Becoming a Man: Contemporary Experiences of Achieving Manhood

by

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BA, University of Saskatchewan, 2000
BSW, University of Regina, 2003

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Supervisory Committee

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This novel study explores the catalytic experiences that demarcate the achievement of manhood and the means by which the participants knew this transition had occurred. Its significance is in its unique findings and contribution to a largely unexplored topic in the research literature. Qualitative methodologies, including narrative interviewing and thematic analysis, were used. Ten individuals were interviewed and asked to tell the story of when they became men and how they knew. Thematic findings include experiences that led to gaining attributes associated with self-reliance and changes related to fathers or fatherhood. The participants uniformly reported that the significance was known by virtue of experiencing a distinct 'felt sense.' Social validation was also noted as a key feature. Further research is recommended including the exploration of this same issue with specific populations and groups, with the larger goal of enhancing the current understanding of these issues by encouraging further dialog in effort to explore the meanings associated with manhood in the contemporary context.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

But when, by what test, by what indication does manhood commence? Physically by one criterion, legally by another. Morally by a third, intellectually by a fourth – and all indefinite. – Thomas De Quincy

Introduction to the Topic

How does a boy become a man? What are the catalytic experiences that demarcate the achievement of manhood in the contemporary situation? Answers to these questions may abound on one level, but remain elusive on another. Academic disciplines including anthropology, feminist/gender studies, sociology, religious studies, philosophy, biology, and psychology have addressed these issues from various perspectives, while writers of poetry and prose have offered vibrant, mythic descriptions of the facets of masculinity for countless generations. Cave art dated to the dawn of civilization depict men in their earliest archaic context. Notions of manhood appear to have been a vital point of concern for as long as human beings have had the capacity for self-reflection. Academic interest in these areas reached a critical mass starting in the mid 20th Century in North America, in the midst of significant social change and ferment. Contemporarily, this age-old set of issues remains the source of much controversy and debate.

Recent decades have brought unprecedented development and innovation. Technology has provided us with easy access to endless information, derived from all corners of the world, drawn from pre-modern, modern and post-modern sources. Changes in social and cultural contexts have resulted in noteworthy upheaval in how we understand one another and ourselves. In this, there appears to be an ongoing negotiation in society in relation to gender identity and social roles. With the old structures dismantled and deconstructed, traditional views of manhood no longer effectively support the needs and demands of contemporary life. The formerly relied upon ways of marking the onset of manhood no longer readily apply. While there have been

voluminous academic and popular writings on a vast spectrum of men's issues, there is very little discussion of experiences of *becoming men* in the literature. As such, new understanding and insight are required to appreciate what the achievement of manhood means to men in the current milieu of masculine identity and male social roles.

Statement of the Problem

Perspectives on masculinity and manhood vary across disciplines, which can be organized into general, broad-based categories that include biological, psychological and sociocultural. Biological perspectives focus on the male sex, taking the position that manhood is physically embodied as the fundamental source of being and identity (*e.g.*, Ashfield, 2012). The psychological standpoint on the topic is primarily concerned with development and identity formation (*e.g.,* Ingersoll & Cook-Greuter, 2007; Marcia, 1993; Wilber, 2000a). The sociocultural research tends to focus on social constructions of gender, social roles and the implications for ideological, cultural, linguistic and structural forces that define and shape identity vis-à-vis social interaction (*e.g.,* Gilmore, 1990; Thompson & Pleck, 1995; Wilber, 2001a). While the biological and psychological processes of development tend to be relatively stable over time, significant social and cultural changes can occur quite rapidly. Developments in the last several decades have led to noteworthy shifts in how gender identity and roles are conceptualized and enacted. In turn, this has led to several researchers noting the emergence of a crisis of masculinity (Brooks, 2010; Levant & Kopecky, 1996).

What is the nature of this crisis? Simply stated, it is no longer clear what it means to be a man. The notion of crisis, used in this respect, refers to the fact that masculinity is a social construct at a turning point. Significant social changes have been occurring since prior to the 1960s, which have brought about a collapse in the *traditional code of masculinity* and

dramatically altered the defining roles and responsibilities of men in society (Levant & Kopecky, 1996). Historically, boys were provided various rites of passage to be initiated into manhood by their community. At different points in time, this may have been related to taking part in specific rituals, inclusion in specific restricted activities, or being bestowed with certain roles and responsibilities that served as a meaningful milestone to mark the transition from boyhood to manhood, and initiation into the community of men. Furthermore, prior to the mid-20th Century, the normative expectations for male and female social roles and behaviour were clearly established and delineated, which provided a clear set of guidelines for *how to be* for men and women, maintaining a sense of security and solidity in gender identity. For example, Terman & Miles (1936) published the first documented attempt to develop a psychological inventory of masculinity, with an operational definition of masculinity indicating that men are "powerful, strenuous, active, steady, strong, self-confident, with preference for machinery, athletics, working for self, and the external/public life" and with a "dislike [of] foreigners, religious men, women cleverer than [they], dancing, guessing games, being alone and thin women" (as cited in Smiler, 2004, p. 17). Although this rigid set of descriptive characteristics may appear somewhat ridiculous when viewed from current perspectives, these criteria reflect the standard view of manhood only a few generations removed.

The feminist movement was fundamental in challenging the primacy of traditional notions of masculinity, and catalytic in the major shifts in the way gender and sex are understood and constructed. While Terman & Miles' (1936) prescriptive and narrow description of depression-era men might have been reflective of normative masculine expressions at the time, by the end of the century, the widening perspectives that made room for increasingly diversified expressions of masculinity replaced the traditional normative standards. While the conventional

notion of manhood served to provide a *basic code* for individuals to know how to be and act as men, they were detrimentally rigid and constricting in terms of socially permissible ways of relating and expressing, and in determining acceptable social and familial roles. As I will detail in the next chapter, certain aspects and dimensions of these dynamics proved to be quite damaging in many ways to men themselves, and also for women, children and communities at-large.

Currently, there is a developing awareness and acceptance the variability in how individuals and groups approach and embrace manhood. While conventional expressions of masculinity remain prevalent, understanding the dynamics of what constitutes becoming a man and maintaining manhood has become increasingly flexible and elusive in terms of subjective notions of identity, along with recognized and accepted social roles. While this represents a freedom for individuals *to be men* without having as much pressure to conform to a prescribed set of rules and with less restraint in their authentic expression of self, the contemporary situation presents a paradoxical conundrum. In the wake of the demolished and deconstructed traditional norms, there is an absence of framework to guide individuals in their relationship with masculinity. It is not that the constraints have been removed in their entirety. They remain, but are significantly more multifaceted, fluid and dynamic. The enhancement of freedom, however, requires that security must be proportionally diminished. The benefits of the emerging liberties enjoyed in terms of self-expression and social roles for men and women far outweigh the limitations and restrictions imposed by the prescriptions of traditional gender roles. Yet, as mentioned at the outset of this section, masculinity has been left in a state of crisis. As a group, men face significant complex issues with respect to masculinity in the context of relationships with women, with other men, in the arena of work, in navigating the multiplicity of challenges

associated with various stages and roles in life – boyhood, adulthood, fatherhood – and along with issues associated with physical health and mental well-being (Brooks, 2010). The semblance of stability and self-assuredness enjoyed by previous generations with respect to masculine identity is no longer adequate to meet the needs of men in an increasingly complex world.

> [T]he majority of men have been forced to give up the hope that they can live their lives in a fashion identical to those of their fathers and grandfathers. The blueprints of their masculine heritage will no longer suffice; new and untried models of male behaviour will be necessary (Brooks, p. 24).

In addition to the need for novel approaches to conceptualizing and thinking about manhood, in order for effective help to be available to assist men in surmounting these problematic issues, new insights and understandings are required. What does it mean to be a man nowadays? How do men appraise their own sense of masculine identity today? Or perhaps even more foundationally, what experiences demarcate the onset of manhood, and how is it that men know when this has happened?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to fill an identified gap in the literature with respect to men's experiences of achieving manhood, and how they came to know that it had occurred. An exploration of such experiences will provide valuable insight into contemporary views that men hold concerning their subjective appraisal of manhood, while articulating meaningful, catalytic events in their lives that serve to initiate them into a new phase of life and identity. The inclusion criteria involved individuals aged 19 years or older, who identify as being a man. Using narrative interviewing, I directly asked participants to tell their story of becoming a man

and how they knew it had occurred.

My primary hope for conducting this study is that it will add a new dimension to the existing body of knowledge concerned with men's identity and psychology, as it is developing in the post-feminist, post-modern, 21st Century context. Building on this, I also anticipate that my study will contribute to a different approach to understanding men's issues with respect to the professional practice of counselling and psychotherapy. There have been a variety of studies that have sought to understand why men are much less likely to access professional help than women (*e.g.*, Blazina, & Watkins, 1996; Good, Dell, & Mintz, 1989; Mahalik, Good, & Englar-Carlson, 2003; Schaub & Williams, 2007). These studies generally focus on various attributes associated with male behavioural tendencies and aspects of masculine identity that prohibit or delimit accessing psychological help. A question that is seldom asked, however, is, what is it about the way counselling and psychotherapy are conducted that does not fit with men? As Ashfield (2011) points out:

> …[O]ur understanding of gender in general, and male psychology and behaviour in particular, has not been informed broadly by the knowledge that is readily available from a range of academic disciplines, it appears that little attempt has been made in social, behavioural and health sciences literature, to obtain and synthesize this knowledge to inform our understanding of men, how best to engage and communicate with them, and how to conduct psychotherapy and counselling in a way that is most efficacious and unlikely to result in determent (p. 18)

Perhaps it is more useful, then, to inquire into how the profession can better serve male clients rather than to focus on what it is about men that makes them unresponsive to the available help such as it is offered at present.

Conducting this study is a foray into exploring a key element in the lived experience of men, foundational in that it is primarily concerned with how manhood is achieved from the direct perspective of men. Although I am not focusing directly on clinical or psychotherapeutic issues, this research is intended to ultimately inform the practice of counselling and psychotherapy. A significant limitation in providing effective services to male client populations is a lack of synthesized knowledge about men and their lives derived directly from men themselves (Ashfield, 2012; Westwood & Black, 2012). As a starting point, it is my intention to directly ask a series of men to share their initiating experiences of manhood with these ultimate aims in mind.

Researcher Context

Positioning Within the Research

The present study will be conducted following a qualitative methodological approach, based on a social constructionist epistemology. "Social constructionism views discourse about the world not as a reflection or map of the world but as an artifact of communal exchange" (Gergen, 1985, p. 266). Following this assertion, it is axiomatic that I am positionally embedded within all aspects of the research, both process and product. Being responsible for the study design and execution, conducting interviews and transcription, data analysis, and written presentation of the document, I am categorically a co-creator of all knowledge generated in my dialogical interaction with the men who participated in the study. Accordingly, it is incumbent upon me to include a description of my relationship with the topic and articulate my context as the researcher within my study.

It is a rather challenging exercise to concisely locate myself within this subject matter, as it is integral to my sense of self in the world. While on one hand it is only one aspect of my larger identity, on the other, it is a significant and foundational aspect of who I am and how

others view me. I will offer a brief overview of some of the key experiences, perspectives and insights that shaped my relationship with the topic and interest in conducting research on the process of achieving manhood. I will conclude this section with a brief discussion of what I anticipated learning in the course of this study.

Early Notions of Manhood

My relationship with masculinity stems from the earliest influences in my life, which contributed to shaping my ever-evolving understanding of what it means to be a man. Growing up in Western Canada in the 1980s and 90s, my formative years took place during an interesting time in the social development of gender and identity. In the larger world, gender roles were rapidly changing and the dynamics between men and women were shifting in families, the workplace, communities and society in general throughout North America.

Throughout my early years, I encountered a variety of influences that informed my sense of *what it means to be a man.* Many of these notions were associated with traditional conceptions of masculinity, which represented the general norm and benchmark to live up to. My earliest implicit impression was that a man is defined by his action - how he carries himself in the world and interacts with his family, friends and community. I was taught that a man provides, protects, is capable, and does what is right. Perhaps most of all, to be a man requires doing what is needed of him, putting his wants and needs second, if necessary. These are values that I still cherish today, and associate with what manhood means to me.

As a child, I cannot recall wondering about the notion of becoming a man. I assumed that, as with the elusive notion of *growing up*, it would 'just happen' someday. I do not recall being consciously concerned with manhood through the earlier stages of my life, but in retrospect the dynamics of masculinity were tacitly quite significant in my development and

upbringing.

Academics and Early Adulthood

After completing high school, I started my undergraduate education in liberal arts, social sciences and social work programs. I found myself in a new world of ideas and insights. Among the many areas that captured my attention, I was introduced to various branches of critical theory and academic gender studies with its various schools of social analysis, which was significantly different from many of the popular notions of feminism that I had previously encountered. I was starting to understand the dynamics of politics, power, gender roles and social justice in the context of how these issues particularly affected various vulnerable people. Many pieces of the puzzle came together for me; much of what I had experienced and witnessed in my world started to make sense, which helped me to become more understanding and compassionate in the process.

At the same time, I became aware of a powerful ideological undercurrent that tended to malign men in general that was quite influential in shaping the way gender issues were framed in the academic arena. The discourse on masculinity tended to be quite jaundiced, especially toward traditional expressions of manhood. At the time, I accepted this as an entrenched feature in the academic culture. Disinterested in this type of ideological orientation, I focused my academic activities elsewhere. Unbeknownst to me then, the issues and perspectives associated with men's psychology and related issues would ultimately take on a central feature in my later professional and academic careers.

Professional Practice, Academic Focus and New Understandings

Upon graduating with a social work degree and after several years of professional practice, I accepted a position providing group counselling and psychoeducation to male clients

in a domestic violence treatment program. This proved to be a time of great ferment for me in terms of conceptual understanding of men's issues and growth in professional practice capacities. The program was firmly based on a philosophical assumption that men instrumentally use violence in relationships with women to meet their fundamental needs for power and control. While this hypothesis seemed to fit with a small portion of the clients, I quickly learned that the realities of most of the men attending this program were far more complicated and complex than this rather narrow stance could explain.

I was again encountering many of the same problematic ideological tenets from my time as an undergraduate student, but now enacted within the context of a set of psychotherapeutic interventions. It was at this point that I started reading various articles and books on men's psychology and related issues. It was exciting and relieving to discover that there was a wealth of research literature that empirically linked domestic violence to childhood experiences of abuse, attachment and developmental issues, psychological trauma, and addiction issues. These insights offered duly sophisticated and empirically-based explanations for my clients' complex situations and behaviours, and provided a significantly more effective theoretical framework from which to practice. It was clear that engaging with this client population in a therapeutic fashion necessitated a different approach to treatment if they and their families were to be helped in meaningful ways. My burgeoning understanding of these deeper dynamics allowed me to become much more effective as a practitioner, but unfortunately, I was ultimately unable to influence any meaningful changes in the larger program. Despite the challenges and frustrations it presented, the opportunity to engage with this client population allowed me to gain significant experience working with men, while developing a knowledge base and discovering a new practice interest in the process.

I became increasingly concerned with men's issues beyond domestic violence, in terms of clinical application to providing services to male clients, and in a more general life context as well. I began to explore wonderings related to what it means to be a man and the variability of how this manifests from person to person. Various authors helped me to make sense of these questions. For example, the writings of Ken Wilber, David Deida, and Warren Farrell provided me with a more balanced, comprehensive framework for understanding expressions of healthy and pathological masculinity and femininity, and to contextualize the historical developments of feminist theory and the study of gender. While I was left with more questions than answers, I was less confused and better able to appreciate the dynamics of this field of academic inquiry, in relation to my professional practice and my own experience.

A short time later, I arrived in Victoria, BC to start graduate school in counselling psychology. I had several ideas for thesis research, and furthering my interest in men's issues was one among them. In discussion with my supervisor about potential topics, we agreed that I would look into the literature concerning the achievement of manhood. Expecting to find a large body of research on the issue, I was struck by the fact that I could locate no empirical research studies on the experience of becoming a man, despite the sheer volume of academic articles and books that have examined various dimensions of men's issues over recent decades. Interestingly, at that point I realized that I had never considered this question for myself. As I mentioned above, I had tacitly assumed that manhood arrived in tandem with the attainment of adulthood.

Complementary to my new research focus and previous professional experience, I was able to complete a series of practica that provided me with the opportunity to provide counselling services to men seeking help for a variety of clinical issues and life challenges. Offering general

counselling at Citizens Counselling Centre allowed me to work with a number of male clients dealing with a cross section of problems including, pervasive fear and anxiety, depression, grief, the consequences of infidelity, pornography addiction, and anger management. My internship at the BC Cancer Agency provided me with counselling experience focused on the complex issues that individuals and families face in the context of serious medical diagnoses. A sizeable portion of my caseload consisted of male clients. Although there are many commonalities among all human beings in this type of predicament, I came to appreciate that men and women often experience different reactions and realities in the context of various types of illnesses. My third practicum was with the Veterans Transition Program, which gave me the opportunity to be a part of an intensive series of psychotherapeutic groups with a cohort of men to assist them with the complex challenges of navigating the transition from military to civilian life.

Although it was not my intention starting out, the trajectory of my graduate training in counselling psychology has drawn me to concentrate on men's issues in both research and practice. I am pleased to be able to make a contribution in this area as there is a need for new perspectives and approaches to counselling men. My hope is that the novel research conducted for this thesis will contribute to remediating these deficits and facilitate further dialog, not only among academics, researchers, and practitioners interested in these issues, but also among men in general and as an integral part of larger conversations in the context of gender identity at interpersonal, cultural and societal levels.

Answering My Own Research Question: The Process that Never Ends

Reflecting on my own life and experience, the role of masculine identity has always been an important, albeit largely implicit, part of my psyche. The most significant early influences and male role models in my life shaped the foundation of my understanding of manhood and

instilled values, views, interests and ways of being in me, which tended to be closely aligned with traditional expressions of masculinity. At the same time, I have chosen a career in human services, first as a social worker and now in completing graduate training in counselling psychology. In my experience, both disciplines tend to be primarily influenced and populated by women and feminine modes of being, more so than men and masculine ways of being (See Chapter 2 for elucidation of what is meant by masculine and feminine modes of being). My choice of professions is a noteworthy departure from the careers that are generally considered to be traditionally male. This balance and tension between traditional and post-modern/post-feminist influences has proven to be quite difficult to maintain at times, but straddling multiple realms of masculinity has provided a variety of advantages with respect to how I am able to relate and interact with people across contexts. I typically feel that I do not fit very well in my chosen professions, but, despite this, I enjoy the challenge of being *a square peg* trying to find a place in the round shape of these professional cultures. Perhaps most importantly, my chosen path has led me to have the privilege to examine these issues and ask these questions in formal academic research.

I am aware of how multifaceted my own sense of self is with respect to the issue of manhood, and know that this holds true for others as well. Being a man - both achieving and maintaining manhood - in the contexts of marriage, family, with friends, at work and in the community and society can be a complicated enterprise. The points that demarcate the onset of manhood for me are reflective of this complexity.

Looking at the sweep of my life experience, I am not able to pinpoint a single occasion that represents my final and full achievement of manhood. The developments of my life with respect to this aspect of my identity seems to have progressed in the context of a series of

significant life events that I hold to be deeply meaningful. While there are dozens of specific examples I could describe, a few experiences of becoming a man tend to stand out in retrospect as particularly salient. My first sense that I was glimpsing aspects of manhood in myself came about when I was approximately 8 years old. With the divorce of my parents and the sudden absence of my father from the family, certain responsibilities fell to me as the oldest child. I also associate my first experiences of working regularly and earning money in later childhood and into my teen years with an aspect of my emerging manhood. In my late teens, a specific encounter with my father brought about a major change in our relationship, resulting in significant healing for me and leading to a renewed bond between two men, rather than that of a son looking up to his father. Moving out of my family home and becoming independent proved to be instrumental in this process. Earning two undergraduate degrees and establishing myself in a professional career in my mid-20s added a dimension to my sense of manhood, given that I was contributing to my community and society with the backing of legally sanctioned qualifications and credentials. The money and respect I started earning at this time was a critical quality of this experience. Developing and growing into a relationship with my partner of 10 years has resulted in remarkable personal and relational growth in a deeply important aspect of myself that is integral to my sense of manhood. More recently, the challenge of graduate school has contributed to a deepened sense of efficacy and competency. In the last year, the death of my brother and navigating my way with my wife through her serious illness have demanded more of me in terms of responsibility and being present through powerfully heart-breaking and devastating predicaments than anything I have previously encountered. These experiences served to expand my ability to endure and love, while caring for self and others, and took my sense of maturity and manhood into new, and previously unknown dimensions.

Given the multiple experiences I associate with becoming a man, I cannot effectively answer my own research question in a fashion that isolates one particular discrete experience or event. When I became a man does not seem to be a fixed point in my biographical memory, but more of an ongoing process of life experiences and challenges that slowly emerged in my awareness in late childhood and has persisted ever since. Paradoxically, I view myself both *as a man* and *in the process of becoming a man*. Similarly, I would consider myself to be educated, yet also not fully educated. I cannot point to the exact moment when I first became educated, but am able to identify a series of events and experiences that I associated with the formation of my intellectual identity.

My response to the second research question, how I knew that I had achieved manhood, is two-fold. Primarily, my knowing was informed by a felt sense that is largely intuitive and highly abstract. A coherent description of this understanding eludes conventional language. Secondly, my knowing was reflected in my relationships with those around me. It is indicated in what I am able to do, the various ways I can contribute and function in the world, and by extension, how I am regarded in my social context as a result. In this sense, my sense of manhood is an interplay of forces both within and outside of me, in which I actively participate.

I do not believe that I ever consciously considered or realized any notions of achieving manhood for myself until I started to consider how it might apply to me in the context of my thesis topic. Since I began this process, I have considered this issue quite deeply from countless perspectives and dimensions. My understanding has been further enriched through extensive reading and having countless conversations with thoughtful people whose perspectives have challenged and enhanced my appreciation of the topic.

My ability to reflect on my relationship with my personal sense of manhood has been

incalculably enhanced by the work I have done toward the completion of this study. My review of the literature, the opportunity to conduct interviews with the men and ask them these same questions, and completing the data analysis process have shaped my current understanding of what it means for me to be a man, and how manhood is constructed and made meaningful by each individual in their life context. Yet, despite the benefits of having had the privilege and opportunity to study these issues so closely and carefully, I still find myself struggling to articulate how I relate to the topic. It has required significant thought and reflection to communicate my current understanding. I have come to regard the focus of this study as much more elusive than I would have ever anticipated going into it. I am also quite confident that my perspective will change as I continue to learn and mature. As such, manhood, as a dimension of self and an aspect of social status and identity, as I understand it, does not seem to be achievable once and for all, but something that is very much alive and subject to change and growth. I have a sense that this aspect of my being will never reach a point of completion. Throughout my life, successive experiences and realizations have deepened and expanded my sense of manhood year after year, and I expect that this process will continue for the remainder of my days.

Pre-research Expectations

Conducting a thorough literature review provided me with the opportunity to deepen my existing understanding of the topic with respect to my own experience and to establish a foundation upon which I was able to conduct the research. Given the complex and dynamic nature of the issues and implications associated with the achievement of manhood and all that it entails, I chose to present the literature using an integrative framework to account for three primary perspectives (i.e., biological, psychological, and sociocultural perspectives). The scope of the literature reviewed for this study, in conjunction with my previous understanding and

experience shaped my expectations as I set out to conduct this research project.

My intention with this study is to inquire into a critical aspect of men's lives and experiences that will provide insight into how these individuals understand the events that propelled them into manhood. In terms of what I expect to find, I anticipate that my participants will share stories that hold significant import in terms of their life narratives, self-perceptions and personal identities as it relates to their sense of masculinity. It is likely that some stories will focus on triumph and success, while others may involve tragedy and hardship. I anticipate that the experiences of transition will not always be focused on one particular catalytic experience, but perhaps a series of encounters or incidents (as is the case in my own story). Finally, I expect that many of the stories will be in the relational context of family or community, and associated with some manner of change in relationship or assumption of responsibility. My anticipations are based on the extensive reading that went into completing the literature review chapter and the assumptions, biases and beliefs derived from personal experience. This includes deep reflective thought along with the pertinent conversations I have had with friends and colleagues concerning the topic. It was interesting to complete this study, as it enabled me to ask a group of individuals an important question that is seldom asked of men, potentially allowing me to make a novel contribution to the body of research knowledge. In the investigative process of coming to better understand these issues by virtue of the findings, my self-understanding was greatly enhanced as well.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented an introduction to the topic, a description of the problem, and discussed the purpose of the study. I concluded with a contextual overview of key aspects of my personal relationship with the topic and experience of achieving manhood, along with an

overview of my expectations for the study. In the following chapter, I present a selected literature review, covering the dynamics of *becoming a man* based on an integrated framework perspective, including the physical, psychological and sociocultural dimensions of manhood and masculinity.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I present a review of a selection of literature pertinent to the research topic, which will ask participants to discuss when they became men and how they knew that it had occurred. The chapter covers a wide variety of issues and themes, and is organized into five basic sections: i) Preliminary Considerations; ii) The Physical Realm; iii) The Psychological Realm; iv) The Socio-cultural Realm; and v) Previous Research. These sections cover a vast array of subject matter, covering multiple points of view from various disciplines, related to concepts of masculinity, identity development, and the social roles required of individuals to achieve manhood in a sociocultural context, and general issues that affect the lives of men. This complex topic requires the inclusion of a multitude of considerations and perspectives to create a multidimensional presentation of the literature concerning the processes by which masculinity and manhood are inherited, instilled, influenced and achieved.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this document, I will make frequent reference to several key terms, which form the basis of my research question and require clarification at the outset. *Become* is defined as: to come into existence; to come to be; and to undergo change or development (Miriam-Webster, 2013). *Man* is defined as: an adult male human; one possessing in high degree the qualities considered distinctive of manhood; the quality or state of being manly (Miriam-Webster, 2013). *Manhood* refers to: qualities associated with men; manliness; and the condition of being an adult male as distinguished from a child or female (Miriam-Webster, 2013). Similarly, *male* refers to: a male person; a man or boy (Miriam-Webster, 2013). *Masculinity* is described as a set of qualities, characteristics or roles generally considered typical of, or appropriate to, a man; it can have degrees of comparison (i.e., *more masculine* or less *masculine*)

(Miriam-Webster, 2013, Wikipedia, 2013). The words *become* and *man* are fundamental to my specific research question, while manhood, male and masculinity are conceptually integral to the topic. These terms and related issues will be explored in detail throughout the chapter.

Another important distinction to identify is my usage of the terms *sex* and *gender*. In this case, *sex* will be used to refer to biological and physical maleness or femaleness, whereas *gender* is used in reference to the social, behavioural, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with the respective sexes (Miriam-Webster, 2013). While these terms are often used interchangeably in popular parlance, each describes an interrelated yet distinct facet of a discussion concerning men's and women's issues. In the ways of thinking and use of language associated with the academic discourse on these topics, this differentiation is the conventional standard, which I will follow throughout this document (Smiler, 2004; Levant, 2011; Wilber, 2000a).

Part I - Preliminary Considerations

To set the stage for the contents of this chapter, this preliminary section presents several important issues affecting the information to follow, with respect to the literature review, as well as for the subsequent chapters of this thesis document. The topic is complicated, and effective coverage requires addressing the complexities of associated with biological, psychological and social issues as related to the point of inquiry. One of the primary challenges exists in the extensive body of available literature, derived from multiple disciplines. In this section, I will address several key issues that require clarification at the outset, including the *problem of the exemplar*, confusions concerning healthy and pathological expressions of masculinity, and issues concerning the constraints of language. I will end this section with a brief discussion of the *integrated approach* that forms the basis of the overall organization of this chapter.

The Problem of the Exemplar

One of the challenging aspects of a study such as this is accounting for the variations and complexities associated with a key aspect of identity such as manhood, while maintaining focus on more generalized, common experiences shared by men. In a discussion of issues such as masculine identity, what manhood entails, and how one becomes a man, I anticipate that there will be as many specific exceptions as there will be *loose* rules. In the absence of a *universal man*, Gilmore (1990) suggested that we speak of a *ubiquitous man* instead, focusing on tendencies, traits and qualities that are more common than not.

Furthermore, manhood is only one, albeit critically important, aspect of an individual's identity. Gender weaves in and through much of who we are as human beings, but it does not necessarily encapsulate the totality of being. There are variations in the emphasis placed on expressions of gender across cultures (Gilmore, 1990) and this variability becomes significantly more pronounced within groups in a given cultural context (Foreman, 2010). Furthermore, notions of gender can be subject to transcendence in higher stages of psychological development (Wilber, 2000b).

Another challenge is discussing men's issues is the inevitable comparison between men and women. Making categorical claims based on sex and gender as absolutes is not only unnecessarily contentious, it is largely antithetical to research findings. Foreman (2010) offers a prime example of this situation. On one hand, s*ystemizing*, the drive to analyze rules governing non-human systems, is generally considered a masculine trait. On the other, *empathizing*, the desire to understand and respond to others, is a trait associated with femininity. Citing Baron-Cohen, Knickmyer and Belmonte (2005), Foreman notes that reliable and valid measures have indicated that these gender traits are statistically associated with their respective gender groups.

Overall, however, 90% or more of men and women show a significant admixture of traits associated with both masculinity and femininity. Most men can be empathic and most women have the capacity to think systemically, as these are fundamentally human attributes, and not gender-specific. In these studies, however, the small minority representing the extreme upper ends of the respective masculine and feminine trait scores were disproportionately associated with men and women, while the vast majority fell somewhere in the middle. There does appear to be important, nuanced differences between the genders beyond primary and secondary sex characteristics, but making a clear-cut distinction along these lines is complicated due to significant overlap in traits among men and women. The extremes, however, tend to be generalized as the standard for each gender, which can lead to faulty, stereotypical notions that lead to "men are like this" and "women are like that" types of associative thinking.

Foreman (2010) refers to this cognitive distortion as the *problem of the exemplar*. Noting the psychological tendency to hold prototypical examples in mind as a point of comparison, extreme parameters are unconsciously selected as contrast markers. Without awareness, we are susceptible to think of men in terms of hypermasculinity and women in terms of hyperfemininity, holding these opposing archetypes as representative. As such, men and women are inaccurately seen as polar opposites.

> The problem with this tendency, of course, is that it obscures the vast majority of men and women who are not archetypically much of anything. Most people fall into the 'great wide middle' in terms of having both masculine and feminine traits and tendencies (Foreman, 2010, p. 241).

Reviewing the literature and conducting the research review for my thesis requires that I focus on issues that apply to the *ubiquitous man,* while being mindful of the nuanced variations

associated with expressions of manhood, while carefully articulating issues concerning gender without falling into the exemplar trap. In the literature review chapter, I will discuss and explore a variety of *men's issues,* but the information presented here should not be taken as applicable to all men in all circumstances, or that it does not apply to women. This chapter explores a variety of issues that have been identified in the literature as affecting men, in general, as a group. The subject matter is perhaps effectively best described as representing a *probability cloud,* comprised of issues and experiences that tend to condense in and around the lives of men, and concerned with notions of masculinity and manhood. As such, all descriptions and claims should be taken as provisional.

My study is not designed to determine what it means to be a man or define manhood insomuch as it is an effort to learn about how a number of individual men subjectively experienced themselves as having attained manhood. While I anticipate that the stories told by my participants will reveal insights into the men's views of themselves as men and how they understand masculinity, no inferences will be made in terms of generalizing the findings to the larger population. (These methodological issues will be further explicated in chapter 3.)

Healthy and Pathological Masculinity

A discussion of the lives of men will unavoidably hinge on meanings of *manhood* and *masculinity*. As I will discuss throughout this chapter, writers have presented these terms with various associative meanings and connotations. While some descriptions are articulated more effectively than others, there is a common assumptive oversight that often leads to discussions that depict masculinity and men's issues with a decidedly negative slant.

Masculine and feminine qualities are typically associated with men and women, respectively. Males and females, however, possess both modal dimensions, and generally (but

not categorically) emphasize one or the other along gender lines. Depending on selected variables and type of measurement, the vast majority of individuals present with a blended degree of masculine and feminine attributes (Foreman, 2010; Smiler, 2004). Various writers (e.g., Wilber, 2006; Deida, 1997) conceptualize each respective gender mode as consisting of specific basic attributes. The masculine principle is generally related to qualities of agency, autonomy, strength, independence, freedom, action and rationality; whereas communion, relationality, linking, care, flow, expressiveness, and intuition are associated with the feminine dimension. While this distinction is presented as though these categories are dichotomous, perhaps it would be more accurate to describe these orientations as poles at the ends of a spectrum of potentialities. With respect to my study, I anticipate that many of these qualities will represent important aspects of the stories of becoming men that will be told to me by my participants.

The attributes listed above are consistent with healthy expressions of the masculine and feminine, and it is important to distinguish these from pathological manifestations of both modes, which occur when these adaptive attributes become '*hyper,'* over-exaggerated or overemphasized. According to Wilber (2006), pathological femininity occurs when instead of being in a relationship, we become lost in the relationship; instead of communion, we are relationally subsumed; not connection, but fixation; a panic state in place of a flow state, and as opposed to fullness-in-connection, there is chaos-in-fusion.

Wilber (2006) further explains what happens when masculine-oriented qualities become maladaptive: autonomy becomes alienation; strength is mutated into domination; independence translates to fear of relationship and commitment; and the impetus toward freedom becomes a destructive drive. The development of a hypermasculine persona can be a consequence of

socialization, within a given set of normative cultural, familial, group and psychological influences (Levant, 1996; Wade, 1998), as well as serving a psychological compensatory function (Spencer, Fegley, Harpalani, & Seaton, 2004) or protective factor as a sequellae to trauma (Howell, 2002). When unhealthy masculinity becomes prevalent in the lives of individuals, families, and cultures (as it has in various ways throughout history), oppressions and abuses can result in significant damage to men, women and children alike, with some groups bearing the brunt of the subjugation and marginalization more than others (See: Kuypers, 1999).

The perspective on masculinity taken by a given author tends depend on how they choose to explicitly or implicitly operationalize their definition and the intentions behind their writing. Unfortunately, it is common practice to describe masculinity as though the pathological aspects represent the totality of the masculine mode, while holding that hypomasculinity is superior in terms of health and well-being, while denouncing traditional notions of masculinity as firmly malevolent. As a consequence of the pervasive influence of ideas such as these, "the view of men and masculinity in popular culture is a decidedly derogatory one" (Ashfield, 2011, p. 20).

Grounded critical analysis is not only warranted, it is necessary for the advancement of social justice. Equity and inclusivity in a just society are integral to the health and wellbeing of all men, women and children. Injustice, mistreatment and abuse of power are never acceptable. When criticism extends beyond reason and informed by ideas based on ideology and confirmation bias, however, the situation becomes problematic. I am left wondering how it remains acceptable in academic discourse to propagate views that single out a specific group of people as being malevolent. For example, when men are encouraged to *refuse to be a man* (Stoltenberg, 2000) in light of a scornful description of manhood and presenting highly selective examples of maladaptive male behaviour as representing the tendencies of all men, this amounts

to applying the same marginalizing and shaming practices to men that such writers claim to stand against, but somehow assumed to be justified in the name of social justice. Flawed reasoning of this variety represents an incompatible self-contradiction. Such claims are not only logically untenable; they are antithetical to the values they purport to reflect.

This important distinction is required to clarify some fundamental points of confusion presented in some academic literature and in popular culture, which has real implications for how constructs of men and masculinity are presented, understood and appraised. These issues may have significant implications for the focus of my study - how men see themselves as having achieved manhood, and underlying meanings and assumptions that inform their view of themselves and other men.

Yet, it is also important to note that this study is not designed to be concerned with identifying what it means to be a *good* or *bad* man. In the interviews, it may be the case that some participants identify experiences that suggest pathological or maladaptive expressions of masculinity as being foundational to their experience of achieving manhood, but this is ultimately inconsequential to the purpose and intent of my research objectives. Assessing the ethical quality of the participants' narratives will not be a part of the data analysis process. Each man's subjective appraisal of his identity and experience will speak for itself. The inclusion of this discussion is solely to identify and clarify a set of problematic issues prevalent in the literature and popular culture.

Representational Language Limitations

The fundamental question of this research study is concerned with the experience of achieving manhood. Following conventional language, there is an implicit assumption that manhood follows boyhood in temporal sequence. I explicitly rely on this two-fold sequence

throughout this document. While this is a valid, albeit limited construct, it is at best a useful shorthand notation for a much more complicated sequence of unfolding stages of multiple areas of development.

The literature is rich and diverse with respect to the various ways of organizing sequences of development, from infancy, to early, middle and late childhood, to adolescence, emerging adulthood, adulthood and beyond. As will be discussed later in this chapter, these stages can be subdivided along various lines of development, including cognitive development, moral development, biological development, and etcetera. These intricate and nuanced divisions are relatively recent discoveries of modern psychological inquiry. The binary of boy-to-man transition is perhaps a carryover from pre-modern cultures where it was a common practice for specific rites of passage to initiate boys into manhood, sanctioning their place among the community of men (Keen, 1992). In popular parlance, it provides a simple means of distinguishing between two fundamental phases in the lives of men. This distinction remains useful to a degree, but its inherent limitations do not reflect the complex process of the achieving manhood for men in the present sociocultural context. The unfolding of human experience over the lifetime is a challenging phenomenon to accurately map, given that it is highly limited by the representational language used to abstractly describe the processes and experience of life stage transition.

As Korzybski (1994) pointed out,

> "If we reflect upon our languages, we find that at best they must be considered *only as maps*. A *word* is not the object it represents; and languages exhibit also this peculiar self-reflexiveness, that we can analyze languages by linguistic means. The self-reflexiveness of language introduces serious complexities… [and] the disregard of these complexities

is tragically disastrous in daily life and science" (p. 58)

The process of transitioning from boyhood to manhood is wrought with the complexities Korzybski references. If taken at face value, the language suggests that there are two dichotomous categorical states, mutually exclusive and linearly lock step in sequence. This is certainly not the case, but following the advice cited above, noting the deceptively simplifying nature of the linguistic convention of the boyhood-to-manhood transition will help facilitate an appreciation of the intricacies and nuances of the experience of achieving manhood. The format of this chapter was designed specifically to flesh out the complex nature of this aspect of identity formation and achievement.

Integrating Perspectives

Topics concerning gender issues are as controversial as they are complex. Discourses on masculinity and men's issues represent a constellation of divergent theoretical perspectives and approaches to research that tend to be taken as incommensurate with one another. There are several standard ways that the topic of *men* is typically approached. When referring to *men* as a group, one might make reference to a legal definition, or a sociocultural notion of masculinity as a gender construct. Perhaps manhood is fundamentally oriented to male sex characteristics, anatomical structure and genetics. How about common psychological issues, or social roles derived from the life experiences of individual men? Asking men to discuss when they became men and how they knew is a question that could stem from any given combination of these influences. Each perspective holds an important aspect of the *big picture,* but is it possible to hold these perspectives together without privileging one and excluding or downgrading the others?

Historically, *nature versus nurture* has been a fundamental debate within the social

sciences, seeking to establish the causal influences that shape us as human beings. Sopalsky (2006) argues that the merits of these dichotomous issues need not continue:

> "To an overwhelming extent, the age-old "nature versus nurture" debate is silly. The action of genes is completely intertwined with the environment in which they function; in a sense, it is pointless to even discuss what gene X does, and we should consider instead only what gene X does in environment Y." (p. 111).

Taking this position one step further, Buss (2001) proclaimed that "the false dichotomies that have been perpetuated into the 21st century—culture versus biology, nature versus nurture—must be revealed as plainly false" (p. 791). It is not one or the other, but the multidimensional interaction between these forces that shapes us in all of our facets. As Diamond (2006) points out, a sophisticated approach to masculine identity must accommodate the tensions between these perspectives on manhood, which will make room for biological givens (e.g., anatomical differences and hormonal influences) and socially mediated, cultural influences that shape masculine identity.

In effort to accommodate multiple perspectives, I have organized this chapter to reflect perspectives on men's issues and the attainment of manhood into three broad categories: the physical realm, the psychological realm, and the sociocultural realm. Considering the remarkable developments in research across disciplines that are now widely accessible, a broadly informed and integrated approach will better account for the myriad of legitimate perspectives currently available. The perilous tendency among academic disciplines toward reductionism is well documented (see: Wilber, 2000a; 2000c). As Wilber has argued, competing academic perspectives provide deeply valuable, complementary insights into a given phenomena, accounting for much more than a singular point of view would offer alone.

The integrated framework presented in this chapter is an adaptation derived from Wilber's (2000a; 2000c) Integral theory. In multiple volumes, Wilber has presented a rigorously developed model that effectively accommodates competing and opposing perspectives. For the purposes of this study, the incorporation of Wilber's full model would pose several technical issues, necessitating significant explanation to render the framework tenable for the document and comprehensible for the reader. In order to avoid unnecessary entanglements, I have used a key aspect of Wilber's model as inspiration for the layout of the remainder of this chapter. The literature review is organized and presented in groupings clustered in the biophysical, psychological, and sociocultural domains. Although I am not using the *de facto* Integral framework, Wilber's influence is pronounced and evident both in the literature review and methodology chapters.

The fundamental benefit that such an approach holds is the potential of situating these divergent perspectives together in a way that reflects their mutual interaction with one another. It is possible to maintain this meta-perspective, however, only in so long as each point of view is included on its own merits and validity claims. This requires a mindful avoidance of the tendency to privilege one perspective, while reducing all others as secondary epiphenomena, or dismissing other points of view as *simply wrong*. Accounting for as many relative truths as possible holds significant promise for the simple fact that it includes more and excludes less of reality.

For the purposes of organizing this literature review chapter, an integrative framework is useful in two key ways. First, it provides a means by which the existing concepts and research can be organized to be mutually complementary without resorting to myopic reductionism. Secondly, in terms of the research question, it will provide a more inclusive perspective to

appreciate and apprehend the responses the participants offered with respect to when they recognized themselves as having become men. Holding these divergent dimensions together makes it possible for the experience of "becoming a man" to be more accurately appreciated as a highly dynamic, multidimensional process. Presenting the information in this systematic fashion is fundamentally an effort to cover the issues as broadly as possible, while mitigating the ontological, epistemological and methodological tensions that exist between biological, psychological and sociocultural research.

In taking this approach to organizing the literature review, I am not arguing against specialization or a more specific focus. It is quite the opposite. Rigorous empirical inquiry flows from precise methodological injunctions specific to a given discipline, which is the case with my study. In the methodology chapter, I will detail the epistemological (i.e., social constructionism) and methodological paradigm (i.e., narrative interviewing and thematic analysis) that will guide my process. At the same time, reviewing the available literature through multiple lenses allows for a big picture understanding of the dynamic factors that comprise the topic at hand.

Part II- The Physical Realm

The fundamental unit of human life is the physical body, which includes molecules, chromosomes, cells, neurotransmitters, hormones, skeletal structure, blood, organs, muscle tissue and skin. A man, as distinguished from a woman, is described as having a male body, denoted by an *xy* chromosomal configuration, primary sex characteristics (i.e., penis and testicles), and secondary sex characteristics induced by higher levels of testosterone, including distribution of muscle mass, bone density, body and facial hair and larger larynx (Mader & Windelspecht, 2011). This description is notwithstanding cases where an individual is born female, but

identifies as male and chooses to undergo medical transition to become a man, or other examples of *gender-nonconformity* (WPATH, 2011).

Assumptions concerning social construction of gender have been increasingly dominant in the discourse on gender and identity for the last several decades. However, the central theory that informs research associated with biological, evolutionary and medical sciences does not necessarily regard maleness as primarily a product of socialization or social learning, and distinct from biological sex. Ashfield (2012), for example, proposes that masculinity is not a social construction, but a fundamentally embodied aspect of human identity, undifferentiated from the physical body. He argues that, "There is no escaping the imperatives of biology or what we share in common with other species, no matter with what sophistication we clothe ourselves" (p. 42).

Citing scientific research derived from a cross-section of disciplines including biology, anthropology, neuroscience, endocrinology, and psychology (Goldberg, 1991; Pinker, 2002; Baron-Cohen, 2003; Sax, 2007; Nadeau, 1996), Ashfield (2011, 2012) points to differences in brain structure and hormone physiology as the primary distinguishing features between male and female. These biological differences are instrumental in shaping behavioural tendencies and preferences that have been statistically correlated with general differences in behaviour at the population level. Ashfield argues that the available scientific knowledge convincingly makes the case that biology is the primary, though not exclusive, determinant that drives individual and social behaviour. From this perspective, masculinity and femininity are grounded in male and female biology, with social systems conforming to the limits and parameters shaped by genetic predisposition.

According to Ashfield (2012), social and cultural forces are influential on gender identity,

but only insofar as serving to reinforce, accentuate, limit, or refine specific natural characteristics to fit with and meet the demands of cultural and environmental contexts. This is juxtaposed with notions that gender is a product of social construction that shapes individuals to think and act in reflection of their social and cultural context, as differentiated from biological sex.

Evolutionary Psychology

Biologically oriented views of sex and gender are foundationally aligned the general principles of evolutionary psychology. The central theory of evolutionary psychology holds that male and female behaviour is a consequence of the process of natural selection of genetic traits over the course of human evolution. Interpersonal and intrapersonal relational tendencies, personality development, and sexual and mating behaviours are considered to be a consequence of adaptations occurring over countless generations of trait selection (Buss, 2008; Wright, 1994). Accordingly, these same natural forces shape social interaction and cultural practices, taking an antithetical stance to proponents of social constructionism. Men and women are primarily a product of the evolutionary impulse, with masculine and feminine traits concomitant to male and female embodiment. To avoid confusion, Buss (2008) is careful to clarify that this theoretical perspective does not entail subscriptions to notions of genetic determinism or unchangeable, static behaviour. He explicitly notes the interaction between innate biology and environmental influences on human behavioural tendencies and highlights the benefit of the insights offered by this discipline for understanding and changing how we act and interact.

Testosterone

There are a number of distinguishing biological attributes that differentiate men and women with respect to male and female embodiment. One important characteristic is the androgenic hormone testosterone, which has been related to gender differences in emotion,

cognition and behavior (Sapienza, Zingales, & Maestripieri, 2009). Testosterone is associated with variations in body size and musculature, various secondary sex characteristics (e.g., body and facial hair; deepened voice). Moderated testosterone levels are integral to health, and hormonal imbalance has been associated with a number of issues that affect men's well-being and functioning. Elevated testosterone has been associated with heightened competitiveness and motivation for dominance (Archer, 2006), diminished fear (Hermans, Putman, Baas, Koppeschaar, & Van Honk, 2006; Van Honk, Schutter, Hermans, Putman, Puiten, & Koppeschaar, 2004), and modified reward and punishment associations, which is related to risk-taking and thrill-seeking behaviour, including gambling and substance use (Dabbs & Morris, 1990; Mazur, 1995; Blanco, Ibáñez, Blanco-Jerez, Baca-Garcia, & Sáiz-Ruiz, 2001; Takahashi, Sakaguchi, Oki, Homma, & Hasegawa, 2006). Testosterone levels are reported to be significantly higher among male inmates convicted of violent crimes in comparison with men convicted of nonviolent criminal behaviour (Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 2005). Conversely, low levels of the hormone have been associated with a various issues affecting men, including depression, lack of motivation and increased fatigue, decreased libido, erectile dysfunction, infertility, loss of muscle mass and strength, diminished bone density, along with other physical and emotional issues affecting functioning (Haren, Morley, Chapman, O'Loughlin, & Wittert, 2002; Snyder et al, 2000).

Women naturally produce a limited amount of the androgenic hormone relative to men, but can increase to abnormally high levels as a result of endocrine disorders (e.g., polycystic ovarian syndrome) or hormone therapy treatments involving exogenous testosterone. This can result in changes to secondary sex characteristics, including increased musculature and loss of adipose tissue, increased body and facial hair, hair loss and deepening of the voice. In such

cases, emotional and behavioural changes include increased irritability, excitability, and decreased aversion risk-taking behaviour (Sapienza, Zingales, & Maestripieri, 2009). Perhaps the most pronounced feature associated with novel increases in testosterone in women is sudden increases in aggression and libido. Commenting on her experience, one woman receiving treatments involving testosterone injections was reported to have pleaded with her physician, " I can't stop thinking about sex! Please can't you make it stop?" (Wilber, 2000a, p. 4). In cases where women experience these changes, their reports offer insights into the psychological, behavioural and relational context in which men find themselves resulting from male embodiment.

Health and Well-Being

Health and well being issues represent a significant set of issues in which the physical body intersects with the social context in the arena of manhood. As a group, men experience rather significant concerns in terms of lifespan, health, and illness. On the average, men die several years sooner than women (Brooks, 2010; Brooks & Silverstone, 1995; Farrell, 1993). For example, Canadian men live to an estimated mean age of 78.89 years, whereas women live to 84.21 years, and in the United States, men live to an average of 76.05 years and women to 80.05 years (C.I.A., 2013). Statistically, women outlive men in nearly every country in the world. Several explanations have been offered to explain this, including genetic differences, environmental influences, and psychosocial factors (McLeod & White, 2005).

Related to early death, men's health is at risk to be compromised by various factors throughout life. Not only are men more likely to abuse substances (e.g., alcohol, illicit drugs and cigarettes), experience higher rates of risk-taking behaviour and injury in work and recreation, they are also much less likely to take preventative health measures and seek adequate medical

care (Ashfield, 2012; Levant & Kopecky, 1996). As such, it is believed the higher rates of mortality are due, at least in part, to inattention to signs and symptoms of disease. Left unattended, symptoms of heart disease, various cancers, hypertension/stress and other health conditions can become exacerbated and ultimately fatal without medical attention and treatment compliance (Brooks & Silverstein, 1995). This raises the question of why men might be susceptible to these risk factors and less attentive to their health and wellbeing.

There is a relationship between these health factors and the socialization of men, highlighting notions of *what it means to be a man*. As will be discussed in detail below, maintaining a masculine identity requires ongoing social validation, given the precarious nature of manhood status (Vandello & Bosson, 2012). Examining these issues, there appear to be two primary factors contributing to this situation. First, there are specific expectations put on men - by society, those around them and, ultimately, by themselves - to "be" certain ways (e.g., competent/ not incompetent, capable/ not incapable, strong/ not weak, durable/not fragile). These ideals are difficult - if not impossible - to achieve and maintain, contributing to significant pressures (Levant, 2011; Pleck, 1995). Secondly, the coping strategies employed to contain this constellation of stressors may provide a temporary analgesic, but are unsustainable over time with cumulatively deleterious effects on physical and mental health. Ashfield (2011) explains:

> "The cultural phenomenon of manhood is a vital key to understanding why men are in fact conditioned not to pay so much attention to their health and well-being – because to do so would be contrary to the many roles they must perform in society… [As such] Men can't afford to be seen by other men or women as weak or unmanly if they are to protect the integrity of their manhood identity (upon which so much depends in any society). This is not a case of 'male ego' or 'machismo,' as is often so sneeringly suggested: it's a

matter of self-preservation through social approval and inclusion" (p. 43).

What may appear to be self-neglect or lack of interest in self-preservation is a much more complicated situation than surface appearances may suggest. Illness and disability pose a significant threat men's ability to maintain the many roles that are central to masculine identity and the maintenance of manhood. If compromised, there is a serious risk in being relegated to an inferior masculinity status (McVittie & Willock, 2006). The challenge for many men is in seeking help while preserving the "social asset and personal necessity of an uncompromised manhood" (Ashfield, 2011, p. 43). In some cases, seeking help is considered unacceptable, which is an interaction between gender role socialization, personal necessity and, the frequently overlooked means by which services are delivered, and often incompatible with social and psychological needs of men (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Ashfield, 2011; Tudiver & Talbot, 1999). The achievement of manhood is often associated with assumption of responsibility for specific roles in family, community and society (Hammond & Mattis, 2005). The ability to carry out these responsibilities is both a social necessity and key aspect of masculine identity, and in many cases, men pay a significant price for preserving these functions, to the determent of themselves and those who rely on them.

Problematic Features

Related to physical and mental health issues, "Men have long been disproportionately represented among many problem populations: parents estranged from their children; the homeless; prisoners; sex addicts and sex offenders; victims of suicide, war, and automobile accidents; and fatal victims of lifestyle- and stress-related illnesses" (Levant, 2011, p. 766). Male violence against other males is epidemic in proportion, with men most likely to be both perpetrators and victims of violent death (Brooks, 2010, p. 15). In the United States, there are

fifteen men incarcerated for every 1 female, and in Canada, the ratio is 5 to 1 (Kong & AuCoin, 2008). While estimates vary, men are prone to experience alcohol addiction five times more often than women, and illicit drug addiction is also significantly more prevalent among men (Brooks, 2010; Brooks & Silverstein, 1995). Compared with women, men are at a higher risk for completed suicide across the lifespan, with risk levels significantly heightened in later years. Furthermore, it is also speculated that many fatal accidents involving men may be unreported and unacknowledged suicides (Farrell, 1993). Male adolescents are significantly more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviour and antisocial acts (including vandalism, assaultive behaviour, theft, reckless driving, and substance abuse) than their female peers (Brooks & Silverstein, 1995). From a macro perspective, men experience significant challenges in terms of health and well-being as individuals and at the group level. Notions that seek to account for some of these phenomena will be discussed throughout this chapter.

The Physical in Context

There is a fundamental component of gender identity that is associated with the body. Following the conventional distinction between sex (biological body) and gender (sociocultural identity) is a useful means to tease apart various influences, yet it is impossible to draw a sharp line of demarcation between these two dimensions. Furthermore, it is nearly impossible to fully discern the extent to which evolutionary and biological processes shape human beings from the degree to which social influences are fundamental. The tensions between these paradigmatic stances are perhaps best reconciled by viewing each perspective as interactively correlated with one another, as opposed to attempting to establish the primacy of one over the other. Much of who we are, what we do and how we interact are somatically embedded, in a reciprocal feedback loop with the environment, social situation and cultural context. Discussing men's issues and the

experience of becoming a man interacts with all realms of a man's life. Central to this is the formation of masculine identity and the psychological implications for how an individual appraises and regards himself with respect to gender and social roles.

Part III - The Psychological Realm

This section will focus on specific aspects of *becoming a man* with respect to psychological issues and inner, subjective experiences. As with each of the major areas this chapter covers, the psychological realm is multifaceted and complicated, and informed by a vast body of research literature. Throughout this chapter, I will make reference to men's relationship with emotional issues, yet many important issues prevalent in the literature are beyond the scope of this document (e.g., specific issues such as emotional expression including prevalence of alexithymia (Levant, Hall, Williams & Hasan, 2009), anger (Masters, 2006), grief and loss (Lister, 1991), and depression (Real, 1998)). Given the nature of my study, the primary pertinent psychological issues relate to development and identity formation, which are the focus of the discussion surrounding the psychological dimension of achieving manhood in this section.

The notion of identity - *one's idea of who one is and how one defines oneself* (Marcia, 1993) - is a central issue in this study. My research question is specifically concerned with a specific experience of *becoming* within the personal identity of men. Although the focus of my study is not primarily concerned with processes of development *per se,* it nonetheless directly relates to specific aspects of identity formation. Keeping focus on the question of who it is that attains manhood, in this section I will present pertinent conceptualizations of a) psychological development; b) the self-system; c) masculinity and femininity in development; d) identity status and achievement; e) masculine identity formation; and f) gender identity in development. These general topics, each building on the last, will lead toward a more specific discussion of

masculine identity and issues associated with manhood.

Psychological Development

According to Wilber (2001a), developmental psychology is "the study of growth and development of the mind – the study of interior development and consciousness evolution" (p. 5). This field is vast, generating research to chart the unfolding trajectories of an array of distinct yet interrelated human intelligences, capacities and attributes, or *lines* of development. Development can proceed with a healthful, unimpeded progression, or if interrupted, various complications and pathologies may result (Wilber, 2000a). Examples of some lines of development include: cognitive development (Piaget, 1952); moral development (Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1981); and values development (Beck & Cowan, 1996). Of particular interest to my study are lines associated with development of the self (Cook-Greuter, 2000; Erikson, 1980; Keegan, 1982; Loevinger & Blasi, 1976). The self, however, is more than a single unit following a specific line of development. The self and its processes of development are perhaps more accurately described as a *self-system*.

The Self-System

Asking individual men to discuss their sense of masculine identity tacitly implies a notion of an underlying personhood, or structured sense of self. Throughout history, seeking to define the concept of self has been the focus of much philosophical speculation and scientific inquiry, across disciplines and traditions. Marcia (1980) offered a practical definition, describing the substrata of identity as an internal, self-constructed organization of drives, abilities, beliefs and individual history.

Viewed in this way, the organization of the self is not so much a monolithic entity, but a complex, interactive array of attributes and dimensions. To effectively capture this complexity,

Wilber (2000b) used the terms *self-system* (referring to the objective, third-person perspective) and *self-sense* (the subjective, first-person perspective). Self, in this respect, refers to that with which an individual identifies as differentiated from the rest of the world (e.g., This is me, whereas that is not me) (Ingersoll & Greuter-Cook, 2007). The notion of an integral self-system provides "a comprehensive model of the self that embraces the relevant research and theoretical understandings of how our self-sense evolves and accounts for much of our experience of the world" (Ingersoll & Cook-Greuter, p. 193). Such an approach is instrumental in providing significant insight into the underpinning processes through which boyhood is transcended and manhood achieved.

Foreman (2010) identified seven key functions of the self-system, including: a) being the locus of identification; b) giving organization or unity to mind; c) being the centre of free will and choice; d) being the centre of defence mechanisms; e) metabolizing of experience; and f) being the centre of developmental navigation, or holding on versus letting go of identity (p.79). One additional key feature that was not included in the self-system literature, but central to this study is the relationship between the self-sense and the personal narrative, which is key to meaning making, and orienting the individual within the context of their temporally-situated experience. Framed another way, the personal narrative is the subjective life story of the objective self-system. (The importance of narratives, as it pertains to my study, will be addressed in detail in the methodology chapter of this document.)

The self-system is a composite, organizing process through which the individual interfaces with their experience of themselves (interior) and their world (exterior), taking its content from all aspects of life (Ingersoll & Cook-Greuter, 2007). In this sense, the self-system acts as the vehicle of consciousness and centre of personhood. The plastic yet cohesive nature

allows for the self-system to adjust and accommodate as developmental processes transpire. With elements continually being added and discarded over time, the entire gestalt of identity may occasionally shift (Marcia, 1980, p. 159). In response to life experience, the self-system adapts with the development new emergent capacities and awareness, which are apprehended in the self-sense as the subjective corollary of the self-system. To offer an example grounded in this study, as a result of experience and related adaptations in the self-system, the individual no longer identifies as a boy, and now recognizes himself (i.e., his self-sense) as being a man.

Self-System in the Developmental Matrix

The concept of the self-system is the individual locus of personhood and identity, which grows and develops as a result of various influences and life experiences, situated within a larger developmental matrix. Wilber (2000a) metaphorically referred to this dynamic as *ladder, climber* and *view* to describe the three essential developmental perspectives. Although it represents a simplified account of highly complex issues, this depiction of development effectively symbolizes these fundamental perspectives, representing an inclusive, integrated approach to describing human development.

Developmental models are commonly illustrated as a sequence of stages, progressing in an upward fashion. In this metaphor, *the ladder* represents the structure of the developmental impulse, with the rungs signifying the stages associated with a specified line of development (Ingersoll & Cook-Greuter, 2007). Each successive rung represents a basic building block, indicative of a higher degree of development (Wilber, 2000a). (Note: Wilber is careful to clarify that development is not as direct and discrete as this illustration might suggest, pointing out that stages are more accurately described as wave-like rather than lock steps. Development tends to follow a spiralling trajectory as opposed to a linear progression. The metaphor is a teaching

device, not intended to be a precise description of the actual directional processes to which it refers.)

The *climber* represents the self-system - that which is in the process of development. With each step upward, the climber moves to a new developmental stage. Wilber describes this as a three-step process. At any given rung, the climber will *fuse* or *identify* with that current stage until a process of *differentiation* and *transcendence* begins to take place, marked by the initial movement to the next step. The climber then *integrates* this new stage, until the process begins again (Wilber, 2000a). This is often referred to as a "transcend and include" process, meaning that when a previous stage is surpassed, it remains simultaneously included in subsequent stages achieved.

Keegan (1982) provides an instructive description of the processes *the climber* undergoes, moving up *the ladder*. In the transition from stage fusion (or *embedding*) to differentiation (or *de-embedding*), that which the individual formerly identified as the subject of the self becomes an object in the awareness of the subject of the self (p. 32 – 33). Applying this construct to my study, the person who was the boy now recognizes boyhood and related identity attributes as an objective aspect or experience of his identity that is now distal from his sense of self. The assumed identity that formerly defined him is now de-embedded and transcended, and the subject now identifies with being a man.

As *the climber* represents the *self-system*, *the view* symbolizes the *self-sense* – the subjective experience of self-in-development. With a higher, wider *view* accessible at a new rung, the individual becomes aware of a shift in his *self*, and how he relates to himself and to others. This may include noteworthy changes in perceptions of self-identity, personal needs, and sense of morality (Wilber, 2000a).

For example, the experience of becoming a first-time father includes both biologically and socially mediated influences on an individual's development. Taking the birth of his child as the catalytic event that demarcated his attainment of manhood, an individual now regards himself as a man with a family of his own. Having become a father has facilitated various changes in his self-system and self-sense. His personal needs have changed in that he assumes responsibility for rearing and providing for his child with his partner, ensuring that their needs are met, perhaps now before his own. Moreover, his sense of morality – concern and care for others – may shift as he becomes more empathic and compassionate as a result of his relationship with his newborn. Multiple influences contribute to this climber's significant step upward on the ladder, and corresponding change in his views of self and other. While he is still the same person in one sense, he has also expanded beyond his former self in several ways. Depending on various intrinsic and extrinsic influences on the individual man, this differentiation may proceed with grace and ease, whereas for others, it may be a cause of significant difficulty and feelings of duress (Foreman, 2010, p. 62-63).

According to Ingersoll and Cook-Greuter (2007), the expanded view associated with each subsequent stage forms a permanent perspective for the time that the climber holds at that rung. At the same time, views can be described as transitional. With each movement upward, the previous view is replaced by a new, expanded vantage point, allowing the climber a broader, deeper capacity to see and understand. However, as noted above, those views are still accessible, from the former perspective are transcended *and included*, not transcended and expunged (Wilber, 2000a). The developmental process in inclusive of its previous stages, just as lower rungs on an actual ladder do not disappear as the climber moves upward. The structure remains whole and in place to support each subsequent step. That which was assimilated and

incorporated throughout boyhood remains with and supports the man's ongoing development, even as he moves beyond the position and vantage point of his former sense of self. This point holds additional significance in light of the view that manhood is not fully secure once attained and is *in the making* throughout a man's life (Vandello & Bosson, 2012).

As a rule, the climber does not move down the ladder (or regress) to identify with former views, except in the case of severe pathology, such as brain trauma (Ingersoll & Cook-Greuter, p. 195). As significant as developmental processes are in the process of becoming a man, manhood is also considered to be an *identity status*. Unlike development, which is unidirectional with each advancement generally secure within each achieved stage, identity status can be threatened and vulnerable to loss. The potential instability of manhood is due in part to the way in which identity is attained, via social validation (Vandello & Bosson, 2012). The precarious nature of manhood will be a recurring theme throughout this document, and is discussed in detail later in this chapter and the issue of identity achievement is central to making sense of this phenomenon.

Masculine and Feminine in Development

Wilber (2000b, 2001a, 2001b) argues that *gender identity* follows from biological roots through conventional socially constructed formations, and, at the higher stages of development, gender is transcended (along with other facets of conventional identity). Furthermore:

> Research continues to confirm that the deep features of the basic (stages) of development and most of the self-related lines are gender neutral (i.e., they are essentially the same in men and women). However, men and women can negotiate the same structures and stages "in a different voice," which is usually summarized by saying that men translate with an emphasis on agency, women on communion, although both use both (Wilber,

2000b, p. 120.)

On the surface, there are obvious differences in how these factors are articulated, but what is being expressed originates in the same developmental structures.

For example, Kohlberg's (1981) model of moral development fundamentally hinges on notions of justice. Gilligan (1982) put forth a well-founded criticism of Kohlberg's findings, arguing that his primary focus on issues of justice-based (related to agency) morality was expressly masculine. Gilligan's (1982) research indicated that this was not largely consistent with feminine expressions of morality, which tend to centre more on notions of relational care (or communion) with less emphasis on justice. Accordingly, she constructed a model of moral development more suited to her research on women's experiences and processes of maturation. As Wilber (2006) explained, Gilligan noted that at the uppermost ranges of moral development, masculine and feminine voices tend to integrate. This does not necessarily mean that individuals blur the line between masculine and feminine to become androgynous or asexual. Instead, masculine and feminine may become more accentuated and intensified as "individuals start to befriend both the masculine and feminine modes in themselves, even if they characteristically act predominantly from one or the other" (p. 13). Over time, processes of development may converge, bringing about coalescence and integration of these divergent dimensions of self.

Identity Status and Achievement

Marcia's (1966, 1993, 2002) research lends significant insight into the general identity achievement process, which further contributes to an understanding of how individuals may come to recognize themselves as having become men. Marcia's model and associated interview protocol were derived from Erikson's (1980) stages of psychosocial development. Although not a developmental model in itself, this body of research sheds light on the processes that occur

within development, with an emphasis on identity crisis resolution associated with personal growth. Identity achievement reflects a significant transition in self-sense and stage of ego development (Marcia, 1993, p. 3).

According to Marcia (1993, 2002), identity is achieved through a commitment to *occupation* (roles, or what the person does) and *ideology* (what a person believes and values), which occurs through exploring potential options in pursuit of identity crisis resolution. This process is both conscious and unconscious, involving *disequilibrating experiences* (an event, positive or negative, that causes upheaval), and subsequent *accommodation* of the changes, allowing for a novel, emergent identity structure capable of adapting to a broader and more inclusive sense of self than that of the previous identity (Marcia, 2002).

In this model, there are four possible classifications in which a person's identity may fall with respect to the process from role confusion into identity attainment. *Identity Foreclosure* refers to a situation in which the individual acquiesces and tacitly accepts the prescribed expectations put forth in the environment by family, peers and other significant influences. Their identity is *foreclosed* until they are able to determine their own sense of self. The individual is ostensibly committed to an identity, but not one arrived at through identity crisis resolution after exploring options. *Identity Moratorium* is the state where the individual holds a vaguely formed sense of ideological and occupational commitments while in the midst of an identity crisis, in which they may be starting to commit to an identity in the process of developing. *Diffusion* is the condition in which a clear sense of identity is absent with no discernable identity development process underway. The individual may have endeavoured to move toward a sense of personal identity, but were unable to resolve the crisis and withdrew from the pursuit as a result. *Identity Achievement* refers to the situation when the individual has managed to develop a

well-defined set of personal values and consistent sense of self-concept. Identity can continue to develop in adulthood, extending from this basis point. As noted, this entails having committed to an occupation and ideology, which further facilitates a strong *self-sense* throughout life. As such, for the purposes of this study, it would be ideal to interview participants who have achieved a sense of mature masculine identity. Given the subjective nature of attaining manhood, however, it could be that some participants may recognize their transition based on other criteria or life experiences that do not necessarily fit with Marcia's framework.

Marcia's (1993) notions of ideology and occupation are salient issues in other research examining the life experiences of men. Pleck (1995) developed the concept of *male gender role strain* to describe the stresses and difficulties experienced by men endeavouring to live up to the *masculine ideology* - the socioculturally-derived, idealized notion of what a man must be do to measure up to an implicit standard. Moreover, Vandello and Bosson (2012) have added the notion of *precarious manhood* to the literature, focusing in the tenuous nature of achieving manhood and the tacit requirement to continually and demonstrably validate through socially visible action. Marcia's identity status research, set in tandem with the research of Pleck and Vandello & Bosson complement one another, and lends critically important insight to the an appreciation of what is at stake for individuals in becoming men. This raises questions concerning the influences that shape children's appraisals of masculinity and what is taken as necessary for achieving manhood later in life.

Masculine Identity Formation

As noted, manhood and masculinity are influenced by interrelated factors associated with psychological development, biological processes, and shaped by cultural and social structures. These dynamics come together to mutually interact with individual psychological processes to

shape the totality of personhood-in-context. Although the notion of manhood suggests male adulthood, the formation of masculine identity begins in early childhood. In this section, I will discuss conceptions related to the genesis of masculine identity in boys.

The achievement of core a masculine identity establishes a basic orientation and sense of self that includes his biological sex, identification by others as a male child and early gender-related experiences, along with subsequent internalization of various gender influences and inputs, all of which contribute to the formation of an *ideal self* (Krugman, 1995). The internalization of this idealized masculine identity guides the boy's understanding of how he is expected to think, feel and behave in any given circumstance.

According to Corneau (1991), identity is constituted and differentiated through a series of identifications. Masculine identity formation is "a psychological process in which a subject assimilates an aspect, a property, or a characteristic of another and transforms himself totally or partially on the basis of this model" (p. 14). As such, the formation of identity requires the identification with others, and incorporating and integrating their attributes through a process of imitation and emulation into personal identity. Corneau's description here is consistent with Marcia's (1993, 2002) notions of occupation and ideology, which are derived from experiences both in the immediate family and in the larger social context.

In the Family Context. Bergman (1995) describes masculine identity formation from a *self-in-relation* perspective, a process that takes place in the context of familial relationships, starting in infancy. Critical of notions of an isolated, unitary self that are commonly associated with traditional psychodynamic theories, Bergman claims that earlier psychoanalytic and object relations assumptions erroneously focus on an isolated individual, which inadequately account for the *deeper, more whole levels* of human development, contextualized in relationships (p. 72).

Noting that male and female infants remain connected with their mothers in a similar way until the approximate age of three, when a socially-dictated shift tends to occur, orienting the boy away from the mother and toward the domain of the father and masculinity. This *disconnection* from the mother has lifelong implications for the boy's sense of self. Bergman asserts that this shift represents much more than a mere change in the infant's relationship with "the mother" as an individual woman. The pressures to "*achieve maleness,*" in fact, lead to a disconnection from the infant's primary, mutually empathic relationship and the "very process of growth-in-relationship." On a deeper level, this represents a "*turning away from the whole relational mode of being,*" which is associated with the feminine, and ostensibly leading to the boy becoming an "agent of disconnect" (p. 74).

According to Bergman (1995), the process of turning away from the mother (and the feminine domain) is prompted by the boy's father, concomitant with pressures associated with the dominant male image in the culture. Bergman argues that the mother is tacitly required to be supportive of her son's transition away from an emphasis on relational connection as his primary way of being. The father's masculine influence, along with a complicit mother, indoctrinates the boy into the masculine realm, marking the genesis of his tendencies toward enactments of comparison, competition, and isolation.

Bergman (1995) goes on to add that the quality of the relationship between his mother and father, both their regard for one another and how they relate to their son, will inform how he comes to understand how to relate to others and to himself. When the importance of the relational dimension and emotional expression are ignored or discouraged in the context of the family relationships, a boy's capacity for empathy and emotional attunement, along with his ability to recognize his own emotional and relational needs will be negatively impacted, leading

to fragmentation and violation in interpersonal relationships. These factors, along with a fear of being vulnerable and emotionally overwhelmed that are instilled in the boy, can lead to what Bergman (1995) refers to as *male relational dread.* This condition predisposes him to anxiety-provoking reactions to intimacy, consisting of various thoughts and emotions that continually work against and delimit the man's potential for growth-in-relationship, posing a significant barrier to intimate connections throughout life (p. 80).

Bergman (1995) points to several key issues that can impair aspects of a child's development as he is initiated into the male sphere, bringing awareness to issues that could significantly interfere with emotional and relational well-being. Although there is value in his appraisal, Bergman's position overlooks several key issues, revealing several oversights and problems in his reasoning.

First, Bergman (1995) does not account for the significant emotional and social challenges faced by men raised without a father present. Corneau (1991) described the experience of sons throughout life when their fathers are absent during their formative years. Most prevalently, this includes limitations in managing affective states (particularly anger and depression), issues with sexual and emotional intimacy and, of particular pertinence to my study, a prolonged sense of not having achieved manhood, despite apparent life experience that might suggest otherwise. Another noteworthy factor is the rate of maladaptive social behaviour that is associated with boys raised without fathers. Kamarck and Galston (1990) suggest that this situation in relation to higher rates of violent crime is "so strong that controlling for family configuration erases the relationship between race and crime, and between low-income and crime. This conclusion shows up time and again in the literature: poverty is far from the sole determinant of crime" (p. 14-15). As Corneau notes, masculine identity can be a precarious and

fragile aspect of personhood. Bergman suggests that these issues occur because of the presence of the father, whereas Corneau argues that they occur as a result of his absence. It could be argued that the influence in both instances is active or passive by negation, and each pointing to issues derived from paternal relationships.

Unfortunately, both writers tended to focus on issues associated with the *shadow side* of male parenting and its influence on male identity development. Based on these accounts, it would seem that regardless of his father's presence or absence, a boy's formative male identity is imperilled. Some of the research literature on men's psychological and social issues that will be reviewed later in this chapter reveals findings supportive of Bergman's (1995) claims. I do not agree, however, with the proposition that fathers and, by extension, the masculine sphere in society, necessarily turns developing boys away from their mother's relational way of being and the sphere of femininity.

While the problematic issues Bergman (1995) associated with masculinity are prevalent and highly troubling, this narrow perspective overlooks the potential of a father's positive influence on his son's identity development. Critical of "mother-blaming" psychodynamic theories (p. 74), Bergman instead ironically shifts blame onto fathers as the source of maladaptive development of their male children and various emotional and relational difficulties they may encounter in life. As such, what he offers is tantamount to a comprehensive indictment of men and masculinity.

In a more favourable scenario that honours the influence of both parents, a child would develop and maintain a solid self-in-relation orientation with experiences supportive of autonomy and individuation, nurtured by strong bonds with his loving mother and father. Revelling in strong relationships and secure in attachment, the child is able to *turn toward* both

parents, integrating expressions the feminine and the masculine - *communion* and *agency* – into a balanced process of male identity formation. Healthy expressions of both realms would be integrated into the boy's forming sense of himself as a male child, fostering favourable development through adolescence, and into his adulthood and manhood. Several studies have indicated that a relative balance in masculinity and femininity attribute measures are associated with favourable development and mental health (Bem, 1979: Smiler, 2004).

Diamond (2006) presents a perspective that is reflective of this healthful balance. Agreeing with Bergman (1995) that the process of becoming masculine begins in infancy and further develops throughout the lifespan, Diamond places emphasis on early relationships with both parents. The infant proceeds through a gradual process of *disidentification* from his mother and, by extension, the realm of the feminine, while shifting toward *identification* with a nurturing, reliable father-figure, which initiates of the boy into the world of masculinity. Departing from Bergman, Diamond clarified that his use of the term *disidentify* does not mean that that the child no longer identifies with his mother, as his relationship with both parents remains deeply significant in his psychic structure. "In healthier, more normative forms of early gender identity development, progressive differentiation, rather than opposition, predominates, enabling masculinity to be founded on a reciprocal identification with an available father (or surrogate), a mother who is able to recognize and affirm her son's maleness, and a parental couple who together are able to acknowledge and love their son" (p. 1116).

Bergman's (1995) perspective offers valuable insights into some of the ways male children may be influenced by their parents, highlighting the often undervalued need for fostering a secure sense of self in boys for the development of strong relational and emotional bonds. His critical appraisal lends insight into facets of masculine identity formation and some

problematic features associated with the process. Relational role modeling in a boy's familial environment is instrumental in shaping of the quality of his subsequent intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, with particular reference to empathy and emotional competency. Bergman presents the issue, however, as a binary choice between either the realm of the warm, nurturing mother or the isolating masculine realm of the father. This position suggests a false dichotomy, suggestive of a divisive, *either-or* situation in which the exclusive choice between disconnection and other problematic features (a product of the masculine influence), or relationality and connectedness (a product of the feminine influence), and does seem not consider the possibility a healthy masculinity or pathological femininity, as previously discussed. Nor can his theory account for the issues that befall boys raised in fatherless homes. In response to this oversight, Hoff Sommers (2001) points out that:

> Fathers appear to be central in helping sons develop a conscience and a sense of responsible manhood. Fathers teach boys that being manly need not be predatory or aggressive. By contrast, when the father is absent, male children tend to get their ideas of what it means to be a man from their peers. Fathers play an indispensible role in the social ecosystem; therefore fewer fathers, more male violence (p. 130).

In this, Hoff Sommers effectively counters the regrettable conflation of masculinity with largely malevolent and deleterious attributes, which clouds and inveigles understanding of the dynamic spectrum of influences that contribute to male identity formation within the family.

In the Social Context. In addition to influences within the immediate family, social influences are also a significant factor in the internalization of gender norms and expectations in the development of masculine identity. According to Steinberg (1993), in the process of socialization and adhering to the demands their cultural and social context, human beings

develop an identity appropriate for their respective situation, appearing and acting in accordance with expected and sanctioned roles. The adoption of, and adherence to g*ender roles* are integral aspects of the formation of this identity, derivative of a socially constructed set of social and psychological norms for men and boys, and for women and girls. These influences ultimately become individual personality characteristics, "developed in accordance with the psychological need to be a man or a woman and with the expectations of the particular society and culture in which a man or woman was socialized" (Steinberg, p. 2). In addition to the masculine example of the father, peers and other male role models also heavily influence the development of boys' masculine identities. Moreover, professional athletes, superheroes and characters in movies and television programs can also figure significantly in shaping a boy's sense of manhood in addition to other *real life influences* (Krugman, 1995). Identity development, in this sense, can be described as a series of reciprocal imitations and adaptations in the individual, which shapes how he relates to himself and how he represents himself in his environment.

The achievement of core masculine identity establishes a basic orientation and sense of self that includes his biological sex, includes identification by others as a male child and early gender-related experiences, along with subsequent internalization of various gender influences and inputs, all of which contribute to the formation of an *ideal self* (Krugman, 1995). The internalization of this idealized masculine identity guides the boy's understanding of how he is expected to think, feel and behave in any given circumstance. The way by which this aspect of identity is formed remains vulnerable through life, as it requires ongoing social validation and reaffirmation (Vandello & Bosson, 2012).

Corneau (1991) suggests that the process of identifying with a father figure and other masculine exemplars, entering the male world and transitioning into manhood is a complex,

delicate and hazardous process (p. 14). Whereas some researchers have suggested that the transition from girlhood to womanhood can be viewed as a natural initiation, represented with the onset of puberty, menstruation and the capacity to bear children, manhood, does not have an analogous, natural, demarcation point (Corneau, 1991; Vandello & Bosson, 2012; Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, & Weaver, 2008). (See Chrisler (2012) for a criticism of the notion that womanhood is not subject to comparable requirements of social validation as manhood.) Historically, various cultures have ceremonially marked boys separation from their mother and acceptance into the adult community of men through rites of passage. As such, rituals are not as commonplace in the modern world as they once were. Aside from some relatively rare exceptions (e.g., Bar Mitzvah coming-of-age rituals for Jewish boys), contemporary culture offers scant guidance along these lines for boys as they mature into adulthood. If Corneau is correct in suggesting that "men are *made*," (p. 14) and the present cultural milieu offers no discernable means of helping this *making* come to pass, something of critical importance in the lives and development of men has been lost. As I will detail below, in the absence of culturally sanctioned rituals or other conventional points of demarcation, manhood is often attained and maintained through various expressions of social validation, many of which are quite costly in terms of psychological, physical and relational well-being.

Gender Identity and Development

The nature of my interviews will invite explicit responses referring to significant, influential life events that have shaped key aspects of each participant's sense of personal identity. In dialogue, we will explore each man's recognition of, and reflection on life experiences that represented a significant shift in his sense of personhood, demarcating boyhood from manhood (e.g., "For me, when *this* took place, I realized that I was no longer a boy and had

become a man. And I knew this because…"). Moreover, in addition to issues associated with identity, the notion of leaving boyhood and achieving manhood is reflective of a transition into a new phase of life, embedded within a wider array of ongoing continuum of progressive developmental processes.

In another example, Marcia (1980), Archer (1989) and Matteson (1993) examined processes of identity development along gender lines following Marcia's (1966, 1993, 2002) four-status model. Utilizing various measures, these studies focused on individual identity development of males and female, both within and between groups. One of the distinctions identified are the prominent concerns of adolescent girls with the establishment of interpersonal relationships (Marcia, 1980, p. 179). This is a departure from his general model of identity development, in which it was assumed that commitment to occupation and ideology were the primary central features of identity achievement. This variant is strikingly similar to the noted example of moral development, in which agency and communion is generally emphasized between the masculine and feminine genders, respectively.

Many of the above referenced studies derive from a specific period in masculinity-focused psychological research. As will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, around the time of these publications, there was a noteworthy conceptual shift occurring in the dominant trends in masculinity research, starting in the early 1990s. During this approximate timeframe, researchers departed from monolithic notions of masculinity, in favour of the concept of *multiple masculinities* (Smiler, 2004). The emergence of this approach was marked by a recognition that masculinity is not a singular, typified operational construct embedded within the male sex, but an idiosyncratic, nuanced, aspect of men's personal identity, largely influenced and shaped by social conventions. Masculinity and men's perceptions of manhood were increasingly

seen as much more variable than appreciated in previous decades.

Assuming Wilber (2000b) is correct in his assessment that gender identity development flows from biological roots to the adoption of conventional ideology and roles, it would explain why there appears to be an absence of tenable developmental models that can specifically account for gender identity development, male or female. It is estimated that the vast majority of the world's population (70% or more) are largely grouped around conventional stages of development (Wilber, 2001a). Therefore, most people, to some degree, will be profoundly influenced by social constructions of gender specific to their social environment, which is logically consistent with the view of multiple expressions of masculinity. As already indicated, there tends to be variability among notions of masculinity, both between and within cultures. (Note: The above-referenced term *conventional stages of development*, described by Wilber (2001a; 2006) is drawn from Kohlberg's (1981) model of moral development. In infancy and early childhood, children have yet to learn and assimilate the basics of their culture's normative rules. This stage is referred to as *preconventional.* With processes of social learning and maturity, children begin to adopt views and behaviours in accord with the conventions of their social and cultural context, which is referred to as the *conventional stage.* According to Wilber, the majority of people remain situated in this stage for life. A third *post-conventional* stage of development is achieved when an individual's worldview and view of self transcends (and includes) the previous stages, with an expanded perspective that surpasses the parameters of the conventions social and cultural situation. There are complex processes at play within each of these stages, which a simple three-tier model cannot effectively capture. Research findings, however, support the basic claims of this developmental track.)

Psychological measures of masculinity have changed rather dramatically over the course

of the last century (Smiler, 2004). Gender development cannot be effectively mapped in terms consistent, discrete stage sequences in the same way that cognition (Piaget, 1952) or values (Beck & Cowan, 1996) have been demonstrated to follow a general trajectory, across cultures. (There is no established universal gender developmental model, notwithstanding the generally accepted temporal sequence of manhood following boyhood, and womanhood following girlhood.) As described above, however, there are various theoretical positions that serve to highlight some of the influences that shape and influence masculine identity in early childhood.

Psychological Development in Context

Although a developmental perspective is necessary for understanding notions of self in the context of identity across the lifespan, there are other ways of looking at masculinity and the attainment of manhood that interact with development, but also stand apart from how one might think of typical stage-sequenced development (e.g., Piaget's (1952) four stage model). Due to the nature of social constructions of masculinity, along with malleability and subjective, personal appraisal of the way in which a given individual may define manhood and recognize himself as having met the implicit or explicit criteria as he perceives it, becoming a man is much more than achieving a discrete developmental stage. Another fundamental aspect of manhood relates to a socially validated status - difficult to achieve and is largely maintained through publicly verifiable actions (Levant & Kopecky, 1996; Vandello & Bosson, 2012).

Part IV - The Socio-cultural Realm

In addition to somatic and psychological dimensions, conceptualizations of manhood are also derivative of particular sociocultural contexts. The sociocultural realm involves patterns in consciousness that are shared by those who are "in" a particular culture or subculture, sharing similarity in areas such as worldview, approaches to language and communication, values,

cultural practices and ethics (Wilber, 2001a, 2006). Perspectives associated with this domain hold particular import for understanding notions of masculinity and what it means to be a man for an individual in a sociocultural context (e.g., prescriptions for how a man should behave; acceptable, culturally sanctioned ways of expressing emotion; and implicit rules of interacting). This perspective represents implicit and explicit assumptions about gender, shaping how we view, understand and relate to one another and ourselves. It also includes social structures and organizations, including modes of production (agricultural, industrial, and informational), legal systems and governance, and organizational structures that administer public and private transactions (e.g., types of roles men hold in society; standards for sentencing in criminal justice systems relative to women) (Wilber, 2001a, 2006). These factors have been integral to the shaping of gender roles, and how manhood is appraised and regarded at different points in history.

The Common Struggle

There are countless cultures throughout the world, each with unique qualities and characteristics. My study, including the literature reviewed in this chapter, is generally focused on North American cultural sources and assumptions – a natural consequence of my personal geographical and cultural location. Different cultures hold specific views of gender and subsequent expectations for men and women in terms of normative expectations for behaviour. While cross-cultural variations in gender roles are noteworthy, the prevalence of similarities is equally significant. Gilmore (1990) conducted groundbreaking, cross-cultural anthropological research into conceptions of manhood. In this first-of-its-kind study, Gilmore noted:

> The one regularity that concerns me here is the often-dramatic ways in which cultures construct an appropriate manhood – the presentation or "imaging" of the masculine role.

> In particular, there is a constantly recurring notion that real manhood is different from simple anatomical maleness that it is not a natural condition that comes about spontaneously through biological maturation but rather is a precarious or artificial state that boys must win against powerful odds. The recurrent notion that manhood is problematic, a critical threshold that boys must pass through testing is found at all levels of sociocultural development regardless of what other alternative roles are recognized. It is found among the simplest hunters and fishermen, among peasants and sophisticated urban people; it is found in all continents and environments. It is found among warrior peoples and those who have never killed in anger (p. 11).

Furthermore, "characterizations of the culture-level differences should carry with them the qualification of important within-culture individual differences and between-culture overlap" (Buss, 2001, p. 971). There does not appear to be a universal conceptualization of what it means to be a man, but the struggle to become and remain a man would appear to be a ubiquitous one. One of the most prevalent shared commonalties that tends to transcend cultural boundaries is the relationship between manhood and specific social responsibilities.

Cultures within Cultures

In a given culture, there are various attributes shared by the population, along with specific characteristics shared by sub-groups within the culture. Ashfield (2011) described this in terms of subcultural connotations associated with manhood. Within the larger context, subcultures develop around various shared concerns and experiences. Values, styles of communication and interaction, and worldviews are further influenced by these subcultures. Examples of this include membership in political, religious and other ideological groups, types of career, lifestyle, and socioeconomic status. Ashfield notes the nuanced differences in notions

of masculinity between men engaged in manual labour work and those who employed in corporate or finance careers. In my own experience, there are clear differences in how I interact with my male friends who are practicing lawyers or serving in the military and law enforcement in comparison with some of those in my professional and academic life in the areas of counselling and social work. These respective career arenas and associated cultures are generally based on adversarial versus collaborative emphases, which influence the way in which masculinity is often expressed (Ashfield, 2011). Certainly, there is more in common with these groups of men than there are differences, but, at the same time, the variations are noteworthy.

Subcultures associated with sexual orientation and ethnicity hold significant implications for men's relationship with masculinity and the normative criteria for manhood. Research conducted by Sanchez, Greenberg, Liu and Vilain (2009) suggests that gay men experience particular challenges in relation to notions of a masculine ideal, in terms of self-image and pressures to appear more masculine to be accepted by mainstream society and mitigate risk of marginalization and mistreatment. Sandfort, Melendez and Diaz (2007) have found that Latino gay and bisexual men can experience difficulties within their ethnic culture, in which the masculine ideal is prominent. Men who identified as appearing less masculine reported having encountered more negative experiences and higher levels of mental distress than men who identified as being more masculine. These concerning issues associated with the experiences of men in a specific cultural context are reflective of the same challenges men generally face in achieving and maintain manhood, but perhaps to a heightened degree (Vandello & Bosson, 2012). In the face of discrimination and marginalization, and in conjunction with traditional masculine ideology presenting an ideal not consistent with being gay or bisexual, men of non-heterosexual orientations may face an array of additional struggles in their relationship with

masculine identity.

Notions of masculinity are integral to notions of self and identity formation, and highly important in social and interpersonal interactions, both in how men portray themselves and how they are regarded by those around them. As a key aspect of identity, it intersects with all other aspects of identity and roles assumed by individuals. Culturally and socially, gender is a prominent feature in how we fit into our context to varying degrees. As noted, some cultures and subcultures carry a significantly heavier slant toward traditional expression of masculinity within and across societies.

The reasons for these variations in emphasis are complex, but there appears to be a correlation with the life circumstances of those individuals comprising the group. In situations that present difficult life conditions, where competition is prevalent and various dangers and threats are present for populations to contend with, normative expressions of masculinity tend to lean toward qualities of toughness, aggression and stoicism (Ashfield, 2011, Gilmore, 1990). "Conversely, in circumstances that are comfortable, less competitive, and pose little threat to health or well being, the manhood culture is relaxed and much more liberal" (Ashfield, p. 31). Depending on the scarcity of resources and needs for protection, Gilmore suggested that, "when men are conditioned to fight, manhood is important; where men are conditioned to flight, the opposite is true" (p. 221). In this sense, manhood takes on a significant utilitarian function in the roles it plays in a given culture, adapting to the needs of the society.

Although extreme hypermasculinity is considered to be largely maladaptive in contemporary thinking, this has not always been the general assumption. Historical trends in masculinity research have been variable in this respect. In the first half of the 20th Century, for instance, early researchers associated *hypomasculinity* with poor mental health (Smiler, 2004).

While it may be tempting to attribute this to archaic notions of sex and gender that were prevalent prior to the 1960s, the relationship between prevailing expressions of masculinity tend to be associated with social conditions, access to resources, and relative security of life in a given situation. In the context of the hardships associated with two world wars and the Great Depression, men are generally required to adopt specific social roles, necessitating that they become more tough, stoical and aggressive to survive, provide for their families and cope with challenges of living (Ashfield, 2011). This phenomenon has also been noted for its prevalence among populations in economically disadvantaged and underemployed communities with higher rates of poverty and crime (Spenser et al, 2004). In situations such as this, hypermasculinity may be adaptive with respect to the prevalent social conditions. Notions of healthy and pathological masculinity are largely context-driven, which will inform the referent criteria that inform the ways individuals will regard themselves as having entered manhood. What it means to become a man for an individual will be largely determined by these factors, hinging on social validation and regard from those around him, along with his subjective appraisal of how he has met the standard for the male gender in his particular historical and social context.

Evidence of Change

Social acceptance of expressions of masculinity that allow men to remain consistent with their genuine experience, true to themselves and caring for others, however, are the necessary counterbalance to many of the concerns discussed in this chapter. There have been significant, positive changes in the dominant masculine ideology in recent decades, widening the parameters of acceptable male conduct. These changes have affected even the most conservative elements in North American culture. Ekman (2007) offered the example of Edmond Muskie, who was considered to be the front-runner in the Democratic primaries for the party's 1972 presidential

nomination, until he appeared to shed tears during a television interview, upset with the mistreatment of his wife in the news media. He fell from favour soon thereafter for appearing "emotional" and "weak," and was subsequently no longer seen as *presidential material*. Twenty-five years later in the 1996 presidential campaign, both candidates, Bill Clinton and Bob Dole, openly shed tears in front of the news media. Perceptions of neither man were reportedly adversely affected in this case.

In a contemporary example, in 2012, the typically stoic Barak Obama became openly emotional during a speech thanking his re-election team (Epstein, 2012)**,** and again while addressing the shooting incident at a Connecticut elementary school later that same year (Rucker & Wilson, 2012). Moved by deep gratitude in one instance, and horror and grief in the other, the President of the United States of America – an office that requires the utmost conservative and conventional approaches to conduct and expression of its holder – was able to be openly emotional and reportedly have the display generally well received as a sign of his humanity and compassion (Cirilli, 2012). There seems to be a noteworthy adjustment in the *display rules* for men in expressing emotion, at least under certain circumstances. While these examples represent relatively rare exceptions, they point to a significant degree of progress in the shifting of the acceptable masculine expression in the course of a few generations.

Evidence of changes and loosening of the norms for men in these respects is encouraging, but the intense struggles remain prevalent. At the heart of my study is a question concerned with what it means to be a man, a concept that has undergone significant transformations in the recent past. While there are many factors that have held constant over the generations, manhood has undergone major changes, following the social and cultural shifts in the last 50 years.

Shifting View of Masculinity

According to Levant (2011), in the decades since the 1960s, there has been a noteworthy surge of research in the areas of gender and psychology, producing new ways of understanding various issues, concepts, and relationships. A framework has been developed that marks a shift from the traditionally dominant academic view of masculinity as an inherent, essential, and universal expression of biological maleness, toward viewing masculinity as a socially constructed identity shaped by influences, stereotypes, and cultural norms that could be enacted by individuals with male or female bodies. This perspective provided the framework for a more multidimensional inquiry into "traditional norms of masculinity, such as the emphasis on dominance, aggression, extreme self-reliance, and restrictive emotionality, and to view certain problems historically prevalent among men (such as the devaluation of women, detachment from relationships, disdain of sexual minorities, neglect of health needs, and violence) as unfortunate but predictable results of male gender role socialization processes informed by traditional masculinity ideologies" (p. 766). This point of view provides a means of understanding these widely documented issues that were previously assumed to be inherent in the behaviour of men, offering a socially-mediated explanation instead.

The concept of *masculine ideology* (Thompson & Pleck, 1995) considers notions of masculinity to be a socially constructed set of gender norms for men. This is a significant departure from the older notion of *masculine gender role identity*, which presumed that masculinity is a manifestation of inherent, mutually exclusive differences between men and women (Levant, 2011; Thompson & Pleck, 1995). The notion of *gender role-based identity* dominated masculinity research for most of the early twentieth century, and assumes that human beings have an inherent psychological need to establish an identity as men or women (Levant,

2011; Pleck, 1981). According to Levant and Pollack (1995):

> "The extent to which this 'inherent' need is met is determined by how completely men and women embrace their traditional gender role. From such a perspective, the development of appropriate gender role identity is viewed as a failure-prone process; failure for men to achieve a masculine gender role identity is thought to result in homosexuality, negative attitudes toward women, or hypermasculinity. This paradigm springs from the same philosophical roots as the 'essentialist' or 'naivist' view of sex roles – the notion that, for men, there is a clear, historically invariant masculine 'essence'" (pp. 2-3).

Reflecting a prevalent contemporary perspective, Levant and Pollack (1995) argue that gender roles are not "biological or even social 'givens' but rather… psychologically and socially constructed entities that that bring certain advantages and disadvantages and, most importantly, can change" (p. 2). Advantages and disadvantages in this case may respectively refer to access to, or denial of, civic participation and social entitlements, benefits, and opportunities, as well as culturally sanctioned ways of being and implicit behavioural obligations for individuals, in the context of relationships and in society. Furthermore, abiding with established gender roles is limiting in many respects, but acquiescence will potentially prevent repercussions as a result of defying the conventional norms.

Social Change in the 1960s

In North America, various social factors led to the massive shifts in the culture in the 1960s. In the years following World War II, relative economic prosperity and security contributed to the onset of the civil rights movement, the rise of feminism and women's rights initiatives, early developments in the gay and lesbian activism, changes in sexual attitudes and behaviours, the introduction of the birth control pill, civil disobedience and Viet Nam War

protests on college campuses, and the infusion of the Hippy movement in popular culture contributed to various radical shifts in the zeitgeist (Allyn, 2001; Burns, 1990; Wouters, 1998). In was increasingly commonplace for men to grow long hair, wear colourful clothing, and to be emotionally expressive within this context. While traditional and less fluid expressions of masculinity remained firmly entrenched in the larger culture (and still does), these changes made room for new perspectives and critical levels of analysis, paving the way to raise questions about men and women, gender roles, and cultural practices that had been previously taken as axiomatic within society. Alternative points of view and ways of being became increasingly accessible, influencing subsequent generations of men and women. Issues that had otherwise been taboo or suppressed were brought out into the popular discourse.

Masculine Ideology

Despite the noteworthy diversity in expressions of masculinity in contemporary western society, Pleck (1995) suggested that "there is a *particular* constellation of standards and expectations that individually and jointly have various kinds of negative concomitants" for men (p. 20). Pleck was referring to a set of prescriptive assumptions he has referred to as the *traditional masculinity ideology,* as it represents the conventional notions of what it means to be a man. As mentioned, the ideology was challenged by an influx of new research and insights into gender identity and issues in the 1960s, and still remains heavily influential in contemporary cultural prescriptions of how men are to be (Levant, 2011).

In a conceptual overview of the notion of *masculine ideology*, Steinberg (1993) indentified various characteristics and roles traditionally associated with *being a man.* Fundamental masculine attributes are based foundationally in *instrumental* and *active* dimensions, whereas basic feminine characteristics are associated with *expressivity* and *passivity*.

This is a significant point of comparison as men may commonly first define themselves by negation, against a *non-masculine* point of reference. Some qualities specified as categorically non-masculine include being emotionally governed and expressive, submissive and non-assertive, frail and weak, passive toward power, and reluctant to act aggressively (Steinberg, p. 46). David and Brannon (1976) identified four key components of traditional masculinity: men should not be feminine, should strive to be respected for successful achievement, should never show weakness, and should seek adventure. Steinberg noted several additional attributes traditionally associated with masculinity, including active leadership, confidence, self-reliance, stoicism, being logical and rational, and competitive and successful. High achievement and ambition in work are considered to be "hallmarks of the masculine gender role" (p. 46). Related factors include toughness, fearlessness, strength, stamina, having the capacity to tolerate and endure mental and physical stress, and able to solve all problems. These characteristics, in turn, support a man's ability to present as perpetually competent, self-confident and self-reliant. Risk-taking and aggression (including the use of violence) also extend from these role features. "No matter what the stress, the man is expected to stand up to it and survive or go down fighting. Part of the image is inexpressiveness, a refusal to show evidence of fear or vulnerability" (Steinberg, 1993, p. 49).

Collectively, these attributes are aspects of the aforementioned *masculine ideology*, which represents a normative ideal to which many men strive. The consequences of this dominant masculine ideology have been quietly devastating for men as individuals and as a group, but also significantly so for women, children, families, and society in general. Indeed, this masculine ideal, which defines the social norms for the male gender role, causes a variety of problems and serious issues for men, including psychological and physical health, as well as

relational and familial difficulties, as discussed above. Furthermore, it has been argued that this phenomenon serves to maintain existing gender-based power structures that privilege some, with particular reference to upper-class, Caucasian, heterosexual, able-bodied men (Levant, 2011) and largely fuelling historical dominance and marginalization over women, men of color, working-class men, as well as gay and bisexual men (Connell & Messerschmitt, 2005). As I suggested previously, various expressions of masculinity can be adaptive or maladaptive, depending on circumstances and social conditions. The outcroppings of an unbalanced, unhealthy masculinity can contribute to significant suffering for all involved.

Legal Issues and Civic Participation

The notion of a masculine ideology, a reflection of attitudes and assumptions about men in a given social and cultural context, will be reflected in and reinforced by legal systems that govern society. Laws and administrative policies effectively serve to define and determine what is tacitly and expressly permitted and prohibited for men, and contribute to how men are treated in various circumstances.

Substantive and procedural laws can have a direct bearing on how manhood is defined, who qualifies as a man, and the degree to which civic participation is permitted for individuals and groups in a given society. As such, legal principles may hold influence over how some individuals may identify as having become men.

Although there is no discernable legal definition of *man*, but it is a term applied to male adults who has reached the established age of majority, and thereby granted access to otherwise restricted rights and responsibilities, such as full consent to engage in various civic activities such as marriage, voting, purchasing alcohol and other controlled goods, or joining the military. Rights, freedoms, civic participation and equal access to services are key issues in areas such as

same-sex marriage rights and full spousal entitlements (Elliot & Bonauto, 2005; Hurly, 2010), and access to maternity and paternity benefits for new parents (Marshall, 2003, 2008). These are examples of substantive laws, which outline specific rights, duties and obligations, while procedural law, on the other hand, determines how substantive principles are administered (Truscott & Crook, 2010). This applies specifically to men in various ways, such as law enforcement policy and legal proceedings in criminal and family court, associated with significant differences along gender lines with respect to rates of incarceration, biased assumptions concerning accusations of harassment and sexual assault, as well as access to children, custody and maintenance payments (Farrell, 1993; Warshak, 1996). This also includes specific issues associated with work, including labour laws and measures to protect workers from harm (Farrell, 1993). Laws play a critical role in determining who is considered a man within social and governmental institutions, and largely determining what men are permitted to do or prohibited from doing. As noted, recent changes have opened the parameters that now sanction men as primary caregivers for children and the rights for gay couples to marry. Legislation that supports these changes reflects changes in attitudes in political and social culture with respect to how manhood is perceived in a given context.

In recent decades, significant changes have occurred in this respect, with many roles that were once the exclusive domain of men and women having been opened to include both sexes. Primary among these are professions that emphasize physicality and risk, including policing, firefighting, and military. Correspondingly, men are increasingly taking on roles in traditionally female professions, such as nursing and social work (Williams, 1992). Furthermore, familial systems have adjusted to these changes, with fathers commonly holding a primary caregiver role and mothers working out side of the home (Marshall, 2008). Men's social roles, often

considered synonymous with manhood, have been undergoing significant changes in the last several decades. Yet, massive social and legal changes not withstanding, there remain several fundamental roles and functions that remain deeply entrenched in masculine identity.

Roles and Responsibilities

Although the assumption of static role-based gender identities are all but passé in academic research on masculinity and gender identity issues (Smiler, 2004), these assumptions remain ingrained in popular cultural views of men and their normative positions in society (Levant, 2011). There are numerous ways these assumptions impact the lives of men and boys, expressed in the expectations put upon them both from within (by virtue of the internalization process of masculine identity development) and from without (through implicit and explicit social and cultural expectations).

Mattis and Hammond (2005) asked a sample of male participants what it means for them to be a man. The vast majority of participants identified issues thematically associated with *responsibility* and *accountability*. Several writers have noted common thematic responsibilities considered synonymous with manhood. Drawing from a significant body of cross-cultural research, Gilmore (1990) identified these as the progenitor, protector, and provider. In a stylized rendering, Hollis (1994) referred to the *Three Ws* of manhood*:* work, war and worry (p. 14). Farrell (1994) positioned this triad as the three *male-only* drafts: a draft into *wars* as soldiers, a draft into the position of *bodyguard* (or family protector)*,* and a draft into *hazardous jobs.* He further suggested that, "When men are not legally drafted, they feel psychologically drafted" (p. 105). Levant (2011) also concurred, noting that a relatively consistent set of standards and expectations exists for men throughout the world. As such, "virtually all societies must socialize boys to develop the set of characteristics that are necessary to perform the behaviours embedded

in those roles" (Levant, p. 768).

Assumption of Risk

As mentioned above, work is commonly viewed as a fundamental responsibility in the lives of men, and fulfilling their responsibilities can come at a significant price (Farrell, 1994; Hollis, 1994; Levant, 2011). Traditionally, men were responsible for earning a living to provide for their families, fulfilling the role of primary breadwinner. Although there have been sweeping changes over the last several decades, with the role of women becoming increasingly prominent in terms of family earnings and career (Kelan, 2008), working and earning remain of paramount importance in the masculine ideology. There are significant sacrifices that men make in the work they do and multiple risks associate with their duties. Moreover, Steinberg (1993) suggests that *being a man* means that the stresses and strains be endured stoically, even at great cost to personal health and well-being.

According to Farrell (1993), the average number of men killed on the job every day in the United States is comparable with daily average of American soldier fatalities during the Viet Nam war. This point illustrates the fact that men occupy at least 95% of the jobs deemed most hazardous (such as firefighting, logging, mining and handling wastes and toxic material), and 94% of all occupational deaths occur to men (Farrell, 1993, p. 105-106). Highlighting the significant dangers associated with work and with particular reference to military service, Farrell questioned the societal acceptance of the frequency with which young men are killed in the course of duty. There are changes taking place with respect to those who provide emergency and security-based services in society. It is increasingly common for women to assume responsibilities as firefighters and police officers, and although historically excluded from military service aside from supportive duties, women began to access limited combat operation

roles in Canada as of 1989, and the United States in 2013 (CBC, 2013).

Acknowledging the discrepancy in average rate of pay between the sexes, Farrell cross-referenced income with the comparative degree of dangerousness associated with the types of work commonly occupied by men and women, respectively. Further to this, he argued that the over-protection and under-pay of women, along with the under-protection of men is inequitable to both. Moreover, the fact that men hold a significant proportion of jobs that require them to routinely risk health, injury and death only serves to reinforce the traditional male gender role. It is expected of them and they expect it of themselves. As Hollis (1994) stated:

> "Our society has long treated men as machines, as bodies expendable in the name of progress or profit. Such an estrangement wounds very deeply; it has gone on so long and is so taken for granted that healing individuals, let alone a whole gender is a dubious undertaking. But the beat goes on, the Saturnian shadow lives, the only game in town, and shame on the defector. The wounding is institutionalized and sanctified, and men unwittingly collude in their own crucifixion" (Hollis, p. 113).

Furthermore, Ashfield (2011) noted, manhood serves an instrumental utility function in society, which often involves significant sacrifice.

As cultural assumptions and worldviews have changed concerning manhood and masculinity, significant social developments have unfolded. A prime example is the shifting roles in parenting and *breadwinning* that have taken place in recent decades. It is now increasingly common for women to be the primary income earner, with men staying home with their children. This is reflected in the inclusion of equal *paternity leave* benefits in 2000 for new Canadian fathers, whereas maternity leave benefits were first introduced in 1971 exclusively for new mothers (Marshall, 2003, 2008). This development reflects a significant alteration in

culturally and socially sanctioned familial structure and gender roles.

Becoming a man and maintaining manhood can be hazardous as much to individual men as it is to their families, and to whole societies. The trends suggest that there is an increasing balance with men and women sharing the dangerous roles in society, but the majority of this type of work remains with men. As noted by Gilmore (1990) there is a fundamental association between manhood and being a *provider* and *protector* across cultures, and as much as these responsibilities may be a liability, they are also deeply meaningful and important. These roles, in their many expressions, seem to be deeply entrenched in the assumed roles of men in society, and, may have implications for how manhood is achieved.

Male Gender Role Strain

In the decades leading up to the 1960s, the predominant model guiding masculinity research assumed specific inherent sex roles (Pleck, 1981). This model held that there were inherent, essential differences between men and women that manifested in specific traits and attributes consistent with masculine and feminine gender roles. Levant and Pollack (1995) maintain that this gender model contained a set of faulty assumptions that caused researchers to erroneously interpret data, and also served to further promote the patriarchal bifurcation of society on the basis of essentialist stereotypes (Levant & Pollack, 1995, p. 2).

Based on extensive research, Pleck (1981, 1995) offered an alternative view with the introduction of the *gender role strain paradigm.* This model is based on a series of key assumptions, including; a) the notion that contemporary gender roles are contradictory and inconsistent and a large proportion of the population violates their respective gender roles; b) actual or imagined violations lead to condemnation and negative psychological consequences, which lead people to over-conform to their prescribed roles; c) contravening these norms has

more severe consequences for males than for females; and d) certain gender traits are often dysfunctional (e.g., the statistical prevalence of violence and alcohol abuse among men). The gender role strain paradigm is based on the position that conceptions of masculinity and femininity are socially constructed and relationally based and, therefore, mouldable. As contemporarily conceptualized, gender roles are subject to change, as they are informed by gender stereotypes and norms imposed throughout development by various *cultural transmitters* (such as parents, teachers, peers and others) who subscribe to traditional masculine ideology. As previously indicated, this socialization can unduly reinforce attributes such as toughness, stoicism, autonomy and rationality while devaluing or prohibiting vulnerability, emotional expression, deep relational connection and intuition. A classic example is the instructive utterance, "Big boys don't cry." Hearing this, a child will learn that there are rules associated with being a *big boy*, and develop the necessary capacities to contain emotional expression.

This gender role strain model offers an alternative level of analysis and means of understanding the significant problems that affect the lives and relationships of men and boys, which are now seen as natural consequences of the male role socialization process, not an outcropping of inherent traits (Pleck, 1981, 1995), or as fundamental deficiencies of capacity and character (Ashfield, 2011). Furthermore, there is recognition that masculinity and manhood are far more flexible and variable than once anticipated, as rigid notions of inherent traits have been dispelled and replaced with a more dynamic and multidimensional appraisal of gender roles.

Pleck (1995) later updated his original, single dimension gender role strain model to include three specific types of strain. *Discrepancy strain* is a consequence of a man not living up to his internalized masculine ideal, which is often an approximation of the *traditional male code*. *Dysfunction strain* results from the fulfillment of the traditional male code, which can be

concomitant of multiple problematic and damaging side effects on the men as individuals and those in relationship with them, such as violence, sexual excess, and socially irresponsible behaviours. This is associated with the development of a hypermasculine persona and behavioural tendencies. *Trauma strain* stems from the stance that aspects of the male role socialization process are fundamentally traumatizing. Initially associated with groups of men such as professional athletes, veterans and survivors of childhood abuse whose socialization process took place under severe conditions, "a perspective has emerged that views the male socialization process under traditional masculinity ideology as inherently traumatic" (Levant, 1996, p. 262).

The notion of identity strain is certainly not the exclusive domain of men. There are many commonalities shared by men and women with respect to the immense pressures and stresses associated with modern life. Navigating and managing the competing demands of various roles and responsibilities is often a Herculean endeavour for individuals to surmount. The mental demands of modern life suggest that, "our current cultural design requires of adults a qualitative transformation of mind every bit as fundamental as the transformation from magical thinking to concrete thinking required of school-age children or the transformation from concrete thinking required of the adolescent" (Keegan, 1994, p. 11). Living up to social and personal expectations is a critical aspect of identity, and while largely similar in many respects, these seem to manifest with nuanced variances for men and women, as individuals and as groups. Accordingly, many cultural requirements for achieving manhood are subject to social validation. Unlike an identity status like adulthood, however, manhood is potentially subject to revocation.

Being a Man

The *problem of the exemplar*, described at the outset of this chapter, is often a central

issue in how manhood is often stereotypically appraised in contemporary society:

> When considering what it means to "be a man" in contemporary America, one easily slips into caricature. TV shows and commercials often lampoon men with hypermasculine stereotypes, depicting them as coarse, rugged, unemotional, and afraid of nothing (except acting "girly"). But what does it really mean to be a man? The language people use to talk about men often reflects anxiety, as if manhood itself is in jeopardy: We ask whether men have become "too soft," we implore them to "man up" in the face of difficulties, and we question whether someone is "man enough" for the job (Vandello & Bosson, 2012, p. 1).

Discussing the findings of his cross-cultural anthropological study of manhood, Gilmore (1990) identified several variations what it means to be a man, but noted that all cultures uphold differentiated standards for how men and women are assessed against notions of masculinity and femininity, respectively. Generally, manhood is not considered to be a given by virtue of anatomical maleness nor a natural condition associated with physical development. Becoming a man is an insecure state that a boy earns after passing through a critical threshold through testing. Manhood is a "restricted status," and "it's vindication is doubtful, resting on rigid codes of decisive action in many spheres of life: as husband, father, lover, provider, warrior" (p. 17). Hammond and Mattis (2005) add that the primary features required to be a man include notions of assuming responsibility, accountability and providing. Manhood, in this respect, is bestowed as a conditional status of being, but achieved through doing – earned through successfully assuming certain social roles and responsibilities.

As I previously indicated, the parameters of masculinity in a given situation are typically related to the quality of existing social conditions. Traditional masculine ideals developed under

harsh conditions with meager resources and looming threats to survival. The more difficult the conditions, the more highly glorified and strictly enforced the manhood code will tend to be in context (Gilmore, 1990; Levant & Kopecky, 1996). More contemporarily, with conditions in being largely secure with resources in relative abundance in North America, traditional masculinity is no longer lionized as it once was, and the manhood code has increasingly become an *open source* phenomenon. As such, what is required to become a man is no longer a strict interpretation of clearly articulated cultural specifications. While this is a significantly positive development, it poses a set of rather serious problems as well.

Smiler (2004) reviewed the trends in psychological masculinity research from the early 20th Century to the early 2000s. Largely, the variations over the decades were reflective of the primacy of the traditional masculinity and gender roles of the depression era through the post-modern deconstruction movement throughout the 1990s and the notion of *multiple masculinities*. Contemporarily, there is increasing awareness, recognition, and acceptance of a significant variability in the way individuals and groups appraise manhood. Although conventional expressions of masculinity remain prevalent, the parameters of what contributes to becoming and being a man in terms of subjective identity and social roles have become more inclusive and flexible. This represents a freedom for individuals to be men without having as much pressure to conform to a prescribed mould and with less restraint in authentic expression of self. It is not that the constraints have been fully removed, but it seems to be the general case that the traditionally restricted status of manhood is less narrow and confined.

The challenges associated with this contemporary situation are derived from the same shifting trends that have been responsible for bringing about the positive developments. Research has drawn attention to an assortment of problematic features occurring in the

experiences of men following the upheaval of traditional views of gender, and loss of traditional masculine standards and roles. This includes difficulties associated with various life domains (many of which have been identified in other sections in this chapter), such as physical and mental health (Ashfield, 2011; Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Tudiver & Talbot, 1999); development through boyhood (Corneau, 1991; Hoff Summers, 2000; Kindlon & Thompson, 2000; Pollack, 1999); work, employment and providing (Farrell, 1993; Levant & Kopecky, 1996); fatherhood (Bly, 1990; Corneau, 1991; Pittman, 1993); relationships with women (Levant et al, 2003); and relationships with other men (Ashton & Fueher, 1993; Brooks, 2010). As a consequence of these issues, masculinity has been unduly shaped as a liability in many respects. In light of this situation, Betcher and Pollack (1993) suggest that,

> We live in a time of fallen heroes. The monuments built of men, by men, for men have tumbled. Men have not just been brought down to earth, their strengths put into perspective with their flaws. Even their virtues are suspect vices… The empire seems to be crumbling (p.1).

The utilitarian function of masculinity in culture and society, as described above, is as necessary now as ever, but the foundations upon which the identities and roles men assumed are no longer as applicable. These conditions necessitate the negotiation of a process of fostering the healthy and life-giving expressions of masculinity while remediating the deleterious and damaging pathological outcroppings of outdated aspects of the masculine mode.

The evidence does not suggest that the collapse of traditional masculinity criteria has necessarily caused these issues, but there appears to be a correlation. With the rise of new perspectives and levels of analysis, perhaps these issues have been a prevalent feature in the lives of men historically, but more effectively identified and examined in recent decades. Issues that

may have been ignored are becoming increasingly understood. The previous psychological and social structures that served to contain these problems can no longer be relied upon, and nor should they. Yet, without any reliable replacement for the traditional *manhood code* and guidelines for what it means to become a man, a key element of identity formation for men may be absent. It is a nebulous construct that is difficult to understand, but the implications for men's relationship with masculinity are deeply interwoven into intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. A pervasive lack of understanding with respect to what manhood entails is a point of significant disjuncture, not only for men as individuals, but also for their capacity to be a healthy masculine presence for those around them in family, the community and society at large. This also delimits their ability to teach and role model this quality to subsequent generations of boys, which further perpetuates the situation. The impacts are significant and far-reaching. These factors have converged to contribute to a quiet yet pervasive crisis in masculinity and manhood (Brooks, 2010).

Curiously, I was able to locate only one example of current research that inquired into experiences of achieving manhood, which was limited to a specific group of men and situated within a particular geographical location in Australia. (This research article is reviewed later in this chapter.) The popular, conceptual and research literature abounds with examples examining various aspects and issues of men's experiences, what it means to be a man, and the nature of manhood. There is, however, very limited discussion of the experience of becoming men, which represents a significant gap in the research. This leaves us with minimal empirical evidence to elucidate what attaining manhood actually means to individuals in the contemporary situation. My study is designed to pose this question directly to men, marking my attempt to begin to remediate this deficiency and open the dialog. As I detail in the following section, the lack of

coverage of this topic may relate, however, not as much to a lack of criteria for achieving manhood as much as for the problematic requirement of maintaining the status once it is achieved.

Maintaining Manhood

Levant and Kopecky (1996) refer to the achievement of manhood as *the big impossible* (p. 135). Juxtaposed with womanhood, manhood is a status that is both difficult to achieve and maintain. Researchers have suggested that men and women are judged against prevailing cultural norms for masculinity and femininity. Generally womanhood, which is viewed as resulting from biological development, which is permanent in nature and typically associated with onset of the capacity to bear children (Gilmore, 1990; Levant & Kopecky, 1996; Vandello & Bosson, 2012). (See Chrisler, 2012, for the counter-position that womanhood is an equally a precarious identity status.) Manhood, however, does not have any comparable, naturally occurring point of arrival. Given that manhood is associated with various social roles, earning and maintaining it requires continual proving and social validation through publicly verifiable actions (Vandello & Bosson, 2012; Vandello et al., 2008). Manhood, both as a social status and aspect of personal identity, is precarious in nature. As Ashfield (2011) points out, it serves society's purposes to prevent manhood from being fully attainable because it is a necessary device of social utility, and in order to preserve and ensure that role requirements are fulfilled, "there is always the hovering threat of it being taken away" (p. 42).

Drawing from various studies, Ashfield (2011) identified several ways in which the threat of manhood materializes and benefits society in various situations: a) most cultures have terms used to challenge and undermine a man's sense of masculinity, with women often playing a prominent role in using language impugning manliness; b) to ensure that necessary roles are

filled and responsibilities completed, manhood has historically been associated with dangerous and health diminishing occupations; c) the maintenance of manhood through the fulfillment of such tasks and responsibilities in service to society was required for social inclusion, with loss of manhood less desirable than death; d) emotional detachment, stoicism and toughness helped to ensure survival, provision of resources and security – aiding men to ignore harmful, potentially life threatening consequences associated with their efforts; and e) the maintenance of status within society is essential for attracting a mate and providing for a family. In this sense, a man's life depends on his striving to maintain his manhood. Vandello et al (2008) have found that this perpetual precariousness is associated with feelings of insecurity and vulnerability, which underpins a variety of maladaptive behaviours, including overwork leading to neglect of physical and mental health and family needs, overwhelming stress, obsession with material success, excessive competitiveness, physical violence, substance abuse, sexual exploitation and other dangerous activities (such as reckless driving and criminal involvement). The research that has examined the tenuousness of manhood has brought to light "the contrast between iconic images of what constitutes a real man and the actual experiences of real men [who] experience their gender as a tenuous status that they may at any time lose and about which they readily experience anxiety and threat" (Vandello et al, 2008, p. 1337). These research findings highlight the often-invisible pressures embedded not only in attaining manhood, but also in securing the status throughout life. The potential implications of these factors for my study into the experience of becoming men are of critical importance. (A key set of studies supportive of this hypothesis will be described in the final section of this chapter.)

For many men, factors that threaten or potentiate a sense of loss of their masculine status hold a significant and powerful presence throughout their lives. With respect to the perceived

potential for role failure, Hollis (1994) noted that men's lives are essentially governed by fear. Real (1999) described pervasive, yet largely unacknowledged issues associated with depression that affect countless men, and Lister (1991) described the complicated and often misunderstood relationship many men have with grief and loss. The inability or loss of ability to fulfill their responsibilities to validate themselves as men is a point of significant and perpetual concern. Exacerbating these issues further is the tacit prohibition on the acknowledgement or expression of these emotions as *un-masculine*, and represents the potential for the development of feelings of shame.

The Role of Shame

Shame plays a central role in the psychological lives of human beings (Lewis, 1995), and can take on a particular prominence in the lives of men (Krugman, 1995; Hollis; 1993). Krugman suggested that feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, insecurity and emotional neediness are a part of every man's experience. This is a consequence of an aversive reaction to rigid, narrow gender norms, which reflect a traditional, idealized notion of masculinity (p. 93). Many boys and men are left feeling as though they cannot meet the manhood standards, are unable to *measure up* and are unfit for the male world. Shame signals threat of vulnerability, loss of control, exposure, and, subsequently, rejection and alienation.

Shame has been at the core of socializing children for the last five centuries, holding a central feature in Western Civilization (Sheff, 2006). Krugman (1995) notes the socially adaptive functions of teaching children to learn to self-manage in relation to authority, peers and intimate others. In the context development, shame is an innate response tendency toward regulating behaviour in line with social conventions and cultural expectations for appropriate conduct. Krugman also notes that when accompanied by developmental or social pressures, or

psychological trauma, males can internalize the shame response, leading to difficulty integrating experiences and social alienation.

Take, for example, a highly talented fourteen-year-old boy, whose developing identity is greatly invested in being an excellent hockey player. Raised in a large *hockey family* with many life long players, he was raised with the belief that the measure of a man is in his success in the sport. In fact, the only time his father expresses pride in him is when he performs well in competition. In a pivotal moment, this boy misses an easy open-net goal in the final seconds of a championship game of a major tournament, missing the chance to tie the score. Initially, he may feel guilty, believing he has let his team, coach and father down. From his point of view, he has lost them the gold medal. His guilt may mutate into shame when his coach and teammates reinforce this belief, publicly and private berating and ostracizing him for being *a loser* who has no place on the team. His father will not even look him in the eye or speak to him for days afterward. In his estimation, not only did he fail to live up to the image of his sports hero, Paul Henderson, he has failed himself and the most important people in his life. Perhaps his girlfriend breaks up with him shortly thereafter, citing her need to be with *a man who rises to the occasion* as her reason. As a consequence, he has been relegated to an inferior status among his peers and in his family, deeply affecting his self-confidence and self-efficacy, both in the context of hockey, and perhaps more globally as he moves into adulthood and manhood.

This shaming experience may irreparably alter the course of his life, causing him to perpetually second-guess himself, and unduly limit critical areas such as relationships and career choices. Never wanting to experience shame of that magnitude again, he effectively limits himself and quality of his life as a safeguard. Alternatively, this sense of being *exposed* (Lewis, 1995) may result in a further entrenchment in the development of a compensatory

hypermasculine persona as a coping strategy (Spencer, Fegley, Harpalani, & Seaton, 2004). Having vicariously experience the boy's shame, some of his peers may also adopt a similar array of protective behaviours, so as to offset the risk of something similar befalling them.

Shame is a formidable and problematic feature in normative male development, shaping acceptable masculine behaviour and attitudes, while at the same time, leaving many boys and men "extremely shame-sensitive" (Krugman, 1995, p. 93). Although there are many ways individuals effectively adapt to cultural norms to avoid negative experiences, shame is often rooted in prevalent issues that affect men as a group. Krugman notes that when the functionality of shame is inhibited or exaggerated, men and boys compensate by creating the appearance of control, masking their insecurities and developing substitute behaviours to externalize their concerns, which may contribute to a variety of social and emotional difficulties, such as tendencies toward social and emotional isolation, excessive focus on work, substance abuse and violent aggression in response to conflict. The pressures to live up to a set of masculine ideals can leave men with deep feelings of inadequacy. Diamond (2006) concurs, noting that throughout life, masculine identity is often required to be repeatedly proven in the social sphere and, "…normative socialization for males relies heavily on the aversive power of shame to shape acceptable male behaviour" (p. 1122). The traditional masculine ideology (Pleck, 1981) consists, in part, of a variety of roles and expectations to which men adhere to in order to socially validate their manhood (Vandello et al., 2008). Living up to these expectations can be central to how some individuals achieve manhood, as these notions of masculinity are central to how manhood is generally understood, and men are largely powerless against these forces.

Power and Powerlessness

There are few gender-related issues that have been more discussed and frequently

misunderstood than the relationship between men and power (Ashfield, 2011). While many men benefit from relatively significant power and privilege in western society (Kuypers, 1999), there is much more to this dynamic than is often appreciated. There are far-reaching, complex and often insidious issues and problems in the lives of men and boys that often go unnoticed or are overlooked, against which men a have little capacity to counteract. The pressures associated with fundamental responsibilities, the looming threat of social role failure, along with the precarious and revocable nature of manhood status, are significant sources of general strain for men (Ashfield, 2011; Vandello & Bosson, 2012). Ashfield (2011) speculated that these factors extensively contribute to mental and physical health concerns, accompanied with other damaging social consequences. As previously mentioned, there is a noteworthy, tacit social acceptance of troubling issues that affect men, including a significantly disproportionate number work-related injuries and fatalities, prevalence of completed suicides, pervasive health issues, disease and early death disease, and frequency of violence both toward men and women (Farrell, 1993). These problems do not just affect the lives of a minority of aberrant or unfortunate men, but all of society as a consequence of the traditional masculine role socialization embedded in the normative values, attitudes and expected roles affecting of a vast number of individuals socialized in contemporary western culture (Brooks & Silverstein, 1995). Putting the extensively damaging consequences of these factors into context, Farrell (1993) has referred to men as society's "disposable sex" (p. 103).

There is an irony that becomes quite obvious when the situation is looked at from this perspective. Indeed, the benefits of relative power and privilege are abundant for many men, but few have the privilege of exemption from these issues, which represent society's fundamental requirements of them. Despite being bestowed with significant power, an unspoken, pervasive

sense of powerless often characterizes men's lives. "What is so often wrongly named as ego is the ways of the will to survive, to be accepted, to qualify – to be worthy of manhood" (Ashfield, 2011, p. 177). Being powerful yet simultaneously powerless is a paradox that is both confusing and potentially paralyzing, which is exacerbated by limited understanding and minimal social validation of the situation to legitimize the experiential reality that shapes and colors lives of men in their context.

Integrated Perspective in Context

Manhood – what it means to achieve, be and remain a man – is a dynamic interaction between biological, psychological and sociocultural factors. Acknowledging and including the influences of human biology in sex and gender is critical for developing a comprehensive and inclusive understanding of these issues – just as it is of equal importance to include the psychological and sociocultural perspectives. The previous sections of this chapter were organized with this perspective in mind. In the final portion of the literature review chapter, I will examine a series of research articles in detail.

Part V - Research Section

There are a significant number of academic and popular publications available concerning men's issues, including various conceptual, theoretical and research literature exploring various areas, including psychological, sociological, anthropological and biophysical/health issues that affect men and inform notions of what it means to be a man. The focus of my study - the experience of becoming a man - however, appears to be a relatively novel point of inquiry. There is some discussion of this topic in popular writings, but it is rarely addressed in the academic literature. I was able to locate only one small-scale study that included findings on this particular issue - an article that presented findings concerning a specific

group of men's accounts of achieving manhood, which is similar to the current study in some ways, but differs in several significant ways with respect to methodological design and findings. In this section, I will review this article along with several other research-specific publications that present findings that inform my understanding of the larger issues prevalent in the lives of men and serve points of reference with respect to this study.

There exist a significant number of measures of masculinity in the psychology literature. Although a thorough discussion of this body research is beyond the scope of this thesis, for the purposes of my study it is important to acknowledge the historical role these measures have played with respect to the study of men's identity and related issues in the last century. The instruments have served to define the characteristics associated with manhood and masculinity within the larger North American social context, which reflects dominant trends in cultural attitudes and assumptions concerning concepts of gender and mental health at various points in time. For a more comprehensive discussion of these measures and associated methodological constructs, see: Beere (1990); Constantinople (1973); Lenney (1991); Thompson & Pleck (1995) and Smiler (2004). For historical examples of specific operational definitions and associated measures of masculinity, see Terman and Miles (1936) for the first published psychological inventory of masculinity; the Strong Vocational Interest Blank (Strong, 1936); measures of psychological androgyny (Bem, 1974); the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (Spence & Helmreich, 1978); sex roles and the Brannon Masculinity Scale (Brannon, 1976; Brannon & Juni, 1984); the Hypermasculinity Index (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984), measures of *machoness* (Bunting & Reeves, 1983; Villemez & Touhey, 1977); the Gender Role Conflict Scale (O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986); the Masculine Gender Role Stress scale (Eisler & Skidmore, 1987); The Male Role Attitudes Scale (Pleck, Sonenstein & Ku, 1993); Conformity to

Male Norms Index (Mahalik et al., 2003); and Reference Group Identity Dependence scale (Wade, 2001; Wade & Gelso, 1998). Each of these instruments represent views of masculinity for the timeframe in which they were published, and offer definitions of various features of male psychology, representing the interwoven threads that comprise the conceptual tapestry of manhood.

Becoming an Adult

The process and experiences that contribute to an individual's passage from boyhood to manhood are naturally comparable to experiences of transitioning from girlhood to womanhood. As the literature reviewed in this document has indicated, there are noted differences between the experiences of men and women, as they assume their emerging sense of mature male or female identity. For example, the findings of Vandello et al. (2008) presented above suggest that while womanhood can be generally considered to be *a given*, manhood requires ongoing social validation. As much as these differences are significant in their context, there also seems to be a noteworthy overlap between male and female responses to questions that supersede differences and focus on an inclusive adult identity that transcends gender. The research conducted in this area has demonstrated several key features that individuals identify as indicators of having attained adulthood (Arnett, 1998; Gordon & Lahelma, 2002; Scheer, Unger & Brown, 1996).

According to Gordon and Lahelma (2002), the discourse on adulthood is reflected in the context of individualization and citizenship, along with a sense of agency concomitant with surpassing limitations in the transition beyond adolescence. The authors note that, "becoming an adult is a prolonged, complex and fraught process" (p. 2). An *inter-stage* progression, as it is described, is associated with an emphasis on gaining independence, separation from parents, financial self-sufficiency and establishing intimate relationships. The findings also indicated that

shifting social conditions are affecting the process of becoming an adult, with specific reference to issues such as employment, family dynamics, and education as factors contributing to less security, predictability, and structure. As a result, the achievement of adulthood and individuation is delimited by prolonged parental dependencies that cannot be easily relinquished.

Scheer, Unger and Brown (1996) indicate that research exploring the onset of adulthood needs to focus on event-related factors (e.g., marriage or purchasing a home), as well as cognitive-related factors (e.g., taking responsibility or decision making). In a study that examined both of these factors in the beliefs about the most important attributes in becoming an adult, the authors interviewed a sample of adolescents between 13 and 19 years of age. The results highlighted the importance of cognitive-related attributes over event-related factors. The majority of the sample (78.8%) self-identified as being adults and suggested that taking responsibility for their actions and making their own decisions were the primary indicators of adulthood. Event-related or achievement-related attributes such as financial independence from parents, moving out of their family home, getting married, having children, reaching the age of majority and completing their education were of secondary importance. Logically, the adolescents who self-identified as adults pointed to factors associated with adulthood which they believe they had achieved, and would be less prone to identify attributes and achievements beyond their experience.

Furthermore, Scheer, Unger and Brown (1996) found that individuals who self-identified as being an adult at an earlier age tended to have higher levels of self-esteem and positive self-image. Adulthood, as an emerging process, may begin for many adolescents when they believe they have reached a specific point in their maturity in terms of cognition, emotion and behaviour.

In a study of contemporary American conceptualizations of transitions into adulthood,

Arnett (1998) also found that the meaning of becoming an adult appears to be associated primarily with assuming responsibility for one's self, self-reliance, individuation, and capacity for self control. 140 participants (47% female and 53% male) aged 21 to 28 years, were asked to indicate which of 38 listed attributes were necessary for adulthood. The top five attributes that participants selected include: a) accepting responsibility for the consequences of their actions; b) deciding on personal beliefs and values independently of their parents or other influences; c) financial independence from parents; d) capability of running a household; and e) the establishment of a relationship with parents as equal adults. The remainder of the listed responses consisted of factors that can be thematically grouped into personal accountability and responsibility, behaving within social convention and providing support and safety for children and family. Other factors on the list identified as not necessary for adulthood include: full-time employment, having children, sexual experience, being in a committed relationship, and having purchased a house.

In the second part of the study, Arnett (1998) asked the participants if they see themselves as having reached adulthood and in what ways they feel they have or have not. 63% indicated they have met their personal criteria for adulthood, 2% reported that they categorically had not become adults and the remaining 35% suggested that they have met some of the requirements while remaining deficient in others. This suggests that for many individuals, the process of becoming an adult is not a singular event, but series of cumulative milestones. In the context of my study, the existing literature offers reason to believe that achieving manhood is a parallel process, involving ongoing fulfillment of social and familial roles coupled with personal independence and achievement. 72% responded that these criteria are the same for both men and women, holding that the identified markers of adulthood transcend gender lines.

The results of these studies do not corroborate the *precarious manhood* hypothesis (Vandello *et al,* 2008), in so far as adulthood status does not seem to carry the same degree of precariousness. While these findings suggest significant commonalities between the genders, there were significant methodological differences and variations in point of inquiry from those conducted by Vandello *et al*, making a direct comparison untenable. Yet this raises several questions as to the relationship between manhood, womanhood, and adulthood. In these studies, adulthood was a consequence of social validation and attained through achievement of certain criteria for both men and women. This might indicate that there is a difference between womanhood and adulthood for women, whereas manhood and adulthood seem to both be derivative of comparable social enactments and attainments. As such, perhaps it is the case that adulthood and manhood are confounded aspects of self for men, and differentiated aspects of self for women.

Although my study employed a different methodological paradigm, these studies nonetheless provide a useful frame of reference, but also pose a set of complications. There is an axiomatic relationship between being an adult and being a man, yet there seems to be significant overlap between these two aspects of identity. This creates difficulty in discerning the qualitative difference between adulthood and manhood. Perhaps it is the case that some individuals will identify more strongly with a masculine identity, where as others associate more strongly with the gender-neutral sense of an adult self. It may also be a consequence of methodology: the nature of the questions posed and the participant population. There may be no ultimate *de facto* difference, but the nature of the questions posed and the degree to which an individual identifies with being a man will influence the responses. Both terms, as conceptualized for the purposes of my study, are social constructions, and are therefore quite

malleable in terms of subjective appraisal of personal meaning and applicability.

Manhood Imprisoned

Phillips (2001) conducted a qualitative study to examine the cultural construction of manhood in prisons. Noting specific characteristics associated with behaviour among incarcerated men, she sought to develop an understanding of how this population relates to manhood within the specific cultural conditions of prison life. In a brief literature review, she presented conceptual notions related to the strains associated with the maintenance of masculine identity in a given context, similar to several of the writings I included above in my discussion of these issues in this chapter. The author highlights Messerschmidt's (1993) notion of masculinity as *public performance*, enacted in a fashion reflective of men's sociocultural environment. Holding this assumption, Phillips holds that, "prison, because of the high degree of difficulty in the performance of masculinity in this context, fosters a deeper understanding of manhood" (p. 13), suggesting that the nature of the environment will reveal aspects of masculine identity that may not be apparent in a less restrictive and oppressive context.

Phillips' (2001) research was conducted at a medium-security state prison for men in Massachusetts. The prison contained all levels of security: minimum, medium, and maximum. The author spent one year observing five separate psychoeducational groups for medium security prisoners, which focused on personal awareness, emotional management, and relaxation training. 20 participants were selected for extended interviews, representing a range of ages, races, and ethnicities, and were included for their willingness and ability to articulate their knowledge and experiences. Unfortunately, beyond these details, Phillips provided no details on her methodology or data analysis.

Phillips (2001) describes the various identity-stripping experiences prisoners face when

entering prison, losing their freedom of mobility, access to goods and services, and self-expression through clothing and other status symbols, while being largely cut off from the outside world in terms of relationships and information. Forced to become bound by an imposed structure and subservient set of formal and informal rules strictly enforced in one context by the prison system and its agents, and in other context, by the prisoners themselves. The author notes that, "Without the resources normally available for the enactment of manhood, men in prison are forced to reconstitute their identity and status using the limited available resources" (p. 13). Phillips sought to describe the fundamental strategies and resources male prisoners use for *recouping* their masculine identity within the context of state prison. From her interviews, she identified five key strategies for preserving and maintaining manhood in prison: (a) the social mapping of relationships, (b) becoming a "stand-up man," (c) the avoidance of social isolation and the formation of associations, (d) the management of reputation through the manipulation and display of crime status or the concealment of crime status, and (e) the display of a readiness to fight (p. 15).

Social mapping of relationships. In the social culture of prison life, a man's appearance and behaviour, his previous crimes, and the people he associates are fundamental to how he will be appraised by his fellow prisoners. Phillips (2001) notes that the common standards against which manhood is assessed include the appearance of being physically strong and muscular, a stoic disposition, loyalty, and asserting dominance over weaker or marginalized men. The nature of gossip and the collective assessments of an individual's manhood tend to exert potent "social sanctions and impel inmates toward public shaming, ostracism, and, at times, violence…. and the building of a reputation as a strong man are essential to survival" (p. 15). Knowing who to associate with and who to avoid is central to perceptions of honour in lessening risk of being

linked with those viewed as having a diminished manhood reputation. One can be *guilty by association* without having done anything wrong, as reputations are contagious. Phillips suggested that this type of environment carries perpetual risk and uncertainty, the "cultural model for establishing relationships among men in prison is characterized by an overlay of compliance, powerlessness, and suspicion. The accepted strategy is "trust no one" and "watch your back" (p. 16).

Becoming a "stand-up" man. Phillips (2001) second identified strategy for re-establishing manhood in prison involves developing a reputation as someone who will not allow anyone to take advantage of him. Referred to a being a *stand-up man,* the author described this persona as being "a cultural category of manhood that incorporates the idealized qualities of the strong, impregnable male self. A stand-up man is one who dares to take action against anyone who tries to 'take something away' from him" (p. 16). A critical feature of a *stand-up man* is to take decisive action against any attempts to take his belongings and displaying no emotion in the process. Phillips does not explain the emphasis on stoicism, but this is presumably a function of the need to act as though he is unaffected by the transgression or his need for retribution, with a willingness to become aggressive without displaying emotion.

According to Phillips' (2001) participants, prisoners who allow others to take from them are downgraded in their manhood. This is particularly prevalent for men who engage in sex with other inmates in the receptive role (i.e., being penetrated). Such men were described as trading their maleness for *ladyhood* (p. 16). Those who penetrate other men, however, are not subject to the same inferior status, and their dominance over another in this context may enhance his reputation. The receptive partner, however, is put at significant risk for further victimization and ostracism. In a perhaps less severe and more common situation, prisoners will fight to protect

small items (e.g., cans of soup, bags of coffee, or sneakers). Phillips noted that with very limited resources and privileges, small material goods become exponentially more important. A pilfered candy bar might not be significant in the *outside world,* but will take on a much more substantial meaning for men in a prison environment.

Formation of associations. Phillips' (2001) third strategy revolves around the nature of the relationships men develop in prison, with whom they interact and for what reasons. Given the transitory nature of prison life, an individual's time in a facility or section of an institution is considered temporary. The author reported that the participants clarified that they do not make friends with other men, but develop relationships with *associates.* The men reported friendship is not possible, as it requires the opportunity to get to know one another in time and within a context that cannot be facilitated in a prison environment (e.g., understanding each other's background or social and familial context), along with the inherent absence of trust among inmates.

The individuals with whom men choose to associate with will either contribute to, or detract from, their ability to establish a reputation as a *stand-up man.* The participants noted that such a reputation would transcend their immediate situation, following them to other units in the same facility, and to other institutions upon transfer. Selecting associates is regarded as strategic process that requires an understanding of prison culture, including personal boundaries (e.g., not appearing needy or overly attached), often staying within one's racial or ethnic groups, aligning with others with similar backgrounds (e.g., types of convictions; addiction issues), and learning appropriate ways to find out from another inmate what crimes he has committed. The more commonalities men share, the greater the likelihood that the prisoners will be able to rely on one another as an *ally;* someone dependable in the event of threats and violence. Affiliations of this

kind provide a loose sense of solidarity for mutual defence of manhood. In cases where men have deeper associations beyond prison walls (e.g., coming from the same neighbourhood, having common friends, knowing one another's family) can upgrade their association to consider each other as *homeboys*. Homeboys may not be friends, but are considered to be *tighter* than being associates.

Phillips (2001) describes a culture in which men must understand that they ultimately stand alone. Having reliable associates is essential to reputation development and for establishing manhood status in this cultural environment. Associates, however, are only as good as their reputations, and being linked with the wrong people can be a serious liability. Shifting alliances and the transient nature of relationships require men in this situation are advised to cultivate qualities of independence and self-containment.

Management of criminal reputation. The fourth strategy Phillips (2001) identified in her interviews is the management of criminal reputation. As mentioned, the way individual men are perceived by their fellow prisoners is instrumental in how they will be regarded and treated, and determine if they will be accepted or rejected. The author notes that:

> Certain crimes create a sense of commonality, shared experience, and status, whereas other crimes symbolize a powerful stigma, compelling others to avoid and marginalize. In the social mapping process through which men categorize one another as enemy or possible associate, the type of crime can be a valuable resource for building honour and enhancing manhood or can cause a diminishment of manhood, which can lead to systematic and collective ostracism and even violence (p. 19).

Those who have been convicted of sex crimes, especially against children, are viewed as being the *lowest* form of criminal. These men are subject to ostracism and often targets of violence.

Those who would be taken as *stand up* men often actively demonstrate their distain for these inmates and no one will associate with them, as their *low* reputation is considered contagious. Phillips (2001) suggests that this is an expression of a cultural rule that prohibits preying on those weaker (i.e., women, children, and older people). A man, secure in his manhood, will only violate those seen a valid targets, which includes others involved in a criminal lifestyle. Furthermore, if sex offenders are seen as the *lowest,* convictions that bring about the highest level of respect are those that are viewed as *heroic* from a criminal perspective, such as armed robbery or crimes involving violence. Being a *cop killer* is reported as the most revered status on the hierarchy, as a man convicted of murdering a police officer is respected for standing up to the authorities. The men on the *higher* end of the spectrum tend to attract the most associates and allies, and generally have a safer existence in prison than those considered *untouchables* on the low end.

Display of a readiness to fight. Phillips (2001) identified a *willingness to fight* as the fifth strategy to recoup manhood within prison. In this setting, fights may occur for various reasons: defending scarce goods or items purchased at the canteen; defending one's honour in response to a perceived threat or insult; or instrumentally to develop a reputation as a *stand up guy.* Phillips stated:

> The battle imperative, the need to respond to displays of disrespect, to reciprocate violence or threats of violence, cannot be ignored in prison. A battle is not just fought against an opponent. Instead, a battle involves the public construction of reputation as a man. A prison gladiator is on display for the collective manhood of the inmate community. The battle, its style, flair, spirit of daring, and the degree of nonchalance with which it is waged, is staged for the scrutiny of all. And after the battle is over, it

enters the annals of prison myth and lore (p. 20).

Provoking a fight was identified as a direct and purposeful way for a new inmate to establish his reputation early, as a means to prove who he is *as a man.* It was also noted that it is not uncommon for men to fight one another, resolve their conflict and become associates out of an earned sense of mutual respect.

Phillips' (2001) participants suggested that fighting is not necessarily about winning the fight, but being seen as someone who will fight. Conversely, the author points out that the failure of a man to *stand up* is to risk reputation, which encourages other inmates to further victimize him and further tarnish his manhood and dignity. A man known to be willing to fight is much more likely to be left alone and respected by his fellow prisoners.

Discussion

Phillips (2001) research article presents important insights into the difficult lives of men in prison. She has conceptually related the sociocultural conditions of the prison environment and strategies required for self-preservation with the inmates' need for defence and preservation of their manhood. Prison, being a harsh and violent environment, will logically shape the behaviour and conduct of human beings in various ways that could be classified as *hypermasculine.* As I noted in a previous section, Gilmore's (1990) cross-cultural research suggested that under conditions where resources are scarce and competition is prevalent, an aggressive and battle-oriented expression of masculinity is typically present, which supports the likelihood of survival in adverse conditions. Examining the specific contextual features that contribute to an understanding of manhood in a given environment, Phillips' description is consistent with Gilmore's findings. Her illustrations were helpful for understanding a conceptualization of manhood as it is viewed in an extreme situation, such as prison. There are,

however, several basic issues and oversights that detract from the value of this article.

Phillips (2001) provided minimal description of her research methodology, leaving the reader to guess at her approach to data analysis. It appears as though she conducted some type of thematic analysis, but there is no explanation for the process that led to the identification of the five specific strategies from her data. Furthermore, a careful review of the depiction of each strategy reveals significant overlap between her categories, with particular reference to the three categories of *social mapping of relationships; formation of associations;* and *managing criminal reputation.* The remaining two, *becoming a stand-up man* and *readiness to fight,* also appeared to be expressions of similar constructs. This loose categorization of the prisoners' strategies to preserve their manhood left the reader with a number of questions concerning her applied methods of inquiry. Without knowing the nature of Phillips' research design, it is difficult to critically appraise the methodology.

Phillips (2001) insists that the five strategies described in her article are based on an *enactment* or *performance* of masculinity in response to the violent and degrading conditions of prison (p. 13). Although she does not identify the dynamic as such, it is a logical inference that the nature of the five strategies serves to further enhance and perpetuate these harsh cultural conditions. Given the available research on male on male violence, it is reasonable for her to suggest that the phenomena she describes is in fact an expression of a pathological expression of masculinity that is rooted in power and dominance. Viewed from another perspective, however, these men are ostensibly acting according to their survival needs, mirroring the social conditions in which they are located. Given the prevalence of aggressive behaviour among female prisoners (Ireland, 1999; Kruttschnitt & Krmpotich, 1990), there is a strong argument that the nature of the prison cultural environment necessitates the types of survival strategies Phillips identified.

Perhaps these behaviours are related to the loss of freedom, identity and resources associated with incarceration or perhaps it is a culture that has developed around the housing of large groups of individuals prone to antisocial and criminal behaviour in close proximity for indefinite periods of time. With respect to her theoretical assumptions concerning manhood, these men do not appear to be performing or pretending to be manly. It appears more likely that they are adapting to their environment and, through processes of social learning, developing strategies necessary to protect themselves in a hostile environment. The focus on manhood may be less important than the basic human survival instinct. Regardless, any claims of causation based on such observations are dubious. "Describing a cultural difference should not be confused with explaining a cultural difference. Descriptions, no matter how accurate and articulate, should not be conflated with proper causal accounts" (Buss, 2001, p. 970).

Gender does seem to be a factor, but the associations Phillips made between manhood and prison conditions are likely not as clear-cut upon closer examination. Men and women are both subject to nearly identical prison environments, and live under similar sociocultural conditions while incarcerated. Ireland (1999) noted that male aggression behind prison walls tends to be direct and physically violent, whereas female aggression tends to be more indirect and ostracizing. These expressions of violence are consistent with the pathological expressions of masculinity and femininity, respectively, as previously described in this chapter.

Phillips' (2001) research article, criticisms not withstanding, provides the reader with a glimpse into the reality of the lives of incarcerated men. There is a dramatic shift in culture when taken from life *on the outside* and to that of being imprisoned. Identity and freedoms are largely stripped away, and any former sense of status or access to resources is severely limited. In a culture reminiscent of Thomas Hobbes' (1999) conception of the *state of nature*, prison life

brings with it "…continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (p. 110). Under such conditions, as noted, human beings will tend to adapt to meet the dictates of the social environment.

Precarious Manhood

The *precarious manhood hypothesis*, as was describe in the previous section, holds that manhood, relative to womanhood, is precarious in nature, requiring continual social proof and validation (Vandello & Bosson, 2012; Vandello et al., 2008). With the basic insecurity of this aspect of identity, men may feel threatened to varying degrees when their masculinity is challenged, potentially leading to typified male behaviours (e.g., physical aggression) resulting from related anxiety. There is no clear explanation for the causal source of this condition, but the authors speculate on two possibilities:

> "That these notions derive from evolved dispositions that have their origins in men's competitive acquisition of social status and resources to gain access to women…" or alternatively, stemming from "the social roles that men and women occupy suggest that physical differences between men and women resulting in predictable divisions of labour could account for normative beliefs about manhood" (Vandello *et al*, 2008, p. 1326).

Vandello et al (2008) reported a series of five psychological studies that sought to examine the validity of this theoretical claim. I will briefly describe each of the studies below.

Study 1a. 201 undergraduates (83 men and 118 women) were randomly assigned to complete one of two versions of a questionnaire that consisted of a selection of 24 proverbs, 6 of which were suggestive of the precariousness of manhood or womanhood. The male or female-based statements were randomly divided among the participants. Examples included: "manhood (womanhood) is hard won and easily lost;" "a boy (girl) cannot become a man (woman) without

struggles;" "all boys (girls) do not grow up to become real men (women);" "a boy (girl) must earn his (her) right to be called a man (woman);" "it is a rocky road from boy (girl) to man (woman);" and "a man (woman) must continually prove his (her) honour" (Vandello *et al*, 2008, p.1328). After reading each statement, participants rated their agreement on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). To determine whether individuals perceived manhood as more precarious than womanhood, the authors conducted an *analysis of covariance* (ANCOVA) (across participant sex and assigned male or female-based proverbs), with results revealing a significant preference for proverbs suggestive of precarious manhood over the womanhood proverbs for both male and female participants. Noting the masculine-typified, agentic wording of the questions (e.g., won, earn, prove), the authors sought to account for the possibility of this factor influencing the results in a follow up study.

Study 1b. 141 undergraduates (76 women and 65 men) were randomly assigned to complete one of two versions of an online questionnaire. Similar to *Study 1a*, the first part of the questionnaire presented several statements about the tenuous and uncertain nature of either manhood or womanhood. Participants were to indicate their sense of truthfulness of each on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all true*) to 7 (*very true*). Correcting for a potential bias in the wording of the previous study, the seven key statements were devised to avoid gender-typified language, as specified above. Examples included: "it is fairly easy for a man (woman) to lose his (her) status as a man (woman);" "a male's (female's) status as a 'real man' ('real woman') sometimes depends on how other people view him (her);" "some boys (girls) do not become men (women), no matter how old they get;" "other people often question whether a man (woman) is a 'real man' ('real woman');" "manhood (womanhood) is something that can be taken away;" "manhood (womanhood) is not assured—it can be lost;" and "manhood (womanhood) is not a

permanent state, because a man (woman) might do something that suggests that he (she) is really just a 'boy' ('girl')" (Vandello *et al*, 2008, p. 1328).

Subsequently, the participants applied the same scaled responses to rate two statements about the transition to adulthood: "The transition from boyhood (girlhood) to manhood (womanhood) occurs because of something physical or biological, e.g., hormonal changes" and "The transition from boyhood (girlhood) to manhood (womanhood) occurs because of something social, e.g., passing certain social milestones" (Vandello *et al,* 2008, p. 1328). In an effort to control for participant bias with respect to their responses being an expression of subscription to traditional notions of gender, the participants completed an assessment to measure egalitarian views of sex roles.

As with *Study 1a*, the authors subjected the data for the *precariousness questions* (across three factors; participant sex, male or female version of questionnaire, and egalitarian views assessment) and the *transition to adulthood* questions (also across three factors: participant sex, male or female version of the questionnaire, and physical versus social cause responses) to an ANCOVA. The results indicated that the participants rated statements about the precariousness of manhood as being more accurate than statements about the tenuousness of womanhood. Furthermore, the transition to manhood was viewed as attributable to social factors much more strongly, whereas the transition to womanhood was firmly associated with both social and physical factors. These findings were consistent with correction for traditional gender role biases.

In both studies (1a and 1b), men and women reliably endorsed the idea that manhood is a tenuous and elusive status that requires active steps to achieve and defend through social validation. Reviewing the findings of the two studies, the authors conclude: "Although entrance

into both manhood and womanhood occurs via the passage of physical or biological milestones, the transition to manhood requires additional social achievements" (Vandello *et al.*, 2008, p. 1329).

Study 2. In Study 2, 75 undergraduates (38 men and 37 women) took part in an examination of whether manhood is viewed as a potentially transient state that can be lost. Vandello *et al.* (2008) theorized that if manhood is viewed as more tenuous, then participants should be able to more easily interpret notions concerning losing manhood status than statements associated with lost womanhood. In groups of four, participants read ambiguous descriptions about losing either manhood or womanhood, and then described what they believed the statements meant. Participants were randomly assigned statements concerning manhood or womanhood. They were subsequently asked to rate the degree of difficulty with making their interpretation by answering scaling questions (from 1 [not at all] to 7 [extremely]), such as "*How difficult was it to understand what the person meant?*," "*How confident are you that your interpretation was what the speaker intended?*," and "*How unusual of a statement was that for someone to say*?" (p. 1329-1330).

Furthermore, as manhood is a socially validated status, social changes should be attributed to lost manhood more readily than physical changes, associated more closely with loss of womanhood. To test this notion, the participants read a series of brief autobiographical-sounding statements concerning the loss of either male or female gender identity, and were then presented with a physical and social interpretation for each account. Participants answered two scaled questions (from 1 [not at all] to 7 [extremely]) for each interpretation: "How much do you agree with this interpretation?" and "Do you think this is the correct interpretation for the statement?" (Vandello *et al.*, 2008, p. 1329-1330).

After subjecting the quantitative data to *analysis of variance* (ANOVA), accounting for the gender of the participant and which set of statements they reviewed, the prediction that the statement about losing manhood was rated as easier to interpret was supported. As was further anticipated, the participants responded with a significantly higher number of social explanations for the loss of manhood. "These results thus corroborate and extend the findings from Studies 1a and 1b in suggesting that manhood is a relatively precarious, socially achieved status, whereas womanhood is a relatively enduring status that is lost (if at all) through physical… changes" (Vandello *et al.*, 2008, p. 1330-1331).

Study 3. Vandello *et al* (2008) specified two main goals for their third study: to explore the notion that womanhood status is related to child bearing (i.e., not being able to bear children is associated with loss of womanhood) and to use images instead of words to learn if participants envision a child while thinking of an adult who is not a *real* woman or man.

Sixty-two undergraduates (31 men and 31 women) completed a questionnaire entitled "Psychological Portraits," containing images described as being a selection of possible abstract representations depicting a person's psychological make-up. The participants were randomly presented one of two *clinical descriptions* of a situation: "John is 29 years old. He and his wife have been trying to have children for years, but without any luck. John recently learned that he is not able to get his wife pregnant" or "Danielle is 29 years old. She and her husband have been trying to have children for years, but without any luck. Danielle recently learned that she is not able to get pregnant" (Vandello *et al.*, 2008, p. 1331). They were asked to assign the description to the best fit selected from one of five sketched images consisting of an attractive adult, an unattractive adult, a child, a price of abstract art, and a horse. The images depicting human beings were consistent with the gender of the person described in the clinical description. The

dependent variable in this study was the percentage of participants who paired the descriptions of infertile adults with the child image.

The results did not support notion that women must bear children as a criterion for womanhood, but did indicate that that producing offspring is viewed as a basic condition for manhood status (40% of participants associated the child sketch with the infertile man and 16% ascribed the infertile woman description to the image of the child). Participants associated the image of the unattractive woman with the description of the infertile woman in 28% of the cases, and 7% related the unattractive male with the infertile man. These results support notions that "women who fail to meet standards of womanhood may be seen as "bad" women with unattractive characteristics, but they are unlikely to lose their status as women (unlike infertile adult men, who are seen as merely boys)" (Vandello *et al.*, 2008, p. 1331).

Study 4. Keeping with the precarious manhood hypothesis and informed by the previous studies, Vandello *et al.* (2008) inquired into men's and women's anxious responses when their gender status was challenged. 81 participants (41 men and 40 women) were randomly assigned to a condition that would or would not pose a threat. The participants completed two related tests, but led to believe that they were for independent studies. The first task consisted of a 32-item *gender knowledge test* to measure their knowledge of stereotypical interests associated with the participant's gender. Pre-determined scores were assigned to each participant relative to the purported *average men's* or *women's scores*, independent of their actual responses: 73rd percentile (non-threatening condition) or 27th percentile (threatening condition). The former affirmed a higher degree of masculinity or femininity, where as the latter score implied an inferior gender status.

The second task was developed to gauge anxiety associated with the results of the

previous 'test.' The participants were presented with 24 word fragments, which they were to complete. Seven could be completed as anxiety-related or unrelated words (e.g THREA__ (*threat* or *thread*), STRE__ __ (*stress* or *streak*), __ __SET (*upset* or *reset*); __OTHER (*bother* or *mother*), SHA__ E (*shame* or *share*), __EAK (*weak* or *beak*), and LO__ER (*loser* or *lover*) (Vandello *et al*, 2008, p. 1332). The primary dependent variable for this study was the percentage of the word fragments completed to reflect anxiety-oriented words.

Upon the completion of the two tasks, participants were asked to report how comfortable they would be with their scores on the *gender knowledge test* being made available to others (e.g., disclosed to friends or family, full name and results posted on a public website or published in a university newspaper). Responses were scaled from 1 (definitely no) to 7 (definitely yes). Finally, participants were asked to predict if their performance would improve if they competed the test a second time.

Vandello *et al.* (2008) predicted that men would be more susceptible to gender threat than women. The data were subject to statistical testing (ANOVA). It was found that men in the *threat condition* created more anxiety-related words from the fragments than male participants in the *non-threatening condition.* Women did not vary significantly across conditions. Men assigned to the *threat condition* reported feeling less comfortable with the disclosure to their scores to others compared with their *non-threat* counterparts. The comfort levels of women in both conditions did not differ. Men in the *threat condition* were more likely to believe that they would improve their score on a second test, whereas men in the non-threatening condition and women in both conditions did not predict change in future test performance.

One possible explanation for these findings is that men do not accept negative feedback as well as women. Vandello *et al.* (2008), however, suggest that this notion is not supported by

self-esteem literature. Instead, they argue that their results indicate, "gender threatening feedback arouses stronger feelings of anxiety and related emotions (threat or shame) among men than among women, a pattern that is consistent with the thesis that manhood is a more tenuous, precarious state than is womanhood" (p. 1333). Following this logic, challenges to masculine identity pose a threat to an integral aspect of a man's sense of self. In response to such a threat, it is possible the aggressive tendencies can be activated.

Study 5. In their fifth study, Vandello *et al.* (2008) examined the susceptibility for aggressive thoughts after feedback threatening to gender identity. The authors predicted an interaction between the participants' sex, experiencing gender threat, and aggression type. (The authors reference literature delineating physical aggression - typified of male behaviour - from relational aggression [e.g., social exclusion] – a more typified female behaviour.) It was anticipated that the gender threat would elicit and intensify physically aggressive thoughts in male participants, but resulting in no effect on female participants' aggressive thoughts.

134 undergraduate participants (67 men and 67 women), divided by gender, were randomly assigned to a *gender threat* or *no threat* experimental condition, and then assessed for either physically or relationally aggressive cognitions. Utilizing the same procedure as *Study 4*, the participants completed a 32-item *gender knowledge test,* and were given subsequent contrived feedback independent of their responses to elicit one of two experimental conditions. Participants were then randomly assigned to complete an "unrelated" word completion task, which was to assess for one of the two types of aggressive thoughts.

The 28-item word completion task portion of the study, similar to the tool used in *Study 4*, was developed on the basis of previous research supportive of the validity of this approach to assessing for aggressive cognition (Vandello *et al.,* 2008). The physical aggression assessment

contained eight word fragments that could be interpreted aggressively or non-aggressively (e.g., GU__ [*gun* or *gum*]; KI__ __ [*kill/kick* or *kind*]; __IGHT [*fight* or *might*]; BLO__ __ [*blood* or *bloom*]; and __ __RDER [*murder* or *herder]*. In the relational aggression version, nine word fragments were interpretable as aggressive or nonaggressive expressions (e.g., __UMOR [*rumour* or *humour*]; __ __CLUDE [*exclude* or *include]*; __ __JECT [*reject* or *object*]; TE__SE [*tease* or tense]; and IGN__ __E [*ignore* or *ignite*] (p. 1334). The participants' scores were calculated for total percentage of possible words completed with an aggressive interpretation.

The data was subject to a statistical analysis (ANOVA) across participant sex, *threat* or *non-threat* condition and physical or relational aggression word completion task. Vandello *et al.* (2008) found that men tended to complete more physically aggressive words when in the *threat* condition. Women's physically aggressive word completions, however, did not fluctuate based on *threat* or *no-threat* condition. No significant effects were detected among the participants assigned the relational aggression task.

Based on the findings, Vandello *et al.* (2008) concluded that when men's masculinity is threatened, they are prone to heightened physically aggressive cognitions, as suggested by the prevalence of male participants spontaneous completion of words with a hostile interpretation. The same threat to masculine gender status, however, did not affect relationally aggressive thoughts. Women did not appear be susceptible to either type of aggressive thought when in the gender-treat condition. The authors note that this study does not demonstrate clear causality, but the data are supportive of the notion that threats to gender status may "prime role-typical aggressive thoughts" more prevalently in men than women (p. 1334).

Discussion

In this series of studies, Vandello *et al.* (2008) presented research supportive of notions

that: (a) manhood is perceived by men and women as "hard to win" (b) manhood is a precarious status and potentially subject to loss; (c) manhood tends to be socially validated; (d) men experience threat to their masculine identity when their manhood status is challenged; and (d) threats to this status can elicit physically aggressive thoughts in men. These findings are consistent with the outcomes of the previously referenced qualitative research by McVittie and Willock (2006), which reflected the notion that men's sense of masculinity can be downgraded to an inferior status when they become physically ill or disabled due to illness or age. This evidence suggests that manhood is not something that simply occurs in the lives of individuals, but an achievement that requires ongoing validation and defence. As Phillips (2001) noted, manhood appears to be both insecure and "always in the making" (p. 13).

Vandello's et al. (2008) findings serve as a useful point of reference for my study, empirically examining a several significant dimensions embedded within masculine identity. Although their focus on the precariousness is dissimilar from my primary concern of the achievement of manhood, their research informs my understanding of the dynamics that formulate manhood as an identity status and suggest important issues that affect individuals when they become men. The methodological design used by the researchers in these examples is quantitative in nature, and paradigmatically distinct from my qualitative approach. This notwithstanding, these studies serve to provide a wealth of conceptual guidance.

To Be a Man

In a qualitative study examining the meaning of manhood among a sample of 152 African American men, Hammond and Mattis' (2005) findings emphasized the relational and interconnected character of masculinity and stressed the importance of taking "specific complexities" into account, including race, age, and relative social location into context with an

inquiry of this kind with this population. The study examined the constructions of manhood while analyzing of the processes of "meaning making among this group… to explore the ways in which [they] construct and deconstruct what it means to be an African American man" (p. 117). The participants, drawn from 5 metropolitan areas in the United States, provided written responses to the open-ended question, "What does manhood mean to you?." A content analysis was conducted using an open coding method.

From the participants' responses, Hammond and Mattis (2005) identified 15 distinct meaning categories, listed here in order of prevalence: a) R*esponsibility–Accountability* (i.e., taking, handling, or being aware of one's responsibility to oneself, family, and others; being accountable for one's actions, thoughts, and behaviours); b) *Autonomy* (i.e., having power, control, or authority over the choices and decisions related to one's life as well as being self-sufficient, free governing, and able to express one's uniqueness); c) *Providing-Waymaking* (i.e., being a provider for oneself, family, or others; making ways to provide for others financially or otherwise); d) *Spirituality-Religiosity* (i.e., seeking guidance about one's life or behaviour from God, a higher power, spirit, religious texts, or leaders; having a belief in, relationship with, or connection with any of the entities referenced above; e) *Moral Rectitude-Virtues* (i.e., having good morals, a virtuous character, or personality traits; striving to live one's life in a morally upright fashion); f) *Family Centeredness* (i.e., having a fulfilling relationship with family members; a general sense that family is an important core of one's life); g) *Growth-Maturity* (i.e., achieving personal growth and development; achieving a level of maturity and accomplishment); h) *Leadership-Guidance* (i.e., having, showing, and using leadership abilities within one's family or community; being an example or role model for others); i) *Groundedness* (i.e., having focus and stability across the areas of one's life; maintaining one's position,

commitment, and life direction); j) *Respect* (i.e., seeking, gaining, giving, and showing respect; having an understanding about the giving and receiving of respect); k) *Outreach–Community Involvement* (i.e., being involved in one's community, having a sense of pride in one's community, being concerned with and acting on the behalf of others; helping, giving, and lending support to others); l) *Surviving–Overcoming* (i.e., enduring, thriving, or overcoming; possessing qualities necessary for survival); m) *Self-appreciation–Awareness* (i.e., having an emotional appreciation for oneself, caring for oneself, and having an appreciation for one's race or history); n) *Protecting Family and Others* (i.e., shielding, guarding, or protecting one's family and community from threats imposed by the social environment); o) *Emotional Connectedness* (i.e., having the overall capacity to express one's emotions freely; being able to assume roles that require one to connect emotionally with others); and p) *Other* (i.e., unusual responses) (p. 120).

Hammond and Mattis (2005) reported that their findings are consistent with indications from comparable previous studies on the meaning of manhood, and are also in line with conceptual notions and findings identified in the literature discussed in previous sections of this chapter. The noted emphasis on the development of personal attributes (e.g., assuming responsibility) over the acquisitive or event related events (e.g., purchasing first home or getting married) is consistent with Scheer and Unger's (1996) findings in their research into the achievement o adulthood. as described above. Furthermore, Hammond and Mattis were careful to specify that the overarching thematic meaning of manhood among their participants were largely situated within the interpersonal domain (p. 114). This is an important distinction as qualities traditionally associated with masculinity (e.g., autonomy and independence) were expressed relationally, stressing importance of these qualities related to family and community.

Further analysis of these 15 meaning categories led Hammond and Mattis (2005) to

organize the data into four distinctive ways this sample associate with manhood: as (a) an *interconnected state of being* (i.e., a constructed and experienced relational, interdependent process between self, family and others); (b) as a *fluid, developmental process of self* (i.e., with acquisition of wisdom and other positive traits over time); (c) as a *redemptive process* (i.e., referring to rectifying personal misdeeds through familial and community engagement), and (d) as a *proactive course* (i.e., meaning the protection of one's identity from threats and "maintenance by initiating a set of positive life actions") (p. 123). These factors point to significant dimensions in the meaning of manhood that, although were extrapolated from data associated with a specific American racial group of men, may be largely applicable to the general population of men within the North American context.

Hammond and Mattis' (2005) research article describing their inquiry into the meaning of manhood adds important findings to the body of knowledge concerning the subject matter, and hold several points of pertinence to my study. Theirs was a qualitative investigation, and, although there is variation in focus of the specific focus of the topics and data gathering methods and analysis, there is noteworthy similarity in terms of paradigmatic injunction and point of inquiry. The authors' approach, directly asking men to articulate their relationship with manhood and recognizing patterns in their responses, provides a comparable study offers a point of comparison for me both in terms of topic and methodology. Of the research literature I have reviewed in this chapter, this article is among the most closely related to my study, with particular reference to Hammond and Mattis' methodological design and concern with how men appraise their sense of manhood.

Becoming a Man in Australia

In the context of a larger sociological study on young and mid-life men's perceptions of

masculinity, Crawford (2003) asked 14 participants to discuss when and how they became men. This study is the only example of an empirical study on this topic that was located. While there are obvious similarities between Crawford's work and the current study, there are also significant diverging features. In this section, I present a brief review of Crawford's research, which is contrasted with my study. Comparisons between the findings of the two studies will be included in Chapter 5.

Methods. Crawford (2003) interviewed a group of second-generation, Australian-born males to explore perceptions of dominant expressions of masculinity as part of an exploratory, comparative study. Seven young men (20-26 years) and seven mid-life men (35-45 years) were recruited from a suburb of Sydney. At the mid-point of the semi-structured interviews with individual participants, Crawford posed the question, "When did you become a man?." The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The data was then coded and analyzed following an "analytic induction" approach. Various patterns were recognized in each participant group, which in turn served as a point of inter-group comparison. In addition to the findings derived from the data analysis results, the author presented a number of process observations associated with responses to the question.

Findings. Crawford (2003) reported that all participants struggled to respond to the question, and, with few exceptions, expressed difficulty articulating how they subjectively define manhood. He suggested that the participants seemed to have given little previous thought to the issue, and only after exploring the issue in the context of the interview were some participants able to point to fatherhood and being a provider as definitive qualities of manhood. Furthermore, based on the provided responses, none of the participants were able to identify a specific, memorable moment or experience that represents their passage into manhood, leading Crawford

suggests that each individual somehow became a man on their own and by accident. He argued that because the participants have given highly limited consideration to notions of manhood and what it meant to them prior to the interview, they have tacitly assumed that its achievement occurs by virtue of ageing, which makes it an unguided process with no discernable transition marker. The author further noted that the participants were not provided with any manner of positive cultural education about masculinity or what it means to be a man, which he believes contributed to their difficulty answering the question and affected the quality of the responses.

Discussion. Crawford's (2003) findings present several significant and rather startling implications. At the same time, the conspicuous absence of academic research publications on the topic of achieving manhood is perhaps reflected in these men's limited awareness and understanding of their own sense of masculine identity. The findings are indicative of the fact that dialog on these issues is effectively non-existent in both popular and academic discourse.

Crawford's (2003) research article serves as a useful guidepost in the process of carrying out my study, as there are important similarities with respect to both topic and methodology. There are, however, a series of significant divergences that's set the studies apart from one another. Crawford's primary concern was on general perceptions of masculinity, and while it is not clear in his article, it appears as though his questions concerning manhood achievement were of secondary importance. Conversely, the current study is singularly concerned with this issue. Furthermore, while Crawford unexpectedly posed the question to his participants in the midst of a semi-structured interview with a larger focus, the specific questions that I posed to my participants were provided to them prior to the interview. This served to provide the opportunity to reflect on their experiences ahead of time, without putting them *on the spot.* This approach created the conditions whereby the dialogs consistently garnered a variety of clear responses to

the research questions, which ultimately had a pronounced impact on the quality of the findings, in comparison with Crawford's results. Furthermore, the inclusion of the question that specifically asked the men to relay the means by which their transition was known to them (i.e., how did you know?) added another dimension to the point of inquiry, which further enhanced the investigation in terms of both process and product.

The sample and context of the population being studied is another point of departure. Crawford interviewed a group of second-generation Australians located in a specific geographical location within the country. The present study will be comprised of a sample of Canadian participants, and included a higher degree of diversity in terms of ethnicity, sexual orientation and regional location. Although it is antithetical to qualitative research to make claims of generalization to the larger population of men, this larger spectrum of representation further strengthens the transferability of the study (Krefting, 1991).

Crawford's research methods, both data gathering and analysis, are similar to the methodological design of the present study, in that they belong to the same overarching family of qualitative approaches. Applying an analytic induction approach to his transcriptions resulted in the extrapolation of several key categories of responses and process observations that informed his outcomes. In the present study, the data was subjected to thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), which is an approach to data analysis that resulted a several noteworthy difference in the way the findings were both developed and presented, which are discussed in detail throughout the next chapters.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed a selection of literature that addresses various topics that relate to my research topic. Issues concerning the physical, psychological and social aspects of

masculinity and men's issues were presented. Particular attention was paid to the notion of "becoming," as the attainment of manhood is integrally embedded within the process of identity formation and development.

A critical element that has does not appear to have been effectively addressed in the literature, however, are the specific events and circumstances that surround individuals' subjective experiences of becoming men and what they recognized in their experience that suggested they had achieved manhood. Inviting men to share their stories of *becoming men* and *how they knew* not only opens the door for an explication of a given experience or set of experiences, but also inquires into the beliefs, assumptions and influences that inform their personal conceptions of masculinity and criteria for manhood. The following chapter details the qualitative research methodology that informed the design of the study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I present the methodological research design for my thesis study. I situate qualitative inquiry within the larger context of empirical research and the scientific method. The philosophical underpinnings of the qualitative paradigm are discussed, followed by a discussion concerning the specifics of my methodological injunctions, consisting of narrative interviewing and thematic analysis. Processes for establishing methodological credibility are explained prior to discussing my participant recruitment process and the ethical implications associated with the study.

Narrow and Broad Empiricism

My study asked a series of men, in the role of participant, to engage with in a dialogue with me, in the role of the researcher, to articulate a specific aspect of their personal experience. Interpersonal communication of experience makes it possible for us to know about one another, the world, and ourselves. As much as this type of informal conversation is commonplace in everyday life, the fundamental difference in the approach taken for this study is the systematic manner in which the exchange took place, following an established approach to scientific inquiry. Prior to describing the specifics of my study's design, I will situate my research methods within the larger realm of science. This is a necessary step to clarify notions of empiricism and my rationale for the application of a general scientific method, positioning my selected approach to qualitative inquiry within the larger context of research methodologies.

There is general agreement among philosophers of science that empirical science fundamentally depends on subjective and intersubjective structures for objective data to be apprehended (Wilber, 1998). In this instance, the *objective/exterior* domain refers to perspectives dependent on the five senses and located in the physical world - observable,

measurable, and quantifiable (e.g., speed of an automobile, weight of a block of granite, height of a giraffe, or number of planets in the solar system). Conversely, the *subjective/interior* domain refers to the inward-focused perspective – thoughts, feelings, perceptions, experiences, and qualifiable (e.g., metaphysical beliefs, the meaning of Macbeth, historical narratives, or the experience of falling in love).

Wilber (1998, 2006) has developed a framework for understanding the relationship between *subjective/interior* data and *objective/exterior* data. Stated simply, an *objective* phenomenon is apprehended by sensory processes, interpreted subjectively and, subsequently, represented as numbers, words or other symbolic language. As such, the exterior and interior domains are not independent of one another, but are correlated, co-emergent perspectives of a given phenomenon in human consciousness. Traditionally, social science has misunderstood this dynamic relationship, relying on axiomatic claims of objectivity and privileging sensory-derived exterior data, while degrading or denying the validity of interior subjective experience. There are a number of complex philosophical underpinnings and historical reasons for the dominance of this position, but Wilber asserts that this is fundamentally a problem rooted in how the term *empiricism* is defined.

In an effort to remedy this problem, Wilber (1998) delineates between *narrow* and *broad* empiricism. Following Wilber, Black (2008) explains that *narrow empiricism* exclusively legitimizes evidence derived from the sensory domain, effectively reducing knowledge to only that which can be observed and measured with the physical senses. *Broad empiricism*, on the other hand, allows for the treatment of interior domain data and exterior domain data as equally legitimate points of scientific investigation. With an expanded conceptualization of the meaning of empiricism, knowledge derived from experiential and emotional accounts, personal

experiences, spiritual encounters and meaning-making processes, then, can be considered as valid as descriptions of objective sensory perceptions. This, in turn, greatly expands the scope and depth of scientific inquiry in both the *hard* and *human* sciences.

Operationally, this requires a rethinking of the relationship between science, research methods and interior/exterior domains. As Wilber (1998) notes:

> Traditionally, what has spooked empirical and positivistic science about these "interiors" is that they cannot be objectified and thus nailed with a sensorimotor hammer, whether that hammer be a telescope, microscope, photographic plate, or whatnot. Thus traditionally, empirical science tended to a simple confusion: it claimed that its basic methodology covered all of the real dimensions of existence, whereas these are two entirely separate considerations. Once we tease apart the scientific method from its application to a particular domain, we might find that a certain spirit of scientific inquiry, honesty, and fallibilism can indeed be carried into the interior domains (which science already does with its own mathematics and logic). We might find that "science" in the broadest sense does not have to be confined to sensory patches, but might include a science of sensory experience, a science of mental experience, and a science of spiritual experience (p.150).

Accordingly, methodology selection for a given study should be contingent on the domain from which the data is derived, as oppose to reliance on a single, all-encompassing, *one-size-fits-all* approach for all occasions. Positivistic-based inquiry, assuming an objective, observable reality, is the appropriate approach for the study of etiology of viral infections and conducting supercollider experiments in attempt confirm the existence of the Higgs boson. A different approach to science, however, is required to effectively investigate subjective, interior

experiences. Qualitative inquiry, in its various forms, is much better suited to explore the personal narratives that describe the meaning made of lived experience or the phenomenological states encountered in various meditative disciplines, for example. In the present study, I have chosen to proceed with a qualitative methodology, as I am inquiring into a specific aspect of the subjective experience of individual men. The phenomena in question are located within each participant's interior awareness, personal history, and meaning-making narratives, none of which can be found in the external, material domain.

Black (2008) points out that social science data, be it numerical or linguistic, are often abstracted representations of interior, subjective experience, and should not be confused with the phenomena themselves. Numbers are not grounded in the material domain any more than storied accounts of life experience. As such, the notion that equates "scientific" with "material" is flawed. Ironically, the methods employed in quantitative research associated with claims of what is objectively *real* rely on mental processes (e.g., mathematical and statistical analysis), which do not hold any tangible physical location that is apprehendable by the five physical senses. Mathematics is a set of logical processes, established conventionally and represented symbolically. Spoken and written language is also a conventional means of interpersonal communication in which experiences and ideas are represented in a structured, symbolic fashion. Just as someone trained in multivariate statistics is best suited to determine the correctness of findings inferred from multiple regression analysis, it requires a speaker of Japanese to engage in dialogue with another person speaking the language. Specific knowledge of meaning and inference is required to understand and interpret meaning, be it numbers or words. In both instances, abstraction is used to represent something of symbolic value that relates to an aspect of experience, which can be subject to empirical inquiry.

The Three Strands of Valid Knowledge

Broad empiricism is fundamental to all science. When exploring data derived from interior domains, specific ontological, epistemological and methodological issues associated with qualitative paradigms must be accounted for, but the basic process of inquiry must nonetheless be scientific in nature. Broadening the definition of empiricism does not diminish the quality of science in so long as the researcher rigorously adheres to logical, systematic and transparent sets of procedures. Regardless of the source of data, perspective (objective or subjective) or type of complementing methodology selected, Wilber (1998) holds that legitimate science is conducted provided the researcher is following the guidelines of an overarching method of inquiry, known as the *three strands of valid knowledge.*

Extending from his definition of a broad-based empiricism, Wilber (1998) describes a fundamental three-step model of the scientific method applicable to all manner of inquiry. These steps include:

> 1. Instrumental injunction. This is an actual practice, an exemplar, a paradigm, an experiment, an ordinance. It is always of the form "If you want to know this, do this."
>
> 2. Direct apprehension. This is an immediate experience of the domain brought forth by the injunction; that is, a direct experience or apprehension of data (even if the data is mediated, at the moment of experience it is immediately apprehended).
>
> 3. Communal confirmation (or rejection). This is a checking of the results, the data, the evidence, with others who have adequately completed the injunctive and apprehensive strands (p. 155-156).

Validation of the accuracy of quantitative data analysis requires peer review of members of a community of the adequately knowledgeable (i.e., fellow researchers trained and experienced

with research methodologies). The same principles apply in qualitative research, where communal confirmation or rejection of credibility and veracity comes from those adequately trained and experienced in qualitative methodologies, as well as participants themselves - as the co-creators of knowledge.

Research following the three strands of knowledge constitutes sound methodological procedure and is scientific in the strictest sense. As such, Black (2008) argues this logic effectively resolves the tensions between quantitative and qualitative paradigms in the social sciences. The debate should not be concerned with which set of methodological injunctions is *real science*, but which methodology is most appropriate for the point of inquiry. Wilber (1998) suggests that this requires a setting aside of well-entrenched dogmatic assumptions concerning research, to include a wider perspective, and more inclusive understanding of epistemology and methodology. A clarification and reconfiguration of the manner in which empiricism is appraised, along with an adherence to a transparent, systematic methodology, serves to make room for qualitative methods to be fully accepted within the scientific cannon among researchers across disciplines.

Qualitative Research Position

In the process of any approach to scientific inquiry, researchers are guided by a set of implicit and explicit assumptions about reality, human beings, knowledge and the acquisition of knowledge. All research is interpretive by nature, and guided by various beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 12). In this section, I present a brief, orienting generalization of the qualitative positioning that informs the design of my study. (For a comprehensive review of the various philosophical, historical and practical issues, see Denzin and Lincoln 2005, 2011.)

Qualitative research is not a monolithic enterprise unto itself, making a concise definition elusive. It can be described a set of complex practices and driven by multiple theoretical paradigms, which overlap and intersect with various academic disciplines (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln explain,

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, using various media. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 3).

As noted, this paradigmatic approach is often referred to as *naturalistic*, qualitative inquiry because it takes place in a contextual, natural setting where experience and phenomena occur without the undue, artificial influence of researcher manipulation (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). While it can be claimed, perhaps, that qualitative researchers do not engage in the type of systematic manipulation that is common in experimental research, the enactment of any injunction will categorically influence and shape any given point of inquiry. As I detail below, by virtue of engaging participants in dialog, researchers become co-creators of knowledge. The injunction itself precludes any tenable claims of preserving an unfettered, natural condition. Used in this sense, the term *naturalistic* can be misleading if this point is overlooked or dismissed.

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) describe several general characteristics common across various qualitative research approaches. Qualitative research focuses on descriptive data, using

words and images, as opposed to numbers. This allows for greater attention to be given to nuanced details and examination of "taken for granted" assumptions. The qualitative paradigm is concerned with the *process* of research as much as *products*. This process involves the experience of both researcher and participant, and also the manner in which assumptions and beliefs develop in the dialogical interaction. As such, qualitative researchers tend to take an inductive approach to data analysis, with theory construction developing from a "bottom up" approach, without prevalent *a priori* assumptions or expectations. Finally, naturalistic inquiry is concerned with *meaning,* with an interest in how people make sense of their lives from a subjective perspective. Bogdan and Bilken emphasize the diversity among qualitative methods, and caution that these general descriptors may not apply to all associated approaches, but are offered as comparative points of reference. In addition to these basic characteristics, the underlying philosophical assumptions that inform qualitative research, as a scientific enterprise, is one of the most salient issues in terms of its location and context as an academic discipline.

Philosophical Situation

Three interwoven philosophical strands form the basis of all scientific inquiry: ontology, epistemology and methodology. In order to establish a transparent, rigorous and empirically sound approach distinct from traditional positivist inquiry, qualitative researchers tend to articulate these three aspects in an explicit fashion. In the following paragraph, I briefly describe the constructivist ontological and epistemological assumptions that shaped my study, which are juxtaposed with the positivist perspectives of reality and knowledge. My selected methodological injunctions - data gathering (narrative interviewing) and data analysis (thematic analysis) - are discussed in greater detail below.

According to Guba and Lincoln (2005), positivist ontology is based on a premise of *naive*

realism, which assumes that an objective reality is both real and apprehendable. Knowledge, then, is acquired by virtue of the "monological gaze" of the scientist, who apprehends aspects this material reality, while standing apart from it (Wilber, 2000a). Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, tend to subscribe to various ontological and epistemological assumptions that differ to varying degrees from the positivist perspective, such as post-positivism, critical theory, and participative reality (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The relativist and social constructionist notions of reality and its apprehension is another set of epistemological stances commonly utilized in qualitative research, and forms the basis of the philosophical assumptions that underpin the current study.

Gergen (1985) argues, discourse about the world is not an accurate reflection of the world, but "an artifact of communal exchange" (p. 266). As such, the constructionist-based qualitative researcher is situated within the research as an integral aspect of both process and product. The production of knowledge is a dialogical, intersubjective, process between scientist and participant. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) suggest that the personal biography, values and social situation of the researcher cannot be held as distinct from the research, but are a basic aspect thereof. The philosophical divergences underlying positivist and constructionist-informed research are fundamentally different, yet commonalities nonetheless abound.

Qualitative inquiry places an emphasis on the processes by which social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Given the nature and intent of my study, the use of a qualitative methodology is most appropriate. In asking participants when they became men and how they knew that it had occurred, I am asking them to report on a specific personal experience or experiences in relation to their sense of subjective identity, which is situated in their unique social and life circumstances. The data, in this case, is embedded in

personal narratives. Exploring these narratives in dialogue, I was able to co-create rich descriptions of their experiences of becoming men. The process of interviewing ten men on this topic allowed me to co-develop a compilation of data, to which I applied a thematic analysis, a process for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Researcher: Human as Instrument

Keeping with the tenets of this qualitative research paradigm, it is important that I acknowledge how my own subjectivity - biases, beliefs and assumptions - are embedded in the study. This is, perhaps, an uncommon step when viewed from a traditional, monological, positivist research perspective. In this process, I am not a removed, independent actor who reports observations and facts. I was as involved as my participants were in generating data. In my dialogical relationship with my participants, it is taken as axiomatic that, together, we co-constructed the data, and shared in producing new knowledge through an interactive process. As Guba and Lincoln (1981) explain, "Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher - the *human as instrument*" (p. 124). The person that I am integrally shaped every aspect of my thesis research, process and product. (In the Introduction chapter, I included the Researcher Context section for the sake of researcher transparency, in maintaining consistency with the methodological considerations described here.)

Narrative Positioning

Narratives, or life-stories, are the fundamental means by which experience is made meaningful (Polkinghorne, 1988). Narrative inquiry is an approach to research situated within the qualitative paradigm, and based on a constructionist epistemology, and is fundamentally concerned with the telling and hearing of personal stories that serve to shape and order sequences of life events (Chase, 2011; Moen, 2006; Polkinghorne). Stated succinctly, "We know the

world through stories that are told about it" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 415).

Moen (2006) traces the development of narrative inquiry to Vygotsky's (1978) position that learning and development occur in social and cultural contexts, and Bakhtin's (1986) notion of the dialogic nature of all human action, which consists of three essential components - utterance, addressee and voice(s). In the context of human research, narratives develop dialogically, wherein stories are co-constructed in the interaction between researcher and participant, or "co-researchers" (Chase, 2005). The narrative is taken as the basic unit of analysis, though which researchers may seek to recognize "broad patterns, themes, images, and qualitative characterizations in order to generate new theories about lives or to understand a single [and typically note-worthy] life in full" (McAdams, 2011, p. 16).

Moen (2006) suggests that there are *three basic claims* and *three recurrent issues* concerning narrative research. The basic claims include: a) the notion that human beings organize their experience of the world into narratives (as suggested above); b) that the stories told depend on the individual's experience, values, audience and time/place and context of the telling; and c) that each narrative has multiple voices embedded within, representing various levels of experience. The three recurrent issues Moen identified within narrative inquiry include: a) the quality of the relationship between the researcher and participant; b) the process of development of a narrative from direct experience to an oral account of the story, and to a written account; and c) the ongoing hermeneutic nature of narrative research. If it is to be effective and ethical, inquiry carried out in this fashion and interacting with participants in the co-construction of narratives requires mindfulness of these dynamics on the part of the researcher.

Narrative researchers are primarily concerned with individual life experiences and how they unfold over time (Cresswell, Hanson, Plano & Morales, 2007). Gathering (or co-creating) data

through in-depth, narrative interviews, researchers transform the interviewee-interviewer relationship into one of co-creators, which requires a shift from the traditional practice of asking participants for narrow, specified accounts of their experience to actively inviting open-ended stories (Chase, 2005; 2011). By design, my research question (i.e., asking about individuals' experiences of having become men) invites the telling of the personal, distinctive story of each individual participant, as it relates to the topic. Although a traditional semi-structured interview could be used to explore aspects this issue, engaging with participants in a narrative-based dialogue created the opportunity for a fuller exploration of their personal experience relative to this key aspect of their identity.

As stories can be told from multiple perspectives and voices, narrative interviews created space for a natural flow of *telling* from cognitive-level understanding as readily as from an emotional/affective, physical, spiritual, or social/relational domains. A dialogical approach to exploring the participants' experiences holds potential to facilitate a more complex and richer co-creation of men's narratives, and consequently, a deeper shared understanding of the meaning made of their experience. This approach also provides space for a potential elucidation of the broader influencing contexts and dynamic factors that contribute to the achievement of manhood. Mischler (1986, as cited in Chase, 1995) suggested that the inclination to tell stories is fundamental to understanding life experience to a degree that participants will provide narrative-based responses, regardless of the approach taken by the interviewer. Following this logic, and with respect for the nature of my inquiry and specific questions I am posing, the use of narrative interviewing was the most appropriate option for my study.

In application, narrative accounts "can be analyzed for content themes, structural properties, functional attributes, and other categories that speak to their psychological, social, and cultural

meanings" (McAdams, 2011, p. 15). As such, there is an important distinction to be made between *narrative interviewing* as a means of gathering data, and *narrative analysis*, which is a method of data analysis. There are a multitude of expressions of narrative analysis as a methodology, many of which are quite distinct from one another. Generally, however, narrative inquiry focuses on analyzing with the multiple contexts in which events and occurrences are oriented into a temporal unity by means of a storied plot (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5). Although narrative analysis is commonly used in tandem with narrative interviewing, the use of an alternative approach to data analysis is also common practice (Chase, 2005; McAdams, 2011). I chose to incorporate narrative interviewing with thematic analysis for this study, which is methodologically distinct from narrative analysis. A thorough description of thematic analysis, and the argument for its appropriateness for this method with my study is included below.

Interview Procedure: The Narrative Interview

The narrative interviews that I conducted with each participant stemmed from a two-part question that invited each man to share his personal story about achieving manhood: "When did you become a man, and how did you know?" I correctly anticipated that the nature of the telling would follow a basic story structure, sometimes told in a linear fashion and in other instances, presented in a more non-linear, meandering process. As this approach to interviewing is a dialogical exchange between each participant and me, I took an active role in asking clarifying questions, prompting, requesting additional information, and reflecting key aspects of the story to help organize the story to enhance my understanding and comprehension. At the end of each interview, I asked the participant, "Do you feel that I have heard and understood your story as you have told it to me today?" This was included to invite any additional details the participant would prefer to include and ensure that they had the sense that I was empathically attuned with

their telling of their story prior to completing the interview.

The interviews were conducted both over the telephone with participants located remotely throughout Canada and in person at the University of Victoria with one local participant, and took place in November and December 2013. There were 10 interviews in total, running approximately 25 to 50 minutes in duration. All dialogs were recorded using an electronic audio recording device. Audio recordings, transcripts and consent forms will be maintained on a password protected laptop computer, and will be erased after five years in storage.

Transcription

Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) discussed a series of issues stemming from the transcription of recorded information (i.e., audio recording of interviews). Arguing that transcription is an integral, albeit often unacknowledged, process in the qualitative data analysis, they point out that "transcription is theory laden; the choices that researchers make about transcription enact the theories they hold and constrain the interpretations they can draw from their data" (p. 64).

Due to the emergence of new technology in the last several decades, researchers have been able to audio and video record interviews with increasing ease. Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) suggested that the capacity to review recordings at will has resulted in the subjective element of the transcription process often being overlooked or denied, leading to the assumption that the content of the recording and its subsequent transformation into text creates "objective" data. Ochs (1979) refutes this, arguing that, "the problems of selective observation are not eliminated with the use of recording equipment. They are simply delayed until the moment at which the researcher sits down to transcribe the material from the audio or video tape" (p. 44). Following Poland (1995), Lapadat and Lindsay suggest that researchers become more reflective

about “whether, when, and how we use transcription” (p. 76).

The transcription methods enacted for this study are an expression of the social constructionist epistemological stance that underpins the larger research project, which assumes that all data and knowledge generated is co-constructed in the dialogical interaction between the participants and me. Transcription is a prime expression of the researcher’s direct inclusion of self and perspective in the research process. Listening to the audio recording of the interview and proceeding to represent the spoken words in written language is reflective of the layers of abstraction the data is subject to in the methodological process, which is left to the subjective discretion of the researcher.

I am aware of the subjective nature of the position I take in the context of my research. I have taken efforts to be mindful and transparent of my personal experiences, beliefs, assumptions and biases that shaped the course of my study, including the transcription process. As such, I included as much of the audio recording as is reasonable into the transcribed dialog as necessary to depict some of the subtler nuances. This included filler utterances (e.g., *um*, *hmm*, *ah*), instances of laughter or other non-linguistic expressive occurrences, and acknowledging in brackets any noteworthy variances or tendencies in speech (e.g., deliberate and pensive, or pressured, fast paced manners of speaking). The words spoken to one another are essential, but the specific qualities and nuances of speech and tone provide context and meaning to dialogical interaction. Including only words and excluding the subtler aspects of the interviews would unduly delimit the quality of data, potentially leading to an impoverished analysis process, with the potential to skew my findings.

While it is not possible to capture everything that occurs in the dialogs, particularly when transcribing audio recordings (most of which were conducted over the telephone), it is critically

important that I reflect as much detailed content as possible in the transcriptions to create as rich of a depiction of the encounter as possible. I was not necessarily able to produce a completely accurate, objective account of the dialogs: the transcriptions are an abstracted depiction of co-created data, a process involving my subjective perceptions and understanding of what I hear and appraise. Furthermore, as I proceeded with the transcription of each interview, I had to make decisions on a continual basis as to what to include, what to exclude, while emphasizing certain aspects of the content over others. By virtue of engaging my participants in narrative interviews, personally transcribing the recordings into text, and subsequently analyzing the data, I co-constructed all aspects of knowledge derived from the study with my participants.

Thematic Analysis Positioning

According to Polkinghorne (1988), the study of meaning requires use of linguistic data and hermeneutic reasoning, which incorporates a process of pattern recognition to draw conclusions about the meaning content of linguistic messages (p. 7). Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis - an established, systematic approach to identify, analyze and report patterns, or themes, within data – as a means to this end. "It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail… and interprets various aspects of the research topic" (p. 79).

Boyatzis (1998) succinctly outlined the basic methodological process associated with thematic analysis, noting that, "Observation precedes understanding. Recognizing an important moment (seeing) precedes encoding it (seeing it as something), which in turn precedes interpretation. Thematic analysis moves you through these three phases of inquiry" (p. 1). This approach is a process for encoding qualitative information; a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data; and a means of relating seemingly unrelated material (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme is a pattern located explicitly or implicitly in

the data that describes and organizes possible observations, or interprets aspects of the phenomenon (Boyatzis, p. vii).

Historically, thematic analysis has been a central approach to qualitative data analysis within psychology and other social sciences. Until recently, however, researchers were often without a common framework to articulate the theoretical underpinnings and procedural process of this method (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although a number of disagreements and divergences persist, a series of well-developed, systematic methodological guidelines have been published to orient researchers to the phases of thematic analysis to aid in ensuring a higher degree of rigorousness. In the case of the present study, the data gathered in my narrative interviews and transcribed into written material was subject to a thematic analysis process.

Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) list a series of five decisions researchers are advised to explicitly consider prior to data collection and analysis when developing a thematic analysis based study. Moreover, these issues need to be the subject of "an ongoing reflexive dialog" throughout the study (p. 82). In this section, I will identify these options and describe the rationale for my choice with respect to each.

What counts as a theme?

Braun and Clarke (2006) define a theme as capturing an important feature in the data as it relates to the research question, which represents a patterned, or meaningful response. As such, the determination of what will count as a theme in my study relies on how the researcher applies specific criteria in the analysis of their data and in relation to the development of themes. Prevalence may refer to the number of instances appearing in a single transcript, or across the entire data set. In this case, once a pattern is recognized as appearing with sufficient frequency

(i.e., in 50% + 1 of the transcripts), it will be considered to have crossed the requisite threshold. Having interviewed 10 participants, I counted an item as a validated theme when it appeared in at least six of the transcripts. In situations where clusters of unique or noteworthy responses appeared that are key to the point of inquiry, I described the items as a *notable category of response* and provided a rationale for its significance. Responses prevalent across the transcripts that depart from the research focus were reported as *auxiliary findings.*

Determining the legitimacy of a given theme requires confirmation from a community of the adequate. The themes were vetted in a three-fold process. Data analysis was conducted under the guidance of my thesis supervisor, who provided initial veracity of the themes with respect to their relationship with the data. Secondly, the findings were presented to my participants for endorsement. Finally, my thesis committee examined my methodological process and themes, providing additional oversight in the thesis oral examination.

Rich Description of the Data Set Versus Detailed Account of One Aspect

Secondly, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that researchers determine the scope of their data set. In instances where the inquiry is on the totality of a given topic, a rich, thematic description of the entire data set is indicated. My study, however, was designed to examine one key aspect of manhood (i.e., becoming a man), and not the totality of the construct. Accordingly, I focused on themes pertinent to my specific investigation. Additional pervasive patterns recognized across the data sets were also reported, but not classified as primary themes. These categories represented auxiliary findings that represent important issues that extend beyond the current study, and contributed to shaping the recommendations for future research.

Inductive versus Theoretical Thematic Analysis

The third question relates to the two basic that ways patterns are identified in data in

thematic analysis: inductively or deductively (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes derived through an inductive coding process are largely data-driven, without prior assumptions or criteria for a coding frame or the researcher preconceptions. The authors caution that "researchers cannot free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological commitments, and data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum" (p. 84). A theory-driven approach to thematic analysis, however, would tend to be informed by the researchers interests in the topic and theoretical persuasion, and is more amenable to a detailed analysis of a given aspect of the data. For this research, I proceeded with a theory-driven approach, given my personal and professional interests in the topic, my familiarity with the literature and the appropriateness of this approach with respect to my research question. Themes, in this case, will be derivative of direct responses to the research question with minimal ambiguity and superfluous coding that extends beyond the focus of the study.

Semantic versus Latent Themes

The fourth question Braun and Clarke (2006) asked researchers to determine is whether they will identify themes on a *semantic* or *latent* level. Semantic themes rely on explicit or surface meanings of the data, and the researcher makes no interpretations beyond what was stated by the participant (p. 84). Conversely, latent-level themes involve interpretive work, examining the ideas, assumptions, conceptualizations, and ideologies that are inferred as informing and shaping the semantic, surface content of the data (p. 84). Semantic themes, therefore, tend to be descriptive, whereas latent themes require theorization.

This study was designed to analyze the data for semantic themes. Given the nature of my topic and research question, this approach facilitated the depiction of the precise aspects of the narrative data that inform each theme, without having to rely on inferring or interpreting that

which has no tangible support. With the co-constructed nature of the data, which was derived from the narrative interview process, I was able to ask for clarification or additional information if my understanding of part of a story was unclear. This approach significantly limited any speculation about what a participant may have meant to indicate. Latent themes require that the researcher *read between the lines* in theme development, which effectively makes validation by a community of the adequate impossible. Semantic themes, on the other hand, are readily accessible to endorsement or refutation.

Essentialist/Realist versus Constructionist Epistemology

Braun and Clarke's (2006) fifth question asks researchers to consider the epistemological basis of their study: essentialist/realist or constructionist. As detailed above, my study is consistent with the latter position. The processes of interviewing, transcription, and data analysis was based on the assumption that I will be intersubjectivly co-creating knowledge with my participants through social discourse, use of language and shared meaning concerning a socially-mediated construct.

These five questions provided me with a series of reference points as I conducted my study. It was helpful for me to return to these distinctions on a continual basis to ensure that my approach remained consistent with my stated intentions at every step in the process, with particular reference to data analysis. These principles formed the basis of my study design, and monitoring my adherence to the guidelines assisted me in keeping the research process on-track.

Thematic Analysis Process

Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a step-by-step set of guidelines for conducting a study using thematic analysis:

1. Familiarizing yourself with your data (transcribing data, reading and re-reading the

data, noting down initial ideas).

2. Generating initial codes (coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, and collating data relevant to each code).

3. Searching for themes (Collating codes into potential themes, and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme).

4. Reviewing themes (checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts, and generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis).

5. Defining and naming themes (ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, and generating clear definitions and names for each theme).

6. Producing the report (selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, and producing a scholarly report of the analysis) (p. 87).

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines, after transcribing the audio recorded interviews, I re-read each transcript multiple times to become immersed in the data. Once sufficiently familiar with the data, I reviewed each segment of dialogue once more and coded each point that appears to contain material that provides a response to the research questions. This process was repeated a second time to ensure that I hadn't overlooked any pertinent responses or included any superfluous quotes that did not address the research question. I then isolated all selections coded as being responses to the research questions, and organized them into overarching groupings, and noted my perception of the logical consistency of the relationship between the segments. After numerous repetitions of this process and ongoing reflection, I refined the themes further in consultation with my thesis supervisor through several

iterations, until a name and operational definition was created for each. Once finalized, I presented the themes to the participants for their review. As the *community of the adequate* (Wilber, 1998), the ten men were asked to either refute or confirm the findings by virtue of their endorsement of the themes.

Participants

The basic inclusion criteria required that all participants self-identify as being a man, age 19 or older (the age of majority in British Columbia) and sufficiently fluent in English language to give informed consent and participate in the research process. The specified age demarcates access to full adult privileges and civic participation in the jurisdiction of the researcher. While there are various possible cut-off ages that could determine the criteria, selecting a legal definition such as this provides an equitable option. This should not be taken to suggest that those under 19 could not be considered to have achieved manhood. It was selected to ensure that the participants are legally recognized as adults, which may have no bearing on any given person's subjective appraisal of this aspect of their identity.

I developed a two-fold approach to recruit participants for this study. Initially, I sent an email communication containing the basic information, inclusion criteria, objective and parameters of the study to a selection of 15 colleagues and professional acquaintances known to have an interest in the topic and associated issues. The recipients were invited to contact me if they were interested in participating (self-nomination) and were asked to forward the information to others who would be eligible and potentially interested in becoming involved with the study (snowball sampling). This recruitment strategy resulted in the completion of 9 telephone interviews with men located in Vancouver, BC; Saskatoon, SK; Swan River, MB; Toronto, ON; and Halifax, NS. A tenth interview was conducted in person in Victoria, BC. One person

contacted me expressing an interest in the study and scheduled a time to discuss the possibility of participating, but could not be reached at the designated time. He did not follow up with me or respond to my subsequent email inviting him to reschedule. Two additional men contacted me to indicate a desire to participate, but this occurred after the timeframe for conducting interviews had come to a close.

I developed a second recruitment strategy that would have used posters situated in various locations throughout Victoria, BC and other communities on southern Vancouver Island. Given the success of the initial recruitment strategy, however, this secondary approach was not utilized since a sufficient number of participants were secured in the initial recruitment drive.

As noted, the participants who took part in the study were located in various locations throughout Canada. Their ages ranged from 23 to 40 years of age. Nine of the men identified as being heterosexual and one identified as being Gay. Eight participants were fathers and two have no children. Six participants indicated that they are married (legally or common law), two are separated, one is engaged, and one described his status as being *in a relationship*. All ten participants speak English as their primary language. Seven men referred to themselves as Caucasian or as being of European descent, one as Canadian, one as Indo-Pakistani-Canadian and one as Dakota Sioux. All the participants had completed post-secondary training: four had completed at least one undergraduate degree; three had completed at least one undergraduate degree and are currently in graduate programs; one completed doctoral studies; one completed a professional certificate; and one had completed diplomas in construction and in formal music training, and is currently completing an undergraduate degree. Eight of the men are employed professionally and two are full-time students. All 10 participants met the inclusion criteria and, prior to the interview, indicated that they related to the research questions and would be prepared

to contribute their story to the research.

Ethical Implications

The University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) granted approval for the study prior to participant recruitment and interviewing. All activities related to my study were in strict adherence to the Tri-Council Policy (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2010), which is fundamentally concerned with identifying and mitigating any potential risk to individuals by virtue of their participation. The policy defines "minimal risk" research as:

> (R)esearch in which the probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in the research is no greater than those encountered by participants in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research (p. 23).

The specific research question and methodological design of my study were developed with this qualification in mind. It was anticipated that participation would not extend beyond the minimal risk associated with *everyday life* activities.

As a reasonable precaution, if, in the course of the interview, participants reflected on upsetting memories or experiences and became distressed (e.g., the experience of becoming a man is associated with the death of an individual's father, evoking a grief response), specific protocols were in place to mitigate any potential harm. The participant would be offered to take a break before resuming, or to discontinue the interview. Given my academic training and professional experience, I am well trained to offer emotional crisis support if the situation necessitated. Moreover, I was prepared to provide all participants with a list of available supports and resources in their respective community (e.g., Vancouver Island Crisis Line,

Citizens' Counselling Centre and Men's Trauma Centre), in the event that they require follow-up professional support. Through the ten completed interviews, no situations resulted in the need to implement any of these contingencies.

Taking the time to meet with me to conduct the interviews may have inconvenienced participants. I sought to minimize this inconvenience by remaining as flexible as possible in accommodating each individual's schedule. In the event that there was cost for parking during the interview time, I was prepared to reimburse the fee. Otherwise, there were no specific, tangible benefits for participation. Participants were made aware that they may withdraw from this study at any point without question or negative consequence.

Qualitative Methodological Trustworthiness

At the outset of this chapter, I differentiated the epistemological assumptions of the qualitative and quantitative paradigms. These important distinctions necessitate a clarification of the respective validity claims associated with the two broad categories of research approaches, as each holds and assumes a different "kind of truth" (Wilber, 2000c, p. 402). In this section, I describe the established criteria to ensure methodological trustworthiness in qualitative research, and discuss the manner in which these principles applied to my study.

Credibility

In the context of qualitative research, *truth value*, or *truthfulness,* is subject-oriented, derived from the dialogical exploration of human experience. Positivist-oriented approaches rely on *a priori* assumptions of a single, objective reality and framed as *internal validity,* or the degree to which causal or correlational claims are valid (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Conversely, the epistemological stance of a constructionist-oriented, naturalistic inquiry holds that the apprehension of a given experience will vary from person to person. Each individual perspective

is unique, and specific to each person's subjective reality as it is lived, experienced, and understood. As such, multiple subjective realities are assumed. Qualitative research is concerned with representing those multiple realities as adequately as possible, and a study is "considered credible when it presents such accurate descriptions or interpretation of human experience that people who also share that experience would immediately recognize the descriptions"(Krefting, 1991, p. 216). This is referred to as *credibility* (Guba, 1981: Krefting, 1991), and is consistent with Wilber's (1998) notion of *communal confirmation*. In the current study, I anticipate that men with similar experiences would recognize the accounts, as would others adequately informed (experientially or conceptually) to appreciate the description. While there may be many common features associated with the experience of becoming a man, there is no ubiquitous narrative that all men share. As such, recognition may not be universal, but limited to those who can relate in some meaningful fashion.

Further to the aims of ensuring credibility, it is critically important for me to assess the influence of my background, perceptions, and interests in the context of the research topic. A high degree of *reflexivity* is required as the researcher is considered to be an essential part of the research. To track my experience, I have followed Krefting's (1991) advice to maintain a *field journal*, to record my various thoughts, feelings, reactions and ideas throughout the process. I began this practice with my initial readings for the literature review, and will continue through the final defence of my thesis. This practice has proven useful for resolving various inconsistencies in my understanding of issues presented in the literature review chapter, as well as exploring and clarifying some of the subtleties associated with the selected methodology. Another approach to supporting the credibility of my study was including the practice of referring my themes and descriptions back to the participants for feedback and endorsement,

which was completed via follow up telephone interviews.

Transferability

Applicability relates to the extent that research findings fit within other contexts, settings or groups (Krefting, 1991). Quantitative research determines applicability by the degree of *generalizability* of findings to the general population, or *external validity.* The qualitative analog is *transferability,* which is achieved when the researcher provides sufficient descriptive information about themselves, the research context, the processes, and participants to enable the reader to determine how the findings may be transferable (Morrow, 2005). I have provided a description of my relationship with the topic in the Introduction chapter of this document, and provided general information about the men who took part in this research. This will help to better contextualize the participants who formed the sample. This information was included above, in the Participants section in this chapter.

Dependability

Consistency refers to the likelihood that the injunction, if repeated, will produce comparably similar results. In quantitative research, the repeatable findings derived from a given experiment or measures are considered *reliable.* Conversely*, dependability*, the qualitative expression of consistency, assumes that there will tend to be a high degree of variability in findings across comparable studies (Guba, 1981). As such, this requires the researcher to take steps to ensure the maintenance of methodological stability. Given that the data is a co-construction between the researcher and participants, however, the data and subsequent findings will necessarily vary between researchers.

Confirmability

Neutrality is traditionally taken to mean researcher objectivity (Guba, 1981). The

qualitative view, however, is more concerned with the c*onfirmability* of the research. As I detailed above, constructionist-based qualitative inquiry assumes the direct influence and embeddedness of the researcher in their research, and intersubjective co-creation of knowledge with their participants. Instead, the burden of neutrality is shifted from the investigator to the data, "requiring evidence not of the certifiability of the investigator or his or her methods but of the confirmability of the data produced" (p. 82). From this perspective, neutrality is established with achieving credibility and transferability (Krefting, 1991).

In my study, the confirmability of data was the criteria for the process of transcribing the dialogs, as was described above. After completing the initial transcription for each interview, I listened to the recordings again while reading the transcribed data, which was then represented in written form. Throughout this process, I made amendments to the text as necessary to ensure a high degree of relative, representative accuracy of the dialogs. Furthermore, in several instances, I reviewed segments of recordings several times until I was confident that the transcribed data was as consistent as possible with the words spoken.

Confirmability also extends to the findings derived from the data analysis process, which should accurately represent the situation being researched as far as possible, and not "the beliefs, pet theories, or biases of the researcher" (Gasson, 2004, p. 93). This is based on the notion that "the integrity of findings lies in the data and that the researcher must adequately tie together the data, analytic processes, and findings in such a way that the reader is able to confirm the adequacy of the findings" (Morrow, 2005, p. 252). I included two audit strategies to my coding procedures, involving a code-recode process, meaning repeated coding of the same segments of transcript at least one week apart to verify the consistency with which I identified key segments of dialogue, as applicable to the research question. Furthermore, my coding process was also

reviewed and discussed with my supervisor to ensure a high degree of methodological credibility and dependability (Krefting, 1991). In the results chapter of my thesis, the themes are presented along with supporting source quotes from each respective participant. Providing documentation to support interpretations is necessary to demonstrate neutrality in relation to the data, thereby enhancing the confirmability of the study (Guba, 1981).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I delineated between two expressions of empiricism and presented an outline of a basic, trans-paradigmatic scientific methodology. The theoretical basis of qualitative research was described along with a discussion of my data gathering and data analysis methods, narrative interviewing and thematic analysis, respectively. I detailed the participants recruitment process and the ethical considerations associated with my study. Finally, I presented a trustworthiness criteria specific to qualitative research.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The data gathering procedure for this study consisted of narrative interviews conducted with ten participants who self-identified as being men and met the minimum age requirement of 19 years. The participants ranged in age from 23 to 40. As described in the previous chapter, the interviews consisted of two basic questions posed to the participants: *When did you become a man* and *how did you know*? Consistent with general guidelines for narrative interviewing, I ask each participant to respond in the form of a story (i.e., "Tell me the story of when you became a man…"). Once data gathering was completed, I transcribed the interviews and subjected the transcripts to thematic analysis, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines. During the coding and thematicizing process, I developed three primary themes, and one *notable category of response* is also included, as it was recognized as potentially key with respect to the research question, but did not reach the critical threshold to be considered a primary theme. In the process of coding the transcripts, there were a number of noteworthy consistencies across the data set that were not direct responses to the specific research questions, yet represent significant issues within the larger context of the study. These *auxiliary findings* are briefly introduced in this chapter as prevalent data points of considerable interest to the larger issue of manhood and masculine identity. While completing the data analysis procedures, I was in regular contact with my supervisor to ensure that my process was effectively audited and reviewed, which helped me to adhere to the specified methodology and maintain the dependability of the study (Krefting, 1991). Consistent with Krefting's guidelines for maintaining credibility in qualitative research, the themes presented in this chapter were reviewed and endorsed by the participants.

Primary Themes and Supporting Quotes

The following are the titles and descriptions of the three themes developed in the data

analysis process, which are accompanied by verbatim supporting excerpts drawn directly from the transcripts.

1. Gaining attributes associated with self-reliance

10 participants validated a theme that associates the experience of achieving manhood with an emergent capacity for 'self-reliance.' As a superordinate theme encompassing a number of dimensions, clarification of my use the term is required. Established definitions of self-reliance tend to be based on lists of characteristics subsumed within the term. One dictionary definition qualifies the terms as "Reliance on one's own capabilities, judgment or resources" (Houghton Mifflin, 2009). The criteria for self-reliance, as it is applied to this theme, is broad, and includes a variety of attributes and qualities identified by participants as integral to their initiation into manhood. These traits were expressed in various ways, including: (a) independently making one's way in the world; (b) development of new abilities or capacities; (c) assuming responsibility in caring both for self and/or others in the context of relationship; (d) faith in autonomous decision-making; (e) a sense of empowerment, personal power, confidence or competence in general or specific areas of life; (f) self-definition of identity despite social expectations and pressures; and (g) personal or professional achievement. Foundationally, these examples refer to meaningful encounters or events in which the individuals experientially learned self-trust through drawing from their abilities and their inner resources to effectively navigate and surmount various life challenges. By definition, this represents a realization that they were able to rely on themselves to solve problems, meet their needs and, in several cases, to be of benefit to others as well. (Theme validated initially by all ten participants, and unanimously endorsed in the final check).

Participant 1: "And that was hard… I mean that was the first time I really was on my own. I had to go find an apartment in a city we didn't know that well… on my own… to find those new

jobs. Sure with the help of friends, but basically on my own. And situate an identity that was not connected to home. That was not connected to my childhood, because I knew my friend for a long time. So when times got tough, him and I could get through it… now it was up to me to figure this stuff out. I could still phone [my friend], I could still phone my family and my friends, but ultimately I had to figure out who I was."

"And I was able to… sitting down with my partner and saying everything I've said to you now and more… a lot more. Because I knew it was the right thing to do and because I wanted to have… a life with her, and I knew that it was the only way to do it was to be entirely open. And I was able to do that now. … I knew that I had become a man at that particular context because instead of repeating the cycle of being in a relationship, finding fault with her and ending it… or being in a relationship and doing things to annoy her so she would end it so I wouldn't have to… and that was a vicious cycle for many years, or in just staying single so I didn't have to worry about the relationship. For once I was able to find a problem, admit there was a problem and go past it by working with another person. (pauses) So that is one way I knew I was successful in becoming a man… that I actually recognized becoming a man."

Participant 2: "I can do these things without help. That power… the power of the capacity to do it for yourself. And… and its not that I didn't like getting help or being a part of a family or community, but it was really big for me to do that on my own. And it really helped with confidence, skill building and autonomy."

"It was visceral, meaningful, it had a big impact and it felt like that was kind of the onset of something different. Like a different way of being in the world… that I left behind that care that I always needed or that care that was always given to me was left behind. I was becoming more confident and competent in doing things for myself. And for me, I think I attached that becoming more of a man and growing up."

Participant 3: "If I have a day where I feel a bit lost, you know… I don't phone anybody. I think about it. The thoughts… it's almost like I'm learning from it. There are many positives out of that… but again going back to our focus… instead of me, like at that moment… what I used to do… I would run… phone my dad and want to hear that "it's going to be okay." But I don't do that, and that's been great, to be perfectly honest. I don't phone anyone. I think about

it… and I really just examine what's going on and why am I feeling lost and what's going on and try to figure it out on my own. And that goes back to that moment of realizing that I am a man. Being a man and having a higher degree of self-reliance… and self-respect."

Participant 4: "I saw an ad or ended up meeting somebody through work or something like that… who was gay and openly gay. And [he] wasn't very masculine in the stereotypical masculine type thing. So I started to realize that not only is the society's stereotypical man not realistic for a lot of people, but I didn't have to be that… and not everybody was that. And the people who weren't, were happy with who they were. … I started thinking about my happiness and what I felt would make me, you know, okay. I was extremely unhappy with my life at that time. And I thought, you know, I have this beautiful daughter and that makes me happy, but there's still something missing still. … So I ended up separating from my daughter's mother and we worked out a custody agreement for my daughter. And I kind of…. came out. Now after I came out, I started to meet all kinds of gay men who were all different kinds of people. Some were feminine, some weren't. Some were in between. So it really opened up my definition of what a man was… …versus what society says a man is."

"I felt okay… okay to go and do things. I had a little bit of anxiety as a kid, and I felt like a lot of that went away. So to be able to… to walk around at night by myself where I lived, which I didn't like doing before. I didn't care after that. I probably had more things to be afraid of after that (laughs), but it didn't matter."

"I knew that I would have to provide and that sort of thing. I mean, I try not to hit on the stereotypical… what would be the stereotypical thoughts about what a man is, but when you think about it (laughs) it's kinda true. I know it's stereotypical… I had to provide and I had to protect… you know all of that came to mind. And it was like 'Wow! This is what it means.'"

Participant 5: "Looking back, I think one of the first times I knew I had become a man, I was 19 and I had… I had been tree planning in the summers for a few years... um… as a high school student. And that summer I turned 19, and the summer, the year before at the [university]… my old boss came out to ask me if I would consider being a tree-planting foreman. … so, to have my own crew. I was shocked and I actually thought it was a joke or someone was playing a prank on me. And he convinced me that it wasn't. So I said yes. And I think, you know… believing

that I could do it was the first kind of… there was something that happened for me… where I felt efficacy… or seeing myself through a lens of competency or leadership. So that was at the [university] probably in the late… late fall or winter of '92 I think… or '93. One of those years."

"So I went about rounding up this crew. Advertizing, interviewing. I did a terrible job of doing it, but whatever… I was trying to be kind of… wise about who I was bringing on and it was really hard because I couldn't find anyone who had experience. I went through a very difficult… especially… we started in May. … I think we started late April, May and into June… it was terrible. …They were very difficult to work with. We were all way too immature to be doing that… and… (pauses) ya, I guess I struggled. I forget what happened. I think at one point I got really angry with the guys not working. So you can imagine, day in and day out, they were just resting… and its all apiece, right? So the more the more you work the more money you make. The more they work, that determined how much I get paid."

"So I remember getting very angry with them and accidentally slamming the door on a guy's foot, and we were going to have a fight, but he backed down. And… ya… and then I think soon after that, talking to them and said, "this isn't working" and saying, "I'm not sure if I can keep you guys on… and it would probably be better for me to go back to planting trees… can we have a talk about this?" And then… things started to get better. They started to figure it out. I think I got some help from a senior guy."

"It was maybe July… and you know, a series of hot days and working with a new supervisor who I thought was pretty cool. And I had gone through this process of realizing that I wasn't quote-unquote "one of them" any more. So, the differentiation piece with my friends and peers. And I was not a drinker. You know… I kind of grew up in a rigid church background. I may have had one beer before. This time… it was a long day of work. I had planted some trees. The group had planted some trees. You know, I had this kind of sense of satisfaction. I helped out the supervisor. We did a bunch of work after. We got back to a good meal waiting for us. And then, we drank a beer. I can see it now… we drank a beer up on this grassy hill above… up above the camp. I can't remember… this is probably idealized, but the emotional memory is that the supervisor handed me the beer. And just… it was something in that, and drinking that beer and that sense of satisfaction that felt like… okay… I can lead. I don't think I thought I was a man then, but looking back on it… there was a feeling of satisfaction, and confidence, and

leadership. Especially having come though quite a significant period of turmoil. You know, I wanted to quit. I found it very difficult to lead some these guys."

"And it was probably the overcoming of the struggle. … I think there… I might have even started to taste or begin to have the language of… that I'm getting somewhere here. Or maybe a feeling of competency or mastery."

Participant 6: "Definitely… in all 3 (experiences), I could sense great responsibility with all three of them, I suppose. So for me, I would associate manhood with a lot of responsibility… it's about the loss of innocence and taking on the intensity and responsibility of things not known before."

Participant 7: "Age 18 when I moved out… I think I was kicked out by my mom's boyfriend at the time. That would have been… but regardless, moving into my first apartment was… ya, it was a realization. Ya, I'm a man now. It's time to survive on my own without the parents and stuff like that. Ya… and once I started doing it, you know, realizing that… ya, its only me (laughs). It's only me and nobody else, and my life's going to be what I make of it, eh?"

"So basically, I was thrown into manhood, got my ass kicked, and then realized that… you know… you do or die, right? You need to basically… I guess I would have had to tell myself… just get a job, start your life, and don't be a bum."

"That was more of… where I realized that I could actually survive, that I could actually do it. Nobody's going to stop me. Nobody. Ya, I remember going through that and feeling more of a man, doing that because it was more my choice."

Participant 8: "I guess, I could say what was the first time I was convinced I was a man and not just a boy was when I started working. So, my first job was a big job. I started working right away at 17 at a hospital doing research. So for me, working with adults, working in a very serious environment… a hospital… you know, working on medical research. Pretty important, professional work… pretty decent money compared to my peers."

"And the ability to show competence, to me, to them… allowed me to show them I'm recognized now. So that's the heart of that first, kind of, sense of at the time, I'm a man. Others have recognized my ability and for now I've grown into something more than I was before."

Participant 9: "So, moving out of my home and onto my own for the first time and being successful in doing that contributed somewhat to me moving towards seeing myself as being a man."

"That would have been in '06… that would have moved into an acquiring of things. (laughs) You know… and these certainly aren't things that were my top priorities in life, but they have had an impact in terms of that whole idea of autonomy and independence. So… purchasing a house, entering into a mortgage for the first time… gives you a sense of responsibility and seriousness… so I've always seen a transitioning from youth to man… as involving some sense of responsibility and acceptance of that."

Participant 10: "So manhood for me… I was thinking about it and I couldn't figure it out. Early on I had this pressure, right, because they're like… it was almost like morally you should get married young and have kids. There was that pressure and I think because of my ADD, I just knew I couldn't handle it. Even now, it takes a lot to function, so I couldn't. If that was becoming a man, in the context… I just couldn't do that. So for a long time, I kind of purposely decided I'm going to be an adolescent and do what I want. I'm not going to try to do this 'man thing.' Anyways… I graduated high school and did construction for a year. Construction school. And I think I really just started feeling a sense of manhood then regardless of the whole getting married thing. I just thought that wasn't for me, and then, just getting out and dealing with a really, really rough environment."

"[My friend] had a body shop and I fixed up a car. I bought a car through him… he could buy auctioned cars… and I fixed it up. It was a lot of work. I did it after… I paid for the car, I paid for all of the parts and I did all of the work myself. It was this really big thing… and I did it after school. That was a really big endeavour. So once I got that, my car done and done my program… so then I started working. In the summer before that, I worked at a truss plant. And it was brutal… just brutal work. 12 bucks an hour, but I saved enough money to do this course. So I worked at the truss plant to pay for the construction program and it was really intense. And then I fixed the car… basically got myself a car. So then I was set… I had a job, a car… and definitely I felt a sense of manhood. I had gone out in the world and accomplished things."

2. Change related to fathers or fatherhood

Eight participants validated a theme associated with a change in relationship with the overarching concept of 'fatherhood.' There were three different expressions of this type of experience that were noted across the transcripts. Four men described specific instances in which they recognized their fathers as fallible human beings. This involved examples of standing up to their fathers, recognizing that their father is not the idealized man he was thought to be, or being put in a position where the roles were reversed, with the son effectively providing care and support for their father. One man described an encounter in which his father's admonition motivated him to take action, and ultimately changed his life trajectory. He described this as the only positive interaction he could recall having with his father. Another participant noted influence his father's values shaped his benchmark for knowing when he reached manhood. Finally, three men described the life-changing experience of having children and becoming fathers. These encounters or events, in some capacity, altered how the participants related to the notion of fatherhood, which they identified as catalytic in initiating them into manhood. (Theme validated initially by eight participants, and endorsed by nine after final check).

Participant 1: "And my relationship with my father…. wasn't the greatest. We spoke on and off and at that time in [specific city], we weren't really speaking that much at all… with his history of depression and my history with him. So, (pauses) I remember talking to my sister right before the Christmas holidays… um…. and things sounded great. You know, she had a supposedly good relationship with him at the time. Everything was going good, and when I got home at Christmas…. she was a mess. He had sent another hurtful… extremely hurtful card to her… and I had just had enough. And from that point on… (pauses) I don't know if it was… or where it came from, but it just felt like it was up to me to now negotiate the rules of his relationship and contact with us… actually confronting him in the way he's been. I realized that, 'Ya, I'm a man.' I dealt with the person who put me on this earth. You know, that was my dad. I was able to tell him everything I needed to say. I was able to explain and express… uh… all

my intentions and all the hurt from that point in [specific city] to when we were kids to future dates. But I think it was that initial instant in [specific city] where I had enough and responded to him by saying, 'this is done and you're not treating us this way any more.'"

Participant 3: "And for me, to really answer that question… that I am a man, that I can, you know, say to my self "I am a man," is when I really realized that I took my dad off of that pedestal I put him on. I still have great respect for my father. I love my father very much. He is one of my best friends. But taking him off that pedestal and not always having to… not always looking at him as the kind of man I need to be… and realizing that he's not the superman. And when I realized that I need to stop trying to be the man he is, but be my own man… And looking back through my life… I'm 40… I have been a man, and looking back on my life I have been a man, but that moment that I realized that have been a man is the moment I took my father off of that pedestal."

Participant 4: "When my daughter was born, I was… I just turned 20 years old. I think that I kind of realized that I hit some sort of a point of manhood at the time… Since I was a father, and you know, I had somebody else that relied on me continuously for support and that sort of thing."

"So in that context anyways, I had to step up and be the dad, otherwise I don't know if I would have that chance later in life if I chose not to do it then. And because I… coming from a family where there was no male role model, or a decent male role model, I felt that it was my obligation, you know… I took part in creating this life, so I had to take part, too, in making sure… giving her everything I could, and making sure she is going to be okay. I mean, it was scary… but I guess it was worth the scariness… it was worth it at the end of the day."

Participant 5: "I had coffee with my dad. And yesterday, for some reason, I had this memory of him coming to see me when I was at [university], probably 6 years ago. … Maybe longer than that, even. And we went for a walk. He wanted to go for a walk with me and he was… he was there to tell me that he was divorcing my mom."

"But thinking back on it, it was another example of when I was … um… like it reminded me, I guess, that I was… I was a man there. Right then. The roles had reversed."

"It's almost like I was managing my life effectively. I had leadership of some kind… what was it? I have to explore this… I realized that… there's something in my character or in who I was that was an anchor for dad. And that he came to me for wisdom. It wasn't the first time [he did], but it was a good reminder of… that's what it meant to have crossed over into being a man. To be someone who brings stability and rationality and wisdom to the people they're in relationship with …and for me in particular, to family. … Maybe there's a mutuality or maybe a shared sense of holding each other. The only difference now is that there is no child and there can be a reversal. In a way, that marked a transition where I became the father."

Participant 6: "And then thinking about my own father. There were times in my late teens when those roles… the father-son line blurred. It was connected to a feeling like I was becoming something more than a child when I had to do things that were, uh… I guess fatherly in nature and… so for example… at 17, 18 maybe, the first time I would have had to drive my father to rehab or something like that. It certainly didn't feel like he was a father… my father. It felt like I was fathering him. Something like that. When those roles got blurry."

"When my children were born, I had a very active role. My ex-partner wanted to have a home based delivery with midwives. I was very involved. Not so much by choice. The midwife would say, 'okay do this… here comes baby… and catch!' So, I was a very active participant in that, and I thought this is sort of… I don't know. I had a vision of a silverback gorilla. Again, it goes back to the cliché, but it felt very animalistic, you could say, to be a father and to feel a sense of being a protector and that kind of thing. It felt manly to help deliver my child and to become a father."

Participant 7: "And finally, probably a year later… dropping out… failing out of my second year of university… I think it would have been one of the changing points in my life. That's when I quit drinking. That's when I really started to listen to what people were telling me. One of the only positive conversations I had with my dad at that time… with my dad ever… would have been right around that time, where he pretty much kicked my ass over the phone when I told him I quit university. He said… I think he told me to pretty much either go back to school or get my drivers license, and get a damn job and start making a life for myself. Basically, get off my ass and start doing something with myself. And as hard as it is for me to admit it, when he was raising his voice over the phone and telling me that… he pretty much lit a fire under me

and… I listened. Probably within 3 weeks… about 2 weeks later, I had my driver's license. And couple of weeks after that, I was in the oil patch. A month after that, I was on the drilling rigs, which was my goal."

Participant 9: "So I think probably the most significant sort of really observable event that happened in terms of really… piecing these things together and helping me feel like a man, I guess… would involve the birth of my first child and now my second child as well."

Participant 10: "My father was born in 1943 in Holland so he grew up after… the Germans starved Holland during the war, so he grew up in Holland and when he was young they didn't even have rubber for bicycle tires. All the trees were cut down. So he's instilled in me a very strong sense of… you have to make money. Money is very, very, very important. So I think… because my father… this is actually very interesting. My father… I felt… so… I finished a year… two years of [just] music and then I did a year of music and construction [at the same time], and then I just did construction because I decided I couldn't do music… there wasn't enough money in it. One of the reasons is that my father was very successful in electronics…. He liked electrical stuff. He built his first radio when he was 7 and went on with it. He went on to make over a hundred grand designing GPS systems. Ya, so for me, I really think that I have been chasing all my life to live up to that."

3. Experience of a 'felt sense'

Ten participants validated experiencing a significant "felt sense" that provided them with an awareness of something meaningful and important occurring in association with the events surrounding their achievement of manhood. These experiences were expressed with variability across the dialogs, but uniformly reflected a sense of knowing that was emotional or feeling-based in nature, and often with reference to a somatically oriented sensation. In some cases, it was a vague sense, whereas other men described awareness of a specific emotion or intensity. Others described feeling more 'masculine,' 'manly,' or 'like a man.' In each instance, this type of embodied knowing was later recognized as heralding their initiation into manhood. (Theme validated initially by all 10 participants, and unanimously endorsed in the final check.)

Participant 1: "Another was that… it was like a weight was lifted… it was… like, 'well look at this… look what happened when you changed from what you repeat… from the schemas that were so engrained in you. Look what happens.' And it was like it was this weight came off of me… and I know it's a terrible cliché, but I really did feel lighter."

Participant 2: "It was a very strong kind of visceral feeling. And I do remember that… It was summer time. School was out and everything, and I was doing these things on my own and I felt like, "Wow! This is big for me. This is different." And it felt empowering."

Participant 3: "I felt… and I've thought about this a lot. And looking back… there was an utter sense of (pauses) relief, but more proud. But it was a pride that… I felt proud when my kids were born. So there were many moments where I felt proud as a father, as an adult. But when that moment happened… I felt proud, but proud of myself. I'm going to put this out there, men… a lot of men, and I've worked with a lot of men… men do not feel proud of themselves enough. And I really think that… you know… I'm not going to say it was joy. To be honest, there was a little bit of sadness at first. You know, like HOLY CRAP! My dad is not as great of a man as I thought. 38 years… but, but there was definitely… I could go on about different emotions, but the one that stuck out the most was that I was proud of myself."

Participant 4: "I think I knew… physically I knew."

"And for me… it made me feel more masculine. I don't know why and I don't know if that makes sense… but it just… did. I felt… I felt proud and I could stand strong. I felt like a lot of the things I was worried about didn't matter anymore, or weren't as important."

Participant 5: "I think I knew…. there was just a felt experience at the time."

Participant 6: "Well… its… I suppose when I use the word 'intensity,' the feeling would be… um… (pauses) definitely with the 1st and the 3rd [experiences I talked about]… the sexual experience and having a child… it was almost visceral. When I think about the memories now, it's like every powerful experience. The hair on my arms almost stands up thinking about those times. I suppose with those, if I had to pick a feeling, it might be fear… just because… it's going into uncharted territory. With something that intense… ya, definitely there's an amount of fear. But I guess they're similar in that they're both wonderful experiences and there are great

memories associated with them… but there's also that bit of fear associated with a bunch of things. Something new, something sort of ominous in its responsibility. So, wonderful and scary at the same time."

Participant 7: "It would probably have been the first feeling that I had when I felt like a man."

Participant 8: "That's a tough question in a way because I feel like it happened so slowly. It kind of crept into my body... my mind over so many years… that sense of knowing is the peace I feel. That's the knowing… the peace I feel. I feel a certain level of peace and acceptance of myself and others."

"That was also a very powerful experience with my sense of manhood that made me feel like I'm okay… I achieved it now… I'm a man. At the time I wouldn't say that at any point I was explicitly saying 'I'm a man,' but I knew something felt different after I had sex with her. I knew something was different. After that relationship, I was different."

Participant 9: "I think probably if I look at it now and ask how did I know this was happening, it would be probably more the development of more of an internal sense of being at peace with myself, being comfortable in my own skin, and a feeling not conflicted about what I was supposed to be doing or achieving and more so just being, you know? … A lack of internal strife about feeling like I had to be getting somewhere with myself and more feeling like maybe I can just relax now and be present."

Participant 10: "And you know, that's actually interesting because I was way more confident on stage. I definitely felt like a man. Before I definitely felt like a boy. You're up on a stage and singing and whatnot… this is not like a manly thing and whatnot. But doing construction and showing up to rehearsal in my work clothes… I felt very manly… ya… I didn't really feel like a boy any more, running around on stage."

Notable Category of Responses

As previously discussed, there was one category of responses that did not meet the critical threshold to be considered a primary theme, but nonetheless represents an area of potential significance with respect to the topic. In this case, a small minority of participants

referred to the issue of *social validation* in their interview, but as will be discussed in the following chapter, this category is reflective of the findings well represented in the research literature.

4. Social Validation

Two participants described experiences in which their achievement of manhood resulted from the internalization of social validation received from others, which affirmed their sense of self as a man. (Validated initially by two participants, and endorsed by nine after final check).

Participant 8: "It was important for me to feel recognized by other men, to know that I am now a man. So it was… it was first being chosen to have the job and then being able to keep the job. And then being given other opportunities within the job… pay raises and the opportunity to work on other projects. It was the… it was sort of… a situation that kept arising that made me feel like these other men trust me. All three of my supervisors were all men… all PhDs and medical doctors. And them offering me opportunities, giving me encouragement… really made me feel like they respect me, they trust me."

Participant 10: "Well, I guess I did the first of my… I first went to music school a year after I did high school and a year of construction and then a two-year diploma in opera. And that was when I kind of felt like a boy for sure. Like at first, I think I felt more (pauses) immature than a lot of the other people because I had been in a rough world. Not necessarily a man."

"But the people in the arts didn't know that. They just knew I work construction and thought that was very, very manly. They looked at me totally differently. So the way they looked at me and treated me made me feel like a man. I just knew that they (pauses) they knew it was such a different world. They knew I was in this… especially the girls, right? They had been… come right out of high school. Maybe they worked at Wal-Mart. It's just so far from the experience of being out there in the cold with swearing, filthy men, throwing stuff around. It's like primeval to them. They can't… so I think they really… they see it somehow as very manly for them. So them respecting me like that made me feel manly. And because I knew that they felt like that, it enabled me to go on stage and I would feel self-assured."

Auxiliary Findings

The following issues were identified as prevalent across the interview transcripts. As they are not considered to be direct responses to the research questions, they do not meet the criteria as *de facto* themes derived from this study. As such, they were not submitted to the participants for formal review and endorsement. The ubiquity of these issues represented in the transcripts of the interviews with the men who took part in this study, however, is persuasive in considering these issues as important points of consideration in both conceptualizing of the issues associated with manhood and masculine identity, which represent potential points for future inquiry (which will be discussed further in Chapter 5).

Implicit Manhood

All of the participants made reference to the implicit nature of manhood. The primary issue associated with this category revolves around the infrequent nature with which manhood is openly discussed. It was common for participants to remark that they had never been asked nor reflected on the idea of what it means for them to be a man, nor was this something that was discussed within their families or communities while they were growing up. Furthermore, several men indicated that they struggled to think about what they were going to discuss in their interview, having not recognized the experiences in life that initiated them into manhood until that point. In these cases, the participants indicated that they were only able to recognize the onset of their manhood while thinking about the issue in preparation for the interview, during the interview itself, or at some other time when they retrospectively considered the same question in another context. None of the men indicated that they clearly recognized the specific meaning at the time of the critical experiences they pointed to as being catalytic in achieving manhood.

Developmental Process

An additional issue that was unanimously acknowledged by the group of participants is the notion that the achievement of manhood does not occur in a particular discrete moment in time or result from a singular event. Instead, it was regarded as more of a gradual, polyphasic set of successive experiences that unfold over time. Several men suggested that this is a life-long process of deepening and growth.

Questions, Doubts and Fears

Six of the participants referred to struggles with questions, fears and doubts as a feature of their process of becoming men. These features were associated with wonderings about whether they had sufficient strength, ability or capacity to surmount the various challenges they recounted in their narratives. One participant indicated that, at times, he would reflect on whether or not he was doing "what a man does." These finding suggest a significant degree of uncertainty associated with the process of overcoming life's challenges in the context of achieving and maintaining a sense of manhood.

Living by Morals and Values

The final auxiliary finding is associated with living in accord with morals and values. Six participants reflected on changes in the way they lived their lives as their sense of manhood extended and deepened after the initial experiences that they associate with the achievement of manhood. These ways of being include being focused on the care and well being of family and friends, civic mindedness and assuming leadership roles that allow them to guide others in a manner consistent with these principles. Several men also suggested that conducting themselves in this way represents their current developmental edge, and a primary issue in the ongoing unfolding of their sense of manhood.

These auxiliary findings represent key experiences of the dynamic process of achieving manhood and features thereof. Although these themes are not directly consistent with the research questions posed in this study, their prevalence in the data is nonetheless noteworthy. These factors will be revisited in the recommendations section in the final chapter of this document.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings that were developed in the process of conducting a thematic analysis with the ten narrative interview transcripts. The following chapter will consist of a review of the significance of these findings as they relate to existing literature and an in-depth discussion of the implications of this research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In this concluding chapter, I will discuss the unique findings of the present study in relation to the existing body of literature, as well as how the outcomes support and extend the previous literature covering the topic. This will be followed by an exploration of the strengths and limitations of the study. Recommendations for future research will be presented, along with a reflection on the researcher's post-study context and implications of the results for the field of counselling psychology.

Findings in Relation to Previous Literature

The results of this study, as presented in Chapter 4, illustrate several key thematic features associated with the experience of achieving manhood. As was noted throughout this document, this research fills a noteworthy gap in the literature, which serves to offer key insights into the life experiences that individuals associate with becoming men. Furthermore, the findings raise new questions that present a myriad of avenues for further empirical research in the area of men's issues.

In this section, the findings will be discussed in comparison with the existing literature. While there are a variety of conceptual and popular writings available specifically concerning the achievement of manhood and related issues, the issue is rarely raised in academic literature. Only one comparable example of published empirical research on this topic could be located, which focused on a group of second generation Australian men in a specific location within the country. Although a similar methodological approach was used in Crawford's (2003) research, the reported outcomes reflect significant differences in comparison with the findings of the present study. For example, Crawford reported that his participants were generally unable to indicate a specific moment or process that marked the onset of their manhood. In response to his question,

many participants discursively discussed experiences with sports, drinking and engaging in sexual intercourse. Crawford emphasizes that:

> The males in this study cannot with certainty and conviction, define or discuss what it personally means to them to be a man. For them it seems that what it is to be a man principally focuses upon biology and maleness, and to a lesser extent fatherhood (para. 30).

Conversely, the participants in the present study offered a variety of perspectives and opinions on their understanding of manhood and what it means to them in their respective situations beyond basic biological implications of being male, and associated behaviour.

As I suggested in the discussion of Crawford's (2003) research in the literature review chapter, the approach taken to posing the question of when his participants became men may have limited their ability to respond cogently (i.e., abruptly raising the question in the middle of an interview on general perceptions of masculinity, ostensibly with no opportunity to consider the question prior to the dialog). One of the *auxiliary findings* from this study concerns the implicit nature of manhood, given that all of the men who took part in the present study commented on their need to take time to reflect on their experience to be able to talk about their achievement of manhood. Crawford noted this same elusive quality in his article, but did not account for the fact that the timing and delivery of his question may have exacerbated the existing difficulty in identifying and articulating these life experiences. Prior to being interviewed for the current study, the participants were furnished with the questions for their consideration. Perhaps this afforded them the opportunity to adequately contemplate and reflect, which led to more specific responses. Given that the focus of Crawford's study was on more generalized notions of masculinity, perhaps concerns for experiences of achieving manhood were

of secondary concern to his overall aims. The present study was specifically intended to explore this topic in isolation, and the methodological approach was designed to account for this eventuality.

No previous research has focused on the issue of manhood achievement within North America or other western countries, making these results contextually unique. Some of the findings from this study are consistent with previous conceptual writings and research findings, while some represent relatively significant departures. The three themes that represent this study's main findings, along with the *category of noteworthy responses* and *auxiliary findings* are discussed below in relation to the existing literature.

1. *Gaining attributes associated with self-reliance*

Ten participants reflected on their experience of achieving manhood as associated with gaining qualities, attributes, or capacities associated with self-reliance. This finding is consistent with traditional notions of manhood and is reflected throughout the literature. In fact, the association between men and self-reliance may be so intertwined that it takes on clichéd proportions. According to Roget's thesaurus (2014), for example, *self-reliance* is listed as a synonym for *manhood*. "Manhood is kind of a male procreation; its heroic quality lies in its self-direction and discipline, its absolute self-reliance – in a word, its agential autonomy" (Gilmore, 1990). This study's findings are consistent with this relationship. Instances drawn from participants' narrative accounts include the ability to autonomously fend and care for oneself, to competently assume various roles in work and community, care and provide for family, trust in oneself to make decisions, to perform and achieve, and to confidently define one's self. These capacities were recognized as emergent with the experience of achieving manhood, each representing a point in the constellation of the self-reliance theme. As much as these examples

represent specific gains and affirming successes in the lives of these men, they also represent some of the basic social demands that individuals are required to meet in order to be considered men in the sociocultural context (Ashfield, 2011; Gilmore, 1990; Levant & Kopecky, 1996; Vandello & Bosson, 2012). Logically, the achievement of various expressions of self-reliance would be associated with the achievement of manhood.

The usage of the term 'self-reliance' is specific, and requires careful distinction from certain popular ideas associated with the concept. In this case, it does not refer to notions of stringent individualism and refusal of assistance or support from others, as was exemplified in Howard Rourk, the protagonist in Rand's (1994) The Fountainhead. While this perspective may reflect a common conception of self-reliance, it represents a highly limited and narrow expression, and should not be taken as synonymous with how it is operationalized to describe this particular theme. Although there are noteworthy qualities of individuation and autonomy that characterize the excerpts that constellate this theme, there also often remains a clear inclusion of interpersonal connection and concern for others in many of the participants' accounts. For example, in a number of the interviews, the participants described their emergent self-reliance as arising in a relational context, derivative of help received from others. Furthermore, some participants regarded these attributes as especially meaningful for facilitating or enhancing their ability to be more caring and engaged in their relationships and to be of benefit to others. Accordingly, self-reliance, as it is applied here, includes a notable relational dimension, which incorporates giving and receiving support and assistance in marriage, family, and work. As such, it could be that the achievement of manhood within these dimensions is associated, by extension, the requisite ability to be a responsible and reliable husband/partner, father, colleague, neighbour and citizen. Hammond and Mattis' (2005) qualitative inquiry into

the meaning of manhood (reviewed in Chapter 2) reported similar findings.

As was extensively discussed in the literature review chapter, there are significant pressures on men to live up to various social expectations. Presenting oneself in particular ways and exuding confidence, while competently fulfilling various complex and competing roles and responsibilities, is the fundamental means by which manhood status is validated in the social context (Vandello & Bosson, 2012). Depending on various personal and sociocultural factors, preliminary opportunities to successfully demonstrate these self-reliance-related attributes would effectively provide evidence that the associated status of manhood has, in some fashion, also been demonstrated. The catalytic experiences in which these occurrences took place would then be made meaningful as initiating the individual into manhood. Such an achievement may be quite affirming and result in the alleviation a certain degree of social and personal pressure. Conversely, the strain of seeking to live up to these gender role expectations may result is significant problematic consequences for men (Levant, 2011; Pleck, 1981, 1995). As such, there may be various liabilities that come to pass when attributes associated with this theme are not achieved, including experiences of shame (Krugman, 1995), depression (Real, 1999) and grief and loss (Ashfield, 2011; Lister, 1991). Some research has also suggested that a loss of various capacities and abilities is associated with a downgrading or loss of manhood status (McVittie and Willock, 2006). Although these cautionary descriptions of aspects of masculine identity are prevalent in the literature, explicit references to a specific drive or need to prove their manhood were not a prevalent feature in the participants' narratives.

An additional point of comparison with the existing literature is the overlap between the findings in this study and the results of previous research into experiences associated with becoming an adult. Sheer and Unger (1996) reported that events such as getting married or

purchasing a home, becoming financially independent, and having children were considered markers for adulthood. In many respects, these examples are consistent with the theme of self-reliance in association with manhood. As was suggested in the literature review chapter, there appears to be considerable overlap between the milestones associated with the onset of adulthood and manhood. Further research is required to determine if these similarities are considered to be an intersection between the two constructs, a confluence, or both.

2. *Change related to fathers or fatherhood*

There is a significant body of academic and popular literature concerning the various dimensions of fatherhood and the influence of the relationships between fathers and sons. Fathers represent a fundamental relationship in family life, commonly associated with the roles of progenitor, provider and protector across cultures (Gilmore, 1990). Responses that referred to either the participants' relationships with their own fathers or becoming fathers themselves, were highly influential in eight of the men's stories. This was expressed in several different ways, but issues associated with paternity were the common denominator.

The experience of having children and assuming the role of father for the first time was regarded as integral to becoming a man for several participants. Given that motherhood is strongly associated with womanhood (Vandello & Bosson, 2012), it would be logically consistent to recognize the relationship between fatherhood and manhood. Crawford's (2003) comparable study found that entering fatherhood was one of the few consistent experiences men confidently reported as demarcating their initiation into manhood.

In another dimension of fatherhood and manhood achievement, some participants were directly or indirectly influenced by their fathers' values and guidance in making choices that led to their initiation into manhood. Steinberg (1993) described the process of masculine identity

development and the significance of the paternal figure in providing boys with an example to emulate and internalize. This is reflective of the father's authority and power, as his influence can be carried with men in various ways throughout life. As Hollis (1993) suggests, fathers can provide a life-giving nurturance to their sons that encourages him to enter the world, or conversely, when this affirmation is absent, many men may spend their lives seeking their father's approval by trying to live up to perceptions of his expectations for them. Kipnis (2004) suggested that winning their father's approval may be instrumental in achieving manhood for some men. Paternal figures can be significant in contributing and shaping notions of manhood and what it means to become a man.

Another factor that was described by several men was the experience of recognizing their fathers as flawed human beings and, in the words of one participant, taking him *off the pedestal*. In the literature review chapter, issues associated with the development of masculine identity in boys were discussed. The perspective of Diamond (2006) and Bergman (1995) highlighted the initial influence of fathers in the development of their son's sense of masculinity. Their perspectives disagreed on the place of the feminine and the mother as the boy learns to orient toward the masculine and his father. There was a general consensus, however, that male children tend to differentiate themselves from their mother in order to develop a relationship with their father, which in turn fosters their own sense of masculine identity. The findings of this study suggest that for some men, the path to manhood requires they also differentiate from their father and his influence in order to individuate and establish their own sense of identity as a man. Steinberg (1993) noted the importance and difficulty in withdrawing idealized impressions of the father as a necessary step in the development of an independent, masculine identity, which is consistent with these findings.

3. *Experience of a 'felt sense'*

In response to the question asking how they knew they had become men, all ten participants reported experiencing a felt sense, emotion, or somatic-based feeling associated with the experience. This unanticipated theme appears to be a unique finding. There exists a significant body of research literature concerning men and emotion, which tends to focus on issues such as alexithymia (e.g., Levant et al., 2003) or gender differences in various dimensions of emotional expression and regulation (e.g., Simon & Nath, 2004; Garnefski, Teerds, Kraaij, Legerstee, & van den Kommer, 2004), but there was no previous research located that reported the phenomena specific to this theme.

The experiences described by the participants included "feeling like a man" or "manly," which were associated with a type of non-specific sensation that the individuals tend to associate with embodying manhood. Others described being aware of specific discreet emotions (i.e., fear; pride; sadness) or feeling less inner strife or *more peaceful*. Of particular note, several participants described the experience of powerful, somatically based sensations that indicated a momentous, inward shift. These descriptions are consistent with Gendlin's (1981) notion of a quality of bodily awareness of shifting feelings that have a profound influence over our lives. "When your felt sense of a situation changes, you change – and therefore, so does your life" (p. 32). The importance of an awareness of this experiential, nonverbal dimension of knowing is well documented and incorporated into various integrative approaches to counselling and psychotherapy (e.g., Gendlin, 2012; Greenberg, 2002; Levine, 2010; Martin, 2011). For this group of men, the apprehension of their initiating shift into man was felt at a deeper level than might be expected if the meanings associated with manhood were superficial or of minimal import. The prevalence of these findings among the participants suggests that this is a highly

significant aspect of the experience of achieving manhood, warranting further investigation.

4. *Social Validation*

Although references to social validation were expected to be a common feature in the stories told by the men in this study, only two participants made overt references to the regard of others as instrumental in their becoming men. As such, this limited number of references to the importance of *social validation* in achieving manhood was insufficient to be considered a primary theme. Given the importance ascribed to these issues in the literature and that it was mentioned by at least two participants, it was included as a *notable category of responses.*

Manhood is not considered to be a biological given, but a tenuous social construct that requires ongoing external validation. Research findings reported by Vandello and Bosson (2012) led the authors to characterize manhood as a precarious social status that is "hard won and easily lost" (p. 1). This description is highly consistent with anthropological research findings that examined how "men are made" across cultures (Gilmore, 1990).

When I followed up with the participants, seven of the remaining eight endorsed this category as pertaining to their experience. There may be several reasons why the majority of the men did not include dimensions of social validation in their story. Perhaps it was simply not a point of conscious consideration in telling their narratives, given that social validation could be an implicit factor that underpins the surface structure of the story. Stemming from this, perhaps the pervasiveness of the relationship between manhood and social validation was sufficiently obvious to be overlooked or taken as axiomatic. Thirdly, it could be that some participants did not recognize the influence of these issues until they were explicitly asked at follow up. It also could be that social validation was not a primary or significant factor in some instances. Whatever the reason may be, the limited number of initial responses that made reference to the

importance of social validation may represent a departure from previous findings. The number of follow up endorsements (i.e., nine of ten), however, is more consistent with previous research and assumptions about manhood status and masculine identity.

Auxiliary Findings

As was indicated in the previous chapter, there were several consistent patterns recognized across the interview transcripts that represented important findings with respect to the larger topic of men's issues and masculine identity, but departed from the specific focus of the study. These auxiliary findings hold the potential to inform subsequent studies inquiring into various facets of men's issues.

Implicit Manhood

Consistent with Crawford's (2003) findings, the participants in the present study unanimously reported some degree of difficulty with the research question. To be included in the study, individuals were required to meet the basic criteria of self-identifying as a man. Despite this, each man initially reported struggling to identify the specific experience that demarcated the onset of his manhood. Given sufficient time to consider the questions, all ten men were able to effectively respond in the interviews when asked to speak about their experiences. Perhaps the challenge is related to the fact that most men did not necessarily regard their 'becoming' as a singular event, but as a serial progression of experience occurring over a period of time. In some cases, participants noted that they had never explicitly reflected on the their relationship with manhood prior to first learning about the study. The interview was the first time that they took the opportunity to openly explore the experience of achieving manhood.

Developmental Process

All ten participants made reference to having more than one context in which they

became men. As noted, each man was able to point to a specific life event that they consider to be the first or most important time, but there was a unanimous expression of a plurality of life events in which their manhood was made. Many of Crawford's (2003) participants suggested a similar relationship with their masculine identity. The reasons for this may relate to the some of same factors associated with the relationship between manhood status and social validation. Vandello et al. (2008) published findings that indicated a primary insecurity connected with manhood, in that it requires ongoing social validation and can be revoked under certain circumstances. Perhaps the successive incidents relate to the social requirement for incremental proof throughout life in order for the community to continue to bestow the status upon the man (Gilmore, 1990). Conversely, the varying experiences may also reflect a sequential accomplishment of different dimensions of manhood that men may associate with experiences associated with marriage, career, having children, or owning a home, for example.

Taking this idea one step further, it would seem that an individual can recognize that he has achieved manhood, but still in the process of becoming a man. In my personal reflection in the introduction chapter, I likened the similarly paradoxical status to the notion of *being educated*. As much as I may regard myself as an educated person given my formal schooling and life experience, at the same time, however, I will never be fully educated. Accordingly, in both learning and manhood, perhaps there is no end point at which to arrive.

Questions, Fears and Doubts

Six participants referenced experiencing questions about their ability to surmount a given situation, solve a particular problem or make it through a difficult experience, which was associated the rise of self-doubts and fears. Hollis (1993) described the complicated relationship men tend to have with fear, which pervasively looms throughout their lives. While noting that

women are equally subject to fear, he argues that it is generally considered more acceptable for a woman to acknowledge her fears to herself and others. Conversely, for men, there is a normative sense that fear should not be acknowledged, as it may be misconstrued as weakness or lack of capacity. This is consistent with the precarious manhood hypothesis (Vandello & Bosson, 2012), in that the sense of a perceived absence of strength or wherewithal to effectively deal with life's challenges potentially poses risk to an individual's manhood status. This holds particular import in the stories told by these participants, given the association to their experience of initiation into manhood.

Interestingly, the majority of the men in this study openly acknowledged their trepidations during their interview, some laughing and joking about the experience in retrospect. Whether the participants would discuss these experiences with other men outside of this situation is not known. Given the confidential nature and purpose of the dialog, the conditions were relatively safe to discuss these issues. Perhaps the fact that they were able to overcome their life challenges despite the questions, fears and doubts is because they represent an integral aspect to how they see themselves as men, which may be indirectly associated with some of the attributes consistent with the self-reliance theme.

Living by Morals and Values

Six participants made reference to important aspects of their masculine identity in the present, revolving around an effort to live according to certain morals and values. The manner in which they conduct themselves and regard others was noted as being central to their sense of self as a man, with several describing this as a type of discipline. As discussed in the literature review chapter, these concerns are reflective of the moral developmental processes mapped by Kohlberg (1981). The adoption of specific values and beliefs are also consistent with Marcia's

(1993) key dimensions of *identity achievement*. As manhood is an aspect of identity, there is a logical consistency between Marcia's model and the emergent values the participants noted as being in tandem with their sense of mature masculine identity, as it has formed and developed. Furthermore, the enactment of morals and values was consistent with Hammond and Mattis' (2005) study examining the meaning of manhood. The importance of principled living for these men, in relation to their manhood, is in line with previous research looking at the issue from various perspectives.

Strengths and Limitations of the Present Study

Strengths

The research carried out for this thesis is novel, notwithstanding one previous comparable study. A number of the findings are consistent with previous research focused on various dimensions of men's issues, while other results have not been previously reported. The specific focus on the achievement of manhood and the concrete responses provided by the participants' positions this study as an original contribution to the existing body of knowledge, with the potential to inform numerous avenues for future research. Furthermore, this inquiry offers an empirical account of factors that men associated with the onset of manhood status that is perhaps more dependable than anecdotal accounts or speculation bootstrapped to ideological or other popular writings.

The recruitment strategy resulted in enlisting participants from across Canada. Men from Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia contributed to the study, which suggests that the findings are not necessarily regionally bound or specific to a certain geographical location, enhancing transferability (Krefting, 1991). Furthermore, there was a degree of diversity in the group in terms of race, ethnicity, culture and sexual orientation that

added a heterogeneous quality to the study.

The methodological design was facilitative in that I was able to ask a group of men to directly describe their experience of manhood achievement. Furthermore, despite the elusive nature of the point of inquiry, the approach provided the participants with the necessary conditions to be able to reflect on, and construct, their narratives. Their responses effectively led to substantial findings, which in turn provided insights into the process of transformation into manhood in the contemporary situation. As such, the objectives of the study were reached. One of the strengths of a research design that incorporates narrative interviews with thematic analysis research is that the participants' storied accounts were preserved in their linguistic context, which retains the descriptive quality of the data. Alternatively, quantitative analysis of such data would have introduced additional levels of abstraction, further removed from the phenomena in question.

Limitations

As much as the methodological design served to strengthen this study, it also resulted in a number of potential limitations. The nature of the recruitment process presented several drawbacks. As described in the methodology chapter, the initial plan was to utilize posters, as well as direct contact to a selected group of individuals to promote the study. The email-based approach proved to be sufficiently successful, making the poster approach unnecessary. As such, only a small group of individuals were aware of the study and had the opportunity to volunteer. Furthermore, those who learned about the study represented a population of individuals who were known to have an interest in the topic and motivation to take part. As a group, these men are formally educated and predisposed to be interested and open to discussing these aspects of their experience. As much as this group of men were diverse in their composition, there was also

a noteworthy homogeneity among them, which limits the transferability of the findings.

A further limitation relates to the limited number of participants. While small groups of participants are necessary to make this type of qualitative research tenable, the findings cannot be generalized to the larger population of men. The results of this study, however, could serve to inform the basis of future large scale, quantitative studies. Additional data derived from larger samples with consistent results could potentially provide further support for the present findings.

The nature of the basic interview questions posed several limitations in the data analysis process. As noted in previous chapters, the participants were asked to respond to two basic questions: 'When did you become a man?' and 'How did you know?' One challenge was noted with respect to the circular relationship between the experience of becoming and the signs that indicated the meaning of the experience. In some cases, the two were one in the same (i.e., I became a man when *x* happened, and I knew because *x* happened). This tautological quality rendered the initial plan to develop distinct themes for each question untenable. Secondly, the question assumes a singular, identifiable event or experience that demarcated when the line was crossed into manhood. The auxiliary finding concerning a developmental process into manhood seems to refute the notion that the transformation occurs all at once. Although this issue did not pose any significant problems with the study, it represents a factor that was not considered in the design process.

An additional limitation was noted in the data analysis process. Given the diversity of the types of experiences that the participants described, developing categorical themes proved to be challenging. Distinguishing between certain responses and cleanly delineating thematic orientations was complicated due to reliance on conceptual language. For example, a participant could state that he 'felt independent' while another could reflect on 'feeling sadness.' Both

utterances suggest feeling, but what is felt is quite distinct. As such, some of the themes may, on the surface, appear to overlap. Close examination of the totality of the supporting excerpts in relation to the operational descriptions of these themes should mitigate any confusion. As such, care was taken to contain potential drawbacks related to this limitation as effectively as possible.

Lastly, the fact that this study is my first experience conducting original research is a limitation unto itself. As in inexperienced, novice researcher, I was learning as I proceeded and, in retrospect, would likely change how I approached various aspects of my thesis, with particular reference to some of the above-mentioned limitations. In preparation for conducting this study, I completed several research methodologies courses, including one focused specifically on qualitative inquiry. Furthermore, the methodological design was developed in close consultation with my supervisor, who oversaw and guided all aspects of the process. Diligence in working directly with my supervisor and the incorporation of the validation of the findings with the participants enhanced the credibility of the study and mitigated these limitations.

Recommendations for Future Research

In previous sections, I provided a description of the findings with respect to the existing literature. Taking previous research results and the available literature into consideration in conjunction with the outcomes of this study, I have become aware of several new questions and issues associated with the topic that warrant further research.

As suggested, using the findings of the present study to develop larger scale quantitative research would allow for the possibility of generalizing these results to the larger population. As an initial study, the use of qualitative research provided the opportunity to closely examine an issue with a small group of men with sufficient dialogical space for participants to present a wide-ranging account of their experience. Using thematic analysis, their accounts have been

distilled into key, shared dimensions of experience, which can now be fashioned into more specific questions that can be put to larger groups of men and subject to statistical analysis. This is a prime example of how qualitative and quantitative methods can be synergistically incorporated in pursuit of well-rounded knowledge. Research approached in this way requires that arguments concerning the superiority of one type of injunction over the other be set aside, while permitting the nature of the question to drive the methodological design (Black, 2008).

A key, overarching issue is reflected in the plurality of experiences the participants identified in relation to moving into manhood. Crawford's (2003) research garnered a similar finding. Achievement of manhood does not appear to be an event so much as it is a process comprised of a series of meaningful incidents. Research focused on the process and development of manhood status would produce additional insights into the underpinnings of the temporal sequence of these events in men's lives. Inquiry along these lines could also examine facilitative and hindering aspects of the process, which could be of particular benefit to informing counselling practice with men and boys.

The present study focuses on a general population of men. The recruitment efforts brought together a group of participants who were diverse in some ways (i.e., race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and representing various regions throughout Canada), yet homogenic in other key respects (i.e., as a group, the participants were educated men of similar socioeconomic status, relatively close in age, and motivated and open to discussing their masculine identity and experiences of achieving manhood). Interviewing cohorts of men drawn from specific populations, such as differing socioeconomic situations (e.g., working class or upper-middle or upper class), sexual orientations (e.g., gay, bisexual, or transgendered), or age groups (e.g., men in their 50s and 60s or 70s and 80s) would generate findings to inform further insights into the

experience of manhood achievement within these groups, and provide a frame of comparison between groups to identify commonalities and differences.

The research of Vandello and colleagues (Vandello et al., 2008; Vandello & Bosson, 2012) has supported the notion that manhood is a precarious social status. Aspects of this body of research have also suggested that womanhood is qualitatively different from manhood, given that it tends to be more biologically oriented and, therefore, not as readily subject to revocation. Further research in this area is necessary to clarify how women identify with their sense of womanhood. A qualitative study in which female participants are asked to discuss when they became women and how they knew would be an advisable approach to initiate this point of inquiry. Research along these lines would complement the current study, and provide a point of comparison to understand the similarities and differences experienced by men and women with respect to this aspect of their identity and life experience.

Finally, as mentioned, research examining the overlaps and distinctions between men's relationship with their dual statuses of manhood and adulthood would provide clarification between how the two aspects of identity are related and differentiated. Available research looking into dimensions of adulthood tends to be consistent in many respects with the same indicators men point to as being integral to manhood. It could be that men tend to confound the two constructs in some ways, which may be different from women's appraisal of their relationship with gender identity and adulthood. There seems to be a noteworthy intersection between these constructs that require further exploration.

In the Implications for Counselling Psychology section, some additional matters concerning research are discussed, with respect to general concerns related to the focus and lenses through which men's issues are approached.

Researcher Context (Post-Research)

In Chapter 1, I described a number of assumptions and beliefs about the topic, along with my various expectations for what I would find in the study. I indicated an expectation that the participants would share stories that were somewhat consistent with the existing writings and my own experience of achieving manhood. In Chapter 2, I reviewed a large selection of literature that covered a variety of men's issues from various disciplines and perspectives, which further shaped my impressions of the topic. I included a rather thorough discussion of psychological development (e.g., Ingersoll & Cook-Greuter, 2007) and identity formation processes (e.g., Marcia, 1993). Perhaps not surprisingly, the participants had little to say about these issues. As someone with a particular interest in psychological development, I was drawn to these ideas to help explain some of the factors that may contribute experiences of achieving manhood. Although these writings carry an important explanatory function, there was no discussion of the technical aspects of development in the data. Perhaps this is a consequence of the nature of the research question, or that the participants did not consider these dynamics when reflecting on their experience. These concepts helped me to appreciate some of the subtler aspects of the transition and to account for some technical theoretical considerations, but did not seem to hold any meaningful implications in the findings. This noted, the totality of the literature review was helpful in developing the discussion chapter, aiding me in integrating a number of interconnected issues that I would have otherwise overlooked.

Many of my initial expectations were accurate, including: discussions of hardship and success; the fact that the participants identified a number of catalytic events instead of one single event; the prominence of matters associated with responsibility; and the common inclusion of important experiences in the context of relationships and concern for others. I did not anticipate

that father-related features would be as prominent as they were, and underestimated the prevalence of the *felt sense* and the affective domain in how the participants came to know that they became men.

In the process of completing the study, I often reflected on the experience of overcoming hardship in the transition to manhood. Although many participants told stories that revolved around surmounting ordeals in some manner, no one specifically emphasized it as a factor that could be taken as thematically central to their story more convincingly than the features that constellated the themes as they were presented in Chapter 4 and endorsed by the participants. Another consideration that captured my imagination through the course of the study is rites of passage. As I noted in Chapter 2, rites of passage were once a common point of entry into manhood, which have largely gone to the wayside in the modern and post-modern eras. As Keen (1991) described, traditional initiatory rights typically involved a trial of some kind to prove worth and manliness. Once passed, boys were accepted into the larger community of adults, and provided with the teachings and responsibilities required of them to fulfill their roles as men. Although none of the men in this study talked about going through a rite of passage, many of them experienced noteworthy hardship in the process of achieving manhood. In these cases, there was an ordeal, but the community was absent and no ceremony was held for these men to connote the occasion. One of the key factors that stands out for me now, having completed the research, is the degree to which manhood is implicit and how often the processes of achieving it go unrecognized and unacknowledged. In a recent discussion on this issue, an Elder steeped in indigenous ceremonial traditions explained that rituals serve to announce the transition, but should not be confused with the actual transition and all that it brings (J. Belanger, personal communication, November 23, 2013). This is an important distinction, but the fact remains that

men are largely on their own to acknowledge their achievement of manhood, which is typically recognized in retrospect, if at all (based on the accounts of the participants in the present study). Given the highly subjective nature of manhood and the multiple expressions of masculinity present in the diversity of the contemporary context, a standard, normative demarcation point of manhood is simply neither tenable nor appropriate. In the complex milieu of gender identity issues and zealous political correctness, men talking about what manhood means to them has become a rarefied occurrence. As a consequence, an important aspect of self and identity is left unexamined in the lives of many men. In the following section, the implications of the findings of this study for counselling psychology are identified and a number of ways the profession can help bring about some much needed changes to this situation are discussed.

Implications for Counselling Psychology

This thesis was conducted toward the completion of a master's degree in counselling psychology. Although the study was primarily concerned with men's identity, as opposed to clinical issues, the implications of the findings nonetheless hold particular import for the knowledgebase of counselling and psychotherapy. The emergence of a crisis in masculinity (Brooks, 2010) in recent decades, as was discussed in previous chapters, has resulted from relatively rapid change in the social roles and expectations placed on men, and led to a large-scale deconstruction and destabilization of formerly pervasive and monolithic notions of what manhood entailed. On one hand, this is a resoundingly positive development in that it has loosened the constraints that placed undue limitations on the lives of men and women for centuries. Individuals are now increasingly gaining freedoms to be and express themselves as they will, along with the opportunity assume social roles as they see fit. These changes are not without problems, however, and it has become quite challenging to make sense of what it means

to be a man in the contemporary situation. Men are still men and boys continue to achieve manhood, but the experiences of these constructs are highly implicit and subjective to individual contexts. As such, manhood has become an increasingly tacit and unarticulated strand of identity. This research was intended to engage with men in dialog to make these aspects of self more explicit, and as such, better understood.

With respect to the specific themes, the results of this study suggest that the *making of men* continues to be situated in line with many traditional notions of manhood. The fact that the participants unanimously validated a self-reliance based theme suggests this group of men strongly associate attributes such as independence, autonomy, agency and competency with manhood. As ubiquitous as these qualities tend to be among this cohort of men, considering that they represent a foundational aspect of self and identity, these findings suggest that exploration of these issues should be taken seriously as being of particular importance in work with male clients. Dynamics and experiences that surround both the gain and loss of these attributes could be key to a client's self image and represent potential points of unrecognized agentic strength, or conversely, a source of grieving and suffering. Exploring men's relationship with self-reliance may be key to the promotion of a healthier, more balanced ego and potentially central to the healing of unresolved emotional wounds. Although it may be out of fashion to promote notions of traditional masculinity as being adaptive, self-reliance, as it is defined in this document, seems to be a virtue that holds a place of deep foundational significance in the lives of this group of men in terms of self-evaluation, self-image and self-respect. Furthermore, the demands of social roles and expectations requires that men adopt capacity for self-sufficiency, but this needs to be tempered by the corresponding need to cooperatively engage and receive help from others in the relational context (Ashfield, 2011). Interestingly, the participants' narratives tended to be

balanced in this fashion, with a general concern for both agency and relational communion. These findings suggest that practitioners working with men are well advised to explore and potentially foster both dimensions with male clients.

The roles and relationships with fathers and fatherhood represent a key theme derived from this study. This is not a surprising result, given the general prominence of fathers in the lives of their children and the life-changing experience of becoming a father. There is an abundance of literature addressing fatherhood and the implications of paternal roles in counselling and psychology (e.g., Hollis, 1994; Levant & Kopecky, 1996; Mitscherlich, 1993; Pittman, 1993). Issues associated with paternal relationships are standard areas of exploration in professional practice, and these findings highlight the importance of the influence of fathers and fatherhood in the achievement of manhood.

The responses to the question about how the participants knew they had achieved manhood were unanimously described as being derived from some manner of *felt sense*. This cohort of men indicated that their appreciation of this shift in their identity presented itself in either a somatic, emotional, or feeling-based sensation. The events of the men's narratives are reflective of a momentous, life-changing experience, and the power of the transition was commonly described as palpable at the time. Working with men to develop and enhance their capacity recognize the signals and messages that come forth in the affective domain may be of significant benefit with respect to understanding and meaning-making processes with important historical experiences, and to deepen awareness of their inner dimension in the present. Incorporating approaches that emphasize such techniques (e.g., Greenberg, 2011; Levine, 2010) may hold the potential to foster healing toward therapeutic aims and to enrich lives through an enhanced capacity for awareness of non-rational ways of knowing.

Perhaps the most important implication for counselling psychology in light of these findings lies in the importance and rarity of asking men about achieving manhood. One of the *auxiliary findings* highlighted the difficulty the participants noted in initially identifying the catalytic experiences that initiated them into manhood. It was often not an obvious point of specific meaning until it was reflected upon in retrospect. As I have stressed throughout this document, one of the main challenges associated with examining this topic is the implicit quality of manhood. Now, perhaps more than ever, definitions of manhood are highly variable and diverse, yet seem to be rarely discussed. In his interview with me, *Participant 2* strongly suggested that conversations about manhood are sorely needed, recognizing the value in being able to tell his story of achieving manhood and the fact that, at the age of 40, no one had ever previously invited him to do so. Several other participants also echoed similar comments. As noted, this deficiency in dialog on these issues was what inspired my selection of this research topic and after completing the study, it is clear to me that the benefits of these dialogs extends well beyond the findings. Most of the participants expressed appreciation for having had the opportunity to explore their experience of when they became men and indicated that it enabled them to further develop their understanding of an important chapter in their personal narrative and to make meaning out of events that they had not previously examined in context. For these men, an important, pivotal event in their lives was left unheralded until they were directly asked to discuss it. As such, it would be of great value to engage male clients in dialog concerning the events that transitioned then into men and to consider how they relate to their masculine identity. Making manhood more explicit is perhaps one of the most valuable things the profession can begin to do to help men better understand themselves and one another.

In the introductory chapter, I noted that popular notions of masculinity tend to be quite

derogatory and subject to derision. Although this issue may be somewhat afield from the focus of the present study, the current topic dovetails into the larger issue of how men are regarded in theory, practice and research. Participant 2 recalled feeling pride in the moment he identified as ushering him into manhood. Upon mentioning this, he reflected that he had never acknowledged this previously and rightfully lamented that men are discouraged from being proud of being men. Counsellors, therapists, and academic researchers have a responsibility to remediate this situation (Westwood & Black, 2012). If, as a profession, we make a concerted effort to promote virtues of healthy masculinity, while seeking to curtail the over-emphasis of pathological assumptions about men, and become more *male-positive* in general, we can in turn assist men in recognizing their positive attributes and strengths, and to grow a sense of pride in themselves as a result. In the literature review chapter, I discussed the issue of shame as it relates to men's psychology and some of the deleterious effects it elicits. This stance will allow practitioners to assume the role euphemistically referred to as a *shame exorcist* (Ryan, 2014), and help men to join along in taking a new perspective on their own relationship with masculinity and manhood.

According to Ashfield (2011), one of the most pressing ethical issues in practice of counselling and psychotherapy with men is the potential for of iatrogenic harm, associated with misconceptions and misunderstandings about gender, male psychology, men's experience and, the imperatives and complex interrelationship of biology and culture (p. 20). Much of the information that shapes our views about men and male behaviour is not primarily informed by careful integration of the available empirical evidence into practice, but on adherence to the suppositions of gender ideologies. Iatrogenic harm, in Ashfield's opinion, stems from applying inappropriate understanding, methods, technique, or attitudes in therapy, leading to ineffective or detrimental outcomes. As nonmaleficence is considered to be a foundational principle of ethical

psychological practice (Truscott & Crook, 2010), it is ethically necessary for all therapeutic interventions to be driven by research, and not ideology. As such, Ashfield is offering a clarion call to those who provides services to male clients to check their assumptions and ensure that their knowledgebase and interventions are informed by legitimate empirical findings, and maintain a perspective that recognizes an adaptive quality in men's psychology and male behaviour. This is consistent with the positive humanistic values that inform contemporary practice, and reflective of ethical guidelines that counsellors respect and remain sensitive to diversity (Schulz, Sheppard, Lehr, & Shepard, 2006). This approach to practice also requires the relinquishing of negative assumptions and presuppositions that masculinity is inherently problematic, and understanding the biological, psychological and sociocultural factors that shape identity and behaviour.

It is also incumbent on researchers to take this approach in conducting research focused on men's issues. This study was conceived with these intentions in mind. My hope was that by going directly to a group of men and asking them to discuss the foundational experiences that shaped their initiation into manhood, I would be able to contribute meaningful insights and understandings to the body of knowledge that informs the counselling profession. Secondly, I was optimistic that those directly and indirectly involved in the research process would begin to engage men in dialog about masculine identity and the importance of understanding the various dimensions of manhood. On a larger scale, this study was intended to contribute to a new wave of interest in men's issues that is much needed in the contemporary context of the profession and its aims.

As I mentioned in the introduction chapter, counselling and psychotherapy need to adapt to better meet the needs of male clients. The fact that men access fewer services and report

limited beneficial outcomes relative to women has led to various studies seeking to understand why men are reluctant to access counselling (*e.g.*, Blazina, & Watkins, 1996; Good, Dell, & Mintz, 1989; Mahalik, Good, & Englar-Carlson, 2003; Schaub & Williams, 2007). Perhaps a superior question would be 'how does therapy need to adjust to better accommodate the specific needs of men?' (Westwood & Black, 2012). While there are no simple answers, I would suggest that one of the most important first steps would be to raise the issue with men to find out directly from the source. While this includes looking at specific clinical issues, it also necessitates a careful examination of factors such as self-perception and identity, values and goals in life, family and community, and the importance of various roles, responsibilities and ways of being that are integral to manhood. Moreover, efforts to explore these issues will be most effective if there is a focus on healthy and adaptive expressions of masculinity. A cursory literature search reveals a preponderance of research concerned with problematic features stemming from views that positions masculinity as fundamentally related to misogyny, homophobia and violence. While it is highly important that these issues are well understood, the dominance of these perspectives seems to have overshadowed discussions centred on specific concerns faced by men in relation to issues such as trauma, grief, addictions, as well as research oriented toward healthful and balanced expressions of manhood, lived by men who are nurturing, respectful and caring for others in their world. Despite certain ideological claims to the contrary, the evidence strongly indicates that men and the masculine mode are not fundamentally harmful and destructive. Perhaps it is time to shift the focus and efforts to better understand the generative and life giving dimensions of masculinity and honour the goodness in men, along with further developing approaches to therapy that can facilitate these attributes through assisting men to become more balanced and secure in themselves. This is only possible if we base our

assumptions on these positive and adaptive dimensions without overemphasizing the deleterious aspects that have dominated perspectives for the last several decades.

It is equally important that we engage in dialog both within the counselling profession and cross-*pollinate* with related health care and mental health disciplines. Ultimately, creating services more appropriate to the needs of men requires new insights and understandings, informed by effective empirical research, which, in turn, are thoughtfully integrated and enacted in counsellor training and professional practice. This is what is required of the profession if we are to be effective and consistent with our ethics in meeting the needs of men in the contemporary 21st Century context. Gauging from the existing literature and the positive responses to the current study, there is significant interest in these issues, and many academic researchers and practitioners have been making important contributions toward these aims. It is my hope that the work will continue in earnest and expand in scope. If successful, the implications of the benefits that will result could be potentially quite significant and far-reaching.

Summary and Conclusion

Little research has been conducted to explore the experience of achieving manhood in the contemporary context. The current study serves to contribute new understandings to this issue and fill a gap in the literature. The results are consistent with some existing studies on issues associated with manhood and masculine identity, and life experiences that are recognized as being formative and essential to this key aspect of masculine identity formation.

In the thematic analysis process, three key themes were developed and endorsed by a strong majority of participants. One notable category of responses was developed, but could not be included as a theme as it was not represented by sufficient numbers of participants. The findings indicate that while there is significant variability in the ways men achieve manhood,

there remains noteworthy commonalities with respect to the underlying themes associated with each man's narrative of becoming.

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Appendix A – Recruitment Email Message

Hello [insert name],

You are receiving this email because you may be interested in participating in this research or you may know others who are.

I am a Master's student at UVic in the counselling psychology program and working on my thesis entitled Becoming Men: Contemporary Experiences of Achieving Manhood

I am currently looking to conduct interviews with men who are 19 years of age or older to explore the significant life experiences they associate with having achieved manhood.

All participants' information will be kept private and confidential.

What is Involved?
You will be asked to respond to two basic questions: "When did you realize that you had become a man?" and "How did you know this occurred?." The interviews (either in-person here in Victoria, BC or via telephone for participants in other locations throughout Canada) will be approximately 45 minutes, along with an email follow up to ask each participant to review the findings.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose is to learn about how men are seeing themselves as being initiated into manhood, and the meaning they associate with the specific events that are associated with these important life experiences.

Importance of this Research
Currently, there is no available research that has looked the issue of achieving manhood. This is a novel study that will add to the body of knowledge that informs our understanding of masculine identity and critical life events associated with entering manhood, which will be of benefit to the disciplines of men's studies, counselling psychology and related helping professions.

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study:

- The researcher - Cory Klath at klath@uvic.ca or 250 857 XXXX
- Thesis supervisor - Dr. Tim Black at tblack@uvic.ca or 250 721 7820
- UVic Human Research Ethics Office - at ethics@uvic.ca or 250 472 4545 (reference Protocol Number 13-391

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. Individuals who feel obliged, coerced, manipulated, or influenced to participate in this study are asked to not participate or can withdraw at any time. Colleagues, friends, or acquaintances of the researcher are asked to not let this relationship influence their decision to participate.

Please circulate this email and poster widely, forwarding it to anyone you think may be interested.

Sincerely,
Cory Klath

Appendix B – Telephone Script

The following is an example of the script to be used when participants (P) initiate contact with the principal investigator, Cory Klath (CK). xact wording and order may change slightly depending on participants' responses.

CK: "Thank you for taking the time to call. We will need about 10 minutes to talk about the study. Do you have the time to talk right now or should I call you back at a different time?"
P: "Yes, we can talk now."
→ "No, I don't have time right now."
CK: "No problem. When would be a good time to call you back?"

CK: "First, would it be alright if I ask you a couple of preliminary questions about yourself? This will help me to ensure that you meet the selection criteria for the study. "

P: "Yes." ("No.")

CK: "Do you identify as being a man and are you 19 years of age or older?"
P: "Yes." ("No.")

CK: "Are you proficient in spoken and written English?"
P: "Yes." ("No.")

→ If YES, continue as follows.
→ If NO, thank participant for their interest and explain that this is an important part of the selection criteria.

CK: "Okay, Great! There are a few things to tell you aout the study before you decide if you would like to participate. Can I breifly tell you a bit more about the study?
P: "Yes."

CK: The main objective for this study is to gain a better understanding of how men experience of attaining manhood in this day and age. Interestingly, there has been very little research on this topic. I want to find out more about men understand their identity within the context of their life and experiences.

Your participation would include an interview that will take about 45 minutes, during which I will ask you two basic questions: "When did you realize that you had become a man?" and "How did you know?." I will send you a copy of these interview questions and the consent form before the interview so you can have a look at them in advance. After the interview, I will ask you for some basic demographic information about you, which is used to provide a richer description of each participant's individual context.

Lastly, I will be contacting you via email a couple of weeks after your interview to verify that the data analysis has accurately captured your story. This may vary in length depending on if you would like to provide me with some feedback or thoughts on the findings, but it is expected that it will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes. The interviews

will be audio-recorded for data analysis purposes but your participation will be completely confidential and there will be no names included in the final report. I will use pseudonyms instead to ensure your privacy. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence and your data will be removed if you wish.

(This section will be included in the event that the person I am speaking with a potential participant with whom I already know in some respect.)

There is one additional thing to mention about my research that is important for you to know. For this study, I may be interviewing people who I know… possibly acquaintances, colleagues or friends. If I have a pre-existing relationship with you, it is very important that you are not considering participating out of any sense of obligation, manipulation or being induced in any way. Please know that your decision to participate or not will have no bearing or consequence whatsoever, and that you have the absolute right to withdraw from the study if you choose.

CK: "How does this sound so far?"

P: "That sounds alright to me."

→ "I think that's going to be too much for me to be able to do right now."

CK: "Okay. That is very understandable, and I really appreciate the time you took to contact me."

CK: "Alright, I would like to advise you of one more thing so that you can make a fully informed decision about your participation. Particiapting in any study will carry certain risks, and this one is no different. With respect to my research, the potential for harm is associated with the nature of each person's story of becoming a man and the circumstances surrounding that experience. It is possible that for some men, their story could evoke feeling of emotional discomfort, embarrassment, or experiencing fatigue or stress. I can't know what anyone's experience is until I hear their story, so it's important that I point this out at this point in our discussion so that you can decide if there is any risk for you in sharing your story. In the event that any of my participants does encounter any difficulties, I will incorporate all reasonable steps to ensure comfort. I expect that this will be rare for this to be the case and that any discomfort will be minimal, but it is incumbent on me to mention before you make any decisions about your participation. That said, if you believe that your participation poses certain risks to you and may cause you to experience discomfort of any kind, please carefully consider this when deciding if you'd like to take part.

Do you have any questions or concerns about the risks of taking part in my study?

P: "No, no questions come to mind right now."

→ "Yes actually, I would like to know more about…. ."

CK: Address questions or concerns as effectively and clearly as possible

CK: "Okay, that is everything I would like to tell you about the study at this point. Based on everything you have heard, are you interested in participating?

P: "Yes, I would like to take part in your study."

→ "Actually, I am having second thoughts and think I will pass."

CK: "Okay. That is very understandable, and I really appreciate the time you took to contact me."

CK: " Great! I am hoping to do interviews between (date) to (date), is there a time during then that would work for you?"
P: "Yes. I could meet on (date) at (time)."
→ "No."
CK: "Is there another time that would work better for you?"

<u>For local participants</u>
CK"Perfect. Do you have a location that you would prefer to conduct the interview? There is space available for us to use on campus but I am happy to meet you somewhere that is convenient for you. I suggest we choose somewhere that we will be uninterrupted and that is private." ("Is there another time that would work better?")
P: "We could meet at my office." ("Let's meet at the university.")

<u>For Participants in other communities</u>
CK: "Perfect. As I am located in Victoria, I will give you a call to conduct the interview over the phone. Can you provide me with the best telephone number to reach you at that time?
P: "Sure. My number is 306 555 1212

CK: "As I mentioned, I would like to provide you with a copy of the Informed Consent form prior to interviewing you. It would be helpful if you could take a couple of minutes to read it over ahead of time. I will also go over it with you when we connect. If you still decide consent to participate at that time, I will ask you to sign off on the document before starting the interview with you." (or for participants in other locations –" I will ask you to provide verbal consent for your participation before starting the interview with you.") Can I please have your email address so that I can send the document over to you?"
P: "Sure… it's particpant@study.mail.com

CK: "Thank you. Before I let you go, do you have any other questions for me at all?"
P: "Yes." ("No, I think I'm fine for now.")

CK: "If anything comes up between now and when we meet, please feel free to give me a call. My cell phone number is 250 857 XXXX (it's a local Victoria number) and my email is klath@uvic.ca. Thank you for taking the time to call and talk with me. I'm looking forward to meeting with you in person. Good-bye for now."

Appendix C – Informed Consent Form

University of Victoria
Education

Department of Educational Psychology
and Leadership Studies
PO Box 3010 STN CSC
Victoria British Columbia V8W 3N4 Canada
Tel 250-721-7799, Fax 250-721-6190

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

***Study Title*: Becoming Men: Contemporary Experiences of Achieving Manhood**

Principal Investigator:
Cory Klath
MA Student (Counselling Psychology)
Email: klath@uvic.ca
Phone: 250 857 XXXX

Thesis Supervisor:
Dr. Timothy Black, PhD, RPsych.
Email: tbalck@uvic.ca
Phone: 250-721-7820

Purpose and Objectives of the Research
The purpose of this research is to explore men's stories of when they realized that they had become men and how they knew that it had occurred.

This includes individuals who:
1. Identify as being a man
2. Are 19 year of age or older
3. Have English language proficiency sufficient to provide informed consent and participate in the interview.

With this information, I hope to contribute to the understanding of the important experiences that individual men see as initiating them into manhood, and how they understand the relationship between these critical experiences and their subjective sense of having achieved manhood.

This Research is Important Because

In recent decades, a pervasive crisis in masculinity has developed in North America (Ashfield, 2010; Brooks, 2010; Levant & Kopecky, 1996). The post-industrial, post-feminist era has brought about significant changes in social and familial roles for men and women. Traditional notions of masculinity and 'what it means to be a man' have not held up in light of these shifting realities. Furthermore, traditional practices of initiation are no longer common experiences to usher boys out adolescence and into the community of men, with the roles and responsibilities that accompany this critical transition (Moore & Gillette, 1991). This lack of reliable guidance and general absence of established milestones to demarcate the achievement of manhood has left individuals to find their own way into an adult masculine identity and status.

Men, as a group, tend to experience significant challenges in the areas of work, family and fatherhood, social relationships, and mental and physical health (Brooks, 2010; Farrell, 1993). The ways men relate to these issues, the approaches taken to cope, and willingness and ability to access help are factors that relate directly to masculine identity and the socially prescribed expectations placed on men (Ashfield, 2010; Vandello & Bosson, 2012). As such, a better awareness of the dynamics that shape and inform masculine identity is required. The ways and means by which men are seeing themselves as achieving manhood in this contemporary situation has been the focus of significant conceptual and popular writing, but no research findings concerning this experience have been published.

The particular experiences that men identify as being catalytic in the onset of their manhood status will provide insight to the critical incidents that shape this aspect of identity and reveal the specific ways in which individuals see themselves as becoming men in the present context. The main contribution and importance of this research is two-fold: 1) it will begin to answer questions about how men see themselves as entering manhood in the contemporarily, which will address a noteworthy gap in the literature, and 2) It will add to the state of knowledge concerning the ways men understand themselves and their social and cultural roles, which in turn will contribute further development of the body of knowledge that informs counselling psychology, as well as other helping professions that provide services to men.

Inclusion for Participation

You are being invited to participate in this study because:

i. You responded to the information concerning this study and freely volunteered to share your story for this study.
ii. You identify as being a man who is 19 years of age or older.

What is Involved in Participation

Your participation will consist of one audio recorded interview of aproximately 45 minutes in durration. You will be asked to respond to two basic questions: **"*When did you realize that you had become a man*?"** and **"How did you know this had occurred?"** Following the interview you will be asked to provide some basic demographic information about you, which will take aproximately 5 minutes to complete.

The location of the interview will either be:

i) For local participants - In an office on the UVic campus or an alternative location that is mutually agreeable, at a time that is convenient for you.
ii) For participants in other locations - Over the telephone, at a time that is convenient for you.

You will also be contacted by email approximately two weeks after your interview to confirm that the data analysis accurately represents your story. The time commitment for this process will vary, depending on the time each participant takes to review and respond to the materials.

Please initial the appropriate box below to indicate permission for follow-up contact to review the findings:

☐ Yes - I consent to receive follow up emails to review the findings associated with my data.

☐ No - I do not consent to receive follow up emails to review the findings associated with my data.

Inconvenience
Involvement in this research will not involve any substantial inconvenience for you other than the time to participate in the interview, and the time to validate findings. The interview will take aproximately 45 minutes and the review of findings is expected to take 30 to 60 minutes.

Benefits
This study will provide participants with the opportunity to tell their stories of becoming men. This encounter may prove to be an affirming and validating experience.

Your participation in this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on men's issues and masculine identity. No available published research has addressed the specific issue of men's direct accounts of attaining manhood, leaving. This novel study will generate new knowledge and fill a noteworthy gap in the literature in the areas of men's studies and identity, which will add to the body knowledge that my serve to help other men.

Risks
Although unlikely, there is a possibility that participation in this study may lead to the experience of psychological or emotional discomfort. If your story of becoming a man took place in the context of difficult circumstances, sharing your experience may result in bringing up difficult memories or emotions, possibly including a sense of embarrassment or feeling demeaned, or experiencing stress or fatigue. In the interview, I will ask you to respond to the two questions specified above. It is important to consider what your responses might be to determine your level of comfort with this aspect of your experience when deciding if you would like to follow through with participating in this study.

Should you experience distress at any time during the interviews, you can take a break, end the interview and resume the interview another time, or withdraw from the study at any point. Any of these choices may be done without any risk of consequence or need for explanation.

I will provide you with a list of available resources in the your community that offer support services in the event that speaking with a professional would of help to you.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without consequence or explanation. If you feel coerced, manipulated, or influenced to participant in this study I ask that you not volunteer to participate, or withdraw from the study.

You have the right to refuse to discuss any aspect of your experience. If you decide to withdraw from the study during the interview, the audio recording of the interview will be erased and all notes will be shredded, unless you give consent to use the material already obtained. If you decide to withdraw after completing the inteview, I will delete the audio recording of your interview and shred all associated documents. I will be able to remove your data from the study in so long as you notifiy me of your decision prior to the completion of the drafing of the final report.

Researcher's Relationship with Participants
In most cases, the researcher (Cory Klath) will not have any known relationship with individuals participating in this study. Colleagues, friends or acquaintances of the researcher are asked to not let this relationship influence their decision to participate or not participate. Your participation is fully independent of, and will have no consequence or bearing on any pre-existing relationship. To help prevent this relationship from influencing your decision to participate you are asked that if you feel

obligated, pressured or otherwise induced to participate in this study in any way that you withdraw and not participate.

Withdrawl of Participation
All aspects of your participation in this study are strictly voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without any obligation, explanation or consequence. You may also choose not to answer certain questions in the interview. You also have the right to not participate when I email you after your interview to verify the accuracy of the data analysis**.**

In the event that you choose to withdraw from the study, you will be asked if you want the data you have contributed to be included the final analysis. If you agree, your data will remain in the study. If not, the audio recording of your interview will be erased and all data associated will be destroyed.

Withdrawal from the study can occur at anytime prior to the final write-up of the study.

Anonymity and Confidentiality
The information you share with the researchers will be kept private and confidential. Your identity will only be known to the researcher.

No names will be given in the final research report. Pseudonyms will be used instead, if appropriate, and any identifying characteristics or details will be omitted.

The audio recording of your interview will be transcribed. The audio recordings will not be shared in the results of the study.

All information collected will be securely stored when not in use.

All information will be kept for 5 years maximum and will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

Exceptions to Confidentiality
The researcher may share segments of your interview recording or trascription with Dr. Tim Black for the purposes of supervision and guideance with the data analysis process. Both the researcher and his supervisor will adhere to ethical standards for confidentiality established by their governing professional bodies, the counselling psychology program, and University of Victoria.

Confidentiality is limited in situations when there is sufficient reason to believe that a child or vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected. Should anyone reveal information to suggest this is the case, it is a legal obligation to file a report. In any such instance, I will follow the legislated *duty to report* guidelines for the province in which the respective participant is located.

Dissemination of Findings
- The findings and final report will be presented in the reseacher's thesis document and oral defense.
- The fidnings and final report will be presented in publications and academic conferences.
- The findings may be presented in a published book chapter.
- The final report will be made available to participants, upon request.

Questions or Concerns
- Contact the researcher or his supervisor, as listed above.
- Contact the UVic Human Research Ethics Office - 250 472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca.

Withdraw from Participation
In the event that you choose to withdraw from the research, please indicate whether you consent to have your data remain in the study. (Inidicate with your initals in the appropriate box below.)

☐ **Yes - I consent to keep my data in the study in the event that I withdraw from the research.**

☐ **No - I do not consent to keep my data in the study in the event that I withdraw from the research.**

Consent
Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you freely agree to participate in this research project.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	*Signature*	*Date*

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix D – Verbal Consent Script

I have reviewed the Informed Consent Form with you for participating in this study.

Do you have any questions, concerns or would you like any additional details?

- *If yes, answer questions.*

Do you agree to participate in this study knowing that you can withdraw at any point with no consequences to you?

- *If yes, begin the interview.*
- *If no, thank the participant for his time.*

Appendix E - Script for Narrative Interview

Preamble:
During this interview, I'm going to be asking you to tell me your story about when you realized you had become a man and how you knew it had occurred. Feel free to start your story at whatever point in your life that your story of this experience begins. During the interview I will be asking clarification questions to make sure that I am following and understanding you accurately, and to support you if you need help in telling your story. Before we finish up today I will check with you to make sure you have told me everything you want to… or feel comfortable telling me… and if your story feels complete to you. Do you have any questions before we begin?

So without anything further, we can get going with the fist question…

Questions:
1) Tell me your story of how when you realized that you had become a man.
2) Tell me how you know that this is what had occurred?
To bring the interview to a close:
Do you feel that you have told me your story of when you realized that you became a man?
Do you feel that I know and have understood your story?

Potential prompts and clarifiers:

Do you mind telling me a bit more about…
How was it for you when…
Is this what you meant by …
What did you do then …
Do you mind repeating…

Appendix F – Demographic and Background Information

The following questions ask for information that will let me know a little bit more about you, which will add richness and context to the study. If you would prefer to not provide an answer for any of the questions, we will skip it and move on to the next question.

Your age: _____

How would you describe your cultural or ethnic identity:_____

How would you describe your sexual orientation: _____

Current relationship status: _____

What language do you speak at home? _____

Do you have any children?
Number: _____
Age(s)/ Gender(s): _____

What is the highest level of education that you have completed? _____

What do you do for a living? _____