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Power and Resistance: Homeless Men Negotiating Masculinity

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Abstract Hegemonic masculinity conceptualizes power from a modernist perspective that precludes a theoretically cohesive explanation of resistance. From this perspective, men are assumed to possess the power to construct masculinity in a manner that not only maintains hegemonic dominance over women and subordinate men, but convinces these groups to be complicit in their own subordination. However, homeless men are commonly believed to be powerless and, therefore, unable to enact normative or ideal (or hegemonic) masculinity. In order to explore theoretical assumptions about power within gender relations, the present research employs a Foucauldian informed perspective on power to examine homeless men's constructions of masculinity. The findings suggest that although the men's attitudes and behaviors are to some degree influenced by masculinity norms, varying individual interpretations of norms and interactional specific goals are also highly influential. The men's choices to comply or resist masculinity norms were not consistent but contextually specific. That resistance was a normative aspect of the men's construction of masculinities suggests that a Foucauldian informed perspective on power relations may more accurately capture the complexities of the construction of masculinities, and the co-constitutive nature of power relations in general.

Keywords Masculinity; Power and Resistance; Hegemonic Masculinity; Foucault; Homelessness

Despite the fact that gender theory typically defines men as a singular dominant group, homeless men are assumed to be powerless and subordinate, as "failed men" (Nonn 1995) or "not men" (Passaro 1996). Regardless of theoretical contradictions and inconsistencies, like all men, homeless men construct gendered subjectivities and participate in gender relations, but the complex ways in which they do so have not been adequately studied. The primary reason for this is that perspectives focusing on masculinities (similar to many feminist perspectives) are uncritically influenced by traditional/modernist notions of power that cannot account for resistance. One such perspective that has been widely influential in studies of men and masculinities is the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

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Despite being an influential framework for understanding the construction of masculinities, the concept of hegemonic masculinity lacks an explanation of resistance due to the fact that its original formulation relied on problematic assumptions about power (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The concept focuses on the constraint of structure (Whitehead 2002; Pringle 2012) and fails to consider individual and group capacities for resistance (Miller 1989). Without a coherent explanation of how power and resistance either co-exist within or concomitantly shape gender relations, efforts to theoretically and empirically grasp the complexities of gender relations are precluded. In order to discover how homeless men, a group commonly defined as entirely powerless, may be influenced by normative or ideal notions of masculinity but also engage in resistance, power must be understood in a manner that does not preclude resistance.

A reliance on traditional theories of power has prevented researchers/theorists from recognizing that power and resistance may be understood to be co-constitutive and an aspect of all social relations (Foucault 1994). Conceptualizing power in this way, as relational and productive rather than hierarchical and repressive, enables an understanding that power relations are far more complex than previously assumed. Comprehension of such complexities requires the use of qualitative research methods. For example, from a Foucauldian informed notion of power, individuals may be understood to frequently engage in a variety of strategies designed to enhance the likelihood of prevailing within interactions, such that one desired outcome of the meaning-making process includes the acceptance of a preferred meaning or depiction of reality on the part of others. Identifying the various types of interactional strategies used within power relations is not possible through the use of quantitative methods. In fact, the use of power application strategies within interactions may not always operate at a conscious level for actors, therefore directly querying research subjects through the use of prefabricated, simplified survey questions cannot produce data that are useful for understanding such complex behavior. Indeed, some individuals who consciously use particular interactional strategies may not be readily inclined to admit to using them since to do so may produce negative sanctioning. The likelihood of subjects being reluctant to disclose such information not only suggests this information cannot be effectively gathered through quantitative methods, but that it must be gleaned through a qualitative examination of specific human experiences.

Another consideration that compels the use of qualitative methods in attempting to understand the way in which power works is that power is commonly defined as the reserve of the "powerful" (i.e., individuals or groups who make claim to the legitimate use of power) and the attempted application of power by members of subordinate groups is commonly defined as illegitimate. These meanings and values associated with power certainly may influence behavioral and interactional choices, but perhaps more importantly they are clearly the result of strategies of power that may act to hamper the ability of researchers and theorists to accurately recognize how power works. Some individuals participating as subjects in research, for example, may try to mask their attempted applications of power to

increase the likelihood of prevailing in interactions or to reduce the possibility of resistance, while others may choose to make false claims of prevailing within interactions to try to increase social status or to make it appear they are engaging in normative actions.

All the aforementioned factors make identifying and understanding power relations particularly difficult and this, in turn, highlights the necessity of using qualitative methods to understand the exceedingly complex nature of power relations. Furthermore, a reliance on traditional perspectives on power means that many subordinate groups' efforts to enact power or resistance have been ignored by researchers because it is assumed they cannot possess power. This is particularly true of homeless men. Therefore, the present study examines the ways in which homeless men negotiate gender and construct masculinities using a Foucauldian informed notion of power in order to understand what the men's experiences reveal about power and resistance in gender relations, and in doing so, to provide a focused critique of the foundational assumptions about power used in hegemonic masculinity.

The first section of this article addresses related literature and includes a critique of the notion of power in the hegemonic masculinity framework. The next section explains the Foucauldian informed notion of power used in the present study to analyze the ways in which homeless men construct masculinities, which is followed by a description of the sample and the methods used in this study. This is then followed by the analysis of homeless men's construction of masculinities. The concluding section summarizes the findings and discusses the theoretical implications of the study's results for the hegemonic masculinity framework and for understanding gender power relations in a manner that recognizes that resistance is a common aspect of gender relations.

Homeless Men and Masculinity

Although there is an extensive body of literature on the homeless, and research in this area acknowledges gender to be a defining factor in the experience of homelessness (Meanwell 2012), much of the research compares homeless men's and women's experiences (e.g., Burt and Cohen 1989; Passaro 1996) or focuses on the experiences of homeless women (e.g., Barrow and Laborde 2008; Bharel, Casey, and Wittenberg 2009; Wesely 2009). Although the majority of homeless individuals in the United States are men (U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development 2010), there is no research focusing on the ways in which homeless men engage in power and resistance in negotiating the construction of masculinities.

Despite assumptions about men's dominance in society, it has generally been assumed that homeless men constitute a group entirely lacking the resources that enable them to enact relatively normative masculinities. Nonn's (1995) research on homeless men in the Tenderloin District of San Francisco, the singular work that focuses on homeless men's construction of masculinity using the framework of hegemonic masculinity, comes to just such a conclusion. In his analysis of homeless men's construction of masculinities, Nonn found that the homeless men in his study were *entirely* blocked from enacting hegemonic masculinity practices. Not only did Nonn find no evidence of the men enacting aspects of hegemonic or normative masculinity, he failed to look for evidence of resistance to hegemonic masculinity. Nonn's findings are problematic due to an overly simplistic definition of hegemonic masculinity, but more importantly his analysis is constrained by a foundational deficit of the hegemonic masculinity perspective guiding his analysis, namely, a modernist conceptualization of power (Beasley 2013).

According to Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005:852) most recent revision, hegemonic masculinity is a "strategy for the maintenance of power" in which the most valued masculinity practices (in any one time and place) are defined in opposition to whatever is defined or constructed as femininity practices. This is assumed to be a common and valued strategy, available to be employed by virtually all men, and supported by most women, in order to maintain men's power over women, as well as subordinate men. Multiple/diverse masculinities are positioned hierarchically, such that non-hegemonic masculinities are understood as subordinate to hegemonic masculinities. The masculinities hierarchy is understood as being hegemonic in the sense that it is a product of multiple and shifting strategies used by most men (including powerless men) to influence, persuade, convince, or even coerce women and subordinate men to endorse and maintain the dominance of men as a group. That hegemonic masculinity practices may be challenged and successfully resisted, by both men and women and in a manner that helps to shape gender relations, is theoretically negated by the perspective—despite a wide variety of empirical work identifying resistance to hegemonic masculinity practices (e.g., see: Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) acknowledge that the original conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity was too simplistic, as Connell (1987:183) had defined all masculinities "in terms of a single pattern of power, the 'global dominance' of men over women." In their 2005 revision, they assert that,

> While this [original conceptualization of power] was useful at the time…it is now clearly inadequate to our understanding of relations among groups of men and forms of masculinity and of women's relations with dominant masculinities. For instance, dominance in gender relations involves an interplay of costs and benefits, challenges to hegemonic masculinity arise from the "protest masculinities" of marginalized ethnic groups, and bourgeois women may appropriate aspects of hegemonic masculinity in constructing corporate or professional careers. Clearly, better ways of understanding gender hierarchy are required. [Connell and Messerschmidt 2005:846-847]

With this statement Connell and Messerschmidt are tacitly acknowledging that the original formulation of the concept of hegemonic masculinity did not account for the complex relationship between power and resistance. However, while their reformulation does acknowledge a) a large body of empirical work that has found a variety of strategies and types of resistance to hegemonic masculinity, b) that gender hegemony requires a great deal of work to maintain

it, but that it is open to contestation, and c) that any empirical efforts must acknowledge the agency of subordinate groups, these assertions do not constitute a theoretical articulation of how power operates or addresses the relationship between power and resistance. Their admission that the concept of hegemonic masculinity was founded on a flawed understanding of power does nothing to actually eliminate the inherent problematic assumption in the concept of hegemonic masculinity, namely, a modernist notion of power in which power is something a group can possess (or not), and is hierarchical and repressive. As such the perspective as it currently stands makes the possibilities for resistance theoretically irrational.

This is a common problem for perspectives unconsciously adopting modernist notions of power that define power as a possession, and as hierarchical and repressive. When power is conceptualized in this manner, the only rational possibility for subordinate individual or group resistance depends on their possessing the power to resist, and simply implying the possibility of agency or recognizing the existence of empirical evidence of resistance does not surmount the *a priori* theoretical presumption for a group's oppression—that they *do not* possess power, or cannot possess power because it is already in the possession of another group.

Despite certain relational aspects of the hegemonic masculinity framework (i.e., that the construction of masculinities and femininities is accomplished in relation to hegemonic masculinity), the foundational notion of power is unquestionably repressive rather than relational. Hegemonic masculinity defines men as a group that is dominant because they possess power—the power to define, promote, and maintain gender ideology and its associated practices, practices that include strategies that somehow convince subordinate groups to comply and position themselves in relation to various ideal practices/models of masculinity. According to Whitehead (2002):

> The fundamental inconsistency in the term hegemonic masculinity is that, while it attempts to recognize difference and resistance, its primary underpinning is the notion of a fixed (male) structure…confronted with the circularity of this agency-structure dualism, many critical gender theorists ultimately ignore this tension and resort to locating hegemonic masculinity within a wider patriarchal state…this fails to understand the character of hegemony and fails to offer a means by which to theorize women's and gay men's exercise of power and their ability to resist oppression. [pp. 93-94]

Indeed, the concept of hegemonic masculinity fails to account for the ability of all individuals and groups to resist, including men who may resist hegemonic masculinity even in instances when they may potentially benefit from engaging in hegemonic masculinity practices. Despite a variety of elaborations designed to try to capture the possibility of agency and resistance, such as the contention that individual men may enact other types of masculinities, that models of hegemonic masculinity may be locally specific and differ by social levels (i.e., local versus regional) and are in general changeable (both culturally and historically), and that gender is a contested arena (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), hegemonic masculinity is unchanged in terms of it being defined as the "'guarantor' of men's power," and the "currently accepted strategy" for "defending patriarchy" (Connell 1995:77). Consequently, the notion of power at the base of the hegemonic masculinity framework assumes that men, as a group, *possess* the power to define, promote, and co-opt whatever is necessary to maintain dominance over women as a group, as well as over subordinate groups of men. However, since there are very few men who can actually enact hegemonic masculinity practices (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), the vast majority of men are positioned as being subordinate to a gender ideology that promotes one basic notion—that men can only be "real men" (i.e., masculine) through subjugating women.

In order to understand how resistance to gender ideals or norms is not only possible but common, even though there are dominant notions (often conflicting and contradictory) about masculinity and femininity that circulate broadly within various cultures, it is necessary to conceive of power in a manner that acknowledges free will and human subjectivity. Despite feminist critiques that contend Foucault's fundamental reconceptualization of power has nothing to offer emancipatory politics (Hartsock 1990; Di Leonardo 1991; Deveaux 1994), numerous feminist scholars have argued that Foucault, particularly in his later work (Sawicki 1998), significantly influenced feminist work exactly because his work has the capacity to inform emancipatory projects (MacLeod and Durrheim 2002). Additionally, in terms of hegemonic masculinity, Pringle (2012) suggests the use of Foucault's philosophy in analyzing masculinity may enable researchers to avoid hegemonic masculinity's theoretical inconsistencies.

In his earlier work, Foucault (1977:201) used the analogy of the panopticon to explain how power produces normalization. Like the panopticon, an architectural prison design in which a central tower enabled guards to constantly monitor prisoners who are housed in cells encircling the tower, Foucault contends that modern power relations function through the unceasing "gaze" (i.e., surveillance and judgment) of power/knowledge regimes (e.g., prisons, science, Western medicine, social services, etc.) situated as arbiters of truth. The truth claims of power/knowledge regimes are based on assertions of expert knowledge that depict supposed objective reality, but these truth claims (or versions of truth claims) are accepted and promulgated by individuals in society, such that every individual is "caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers" (Foucault 1977:201). From a Foucauldian informed perspective, power is a part of all interactions, and truth claims about gender, particularly about what constitutes appropriate masculinity and femininity practices or behaviors, are commonly included in a wide variety of discourses and interactions in which most individuals are likely to make assertions of expert gender knowledge (e.g., "men do _____; women do _____) that may be accepted or contested.

Foucault's view of surveillance does not simply refer to face-to-face interactions, but also the self-surveillance/self-regulation individuals exercise because they internalize the gaze. However, and here I depart somewhat from Foucault's work, the degree to

which the gaze is internalized is variable since what is actually internalized depends on the situational interpretation and salience of the knowledge/truth claims transmitted. In other words, individuals may incorporate the gaze into their understanding of their embodied selves and the world, but they do so to differing degrees and in imperfect ways, and as Foucault later recognized, "the gaze" can also be resisted. In this way, power can be understood to produce, in this particular case of gender, a societal ethos that can influence, but which does not determine the production of gendered subjectivities.

Men and women do not require the incessant surveillance of others to be influenced by the power relations of gender, as various truth claims about gender may be interpreted and accepted as simple objective reality. However, they may also be interpreted in a manner that leads to resistance. In terms of gender, this may produce a *relatively* high degree of rationalized, self-regulation of populations such that there is frequently at least provisional or superficial interactional agreement about what it means to be a man or woman, but it cannot produce societal-wide uniform understanding about, or perfect adherence to some supposed set of unquestioned gender norms. Rather, in using a Foucauldian informed notion of power, knowledge/power relies on negotiation, which produces the possibility for resistance because truth claims about gender are always contestable.

Although Foucault did not address gender, gender can be understood to be an overarching knowledge/power regime (one that influences all other knowledge/power regimes) that produces truth claims concerning appropriate behavior for men and women. According to Foucault (1977), power is relational and productive, not purely repressive. Power relations produce bodies that are disciplined *and* resistant, through the manner in which knowledge/power moves between shifting positions/statuses, that is, for example, through practices such as the negotiation of truth claims. Power relations are not simply repressive precisely because they rely on the interactions of free subjects, for "in order for power relations to come into play there must be a certain degree of freedom on both sides" (Foucault 1994:292). In other words, power relations are not fixed, rather, they are malleable and "anarchic" (Bruns 2005:369) because they are formed through the altering alignments and negotiated practices of individuals and groups.

Shifting alignments and negotiated practices come into play locally, in interactional moments. Alignments are constituted when multiple social agents are coordinated in a way that enables the exercise of power on the part of one or more social agents. "To be in alignment…the coordinating practices of these social agents need to be comprehensive enough that the social agent facing the alignment encounters that alignment as having control over certain things that she might either need or desire" (Wartenberg 1990:150). Consequently, a successful attempt to exercise power in any interaction is only possible when numerous others, who are enacting practices in relation to the individuals or groups attempting to exercise control, consensually enact contextually specific, temporary/momentary, self-subordination. But, this choice to self-subordinate, to be in alignment with those who control resources one desires, may be changed or rescinded during any point in an interaction. However much an individual may desire resources controlled by an individual, he or she may still refuse to be in alignment with that person by choosing to forego those particular resources or by contesting the individual's control over the resources.

Therefore, because power is understood as relational and always contingent on the coordinated practices of others (e.g., every individual has the opportunity to use truth claims to achieve interactional goals, but truth claims may also be used in attempts to resist or counter the truth claims of others), the possibility for resistance to power is constantly present in every interactional moment. As Foucault (1980) argues,

> If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power so good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it produces discourses. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than a negative instance whose focus is repression. [p. 119]

Power relations, according to Foucault (1994:342), are essentially played out between free agents, since without such freedom power relations would be "equivalent to a physical determination." Consequently, a Foucauldian informed notion of gender power relations understands that resistance and power concomitantly shape our gendered subjectivities, our social world in general, and how we understand our own possibilities through complex negotiations that do not necessarily have fixed or predetermined conclusions. Foucault (1994) states:

> In effect, what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action that does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on possible or actual future or present actions. A relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things; it forces it, it bends, it destroys, or it closes off all possibilities. Its opposite pole can only be passivity, and if it comes up against any resistance, it has no other option but to try to break it down. A power relationship, on the other hand, can only be articulated on the basis of two elements that are indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that "the other" (the one over whom power is exercised) is recognized and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible interventions may open up. [p. 340]

Understanding gender relations from a Foucauldian perspective suggests there are innumerable possible interactional responses (including the possibility of resistance) within any interaction. At the foundation of understanding gender power relations in this way is the assumption that humans have free will and however highly influenced an individual may be by structural forces, one's gendered subjectivity is not *determined* by them. The variable constraints of social structure are not disputed since as participants in social relations no individual can escape power relations as long as he or she chooses to interact with others. Power relations

are a fundamental aspect of interaction and social life in general. Certainly society presents many kinds of constraints, but social agents have scores of alternatives in terms of how to interact within power relations. How we choose to act and respond within specific interactions partly depends on our goals, as well as on how others interacting with us try to reach their goals through such interactions. As such, resistance is always a potential aspect of power relations in which negotiation and shifting alignments influence a multiplicity of outcomes.

From a Foucauldian informed perspective, gender relations are power relations in which men and women negotiate gendered subjectivities from interaction to interaction. Both men and women are capable of advancing truth claims about gender (e.g., what constitutes appropriate masculinity and femininity) that may be challenged through the use of competing truth claims, or resisted entirely by an individual's refusal to accept and internalize society's or another individual's truth claims about gender.

If gender power relations may be accurately understood to function in this way, through truth claims participants advance, and accept or resist, then the production of an uncontested gendered reality cannot be assumed to be the only possible outcome of interaction. Consequently, the outcome of gender power relations cannot be conceived of as producing passive compliance to precisely defined notions of masculinity and femininity because, as Foucault argues, power produces both disciplined and resistant bodies. Although Foucault did not address gender specifically, his perspective on power suggests that men and women negotiate gendered, self-regulating *and* resistant subjectivities. That is, power and resistance are co-constitutive of gender and gendered subjectivities through the eternally mutable alignments and negotiated practices of individuals and groups (Lorentzen 2008:53).

However much Foucault focused in his early works on the disciplinary effects of modern power, in his later work, Foucault (1994) argues that power not only produces self-discipline but also the experiences and knowledge that enable resistance. Therefore, although power relations contribute to normalization, the associated truth claims may be contested or countered by using the same knowledge/strategies aimed at producing normalization. Simply because there exists a social field of normative or ideal masculinity and femininity practices (depending on time and place) does not mean that the outcome of gender negotiations are predetermined such that men have power and women do not. Using Foucauldian assumptions about power relations to understand gender relations suggests that masculinity or femininity norms or ideals cannot be forced on unwilling subjects. Men and women do resist masculinity and femininity practices, and notions of what constitutes acceptable or ideal masculinity or femininity may depend on the individual interpretation and specific goals of individuals within various interactions. In order to understand the ways in which homeless men construct a variety of masculinities contingent on negotiation, interpretation, and interactional goals, the analysis in this study is guided by a Foucauldian informed notion of power in which gender relations are essentially power relations that are relational and productive, and in which resistance is always a possibility.

Methods

This study analyzes secondary qualitative data previously gathered for research on coping methods and felt experiences of homeless adults in a largely rural area. In order to create a geographically diverse sample, the researchers used purposive sampling. Although most of the volunteers for the initial interviews were living at homeless shelters, in order to obtain greater balance in the sample, non-sheltered individuals were targeted during the later stages of data collection. Initial recruitment focused on participants who used services offered by community agencies assisting the homeless population in the area. Later recruitment of non-sheltered individuals proceeded through referrals from earlier participants. Additionally, non-sheltered individuals were recruited through the posting of flyers at social service agencies and restaurants throughout the region. For their participation, each individual received a ten dollar and a seven dollar gift card for a local restaurant.

Men (45) made up the largest proportion of the sample, with 10 women also included. However, the information provided by the women were not analyzed for the present study. The sample reflected the racial distribution of the general population of the area, which is over 90% Caucasian as of the 2000 Census (United States Census Bureau 2000). Fifty of the participants identified themselves as "White," one as African American, two as Latino, and two as Native American.

During the interview process the men were not asked questions specifically pertaining to masculinity. However, the original analysis demonstrated a variety of gender issues within the data, therefore a second narrative analysis was performed which focused on the ways in which the homeless men constructed masculinities.

The coding scheme used for analysis was developed by listening to the recorded interviews of the homeless men and transcribing all sections of speech that could in any way be defined as possibly denoting an aspect of gender relations. Key themes emerging from the data include the men's a) individual interpretation of masculinity norms influenced how the men enacted masculinity, b) individual interactional goals influenced alignment with or resistance to those who controlled resources, and c) interaction specific use of truth claims to support or resist normative or ideal masculinity. The overarching theme concerns the homeless men's choices to enact and/or support, or contest and/or resist certain aspects of normative or ideal masculinity depending on individual interpretations of masculinity norms and situations and their individual goals to secure specific resources.

Homeless Men, Power, and Masculinity

The men in this study provided a wealth of information about the ways in which they construct variable masculinities within specific social contexts and interactions common to homeless men. All of the men in this study revealed attitudes, behaviors, and/or experiences that demonstrate a variety of gender attitudes and behaviors that included situational

acceptance of and resistance to normative or ideal masculinity. Their gender attitudes and behaviors were often contextually specific, such that their objectives within different interactions influenced the ways in which they individually attempted to enact or resist aspects of masculinity. In other words, the men's gender behavior often appeared to depend on individual interpretations of interactions or situations and individually specific (as well as frequently changing and conflicting) interactional goals. This suggests that homeless men, and members of subordinate groups in general, do attempt applications or power and resistance within common, everyday interactions.

The strategies by which the men negotiated masculinities through day-to-day interactions were diverse and complex. Although all the men clearly struggled with a lack of material and financial resources (something traditional notions of power assume constitutes a total lack of power), this did not prevent them from pursuing interactional power/resistance goals that included demonstrations or assertions of normative or ideal masculinity or, conversely, resistance to ideal notions of masculinity. The men's demonstrated capacity to pursue such interactional goals despite being homeless suggests that contextual factors or influences do not prevent efforts to enact power/resistance within interactions.

The primary ways the men in this study attempted to negotiate masculinities were through a variety of strategies exhibiting autonomy and control of self and/or others, and referencing personal physical attributes and expertise within interactions. These constitute attempts to produce a meaning of self that sometimes was in keeping with traditional notions of masculinity, but at other times was not. An example of some of the men's attempts to demonstrate individual independence, autonomy, and self-control is the varied choices they made when securing shelter. A number of the men stated that they typically avoided using homeless shelters, making it clear in various ways that they considered shelter rules to be unduly restrictive by impinging on their independence and autonomy. For example, David explained that he avoided staying in shelters because an overnight stay in a shelter typically meant a man could not choose to go out drinking later in the evening since no individual was allowed to enter the shelter after curfew. Although he often avoids using shelters because they restrict his capacity to make independent decisions—which may be understood as resisting an attempted application of power in order to be able to enact power—under particular circumstances, David, like all the other men who spoke about typically avoiding shelters, did choose to use a shelter when he determined it was absolutely necessary to do so. This suggests that homeless men are to some degree conscious of the power relations inherent in common interactions experienced in shelters, interactions structured by rules that at least some homeless men define as preventing them from prevailing in terms of negotiating a desired type of masculinity. Therefore, choosing to avoid using shelters may be understood as a power/resistance strategy that is used by some homeless men to avoid possible interactions that may prevent them from prevailing in creating certain meanings about their masculinity. This may partly explain why some of the homeless men avoid staying at shelters even under the most extreme or harshest circumstances.

Instead of routinely staying in shelters, a number of the men chose to live with friends or family, on the streets, in abandoned buildings, or camp in wilderness areas. Choosing to live in these types of places rather than in a shelter can also be understood as a power/resistance strategy, one that the men believe may enhance the probability of being successful in negotiating their preferred masculinities. The general strategy that the men's housing choices represent may be summarized as a power/resistance strategy in which the choice of interactional partners or social contexts may positively influence the likelihood of successfully negotiating desired masculinities. Clearly, being homeless did not eliminate the men's capacity to make a number of different choices that enabled them to enact aspects of normative or ideal masculinity when that was a desired outcome.

Conversely, a number of the men apparently chose to stay at homeless shelters because they felt it provided them with some degree of autonomy. For some of the men, staying at a shelter means that they can avoid not only asking their friends and family for help, but they can avoid interactions in which they are likely to not prevail in their attempts to negotiate preferred masculinities. For example, Marvin stated,

> Most of my family is around here, you know, and I'm not trying to burden them, you know, 'cause they got their own things going on. I'm 23 years old and I shouldn't be living with them anyway. I should be on my own and try to be a man.

Marvin, like many of the men, believes that enacting masculinity requires autonomous behavior, although how the men individually defined what it means to be autonomous varied. For some homeless men, choosing to stay at a shelter, despite the associated limitations of rules and a controlling staff, constitutes an option that enables relative independence from relying on family and friends, interactional partners whose opinions may hold greater salience than shelter staff. Shelters, for these men, are interpreted as a resource that can enable independence and control in terms of the nature of the men's interactions with family members and friends. As such, this too is an example of the power/resistance strategy in which determining with whom one will interact can enhance one's ability to construct desired masculinities. Certainly this is a limited strategy in the sense that individuals cannot always choose with whom they will interact. However, there are other power/resistance strategies that may be used in interactions.

Some of the men who frequently chose to not stay at shelters or with family or friends chose to stay in public or remote places. For example, Joshua, who did not typically stay at shelters or with family or friends, has a successful strategy for getting periodically warm during the winter that entails behaving passively or unobtrusively in hospital waiting rooms. He states, "You can go to the hospital and just hang out…Like you can go to the waiting room and fall asleep…and just hope they leave you alone and that they don't check."

Joshua indicated that as long as he remained passive and unobtrusive he could depend on numerous hours of warmth and comfort in the hospital waiting room. Similarly Darren described the process of

finding a place to stay each night and stressed the importance of engaging in passive behavior:

> I pretty much know where to go and to hide. Most places, even if someone doesn't want you there—they're not that upset about it. You know, they just say, "Hey, this isn't a campground, just get the hell out of here," or something like that, and if you don't give them any grief, there isn't any trouble, then you just get up and go.

Despite the importance of aggressive behavior or exhibiting a capacity for violence being a primary practice by which men can choose to demonstrate power and dominance (Archer 1994; Kimmel 1994; Bowker 1998), a number of the men reported behavior that was exceedingly passive in nature. Nathan, for example, described using submissive practices to secure shelter from family or friends at the approach of winter: "You eat a lot of humble pie…that means saying you were wrong about something, you know, and apologizing and sitting down and talking about things and admitting your faults."

These examples of some of the men's behavior stand in direct contrast to the stereotypical aggressive, non-communicative, and controlling man. Intentionally engaging in contextually specific passive and/or cooperative behavior in order to secure a resource that is in the control of others is a prime example of the process in which gender behavior is negotiated. It is also a prime example of how power relations work in general. These behaviors are not forced on the men as each of them have the option to forego assistance from family or friends by choosing to stay at a homeless shelter or elsewhere. It is clear that in the variety of interactions that homeless men may engage in, no party involved has complete power over any other party as there are always multiple options available to everyone involved. Despite the fact that being homeless does mean the men may have relatively fewer options, it does not mean they have no options when interacting with others. From a Foucauldian informed perspective on power, the men's behavioral choices are often based on social relationships that constitute alignments with family, friends, acquaintances, and others in which they may either freely choose to participate or to forego. It is within these social alignments that the homeless men attempt to prevail in constructing their masculinities.

A number of the men readily related instances of non-aggressive, submissive, or passive behavior that enabled them to situationally garner resources they desired. Not only did they not express regret or shame for such behavior, the manner in which they typically related this type of behavior suggests they consider such behaviors to be useful strategies for obtaining and/or maintaining resources that allow them to survive and to avoid loss of autonomy (and thus loss of the capacity to prevail within gender constructing power relations). Submissiveness or maintaining a passive demeanor by no means characterizes all of their attitudes or behaviors in a wide variety of interactions, but rather appeared to be selectively used by a number of the men.

These men are engaging in coordinating practices that place them in alignment with social agents who have control over various resources they desire—which, according to Foucault, is typical of power relations. However, the men individually determine when they would engage in such coordinating practices and when they would not.

Although independence and control are behaviors associated with normative masculinity, the men in this study varied in the way they interpreted and accepted or rejected certain masculinity norms. For example, in terms of his relationship with his fiancé, Jerry accepted masculinity norms prescribing that a man be the bread-winner for his family:

> What makes it tough living here [a homeless shelter exclusively for men] is because you start thinking I shouldn't even be in this position—I should be able to have my own place, and I should be out there working like the rest of them [men]. And then it really brings you down when people start looking down at you for your misfortune.

Jerry is not only fully aware of the masculinity norm prescribing men the role of family provider, but accepts this norm even while he resists the social judgments concerning the sufficiency of his masculinity. It is apparent that although real and anticipated appraisals influence his self-judgments, they do not do so in a deterministic way since he is able to question their validity and thus resist power relations that attempt to define masculinity in highly truncated and stereotypical terms. Jerry, as all men do, has other options in terms of the types of interactions in which they choose to be participants. Similar to some of the other homeless men in this study, Jerry is capable of choosing to avoid interactions in which his masculinity is judged insufficient. Additionally, also similar to some of the other men, he could choose to critically assess the expectations associated with masculinity norms. For example, when asked what his plans were for the future, Edward replied,

> Employed, you know. Hopefully, having my own place, maybe sharing expenses with someone else, and slowly but surely working my way to self-sufficiency, which is anyone really self-sufficient? I mean, you can't make a living on your own. Even if you're self-employed, you're not really "self-employed," you're working for someone else. I mean, there is always someone else involved...In the end, I want to have my own place and be with a roommate and earning my wages and being responsible.

Although Edward appears to recognize and to some degree accept the social expectation that men should be independent, he rejects the idea that anyone, no matter what their social or economic status, can actually be entirely independent. This suggests that some homeless men may to some degree engage in critical examination of social and masculinity expectations that may constitute a basis or rationale for resistance.

Foucault (1994) contends that power produces both self-discipline, as well as the experience and knowledge that enables resistance. From this perspective, through his participation in interactions in which applications of power and resistance are advanced, Edward can be understood as having gained experience and knowledge that enable him to conceive of and advance counter truth claims that refute the notion that dependency constitutes insufficiency

and normalizes interdependence as a common aspect of all individual's lives. Therefore, although power relations may to some degree influence the production of self-regulating gender subjectivities, experience enables truth claims about gender that contest or resist prevailing gender norms by using the same strategies that are aimed at producing normalization.

Even though some of the men selectively engaged in passive behavior depending on their individual goals within particular interactions, a number of these men also related experiences that stressed their capacity for aggression, violence, and/or physical toughness, all of which are characteristics or behavior associated with normative or ideal masculinity. For example, Paul stated, "I pissed some people off around here 'cause I didn't take any crap." Sam stated, "I don't like to fight—I'm just real good at it. I try to walk away from—I'm real good at it…I'm a small guy, but I'm not too afraid of anybody, and, eh, it usually takes three or four people to get me on the ground."

The majority of the men in the study were not exceedingly tall, large, or physically fit. However, that did not prevent many of them from relating experiences in ways that defined and demonstrated their masculinities in terms of physical capacities/prowess. Indeed, a number of the men were particularly proud of their ability to survive outdoors and withstand excessively harsh winter weather. This type of masculinity is defined in terms of physical strength (Little and Leyshon 2003) and the capacity to subordinate nature (Kimmel 1987), and constitutes truth claims about the men's masculinities that may be defined as attempted applications of power.

For some of the men, highlighting multiple experiences that suggested they could survive whatever life or nature could throw at them operated as truth claims about the quality of their individual masculinities and about normative or ideal masculinity in general. Nevertheless, all of the men in this study had used shelters or stayed with family or friends at some point during their homelessness—none of the men relied exclusively on camping in the wilderness. Indeed, without help from social service agencies, shelters, and/or family members or friends, or more generally without cooperative social interactions, most homeless men would have extreme difficulty surviving. Nevertheless, that does not inhibit attempted applications of power within a wide variety of interactions.

Ideal masculinity includes the notion of the archetypal loner, a man who needs no one and eschews communal connections (Kimmel 1994; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). A number of the men in this study appeared to be attempting to depict themselves as "loners," thereby offering truth claims that defined their masculinities in terms of extreme versions of independence, autonomy, and control. Despite the fact that a number of the men claimed in one fashion or another that they were completely independent and in control, they also related a wide variety of interactions that demonstrate they also rely on many other people for not just survival, but for connectedness and companionship. This is not unlike many men—men who are not homeless but who also reveal complicated, conditional, and often contradictory masculinities dependent upon interactional negotiations in which the manner in which they present their masculinities may be accepted or challenged.

The manner in which a number of the men in this study related specific experiences served as truth claims promoting the notion (rather than an incontestable reality) that an authentically dominant man can survive on his own in any physical or social environment no matter what types of challenges or danger may be encountered. Although the men in this study lacked a wide variety of resources, a circumstance that clearly makes it very difficult for any person to exert a great deal of control over one's life, and despite the fact that many of the men complained about numerous aspects of homelessness that prevented them from having greater control over their day-to-day lives, many of these same men made statements that positioned them as being in control and having no significant problems with being homeless, and/or as having mastered the complexities and difficulties of homelessness. These truth claims about their masculinities, based on broadly promoted notions of ideal masculinity in general, are certainly open to contestation. This would be the case whether men making such truth claims were homeless or not.

The complexities of the homeless men's attempts to negotiate masculinity suggest that even though the men conditionally enact or promote certain aspects of normative or ideal masculinity, they also revealed attitudes and behaviors that are not socially identified as normatively masculine. For example, Sam defined himself as a man whom his brothers feared and who, "when it comes to fighting, well, I'm the kind of person you don't want to fight against." Yet, in response to the question, "What's the hardest thing about being homeless," Sam stated;

> People being scared of me…that hurts the worst, 'cause I share my favorite poems, you know, and people that act like, oh, that's that crazy guy, you know? 'Cause I'm a good, loving person. I'm very old-fashioned.

Sam's various discursive attempts at establishing the character of his masculinity appear contradictory, but this was not an uncommon aspect of the men's interviews. During their interviews many of the men made statements or related experiences or interactions that clearly support traditional or normative masculinity, but also provided information that demonstrates that they do not consistently adhere to or value normative masculinity in every experience or interaction. This suggests that a man's gendered subjectivity is not static or concrete, but is negotiated within social interaction and influenced by variable and changing goals. For example, Henry is thirty-five years old and has experienced extended periods of homelessness. Currently he temporarily lives in public housing and shares custody of his daughter with his ex-wife. He explained his situation thusly:

> I have custody and it's fifty-fifty, down the middle. I've always been in my daughter's life and I fought for that custody to be down the middle—it's going to stay that way…I don't just have any Joe Shmo watch her, that's for sure…My mom helps out, my sisters help out…I talk to everybody [those who also care for his daughter] everyday.

Henry's statement demonstrates that he is not only thoroughly involved in the day-to-day care of his daughter, but that he maintains close communication with family members who also provide care for his daughter. His insistence on consistent communication with family members, an effort to maintain the best care possible for his daughter, is not a quality associated with normative or ideal masculinity. However, when asked how he coped, Henry replied in what many individuals would characterize as a typical masculine fashion, "You gotta' do what you gotta' do, you know? You can't just curl up into a ball."

Connected, enduring, and close relationships are important to many men, but they are not typically associated with normative or ideal masculinity. Despite this most of the men revealed that they valued and often relied upon close relationships. For example, after a period of prolonged homelessness, Roger now lives with his nephew, his nephew's wife, and their two children. Although it is not his home, Roger's contribution of money, food, and childcare has become very important to the family's functioning because, like Roger, they too are struggling financially. Roger spends much of his day cleaning house and caring for children who are not his biological offspring. These behaviors are in no way associated with normative or ideal masculinity, but Roger makes it clear that he has no problem behaving in this fashion. Like other men, homeless or not, he is engaging in a strategy that enables him to secure resources he needs or desires, and does so by aligning himself with members of his extended family. From a Foucauldian perspective on power, alignment requires at least temporary, freely chosen self-subordination, which is an ongoing choice that Roger apparently makes with ease. Although his family members control resources Roger desires, the resources they control extend far beyond housing. Resources may include connected and caring interactions, enduring relationships, and a sense of belonging and being needed. Roger's statements also suggest that motivation for remaining in alignment with others may include the desire to continue receiving positive regard from those valued others. Since occasional or intermittent passive or cooperative behavior is a foundational aspect of relationships, all men who desire continuing interaction with particular others must engage in such behavior on occasion. As such, passive and/or cooperative behavior is a foundational, indispensable aspect of human social behavior, despite the fact that it is not commonly identified as an aspect of "ideal" masculine behavior. This is important because it suggests that all men, no matter their social position, *must* at times also resist normative or ideal notions of masculinity simply to engage in many different common and desired social behaviors. Consequently, this suggests that attempted applications of power to try to prevail in defining the meaning of one's masculinity within interactions are not necessarily an aspect of all interactions in which men are participants. It is reasonable to assume other things besides one's masculinity may take priority in various interactions.

Many of the men who reported that they had friends or family who provided assistance often referred to an individual woman, or a number of women. For example, Albert mentions that although they are no longer living together, his wife helps him out. "My wife takes care of me as far as car insurance goes, she pays the car insurance and this and that…I get medical insurance through my wife's [job]." James spoke highly of his fiancé, stating, "Another big motivation is my fiancé, she keeps me going…I talk with her regularly, communicate, that helps, too." A few of the men revealed that they relied on girlfriends, or spoke of casually "hooking up" with different women in order to have a place to spend the night. When asked if he has a place to store or keep his possessions, Peter explained, "I have multiple girlfriends that I can store stuff at their house, you know, so that kind of makes things a little easier for me now." When asked how he gets around since he does not own a car, Peter again refers to his relationships with women, "You got to have your lady friends on your side to get you around."

Referencing the women one has access to or whom a man can control is another truth claim that some of the homeless men resorted to and may be understood as another type of power/resistance strategy to secure alignment regarding the nature and quality of their masculinity. Traditional and stereotypical notions of masculinity have long used the supposed "ownership" of women as an effort to establish the quality of one's masculinity. However, given the extent to which some homeless men may feel they have to go in order to produce the social alignments that secure agreement about the quality of a homeless man's masculinity, at least with regard to ideal or normative masculinity, it is not surprising that some of the homeless men in this study resorted to this tried and true means of attempting to prevail in the power relations within the interview setting.

Discussion and Summary

The various and nuanced ways in which the homeless men in this study negotiate and discursively construct masculinity cannot be adequately understood from the perspective of hegemonic masculinity. Although the men are certainly marginalized in many ways, this did not prevent the men from enacting aspects of normative masculinity similar to men in other social groups that are not extensively resource challenged—and through the same types of power-resistance strategies. The men situationally offer certain types of truth claims that support particular aspects of normative or ideal masculinity, but not in any kind of consistent fashion. The men selectively enacted normative or ideal masculinity within particular social contexts, just as they selectively ignored, contested, or resisted masculinity norms in order to engage in relations/interactions they defined as desirable. Structural forces certainly influenced some of the men's behavioral choices, but so did the men's individual interpretations of masculinity and specific interactional contexts and goals.

A number of the men's experiences suggest that even if men situationally choose to align themselves with dominant masculinity expectations, resistance to masculinity norms is also common. Although many of the men made numerous statements clearly intended to demonstrate normative or ideal masculinity, they also related attitudes and experiences within particular interactions that stand in direct conflict with the structures of normative masculinity. This suggests that resistance to masculinity norms is not only common, but contextually specific, as is the choice to enact aspects of normative or ideal

masculinity. These findings support the notion that power and resistance concomitantly shape gender relations—even for the most resource challenged individuals/groups.

From a Foucauldian perspective on power, alignments are created when social agents are coordinated in a way that enables the exercise of power on the part of one or more social agents, but such alignments rely on the situational complicity of an agent who chooses to self-subordinate. At any moment in a local instance of power relations a subordinate agent may choose to accept or reject self-subordination. This aspect of social interaction is demonstrated by the men in this study making individual choices about when and with whom they would align themselves in order to secure various resources that enable relative autonomy, even when these alignments required behavior that is not broadly accepted as normatively or ideally masculine.

In terms of negotiating masculinity within interactions, homeless men, like all other men, may choose to align their values and behavior with masculinity norms, or contest and resist them depending on what they are attempting to achieve. Both alignment and resistance are associated with benefits and costs, and individual men must first interpret masculinity norms before enacting them. Certainly, while some amount of men's behavior may result from long-term unquestioning acceptance of masculinity norms, throughout any interaction there is no guarantee that one's behavior will go uncontested, even when an individual assumes he or she is adequately following generally accepted gender norms. All agents within interactions have the freedom to negatively or positively evaluate and sanction others through the use of truth claims, and such sanctions may result in conferring (or withholding) access to resources over which an agent has control. If power relations in general, and gender relations in particular, operate in this manner, it is not only homeless men who must engage in behavior that departs from normative or ideal masculinity in order to secure what they desire from others, as all men must negotiate alignments in which their particular constructions of masculinities are contingent upon interaction partners acceptance or rejection.

The results of this study suggest that the construction of masculinities is a complex process that cannot be adequately understood using the hegemonic masculinity framework due to its modernist conceptualization of power. The development of the hegemonic masculinity framework has been influenced by the work of both Gramsci and Foucault, but as Pringle (2012) explains, despite similarities, the two theorists offer incompatible versions of power, and this has contributed to hegemonic masculinity's theoretical incoherency. According to Pringle (2012), Gramsci's conceptualization of power is entirely modernist in that it is defined as entirely oppositional—those who have power can use it to subordinate and those who do not have power can only be subordinated. Conversely, for Foucault, power relations are "alterable… unstable and…anarchic" (Bruns 2005:369) because they are formed through the altering alignments and negotiated practices of individuals and groups. In contrast to Gramsci, Foucault's understanding of power defines power structures (e.g., the state, classes, etc.) not as the source of power relations, but as the *result* of ongoing local power relations (Pringle 2012)—that is, power relations occur in interactions that produce social structures. Since Gramsci and Foucault's conceptualizations of power are actually contradictory, their combined influence on hegemonic masculinity can only result in theoretical incoherency. Consequently, any attempt to revise hegemonic masculinity in order to theoretically account for resistance will be stymied because simply attempting to add resistance to the mix can only be achieved by negating the very notion of hegemony on which the framework is based. This is why Pringle (2012) suggests that using a Foucauldian perspective to understand the construction of masculinity may be more useful as it provides a theoretically coherent explanation that includes both power and resistance.

The primary limitation of this study is that it focuses on a specific population of homeless men in a particular rural geographic area. Although this limitation and the qualitative nature of the data precludes making generalizations to the larger population, it does reveal that resistance within gender power relations is a common feature of constructing masculinities within even subordinate groups. Despite the limitations, this research has important implications for understanding masculinity as a process of negotiation in which men's gender subjectivities are not fixed and immutable, but continuously socially situated and contingent. Furthermore, it highlights the degree to which resistance is an ordinary aspect of all social relations—including gender relations—rather than a singular aspect of those groups (i.e., men) who are assumed to possess power.

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