

## Inclusive Masculinity in a Fraternal Setting

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This ethnographic research uses 32 in-depth interviews and two years of participant/observation on a large chapter of a national fraternity in order to examine the construction of masculinity among heterosexual men. Whereas previous studies of masculine construction maintain that most men in fraternities attempt to bolster their masculinity through the approximation of requisites of hegemonic masculinity, this research shows that there also exists a more inclusive form of masculinity institutionalized within the fraternal system: one based in social equality for gay men, respect for women, racial parity, and one in which fraternity men bond over emotional intimacy.

## Hegemonic Masculinity in a Fraternal Setting

Connell (1995:77) describes hegemonic masculinity as a social process in which one form of institutionalized masculinity is “culturally exalted” above all others. In this model men must maintain and sustain a host of achieved and ascribed variables in order to obtain hegemonic power. Accordingly, previous investigations of the masculine construction among men in the American fraternity system near-monolithically show that these men revere hegemonic masculinity. They attempt to approximate it through distancing themselves from subordinate status and they promote it within their fraternities by selectively recruiting members whom possess many of the requisite variables (Boswell & Spade 1996; Martin & Hummer 1989; Sanday 1990). Thus, the fraternal system has been described as reproducing hegemonic masculinity through an institutionalized, gender-segregated, racially-exclusive, sexist, and highly homophobic masculine peer culture (Martin & Hummer 1989; Ross 1999; Sanday 1990).

Sanday (1990) suggests that the type of masculinity exhibited in fraternities is almost monolithically based upon sexual aggression toward women, and that heterosexual masculinity in fraternities is constructed over the use of women’s bodies. Wright (1996:33) highlights that “[hetero]sexual aggression so permeates the language, lifestyle, and morals of fraternity members, [that] fraternity houses have become a virtual breeding ground for men indoctrinated into the ways of sexism and sexual harassment.” She adds that the fraternity system fosters stereotypical views of male dominance and female submissiveness, so that women solely represent objects to be sexually conquered. Furthermore, the presence of a hyper-hetero-sexed and anti-feminine culture seems to promote the sexual assault of women within the fraternal setting, although Boswell and Spade (1996) warn against such over-generalizations, instead

clarifying that there exists stratification from high to low risk settings (Boeringer 1996, 1999; Brown et al 2002; Copenhaver & Grauerholz 1991; Koss 1996; Lackie & de Man 1997; Nogrady & Schwartz 1996; Wright 1996; Martin and Hummer 1989; Sanday 1990).

North American hegemonic masculinity is also described as being partially based on the outright expression of homophobia, particularly among men in homogenous, masculine settings (Anderson 2005a; Britton & Williams 1995; Curry 1990; Messner 1992; Sanday 1990; Yeung & Stomblor 2000). Accordingly, fraternities have been described as organizational settings that are near-totally intolerant of homosexuality (Sanday 1990; Yeung & Stomblor 2000). Taken together with anti-femininity, this culture may help these men deny themselves as gay in a culture in which sexuality constitutes gender (Anderson 2005b; Adams, Lester & Lohr 1996; Pascoe 2005; Swain 2003; Willer 2005). Accordingly, the presence of openly gay men within the mainstream fraternal system is rare and when gay men have come out, their stigmatized sexuality often brings homosexual suspicion to other fraternity members (Windmeyer & Freeman 1998).

However, it takes more than simply avoiding association with homosexuality and femininity to achieve the hegemonic form of masculinity. In order to possess this socially elite status, certain other variables are also requisite (Connell 1987, 1995). These variables (like race, class, athleticism, and a certain body aesthetic) fall in line with dominant cultural power positions (Anderson 2005a; Chen 1999). Accordingly, most fraternities are over-represented by white, heterosexual men whom are then expected to act in accord with an exclusive gender perspective (Boeringer 1996, 1999; Brown et al 2002; Chang 1996; Martin & Hummer 1989; Windmeyer & Freeman 1998; Wright 1996; Yeung & Stomblor 2000; Windemeyer 2005).

Martin & Hummer (1989:460) maintain that fraternities generally avoid recruiting, “geeks, nerds, and men that might give the fraternity a wimpy or gay reputation.”

### **Shifting Masculinities**

Despite the near-monolithic description of fraternities as organizations which promote a restricted and exclusive masculine atmosphere, there is no one way of constructing masculinity, there always exists competition for hegemonic status among men in any group (Anderson 2005b; Connell 1995; Ibson 2002; Swain 2006). Thus, when it comes to gender expression in masculinized settings, different organizations might adhere to different sets of gendered values and masculine norms (Anderson 2005a, 2005b; Cashmore & Parker 2003; Swain 2006; Wilson 2002). I have recently described *inclusive masculinity* as a more encompassing form of masculinity, particularly for young, middle-class, educated white men (Anderson 2005b). Here, an institutionalized form of masculinity rivals Connell’s hegemonic form for social dominance.

Similar to Swain’s (2006) notion of personalized masculinity, where pre-adolescents are content to pursue identities not associated with the dominant form, inclusive masculinity is thought to be predicated in the social inclusion of those traditionally marginalized by hegemonic masculinity. With the support of organizational and/or institutional culture, these men are said to politically align themselves away from orthodox notions of masculinity: to be less, or entirely unconcerned, whether others perceive them to be gay or straight, masculine or feminine. Because these men are said to have a culturally positive association with homosexuality, not only does homophobia cease to be a tool of masculine marginalization, but homophobic expression becomes stigmatized. Thus, men whom subscribe to inclusive masculinity have been shown to

behave in effeminate ways and to be less defensive about their heterosexuality, all with less or without fear of social stigma (Anderson 2005a; 2005b).

### **Theory and Methods**

In order to understand the factors that contribute to the development of inclusive masculinity, I rely upon a socio-feminist theory of masculinity which maintains that gender is produced through a complex interaction of institutional power, organizational culture, and individual agency (Acker 1990; Anderson 2005b; Connell 1995; Dilorio 1989; Frye 1983; Kimmel 1994; Lorber 1994; Thorne 1993; West and Zimmerman 1987; Wharton 1991). In this case, fraternity men are thought to be both masculinized and heterosexualized according to the dominant, institutionalized gender ideology of men in fraternities (Britton & Williams 1995; Chen 1999; Sanday 1990; Wright 1996). I therefore use participant/observations and in-depth interviews (Dilorio 1989; Glaser & Strauss 1967) in order to examine how masculinity is constructed through micro and macro processes in a fraternity setting.

Data collection comes from two years of participant/observation on 67 heterosexual and one homosexual member of the “Troubadours” (a national fraternity) located at a university which maintains a population of 19,000 undergraduate students. Of these students, 53% are Asian, 31% white, and 12% Latino. There are thirty-one fraternities on this campus, all with men ranging between ages 18 and 23. Because of the costs associated with fraternity membership, most come from middle to upper-class backgrounds, making a class analysis difficult. Furthermore,

this research only provides an in-depth analysis of the Troubadours, at this particularly university, so generalizations cannot be made for other chapters of this, or other fraternal orders.

The type of total access gained to the Troubadours is not common. It came as a result of a formal invitation to serve as the fraternity's faculty mentor. In order to help facilitate my status as an insider, the chapter president determined that it was best for me to partake in initiation procedures and rituals alongside the class of new recruits. As with these other recruits, this initiation did not include demeaning or degrading hazing rituals. After this ten-week imitation period, all fraternity activities were open to me, including formal meetings, athletic contests, parties, and rituals.

The decision of how to negotiate the role between faculty advisor and maintaining an insider's status was heavily influenced by Ann Arnett Ferguson's (2000) ethnographic approach in *Bad Boys: Public Schools and the Making of Black Masculinities*. Here, Ferguson struggled with whether to represent an adult or operate like the elementary school children she observed. In deciding the later, she found that she was made privy to information otherwise inaccessible. Accordingly, an insider's status was maintained throughout most of this participant/observation. This occurred by partaking in college-aged activities, including drinking, clubbing, and participating in athletic events. I was also openly gay in this setting. As with other research, rather than this placing social distance between the researcher and informants, this disclosure seems to have had the opposite effect, instead influencing self-disclosure among many informants (Fingerson 2002; Johnson 2002; Kong 2002; Wenger 2002). Still, one can never be sure how the heterosexual or homosexual orientation of any researcher will influence the data.

Notes were taken both during and immediately following visits, which occurred at all hours and in multiple locations. While the members of the fraternity knew that their faculty advisor was also conducting research, care was taken not to make notes in their presence. I believe this strategy helped enable the fraternity members to forget that their faculty mentor was also conducting research.

Data is also drawn from 18 qualitative interviews strategically selected for racial diversity from this chapter. Interviews generally occurred over private meals or in members' rooms. They generally began by asking informants to discuss their history in the fraternity and their views of its organizational culture regarding sexuality and gender issues. Informants were also asked about their perceptions of the sexual and gendered views held by other fraternity members on this and other campuses. These in-depth, loosely-structured, one to two hour interviews were transcribed verbatim by research assistants. They were then coded for content, and emerging themes were organized into conceptual and thematic categories (Goetz and LeCompte 1981; Strauss and Corbin 1994). In order to improve reliability, researcher triangulation was used on ten percent of the transcription coding, and a key informant checked several drafts of the paper.

A strategically selected sample of ten other fraternity members was also obtained. Four of these interviews were conducted on closeted gay male fraternity members within the same university, but within different fraternity chapters. Another four interviews were conducted on heterosexual members of other fraternity members within the same university. Two were then conducted on heterosexual Troubadour members from other universities. While informants' names have been changed, it is sometimes difficult to protect organizational or institutional identities.

### The 'New Age Man'

It would be difficult to describe the organizational culture of this Troubadour chapter as one that aspires to the traditional tenets of hegemonic masculinity. In addition to representing the same racial diversity as the university's student population, one of the two previous chapter presidents, Joe, was also openly gay. Wright (1996) suggests that when this type of diversity does occur in the fraternal setting it generally indicates a lower social status. This, however, was not the case: this fraternity chapter is among the largest and most successful fraternities on campus.

Exemplifying this, during the research period, the Troubadours were awarded for possessing the highest collective grade point average; they were also voted *fraternity of the year* by the university sororities; and they were also ranked first in inter-fraternal athletic competitions. Thus, the Troubadours not only represent a highly diverse fraternity, but they also maintain high social prestige in the Greek system.

It is possible that the Troubadour's organizational culture of inclusivity is partially influenced through a top-down institutional perspective. In addition to being the first to pass a national bylaw forbidding discrimination based on sexuality, the National Chapter of the Troubadours also encourages a softer form of masculinity among its members, something they call being "a new age man." Part of this directive includes discussions of homosexuality.

Jon, the current chapter president said, "We try to distance ourselves from the *Animal House* stereotype ... we seek a variety of men, including gay men ... we are not looking for the typical frat boy." When asked whether they actively seek gay men or whether they just accept those who come out, he responded, "Well we don't put a poster up saying that we are seeking



gay men...but it is part of our recruitment discussion. So when guys come to our table [during the week in which students pledge fraternities] we let them know that we are seeking diversity, and we specifically mention sexual orientation.” Jon explains that seeking a diversity of members is part of the “new-age man” program. In order to be considered a “new-age-man” chapter, each Troubadour organization must institute a program of coursework and activities, all designed to construct a different form of masculinity among its members. These members must promote inclusive attitudes toward both sexual and racial diversity, and they must also promote the treatment of women with dignity. Alex further explained the new-age man concept:

It is really about respect. It’s about being a gentleman, polite, and respectful. Not just respectful toward one another, but toward women, gay men, Christians and atheists ...

But a large part of it has to do with not being a stereotypical frat boy too. We expect our brothers not to partake in that macho jock mentality. We want to stand out as being intellectual and athletic, but also as being kind and respectful.

But just because individuals fall under the rubric of an institutional creed does not necessarily mean that they will comply with the desired perspective. Individual and organizational agency is highly influential in developing a masculine perspective (Anderson 2005b; Dellinger 2004).

Highlighting such organizational agency, not all chapters have undergone the process to be deemed a “new-age-man chapter.” Ronnie, a Troubadour from another university said, “I can’t believe your brothers are so cool, you should spend a day here. They are horrible ... a bunch of homophobic white boys spending daddy’s trust fund so they can get laid.”

There is another reason institutional creeds may fail. CJ, the president of another fraternity, said that while his fraternity has also codified a less-macho perspective among its

members, the creed is not taken seriously:

We have this huge rule book on what we can and can't do, and what type of man they expect us to be. I think it says in there that we are not to discriminate based on sexual orientation, but it's just one of a list of things, so I don't think it's something they actually care about much ... What they really care about is drinking, because our chapter was sued a few years ago...

This highlights that institutional policies are often developed out of risk-management strategies (Needleman 2000). While many fraternities may have codified respect for women, tolerance for sexual and racial minorities and temperance on sex and alcohol, much of this may be a strategic decision regarding legal practices, not originating from a concern for those marginalized, harassed, or assaulted by men in fraternal settings.

### **Organizational Culture and Homosexuality**

Research on fraternities near-unanimously attributes to them an organizational and institutional culture of extreme homophobia (Sanday 1990; Windmeyer & Freeman 1998). Fraternities are described as places in which homophobic discourse and socio-negative hazing all serve to stigmatize homosexuality. Sanday (1990) suggests that this serves to deny the homoeroticism within the group, something also theorized among other groups of college-age men (Adams, Wright & Lohr 1996; Anderson 2005a; Pronger 1990). Thus, the organizational culture of mainstream fraternal studies has unanimously shown fraternities to be hostile toward recruiting or maintaining openly gay members. Supporting these findings, closeted members from other fraternities report that homophobic discourse pervades their organizations, particularly through the word *fag* and the phrase *that's so gay*.

Blake, a closeted member of another fraternity said, “Oh yeah, everything is ‘fag this’ and ‘fag that.’ You can’t escape it; you just hear it all the time.” Carlos (also from another fraternity) said, “They are always talking about what’s gay or who is gay.” However, just as Smith (1998), Pascoe (2005) and Anderson (2005a, 2005b) have shown, these closeted gay informants do not always judge homophobic discourse as conveying anti-gay sentiment. Instead, they suggest that the phrase *that’s so gay* is utilized as a general, non-specific expression of dissatisfaction and that *fag* is used as an expression of antifemininity, not homophobia. Jeff said of his non-Troubadour brothers, “Yeah, I hear that [fag] all the time, and I say it too. But I don’t mean it that way. We are not really trying to be homophobic when we say it.” These comments suggest that homophobia is either decreasing in the fraternal setting or its expression is growing more covert; either way, the Troubadours take a different perspective on the issue—they decry such expression altogether.

This Troubadour chapter is politically charged to promote inclusivity of homosexuality as being equal to heterosexuality, and they understand that homophobic discourse, regardless of its intention, interferes with this. Garret said, “No. We won’t say fag. I mean I might say it to Joe [who is openly gay] as a joke, but I’d then expect him to snap back with a ‘whatever breeder’ or something. So there is joking yes, but we’d never say something like that in a serious manner.” Jon added, “I think it’s really more of an education issue. They [members of other fraternities] just don’t understand that even the casual use of that kind of language hurts their gay brothers. We get that, and we understood that before you came to this fraternity.” Mike added, “It is simple, if we don’t want people to think that we are a bunch of homophobic jerks then we can’t give them reason to suspect such.”

These statements are consistent with my participant/observations. Regardless of the venue, time, or level of intoxication, the use of homophobic discourse *was not* used among members of this fraternity. To be clear, throughout this two-year ethnographic study, no use of the word *fag* or the phrase *that's so gay* was detected among Troubadour members. Although it is recognized that their behaviors might have been influenced by an awareness of being studied by their openly gay advisor, and that the absence of homophobic discourse does not necessarily imply that the organization is free of homophobia, no counter-evidence emerged to contradict the authenticity of the Troubadours homo-welcoming standpoint. Discussions about homosexuality were abundant, my same-sex partner was encouraged to attend all social events, and there existed a political climate which challenged heterosexism. Many of the brothers even challenged the polarization of sexual binaries. Nate said, "I don't get it. Why do we have to be gay or straight? Why can't we just be?" Trevor added, "Or why can't we be somewhere between. I don't really believe anyone is a hundred percent anything." Alex agreed, saying, "I think we are all bisexual to some degree." Andrew said, "Gay, straight, whatever, I really don't care." Joe added, "We talk about this kind of stuff all the time." His heterosexual roommate agreed, "If I cared that Joe was gay, I'd have to ask myself why..." In this respect, the sexual perspectives of some Troubadour men might best be understood from a queer perspective as they discuss the deconstruction of sexual categorization (Kosofsky 1993; Seidman 1996; Jargose 1996).

The organizational efforts toward inclusivity of homosexuality began at least two years prior to this research, when Brian, the fraternity's first openly gay member came out. Joe, who was closeted at the time, said that there were multiple discussions of this, and that, "some of the members even wanted to keep him out. But the fraternity voted on the issue, and the

overwhelming majority welcomed him.” He added, “Most of the members were cool with it anyhow, but of the few who weren’t, either they changed their views or they left the fraternity.”

Mike was one who changed his views. “I used to hate gays, but now I think that’s stupid. Brian was a senior my first year here and I had a lot of discussion with him. Now I think it’s cool having gay guys around.” His roommate Lynn added, “I never had a problem with gays, but a couple of the older guys did when I first joined the fraternity [four years earlier], some of them used to just hate gays. But you don’t find that here anymore.”

These discussions not only have made homophobia passé as a marginalizing tool of masculinity, but homosexuality is also accorded the same potential for masculinity as heterosexuality. When informants were asked if gay men could be “as masculine as straight men,” all agreed that they could. But they also questioned whether they (or straight men) *should* be macho. In this manner, the Troubadour’s not only permit gay men to be equal members in masculinity, but many critiqued masculinity in its traditional form.

### **Organizational Culture and Misogyny**

Indicating the strength of association between masculinity and misogynistic attitudes within the fraternal system, informants from other fraternities demonstrate the pervasive use of misogynistic discourse among most fraternity brothers. In this case, the socio-negative discourse mostly comes through the terms *bitch* and *slut*. Blake (not a Troubadour) said, “Yes, I hear that too. She’s a bitch, or she’s a slut; of course. You hear it all the time.” Carlos confirmed, “Yeah, they use those terms; but again, I’m not sure they mean it that way.”

However, Allen, a Troubadour, said, “We don’t look at women in the same manner [men of] other fraternities do. You’ll notice that we treat them with respect. They are just part of the group.” Mike agreed, “Women are some of my best friends. Like Melissa. She is in my room all the time. She’s like my best friend.” Jon added, “...it’s not appropriate to use that type of terminology; and the use of it simply won’t be tolerated.” Steve agreed, “There is a strong belief that we are to treat women well. There is actually peer pressure this way. In fact, if you don’t treat women well, I mean if you even do something perceived as mean-spirited, you can be brought to standards” (a judicial hearing). When asked whether this included misogynistic discourse Steve responded, “Of course. In fact, we had a brother brought to standards because he called a girl a bitch. Observations largely support this claim, as casual use of the terms *bitch*, *slut*, and *dyke* were used in reference to women hardly ever (three times within the two-year study).

Thus, just as homophobic discourse is virtually absent from the social world of the brothers of this fraternity, the Troubadours avoid misogynistic discourse with nearly the same political intent they do homophobic discourse. And while this may be partially influenced by their institutional creed, it is more likely a product of organizational culture, which in turn is heavily influenced by individual agency (Anderson 2005a; Dellinger 2004; Martin & Collinson 1999).

A great deal of political awareness was brought to this campus after a member of another fraternity violently sexually assaulted an underage girl on campus. The Troubadours reeled in the situation. Danny said:

Of course, there was that [names incident] with [names fraternity] and that was horrible. I mean, just horrible....It also made us all [all fraternities at this university] look bad because people think we were all the same, and that's not fair .... We were so horrified [about the rape] that we asked Professor [names professor] to talk to us.

None of this is to suggest that the men of this organization do not sexualize women—they do, but supporting the explicit statement, many strong non-sexual relationships were also formed between Troubadour men and women. A number of individual women embedded themselves into the social networks and cliques of this fraternity, existing as valued friends. Some belonged to sororities, others did not. Many attended social events, and several spent the night in the fraternity with regular occurrence. As far as could be discerned, these relationships remained non-sexual. It was not uncommon to walk the fraternity's hallways and see, through an open door, women (usually fully dressed) sleeping on a bed (usually on top of the covers) in one of the members' rooms. These female friends were granted considerable access to the fraternity and, when interviewed, expressed that they had no fear of being sexually victimized. One said, "Come on, their Troubadours." Whether the decision to sleep in a fraternity house is wise or not, the event establishes a level of comfort they maintain with these men—something influenced by the positive treatment they have received from them.

It should be noted that these men have not redefined all aspects of heteromascularity. After returning from a dance at 2:30 in the morning, Dan called out, "Don't go in there, Tim is in there and he hasn't been with a woman in a few months." Tim, who had met Kate at a club, brought her back to his room. The next day he received comments like, "Tim, in the room with

the door closed” and “Tim, I see your all smiles today,” *but* the discourse lacked the hyper-macho tone of symbolic rape. None asked, “Did you fuck her?” “Nail her?” or “score?”

Conversely, two of the men publicly proclaimed their desire to remain virgins. While one of the brothers identified as being bound to Christian morality on the issue, Chris expressed that his lack of heterosexual sex was a result of a low sex drive, self-identifying as asexual. “I just don’t care much for sex. I have like no sex drive.” When asked if his brothers made fun of him for this, he responded, “Not really. I guess every great now and then, but it’s not like they really care.” Thus, unlike previous research, which generalizes all fraternity men to be hyper-heterosexual, there is no homogenous view of heterosexual activity among these fraternal brothers—even though many men were positively rewarded for having heterosexual sex.

These results do not suggest that there are *no* misogynistic or antifeminine attitudes among the men in this group. Nor is this to suggest that this fraternity does not help reproduce patriarchy; after all, it does remain a formally gender-segregated institution. Many of the men do sexually objectify women in constructing their heterosexual identities, but they also align themselves politically with sexual equality: they befriend women in non-sexual ways and several of these men self-described themselves as feminists. Thus, a fair assessment might be to claim that the relationship these men maintain with women is more complicated than that of other studies of men in fraternities.

### **Organizational Culture and Racism**

Historical exclusivity has created institutionalized racial segregation within the fraternity system. Even in recent times, Ross (1999) and Chang (1996) have found that when racial conflict



arises on university campuses, white men seek unquestioned power by joining white fraternities. In response to this discrimination nine exclusively black fraternal orders have been formed in the United States, and two exclusively Asian fraternal orders (Ross 1999; Windmeyer 2005).

Race, however, is an interesting topic for this research. Unlike most discussions of race, which focus on issues of black and white (Chen 1999), the racial issue on this campus is largely that of Asian and white. 53% of the campus identifies as maintaining some form of ethnicity loosely described here as Asian, while only 31% self-identified as white. The composition of the Troubadours roughly matched that of the university's general population.

Race was examined here for its role in the development of cliques. One clique is a group of Troubadours who call themselves "The Dark Side." Prajay said, "Hey, why don't you join the 'dark-side.'" Being of Indian descent it seemed, at first, that the language Prajay used referenced a clique of exclusively brothers of color. Perhaps there was the appearance of racial diversity at one level, while men of color were actually segregated or clustered at another (Schneider 1986). This however, was not found to be the case. Although Prajay was of color, the 'dark side' of the fraternity represented the same racial composition as the fraternity at large.

When Lynn, an Asian member, was asked about the fraternity's racial composite, he said, "I don't think race is an issue here. I'd say we're as diverse as it gets for this campus." Considering that less than 1% of the campus population identifies as black, the fact that there are two black men as part of this group does suggest that, at least in representation, Lynn is correct. According to Joe, this is a strategy of selective recruiting for racial diversity. "We are first looking for guys that fit our bill. You know, being a new-age-man and all. But there is no reason

those guys shouldn't come from all backgrounds. I'd say that overall we represent just about every population on campus."

But just because the racial composite of a group matches the larger population, does not mean that covert forms of discrimination do not occur. For example, covert forms of discrimination have been found among gay men despite their insistence that they are treated with equality (Anderson 2002). However, observations could find no structural or social mode of discrimination against Troubadour men of color. When the men sat around their living-area for their mandatory monthly meeting, no discernable pattern in race could be detected. Nor was race was not found to be patterned in clique formation, committee involvement, extra curricular involvement, roommate selection, or even social status. In fact, many considered Joe the fraternity's highest valued social member; and he is both gay and of color. Alex said, "I don't feel black here. Although I'm clearly black, I don't feel like people are looking at me that way. In fact, I don't really see color at all here. It's like Tim. He is just Tim. He is not Asian Tim, or white Tim. He's just Tim."

When trying to recall members' names, memories were prompted with, "He's the tall one," "He's the soccer player," or "He's the one that drove you to..." but rarely was it heard, "He's the white one," or "He's the Asian guy." Perhaps this just reflects the lack of utility in using race as a master identity in a population near evenly split between two racial groups; alternatively it might simply reflect extreme political correctness. Either way, it might also serve as an indicator that the significance of race is at least declining for these men.

## **Inclusive Masculinity and Fraternal Bonding**

The Troubadours have not revised all conscripts of hegemonic masculinity. They maintain reverence for athleticism; praising members who help them win intra-fraternity contests. For a select few of the Troubadours, this sporting ethic is also coupled with the traditional masculine script of standing one's ground: a dispute over a sport call once led to a fight between a Troubadour and another fraternity member. The Troubadours also do their fair share of drinking, including binge drinking. However, the men of this fraternity were also shown to construct their masculinity over something not previously discussed among men in highly masculinized arenas. Many Troubadour men were found to bond over the expression of intimacy, something traditionally attributed to the manner in which women bond (Walker 1998).

After hearing a presentation on sexual assault, Alex (one of the fraternity's most athletic and perhaps best looking members) talked with several of his brothers about having once been raped; saying that he was sixteen when an older woman took advantage of his intoxicated state and forced herself onto him. Despite this revelation, none of the brothers responded with, "God, I wish I were raped," or "What are you complaining about?" Instead, Alex's brothers listened to him discuss the painful event. Gallel said, "That's awful," holding Alex as he told his brothers that he felt dirty, abused, and depressed over the situation. Remarkably, none of Alex's feelings were negated by escapist-comedy or masculine banter; quite the opposite, Alex was nurtured to the point of tears.

Another example came as Max (voted the most athletic member of the fraternity), was engaging Joe and some of his fraternity brothers in a discussion about sexual fluidity. Suddenly, Max said, "Yeah, I had to experiment with a guy to find out that I was straight." His statement

brought little pause to the group. And where one might expect this disclosure to be followed by heterosexualizing and/or masculinizing discourse; or where one might expect to hear homophobic statements to distance oneself from the stigma of gay sex, none occurred. Instead, one of his brothers responded enthusiastically, “Really. That’s cool, what did you do?”

### **Discussion**

Previous investigations into the masculine peer culture of American fraternities near-monolithically show that fraternity men revere hegemonic masculinity and attempt to approximate it through distancing themselves from subordinate status (Boswell & Spade 1996; Sanday 1990). This primarily occurs through the selective recruitment of athletic, white, heterosexual men; and through heteromasculinizing their organization through the extreme sexual objectification of women and gay men. In this two-year ethnographic research however, a different type of masculinity was discovered in the fraternal setting. The men belonging to this chapter of a national fraternity exhibited an institutionalized form of masculinity esteemed for the social inclusivity of various types of men. Their particular construction of masculinity overtly requires the acceptance of homosexuality, respect for women, and emotional intimacy among brothers. In this respect, masculinity is constructed in opposition to many of the traditional tenets of hegemonic masculinity, and in ways not previously discussed among mainstream fraternities.

While it is not clear how long this form of masculinity has existed as the norm in this setting, these findings are nonetheless attributed to a number of contemporary social influences. Primarily, it is thought that decreasing levels of cultural homophobia have been influential in creating a new form of masculinity; something recently found among heterosexual university

athletes as well (Anderson 2005a, 2005b). While homophobia certainly exists among members of other fraternities on this campus, one indicator of cultural homophobia's decline is that Joe (the openly gay chapter president of the Troubadours) was voted "Greek man of the year," by a representative body of all fraternities on campus.

But this emerging gendered perspective might also be (partially) attributable to the institutional directives of the Troubadour's national governance. The national chapter of the Troubadours has codified this version of masculinity through its 'new-age-man' program. Yet, because members of other Troubadour fraternities were shown not to venerate this 'new-age-man' disposition, organizational culture and individual agency is also influential.

Whatever the antecedents, the members of this fraternity were (in some ways) found to behave in ways once associated with homosexuality and/or femininity, yet they did not receive the social stigma that Kimmel (1994) suggests distances men from being thought less than hegemonically masculine. Conversely, they distanced themselves from what they considered a "frat boy culture." These men have largely reduced the policing of their own public identities as heteromasculine through the elimination of homophobic discourse. Because of their positive association with homosexuality, homophobia ceases to be a tool of masculine marginalization.

Equally important, one's race, sexuality, or gendered expression was not found to be influential within the social hierarchies of this fraternity. Racial composites of sub-groups varied, and cliques seemed to be formed off of who roomed with whom, rather than racial, sexual or gendered characteristics. Similarly, social class (of which there was little variance), body types, athleticism or even good looks, did not seem to be strong markers of social status. This is not to

say that all members were equally revered by their brothers, but it is to say that usual categories of marginalization did not seem to apply to these men.

The form of masculinity these college-age men exhibit what I have recently described as “inclusive masculinity” (Anderson 2005b) because it is predicated upon social inclusion of those traditionally marginalized by contemporary notions of hegemonic masculinity. Because of their culture of inclusive masculinity, the men of this fraternity beckon sociologists to re-think categorizing fraternal life as monolithically socio-negative toward women and gay men. This is particularly relevant in light of evidence that other groups of highly masculinized college-aged men have also begun to exhibit inclusive masculinity (Anderson 2005a, 2005b). Consistent with these other groups of men, social stigma is doled out to those who act in accord with hegemonic masculinity, not to those who distance themselves from it.

In addition to showing that inclusive masculinity exists in a variety of masculinized institutions, this study also enables gender scholars to expand upon its definition. This is because previous research on inclusive masculinity was limited to that of primarily white men, but this research found inclusive masculinity available to men of color as well. It also expands upon inclusive masculinity because it foregrounds men’s bonding over emotional intimacy and the disclosure of personal matters. Troubadour members shared anxieties and troubles, secrets and fears. So common was this form of emotional bonding that it remained acceptable for men to cry in each other’s presence, something which occurred with surprising frequency. And while *not all* of the men in the fraternity choose to open up in this manner, those that did seemed to rejoice in confiding in one another. Troubadour men were also shown to develop non-sexual friendships with women. Thus, in addition to supporting the contention that inclusive masculinity is more

welcoming of gay men, men of color, and is accepting of femininity, this research found that these men bond in ways previously thought effeminate, without receiving social stigma from their members.

Thus, new to the research on fraternities, rather than inclusive masculinity being exhibited by a few individual agents in an otherwise traditional fraternity, inclusive masculinity was an organizational mantra, something the Troubadours called being “a new-age-man,” and something which was backed by an organizational and institutional culture. To be clear, the description of a variance in masculinity among fraternity men is not new (Boswell & Spade 1996; Windemeyer 2005), it is the degree of this variance which is significant here.

Thus, opposite the findings of previous studies on men in fraternities, the men of this study resisted many of the tenets of hegemonic masculinity and constructed a normative and institutionalized form of masculinity based more on inclusiveness than marginalization. Among the Troubadours, this inclusive form of masculinity became the hegemonic form. The fraternity men in this research therefore remind us that hegemony is never seamless; that identities are always in flux, and that generalizations to even well-studied cultures should be made with caution.

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