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# Finding space in the field of masculinity



## Lived experiences of men's masculinities

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### **Abstract**

Hegemonic masculinity as a theoretical concept separates those men in a dominant position who are able to live up to the cultural ideal and attain hegemonic status from those who are subordinated and marginalized by it. Yet men's lived experiences of masculinity are not necessarily of being subordinated by the cultural ideal. Many men feel comfortable with their masculine identities despite an inability to fit the hegemonic ideal. Based on qualitative empirical research, this article identifies the strategies men use to successfully negotiate masculinities over the life course, and that enable men to adopt dominant masculinities in their everyday lived experiences while ultimately being subordinated in relation to the culturally dominant, hegemonic masculine ideal. Such strategies include reformulating definitions of masculinity, emphasizing maleness as innately masculine, and operating in subfields in the field of masculinity where the capital that men own is valued and their position dominant in relation to other men.

**Keywords:** dominant masculinities, field of masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, physical capital

According to Connell (1995: 77), hegemonic masculinity refers to one form of masculinity that is culturally exalted over all others at a particular place and point in time. As the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity are narrow and limiting (though they can be challenged and transformed), few men actually meet the hegemonic ideal. Despite this, Connell (1995: 79–82) suggests that most men are complicit in supporting hegemonic masculinity, despite being subordinated or marginalized by it, because from it they derive a patriarchal dividend that ensures men's collective power and privilege over women.

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Yet the vast majority of men interviewed for this research did not support hegemonic masculinity. Some of the men interviewed supported elements of hegemonic masculinity that were congruent with their own abilities to perform hegemonic masculinity; however, as an ideal they rejected the notion that it was superior to their own masculinity, which did not necessarily wholly epitomize standards of hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, their lived experiences of masculinity were not of being subordinated or marginalized by hegemonic masculinity; to the contrary, they considered their own masculinity to be dominant despite being incompatible with, or varying from, the hegemonic ideal. While they accepted that there was a culturally dominant archetype of masculinity pervasive in Australian society, they did not allow it to necessarily subordinate them at the individual level in the context of their everyday lives. Instead, they recognized that there were alternative dominant masculinities that were distinct from (and could even be argued to be superior to) hegemonic masculinity.

Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, the concepts of capital and fields have been incorporated with Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity to produce a theoretical model that is able to adequately explain how dominant masculinities are able to exist despite being subordinated by hegemonic masculinity. It also ably explains how and why men challenge and reject notions of hegemonic masculinity, and provides a framework for the strategies men use to negotiate masculinities. The model is referred to as 'the field of masculinity'.

## **The field of masculinity**

The Bourdieusian concept of 'fields' is a spatial metaphor for domains of social life that are relational and malleable and may be inter-institutional or intra-institutional in scope (Swartz, 1997: 120). Within any given field there are struggles over power and position that necessarily result in a dichotomous relationship between those in positions of dominance who defend their dominant position (orthodoxy), and those who are subordinated and attempt to challenge the superiority of orthodoxy within the hierarchical order and struggle against their subordinated status (heterodoxy) (Bourdieu, 1993: 73). Actors' positions within fields are determined by the value of capital (economic, social, cultural and physical) that they own (Bourdieu, 1993: 73). Those with valued capital are assigned privilege and status in the field, while those with less valued capital are subordinated or marginalized.

Bourdieu's concept of fields is easily extended to a field of masculinity in which there are struggles and contestations over definitions of what is, and what is not, considered to be masculine/masculinity resulting in a relationship of orthodoxy and heterodoxy as those with valued capital defend their position against those who seek change. In turn, this notion of a field of masculinity is

complementary to the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Just as fields focus on the fluid social relations of power that result in a dichotomy of dominant/subordinate that is continually susceptible to challenge and change, so too does hegemony consider the struggles that emerge as a result of the social tensions between those who strive to maintain the status quo and those who press for change. As Williams demonstrates in his definition of hegemony:

A lived hegemony is always a process. It is not, except analytically, a system or a structure. It is a realized complex of experiences, relationships, and activities, with specific and changing pressures and limits.... Moreover (and this is crucial, reminding us of the necessary thrust of the concept), [hegemony] does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own. We have then to add to the concept of hegemony the concepts of counter-hegemony and alternative hegemony, which are real and persistent elements of practice.... [A]ny hegemonic process must be especially alert and responsive to the alternatives and opposition which question or threaten its dominance. (1977: 112–13)

Using the definition of hegemony above, hegemonic masculinity can be used to appropriately describe that form of masculinity which is considered culturally to be most dominant at any given time *within the field of masculinity* (Coles, in press). Within the field of masculinity, holders of hegemonic masculinity must defend their hegemonic status (orthodoxy) against others who challenge it (heterodoxy). For the most part, the culturally dominant masculine ideal is perpetuated by an elite few who gain from the hierarchical ordering of masculinities. For some, there is economic capital to be gained by commodifying and distributing an image of hegemonic masculinity and selling it to a mass consumer market, while others own forms of capital valued in the field of masculinity and thus defend hegemonic masculinity due to the privilege and status that it gives them in the field of masculinity in relation to other men.

However, while hegemonic masculinity refers to the culturally dominant ideal within the field of masculinity, there is a vast array of subfields located within the field of masculinity (e.g. the field of gay masculinity, the field of aged masculinity, the field of black masculinity) that have their own struggles over specific capital and result in a dichotomous relationship of dominant versus subordinate (or hegemony versus counter-hegemony). Therefore, although men may be subordinated by hegemonic masculinity within the field of masculinity, they may assume a dominant masculine identity in an alternate subfield in which the capital that they own is valued. Considering subfields within the field of masculinity allows for a range of dominant masculinities to exist (e.g. dominant gay masculinity, dominant aged masculinity, dominant working-class masculinity, dominant black masculinity, dominant disabled masculinity) outside of the hegemonic masculine ideal.

## Methods and methodology

For the purpose of investigating meaning and understanding in the lives of men a qualitative approach was employed. This involved the use of grounded theory as established by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and included tangential theoretical models emanating from grounded theory traditions (Charmaz, 1990, 1991, 1994; Dey, 1999; Rice and Ezzy, 1999; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Watson, 2000). A qualitative approach was chosen because of what it offered in terms of seeking understanding of how men make sense of, and negotiate, masculinities. Engaging with subjects through the action of speech allowed an insight into their subjectivity and motives for action as they experienced them in the everyday world (Lindlof, 1995; Nettleton and Watson, 1998; Rice and Ezzy, 1999).

The empirical data for this research project were obtained through 41 semi-structured interviews, and a collection of field notes taken immediately after each interview, conducted between February 2003 and August 2004. Semi-structured interviews were used because they have the advantage of allowing for the contrasting and comparing of results across the range of men interviewed, while also providing the flexibility to probe responses and engage in greater understanding of the participants' own perspectives; that is, semi-structured interviewing allowed for depth as well as structure. The interviews were conducted at a time and place that was convenient to the participant. Most often this was during business hours, Monday to Friday, though on occasions it included weekends and evenings. Usually the interviews were conducted either in my office at the University of Tasmania, or else at the respondent's place of residence or work. The interviews varied in length; the shortest one lasted just 47 minutes, while the longest took just under two hours. The majority of the interviews, however, lasted between an hour and an hour and a half. All of the interviews were tape recorded and later fully transcribed.

Snowball sampling and volunteer sampling were the sampling methods used to recruit participants. The selection criteria used included the following: (1) subjects must be men; (2) subjects must be adults (over the age of 18); (3) subjects must be living in Tasmania at the time of the interview; and (4) subjects must be willing to discuss their own life experiences associated with masculinities. The men interviewed ranged in age between 19 and 78 years. The men also ranged in class, sexuality, nationality, educational status and marital status. They included: working-class and under-class men through to middle- and upper-class men; unemployed men, students and retirees through to doctors and wealthy businessmen; men who never finished high school through to those with postgraduate degrees; childless men through to fathers and grandfathers; gay, straight and bisexual men; single, de facto, separated, divorced and married men; able-bodied and disabled men; white men and Aboriginal men; Australian-born men and migrants. The analysis of the data was conducted in the traditions of grounded theory.

Informed consent was always obtained prior to the interview taking place and the participants were informed of their right to withdraw consent, refuse to answer questions or terminate the interview at any stage. In order to protect the participants' identities the names have been changed in the article and any other identifying information has been either slightly altered or excluded altogether.

## **Carving a niche in the field of masculinity**

In Australian society, some of the more dominant aspects of hegemonic masculinity are associated with sporting prowess and competitiveness, heterosexuality and the objectification of women, alcohol and mateship, and the ability to prove oneself through physical force (Buchbinder, 1994; Coad, 2002; Connell, 1995, 2000; Donaldson, 1991; Pease, 1997, 2001; Tomsen, 2002; Webb, 1998). These were certainly some of the more recurrent themes that emerged from what many men saw as being particularly masculine or typically male behaviour. Many of the men came to rely heavily on these standards of hegemonic masculinity for how they judged themselves as both masculine and as men. By relying on these standards they gained privileged status within the field of masculinity. Being culturally exalted, hegemonic masculinity had the added incentive of being socially accepted as the most legitimate form of masculinity. Performing hegemonic masculinity was a means by which these men could gain legitimate status as men and acceptance from their peers.

It is important to note, however, that the men who supported hegemonic masculinity also had the specific capital that allowed them to perform hegemonic masculinity. They had the physical capital that permitted them to play competitive sports, win physical fights, engage in promiscuous sexual activities and the constitution to consume great quantities of alcohol. They had the economic capital that gave them financial independence and status, and provided them with the opportunity to convert their economic capital into physical capital through the purchase of gym memberships and nutritious foods to build bodies that reflected the hegemonic masculine ideal; and they had the cultural capital gained through higher education that contributed to their privileged position. Being privileged through ownership of valued capital in the field of masculinity, these men performed hegemonic masculinity to protect and reproduce the very values that they derived benefits from.

Yet only a few of the men interviewed wholly supported hegemonic masculinity. Unlike Connell (1995: 79–82), who suggests that men are inclined to support hegemonic masculinity to gain a patriarchal dividend, most of the men interviewed in this study did not support hegemonic masculinity, but instead supported dominant masculinities in alternative subfields in the field of masculinity. Too far removed from the hegemonic masculine ideal,

these men negotiated masculinity within other subfields in the field of masculinity, in which the capital they owned was valued. For some of the men, this meant negotiating masculinity to pull together elements of hegemonic masculinity and fusing these with their own reformulated version of masculinity. For others, it meant drawing on hegemony in other fields and using it in the field of masculinity. For others still, it meant operating in subfields in which they fitted the dominant version of masculinity. In so doing, these men were able to successfully negotiate masculinity and take advantage of the capital that they did have, which allowed them to perform dominant masculinities that openly challenged hegemonic masculinity. These men's everyday lived experiences in the field of masculinity were not of being subordinated; on the contrary, they often experienced their masculinities as dominant in relation to other men's masculinities while simultaneously challenging hegemonic masculinity.

## **Mosaic masculinities**

Mosaic masculinities refers to the process by which men negotiate masculinity, drawing upon fragments or pieces of hegemonic masculinity which they have the capacity to perform and piecing them together to reformulate what masculinity means to them in order to come up with their own dominant standard of masculinity. This form of masculinity is like a mosaic in that incompatible pieces or fragments that do not easily fit together are placed to form a coherent pattern. The formation of mosaic masculinities is similar to the reformulation pattern described by Gerschick and Miller:

Men who reformulate predominant standards in defining their masculinity tend not to overtly contest these standards, but – either consciously or unconsciously – they recognize in their own condition an inability to meet these ideals as they are culturally conceived. They respond to an ideal by reformulating it, shaping it along the lines of their own abilities, perceptions, and strengths, and they define their manhood along these new lines. (1994: 37)

Although men may be subordinated by hegemonic masculinity, they do not necessarily reject it altogether. Instead, they focus upon those elements that privilege them and reject the rest.

Mosaic masculinities are individual in how they are constructed but rely on hegemonic definitions of masculinity that operate in the field of masculinity. In essence, some men build their own standards of masculinity in the field of masculinity, which allow them to define dominant masculinities within these boundaries (thus giving them status) and establish legitimacy by drawing upon elements of hegemonic masculinity (e.g. they may draw upon the hegemonic masculine ideal of strength for their ability to be mentally strong, even though they may be physically weak). Yet because they do not have the capital to adequately perform hegemonic masculinity they are subordinated by hegemonic masculinity and therefore challenge it.

However, in relying on elements of hegemonic masculinity to define themselves they also resist other subordinate masculinities through their support of those elements of hegemonic masculinity that give them status in the field of masculinity.

Frank (31, student) was one such man, who used the strategy of creating mosaic masculinities by reformulating hegemonic masculinity to suit the capital that he had at hand. Frank was an overweight young man who did not physically match up to the hegemonic masculine ideal of the lean, toned, athletic male. However, in pursuing his academic interests, Frank maintained that he was very competitive and that competitiveness was the benchmark by which he measured masculinity. He saw competitiveness existing in many facets of men's lives, from work through to sport, to hosting a dinner party for friends. When Frank was asked what he perceived as masculine, he replied:

Wanting to take on the world. Viewing everything as a challenge. And attacking everything competitively. You know, it's all dicks on the tables sort of stuff. And ... I don't think that really does change. It's probably the one thing that doesn't change. You know, you might change the field of competition, but I don't think you ever change that competitiveness. I mean, I'm probably still as competitive now, and it doesn't matter what I take on, I always take it sort of competitively. Even now if I have friends around for tea, I'm always judging that against what other people have when I go around for tea. So I think that's competitiveness and viewing everything as a competition and wanting to battle and win. Maybe that mellows out as you get older, but, I dunno. I think there's something in men that wants that – everything's got to be a challenge, everything's got to be a competition. (Frank, 31, student)

Frank's strategy to reformulate hegemonic masculinity and develop his own mosaic masculinity surfaced as a result of him giving up competitive field hockey and gaining weight. When Frank played on the hockey team, he talked of sport, alcohol, and women as being of central importance in his life: attitudes congruent with the hegemonic ideal. He was also a fit young man with an athletic body that exemplified the hegemonic masculine ideal and provided him with valued physical capital in the field of masculinity. It was not until he gave up sport due to work commitments that Frank began putting on weight. Gaining weight resulted in the devaluation of his physical capital and the realization that he was not able to meet cultural norms associated with the ideal male body. Frank discussed how he went through a period of personal conflict over his own body image as he found it increasingly difficult to lose weight.

In relating to the present day, however, Frank claimed that body image was of very little importance and that there was more to life than looks and a toned body. He shifted from supporting hegemonic masculinity and trying to achieve a lean, toned body to developing a mosaic masculinity that allowed him to reject the importance of physical capital in favour of other



elements of hegemonic masculinity, such as improving the value of his cultural capital by competing academically. Frank successfully negotiated his weight gain and lack of interest in playing competitive sport to focus on competition in other areas of his life that allowed him to meet culturally accepted standards of masculinity.

Men such as Frank, who reformulate definitions of hegemonic masculinity, tend to draw attention to the strengths they have that run parallel with definitions of hegemonic masculinity, while rejecting those elements of hegemonic masculinity to which they are unable to conform. Thus, they form mosaic masculinities that operate as dominant masculinities relative to the masculinities of other men (despite being subordinated by hegemonic masculinity).

## Drawing on the field of gender

Some of the men who did not fit the hegemonic ideal chose to reject hegemonic masculinity and instead drew upon hegemony in other fields. As they did not have the capital that was valued in the field of masculinity, they looked to where the capital they owned was valued. The obvious example for many of these men was to draw upon male hegemony in the field of gender. Here they used their privileged position as men in the field of gender to attempt to gain status in the field of masculinity. They tended to emphasize their masculinity as innate and conflate their maleness with their masculinity.

For example, Umberto (50, carpenter), Victor (56, small business owner) and William (58, call centre telephonist) all declared hegemonic masculinity to be damaging to men and avoided defining their masculinity according to what they saw as restrictive stereotypes of the culturally perceived masculine ideal. As Umberto states in response to a question on gender stereotypes:

I hate projecting masculinity onto young boys, you know. The masculine agenda. And there's nothing I hate worse than seeing a little kid with the pullover and the footy boots playing the role, you know.... I suppose I hate also cutting children's hair when they're only two or three years old because they're a boy, you know. And it looks so beautiful and then it's shorn, you know. What's next? The army? And same with putting this frilly shit on girls. (Umberto, 50, carpenter)

While they rejected the culturally dominant ideal of masculinity they did not reject masculinity outright. They still saw themselves as very masculine; however, they celebrated their own diversity as men. As Victor encapsulates:

It doesn't have to be anything to be a man. But in our society generally, if you're a homosexual, well, you're not a man. You know, if you're a transsexual, you're not a man. All of that sort of stuff. Whereas, they are men because they were born men. That's my philosophy. Because we have soft men, gentle men, hard men. They're all men. So what does it mean to be a man? It's as wide as you want to make it. (Victor, 56, small business owner)

These men took a new-age approach to masculinity that attempted to transgress boundaries and break down the hierarchies of dominant and subordinated masculinities. They saw all masculinities as equal and rich in their own unique ways.

All three men emphasized a desire to express themselves emotionally and did not see this as being in any way effeminate. Instead, they referred to this as 'soft masculinity'. For example, as Victor states in response to being asked if he thought of himself as masculine:

Yeah, I'm masculine. Yet I'm soft masculine.... I've got a loud voice, I'm noisy, I can bulldust and do the stuff that all blokes can do easily. You know, I can bounce off other fellas and have a lot of fun. Yet – and that's part of me – ... there's another real soft gentle part of me.... Part of me that wants to be looked after. Part of me that wants to be cared for and nurtured and sometimes I let that happen.... Now I'm in a relationship with a woman younger than me – she's ten years my junior – but, I think we've developed to the point where I can say 'I just want to stop at your place tonight because I just want a cuddle. That's all I want. You know, I just want to be near you. I just want to be nurtured. I'm feeling a bit vulnerable or whatever.' ... But, yeah, no I'm masculine. (Victor, 56, small business owner)

They described their ability to express their emotions as men as an enlightening and spiritual experience, and one that enabled them to find their 'true' identities as men.

Interestingly, these men avoided the company of other men who might challenge or threaten their masculinity. Umberto, William and Victor all disliked and avoided engaging with men who supported hegemonic masculinity. While they still enjoyed a beer, they did not like to sit around with other 'blokes' in a pub talking about inane subject matter. They preferred being with men with whom they could share an intimate conversation.

You know, because of my involvement in the men's stuff, I don't wanna be with blokes any more. I mean, I don't mind a bit of skylarking around and having a silly beer at the pub type of stuff, but I don't choose to mix in that sort of group a lot. I still go to the pub and have a beer and talk rubbish and carry on a bit, but I would prefer to have a more intimate conversation with a fella than get bored with crap talking about footy. (Victor, 56, small business owner)

For me, [going to a men's group] was just being able to become intimate with other men, that I realized there was this thing called masculinity, whatever it is, that's a bond that we feel. It's extremely diverse, which is wonderful.... And there was that total respect and love and it was just fascinating. And I didn't think it would be possible for men to do that.... And I felt part of masculinity. And I realized then that yes, now I know what it's about. (William, 58, call centre telephonist)

Victor, William and Umberto saw no reason to question their masculinity as they saw it as innately connected to being male. In this way, they did not have to defend their softer sides from being considered weak or effeminate,

or rationalize this aspect of themselves. By virtue of the fact that they were biologically male, they believed themselves to be masculine.

I only see masculinity as a response to the feminine polarization. And for sexual purposes, you know. It's the reason that we're male and female actually when it boils down to it. (Umberto, 50, carpenter)

Without a male body I wouldn't be [a man].... Well, I think that's the bottom line in a sense. That's all there is. A man is born a man because he's got genitalia and so. And that's all the proof you need to be a man really. (Victor, 56, small business owner)

As far as what does it mean to be masculine, the dick between the legs helps. That starts you off. Then there's all the other things that's inside of you that are innate that you don't understand. (William, 58, call centre telephonist)

By conflating male with masculine, they no longer had reason to feel threatened or insecure in their masculinity. To show their emotions and become intimate with men was not seen as homosexual or feminine, but rather simply another form of masculinity set equally amongst a myriad of others.

Interestingly, amongst the rhetoric of masculine equality was an ever pervading sense of anti-feminism and a desire to stress difference between men and women. In contextualizing the meaning of masculinity in their lives, these men associated masculinity with being biologically male and necessarily excluded women. As such, it was necessary for them to dichotomize male from female so as to separate masculinity from femininity. To do this, they often talked of men and women as polar opposites. In fact, some of the men became quite irate at the suggestion that men and women should be considered equals. For example, William, in discussing how he came to accept himself as masculine, describes how important it was to distance himself from women and feminism:

Feminism always came out about this equality nonsense, you know, which is totally right off, I mean it's stupid. And it's really nice to see them change and also nice to see men start to understand too that we don't have to be, we don't want to be equal with women, okay, because we can't be. We are different. And it's much better to celebrate our masculinity, celebrate who we are and celebrate each other, and enjoy that. And also realize that they're doing the same thing on their side. (William, 58, call centre telephonist)

William held a lot of resentment towards women involved in feminism. He blamed feminism for the negative connotations that the term 'masculinity' has and what he saw as the emotional separation and physical detachment of fathers from their children.

Masculinity is normally a dirty word, you know. If you're a man, who've you beaten recently? If you're a man with a little kid, what are you after? God forbid you have a kid and kiss it. And, I got hurt a few times, because I'm a very affectionate person and I remember when my kids were young and we were kissing

and hugging all the time. And because of feminism, when that started coming up, all of a sudden, because I worked with women and I heard them talk, I was actually starting to feel guilty. And I'm angry about that. I actually started feeling guilty, and it pulled me back a little bit which angers me more. I remember I went to pick up my daughter from high school and I came in the back and I was waiting for her. And this male teacher comes towards me, and he says, 'Can I help you?' And I knew what it was all about, and I thought, I don't believe this.... And I said, 'What are you thinking mate?' I mean, I can understand him doing it and why because that was the thing at the time, but how dare he? And what I found out from other men is they have been disenfranchised from their kids because of that and what's been going on in the news and that. And it's a lot to do with feminism. (William, 58, call centre telephonist)

In believing that masculinity is innate to men and that all masculinities should be respected equally, these men felt free to behave as they pleased without fear of having their masculinity questioned. They challenged hegemonic masculinity and the value of a particularly narrow form of the male body as valued physical capital (i.e. lean, muscular, youthful) by reducing the male body to its chromosomal level at which all men are equal. Subordinated by hegemonic masculinity, these men sought a level playing field that reduced the privileged position of other men (while simultaneously defending their patriarchal position over women).

## **Subfields in the field of masculinity**

For men who were subordinated by hegemonic masculinity, another strategy for negotiating their position in the field of masculinity was to focus on their dominant position within various subfields. Gay men, for example, who were subordinated within the field of masculinity by virtue of their homosexuality, negotiated their position by fixing their attention on their own valued capital in the field of gay masculinity. Here they assumed a dominant position in relation to other gay men such as 'queens' and 'fairies'. By drawing on elements of hegemonic masculinity that supported their dominant position, they were able to validate their own masculinity.

In any field, a position of dominance can only exist through a corresponding position of subordination (orthodoxy versus heterodoxy) (Smith, 2001; Swartz, 1997). To justify a dominant position means that there must be others to assert dominance over. Both Yoav (22, receptionist) and Frederick (23, computer technician) used this strategy of assuming a position of dominance by undermining others in order to legitimize themselves as 'real' masculine men. Although they were subordinated in the field of masculinity for being gay, they negotiated their position by focusing on their dominant position in relation to other men in the field of gay masculinity. Within the field of gay masculinity, engaging in sexual activities with men or being sexually attracted to men was not seen as un-masculine. Operating in this field allowed them to be comfortable with their sexuality

without it challenging their gender identity. Although Yoav and Frederick struggled with defining what it meant to be either masculine or a man, both came to the conclusion that, ultimately, to be a man meant not being a woman and that to be masculine was not to be feminine. They did not see their sexuality as influencing their gender identity. Instead, they focused on behaviour (discounting sexuality) as being the determinant of masculinity and femininity.

As Yoav and Frederick did not dress up as 'queens' or assume effeminate mannerisms (e.g. limp wrists, high-pitched voice) they defined themselves as masculine. In doing so, they contextualized their situation by subordinating other men within the field of gay masculinity who did not meet their standards of masculinity. Gay men who dressed in women's clothing or behaved in a manner that contradicted the masculine ideal were referred to by Frederick and Yoav as 'poofers' and 'fairies'. Frederick and Yoav did not see these men as masculine or even as male. As Yoav stated when questioned as to what he saw as being male behaviour:

*Yoav:* Being who I am [gay] I guess you meet a lot of fairy freaky people, but that's not male. That's put on.

*Interviewer:* What do you mean by fairy freaky people?

*Yoav:* Oh, I mean a man who wants to become a woman, or a man who acts like a woman. All poofy, and that's not me. Okay, you can be gay, but that's yuck. That's disgusting. If you're a man, you're a man. You don't go off pretending to be something else just to be something else.

Yoav then contextualizes his own masculinity within these boundaries by juxtaposing his masculinity with gay men he labels as fairies:

I'm masculine to the extent that I'm not a little fairy that runs around pretending to be something that I'm not. I mean, yeah, I'll get out there and I'll help around, but I'm still sort of like, I don't get into those nitty [women's] groups. I still like my cars and I'll work around the house. I'll renovate everything that's done on the house. I won't say, oh, it's too dirty, I'm not going to get my hands dirty. I'll go out into the garden and I'll dig or I'll go plant things or do some brick laying or put some pavers down. I mean if you don't want to get your hands dirty and you want to pay someone else to do it, then that's not masculine. (Yoav, 22, receptionist)

Likewise, Frederick defines his masculinity along similar lines. When asked if he perceived himself as being masculine, he replied:

*Frederick:* I guess I'm reasonably [masculine]. I dunno. It's just how I know things are.... I guess masculine behaviour comes down to not being feminine.... So, like people you see, like fairies running around sort of thing, that's sort of not masculine. I dunno ... I guess that's how I sort of associate it.

*Interviewer:* You mentioned fairy. What makes a man a fairy?

*Frederick:* I dunno, just someone who's got a high-pitched voice and they sort of act very non-masculine I guess. They just sort of run around with weird fashion and waving their arms around. I dunno, it's hard to word it. You just sort of look at them and go, no. Do you know what I mean?

Frederick and Yoav defended the physical capital that they owned (dressing like a 'man' and assuming male mannerisms associated with hegemonic masculinity) and separated themselves from other gay men whom they likened to women. In this way, within the field of gay masculinity, Yoav and Frederick were able to protect their own dominant position by using their physical capital (i.e. gait, speech, etc.) to perform gay masculinity in ways that were valued within the field of gay masculinity. In turn, they debased those gay men who did not perform versions of dominant gay masculinity valued in the field of gay masculinity, as such behaviour threatened the value of their own capital.

Interestingly, although subordinated by hegemonic masculinity, Yoav and Frederick drew on elements of hegemonic masculinity that added value to the capital they owned in the field of gay masculinity. Drawing on these elements helped to validate their dominant masculine position. In much the same way as those men who develop mosaic masculinities, gay men in dominant positions in the field of gay masculinity draw on those elements that privilege them in the field of masculinity and reject those aspects that subordinate them (i.e. their preference for homosexual relations).

For example, Charlie (62, retiree), a homosexual man who had been aware of, and secure in, his homosexuality from an early age, described how he reformulates masculinity on his own terms that deliberately exclude heterosexuality and sporting prowess. Charlie was highly critical of aspects of hegemonic masculinity that marginalized him as a homosexual man. He defended homosexual behaviour as equally masculine as heterosexual behaviour and rejected the cultural assumption that sporting 'he-men' are necessarily heterosexual. Charlie referred to those men who rely on the hegemonic standard of masculinity as 'pathetic' and 'insecure'. Charlie did, however, associate manual labour with masculinity. In this way, Charlie was able to focus on an aspect of hegemonic masculinity that did not challenge his sexuality and favoured the physical capital he owned (i.e. his preference for physical labour in the garden). In response to questions surrounding his own masculinity, Charlie stated:

I've got a lot of my father in me, and he was a market gardener. You know, getting his hands dirty, he learned to plough with horses and all that sort of thing. He lived through the war years. And that's what I, as a kid, grew up to see as masculine. So I have a lot of that about me. The ability to use a screw driver et cetera. That comes from my father. And not being interested in sport, not being able to kick a footy around or throw a ball, not being interested in women's tits, I don't think makes me any less of a male. (Charlie, 62, retiree)

For men whose capital was not highly valued in the field of masculinity, supporting dominant masculinities in alternative subfields was the preferred strategy. Instead of being subordinated or marginalized by hegemonic masculinity, these men found strategies that enabled them to take up dominant positions in subfields within the field of masculinity that openly challenged hegemonic masculinity. The subfields they engaged in valued the capital that they owned and lent legitimacy to their dominant status.

## Conclusion

The findings from this research suggest that men are able to negotiate masculinities in a number of significant ways that allow them to support a range of dominant masculinities. This includes: drawing on elements of hegemonic masculine traits to form their own mosaic masculinities, which they perceive as dominant and superior in relation to other masculinities; drawing on their hegemonic position in other fields to emphasize a dominant position in the field of masculinity; and by drawing on their dominant position in relation to other men in subfields within the field of masculinity. In supporting alternative dominant masculinities away from the hegemonic ideal, men are able to both challenge hegemonic masculinity and avoid being subordinated by it in the context of their everyday lives.

Men subordinated by hegemonic masculinity often look for reassurance in themselves as masculine by reformulating what masculinity means to them so as to accommodate for their own differences from the cultural ideal. In this way, they are able to feel that their masculine identities are valid in the context of their everyday lives. Although men use different strategies to negotiate the field of masculinity, there is a common thread; they are secure in themselves and their gender identities, and confident in their abilities to redefine masculinity on their own terms, so that they are not left feeling marginalized or subordinated. The lived reality for these men is one in which they use the capital that they own to resist and challenge the superiority of hegemonic masculinity while legitimizing their own position. They may also feel that their masculinity is dominant in relation to other masculinities, depending on where they fit in the field of masculinity or within alternative subfields in the field of masculinity. This strategy allows them to feel that their masculinity is valid in relation to hegemonic masculinity and superior in relation to other subordinate masculinities. Despite being located in a subordinate position in the field of masculinity, these men's lived experiences of masculinity are not of being marginalized or subordinated, but of being legitimate and dominant.

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