

**RURAL LEGENDS:
WHITE HETERO-SETTLER MASCULINITY,
NEOLIBERAL IDEOLOGY,
AND HEGEMONY IN THE HEARTLAND**

by

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Abstract

This dissertation applies an interlocking spatial framework and critical discourse analysis to hegemonic masculinity, neoliberal ideology, and conceptions of the rural in Southeast Kansas. Drawing from decolonial, feminist, poststructural, and anarchist perspectives, it examines the different ways in which masculinities are discursively and materially embodied in rural spaces. The analysis utilizes empirical evidence, qualitative research methods, and fieldwork conducted in rural Kansas to highlight how mutually constitutive social axes of identification are intimately tied to place, as well as how socio-spatial relationships and neo(liberal) configurations of practice position differing entities as subjects.

The research project also sheds light on taken-for-granted notions of masculinity and how hegemonic formations of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, ethnicity, citizenship, religion, and nationality produce dynamic, spatialized oppressions and privileges. In addition, it seeks to elicit understandings of what is produced by (neo)liberal ideologies and masculinist subjectivities that rely upon the rhetoric of competition, self-reliance, and rugged individualism. Lastly, it illustrates the exclusionary, marginalizing, enabling, and normalizing tendencies that have developed in Southeast Kansas as a result of settler colonialism, conservative Christianity, the ideals of capitalism, gendered hierarchies, white supremacist processes of racialization, ableist social relations, heteronormativity, American nationalism, and liberal conceptions of the self.

Preface

As per policy of UBC College of Graduate Studies, this preface provides confirmation of ethics approval, and gives a list of my contributions to all the current publications and accepted submissions that have arisen from the research project.

- Ethics approval for this project was issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board – Okanagan. Certificate Number: H11-02552.
- Portions of both chapters one and two will appear in the forthcoming book: *Masculinities of Place*. Those sections that appear in both this thesis and the forthcoming book are written solely by myself.
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- A version of Chapter Six has been accepted for publication in the journal *Gender, Place, and Culture*. I am the sole author of the article and all research was conducted by myself under the approved BREB certificate noted above.
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(1.) The number of names on said hypothetical list (those who deserve acknowledgement and praise from me) is in actuality, much too long to type out ...and subsequently read. I also realize that if I were indeed going to follow through on typing out that list (as well as my thoughts and feelings detailing exactly what I would like to say to those people whom I owe thanks to) I would without a doubt, become overwhelmed, frustrated, and oddly enough, probably resentful (which would be ironic considering this is an '*Acknowledgements*' section). This is due to the fact that I would come to the realization that I was not actually doing justice to each person included on the list, and also, because ultimately I suspect that I would end up forgetting someone who was dearly important to me ...which would end up crushing me with guilt. I also know that if I listed every person who deserved acknowledgement, that this section would then go well over the suggested two-page length that the institution of which I am a part of allows. This is due in part to the reality that there are not enough positive, complimentary, lovely, whimsical, and flowery superlatives and expressions in the English language to fully articulate just how much gratitude I would like to give all those people who have undoubtedly been burdened (although they would never admit it) by the task of supporting me during the research.

(2.) I also refrain from listing individual names so as to avoid the potential trappings of creating a discursive hierarchal quotient of thanks, gratitude, and appreciation. Although not always intentional, there are tendencies for lists of individual names to signify ordinal rankings and vertically integrated positions of status and prestige - in addition to the propensities such lists have in potentially fostering thoughts and feelings of exclusion and omission if one's name does not appear on the list. Plus, in most contexts, lists of individual names are for the bourgeoisie, for the capitalists, for the police, for the military, for the institution, for the establishment, for the colonizer, for the supremacist, for the oppressor, for the boss, for the dean, for the chair, for the patriarch, for the overseer, and ultimately, for Power - none of whose illusory titles or fictive statuses are welcome in this '*Acknowledgements*' section. So, without further ado, I now offer my most heartfelt, sincere, warm and rebellious gratitude to...

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To my mother...
For teaching me that 'men' need to do better,

And to my father...
For quietly agreeing.

Chapter 1: Theorizing Masculinity and Space

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.

-Thoreau-

Introduction and Outline

Dating back to the 1980s, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has reshaped understandings of gender, patriarchy, and masculinity by critiquing, analyzing, and exposing the multiple forms of masculinity that exist. By relating competing masculine subject positions to both temporal and spatial contexts, hegemonic masculinity has proven to be an effective concept in understanding how historical and contemporary power-relations permeate social, political, economic, and environmental structures. My aim in this thesis is to use the concept of hegemony to address the social construction of masculinities, analyze the role the body plays in the formation of masculinities, and describe how masculinities are produced and embodied in rural spaces within the central plains of the United States.

Historical perceptions of ‘manhood’ and masculine identities have traditionally placed a high degree of importance on men’s roles as sole providers and protectors. These socially constructed positions are typically recognized in men who display emotional restraint, rational thought, and domineering authority (Bell 1991, Rose 1993, Seidler 1989). Given shifts in the societal position of women¹ and minorities over the past generation, in

¹ Relying on the binary constructs of ‘male/female,’ ‘man/woman,’ ‘masculine/feminine’ are problematic due to the exclusion that is produced as a result of these dualistic categories that omit and negate people who do not conform to such classifications. Thus, it is here that I stress the limitations of our reliance upon modernist epistemology because the ways in which we come to know, define, and conceptualize both bodies and gender are subsequently restricted and incomplete. I also note that I will use such terms throughout the thesis not to further reaffirm rigid dichotomies, but I do so because being labeled a ‘woman’ (just as being labeled a ‘man’)

addition to feminist and anti-oppressionist voices questioning long-established systems of patriarchal power, such accepted indicators of masculinity are now being challenged, contested, and critically examined (Connell 2005, 1987, Berg 2001, 1993, Halberstam 1998, Domosh 1991).

With transitions in academia toward feminist, queer, and critical race theories, scholars recognize that contemporary gender roles based on binary categorizations of prescriptive male/female behaviour are no longer accurate. As a result, masculinities that do not conform to traditional ideals of manhood are now being analyzed and researched, along with the spaces where they operate (Connell 2005, Berg and Longhurst 2003, Longhurst 1997, Jackson 1991). An increasing recognition of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, in addition to the decline of conventional notions of what a man should be (i.e. domineering, aggressive, unemotional, virile, powerful, courageous, etc.), has also allowed for non-hegemonic masculinities to be studied. Consequently, this has resulted in the acknowledgment that identity is not a stable, inherent, attribute, rather, individuals may occupy a variety of shifting subject positions (Von Hoven and Horschelmann 2005, Bell and Valentine 1995, Connell 1995,).

While it appears that developments are being made in the acceptance of marginalized populations as a result of policies that reduce discrimination based on race, sex, gender, and ethnicity, it also should be emphasized that the creation of new societal values has not resulted in the abandonment of the time-honoured symbol of the stoic, rational, and powerful man (Adams and Savran 2002, Kimmel and Ferber 2000, Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985).

has had, and continues to have, significant consequences for those who are marked as such. I am also not suggesting that the classifications of 'men' and 'women' are homogenous and uniform, but rather, that being positioned as a 'man' or 'woman' does matter - particularly for 'women.'

Despite the progress that has been made in giving voice to subordinated groups, the current state of socio-political relations remains replete with male supremacy and the unbalanced distribution of power (Whitehead and Barrett 2001, Hearn 1999, Connell 1995, Zelinsky, Monk, and Hanson 1982). Unequal social hierarchies of exclusion and privilege now represent new arenas for the contestation and resistance to oppressive hegemonic norms. The places where dominant masculinities operate, along with the spaces where alternative masculinities exist, shed light on the relationships at work between the multitude of contrasting subject positions that can be critiqued and deconstructed by scholars.

With new dimensions of critical research on men and masculinities being opened up by feminist, poststructural, anarchist, and decolonial theorists², it seems fitting to start by examining what is meant by the word masculinity. When initially exploring masculinity, several questions arise. For instance, what specifically is it that is being discussed when masculinity is said? Is the term intended to apply only to men and the roles they play in society? Are notions of manhood, manliness, male supremacy, and masculine discourse all included when analyzing the term? What significance do race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, age, nationality, and religion play in the production of masculinity?

A critical analysis of masculinity also addresses the affects of gendered social constructs. Exploring the manufactured cultural ideologies that value masculine status over femininity can be accomplished by examining the privilege afforded to individuals who

² It is important to state that while these theoretical paradigms are all noted as lenses from which I draw upon, there do remain differing perspectives amongst, and within, all of them. I list them therefore not suggest they are congruent and always harmonious, but rather because particular currents within each do have the potential to offer critical insights, as well as radically interrogate, the research topic(s) I am engaging with in this thesis. Thus, it is with the sometimes contentious, as well as sometimes complimentary, perspectives of each that I proceed with my analysis. And while the tensions and debates amongst the theoretical lenses noted here are not addressed in this particular piece of work, such discussions are conversations that I look forward to contributing to in the future.

benefit from colonial structures of governance and patriarchal social norms. Conversely, it is paramount to expose the marginalization and oppression that can result from such gendered hierarchies. It is also advantageous to discover how such unbalanced social relations have surfaced, as well as look at how are they sustained and reproduced. In striving to respond to such issues, as well as the ambiguity and uncertainty that occurs when seeking out meanings of masculinity, it is crucial to realize that several fluid and situational definitions may exist for the concept. In the next section I provide an outline of this thesis that will provide a summary for the ways in which those situational definitions are arrived at, as well as what is produced by such meanings.

Organization of Chapters

The first two chapters of this thesis offer comprehensive reviews of the pertinent bodies of literature concerning social theory, space, and neoliberalism. The third chapter gives a detailed description of the theoretical framework and qualitative methods used for the project. Chapters four, five, and six are empirical in nature and analyze the data and material gathered while conducting fieldwork. The final chapter provides concluding reflections regarding the research in relation to the theoretical foundations, qualitative methods, and empirical evidence discussed throughout the entire thesis.

More specifically, chapter one, in addition to outlining the structure of the thesis, will introduce historical and contemporary definitions of masculinity, as well as expound upon the multiple meanings that are ascribed to it. It then moves into a summary of key concepts pertaining to critical perspectives on the formation of hegemonic masculinity, as well as how alternative configurations of masculine practice arise and are practiced. Following that, it

highlights the principal theories applied in feminist and poststructural scholarship that aids researchers in understanding how space, power, and embodiment work in conjunction with one another to produce gendered subjectivities.

Chapter two describes how differing social axes of identification interlock to produce hierarchies of oppression, domination, and privilege. It then moves into a description of the definitions, representations, and practices surrounding rurality, and its association with masculinity. The subsequent sections elaborate upon conceptual understandings of those processes socio-spatial subjectification, the production of hegemonic social relations, and the formation of (neo)liberal ideologies/identities as found in anarchist, decolonial, feminist, and poststructural theories. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the underlying structural forces influencing how space, masculinity, and society are mutually constituted and ultimately understood.

In chapter three, I explain the setting, site, and context of the project that I conducted in rural Southeast Kansas. I then move into an in-depth examination of both neoliberalism and masculinity, particularly in regard to how these concepts are studied, researched, and theorized within the discipline of Geography. The chapter then describes the practical aspects of my research design, as well as the qualitative methods (participant observation, personal interviews, focus groups, and photovoice) utilized while in the field. It also illustrates my position as a researcher as well as some of strengths, limitations, complications, and complexities that arise when interacting and building relationships with participants. The chapter ends by emphasizing the significance that space and place have in the realm of scholarly research.

Chapter four applies the theoretical concepts mentioned in chapters one and two to empirical data I gathered while conducting fieldwork surrounding the research area's local history and current socio-cultural position. It critiques settler colonialism, as well as the ongoing imperial practices of dispossession, enclosure, and assimilation that are found within settler societies. It then moves into a critical interrogation of the discourses, practices, and perspectives found within Southeast Kansas (traditional Osage Territory) based upon interviews and photographs gathered while in the field. The chapter next elaborates upon how race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, citizenship, and religion factor into nation-building, and the perpetuation of masculinist white supremacy. It ends by shedding light on the ambivalent emotions, rationalizations, and contradictions that arise within settler societies as they try to deny, disaffiliate, and forget the colonial violence they are founded upon.

In chapter five I continue my analysis of the empirical evidence gathered in the field by examining how competition, work ethic, and tradition all play key roles in the formation of localized hegemonic masculinity and individualistic (neoliberal) ideology in Southeast Kansas. The chapter also engages in a discussion pertaining to the links between patriarchal social relations, 'compulsory heterosexuality,' conservative religious doctrine, and conceptions of rurality (Rich 1980). It then reveals the how masculinist discourses, particularly in contexts of male homosocial fraternizing, rely upon reductionist narratives that essentialize women/femininity into distinct categories that are then framed as inferior and subordinate. The chapter also provides evidence showing how embodiment, production, and self-discipline (specifically in the arenas of paid employment, American football, and alcohol consumption) also serve as influential elements in the production of spatialized masculinities.

Chapter six is the last empirical chapter of the thesis, and it highlights the normalization of Gun Culture in Southeast Kansas. It provides an overview of the intimate ties that guns and masculinity have with rural space, settler colonialism, and nationalistic discourses. The chapter also offers a further elaboration of my position as researcher, particularly when encountering politically charged issues in the field (in this case gun rights and abortion). It then moves into an articulation of the main configurations of practice that men cite as reasons why they own guns (e.g. for protection, provision, and security; as rites of passage; as ways to honour and remember history as well as past ancestors; for leisure, recreation and utility; as an expression of individual freedom; and finally, as an exercising of civil liberties). The chapter next underscores how (dis)ability, race, and gun use are employed in order to pathologize, denigrate, and criminalize ‘othered’ bodies. It ends with an examination of what is produced by hegemonic conceptions surrounding guns, rural space, and masculinity.

Last, chapter seven brings together the central arguments from the three empirical chapters and concludes the thesis by considering some of the implications that socially constructed conceptions of masculinity and place have upon people and society. I suggest that feminist, decolonial, and anarchist perspectives be applied to the examination of socio-spatial relationships that give rise to oppression, privilege, marginalization, enablement, and violence. I then propose that when studying the formation and reproduction of social hierarchies; when looking at the multifaceted development of cultural landscapes; and when investigating the complex processes of subjectification that occur across-and-within space and place, that researchers do so by utilizing interlocking frameworks of analysis, whilst also remaining critically self-reflexive.

I finish by contending that radical collective praxis, in addition to research striving for social justice, is needed to further unsettle, resist, and dismantle the ongoing colonial violence, imperialistic ‘othering,’ neoliberal exploitation, patriarchal dominance, heteronormative oppression, normalization of ableist social relations, exclusionary processes of racialization, and perpetuation of masculinist white supremacy that so continue to effect the lives and experiences of countless people all throughout the world. And as the structure of the thesis is now in place, I will next examine the multiple ways masculinity has been defined throughout the literature.

Literature Review: Definitions and Meanings

The Oxford Dictionary of English defines masculinity as: ‘1) relating to men; male, 2) having the qualities or appearance traditionally associated with men, 3) referring to a gender of nouns and adjectives conventionally regarded as male’ (2010). Despite these seemingly clear-cut and straightforward definitions, the concept of masculinity is a much more dynamic and ephemeral term. To emphasize this point, many theorists today support the notion that multiple masculinities exist and that the perception of masculinity as a single, distinct entity excludes significant details when trying to understand what it means (Connell 1995, McDowell 2002, Whitehead 2002).

Perspectives recognizing pluralities of masculinities has thus become an essential component of gender studies over the past three decades (Mac an Ghail and Haywood 2007, Myers 2002, Hearn 1999, Grosz 1994, Butler 1990, Brittan 1989, Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985, Cockburn 1984, Brannon 1976). Driven in part by writings in psychoanalytic, feminist and queer theory, research on gender relations has focused recently on the development and

reproduction of masculine identities (Katz 2003, Longhurst 2000, McDowell 1999, Buchbinder 1994). Theorists today are critically engaging with studies of masculinities in order to understand the implications that formations of masculinity have on individuals, as well as the whole of society (Mac an Ghail 2007, Connell 2005, Hearn 2004). In order to fully observe how scholars currently use the concept of masculinity it is important to start with an overview of how the subject was approached in the past.

Research pertaining to masculinity, femininity, gender, and sexuality was not widespread in academia until the rise of the Women's Liberation Movement and Second-Wave Feminism in the 1960s and 1970s (Echols 1989, Ballan 1971, Reed 1972, 1969). It was during this period that feminist theorists began challenging the social injustice that women faced (hooks 2001, Domosh 1991, Davis 1981, 1971, Mitchell 1976, 1973, Kessler-Harris 1976). The most prominent scholarly research completed during that time centered on psychoanalytic theories and sex role development (Moreno 1961, Biddle 1966, 1979, Perlman 1968, Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985).

A general premise of sex role theory, and some of the psychoanalytical approaches, is the relatively unchallenged supposition that fundamental differences between men and women are displayed through male/masculine and female/feminine behaviours. What is problematic in both theories is the tendency to neglect the power dynamics implicated in structuring men and women as natural, binary opposites. As a result, there is a propensity to classify men and women into discrete categories of fixed gender identities. Conceptualizing gender in this reductionist fashion relies upon an archaic masculine/feminine dichotomy, which in turn fails to recognize people who identify as genderqueer, Transsexual, Transgendered, Two-Spirited, Intersex, gender-nonconforming, and who express any from of

gender variance or fluidity. With this penchant to normalize behaviour and essentialize men and women into standardized generalizations, sex role theory and certain psychoanalytical approaches ultimately fail to recognize the shifting identities that men, women, and people identified as intersexed all possess (Anderson 2009, Lorber 1996, Hearn 1994, Butler 1990, Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985).

When specifically analyzing masculinity, these models often presuppose that men naturally possess biological drives that establishes their behaviour (Alcock 2001, Edley and Wetherall 1996, Wilson 1978, Hartley 1970). A longstanding hypothesis in such theories is that gender is attained through the progressive Oedipal recognition and repression of innate desires (Burger 2004, Chodorow 1989, Freud 1963). Further readings of some psychoanalytical theories also suggest that the socialization men encounter as they grow up produces a continual need to demonstrate, or prove, that one is a 'man' (Christiansen 1996, Benjamin 1995). The literature goes on to propose that confusion and insecurity may surface for the male personality due to the prescriptive roles that children must adhere to during their formative years (Buchbinder 1994, Irigaray 1993, Chodorow 1989). Thus, psychoanalytic theorists often support the notion that men who fail to prove their masculinity may experience dysfunction and anxiety (Hurvich 1997, Smith 1997, Wetherall 1996, Hartley 1959).

Sex role theory puts forward the notion that masculinity is the societal demonstration of natural differences between men and women (Brannon 1976, Bem 1975). Adhering to this viewpoint, roles based on biological sex are seen as the archetypes into which male and female identities are fashioned through social experience (Farrell 1974, Hartley 1970). Men and women are believed to possess innate gender characteristics alongside particular

attributes that are learned through the socialization process (Farrell 1974, Burgess and Locke 1945). Examples of these roles include the perception that women are more nurturing, emotionally expressive, passive, and better suited to perform private, domestic, duties. In contrast, men are assumed to be more aggressive, emotionally reserved, assertive, employable, and public (Irigaray 1993, Biddle and Thomas 1966).

Upon examining the normative influence that sex role theory has, it can be noted that women are discredited by failures in effectively performing feminine roles. In addition to the domestic duties prescribed to the feminine sex role, women are also held accountable for ensuring that men are caring, concerned and attentive fathers within the private arena of the household (Johnson 1997, Biller 1974). Otherwise stated, women are responsible for mediating the contradictions between the aggressive (public) persona of men, and their role as non-aggressive (and private) family men (Buchbinder 1994, Chodorow 1971). Conversely, men are measured by their ability to successfully fulfill the cultural standards associated with masculinity. These markers of masculinity may vary according to time and place, but for men, particularly in nations with colonially rooted neoliberal economies, it is generally assumed that such characteristics are physical strength, accumulation of wealth, a composed demeanor, self-control, individual drive, and emotional regulation (Jackson 2001, Kimmel 1994, Seidler 1989, Brannon 1976).

Sex role theory assumes that men adopt these roles over the course of their lives through relations with various societal institutions (e.g. the home, family, school, community, peer groups, media, economy, environment) that ‘turn’ boys into men. Thus, masculinity is viewed as a performance on a predetermined stage, typically resulting in men following a set of standard procedures where only a few outcomes are acceptable (Adams

and Savran 2002, Benyon 2002, Chodorow 1971, Biddle and Thomas 1966). The relationship between maleness and masculinity is viewed as a functional mechanism that purposefully socializes men as a complement to women and femininity (Christiansen 1996, Biller 1974, Jung 1971). It tends to neglect cultural redefinitions of masculinity and fails to analyze the relationships of power at play between men and women, between men and other men, and between cisgendered bodies and people who are gender nonconforming (Connell 1995).

It was not until the 1980s and 1990s that approaching gender and masculinity from alternative viewpoints gained momentum (Kosofsky Sedgwick 1995, Jackson 1990, Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985, Monk and Hansen 1982). In contrast to psychoanalytic and sex role theories, critical theorists began questioning the presumption that research was objective and that the world could be explained by measurable facts and empirical truths (Wiegman 1994, Haraway 1988). Utilizing poststructuralist critiques, feminist and queer theorists began taking non-essentialist positions when evaluating masculinities (Anderson 2009, Halberstam 1998, Grosz 1995, Butler 1990, Connell 1985). In doing so, they have established progressive methods of research centering on the contestation of universalized conceptions of gender and sexuality.

What is significant about anarchist, decolonial, and poststructuralist viewpoints, particularly those that draw on feminist and queer theory, is their critical engagement with the power dynamics at play in gendered relations and the hierarchies that are produced through them. Feminist scholars led the way in questioning the belief that knowledge production is an impartial, gender-neutral, and unprejudiced endeavour. By challenging fixed notions of universal truths they have brought forth a progressive critique of the roles

that heterosexuality, colonialism, patriarchy, and neoliberalism play as normative standards (Anderson 2009, Bell 1991, Butler 1990, 1993). Thus, those attributes customarily representing masculinity in capitalistic settler societies (aggressiveness, heterosexuality, physical strength, individual drive, and repression of emotions) are facing contestation and resistance.

What should be stressed at this point is that feminist theory in particular has provided substantial contributions to masculinity studies. Literature based in feminist perspectives continues to be a significant force in challenging uneven power relations, deconstructing reductionist understandings of gender, as well as exposing injustices rooted in racial discrimination and the subordination of marginalized sexualities. As scholars analyze what threads of thought are present in progressive research on masculinities today, it is evident that feminist, anarchist, queer, decolonial, and critical race theories provide an effective lens through which to examine and critique issues of power and privilege that remain ubiquitous in contemporary gender relations.

One key dilemma that feminist/profeminist theorists have exposed is that the prevailing form of masculinity (typically white, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle/upper class, and male) is regularly established as the inherent norm against which subordinate and ‘other’ groups are evaluated (Kobayashi 2003, Kimmel and Ferber 2003, Messner 2000, 1993, Hall 1997, McIntosh 1990). The initial works by feminist theorists centered on revealing the unequal power relations between men and women and sought to deconstruct the practices that reproduced such disparities (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985, Monk and Cockburn 1984, Hansen 1982).

This literature also problematized societal institutions by highlighting the dominant presence that patriarchal social relations maintained in neoliberal, capitalistic economies (Collinson and Hearn 1996, Peake 1993, Walby 1990). This early criticism of masculine supremacy was vital in exposing inequalities that result from hierarchical gender relations. Despite this, some theorists suggest that how such research was completed remained prone to restrictive definitions of masculinity as solely a mechanism of control (Connell 2005, Whitehead 2001).

While early analyses centered on dismantling the unequal distribution of power between men and women, what early feminist critiques tended to neglect was an investigation into the role that subordinated forms of masculinity had in gendered relations (Whitehead and Barrett 2001, Hearn 1996, Connell 1995). As research investigating patriarchal hierarchies expanded, decolonial, queer, critical race, and feminist authors continued to develop their theories and expand upon the concept of multiple masculinities, as well as whiteness (Kobayashi 2000, Halberstam 1998, Mills 1996, Connell 1995, Bell 1991, Butler 1990). Consequently, this has garnered more attention being paid to the implications that traditional forms of manhood has had for queer sexualities, as well as alternate forms of masculine subject positions (Anderson 2009, Halberstam 2002, Kimmel 1994, Butler 1990).

With this transition away from biological explanations of binary sex roles scholars at the centre of research on gender continued focusing on the social construction of masculinity (Walby 1990, Massey 1994, Mac an Ghail 1994, Connell 1995). By approaching masculinity as the formation of a social product mutually influenced by structure and individuals, researchers sought to critically analyze how power is situated amongst groups of men, as well as between men and women. They accomplished this by examining how

gendered relationships are developed and reaffirmed through discourse, practice, and learning (Whitehead 2001, Connell 2000, 1995, Mac an Ghail 1996, 1994, Jackson 1991, Brittan 1989). By utilizing anti-masculinist standpoints drawing on feminist, anarchist, queer, and decolonial theories, scholars have been able to critique inequalities based upon varied interlocking social axes of identification; as well as better understand power relations operating in contemporary society. Accordingly, critical theorists have been able to do this by avoiding the tendency to blame social disparities and cultural oppression on widely liberal and biological perspectives that locate difference within individuals.

Hegemonic Masculinity

R.W. Connell has formulated and expanded a broad conceptual foundation for examining gender relations that has an extensive appeal in theorizing masculinities. Her research on what is termed 'hegemonic masculinity' has been featured prominently within a wide range of academic disciplines and her theoretical framework for analyzing men remains highly influential as it provides a functional approach to examining the concerns of feminist scholars investigating masculinity. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity initially gained prominence in the 1980s with research pertaining to the relationship among identity, social inequality, and labor issues (Connell 1983, 1982). The results of these studies were later organized in an article entitled 'Towards a New Sociology of Masculinity' that critically analyzed sex role theory's stance that gendered identities are natural, biological differences between male and female sexes (Carrigan, Connell, Lee 1985). The article suggests that multiple forms of fractured masculinities interact among various levels of societal

relationships. The concept of hegemonic masculinity thus challenged the long-held notion that there is a single, archetypal masculinity predetermined for men.

The significance of Connell's concept of multiple masculinities highlights how male bodies and men are positioned as a gendered class. In her analysis of gender, Connell develops a lens for studying masculinity based upon Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony (Connell 2005, 1995, Hearn 2004). In doing so, Connell utilizes Gramsci's theorizations surrounding class dynamics to examine the relationships that exist amongst men, as well as those between men and women. Gramsci, primarily concerned with the cultural influence that capitalism has on society, suggests that members of the dominant faction rationalize their authority principally by gaining passive consent to their ideology from other groups, rather than by using overt force and physical brutality (Boggs 1984, Joll 1997, Gramsci 1971).

In order to attain this hegemonic position to uphold the economic controls imposed on society, Gramsci noted that those who wield power rely upon the subordination of other social classes through a series of competing struggles and alliances with members of differing groups (Ekers, Loftus and Mann 2009, Hall 1986, Gramsci 1971). His analysis also claims that the orchestration of such dominance is never complete or finished, but rather the contest for hegemonic positions is a dynamic, on-going process of negotiation and concession (Francese 2009, Hall 1997, Gramsci 1971). With this perspective, Gramsci underscores the fundamental significance that ideology has in the development of hegemony and how members of a capitalist society grant certain privileged assemblages of people legitimacy, even if it is not in their best interest to do so (Francese 2009, Connell 1995, Gramsci 1992).

Borrowing from Gramsci's perspectives of ideology under capitalism, Connell exposes how the common beliefs and values within a society allow certain men to maintain power and authority (Connell 2005, 1995, Demetriou 2001, Donaldson 1993). She notes that in order to best understand the dynamics at play in the realm of social relationships a plurality of masculinities should be recognized, along with the subordination and domination that result from the vast array of interactions that occur between and amongst genders (Ashe 2007, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, Hearn 2004, Connell 1995).

Framing gendered relations conceptually through a social constructivist lens, Connell makes certain to assert that masculinities cannot be reduced to dichotomous sex roles, nor should they be characterized as fixed norms operating independently across social relations (Connell 2005, 1995). Through this 'social theory of gender,' Connell identifies the multifaceted nature of masculinities and femininities, as well as the complex set of power relations within and between genders (Connell 1987: 91).

Connell's theory of multiple masculinities is underscored with the recognition that the fluidity in gendered relations leaves certain groups of men in dominant positions of authority, whilst other groups of women, men, and people who are gender non-conforming are subject to marginalization, coerced complicity, and subordination. The foundation of Connell's analysis puts forward the idea that masculinity is inherently socio-historical, context-dependent, and is a social construct reliant upon the continual negotiation of gendered practices and discourses (Connell 2005, Hearn 2004, Demetriou 2001). It is through the normalized everyday practices of men and male bodies that normative masculinity is reproduced and maintained. This reproduction of normative and hegemonic masculinity thus serves to reinforce a system of unequal power relations while simultaneously sustaining

hierarchical gender regimes. Connell's understanding of masculinities underscores the fact that because masculinities are historically and spatially constituted, they are able to shift and be modified (Connell 2005).

This continual flux of masculinities is what allows masculinity to maintain a hegemonic position. In defining masculinities Connell states that they are 'configurations of practice structured by gendered relations' (Connell 1995: 44) and that such practices are situated in places heavily influenced by 'bodily experience, personality and culture' (Connell 1995: 71). This definition affirms the importance that place and time have on the fluidity present in the construction of masculinity. Connell's theory pertaining to gendered relations ultimately elicits how masculinity is mutually constituted by subjects seeking to embody it, as well as by the spaces within which it operates.

In approaching the study of gender through a poststructuralist framework, Connell argues that the constructs of masculinity and femininity are arrangements of social practices, and therefore are not reducible to binary sex roles (Donaldson 1993, Connell 1987, Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985). She rejects the position that definitions of these concepts possess an inherent core, and she also maintains that theorists should steer away from any essentialist theory framing masculinity and femininity as intrinsic, predetermined, or innate. In analyzing what constitutes masculinity Connell also makes note of the importance that semiotics has on the theoretical elements of gendered relations (Anderson 2009, Ashe 2007, Connell 2005). By acknowledging the signs and markers of what is 'masculine' and 'feminine' researchers will be able to more fully understand the generalized discursive dichotomy that exists when analyzing masculinities.

This relational perspective of Connell's theory is particularly salient as it elicits the notion that masculinity is typically framed in comparison to what it is not, (i.e. femininity) that is often constructed as inferior, lacking, and deficient (Anderson 2009, Ashe 2007, Hopkins 2007). Thus, for Connell, masculinity does not surface unless it is operating within an arrangement of gendered relations, thereby leading to a social configuration of practice in that regularly oppresses women. The practical elements of such social dynamics can be readily seen operating across neoliberal spaces in the arenas of production, labour, domesticity, and interpersonal relationships. In capitalistic, as well as settler societies, these spaces regularly ascribe men status as sole providers and suggest they are public in nature.

Additionally, masculinity is framed as being rational, decisive, and in control (Kimmel, Hearn and Connell 2005, Demetriou 2001, Connell 1995). Although such an analysis may lend itself to static and binary interpretations, Connell has reaffirmed her position numerous times that in order to more appropriately understand the dynamics at play in defining gender relations researchers must take into account that there is no single, standardized masculinity. Rather, she notes that it occurs in multiple forms, is constantly shifting, and changes depending upon time and place (Ashe 2007, Connell 2005, 1995).

By approaching gendered practices through this lens, Connell once again draws upon Gramsci's work and employs the concept of hegemony in her evaluation of masculinities. Noting that men can utilize certain behaviours associated with manhood for their own advantage, she argues that as a result, certain forms of masculinity are praised and legitimated, whilst others are castigated and criticized (Ashe 2007, Hall 2002, Connell 1995). These arrangements of masculine practices, as fleeting and spatialized as they are, can therefore readily be referred to as 'hegemonic masculinity.' This is to say that some aspects

of masculinity: ambition, pride, aggressiveness, emotional restraint, physicality and competitiveness, when used in the appropriate time and place, can afford men more privilege, be used as justification for the subordination of women, and ultimately become both normalized and socially sanctioned (Pringle 2005, McGann 2002, Messner 2000).

Connell (2005), along with many other scholars critically studying masculinity, go on to note that at other times men whose demeanors and appearances fall outside the dominant norms of hegemonic masculinity (passivity, deference, emotionality, non-heterosexuality, racialized minorities, etc.) are not afforded the same benefits and degrees of authority granted to those men who are perceived to more fully embody traditionally accepted masculine attributes (Howson 2006, Haywood and Mac an Ghail 2003, Bordo 1997).

The Patriarchal Dividend

In identifying this complex interplay of gendered relations, Connell suggests that hegemonic masculinity can be defined as:

The configuration of gender practice, which embodies the currently accepted answer to the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is take to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.

(1995: 77)

With this definition of hegemonic masculinity, Connell is suggesting the practices and ideals of men produce a ‘patriarchal dividend’ that she describes as ‘the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women’ (Connell 1995: 79). In other words, Connell’s concept of the patriarchal dividend can be explained as the disproportionate amount of authority, power, status, wealth, and prestige afforded to men, due to the fact that

they are men. Connell goes on to add that it is the taken-for-granted arrangement of gendered hierarchies that further validates the ‘legitimacy of patriarchy’ as an accepted cultural norm (Connell 1995: 82). This consent, a concept once again taken from Gramsci’s writings on cultural hegemony, enables men to retain the majority of power in society, while women and minorities often remain marginalized (Connell 1995: 77, Gramsci 1992).

Connell is careful to qualify her notion of the patriarchal dividend by noting that not all men receive the social and material benefits attributable to the concept. To illustrate this point, she emphasizes that certain subordinated masculinities based on race, class, sexuality, nationality, age, and ability remain excluded from the advantages of the patriarchal dividend (Connell 2005: 79). Connell goes on to state that hegemonic masculinity is an ambiguous term in a constant state of fluctuation. Noting that it is impossible for all men to permanently employ a standardized version hegemonic masculinity in their daily practices, she does recognize that there are actions that men can employ in everyday social relations that allow them to express their perceived dominance (McGann 2002, Connell 1995, Donaldson 1993).

Connell also suggests that qualities most typically attributed to ‘real men’ in neoliberalized colonial cultures include heterosexuality, pride, assertiveness, competitiveness, and virility (Peralta 2007, Connell 2005, Malszecki and Cavar 2004, McGann 2002). These normalizing attributes are contingent upon social context, but when enacted by men, allow them to continue to further benefit from the patriarchal dividend (Weis 2006, Connell 2005, Hearn 2004, Speer 2001). Connell elaborates on her analysis of hegemonic masculinity by stating that it is not a static or idle concept, but rather it is subject to contestation, challenge, and change (Connell 2005).

Drawing once again from Gramsci's idea of hegemony and power relations, Connell puts forth the qualification that not all men are afforded this hegemonic position in society. She recognizes the blurred distinctions that are present amongst contrasting groups of men and does not consign hegemonic masculinity into an isolated character typology. While her perspective emphasizes the overall subordination of women that results from hegemonic masculinity, she also points out that there also is a set of hierarchical relations present that arise within groups of men. By noting this plurality of masculinities, Connell steers away from the tendency to reduce hegemonic masculinity into an essentialist definition that views men as a homogenous bloc (Connell 2005, Demetriou 2001). In turn, Connell's social constructionist view acknowledges that three contrasting relational sets of interaction may surface as a result of the dominant standards of masculinity; these include subordinate, marginalized, and complicit masculinities (Connell 1995).

Subordinated, Marginalized, and Complicit Masculinities

Subordinated masculinities can be most readily seen in the fact that heterosexual men generally are afforded more social ascendancy than men who are gay. Within many capitalistic, colonial gender regimes gay men are subordinated by heterosexuality through cultural norms, as well as by the institutions that function within the legal, economic and political arenas of society (Anderson 2009, Ashe 2007, Grosz 1995). One of the most observable aspects of homosexuality as being subordinated can be seen through Connell's feminist analysis of power, patriarchy, and sexuality. Her argument recognizes that homosexuality is often equated with effeminacy, or more specifically, with being a woman.

She notes that in patriarchal societies the label of being feminine, womanly, or ‘less than a man’ continues to be stigmatized and deemed inferior (Connell 1995).

Connell acknowledges this phenomenon by stating that men who are not compliant with normative heterosexuality are forced out of the hegemonic faction where societal authority resides (Ashe 2007: 147). Thus, the subordinating function of normative heterosexuality has a direct consequence on homosexual men as it may result in physical violence, abusive language, economic prejudice, and legal discrimination (Anderson 2009, Pascoe 2007, Kimmel 1994). Connell also notes that the mechanism of masculinity can also marginalize certain men (Connell 1995: 81). These ostracizing aspects of gendered relations can be readily seen when analyzing socio-cultural subject positions (Howson 2006, Cleaver 2003, hooks 2003, Pain 2003, Bondi 1998). The hegemonic bloc of men who wield the most power often times can draw lines of distinction in terms of race, class, nationality, sexuality, age, religion, and ability (Smith 2007, Weis 2006, Peake 1993, Bell 1991). It is not uncommon for homosexual men, racialized minorities, disabled people³, and working-class men to be relegated to positions of lower social status and rendered as less significant to society.

Connell (1995) additionally states that at times men in marginalized positions can engage in behaviours associated with hegemonic masculinity and benefit from such actions.

³ I use the term ‘disabled people’ throughout this thesis due to recent efforts that collective movements are making in the reclaiming conceptions of disability. Such movements suggest that the use of ‘people first language’ as well as ‘person(s) with...’ labels have the tendency to discursively remove/dismiss disability from the person by giving the impression that people are separate from their disability. Those who choose to self-identify as ‘disabled people’ argue that their disability is an essential part of their life experience, that they are proud of who they are, and that their disability, like other facets of their life, contributes to who they are as a person. Thus, they cannot, and do not want to, disown, dismiss, or relegate their disability. Rather, they acknowledge and embrace those aspects of their disability that contributes to their lived experiences. I am also not suggesting that the use of ‘people first language’ is incorrect or oppressive, I simply use the term ‘disabled people’ because doing so more appropriately fits my theoretical approach of attempting to avoid instantiating disability as a discursive construction that reaffirms neoliberal subjects.

For example, in a white supremacist colonial nation-state, a black male athlete succeeding in competition and playing in professional sports gains masculine status, but black men as a whole do not benefit from these individual instances (Connell 1995). Another example is a working-class man who has a blue-collar job requiring manual labour. Despite the fact that he may be engaging in practices that are associated with hegemonic masculinity (working hard, displaying dedication, taking 'pride in his work', etc.), not all men that make up the social strata of the working-class will benefit from the actions of that particular individual.

This is in part due to the process of inferiorization that is utilized by hegemonic (masculine) blocs that qualify the actions of marginalized men with cultural caveats and social disclaimers. Thus, those marginalized men who embody characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (i.e. the black male athlete who succeeds at sports and the blue collar labourer who can physically work for hours on end) are often framed as being less intelligent, criminal, hypersexual, uneducated, coarse, or deceitful (hooks 2003, 2000, Kimmel and Ferber 2000, Jackson 1994). Connell notes this construction of dominant white masculinities by stating:

In a white supremacist context, black masculinities play symbolic roles for white gender construction. For example, black sporting stars become exemplars of masculine toughness, while the fantasy figure of the black rapist plays an important role in sexual politics among whites. (1995: 80)

She goes on to note that despite the fact that some black men may attain monetary success and celebrity due to their athletic prowess, there is not an equal distribution of wealth given to all black men as a result of individual accomplishments (hooks 2003, Connell 1995). This process of marginalization via individualization shows hegemonic masculinity's pervasive

influence not only in personal interactions, but also in societal institutions that keep racialized and working-class men disadvantaged.

Referring once again to Gramsci's concept of hegemony and the ways in which dominant blocs maintain hegemony through consent, Connell identifies complicit masculinities that include men who do not actually embody the normative characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995: 79, Gramsci 1971). She goes on to note that the majority of men may not always meet the strict, prescribed standards of hegemonic masculinity, but nonetheless they still profit from the patriarchal dividend that is acquired due to the overall subordination of women (Connell 1995). As a result, men become complicit and passive allowing the ideals of hegemonic masculinity to uphold a patriarchal system.

Connell subscribes to the position that for hegemonic masculinity to sustain itself, it must compromise and be flexible with some aspects of the normalized characteristics of 'being a man.' One example of this is when heterosexual men get married, become fathers, or engage in community life (Connell 1995). It is in these instances that men are more malleable with what masculine characteristics they choose to engage in, often opting for more cooperative actions rather than displaying overt signs of aggressive authority over women and other men (Connell 1995). Consequently, as men alter their patterns of behaviour due the shifting conditions of social context, it thereby shows the adaptive capacity of hegemonic masculinity to adjust itself into a modified version of masculinity that gains support from civil society (Howson 2006, Hearn 2004, Demetriou 2001). This continual flux and renegotiation of hegemonic masculinity as it moves across differing social spaces is what enables it to sustain power, gain consent, and remain a influential force in gender relations.

Space, Place, and Scale

With Connell's identification of the interplay of multiple masculinities she then moves her analysis of masculinity and power to the multiple scales across which gender relations occur. Acknowledging that the formation of gender is historically contextualized and spatially situated, she suggests that hegemonic masculinity can be examined across three differing dimensions: global, regional, and local levels (2005: 849). It is with this recognition of space playing a significant role in the construction of masculinities that Connell discusses the importance of geography in her analysis of hegemonic masculinity.

The global scale of interaction can be thought of as being comprised of transnational businesses, free trade agreements, multinational corporations, and international systems of governance and media (Ashe 2007, Connell 2005, Von Hoven and Horschelmann 2005). It is in this realm of social interaction that Connell suggests that imperialism, colonialism, and neoliberalism continues to reconstitute gender relations based on hierarchies of power that give legitimacy to patriarchy (Connell, Kimmel and Hearn 2005, Connell 2000). It was, and currently still is, through colonialism, and the establishment of ethnocentric policies of political, economic, and religious statutes that many of today's contemporary norms associated with masculinity are dispersed across the globe.

Those ideals that were transferred through the imperial project include compulsory heterosexuality, the exaltation of capitalistic exploitation, the reification of public (male) and private (female) life, unequal divisions of labour, the racialization of non-white people, and the assimilation, and at times elimination, of Indigenous gender orders that differed from that of the colonial settlers (Ekers, Loftus, and Mann 2009, Davis 2007, Mills 1996, Blunt and

Rose 1994). When these influences were spread across the globe and merged with contrasting regional and local contexts the result shifted gender regimes to reflect a more white supremacist, capitalistic, and patriarchal forms of social reproduction.

Connell goes on to note that such processes continue in contemporary times through neoliberal policies and individual rights-based political rhetoric (Ashe 2007, Connell 2005, Kimmel and Ferber 2000). Connell also recognizes that the global forces influencing local cultures do not entirely eliminate existing gender relations, on the other hand, these dominating influences interact, blend, and merge with existing gendered social relationships. Consequently, hybrid masculinities and femininities form, but despite such shifts, there remains an established social hierarchy that privileges men over women, and positions hegemonic masculinities over other marginalized and subordinated forms of masculine practice (Connell, 2005, Demetriou 2001).

Connell continues her analysis of the geography of masculinities by stating that regional masculinities also factor into gendered social relations. The markers of regional masculinities are most often seen through processes that occur at the scale of the fictional nation-state, province, territory, or state and encompass socio-political ideologies, national media advertising, and domestic economic policies (Ashe 2007, Von Hoven and Horschellmann 2005, Connell 2005). Connell's examination notes that regional examples of these hegemonic formulations of manhood are 'typically found in discursive, political and demographic research' (2005: 849).

More specifically, Connell is suggesting that regional masculinities may include exemplary symbols of masculine dominance that are represented in society by high-ranking politicians, professional athletes, major motion picture actors, and upper-level military

officials (Weis 2006, Connell 2005, Malszecki 2004). In her analysis, Connell (2005) also notes that constructions of regional masculinities are influenced by local masculinities and are formulated through a wide array of immediate daily interactions. Sites where the production of men operate on an organic or local level range from educational institutions, places of worship, community affiliations, businesses and workplaces, family interactions, participation in athletics, as well as in recreation and leisure activities (Lusher and Robins 2009, Smith 2007, Pascoe 2007, McGann 2002, Morgan 2001, Messner 2000).

While Connell has categorized the construction of masculinities into three distinct levels she is quick to qualify the reasoning for such demarcations. She notes that global, regional, and local masculinities should not be conceptualized as totally independent from one another because of the manner in which they all mutually influence each other. The reciprocal relationship of gendered interactions across space thus shapes certain characteristics of masculinity, as well as what becomes prescribed as hegemonic (Connell 2005: 850). It is in this line of thinking that when discussing the contrasting locations of masculinity researchers should remain cognizant of the fact that, while each spatialized level is influencing and affecting the others, they are not wholly determining what hegemonic masculinity is in a universal sense. Connell sums up the importance of geography in the construction of masculinities when she states:

Adopting an analytical framework that distinguishes local, regional, and global masculinities (and the same point applies to femininities) allows us to recognize the importance of place without falling into a monadic world of totally independent cultures or discourses.' (2005: 850, my emphasis added)

By establishing the suggestion that social space factors into the formation of hegemonic masculinities Connell gives credence to the position that a plurality of masculinities are present in separate contexts and that a variety of masculinities may be forged across different spaces. Connell's theory thereby aligns with Gramsci's writings on hegemony and power because masculinity itself is contested, altered and renegotiated into multiple forms based upon the places where it exists (Connell 2005, Jessop 2005, Joll 1977, Gramsci 1971).

Embodiment and Social Construction

Having acknowledged the significance that geography has in the formation of masculinities, Connell also emphasizes the role that the body has on the construction of what is deemed as masculine. To emphasize her point, Connell states:

Gender centrally involves social embodiment, based on body-reflexive practices where the body is both agent and object of practice. The gender order therefore has important effects at the level of the body as well as in social relations. (1995: 248)

Steering away from theories that attach an innate, natural masculinity to men's bodies, Connell subscribes to a poststructuralist perspective and is a proponent of locating men's bodies in political realm noting that the body both is inscribed with society's ideals of masculine behaviour and that the body also shapes the social spaces where they are interacting (Ashe 2007, Davis 2007, Connell 2005). In theorizing the body in this manner, Connell stresses the importance of both the corporality of the body as well as the discursive formations that represent what is recognized as hegemonic. It is the mutual constitution of the space on the body and the body on space, along with the everyday practices and cultural

discourse surrounding the body, that gives body-reflexive practices such an influential role in the formation of hegemonic masculinities.

With the recognition that embodiment plays a fundamental role in the formation of masculinity, it is now time to turn to a discussion of how the body is used to signify gendered subject positions. This perspective, a major theme raised by feminist, queer, and critical theorists, suggests that research pertaining to masculinities has left questions concerning the body unanswered (Bordo 2000, Halberstam 1998, Longhurst 1995). While it is evident that the body plays a substantial role in the association between masculinity and what ‘being a man’ means, many authors state that the body is often naturalized in a binary manner, or the meaning of masculinity ascribed to body-reflexive practices is left vague and unclear (Connell 2005, Hearn 1996, Kimmel 1994, Butler 1993).

Over the past few decades academic interest regarding embodiment has resulted in an abundance of research centering on the social, political, and historical role the body plays in society (Davis 2007, Longhurst 1995, 1997, Blunt and Rose 1994, Grosz 1994, Bordo 1993, Butler 1993). More specifically, theorizing the concepts of masculinity and femininity, coupled with their association to body reflexive practices, has been approached from a wide array of disciplines (Berg and Longhurst 2003, Berg 2002, Halberstam 2002, Butler 1993). Numerous scholars deem perceptions of gender, masculinity, and femininity as social constructions and oppose analyzing the body as a purely biological entity (Anderson 2009, Connell 2005, Lorber 1996, Grosz 1995, Butler 1993, Foucault 1978, 1976).

In this line of thinking, social constructionist views pertaining to embodiment suggest bodies are produced, regulated and shaped by social forces (Shilling 2003, Weigman 2002, Grosz 1994, Bordo 1993, Butler 1990, Foucault 1982, 1975). These societal influences can

be found in a variety of forms based upon differing contexts and spaces, and are generally built upon the notion that the body is the result, rather than the source, of social meaning (Shilling 2003, Butler 1993, Foucault 1975).

With this being said, it should be noted that many authors support the stance that merely framing gender as the result of conforming to cultural expectations of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ fails to recognize personal autonomy that can impact gendered social relationships (Davis 2007, Connell 2005, Shilling 2003, Bordo 2000). Keeping in mind that both social structures and individual agency mutually constitute what the body is, several poststructuralist theorists emphasize the point that gender relations are multifaceted and not simply the compliance to societal norms, nor are they solely the result of cultural expectations (Anderson 2009, Pringle 2005, Connell 2005, Shilling 2003).

Biopower and Docile Bodies

Turning the discussion now to embodiment and the discursive formations that constitute the body, it is helpful to look to the work of Michel Foucault and his thoughts on the role that power plays in the development of socio-cultural relations within society. In detailing his examination of the way bodies are regulated, Foucault (1976: 140) puts forward his concept of biopower that he views as a mechanism of control that centers on the body. Foucault (1976: 140) suggests that power is ‘not a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens’ but rather it is the ‘numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations.’ He goes on to state that biopower is a force that penetrates all spheres of the social order, has no observable core, and that it is incapable of being located in a single, identifiable, source (Foucault 1976).

Rather, for Foucault, biopower resides in societal institutions, cultural expectations and the normative principles held throughout civil society (Bartky 1998, Hartsock 1990, Foucault 1976).

Foucault notes that the disciplinary technologies that influence individual and social behaviour permeate all of society and are mediated through establishments such as governments, religion, family, schools, prisons, businesses, legal systems, hospitals, and economic policies (Sawicki 1998, Foucault 1982, 1978). By monitoring, disciplining, punishing and rewarding certain behaviours and ideals these institutions exercise power over individuals, shape what is considered conventional knowledge, and produce 'docile bodies' (Foucault 1978: 135). Docile bodies, more specifically, can be thought of as assemblages of people, coupled with their perspectives and subjectivities that remain obedient, complicit, and compliant with normalized social practices occurring across personal, cultural, and institutional levels of society.

Docility is particularly important to point at in this conceptualization because it can even occur when taken-for-granted social relationships result in marginalization, subordination, negligence, and violence. Foucault (1978: 138) states that in order to perpetuate the hierarchal functioning of social organization, docile bodies must be produced. He also describes the general public as the recipients of social conditioning that dictates their conduct, comparing civil society to disciplined soldiers, obedient industrial laborers, and submissive students (Pringle 2005, Bartky 1990, Foucault 1978).

Foucault continues his analysis of power by maintaining that societal structures control docile bodies because they are indoctrinated to passively comply with authority and give consent to the normative judgments of those entities where influence resides (Bordo

1993, Foucault 1978). Thus, Foucault envisions society where systems of dominance (and resistance), require individuals to assimilate to, and often take-for-granted, manufactured sets of normalized ideals (Bartky 1998, Foucault 1978, 1976). To describe these power relations Foucault argues that disciplinary procedures have developed over time and that people adopt and carry them out in through the process of social reproduction. He maintains that the creation and reaffirmation of such conditions often lead individuals and social groups to become subservient and submit to institutional authority (Foucault 1978). In this way, masculinity can be pointed to as an unseen societal institution and regulatory cultural authority that is both obeyed consented to.

The Panopticon and Disciplined Subjects

Foucault likens the disciplinary practices of societal institutions and processes of normalization to that of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, noting that individuals are observed, evaluated, and under constant surveillance by an omnipresent, yet invisible, judgmental gaze. His perspective of biopower draws highly upon subjectivity, and how it is retained by an individual's own self-observation and obedience to norms (Foucault 1978: 200). When analyzing how individuals are regulated in a society, Foucault states:

There is no need for arms, physical evidence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against himself. (1978: 155)

With this framework of power in place, it positions individuals who naturally or voluntarily yield to societal expectations as the overseers of their own bodies. The punitive controls that

generate cultural norm and expectations result in self-disciplinary measures whereby individuals police themselves, as well as others, through the use of discourse and material practices. As a result, the body becomes a key site of the inscription for social norms thereby pressuring individuals to conform to the axiomatic edicts that are regulated by societal institutions.

At the same time, Foucault (1978) notes that the source of biopower that produces docile bodies cannot be precisely located, exists nowhere, and remains unseen. He suggests that power and authority are not located in a unitary governing entity, rather, it is located everywhere and permeates all aspects of society. To illustrate this point he states:

Power comes from below; that is, there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix - no such duality extending from the top down and reacting on more and more limited groups to the very depths of the social body. (1978: 94)

This absence of a readily identifiable and tangible imposing force exerting power over individuals gives the impression that the development of society's disciplinary constructs, as well as the general population's subsequent adherence to them, are voluntary, natural and productive (Jones 2007, Bartky 1998, Foucault 1978). Foucault also goes on to importantly note that there is resistance to docility, to authority, and complicity in his infamous statement, 'Where there is power, there is resistance' (1990: 95). However, what resistance produces in relation to, and as a part of power, is often not without repercussion.

It is with this understanding of Foucault's theorizing on power and how it is exercised over the body that other theorists have extended his analysis to the construction of gendered

subject positions (Whitehead 2002, Bartky 1998, Bordo 1993, Butler 1990, Hartsock 1990).

In expanding Foucault's concept of biopower to gender it can be suggested that the attribution of masculinity and femininity to bodies is a regulatory process resulting in the strict adherence to a constructed set of normalized actions and behaviours. As individuals embody the normalized gendered formations endorsed by the regulatory codes of civil society (i.e. masculine/male and feminine/female), they continue to uphold the accepted status quo. As a result, masculinity and femininity are viewed as innate biological characteristics that male and female bodies naturally possess. Consequently, people who resist, challenge, or do not conform to homogenously naturalized behaviours are pathologized and assessed as being deviant, inferior, or abnormal (Bartky 1998, Foucault 1978).

The Normalizing Gaze

As a society develops its constructions of what is deemed natural behaviour, a complex interplay between individual agency and structural pressure ensues that requires members of civil society to either submit to, or reject, the social demands of an invisible normalizing gaze that constitutes the fluctuating subject positions they occupy (Foucault 1977). In terms of gender relations these standards have reaffirmed a patriarchal system of dominance that generally affords men as a group more legitimacy (Anderson 2009, Albury 2005, Brittan 1989). The sites where masculinity and femininity then become most evident include the body, as well as discourse surrounding the social construction of gender. When specifically analyzing the 'real body' it can be viewed as the substantive element where gendered inscriptions are made material (Foucault 1982, 1978, Bordo 1993).

In analyzing the corporeal body it is useful to turn to the work of Susan Bordo who utilizes Foucault's theories in her investigation of the materiality of gender (Bordo 1993). She connects Foucault's conceptions on power, the normalizing gaze, and self-surveillance with the material existence of the body. Falling in line with Foucault, she suggests that the construction of gender is a disciplinary tool that shapes the behaviour and actions of women and men (Bordo 1993, 1997). Noting that men who aspire to maintain positions of authority often engage in practices that conform to idealized images of what is considered masculine, Bordo (2000) states that normalized conceptions of manhood (compulsory heterosexuality, aggressiveness, rationality, physical strength, virility, and protectiveness) become central in shaping men's actions.

Relating her theory to R.W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, it can be suggested that the male body can be read and coded with gendered constructs, which when given consent to and enacted by men, become hegemonic. In aspiring to attain the social advantages afforded to masculinity, Connell's patriarchal dividend, Bordo (2000) notes that the physical characteristics of men: muscle definition, a deep voice, broad shoulders, penis size, and repressing emotional behaviour, become the corporeal indicators used to gauge masculinity.

From Bordo's perspective, the embodiment of the social construction of masculinity interacting with the tangible elements of how men perceive and use their bodies provides an explanation of how societal norms exact control over individuals (Bordo 2000).

Consequently, the disciplinary tools of normalized perceptions of gender become mechanisms of control because they permeate a culture's normative ideals regarding bodies, actions, behaviours, desires and habits. As a result, the disciplinary gaze that is transmitted

through societal institutions, media, advertising, peer groups, and family relations produce individuals who become the unsuspecting source of their own subjection (Bordo 2000, Foucault 1975). Relating these regulatory controls to masculinity, it can be seen that Foucault's and Bordo's thoughts on power and dominance become embodied and experienced through the way men use and perceive their bodies.

Building upon these issues of embodiment, Jack/Judith Halberstam (2002: 2) poses the question: Can there be 'masculinity without men?' Halberstam's work recognizes female masculinities and challenges the standpoint that only male bodies can retain masculinity (Halberstam 2012, 2002, 1998). By acknowledging contrasting gendered identities Halberstam is disrupting the assumed naturalness between male possession of masculinity and female ownership of femininity. This dismantling of dualistic categorizations is now altering the power dynamics that are located in gender relations.

Halberstam claims the assertion that masculinity is reserved only for men reveals a reluctance to work through the complex interactions that are present in modern relationships involving race, class, gender, and ability (Halberstam, 1998: 364). From Halberstam's perspective, generalizing masculinity leaves out significant details when deconstructing gender relations. Therefore, Halberstam calls for a critical reexamination of masculinity that encourages more inclusion when it comes to determining who can embody masculinity. What also can be taken from Halberstam's perspective is that researchers should move away from theorizing masculinity as a fixed identity and that a continuum of subject positions should be recognized. This allows for a much wider rendering of masculine subject positions and the bodies that can enact those subjectivities.

Performativity and Fluid Masculinities

Recognizing that individuals occupy varying subject positions based upon the mutually constitutive nature of social structures and active agents, Judith Butler (1990) offers her concept of performativity to theorize gender relations. Butler contends that the delineation of gender into two separate and distinct categories, male and female, has limited the formation of personal identities. Her idea of performativity is not based upon a foundation of predetermined, biological traits, rather, Butler defines it as recurring culturally normative interactions across particular contexts (1990). Butler notes that recognizing only male and female bodies, and subsequently ascribing them with 'masculine' and 'feminine' attributes causes gender to become a preordained and limiting social construct (Von Hoven and Horschelmann 2005, Butler 1993, 1990). She contends that if gender, as well as the binary categories of male and female, were seen as occurring across a continuum it would allow a greater degree of choice, challenge and opposition to such restrictive dichotomies (Butler 2005, 1990).

By theorizing gender as a fluid construct Butler steers away from the position that gender is a static identity or authentic self (1990). She notes that performativity is an iterative process of social relations and suggests that gender is something that is produced on a reoccurring basis, and is not an inherent, universal truth (Butler 1993). Thus, social interactions are constituted by practices and discourses that construct a multitude of situated subject positions (Butler 1990). In this way, Butler is carefully suggesting that performativity is a continuous discursive process that cannot merely be viewed as a performance, nor should it be described simply as specific manners of material self-presentation.

What is essential to Butler's concept is that it emphasizes the notion that identities are in a constant state of flux and based upon context. She stresses that normalized conceptions of masculinity, femininity, heterosexuality, and other categorical social constructions should be questioned. The contestation of such conventional attributes and conformist behaviours can potentially result in wider acceptance of individuals who fall outside of rigid, normative definitions. Butler goes on to argue that recognizing subject positions that are dynamic and flexible will reduce some of the prejudices, discrimination, and inequalities that are prevalent in contemporary societies (Anderson 2009, Ashe 2007, Butler 2005, Halberstam 2002).

In specifically addressing masculinity, it is evident that Butler's concept of performativity and the conception of multiple subject positions lead to an effective analysis of how men use their bodies to maintain hegemonic positions and earn legitimacy (Pascoe 2007, Smith 2007, Connell 2005, Longhurst 1995). Her concept of performativity as being something that is 'performed social identity, rather than a state of being' allows us to recognize that male bodies are often the medium through which masculinity is performed (Von Hoven and Horschelmann 2005: 186).

It is with the body that men (as well as women) engage in tasks, behaviours, and actions that are characterized as masculine. Thus, in order to maintain a position of authority within a system of patriarchal hierarchy, men must continue to perform 'acts of manhood' as their status of being masculine is fleeting and temporary (Pascoe 2007, Peralta 2007, McGann 2002). By performing such actions as manual labour, accumulating sexual prowess, participating in competitive athletics, engaging in risk-taking activities, repressing emotions, taking control in professional business related activities, being a dedicated father, and refusing medical attention, men are able to claim credibility within a gender hierarchy that

privileges masculine behaviour (Anderson 2009, Connell 2000, Messerschmidt 2000, Collinson and Hearn 1996).

Butler goes on to contend that the binary roles associated with sex and gender construct heterosexuality as innate and normal (1990). Conversely, sexualities that do not conform to compulsory heterosexuality are often labeled as abnormal or deviant, and are consequently subjugated by dominant discourses. Butler explains the process of marginalization of counter-sexualities when she states:

This exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of object beings, those who are not yet 'subjects,' but who form the constitutive outside the domain of the subject. (1993: 3)

The quote above emphasizes Butler's stance that processes of 'othering' maintain legitimacy through the systemic discursive subordination of queer sexualities. This is due to the fact that queer sexualities fall outside of (hetero)normalized notions of acceptance. Consequently, the discourses operating within particular spaces have the tendency to signify people who do not conform to compulsory heterosexuality as lacking and inferior, thereby relegating them to the peripheries of society.

In using Butler's concept of performativity to analyze gender it should also be noted that the construct of masculinity is contradictory in nature (Anderson 2009, Connell 2005, Butler 1993). The continual reiteration of gendered practices relegates those individuals who are striving to be masculine in a position where they can never fully attain a permanent or final masculinity (Connell 1995). This is due to the recognition that gaining masculine status relies upon the constant embodiment of social acts that are deemed 'manly.' The process of

retaining a masculine position is dependent upon a continual, inexhaustible quest to prove that one is a man.

This pursuit of manhood directly involves the body, as it is the site where such practices arise. Thus, the embodied actions of men reproduce a system of patriarchy that privileges the masculine over the feminine (Connell 2005, Hearn 2004, Edley and Wetherell 1996). Despite the overall benefits afforded to men, inconsistencies do remain in the practices of masculinity. This is recognized in Connell's concept of multiple masculinities, as who is afforded the most masculine capital is dependent upon the individuals performing such actions as well as the social spaces where such interactions are occurring. As mentioned earlier, some groups of men will retain a hegemonic position, while others will be subordinated, marginalized, and remain complicit.

While the assertion of 'being a man' implies one possesses a male body, it also should be recognized that masculinity can also be attached to a wide variety of social groups, places, objects, bodies, and spaces outside the boundaries of individuals. The term masculinity induces images of manhood, yet the meaning fluctuates significantly amongst men and may also be attributed to women (Connell 2005, Halberstam 2002, 1998). Critically examining masculinity enables theorists to dismantle binary gender identities and challenge the presumed normality associated with biological understandings of male/female. It also sheds light on multiple forms of masculinity that are formed and allows us to more fully recognize the significant impact that body reflexive practices have on power relations in society.

Chapter 2: Producing Hegemony and Hierarchy

Geography is about power. Although often assumed to be innocent, the geography of the world is not a product of nature but a product of histories of struggle between competing authorities over the power to organize, occupy, and administer space.

-Ó Tuathail-

Interlocking Axes

Critical studies on men, masculinity, and rurality have recently become an increasingly significant area of interest for scholars and theorists. Although the focus on masculinity and masculinities has only been a growing topic of concentration for the past 30 years, it is nonetheless a key area of research as it allows us to broaden our understanding of social relationships and cultural ideologies (Van Hoven and Horschelmann 2005, Connell 1995). Critical research on masculinity also fits prominently into the socio-cultural dynamics at work when analyzing hierarchical systems of privilege and marginalization.

Studying masculinities and rurality can assist in the dismantling of obstacles that are present in current struggles to overcome the systemic oppression and banal violence that exists in contemporary times, particularly in settler societies. This is evidenced in the fact that over the span of the past 30 years, progressive forms of social theory and radical praxis have moved beyond analyzing singular approaches to oppression and now include critical research that thoroughly addresses space and the interlocking nature of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationhood, enabledness, and other forms of socially constructed categories (Connell, Kimmel, Hearn 2005, Razack 2002, Wilson-Gilmore 2002, McClintock, Mufti, Shohat 1997, Hill Collins 1990).

Critically analyzing interlocking social axes of identification allows researchers to examine how hegemonic masculinity is shaped and reproduced in rural contexts, as well as what implications such formations have on the whole of society. And by building upon the conceptualizations of hegemony, embodiment, and space that are being discussed by critical scholars pursuing social justice, it is evident that there continues to be strides being made in better understanding the production of gendered subject positions, masculine hierarchies, and meanings attributed to rural spaces. With this foundation in place, I will now discuss how such factors play a crucial role in conceptions of ‘the rural.’

Defining the Rural

When investigating rural masculinities it is beneficial to unpack what is exactly meant by ‘rural’. As is the case with masculinity, rurality is often determined by what it is not. Just as masculinity is often framed as being *not* feminine, *not* female, and *not* womanly, the meaning of rural is predicated on the fact that it is *not* urban, it is *not* metropolitan, and what takes place in the rural is *not* found in the city. Consequently, defining the rural, as well as masculinity, through an *identification against* oppositional entities highlights the relationality of both. And while emphasizing relationality allows for a more accurate analysis of the socio-spatial processes that produce meaning to be had, doing so often causes confusion to arise due to the ambiguities and complexities and that surface when trying to pin down fixed notions rurality and masculinity.

Hugh Campbell, Michael Mayerfield Bell, and Margaret Finney (2006) address the ambiguities of rurality by noting that classifying space as rural is often accomplished by problematically relying upon population statistics that fall within bounded areas of land. As

such, selecting specific parameters regarding rurality can become arbitrary because ideas about what the exact border between the urban and rural is can change depending upon geographical contexts. What Campbell, Mayerfield Bell, and Finney (2006) are suggesting is that there are no clear lines of demarcation that indicate where the ‘urban’ stops and the ‘rural’ begins. Consequently, sectioning off quantifiable demographic units that fit into specific sets of geographic boundaries may not be an accurate representation of what can be elicited regarding rurality when examining the discursive constructions, emotions, and feelings associated with differing spaces and places.

Another long-standing and prominent, yet problematic, way of distinguishing the urban from the rural is relying upon the types of businesses and industries that a region depends upon for commerce (Lewis 1979). In this method of delineation, determining rurality is conditional upon the economic factors found within a region. Traditionally, rural spaces have been identified as areas where the commercial activities include logging, cattle ranching, agricultural production, mining, fossil fuel extraction, fishing, and tending to livestock, to name a few (Mayerfield Bell 1992). In contrast to those rural settings, urban spaces are more readily identified by the presence of business and commerce, retail and department stores, real estate companies, information and technology services, financing centres, as well as dental, law, and medical offices (Mayerfield Bell 1992). In framing the urban/rural split as a binary definition heavily contingent upon economic industry, the definition of rurality can thus become erroneous and lead to misrepresentation.

With these dilemmas in defining the rural, critical theorists now approach rurality through a poststructuralist lens that steers away from seeking objective truths and discrete boundaries. Researchers are now more inclined to acknowledge that rural space is

constituted by a multitude of factors and cannot be classified by universal definitions.

Accordingly, this has led to perspectives that are moving toward investigations of a wide array of 'rurals' that do not frame rural space as static and fixed (Campbell, Mayerfield Bell and Finney 2006, Little 2002). In recognizing that the boundaries of rural and urban spaces are vague and unclear, researchers now study rurality in much the same manner as poststructuralist theorists approach the study of gender and masculinity. That is, there is now recognition that rurality exists along a continuum that in many ways mirrors the study of masculine subject positions. Thus, social theorists now emphasize theorizing both masculinity and rurality along differing spectrums, scales, and dimensions.

By positioning what is considered rural along a broad range of possibilities, scholars have been able to move away from seeking objective facts and hard truths. Consequently, this movement away from positivist and empirical definitions has opened up research that enables investigations pertaining to the subjective ideas about what is considered rural. This shift towards poststructuralist approaches has also moved away from essentialized notions of space as a whole, and continues to expand the ways in which 'the rural' and 'the urban' are conceptualized. With this critical framework established, and with an ever-expanding emphasis on the social construction of space and place, scholars are now looking at the perceptions, ideas, and discourses surrounding rurality, instead of simply analyzing quantitative data taken from bounded, reified spaces (Mayerfield Bell 1992).

In analyzing the ideals, symbols, and practical experiences of individuals and cultural groups associated with the rural, theorists have thereby been able to link the study of rural space to social axes of identification (race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and able-bodiedness) (Campbell, Mayerfield Bell and Finney 2006). This convergence of factors

gives the study of rural masculinity particular salience for contemporary scholars investigating colonialism, patriarchy, gender inequality, and social injustice. With these concerns in mind, it is evident that ‘the rural,’ as well as masculinity, can both be approached as symbolic and discursive constructions that also include arrangements of materially embodied actions (Lobao 2006, Connell 2005, Little 2003). Given these critical insights, the next section will elaborate on how the arrangements of masculinity and rurality work in conjunction with one another to produce rural masculinities.

Rural Masculinity

In discussing the production of rural masculinities, it is important to consider how research relates to issues of everyday life, as well as social justice. More precisely, it is beneficial to understand how rural masculinity is both personal and political. In contemporary settler societies it is difficult to have not had any experience with symbolic representations of rural men. The overwhelming majority of societal structures found in settler societies typically valorize conquest by manufacturing a narrative that posits colonizers as explorers who bravely set sail on a unforgiving sea to conquer a new and untamed land (Kimmel 1996, Mills 1996, Blunt and Rose 1994). This version of history that includes images of white settlers courageously defending their right to ‘Manifest Destiny’ against ‘native savages’ by either conquering or civilizing them, remains a much-glorified piece of folklore across the United States (Kimmel 1996, Mills 1996).

The representations of rough-and-tumble frontiersmen protecting their families and making their way across a harsh landscape also have resonance in the production of masculinity during contemporary times. Throwbacks to the characteristics that ‘America’s

Founding Fathers’ and the ‘pioneers’ possessed during these times can be still be heard in the rhetoric and analogies of today across a host of differing business settings, military endeavours, sporting events, and even classroom lectures (Woodward 2003, Connell 2000, Messner 1992). Such stories, while commonly accepted as conventional wisdom, nonetheless continue to be colonial, patriarchal, and oppressive when absorbed as ‘truths’ in the cultural fabric of a given society. In this way, many people are exposed to histories that continue to venerate rural masculinity in one form or another.

And while perhaps not every member of society is directly exposed to the most overt and tangible elements of rural masculinity on a regular basis (i.e. not everyone finds themselves in a rustic agrarian setting surrounded by heavy machinery, livestock, agricultural crops, farm equipment, and ‘country boys’ daily), they are subjected to representations of rural masculinity through both history and media. More specifically, it is readily apparent that widespread swaths of society are fed images of the archetypal ‘hard working man’ (usually in the serene settings of the natural landscape) quite often through a wide variety of broadcasting avenues. Advertisements selling products ranging from beer and cigarettes, to trucks, jeans, technology solutions, and even perfume and cleaning products can be seen on a daily basis in both urban and rural settings (Campbell, Mayerfield Bell and Finney 2006, Cloke 2005, Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks 2001, Jackson 1994). The ubiquity of rural masculinity is indeed something that has become engrained in the collective consciousness for many settler societies. Thus, rural masculinity is an influential cultural token that is both imagined and real, it is found in both discourse and practice, and it is something that most have encountered in one form or another at some point their lives.

In addition to the symbolic representations that the rural masculine signifies (e.g. strength, authority, and control) in the manufacturing of mainstream education and the realm of marketing, it also carries a great deal of significance in political elections as well. Numerous politicians have campaign stops in rural towns in attempts to distance themselves from the notion that they are a part of an elite, exclusionary, upper-class who primarily works in offices, wears suits, and do not ‘get their hands dirty’ (Messner 2007). Taking time to shake hands with the locals, chat with the ‘Average Joes,’ and perhaps appear at a local sporting event or church service has particular resonance for individuals who may be undecided in their political choices (Messner 2007). By attending town hall meetings and experiencing a little bit of ‘country living’ candidates engage in masculine acts themselves in order to manufacture an approachable, down-to-earth, populist persona that can influence voting decisions and oftentimes sways members of civil society to select candidates making legislative decisions that are not in their best interest.

More direct experience with rural masculinity also has a significant impact on social relations as well. The dichotomous socialization of men and women in rural settings shapes the ideologies of almost every social assemblage and informs their opinions, attitudes, and actions as they move through life. The establishment of the nuclear family, compulsory heterosexuality, rugged individualism, and a liberal ‘pull yourself up by your bootstraps’ mentality are all very much alive and well in rural settings.

Peer groups also have a heavy influence on what becomes constituted as being a ‘man’ in rural spaces. From an early age, athletic ability, consumption of alcohol, sexual prowess, being a proficient hunter/fisherman, and the ability to fight can all earn masculine status for teenage boys growing up in rural settings (Pascoe 2007, Connell 2005, Messner

1992). Current research shows that it is not uncommon to hear young adolescent boys policing each other with homophobic epithets and racial slurs if they do not successfully fulfill what is considered to be masculine (Pascoe 2007, Tyson, Darity and Castellino 2005). Given the widespread prevalence of regulatory masculine monitoring that now operates across so many different social spaces, I will now turn my discussion onto some of the most common representations of rural masculinities, as well as what implications such constructions have upon society.

Representation and Practice

For settler societies such as the United States⁴, the rural plays a significant role in the cultural representation of what is regarded as familial, natural, pure, and communal (Little 2003, 2002). Common depictions of rural masculinity often include images of tough cowboys, rugged outdoorsmen, and hardened workers in bucolic landscapes that are vast, untamed, and separated from the hectic lifestyle of the frenzied urban metropolis. These symbols of masculinity are often reaffirmed through body-reflexive practices and associated with the material day-to-day activities of individuals who reside in the country (Little 2002). The embodiment of rural masculinity can often be ascribed to male bodies that engage in activities that show them exercising power and control over nature. It is the ability to perform physicality that is given particular importance in framing rural activities as masculine.

⁴ Numerous voices have noted that the title 'United States of America' is a problematic place name as it is a colonial construct that does not acknowledge the Indigenous territories it has taken possession of. I use the term 'United States' throughout this thesis not to recognize it as the rightful and legitimate governing authority, rather, I do so for the purpose of signifying that it is the settler nation-state currently exercising the most control and surveillance over the land and people it has displaced and continues to occupy.

Extensive research notes that what is typically seen as masculine can incorporate a host of actions that include: working the land, hunting, fishing, heterosexual intercourse, drinking alcohol, eating meat, riding horses, shooting guns, succeeding in athletics, working on farm equipment, and even running a chainsaw and swinging an axe (Lobao 2006, Cloke 2004, McGann 2002 Law 1997). The emphasis on individual displays of physical strength, stamina, and endurance are directly linked to how the male body is used across social space. In the United States, these symbolic standards of masculinity are the result of a patriotic sense of duty to the governing authority of an individualistic, Christian-based, neoliberal system (Connell 2005). In other words, ‘real men, work hard;’ however, who men work for, why men work hard, and what their work produces are dependent upon perspective and open to interpretation.

In analyzing the United States, drawing upon Foucault’s conception of biopower and Gramsci’s theory of hegemony is particularly helpful in gaining a sense of how rural masculinity is produced. Given the encultured and institutionalized emphasis placed on ‘American Pride’ found within many spaces across the United States, it is apparent that manufacturing a sense of obligation towards the history of the nation, its capitalist economy, and the liberal rights it claims to seek creates conditions in which people feel compelled to promote the perspectives they are exposed to. The effect for many Americans is that both individuals and entire social assemblages consent to the regulatory policies of those who are managing, governing, and educating them. Thus, concepts of the ‘nation,’ of being a ‘man,’ and being ‘rural,’ can become powerful constructs that may render bodies docile in their commitments to serve and uphold them.

As noted previously, Foucault (1978: 227) identifies that this power is not exercised from above, rather, it is 'from below' and permeates social relations that are seen as normal and part of the status quo. Foucault's perspective of power also relates to Gramsci's ideas of hegemony and consent. Members of civil society are not overtly forced to submit to such edicts; rather they are subtly manipulated into thinking that those ideologies are beneficial, productive, and in their best interest (Ekers, Loftus and Mann 2009, Connell 2005, Gramsci 1971). In the United States, an analysis of power and consent are particularly germane when scrutinizing the underlying systems of colonialism, patriarchy, and neoliberal capitalism that constitute its claims to nationhood. I will now turn to an analysis of how these structures interlock with rural masculinity, power, and the body

The interaction of bodies and spaces mutually constitute the social construction of rural masculinity. The relationship of space and bodily practice code landscapes with gendered characteristics. This gendering is evident in that bodies can earn masculine status by exercising control over rural areas, dominating the landscape, and exerting control over nature (Little 2007). Consequently, in associating dominance, rationality, power, and control over the land as masculine characteristics, femininity is framed as the opposite (i.e. submissive, irrational, weak, and unpredictable) (Little 2002).

It is also in the positioning of the male body against the elements of nature in activities such as farming, ranching, athletic competition, and hunting, that they are rewarded with assertions of their masculinity. Conversely, if men fail in such endeavours they are relegated to a position of lower societal status, and lose standing in the masculine hierarchy. It is this self-surveillance and policing of individuals that gives hegemonic masculinity incredible influence in the construction of rural masculinity. If men do not surmount the

obstacles they face, they are often framed as weak, feminine, or gay and may become temporarily, or permanently, excluded from the hegemonic bloc.

David Bell (2000) points out that the ascription of weakness to femininity and homosexuality makes rural masculinity become unquestionably heterosexual. The normalization of heterosexuality that pervades many settler societies is further engrained in the social consciousness of people through the institutional practices of the legal system, places of worship, marriage into nuclear families, and the education system (Campbell, Mayerfield Bell and Finney 2006). The taken-for-granted routines of domestic life thus reify compulsory heterosexuality as normal. The body serves as the key site of the regulatory norms that reaffirm and naturalize accepted social conventions regarding sexuality. To further explain this dynamic, I look to the work of Diane Richardson who states:

Heterosexuality depends on a view of differently gendered individuals who complement each other, right down to their bodies and body parts fitting together; 'like a lock and key' the penis and vagina are assumed to be a natural fit. (1996: 7)

Despite the powerful force that normalization has on the construction of rural masculinities, the formations of such masculinities are not without contradictions. Some authors have explored the construction of nature as a queer space providing a calm, serene setting for homosexual activities; this highlights the paradoxical nature that results from framing the rural as an aggressively heterosexual space (Little 2003, Bell 2000).

Further skewing the arrangement of rural masculinities as domineering, aggressive, and controlling, various researchers have conducted studies that contradict conventionally accepted notions of what it means to be a 'man' by highlighting that in some circumstances

male bodies in the countryside are viewed as nonthreatening, unrefined, inane, humorous, and unattractive (Little 2002). Recent research on embodiment in the countryside further reinforces Connell's theory of multiple masculinities and highlights the premise that masculinity in itself is paradoxical, ambiguous, and ironic. Consequently, the contradictions of masculinity are widespread and pervasive. Attempts to attain, achieve, and assert hegemonic masculinity are also not without consequences, nor sources. I will now turn to some of the origins of hegemonic masculinity, the interlocking systems implicated in its formation, as well as what it produces.

Whiteness and Religion

Whiteness and religion are two of the most powerful influences factoring into the development of the socio-cultural values present within rural communities. In many white settler societies, as well other neoliberal invented nation-states, conservative Christianity informs the perspectives of many individuals in regard to how they should act, what political policies they should support, and what codes of conduct are acceptable (Kwok 2009, Hopkins 2007, Smith 2006, Albanese 1999). The implications of conservative religious beliefs can be seen in the obedience that is offered to colonial institutions across large sections of white settler societies. Oftentimes, oppressive and exclusionary beliefs go unquestioned simply because they are distributed by privileged white settlers in positions of authority (Pease 2010a, Razack 2002, hooks 2000). This can be seen due to the ways in which homosexuality is pathologized by fundamentalist streams of Christianity, as well as the ways that women are expected to acquiesce to a social system based upon patriarchal governance (Anderson 2009, Hearn 2004, Bell 2000).

The invisibility of whiteness also factors into the construction of masculinity. Within the United States, the pioneers, Founding Fathers, cowboy heroes of the past, and overwhelming majority of its military leaders have been, and continue to be, white men (Kimmel and Ferber 2003, 2000, McIntosh 1990). Currently, there are small enclaves of xenophobic extremists making claims that the United States is a 'White Nation' and that the 'founding' principles of the country should be aggressively protected. Evidence of this can be seen in the formation of isolated militias and factions of white supremacists, who ardently resist gun control laws, employ the use of hate-speech to oppress racialized people, and oppose legislation that allows immigration (Kimmel and Ferber 2000). With the convergence of such images, practices, and experiences, it is clear that rural masculinity has a major influence on the lives of people, even if not tangibly placed front and centre. It is also not incorrect to state, that to some degree, that job opportunities, access to healthcare, recreational choices, purchasing patterns, political elections, as well as how people engage in everyday social relationships, continue to be impacted in some way by both rural masculinity, and structural white supremacy. What is produced as a result of whiteness, rurality, and fundamentalist Christianity is often exclusionary, marginalizing, and repressive, the impacts of which are expounded upon in the next section.

The Race to Innocence and the Luxury of Obliviousness

Any discussion of hegemonic masculinity in the rural United States, particularly when considering whiteness and religion, should also include an analysis of oppression and dominance. Numerous critical social theorists have pointed out that societal institutions (the education system, the economy, media, government, places of worship, the military, the

justice system, etc.) have always been key sites in the reproduction of oppression (Connell 2005, Moosa-Mitha 2005, Foucault 1977, Gramsci 1971). As many institutions are predominantly administered by white, upper class, heterosexual, able-bodied, Christian men; they serve an underlying (although not always explicit) function of privileging those who fall into that same fraternity.

Additionally, those normalized members of civil society often earn their structural advantages at the expense of other marginalized groups (e.g. women, Indigenous people, lesbian, gay, transsexual, and transgender people, non-Christians, racialized people, the unemployed, the working-class, disabled people, as well as non-citizens). As such, the social structures that make up our culture are permeated by patriarchy, white supremacy, and class hierarchies in that some groups of society are enabled and hold more power and influence, whilst others are subjected to oppression, injustice, and exclusion (Razack 2002, hooks 2000, Mac an Ghail 1996). Complicating these social relations is the fact that because domination is often times located within the structures of society, it therefore is not necessarily a deliberate or intentional choice on the part of those members who comprise normalized sections of society.

This dynamic, often termed the ‘luxury of obliviousness,’ means that members of civil society do not see themselves as being privileged, and as a result, credit themselves as ‘good individuals’ for the comforts and success they attain (Johnson 2005: 78). Paulo Freire (1970) suggests that people who are normalized within hegemonic blocs of society view the privileges they receive as rightfully earned benefits that they are entitled to for having capitalized on opportunities that are equally open to all. This (neo)liberal mindset leaves

little room for suggesting that ‘success’ is heavily influenced by the cultural positions and social conditions one is born into, and is not strictly a result of their own hard work.

Conversely, critical scholarship is now recognizing that a ‘race to innocence’ develops on the part of normalized members of society who enjoy access to privilege, in particular white privilege (Berg 2013, Tuck and Yang 2012, Lamble 2008, Magnet 2006). The ‘race to innocence’ was originally identified by Fellows and Razack (1997) and underscored how white feminists in Canada and the United States were reproducing oppression for others whilst asserting they were innocent from doing so because they were marginalized on account of their own status as women in a patriarchal gender regime. Borrowing from this notion developed by Fellows and Razack, I suggest that the race to innocence is also being employed in a wide variety of other contexts, and perhaps most readily, by white settlers in colonial spaces. I also contend that the ways in which the race to innocence, as well as the luxury of obliviousness, manifests themselves are complex, multifaceted, and contingent upon a host of social, political, economic, and cultural factors. The rest of this chapter will attempt to critically analyze what drives the oppression, dominance, and privilege, as well as subsequent claims to innocence, and attempts at disaffiliation, that exist within society as a result of the ways that patriarchy, colonialism, and neoliberalism interlock and become hegemonic.

Agency and Structure

Investigation surrounding social-spatial relationships and cultural politics naturally leads to inquiries of whether individuals are autonomous, self-directed agents who are able to act freely, or rather, are their social positions and agencies an outcome of the larger structural

forces, governing authorities, and societal institutions? Put differently, are people the architects, or the products, of the social structures that surround them? The stance taken in this analysis is that both structural factors and personal agency are integral in the formation of subjectivities, and that they are not discrete categories unto themselves. If either one of these aspects of relationality were left out of theorizing society and space, it would create a false binary and diminish the significance that both structure and agency have in analyzing the current social order (Bourdieu 1977).

An understanding of society is not something that can be reduced to a dichotomy of exclusively structure or agency, nor can it be explained by essentialized conceptions based solely upon personal choices versus the influence of institutions. Rather, human action, social relationships, and the dynamics that make up society require an inclusion of both the control that social structures have on individuals, coupled with a recognition that people do have a certain degree of autonomy when it comes to operating within those macro-level societal structures (Bourdieu 1990).

Structure and agency mutually constitute one another and work in conjunction to produce contrasting results depending upon different actors, contexts, and spaces. The degree of agency that people have can be severely limited, constrained, and restricted by regulatory societal forces and naturalized cultural norms, but the ability for people to act and express agency collectively within society should not be discounted. This is primarily due to the fact that such acts can lead to resistance, dissent, and challenges to an oppressive status quo (Marcos 2011, Smith 2006, Alfred 2010, Bourdieu 1990, McIntosh 1990).

It is also critical to avoid overstating the role that individualized agency plays in social transformation as emphasizing the autonomy of the ‘individual’ would reassert the

conservative opinion that people are totally free to make their own choices and act independent of other social influences. Thus, the danger in overstressing individual agency is that people who are at the margins of society may face further exclusion, neglect, labeling, and violence because they are perceived to be not taking initiative, when in reality, it is structural barriers that are the predominant cause of their struggles and marginalization.

Power and Resistance

Related to the complex interplay of the structure of society and the agency of individuals are power and resistance. Historically, social theorists have had a tendency to locate power in societal structures (state bureaucracies, corporate organizations, religious institutions, military-industrial complexes, cultural norms) and have analyzed it as a tool of control that was utilized by individuals and institutions to preserve hierarchical relationships built upon dominance and subordination (Smith 2012, Althusser 2006, Marx 1973, Gramsci 1971). To offset or counter this use of power, critical theorists advocated for large-scale social movements to mobilize and change the power structures (civil rights movement, women's liberation movement, trade unions, etc.). A corollary to this belief in collective action in bringing about social change is that the individual, alone, has little power and influence in the face of institutionalized authority, and thus there is a need for civil society to collectivize in order to move towards democracy, justice, and liberation. Much of the progressive literature pertaining to community organizing and mutual aid surrounding resistance and autonomy is predicated on such actions and agitations in the face of power (Rowbotham 2013, Marcos 2011, Holloway 2002).

Feminist, poststructural, and decolonial theorists have also formulated counter-perspectives regarding power noting that it circulates throughout society and is dispersed (Lemke 2004, Razack 1998, Foucault 1991, 1982). Many do not adhere to the stance that power is ultimately concentrated in large structures; rather, they theorize that power must be contextualized and operates across different social spaces and cultural circumstances (Lemke 2001, Larner 2000, Tuhiwai Smith 1999, Foucault 1984). Education systems, the judiciary, business offices, media outlets, prisons, and hospitals all serve as sites of power; however, those spaces do not have an exclusive hold on power, it therefore remains diffuse and is widely transmitted throughout the whole of society. Numerous scholars also suggest that what occurs within each structure of society cannot be generalized and explained by a grand theory, rather, they argue that the distribution of power is much more subtle, complicated, and situational (Dempsey, Parker, and Krone 2011, Holloway 2002, Davis 1971).

Maintaining a poststructuralist perspective on power, Michel Foucault viewed it as characteristic present in all social relationships (Foucault 1991, 1982). He did not consider power to be a possession that individuals owned, but rather the influential tendencies that result from interactions amongst the institutions, individuals, and assemblages found in society (Mills 2003, Dean 1999). To Foucault, power is a dynamic entity subject to constant flux, modification, and alteration. It is productive, and it can serve as either a restrictive or enabling force for individuals and organizations (Foucault 1991). Power, from Foucault's perspective is fluid, diffuse, and requires a continual reevaluation of who is employing it, for what purpose, and who has set the terms across which it operates (1982).

Foucault (1998) also suggests that power can always be opposed, that all acts of power may be challenged, and that confronting power is an exercise of power in itself. This

proposition has considerable potential for overcoming the oppressive structures of colonialism, patriarchy, and neoliberalism that are embedded in the cultural milieu of contemporary settler societies and capitalistic nation-states. Foucault's notion of power does so by disputing the notions that individuals and marginalized populations are powerless to do anything about the prevailing normalized standards of society that are repressing them. Those hegemonic aspects (colonialism, patriarchy, neoliberal ideology, etc.) can then be contested by refusing to accept the conventional norms present in contemporary society. Resistance to such norms therefore can potentially destabilize the attitudes, beliefs, and actions that comprise the dominant assumptions established by individualized, liberal, ideologies.

Given that power functions across all levels of society in that it is both held within the macro-level institutions of the general public, and that it is also a crucial factor in micro-level individual relationships, the position taken here is that both views warrant further investigation when analyzing the distribution of power within society. In suggesting that both social structures and individual people are able to occupy positions of power, it is clearly obvious that power is not distributed equally and that the institutional structures of society typically hold more influence than do single members of the general populace (Ludwig and Wohl 2009). In addition, it can also readily be seen that members of the dominant bloc of settler societies, (white, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied, Christian, male, citizens) are generally able to access more power and influence than an individual from a marginalized population (e.g. Indigenous people, women, racialized minorities, disabled people, immigrants, people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, intersex, genderqueer, or those who express gender nonconformity) (Donaldson and Poynting 2007).

With the relationality of power in mind, I suggest that certain members of civil society occupy privileged and enabled positions within the institutional structures of contemporary neoliberal settler societies. As a consequence, some individuals are granted more rights and opportunities than other subordinated members of a population; no matter how self-confident, capable, and talented the latter may be. For neoliberal nation-states and settler societies where individualism, competition, and self-reliance are viewed as the qualities that lead to success, the suggestion that power is not equally distributed is significant because it problematizes the conventional notion that success is solely a matter of individual drive and personal motivation (Roediger 1999). By viewing the distribution of power, control, and influence as relational and in a constant state of inequality, a wider critical analysis of society is opened up in which privileged and oppressed groups of people are recognized, and not forgotten or relegated to positions of invisibility and ridicule.

Discourse

Anarchist, feminist, decolonial, and poststructuralist theorists have stressed the importance of realizing that there is not a single unitary reality in the world, but conversely many realities exist and are dependent upon context (Goldman 2012, Marcos 2011, Mohanty 2003, Derrida 1997, Foucault 1982). In understanding this, critical social theorists have also suggested that language does not have the properties of absolute truths but that it is contingent upon historical, social, and cultural factors (Mohanty 2003, Derrida 1997, Foucault 1982). Language can be said to primarily reflect the interests and interpretations of the hegemonic bloc of society.

Language is not impartial and neutral; rather, it is used to define universal truths and create frameworks for reason and understanding that when dispersed throughout society creates the prevailing norms that dictate what is accepted as normal and natural (Marcos 2011, Mohanty 2003, Dean 1999, Derrida 1997, Foucault 1998). Within a given culture, those individuals and institutions that hold more power have more control of what is accepted as knowledge and therefore can manage the rhetoric of a population. In doing so, the members of a particular social assemblage are thus exposed to contrasting interpretations of the world that are often in conflict, which in turn influences what is normalized and accepted, as well as what it is marginalized and repressed(Foucault 1991).

Suggesting that language is heavily influenced by power does not mean that it cannot be challenged, resisted, or confronted. There are subordinate and marginalized voices in the world that often bring awareness and exposure to the oppressive elements of certain cultural norms; however, their voices are often pushed to the periphery and not granted as much legitimacy as those that adhere to the hegemonic standard (Marcos 2011, Mohanty 2003, Tuhiwai Smith 1999, Foucault 1982). It also should be noted that language and knowledge are not dictated solely by a domineering, tangible structure or group of individuals, rather, language and the formation of knowledge is much more subtle, fluid, and often goes unnoticed because it is engrained in the institutions of society (Mills 2003, Dean 1999, Foucault 1991). In stating this, it remains evident that language upholds some possibilities while at the same time excluding others; in other words, it restricts what is known and what remains unknown.

Discourse is often associated with language, however, it includes not only language, but also the conventions governing the selection and use of the rhetoric in a given society

(Gramsci 1971). Discourse serves as a foundation of ideas, theories, and beliefs, that do not represent truth, fact, or reality, but rather, produces and sustains them. According to Foucault (1977), knowledge is a product of discourse; it is how power, language, and institutional practices combine at historically specific points to produce particular ways of thinking. He goes on to state that civil society will give consent to a dominant discourse despite the fact that several other discourses will exist at more than one time (Foucault 1977). For the rural United States, the principal discourse in operation currently promotes a colonial, masculinist, and neoliberalized worldview (Marcos 2011, Mohanty 2003, Lerner 2000, Tuhiwai Smith 1999).

As a consequence, the current socio-cultural environment that individuals are a part of exposes them to a hegemonic discourses that are endorsed by schools, places of worship, advertising, media, political officials, and business leaders. The dominant narratives that are operating in contemporary times are important tools in understanding the reaffirmation of privilege and the rationalization of oppression that continues to occur across society. I suggest that by recognizing and understanding the hegemonic discourses that exist across given places, one can then begin to question, expose, contest, challenge, and resist the oppressive and marginalizing practices, values, and perspectives that continue to be sanctioned by the current status quo.

Ideology

Karl Marx, who developed some of the most well known critical evaluations of capitalism, as well as the principles upon which it is founded, also expanded upon the concept of ideology (1977, 1976). While the widespread definition of ideology in modern

times pertains to a worldview or a set of socio-cultural, political, and economic beliefs, Marx suggested that ideology was an arrangement of manufactured social norms that produces distorted perceptions of reality and that consequently upholds the existing conditions of capitalism (1970). His analysis of capitalism pointed out the beliefs that justified the exploitation and oppression that are inherent in social relations built upon capitalistic ideals.

An example of such a taken-for-granted claim that normalizes the inevitability of capitalism is the belief that ‘the market will decide on its own.’ This stance was endorsed by the bourgeoisie during Marx’s time, and continues to be repeated by contemporary profit-oriented business leaders (Holloway 2010, Harvey 2007). In Marx’s view, such naturalized views surrounding an unopposed socio-economic system based upon alienation, exploitation, and accumulation lessens civil society’s awareness of class struggle. This configuration of labour relations prevents marginalized groups from questioning, and reacting against, the deprivation they experience as a result of widely accepting a normalized, and fetishized, economic arrangement (Marx and Engels 2012).

Marx (1976) also contended that the prevailing norms of a particular society are primarily those of the dominant classes. Such ideas, while presented in a manner that frames them to be in the best interest of all members of society, in actuality, merely sustains privileges afforded to the ruling class (Gramsci 1971). Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) notes that the importance of such characteristics as competition, the accumulation of wealth, material possessions, and ownership of private property are all stressed in liberal societies and cater to the interests of the capitalist class. Those signifiers of success are then framed as universally valid aspirations that benefit the whole of society and will elevate the living conditions of everyone. The resulting effect is that a cycle of exploitation and domination

occurs as the marginalized members of society are manipulated into supporting an economic system that subjects them to being taken advantage of (Goldman 2012, Harvey 2007, Marx 1973).

An illustration of Marx's engagement with Christianity explains the pervasive influence that capitalist ideology has on rural America. Marx recognized religion as a powerful cultural force that helped drive capitalism. In stating that religion was 'the opiate of the masses' he was suggesting that because the Christian faith offered relief from pain and suffering in the afterlife, it helped appease people and come to terms with the inequality and injustice that they experienced as subordinate members of society while in this life (Marx 1844). From this perspective, religion fulfilled the goals of capitalism by playing the role of a pacifying drug that distracted people from the exploitation they faced. Marx also took the stance that in merging capitalist ideology with Christian principles many people thus viewed the deprivation and mistreatment they were experiencing as both natural and inevitable (Marx 1964, 1844). As a consequence, members of society would give consent to this constructed set of beliefs and expectations because it normalized the injustice that society experienced in the face of capitalism.

It should be noted that Marx was referencing capitalism during a time period when the main concern for members of the working-class was providing the essentials for their families (e.g. food, clothing, and shelter). Marx also identified capitalism as the foundation of society and viewed cultural traditions, political structures, and societal institutions as an extension of that base (Marx 1976, 1973). His perspective stressed that the values of capitalism have become the dominant set of guidelines that govern Western society and that culture then does work of extolling capitalist doctrine. Most poststructuralist scholars today

consider ideology and culture in contemporary times to be much more complicated, complex, and all encompassing than the way Marx viewed it during his life.

Critical social theorists in recent times suggest that the currently accepted ideology is not solely dependent upon an economic base with societal institutions serving as the superstructure (Smith 2006, Mohanty 2003, Dean 1999). Rather, they adhere to the position that the hegemonic ideology experienced today is much more subtle and tightly woven into the social fabric of everyday life. Thus, as opposed to an overarching capitalistic economy that imposes its force upon the population, theorists today note that the hegemonic ideology can be found within our language, discourses, and social institutions that include families, churches, schools, corporations, judicial system, prisons, hospitals, the military, and media.

In expanding the notion of ideology beyond the Marxist perspective that views it exclusively as a force that masks capitalistic exploitation and alienation, it is more accurate in contemporary times to say that ideology is a uniform set of economic, political, and social attitudes, principles, and standards. Ideologies offer individuals a way to view the world and aid them in constructing their beliefs about their surroundings (Brown 2005). They serve as a filter for our beliefs, values, and behaviours, as well as provide us with a foundation of thought that allows us to make sense of our surroundings. Consequently, ideologies force people into developing particular ‘ways of looking’ at the phenomena that is encountered in social relationships (Larain 1979: 111). Through the socialization process, ideologies develop into conventional wisdom and become so embedded in culture they become common-sense knowledge (Gramsci 1971). Ideologies are then used to explain the origin and cause of societal problems, as well as the answers to such problems.

It is also important to note that several ideologies may exist and compete at the same time. Despite this, the ideology that aligns itself with the set of beliefs that corresponds to the judgments of the dominant group typically ends up governing the cultural environment of a particular locale, and thus becomes hegemonic (Gramsci 1971). For example, neoliberal ideology and patriarchy, with capitalistic and masculinist principles at their foundations, will serve the interests of upper class men more than they will women or working-class men (Larner 2000). As a result of one ideology occupying the dominant position in society others will be relegated to subordinate positions.

For rural America, ideologies based on equity and communalism (socialist, anarchist, and communist perspectives) are viewed as inferior to neoliberal capitalist ideologies, which stress individualism and competition (Holloway 2010, Campbell, Bell, and Finney 2006, Dean 1999). Because the hegemonic ideology is so enmeshed in the cultural fabric of a society, both within the dominant bloc and within many individuals in marginalized groups, any other ideological perspective is rarely given credibility as a feasible and alternative socio-economic system (Holloway 2010, Giroux 2008, Connell 2000). A significant side effect to the conformity of a hegemonic ideology is that it becomes seen as the natural, normal, and unavoidable state of affairs.

Thus, ideology is a key element in understanding how masculine dominance and neoliberalism become pervasive cultural structures that govern contemporary society. A breakdown of the hegemonic principles of rural United States allows us to recognize and expose the thought processes that justify the oppression that results from patriarchal capitalism. It also aids us in understanding why members of civil society give their consent to a system that often puts them at a disadvantage. This is not to say that ideology is a

totalitarian power that is forced upon society from above, rather, the ideology of masculine dominance and neoliberalism have become routine in everyday life and subtly work their way into the discourse and practices of our day-to-day activities (Larner 2000).

Consequently, the unquestioned and naturalized acceptance of masculine dominance and neoliberal ideology has compelled society to comply with a social order that privileges a select minority at the expense of the majority.

Hegemony

Antonio Gramsci (1971) extended Marx's critique of culture beyond ideas situating its foundation in a class-based political economy. Gramsci saw culture as a more independent arena that was not entirely dependent upon the economic system in which it was located. He expanded Marx's critical analysis of culture by examining the conventional political ideologies that existed within a society and how they were reaffirmed in day-to-day life. For Gramsci, hegemony can be defined as the uncontested dominance of taken-for-granted beliefs that uphold the interests of the groups supporting them (Hall 1981, Gramsci 1971). Hegemony therefore encompasses social structures, cultural norms, institutional organizations, common sense understandings of the world, as well as the quotidian practices that members of society engage in.

The concept of hegemony does not suggest the power that societal institutions hold is a product of overt attempts by authority figures to forcibly control populations. Gramsci (1971) does note that at times throughout history totalitarian states have utilized forced coercion and calculated manipulation to exercise power over its citizens, however, his theory of hegemony suggests that maintaining authority over civil society is a restrained and

understated process. Instead of using brute force, physical threat, and scare-tactics, Gramsci suggests that hegemony operates by persuasively guiding people into particular ways of thinking and behaving in order to gain their consent (Gramsci 1971, Hall 1981). Thus, his concept identifies how control is maintained by the routine practices, actions, and beliefs that occur in everyday life.

Gramsci also seeks to explain how and why subordinated groups often remain complicit, and even support, those aspects of society that marginalize them. The most powerful aspect of hegemony, as Gramsci and subsequent social theorists have pointed out, is that the most persuasive messages found in society are those that remain obscured in discourses of established routines (Hall 1997, Connell 1995, Gramsci 1971). From this perspective, hegemony operates in ways that distract members of civil society from the exploitation they face by offering them temporary reprieves from the authority they are submitting to. These escapes come in many forms; shopping for material goods, watching television, browsing the internet, attending sporting events, engaging in religious retreats, spending time social networking, following the personal lives of celebrities and politicians, and so forth, which all depict the conditions of society as normal, unavoidable, and natural (Connell 2009). This notion of hegemony accurately describes the crucial role that culture plays in preserving the status quo. Gramsci's theory points to the shrewd nature of hegemony by suggesting that it silently permeates all aspects of society, although not necessarily in deliberately premeditated manners.

Another important aspect of Gramsci's theory is that it moves past identifying the institutional structures of society as simply instruments of class domination (Connell 2000). Rather, he acknowledged that within any culture there are competing sets of beliefs, ideas,

and opinions all vying for dominance. He goes on to note that those practices and discourses that become hegemonic contingent upon a plethora of social factors that include race, gender, religion, sexuality, nationality, location, and so forth (Connell 1995, Gramsci 1971). From his perspective, hegemony is dynamic, it never is fixed, and it is continually being negotiated and contested. In this way, while the ideology of the dominant group within a society may become hegemonic, Gramsci's concept does allow for that dominance to be questioned, resisted, and challenged; providing members of society, both from marginalized groups and the privileged class, the capability to overcome the oppression and exploitation.

Capitalism

Within the rural areas of the United States, capitalism is one of the most ubiquitous and unquestioned structures embedded within its social fabric. It is an omnipresent force that produces stratified hierarchies across all aspects of society. It is also one of the major factors directly responsible for the division of labour that exploits, marginalizes, and takes advantage of the people that it purports to protect (Harvey 2007, Marx 1976). I will now explain how capitalism, as well as neoliberal ideology, has shifted its form over the past few decades and remains a powerful influence, particularly in the production of rural masculinity.

Since the early 1970s the path that capitalism has taken has shifted drastically when compared to what it was following World War II. After the conclusion of war in 1945, the capitalistic system in place in the United States was able to sustain a steady flow of profits and increases in income for a large percentage of the population (Harvey 2007). This prolonged success raised the standard of living for the majority of the population of United

States citizens, and also benefitted other advanced capitalist societies by offering corporate businesses and commercial enterprises a relatively secure atmosphere for earning profits.

The underlying force driving this model of capitalism was the expansion of production and consumption that was believed to stimulate the economy, increase employment, and raise profits. The rationale with which capitalist doctrine operated stated that free enterprise would result in higher wages and generate more income to be invested in state welfare and social services (Giroux 2008, Harvey 2007). While the United States and other countries in this stage of advanced capitalism enjoyed a booming economy for nearly three decades after World War II, such a model was built upon an unsustainable premise.

Ultimately, the market economy of the 'Golden Age of Capitalism' began to steadily weaken in the early 1970s due to the fact that the primary objective of maintaining continual growth quickly became unfeasible (Harvey 2007). With this flawed goal driving the economy, along with the costs of the Vietnam War, recession, and oil shocks of 1973, the capitalistic system that had been thriving since the end of the war began to crumble (Giroux 2005). In response to the economic decline of the early 1970s, the alteration of capitalism from its post World War II arrangement (where it was primarily situated within the nation-states) transformed into an international system of free enterprise with corporate interests taking the forefront (Connell 2009). Thus, in order to carry on and maintain profits, businesses had to shift into the service sector and resort to technological innovations, automated production, cut backs in employment, large scale business mergers, increases to the rate of investment turnover, and moving production from the United States to nations with less protection for labour and cheaper wages (Brown 2005, Harvey 1989).

The shifting nature of economic policy that occurred in advanced capitalist societies throughout the 1980s, branded ‘Reaganomics’ in the United States, was based upon classical liberal economic doctrine and tied to the rhetorical promotion of American nationalism (Giroux 2008, Harvey 2007). The transition to this shifting set of capitalist policies that continues today, often referred to as trickle-down/supply-side economics (or more appropriately neoliberalism), fosters *laissez faire* open markets, deregulation, lower government spending, tax cuts, the reduction of trade barriers, privatization, higher military spending, increases in foreign investment, free trade agreements, and the restriction of public expenditures (Giroux 2008, Brenner and Theodore 2002).

Proponents of such policies continue to claim that economic growth can be most readily stimulated by liberalizing markets, which will thereby give businesses, entrepreneurs, and investors the ability to generate more goods and services (supply) at less cost. They argue that these increases in supply will then improve market conditions for consumers. The rationale driving such policies is a belief that accelerations in the production of goods and services will mean that prices can be lowered, demand will rise, and investment will increase. In turn, these free market economic beliefs also maintain that the expansion of the business sector will ultimately increase the need for employment and provide more jobs. What these neoliberal trickle-down policies actually do is shift regulatory control of the economy away from the public sector to the private sector, much to the expense of those who do not already wield much power or privilege within the arena of American business.

These neoliberal overhauls to American political policy and the economic system of the United States thus continue to amplify the vulnerabilities of historically marginalized people. They also reduce the amount of general welfare, public assistance, and social

services the state purports to offer its citizens (Giroux 2008, Chomsky 1999). Those groups who are most disadvantaged by such neoliberal policies, as well as the policies implemented on account of them, include immigrants, racialized people, women, Indigenous people, the working-class, disabled people, children, unemployed people, and workers in the Global South (Smith and Stenning 2010, Giroux 2008, Chomsky 2007, 1999). Neoliberal programs also target trade unions by implementing economic policies that allow companies to reduce the number of full-time workers they employ in favour of temporary, part-time, and contracted labour (Chomsky 2007, Paap 2006). As a consequence, unions have seen decreases in their membership and have lost bargaining power when dealing with management.

Additionally, the neoliberalization of the global economy has increased exploitation and repression of workers as they face job loss (or in some cases gender-based sexual assault and death) if they organize (Bumiller 2009, Livingston 2004, Chomsky 1999). This repression is because administrative hierarchies want to protect profits and do so by intimidating labour with pain and violence, or threatening to relocate. Given these dynamics, it can be seen that capitalism was, and continues to be, one of the largest pillars upholding the socio-cultural and politico-economic conditions of the United States, as well as the world. I will now shift the discussion away from the overview and impacts of capitalistic economic policies and highlight how neoliberalism permeates societal values, cultural ideals, and language.

Neoliberal Ideology

The discourse of neoliberalism has become a force to be reckoned with. It appropriates the philosophies of Thomas Hobbes, Charles Darwin, and Adam Smith in order to persuade civil society to believe that the natural conditions of life are cruel, individualistic, grim, competitive, and dismal (Marcos 2011, Chomsky 2007, Harvey 2007). Thus, by using liberal rhetoric, neoliberalism suggests that those individuals who are fit to succeed in the economy can only do so if a free market exists and they possess entrepreneurial determination and individual resilience. As a consequence, neoliberal ideology is formed and sways public opinion to accept, as fact, that a society based upon capitalist principles is the only way the global economy can survive (Chomsky 2007, Brenner and Theodore 2002).

Civil society is then told that the oppression, injustice, and marginalization that are found throughout the world are the inevitable consequences of an imperfect world; and that conditions would be worse if it were not for capitalism. Abject poverty, dire living conditions, and the ills of society are then blamed on individuals who are seen to be unmotivated, lazy, and uneducated. As a result, social injustice and structural violence are deemed unsolvable and normal because they are products of apathetic people who do not have the necessary capabilities to compete in a free market (Giroux 2005).

Neoliberal ideology also stresses the importance of economic expansion in the ‘developing’ world or Global South (Marcos 2011, Barnett 2005). The discourse employed to justify corporate exploitation of such regions states that transnational business development in less wealthy nations will boost foreign economies, alleviate poverty, and that profits will flow downward and reach the entire population (Castree 2006). In reality, this form of capitalism simply abuses international labour, takes advantage of exploited

populations, and perpetuates economic disparities between the rich and poor, and can be seen as ongoing modes of colonial rule (Marcos 2011, Giroux 2008). The end result is that neoliberal ideology, as well the policies it endorses, convinces people to support a socio-economic scheme that maximizes profits for multinational corporations at the expense of the working-class and poor.

As capitalism shifted into its neoliberal phase, so too did the language and rhetoric that justified the perceived benefits of the newly established unregulated global economy. The fundamental principles of neoliberal ideology intimate that capitalism is natural, inevitable, and normal because it is unencumbered by outside forces and allows the free market to decide who will succeed and who will fail (Castree 2006, Connell 2000). For the United States in particular, it is also seen as a force that will conquer the injustice that results from socialist and communist ideals, which in the eyes of those who support capitalism, are seen as economic systems that reward the lazy at the expense of the hardworking. The hegemonic discourse of the United States also suggests that neoliberalism is a way to combat oppressive dictatorships and turn them into democracies because it would increase foreign trade, thereby lifting impoverished nations into economic stability.

Neoliberal ideology also garners support for free enterprise by claiming it will benefit everyone. It does so by implying that open markets, free trade, and foreign direct investment will increase revenues for businesses and in turn those profits will subsequently trickle down to the masses (Larner 2000). It also claims that government spending on social services is unaffordable and that such expenses are the primary reason for many of the poverty because it enables individuals who ‘freeload’ and take advantage of the system. The dominant discourse of neoliberalism also praises the entrepreneurial spirit, the benefits of competition,

and suggests that success is the result of individual drive, work ethic, and motivation. While all of those characteristics sound relatively harmless on the surface, they have dire consequences for those marginalized groups who have been subjected to the oppressive social structures of capitalism.

Governmentality

I now turn to Michel Foucault's notion of governmentality for an explanation of how neoliberalism maintains its support and hegemonic status. This concept explains how subjects are organized, governed, and self-regulated as a result of the way cultural norms, societal institutions, legal policies, forms of knowledge, and modes of thought influence them (Lemke 2001, 2004, Dean 1999, Barry, Osborne, and Rose 1996, Foucault 1991). The idea of governmentality is particularly salient in explaining how rural working-class men are produced to be complicit subjects who endorse neoliberal ideals. This is accomplished quite effectively due to the fact that neoliberalism presents success in the free market and investment in social welfare services as diametrically opposed. As a result, rural working-class men, who tend to value work ethic, individual determination, and 'earning your keep,' have sided with neoliberal policies that decrease their own collective well-being through the support they offer to cuts in social spending.

This dynamic is due to the hegemonic discourse operating in rural America that ascribes negative connotations to 'welfare' by claiming it is a tactic employed by 'big government' to take away a worker's 'hard earned dollar.' Rather than supporting an economic system founded upon communal and socialistic ideals (that neoliberal and neoconservative demagogues frame as 'Marxist,' 'communistic,' and that enables 'lazy

freeloaders'), working-class men often choose to support political policies that reduce their mobility, keeps them disadvantaged, and continues to marginalize other subordinated and minority populations (Giroux 2008, Chomsky 2007, Paap 2006).

Another undercurrent of neoliberal ideology that governs the formation of masculinity for rural working-class men is that it has aligned itself with the socially conservative agenda of Christianity in America (Connell, Kimmel, and Hearn 2005). In many rural regions throughout the United States, paid employment and attaining waged labour are seen as moral obligations and the 'good Christian thing' as it allows a man to support himself and family (Campbell, Bell, Finney 2006). Thus, the belief found within the economic environment of the rural United States is that individuals are required to work for a living, and they should do so with contentment, satisfaction, and a productive mindset.

What is left out of the discussion surrounding labour under neoliberalism is the material well-being of workers in regard to the level of wages and benefits they receive (Giroux 2008, Paap 2006). The issues of worker's rights, as well as support and protection for the unemployed and poor, are not given credence within mainstream neoliberal discourse. This dismissal of dignity is evident given the propensity of people living in poverty and hardship to be framed as greedy in nature, as complaining and unmotivated, or as criminals who are trying to take money that is not rightfully theirs. Consequently, the social welfare and needs of the oppressed are cast aside or denigrated.

For rural working-class men in the United States, capitalism, coupled with the principles of Christianity, is largely regarded as the foundation upon which the country was built (Campbell, Bell, and Finney 2006). In addition, these liberal subjectivities are seen as the reasons why America was able to pull itself out of The Great Depression, why it was able

to win World War II, and why previous generations were able to attain the ‘American Dream:’ possessing of private property, owning a home, and maintaining a comfortable standard of living.

In regard to conservative Christianity, capitalism is also viewed as the one of the driving forces preventing the secularization of society thought to be promoted by communism, socialism, and other economic systems that become branded as anti-Christian. Due to the enmeshed influence of capitalism and Christianity, neoliberal ideology maintains its ability to produce loyal subjects that serve a structural system that is exploitative, abusive, and manipulative (Giroux 2008, Campbell, Bell, Finney 2006). And despite the injustice that is produced within such an arrangement, the guilt and shame (resulting from the Christian values of conformity, obedience, and obligation) that result from questioning, challenging, or rejecting such an oppressive economic structure tends to keep civil society from resisting the overarching ideology of neoliberalism. As a consequence, disempowered masses conform to an exploitative status quo that reaps the benefits of neoliberal policies and further perpetuates hierarchical social assemblages of exclusion and abandonment.

Masculinist Knowledge Production

In studying masculinity and neoliberal ideology within the context of the rural United States, there is agreement among feminist theorists that the hegemonic ideals of today have been significantly influenced by knowledge, ideas, and decrees that are colonial and white supremacist in form (Connell 2000, 1995, Mohanty 2003, Tuhiwai Smith 1999, Razack 1998). Given the fact that throughout the history of Western thought that the ‘theorist’, the ‘scientist,’ and the ‘knowledge producer’ were primarily white males who came from

wealthy, Christian, European backgrounds, it is not surprising that white males were able to maintain a stronghold on social privilege.

An overview of the progress of Western social theory shows that in the late 1800s the majority of scholars teaching at universities were wealthy men from the aristocratic elite (Wineman 1984). Research has also pointed out, that for the most part, women were not allowed into academic publishing (unless under pseudonyms) until the early 1900s. At that time, most publishing that women were able to do typically included travelogues, personal journals, and observational descriptions of places they had been. For the most part, they remained excluded from the domain of academic intellectual thought, philosophy, and social theory.

The production of knowledge in white settler societies and colonized nation-states also had a penchant for ignoring and repressing Indigenous people, racialized minorities, and immigrants, much in the same way that they spurned and oppressed women. In addition, several other groups remained at the periphery and were not allowed to contribute to the formation of knowledge, primarily those working-class, unemployed, and poor people who could not access education. They were excluded mainly due to the fact that they were unable to afford, or gain admission into, universities and academic life (Whitson 2004). As a result, the small faction of wealthy, upper class, white men who benefitted from their privileged social positions were primarily responsible for controlling the production of ideas and knowledge, in addition to the economy, political system, military, and judicial system (Monk and Hanson 1982). Thus, with liberal white men occupying the majority of seats in societal institutions, the knowledge they laid claim to in the name of science and theory shored up

their own assertions to superiority, as well as allowed them to more firmly tighten their grips on positions of power and control.

There has been extensive critical analysis on modern scientific reason by decolonial theorists, feminist scholars, and poststructuralists (Butler 1993, 1990, Foucault 1998, 1977, 1977, Mohanty 2003, Tuhiwai Smith 1999). A major facet of the criticism has been aimed at the formation of the scientist and philosopher (who have predominantly been white, heterosexual, male, and upper class) as an objective, unbiased, and impartial holder of knowledge who remains outside the phenomena one is studying. Anarchist, Indigenous, and poststructural feminists have been at the forefront of questioning the claim that a researcher can be a completely impartial observer who occupies a space in the immediate vicinity of the social world, but does so without any participation in it (McRobbie 2009, Wilson 2005, Butler 1990). In addition to the objective knowledge claims that white male scholars recorded as truth and fact, their observations were not simply short-lived looks, but rather they became normalizing gazes that evaluate their object of study based on fabricated hierarchal standards (Foucault 1977). Such normalizing gazes allow knowledge that is produced by the hegemonic bloc to be legitimated and upheld, while those who remain outside of the dominant group are often de-legitimated, or are omitted altogether.

Strongly related to the research done on how colonial knowledge upholds a white masculinist bias, R.W. Connell (1995) notes that Anglocentric and bourgeois perspectives have also been connected to rationality and reason. The characteristics of science have been merged with qualities regularly associated to masculinity: objectivity, authoritativeness, technicality, detachment, rationality, and judiciousness. Through socially constructed and gendered language privileged white men were able to fortify their voices as valid in the

sciences. In addition to being granted status as legitimate researchers, those men who were granted a forum to articulate their thoughts and opinions regularly did so while remaining unaware that there were other perspectives being excluded and suppressed (Monk and Hanson 1982). As a result, bourgeois, white men were not only granted status as the possessors of knowledge, but they also became the standard against which all other groups were measured.

The binaries created as a result of accepted masculinist perspectives in the realm of knowledge production have thus naturalized the hierarchical relations that have resulted from categorical distinctions drawn upon the lines of gender, race, class, ability, nationality, sexuality, religion, etc. Accordingly, the hegemonic (white, heterosexual, Christian, male) bloc of society becomes the model for what is accepted as normal, thereby enabling it to thrust regulating judgments upon other members of society (Gramsci 1971).

From this perspective, it can be noted that the hegemonic bloc is everywhere but nowhere, while marginalized groups remain trapped in their bodies, and subject to the judgments, evaluations, and opinions of those with privilege, access, and stability. In turn, a dualistic system of classification is created that has bestowed positive attributes to men (rational, ambitious, stoic, assertive, sensible) and negative characteristics to women (irrational, apathetic, emotional, passive, unstable) (Ni Laoire 2005). As a result of these gendered binaries, men are granted higher status across all levels of society, while the majority of women are forced into subordinate positions. Stereotypes continually bolster the privileges that men can access as they are perceived to be superior, based solely upon manufactured norms pertaining to masculinity and knowledge.

Feminist, anarchist, decolonial, and poststructuralist scholars have been the leading voices challenging the doctrines of masculinist knowledge (Goldman 2012, Mohanty 2003, Tuhiwai Smith 1999, Butler 1990). They have pointed out that dichotomous gendered social relationships are in no way natural, predetermined by sex, nor are they programmed into individuals at birth. Such binaries have also marginalized and excluded an entire spectrum of intersex people due to the medicalization of society in which individuals are routinely forced to identify as either male or female. The current socially constructed status quo of biological sex, rooted in concealment-centered perspectives, tends to view any person who is not 'completely' male or 'completely' female as abnormal, irregular, and in need of treatment (Butler 1993). As a consequence, the medical profession has been dominated by masculinist intellectualism and does not leave any room for the notion that biological sex, albeit invented itself, may fall upon a continuum. Rather, individuals are forced into an either/or (male/female) category upon birth.

Feminist theorists go on to suggest that the development of one's personality characteristics, emotional stability, and sense of identity is a fluid, complicated, and ever-changing process dependent upon a host of influences that cannot be fully explained by biological factors (Whitson 2004, Butler 1990). They have also been quick to point out that essentializing groups of people based upon binary sex roles fails to recognize the multitude of differences that are present amongst contrasting groups of people who are identified as being the same biological sex. This is particularly true when binary sex roles are then used to stereotype and label the categories of male and female that are thought to exist. To generalize a masculinist-based scientific explanation that male and female bodies are naturally more inclined to behave, act, and think in generalizable ways is not only inaccurate,

but it is oppressive, especially when those broad generalizations often frame the female body as being weaker, irrational, illogical, and reactionary.

Biological explanations are erroneous in that 1) they stereotype women based upon a false social construction that marginalizes them as an entire group, and 2) they fail to acknowledge differences amongst women in regard to gender, race, class, sexuality, nationality, ability, age, and ethnicity. Thus, one of the most repressive aspects of forcing a social definition upon women is that they are then subjected to widespread categorical treatment (Smith 2006, Foucault 1998, Butler 1993). When white heterosexual men, who are trying to maintain dominant positions in colonial societies, perpetuate a classification system that diagnoses the female body based on perceived innate characteristics the implications are damaging and destructive.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is the widespread structure of societal institutions and practices that marginalize women (Whitson 2004). It is a set of social, cultural, political, and economic perspectives and practices that subordinates and harms women. Within the arena of capitalist economies and colonial nation-states, patriarchy produces conditions where women earn less money than men, are less likely to be promoted, and are sexually harassed and bullied in the workplace more than men. Whitson (2004) also notes that in most liberal capitalist states women are granted higher social status based upon whether they fit into contemporary standards of beauty and sex appeal. Beauty standards can further intensify the degree of how they are compromised by society in terms of mental health, emotional trauma, and psychological well-being (Boisvert 2012, Wu 2012, Etcoff 2011, Shaw 2005, Bordo 1997,

Hesse-Biber 1991). Mentioning these aspects of patriarchal social relations does not mean that men do not experience them; rather, the impact emphasizes the impact on women because they have been targeted by patriarchy to a much higher degree.

Patriarchy, which grants men the dominant position in society, also subjugates women by turning them into objects deemed to be here to serve and pleasure the desires of men. Typically, the more attractive a woman is judged to be, the more admiration, respect, and opportunities she will have (Gill 2007). On the other hand, women who are deemed to be less attractive and do not measure up to society's beauty standards are likely to receive less prestige and status. In this manner, the capitalistic principles of individuality, consumerism, the accumulation of wealth, and the attainment of social status foster the sexual objectification of women because it benefits and rewards individuals to consent to such standards. Women are also expected to bear the burden of unpaid socially reproductive labour, and also experience domestic and sexual violence at higher rates than men (Connell 2000). Women are also at a greater risk to become victims of human trafficking and forced to work in the sex trade industry, domestic servitude, and pornography (Whitson 2004).

In any discussion regarding the oppression women encounter in the face of patriarchy, it is essential to stress that women are not a homogenous group, and thus are not all marginalized in the same way. As mentioned above, the cultural identifiers of race, class, sexuality, ability, age, nationality, religion, etc. all interlock and influence the oppression that women are subjected to. In addition to the cultural identifiers that women are born into, they may also face discrimination based upon factors outside of their own individual social axes of identification. To clarify, I will point to a common example of how a woman may be marginalized, or privileged, based upon external factors.

Within highly masculinist cultures, rural America being one, it is common for a woman's social status to be connected to how much prestige her male partner (husband, fiancée, boyfriend) possesses (Liepins 2000, 1998). Thus, if a woman's male partner is viewed as highly accomplished and successful, it is not uncommon for her to be given higher degrees of esteem, respect, and privilege based solely upon the perceived attributes of the man she is with. Conversely, if a woman has a male partner who does not occupy a position of high social status, she is consequently given less social status (Wineman 1984). The factors involved in this dynamic do not necessarily stress that the male partner in such a relationship lacks positive characteristics; rather, what is emphasized is that the woman is viewed deficient because she has not been capable of attracting a more desirable and appealing partner. As a result of the underlying masculinist domination present in a culture that has a tendency to judge women based upon the men they are partnered with; further fracturing and divisions amongst communities may occur leading to increased levels of alienation, individualism, and isolation.

The way these divisions manifest themselves is seen in that in some instances heterosexual women of lower perceived social status think of women who attain higher status, through partnering with an 'esteemed' man, as scheming opportunists (Gosselik, Cox, McClure, De Jong 2008, Skeggs 2005). On the contrary, it has been noted in some instances that heterosexual women with male partners who maintain high social status may view women of lower class as unsophisticated and unattractive (Gosselik, Cox, McClure, De Jong 2008, Skeggs 2005). Ultimately, the heart of the problem is the liberal (and masculinist) mindset that serves to foster competition in regard to class status and intimate partner relationships (Leyshon 2005, Skeggs 2005).

Class hierarchy amongst women is evidenced by the potential for a woman who gains more privilege and status as a result of a relationship with a privileged male to then identify and relate with other people in her social class (both men and women), more than she would with marginalized women who remain oppressed by masculine dominance (Leyson 2005, Skeegs 2005). This means some women will then be less dedicated to resisting and challenging a system that has granted them benefits and privilege. As a result of (neo)liberal ideology, women (just as men and all others) can further exacerbate divisions amongst themselves (Skeegs2005). One outcome of this dynamic is that certain groups of women give their consent to an oppressive system of patriarchy in order to maintain their privilege, while other women remain subordinates within a parochial culture that provides men with most of the benefits.

Another significant influence operating in the rural United States that sustains patriarchy is that some women see the source of their oppression as a natural and normal aspect of life (Wineman 1984). It is not uncommon for women in rural areas to occupy subject positions influenced by edicts they receive from conservative leaning Christian leaders, who once again, are predominately white heterosexual men. To be more specific, feminist theorists suggest that the beliefs that are endorsed by some religious clergy-people promote the stance that the nuclear family (the man as the head of the household), traditional family values (women are private domestic workers and men are public, professional workers), and that biological determinism (women are more nurturing because they give birth) are natural and innate (Campbell, Bell, and Finney 2006, Leyshon 2005).

It should be noted that not all religious officials propagate such perspectives, but there have been widespread research showing that it does occur (Johnson 2005, McDermott and

Samson 2005, Brown 1989). As a result, many women internalize their oppression, see it as a regular part of their lives, and are socialized not to question the underlying issues of power that drive such constructs (Wineman 1984).

Patriarchal social relations have also romanticized the notion that a man can offer a woman protection, financial security, and admiration in exchange for looking after his home, his well-being, and his children. These perspectives, which are strongly reinforced by certain Christian religious doctrines, subsequently persuade women to conform to social relationships where they are predestined to become subordinates of men (Van Hoven and Horschelmann 2005). As a result, members of society take to heart such opinions and hold them as truths. Consequently, gender equity is viewed not only as unachievable, but it is also seen as detrimental in particular circumstances, because it may disrupt the natural progression of the social reproduction of families.

Notably, there are also women who maintain liberal ideals entrenched in conservative beliefs that are offended by anarchist, poststructuralist, queer, and decolonial feminist perspectives who are critical of such arrangements (Wineman 1984). In the rural United States, men with masculinist subjectivities typically point these women out as ‘exceptions,’ and often label women who engage in masculinist rhetoric as women ‘who get it.’ Thus, a further complex system of power relations develops because when placed in the public eye, women who endorse anti-feminist, neoliberal, and capitalist ideals thus become influential forces in the perpetuation of patriarchal social relations.

Race and Racialization

Race is also a key factor in the formation of hegemonic masculinity in rural America. Racism, in its most basic form, is the thought that personal characteristics are determined by ethnicity or skin colour, that one race is inherently superior to others, and that race is a cause of natural difference between people (Schaefer 2008). The underlying perspective driving such notions is that classifying bodies based on race is supported by scientific fact. One egregious historical example that has since been categorically dismissed is scientific racism, the supremacist notion that intelligence could be linked to the colour of a person's skin, and that this relationship could be verified by science as a biological fact (West 2002, Collins 1990).

Another key aspect of racism is essentialism (hooks 2000). Essentialism is the process of attributing the same characteristics to an entire population based upon observations and behaviours made by a few members of a society. Research has since challenged such antiquated perspectives on race, and has pointed out that there is no biological evidence to support categorizing people based on skin colour, or their ethnicity. Critical social theorists note that racial classifications are socially constructed and were primarily created in order to try to maintain power, control, and dominance (McClintock 2013, Bond and Gilliam 1994). Critical perspectives also emphasize the point that categorizations based on race have no underlying biological cause and effect relationships when it comes to personality, demeanor, and behaviour (Kobayashi and Peake 2000).

Despite the fact that no scientific evidence exists that supports classifications based on race, the concept of race does remain a powerful construct as it carries significant socio-political and ideological functions for the hegemonic (in the case of rural America – white)

racial group. By this I mean to state that classifications of race are not neutral but rather, they comprise a socially stratified hierarchy of racialized groups in which white people occupy the hegemonic position because of their culturally manufactured supremacy, and invisibility (Leonardo 2004, Roediger 1999). As hooks (2006: 174) contends, white supremacy is at the foundation of racism and ‘we have to constantly critique imperialist white supremacist patriarchal culture because it is normalized ...and rendered unproblematic.’ From an analysis such as this it can be noted that racism is not always experienced on individual levels, but exists on several different scales and permeates the structures and institutions that society has created.

To be more specific, racism functions at the personal, cultural, and institutional levels (Pease 2010a, Mullaly 2010). At the personal level, it can be seen as a set of individual xenophobic and bigoted beliefs, thoughts, and actions. At the cultural level it takes shape as exclusionary sets of norms, ideals, images, stereotypes, and messages; and at the institutional level it is evidenced in government administrations, state laws and policies, the private business sector, the educational system, the judicial system, restrictions on immigration, as well as in the areas of access to social services, employment, health care, and welfare (Pease 2010a, Kobayashi and Peake 2000).

Although essentializing people based upon race using biological categories is now largely recognized as problematic and obsolete, the fact that racism exists is not always readily acknowledged. Even though critical race theorists have known for generations that race is a socially constructed concept, categorizations based on race, skin colour, and physical characteristics are so embedded in white supremacist cultures that convincing individuals to think otherwise is a major hurdle in overcoming racial discrimination (Roberts

and Mahtani 2010, hooks 2000, Kobayashi and Peake 2000). Thus the social categories of race are naturalized and become accepted as the normal way to distinguish individuals from one another.

The implications of such divisions are that exclusionary measures are then implemented in order to justify the suppression of those groups that do not hold power. Remnants of the naturalization and invisibility of racism can still be seen today as the historical trajectories of colonialism serve as the structural foundation of the institutions that settler societies are built upon (Mullaly 2010, Smith 2006, hooks 2000). Consequently, as the dominant bloc of society perpetuates ideals based upon difference and notions of racial dominance, racism continues to have damaging consequences for racialized people within the colonial nation-states and settler societies.

In stating that racialized people can all potentially be oppressed by racism, it should also be noted that racialized people do not comprise a universally homogenous group. There are a wide variety of differences among people who are subjected to racial classification in terms of gender, class, sexuality, ability/enablement, religion, nationality, etc. Due to the widespread diversity of subject positions and social identifiers amongst people who are racialized, a complex matrix of racist experience is created that does not make all instances of racial oppression take the same form (Mullaly 2010, hooks 2000, Collins 1990). To put it another way, racialized people may experience racism differently as a result of the cultural contexts, social circumstances, and spaces they find themselves in (Jiwani 2006, Razack 2002, hooks 2000). Nonetheless, the various forms of racism that exist in settler societies are primarily the result of culturally manufactured hierarchies that are promoted and supported

by society's hegemonic group (McClintock 2013, Roberts and Mahtani 2010, Mullaly 2010, Razack 1998).

In rural America, racialized people are often perceived as 'better' if they conform to white supremacist notions of cultural acceptability. More specifically, the more whiteness they embody (i.e. patterns of speech, holiday celebrations, dress and attire, family lifestyles) - the more acceptable they are. As a result, racialized people are often placed in situations in which (if desiring a more comfortable existence) they have to acquiesce to white supremacist notions of normality. This is due to the fact that the structural and cultural barriers produced by structural white supremacy restrict the ability of racialized people to live on their own terms (Mullaly 2010, Phoenix 2004, West 2002). As a result, racialized minorities are expected to conform to the cultural expectations of white supremacy, and as a consequence of the structural power that it wields, they regularly are relegated to the margins of society (Mullaly 2011, hooks 2006, West 2002, Cloke and Little 1997).

In summation, race is a multifaceted social construction that has substantial societal consequences for racialized people in terms of the oppression and marginalization they may face on account of its existence. In the United States, racial hierarchies have been in place since settlers started the colonial endeavour of eradicating Indigenous people and forcing racialized people into slavery. These dynamics still have a significant impact on the material existence and life chances that people who are racialized have today. It goes without saying that structural and cultural exploitation that results from racism permeates all spheres of life, ranging from employment, education, income, housing, and welfare; to negative cultural stereotypes that suppress members of minority groups (Mullaly 2010, hooks 2000, Roediger 1999, Davis 1971).

Racism also attacks individuals on the personal level, not only in the sense of bigotry and prejudice, but in the fact that it strips away a person's sense of value and questions their right to exist (Fanon 1968). Wineman (1984) describes the debilitating effect of racism aptly when he states 'when you are taught from birth that you are inherently inferior, you are taught in the same breath that you are inherently powerless.' Thus, racism, and the invisibility it enjoys while firmly rooted in white supremacist subjectivities, sustains white privilege and continues to oppress racialized people across all scales of society.

Heteronormativity

Within the culture of the rural United States, people are taught from an early age that in regard to biological sex individuals fall into one of two categories: male or female. From that point on, the social reproduction of individuals into gender roles is determined by whether a person is male or female. And as much of rural America is firmly rooted in masculinist, Christian, and liberal ways of thinking, there remains an underlying assumption that being the natural sexual orientation of all humanity is heterosexuality (Campbell, Bell, Finney 2006). Despite the fact that biological sex and gender are widely regarded as inherently linked in, critical theorists have stressed for years that in fact they are not (Foucault 1998, Butler 1990). And while the differences between the two may be largely ignored by rural America, there do remain distinct differences.

Biological sex is the description of people as male or female as a result of the physiological features, secondary sexual characteristics, and reproductive organs that a body possesses. Gender, on the other hand, has been typically theorized in Westernized medicine as the socially constructed behaviours, attitudes, and roles that are assumed by individuals

based on the problematic designations of female or male (Crawley, Foley, and Shehan 2008). Cultural norms also serve as a catalyst for binary demarcations that attempt to neatly align biological sex and gender. Within the context of patriarchal Christian societies, it is understood that if you are a boy that you will act masculine, or put another way, heterosexuality is compulsory.

Girls are subjected to the same mandatory heterosexuality, however, how they perform their heterosexuality is expected to be more submissive, modest, and 'pure.' Perspectives based upon these dualistic categories thus leave no room for those people who do not conform to conventional notions of male/masculinity and female/feminine performances. Consequently, individuals who are intersex, as well as people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, Two-Spirited, genderqueer, or express gender variance are pushed into subordinated positions within society and often face oppression based upon the socially constructed views of biological sex, gender, and sexuality (Butler 1990).

More recent conceptualizations have problematized the binary constructs of both biological sex (male/female) and gender (masculine/feminine), and it is now recognized that these social identifiers fall along a continuum (Anderson 2009, Halberstam 2002, Foucault 1998, Grosz 1995). Amongst feminist, queer, and anarchist perspectives, the same critical perspectives are also present in terms of theorizing sexuality. At one time, the widespread opinion was that people are naturally heterosexual, and any sexuality that fell outside of heterosexuality were considered atypical and perverse (Foucault 1991). As many poststructuralist and queer theorists point out, sexuality, like biological sex and gender, cannot be identified as a concrete, specific category because they are all fluid, flexible, and

can take a variety of forms (Longhurst 2003, Foucault 1998, Butler 1993). In analyzing the rural United States, it can be noted that the dominant ideology of patriarchal culture is rooted in Christian values. Values that can lead to serious consequences for individuals who embody characteristics that do not conform to conventional beliefs regarding biological sex, gender, and sexuality.

The consequence of ubiquitous rigid perspectives that try to reign in differing sexualities, and that attempt to enclose the plurality of gender identities that exist, is heteronormativity, a social system that naturalizes heterosexuality and suggests that it is the only acceptable type of sexuality for individuals (Griffen 2007, Warner 1991). Views that fall into this ideology consider heterosexuality as innate, and deem sexual preferences that fall outside of heterosexuality as abnormal, unusual, and even dysfunctional or criminal. Heteronormativity is promulgated across society through a number of mediums. Television shows, movie releases, popular literature, the entertainment industry, the educational system, religious institutions, the business sector, everyday language, and other daily interactions all promote relationships that feature heterosexual men with heterosexual women (Guantlett 2008, Gill 2007). As heterosexual relationships are subtly worked into the everyday lives of civil society so frequently, it in turn hides or obscures relationships that fall outside of this paradigm. As a consequence, heterosexuality is normalized, thus making a pervasive, yet often invisible, regulatory socio-cultural standard.

One powerful result of heteronormativity is the prejudice that people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and non-heterosexual in general, face. The marginalizing aspects of heteronormativity, often referred to as heterosexism, can be defined as the discrimination that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and people with non-conforming sexualities face within

society. Heterosexism targets people who demonstrate behaviour that does not conform to the long-established, taken-for-granted notion that people are supposed to be in heterosexual relationships (Campbell, Bell, Finney 2006, Butler 1990).

Another dynamic operating within heteronormative social environments is homophobia. Homophobia is slightly different than heteronormativity and heterosexism, in that it is the unfounded hate, fear, or discomfort towards homosexuality. While the concepts are all slightly different, there is considerable overlap amongst the terms as homophobia is often evident in the structural oppression and individual prejudices that people who are not heterosexual are subjected to.

On individual levels, homophobic reactions to people who are gay manifest themselves in a wide array of oppressive acts. Such vitriol towards homosexuality can take the form of hate speech, physical attacks, bullying, passive-aggressive exclusion, harassment, the damaging and defacement of personal possessions, character defamation, and intimidation tactics. These oppressive backlashes are predominantly rooted in the fact that homosexuality is often viewed as unnatural and deviant within heteronormative cultures (Griffen 2007).

Instances of homophobia that have permeated the structural levels of society within the United States can be evidenced in the fact that homosexuality was classified as a psychiatric disorder by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* until 1973. The United States military also maintained a 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' policy (banning people who were gay, lesbian, and bisexual from military service as well as restricting closeted individuals who were serving from openly discussing their sexuality) until 2011. It was also illegal in many states for consenting adults to engage in 'homosexual activities'

until 2003 (U.S. Sodomy Laws), and at the time of this writing only 17 out of 50 states in the United States allow or license same-sex marriages.

When looking at those states where homophobic policies are most prevalent, it can be seen that such laws are most prevalent in rural regions of the United States that have proportionally larger populations of white, conservative Christians. For people living in these spaces - the opinions they form, the beliefs they hold, and the attitudes they have towards homosexuality, are shaped by a number of structural and cultural influences. One of the most powerful forces is Christianity, which in the United States has become aligned with liberal (individualistic) ideology, the values of capitalism, and patriarchal beliefs about the nature of men and women (Ludwig and Wohl 2009).

Religious fundamentalism, and the beliefs it espouses, judges homosexuality to be an abomination, and deems it as immoral in the eyes of God. This condemnation of homosexuality has a particularly commanding influence for people who are followers of conservative currents of the Christian faith as many of their social values, political opinions, and cultural beliefs support the messages they receive from their religious leaders. The most influential people in some Christian churches, the majority of whom are white heterosexual males, support the belief that the only type of relationship that is natural is one based upon the union between man and woman (Bell 2000). From a fundamentalist Christian perspective, the main reason for engaging in sexual intercourse is specifically for procreation. Any other reason for engaging in sexual activity is seen as a personal failing and is taught to be a source of guilt, remorse, and shame. Based on this rationale, the authoritative figures of inflexible religious denominations have labeled people who have sex outside the confines of heterosexuality as destructive, weak, deviant, and flawed.

These socially constructed beliefs that pathologize homosexuality and marginalize people who are not heterosexual, become widely accepted truths and indisputable facts for those people who listen to the governing voices of dogmatic fundamentalist Christianity. As a result, homosexual people are resented for their rejection of the divine doctrine of God, or they are pitied due to the fact that they were born with (or as some Christians believe, have chosen) a condition that needs to be cured. As opinions that promote fear and intolerance regarding homosexuality become instilled in a congregation, so continues the perpetuation of oppressive ideals in the cultural norms and institutional structures of a society for generations to come. Thus, homophobic members of society deem the subordination that people who are homosexual experience as necessary and inevitable.

It also should be noted that not all members of the Christian faith adhere to such strict and rigid interpretations of sexuality. Some groups who identify as followers of Christ are quite progressive, understanding, and accepting of people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer. And in the interest of avoiding reducing all Christians into an intolerant and homophobic group, it is important acknowledge that Christianity also exists along a continuum in terms of inclusion and acceptance. The key point here is that the dominant principles that are backed by the majority of church leaders in the rural United States are based upon the principle that homosexuality is wrong, and those members of the Christian faith who dissent from such a perspective remain a small minority.

Ableism and (Dis)Ability

Ableism is the socio-cultural oppression, discrimination, and marginalizing aspects of society that people labeled with disabilities are subjected to (Campbell 2007, Davis 1997).

This form of marginalization surfaces through an array of personal prejudices, cultural norms, and structural barriers that prevents participation in society and depicts disabled people negatively by suggesting they are not complete individuals (Snyder, Brueggemann and Garland-Thomson 2002). This is due in part to a medical model that positions disabilities as negative impairments or brokenness, and relies upon notions of treatment and support that seek to ‘fix’ the person who has been labeled as having a problem. The oppressive aspect of the medical model is that it locates dysfunction within the person (Garland-Thomson 2002, Davis 1997). It perceives disability to be abnormal when compared to the socially constructed standards of what is considered normal.

The medical model also bases its benchmarks of ability on how the bodies and minds of the majority of civil society work (Albrecht 2006). Thus, if a person with a disability does not measure up to the standardized norms of what is acceptable in the medical model of a colonial healthcare system their body or mind is seen to be at flawed, is diagnosed as insufficient, and is subsequently treated with interventions in order to be repaired (Campbell 2009, Garland-Thomson 1997, Davis 1997).

Such a restrictive perspective neglects the fact that labeling individuals as disabled results in socio-cultural divisions and marginalizes those people who fall outside of the institutionally arrived at conceptions of ability. As a consequence, entire groups of individuals are alienated and excluded from participating fully in the whole of society due to the presence of what are defined as disabilities (Snyder, Brueggemann and Garland-Thomson 2002). In these cases it is common for people diagnosed with disabilities to be perceived as dependent, weak, helpless, asexual, incapable, and having a lower quality of life. This has significant implications within capitalistic economic systems as a person with a disability is

often seen as not being able to contribute as much as other individuals, and as a result is devalued as a human being.

As is the case with many socially constructed markers of identity, disabled people remain marginalized at the personal, cultural, and institutional levels (Snyder, Brueggemann and Garland-Thomson 2002). Oppression on the personal level can take the form of pity, irritation, discomfort, and annoyance. At the cultural level, it is made manifest as negative stereotypes, omission from popular culture, and hurtful attempts at humour. And on the institutional level, it is evidenced by the exclusion, discrimination, and inequality that are found within the political, social, and economic systems of a society (Mullaly 2010, Campbell 2009, Davis 1997).

In terms of ability it can be noted that any person is susceptible to experiencing a disability in some manner. Whether it is the direct result of an injury or illness, or it is simply a matter of having a friend, family member, or colleague who has a disability, most people will encounter disability at some point in their lives. Conversely, the privileges that society offers those people who are enabled often go unnoticed, which means that the implications for disabled people are substantial.

Critical social theorists have analyzed the way the general public perceives disabilities and suggest that 'being disabled' is in actuality a social construction that labels individuals who do not fit into the conventionally established definition of normality (Campbell 2009, Davis 1997). Many of the obstacles present for persons marked as physically or mentally disabled surface principally from ableist socio-cultural ideologies that pathologize disability. Subsequently, they are further compromised by society and subjected to higher degrees of exclusion, prejudice, and discrimination (Snyder, Brueggemann and

Garland-Thomson 2002). Thus, as disabled people are stigmatized as lacking, deficient, and incomplete as result of the societal barriers they face, the ‘othering’ they face reduces their existence and personhood into a pathologized or pitied label.

Compulsory Able-bodiedness

Adding to the discussion surrounding normality and disability, Robert McRuer draws from Queer and Crip Theory to introduce the concept of compulsory able-bodiedness. He suggests compulsory able-bodiedness is an often-obscured arrangement of cultural ideals and everyday practices that serves to discipline individual bodies, as well as society as a whole. The discipline that arises from compulsory able-bodiedness stems from the expectations members of society face in terms of being able-bodied. If for some reason a person, or body, does not conform or fit into these expectations, they then face the punishment of being labeled as an ‘other.’

McRuer also notes that compulsory able-bodiedness is concealed, disembodied, and most readily found within the hegemonic discourses of society. McRuer (2006:1) affirms its ability to discursively govern and surveil when he states ‘able-bodiedness, even more than heterosexuality, still largely masquerades as a nonidentity, as the natural order of things.’ Based on McRuer’s theorizations, it can be noted that compulsory able-bodiedness functions as an immaterial and diffuse apparatus of societal regulation that normalizes being able-bodied, much in the same way that heterosexuality is assumed to be natural in regard to sexuality. McRuer also points out that able-bodiedness is paradoxically a social construct, and something that can never be fully realized or achieved. And despite the illusory, ephemeral, and elusive nature of being abled-bodied, the pressure that members of society

face in having to attain it is nevertheless a powerful influence operating across a host of differing spaces.

For men living in the rural America, a significant and regularly overlooked aspect of masculinity is compulsory able-bodiedness. Men in the rural United States use their bodies for a wide variety of activities that all shape their beliefs regarding how much of a ‘man’ one is. Whether it is participating in sports, hunting and fishing, lifting weights, doing construction work, taking care of chores on a farm, performing religious rituals, drinking beer, running mechanical equipment, working on cars, fighting with other men, playing with their children, performing physical labour, or having sex with women; men gauge masculinity by what they do with their bodies (Campbell, Bell, and Finney 2005, Leyshon 2005, Little 2002, Saugeres 2002).

It is not uncommon for rural men to be proud of their scars, compare injuries with other men, and romanticize the notion that when it comes to women, land, and interactions with other men, that they use their bodies for conquering and controlling (Saugeres 2002). When these masculinist ideals surrounding the body are embedded within given spaces it produces serious implications for individuals who do not have the ability to use their bodies in the same, normalized, ways. For rural America, those who are most enabled by processes of normalization regarding bodily practices are often white, heterosexual, Christian, males. Thus, this group is the standard against which all other groups are measured.

And although people with differing physical and mental disabilities are recognized under the broad expression of being disabled, they are nonetheless one of the most heterogeneous and diverse sections of all marginalized groups (Campbell 2009, Davis 1997). In addition to the divisions they face due their race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality, age,

and so on, they also deal with the fact that several different types of disability further fragment their group. For example, those people with physical disabilities have to deal with different forms of exclusion and discrimination in comparison to people with mental illnesses. People who are deaf also face differing challenges when compared to people who are blind or have a visual impairment, just as people who use wheelchairs face different barriers compared to those people who experience chronic pain, have sustained a serious head injury, or have cognitive disabilities (Albrecht 2006). Interestingly, some social assemblages who are conventionally marked as ‘disabled’ reject such labels, as is the case for people who identify as being culturally Deaf (Lane, Pillard, and Hedberg 2010, Ladd 2003).

It should be noted at this point that there has been a movement to challenge the individual pathologization that people labeled with disabilities face within the medical model (Campbell 2009, Snyder, Brueggemann and Garland-Thomson 2002). This counter-perspective can be found in perspectives advocating a social model of disability and identifies the problems attributed to disabilities within the environment, institutional structures, and cultural norms of a society. It also supports the rights of disabled people and criticizes discourses that stigmatize disability as a tragedy that should be pitied, fixed, and monitored.

Normalization, ‘Othering,’ and the Media⁵

Thus far, I have discussed several of the interlocking social axes of identification that work in conjunction with one another to reproduce oppression, privilege, and exclusion. Oftentimes, tying together the plurality of social identifiers and complex subjectivities that exist in particular spaces can become a complicated and problematic endeavour. Thus, in order to try to make sense of socio-spatial power dynamics that operate across society, I once again turn to Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony. Gramsci states that schools, religion, media, business, advertising, government, and other cultural institutions are all conduits of cultural norms (1971). These structures, and the individuals and assemblages within them, produce society through the reiteration and negotiation of discourse, power, control, and resistance. Put another way, the assumed to be commonplace perspectives, images, and values of a particular society serve the purpose of benefitting certain groups, whilst marginalizing others. These processes of consent and contestation involve the, diffuse exchange, and subtle exercise of power and are always dependent upon context and space.

In the case of the rural United States, what has become hegemonic are subjectivities of masculinism, white supremacy, neoliberalism, reactionary conservatism, and imperialism. The end result is that culture upholds, and finds ways to rationalize, the systemic inequalities that arise in a given space. The status quo currently in operation in the United States also ensures that some members of society will remain privileged, while others will remain

⁵ While this dissertation does not contain a chapter specifically addressing masculinity in the media, such representations have been, and do remain, important aspects of the reproduction of masculine subjects and subjectivities. Several participants noted the influence of the media from an early age up to the present, but as this thesis maintains a focus on the practices and discourses of masculinity within rural Southeast Kansas, it was key to emphasize the local spatiality of masculinity with the everyday practices and discourses of the participants. An in-depth analysis of masculinity and the media will be addressed more thoroughly in future research and analysis.

marginalized and oppressed. Within such a social arrangement, people may find themselves in the privileged classes in certain contexts, but may also find themselves omitted from such privileges in different spaces. In this way, privilege, exclusion, oppression, and inclusion are also complex and fluid experiences, but despite the fluctuations of power and control that exist in society, there does remain a routine social order dependent upon the dispossession, alienation, exploitation, repression, and neglect of people who are discursively positioned as ‘others.’

One site of concentration for ‘othering’ is the media. Corporate marketing agencies, news outlets, the entertainment industry, and other forms of mass media manufacture and distribute imagery and outputs that portray hegemonic assemblages of people, as well as institutions, as normal (Connell 2000). Everyday there is constant affirmation for members of the dominant classes to position their values, perspectives, religions, economic beliefs, bodies, language, goals, etc. as the standard that all others should aspire to be a part of. As a result, certain social identifiers become hegemonic, and thus become the most culturally endorsed representation of normalcy. Those individuals and groups that fall outside of those normalized subject positions remain on the periphery and face greater hardship, struggle, and suffering during their life (Cloke and Little 1997). The manufactured constructs of the hegemonic culture allows processes of ‘othering’ to occur, and consequently leads members of marginalized groups to become characterized as inferior, abnormal, or deviant (Marcos 2011, Butler 1993, Foucault 1981).

Vestiges of this process are still present in rural United States as Indigenous people and racialized minorities in white settler communities are typically pushed to the margins. Their customs and traditions are repressed and their voices are no longer allowed in the

institutions of a society that is operating upon a foundation imperial violence (Campbell, Bell, Finney 2006). This process of inferiorization legitimizes oppressive policies and over time allows produces a hegemonic discourse that negatively stereotypes those who do not conform to the status quo. The subsequent diffusion of images and naturalized labels that are forced upon members of subordinate groups, in turn, allows members of society with power and prestige to espouse discourse of fear and threat upon those who fall outside of the norm.

An early example of this inferiorization that has long been popular amongst rural populations that can be found throughout American cinema, television, and literature is the 'Westerns' genre. These coded stories stereotypically situated conflicts between 'Cowboys versus Indians,' and perhaps less overtly, framed such clashes as confrontations between 'Good Guys versus Bad Guys.' In doing so endorsed colonial white settlers as possessors of heroic qualities who were constantly tasked with the burden of fighting off, or educating, 'angry, uncivilized, savages.' A more recent example of the white masculine supremacist discourse of media includes representations of people from the Middle East. As a result of the events of September 11, 2001, and even prior to them, Middle Eastern characters were racialized in negative ways and depicted as threatening, menacing, extremists who hate the United States.

On the contrary, those individuals (members of the United States Armed Forces, as well as many of the nation's political leaders) defending the country from the 'terrorists' are often portrayed as 'good guys' who are physically domineering, white (sometimes stories do include a token racialized person), English speaking, oftentimes Christian, heterosexual, hyper-aggressive, males. In turn, the messages of media and popular culture promote

representations of masculinity that posit liberal, white, able-bodied, heterosexuality as the idealized version of what a ‘man’ should embody.

Stuart Hall (1997) also argues that the mass media play a significant role in perpetuating the hegemonic culture that is present within a given society. Another subtle example of this can be found on television in the United States in programming that often presents conventional life as being anchored by the nuclear family. The majority of portrayals of the ‘average American household’ further normalizes whiteness, heterosexuality, masculine supremacy, settler colonialism, and capitalist values (McClintock 2013, Gill 2007). Such images influence civil society’s perception of reality and frames social problems as the result of personal adversity that can be overcome by perseverance, work ethic, and a positive outlook on life.

Consequently, the structural basis of inequality that is founded upon masculinist domination and neoliberal ideology is rarely mentioned in public discourse. Thus, the general populace remains distracted from the institutional oppression and structural violence that is the source of many social ills (Connell 1995). The sanitized versions of struggle, hardship, and violence that are seen in media, typically do not spur critical thought or radical agitation that would seriously challenge the privileged enablement that hegemonic groups enjoy. In turn, the whitewashed narratives and sterilized news stories that most forms of popular media broadcast perpetuate discourses suggesting that people who are struggling are doing so because of their own choices, flaws, shortcomings, and mistakes.

Based on the theorizations of Hall, as well as numerous other cultural theorists, it can be seen that media do not address human tragedy with much understanding or nuance. The most prescient issues that society faces (ongoing colonialism, poverty, racism, sexism,

classism, ableism, disenfranchisement, nationalism, homophobia, exploitation, oppression, etc.) are often treated as platforms for comedy, packaged as neat-and-tidy emotional appeals, or are simply sound-bites in which the problems and solutions are seen as discrete, light-hearted, humorous issues that the audience can easily feel good about. It is also not uncommon for media to portray ‘a world at one with itself’ where violence, suffering, death, and oppression are seen as single moments in time with easily attainable solutions that provide the audience with valuable life lessons (Guntlett 2008, Hall 1997). The fact that major disparities in power, wealth, and accessibility continue to exist in society is largely omitted because it is more comfortable to ignore such issues in favor of readily available resolutions that provide feel-good moments. As a result, viewers are shielded from the suffering and deprivation that result from everyday, real-life, prejudice ...or, if they are exposed those unsettling violent realities, they can quickly detach by simply tuning out.

Kyriarchy

In conclusion, the ethnocentric exercise of naturalizing hegemonic culture as the standard by which all other people are measured is a form of both cultural imperialism and structural violence. Within neoliberalizing settler nation-states it is quite common for the interests of the normalized members of civil society (those who benefit from colonial, white supremacist, patriarchal structures of individualism) to be privileged and enabled due to the fact that many of the political leaders, government officials, business executives, administrators in the education system, and owners of mass media are legitimized by such structures. In turn, a kyriarchy (hierarchal context-dependent relationships founded upon interlocking systems of domination, oppression, submission, and privilege) is created through

socio-spatial subjectification, the reification of societal structures, and the reproduction of culture (Kwok 2009, Schüssler 2009).

Given that the reproduction of society takes place within the arena of the culture, those people and groups who fall outside of hegemonic kyriarchical norms will continue to be perceived as different, unusual, and inferior. For the rural United States, this can be seen in the socio-political issues that are discussed by partisan pundits, elected officials, conservative religious leaders, the media, and even ‘everyday folks’ who venture into discussions about politics and power. As will be reflected in the coming chapters, some of the most pressing topics of conversation that are addressed amongst rural men include decreasing gun control, ‘deaths’ from abortion, reducing immigration, increasing domestic job security, combating terrorist threats, banning gay marriage, lowering taxes, and boosting the economy.

As a consequence, the hegemonic standards currently operating across the kyriarchy of the rural United States rarely address the interlocking systems of colonialism, class struggle, masculinism, heteronormativity, racial discrimination, enablement, neoliberal victimization, and the ongoing oppression of marginalized groups who fall outside the normalized conceptions of society. Accordingly, hegemonic masculinity in rural spaces, and the discourse that serves to protect it, reflects those same abusive biases and violent prejudices. In the next chapter I will describe the methods and theories I took with me on a nearly year long venture into rural Southeast Kansas to research such dynamics.

Chapter 3: Methods and Framework

*All things are subject to interpretation. Whichever interpretation prevails at a given time
is a function of power - not truth.*

-Nietzsche-

There's No Place Like Home

Amidst the seemingly slow-paced lifestyle of the open rolling plains and endless blue skies of rural Kansas, lies a competitive arena of social relations where 'men' constantly vie for power, control, and dominance. I use the word 'men' specifically because (despite the problematic nature of relying upon socially constructed binaries that suggest that all people are either are a man or a woman) the word carries significant meanings in this space. The cultural landscape of rural Southeast Kansas is a socio-political battlefield of sorts, but not one in which the actors are engaged in armed conflict, rather the exchanges are much more subtle, mundane, and banal. Posturing for status can be seen and heard in the most ordinary of instances. Whether it is at a school, a workplace, a local bar, a high school football game, Sunday morning Mass, a hunting trip, a fishing outing, a rolling field of wheat, a calm pasture of cattle grazing, or even in the confines of a quaint country farmhouse, the endless campaign that 'men' embark on seems to permeate every aspect of their lives.

The spoils of this war are not made up of tangible material possessions, nor do the victors attain valuable rewards or dominion over other bounded nation-states. On the other hand, to prevail in this endless struggle the participants relentlessly strive for what is seen as the most significant and essential quality that a 'man' can possess. It is what 'men' who grow up on the plains of rural Kansas call 'respect.' To others, respect can have a wide array

of meanings, but in rural Southeast Kansas, this obscure badge of honour that men (both intentionally and subconsciously) yearn for, is more specifically, masculinity. The efforts to earn respect, or rather, the actions and perspectives that people maintain in order to think of themselves, and be thought of, as 'men' takes a variety of forms. The work required in order to attain masculinity can be described in many different ways: being a man, receiving masculine capital, being machismo, getting man points, socially reproducing masculinist ontology, maintaining a male-centered perspective, manning-up, occupying a masculine subject position, earning a man-card, *not* being a girl, *not* being gay, *not* being a fag, *not* being a bitch, *not* being a pussy ...the list goes on and on.

No matter how the efforts of achieving masculinity are described, what is key to note is what such practices produce. What are the implications involved in acquiring this vague cultural signifier known as masculinity? What exactly is this unclear concept that men continually seek out? Whatever it is, whatever it enables people to do, whatever benefits and privileges it offers people, it is safe to say that it is indeed real. It is influential, it is powerful, and it is also ambiguous and ephemeral. It can be thought of as a label, a badge, an illusion, an addiction, an emblem, a truth, a delusion, as well as many other things. And despite the evanescent nature of what masculinity is, it is sought out in the most ordinary, routine, and taken-for-granted instances of everyday life.

Masculinity is contradictory, it is paradoxical, and in some cases, it is absurd. It forms opinions, guides actions, alters attitudes, shapes values, determines voting patterns, and even endorses individualistic hostility and violence whilst promoting caring fathers and loyal fraternization. It convinces people that aggression and risk-taking are innate, while concurrently persuading them to care, cultivate, and nurture. It implores people to take part

in fighting, football, fucking, firearms, the free market, and simultaneously implores them to be unfaltering friends, fathers, family members, and followers. What is crucial to realize about masculinity is that the implications of it are far reaching and significantly influence how social relations play out across numerous cultural settings. Thus, masculinity is difficult to pin down and defining it will never be fully possible. On the other hand, what masculinity produces, certainly is something that can be seen, felt, and experienced.

Research Topic and Context

It is with those questions, understandings (as well as lack of understandings), and perspectives that I went to rural Southeast Kansas for nine months over the course of 2011 and 2012. My intent was to study the relationship amongst hegemonic masculinity, neoliberal ideology, rurality, and the socio-cultural structures and political subjectivities operating in the area that position particular individuals, practices, actions, perspectives, and places, as masculine. As noted in the first chapter, R.W. Connell developed the phrase hegemonic masculinity to describe the normative ideal operating across cultures that define successful ways of ‘being a man’ (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Thus, my investigation of masculinity, neoliberalism, and rurality pursues how ‘being a man’ takes shape across a host of differing social spaces (i.e. in homes, with families, with peer groups, during leisure activities, at places of work and worship, in community centres, along gravel roads, and on front porches and backyard gardens) within rural Southeast Kansas.

I sought an in-depth and critical understanding of how people who self-identify as men in rural Kansas frame their experiences, values, and practices within the wider context of the neoliberalization of society. I am also attempting to discern how ‘manhood’ is

dependent upon place and is situated in discourses of colonialism, free market capitalism, patriarchy, whiteness, and individualism. Thus, my time in the field, and subsequent analysis, is a cultural geography of spatialized masculinities that attempts to expose how power, control, and dominance operate amongst hegemonic and subordinate social groups. Before detailing the pragmatic aspects of the methods used during my time in the field, I first turn to the theoretical perspectives driving the methodological practice of my research project.

Theorizing Neoliberalism

Current academic interest pertaining to neoliberal ideology is currently increasing as the amount of literature centering on the role of power in the historical, political, and social construction of masculinity across differing social settings continues to expand (Berg 2012, Carroll 2011, Kimmel, Hearn, and Connel 2005, Mac an Ghail 1996, Jackson 1991). The theories offered in such critiques interrogate the central role that masculinity plays in the cultural construction of hegemonic ideals, as well as the positioning of subjects in relation to social axes of identification such as race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and ability (Peake 1996, Butler 1990).

Recently, scholars have started to focus on the normative role that hegemonic masculinity has on men and how it influences their relationships, ideals, actions, behaviours, and identities across spaces (Monk 2004, Van Hoven and Horschelmann 2004, Berg and Longhurst 2003, Myers 2002). In focusing on the spatiality of these processes, geographers have begun to make important contributions to theories of masculinity, particularly in critical perspectives regarding neoliberalism and processes of socio-spatial subjectification.

Neoliberalism is a broad term designed to give a name to the social relations that have become dominant in the post-Keynesian era, namely the intensification of economic liberalism in combination with the rise of libertarian social and political philosophies (Larner 2000). The proliferation of neoliberalism can therefore be understood as a professed movement towards ‘more markets and less government’ that increase individual choices and provide more freedom to members of society. Despite the alleged benefits that neoliberal policies lay claim to, scholarship points out the incongruent results that such agendas have led to. This is highlighted due to the fact that deregulatory processes have the tendency to actually result in more pressure to conform to an economic system that actually lessens autonomy and choice (Brenner and Theodore 2002).

Neoliberalism is also geographically uneven and contextualized, thus theorists make a distinction between ‘neoliberalism’ as an overarching ideology, and ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ as geographically differentiated practices (Peck and Tickell 2002). Even though it takes its form in a variety of differing ways depending upon place, neoliberalism still has become hegemonic in white settler societies and colonial nation-states (Canada, United States, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, etc.). As such, it has come to have important effects in socio-spatial constructions of masculinity, as well as the political subjectivities of people who find themselves in those spaces.

For the research project I conducted, which involved white, working-class men in Southeast Kansas, the emphasis placed upon ‘being a man’ and the link this has with neoliberalism, remains a highly influential factor in the formation of individualized notions of identity, self-worth, personal autonomy, and social status. Consequently, masculinity, as constituted by neoliberalism, can be utilized as a source of power, exclusion, individuality,

commodification, and oppression; and can also be ascribed a wide array of cultural ideals and meanings (Halberstam 1998, Eddley and Wetherall 1996, Mac an Ghaill 1994). Research has also shown that the characteristics attributed to masculinity are heavily influenced by race, class, gender, ability, religion, age, and nationality, etc. and often persuade men to display domineering presences, exercise emotional regulation, and maintain aggressive demeanors.

The hegemonic attributes typically associated with masculinity as reproduced by neoliberal ideology also include outward displays of individual strength, determination, ambition, drive, and self-reliance. Theorists are now investigating how these gendered characteristics interlock with other socially produced signifiers in order to more accurately understand the relationships amongst cultural assemblages in particular locales (Berg 2013, Connell 2005, Razack 1998). This interlocking analysis disrupts the tendency to perceive social axes of identification as discrete and isolated from each other, and emphasizes that they are in fact indissoluble (Das Gupta 2007). An interlocking analysis also allows researchers to examine how discursive formations that lead to oppression, marginalization, and subordination are perpetuated and reaffirmed.

It is with an understanding of the interlocking nature of neoliberalism, masculinity, space, and power that I approach my investigation of how men in Southeast Kansas are positioned as subjects. Thus, I do not proceed with any attempt to separate the socially constructed descriptors of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, age, ability, religion, ethnicity, etc. as doing so would deny key elements that constitute the multiplicity of subject positions present in rural Kansas. In particular, it should be noted that one factor taken into heavy consideration (both during my time in the field as well as this subsequent analysis) is

space. Within feminist, anarchist, decolonial, and poststructural geographical theories, there remains the position that masculinities cannot be understood without taking into account space, and conversely, space cannot be completely understood without taking into account masculinities (Connell 2005, Mac an Ghaill 1997, Jackson 1991). With this in mind, I will now briefly summarize the theoretical perspectives driving critical research within the discipline of geography.

Masculinity in Geography

Turning my discussion specifically onto the discipline of geography, I will now give a brief overview of how masculinity and power have recently become important research topics for geographers who conduct fieldwork. During the early 1980s the discipline began to increasingly recognize the status it had as a patriarchal, male-saturated field that largely neglected women (Monk and Hanson 1982). During this time geographers also began to realize that the unequal power relations and subordinated roles that women, racialized minorities, and marginalized people were facing needed to be more thoroughly addressed. Literature challenging the status quo and questioning the parochial nature of geographic knowledge production provided an opportunity for once marginalized voices to be heard (McDowell and Bowlby 1983, Mackenzie and Rose 1982).

Consequently, this movement opened the door for feminist, queer, postcolonial, and critical race theorists to deconstruct the power dynamics operating within the discipline of the geography. By the end of the 1980s, radical positions were becoming firmly incorporated throughout academia, but were less prevalent in the discipline of geography (Massey 1989, Wekerle and Rutherford 1989). Despite the fact that radical voices made up only a small

minority of the field, scholars were continuing to be influenced by politicized feminist perspectives that questioned assessments of what was considered objective knowledge production (Domosh 1991). As a result of the growing influence that poststructuralist and approaches had, more geographers began to embrace and utilize such critiques in their own studies, particularly in the areas of radical, critical, and feminist geographies (Monk 2004, Berg 1993, Moss 1993).

Examples of such research include studies that criticized the racialization and gendering of advertising, colonial travel literature, rural and metropolitan spaces, the fear of criminal acts associated with particular spaces, and discriminatory admission into specific places based upon gender and race (Myers 2002, Pain 2002, Peake 1994, Jackson 1994). Geographers also began undertaking research that contested universalized notions of race, class, and gender, and how those identities become marginalized and excluded from public spaces (Sibley 1995, Bondi 1992).

At the same time, researchers in the discipline began critically focusing on rural studies drawing more awareness to the position of women in agricultural communities (Fincher and Jacobs 1998, Whatmore 1994). This literature highlighted how gendered social arrangements impact the public and private lives of women (Little and Panelli 2003, Saugeres 2002). Continuing the trend to critically analyze areas of their research, geographers have also focused on the roles of race, class, gender, and sexuality in economic shifts and development issues (Cleaver 2003, Jackson C. 1999, McDowell 1997).

An additional poststructuralist lens that geographers began to utilize during this time was queer theory. Perspectives within queer theory largely drew from deconstruction to contest understandings that categorized sexualities (Halperin 1997, Warner 1991). They also

sought to destabilize conventional notions of what is meant by being male, being female, being straight, and being normal. In addition, queer theorists began confronting the widespread acceptance of social institutions including religion, marriage, waged labour, the education system, the military, sport and leisure, gender roles, sexuality, etc. (Sullivan 2003, Turner 2000, Jagose 1996). Queer research thus challenged the validity of heteronormative discourse by using non-heteronormative critiques thereby allowing scholars to move beyond fixed descriptions of gendered places by problematizing the hegemonic beliefs operating with them. They also shed light on the subjugation that queer practices and non-conformist subjectivities faced across differing and shifting spaces (Halperin 1997, Bell and Valentine 1995, Knopp 1994).

With the move in geography away from research that was empirically based and positivist, coupled with the elevated level of practical action and advocacy for change inherent in feminist, queer, and critical race theories, a main focus of research thus centered on subjects that were negatively labeled and oppressed (Hall 1997, Peake 1996, Bell 1991). Such inquiries into relationships involving individuals or groups being 'othered' due to race, class, ability, sexuality, nationality, and gender resulted in significant contributions by scholars writing from radical viewpoints.

From the end of the 1990s up until the present time, more geographers are focusing on issues of empowerment, social action, political change, and the implications their work has on people involved in the research (Butz 2009, Kobayashi 2003, Katz 2003, Peake 1996). As a result, feminist, queer, and critical race theorists increasingly analyze and question where they themselves fit into the methods and epistemological positions they maintain when exploring their interests (Butz and Besio 2009, Hay 2005, Berg 2001). Within a few

decades, a crucial concern for geographers has become centered on how knowledge based on naturalized, objective, ‘truths’ is problematic and violent. This increasing awareness of subjectivity, positionality, and power relations, in addition to the contestation of the prevailing structure of objective knowledge production, continues to lead to the reevaluation of what is constituted as legitimate contributions to the discipline.

At the present time, it seems that the significance of feminist, queer, and critical race theories in geography remains vital and will continue to influence researchers in their own philosophies and practices. If academics seek to amend the unjust power relations that pervade society based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, it is paramount to recognize that such inequalities have not only existed historically, but also are experienced and lived spatially. Feminist, queer, anarchist, decolonial, and critical race theories all provide researchers with valuable perspectives in critiquing the structural oppression that exists across space. The lines of questioning that stem from these lenses also offer the discipline of geography a valuable opportunity to gain insight from a wide variety of once silenced voices.

Taking geography’s trajectory as a discipline into consideration shows that within the past thirty years theorists have greatly expanded the critical assessment of geography’s historical negligence of women and racialized minorities. And while the past three decades have seen the discipline take significant strides in challenging the oppression associated with race, class, sexuality, ability, nationality, and gender, less attention has concentrated specifically on the role of masculinity and privilege in such formations (Longhurst 2000, Massey 1994, Jackson 1991). Linda McDowell emphasizes this point when she states:

Gender is not an attribute solely possessed by women... masculinity, too, is also an uncertain and provisional project, subject to change and redefinition.

Geographers have perhaps, however, been slow to accept this challenge...relying too heavily on a singular masculinity, defined as the unchanging 'One' against which multiple and contested femininities are constructed. (2001: 184)

With an increasing number of feminist, queer, anarchist, decolonial, and critical race theorists writing about masculinity in geography today, it seems that the discipline is well prepared for continual growth in the way of research concerning the concept. Geographers should be aware of the social interactions and places where masculinities operate, and also need to be cognizant of the impact their work may have on the people involved. Finally, in order to obtain an in-depth, fully developed, critical analysis of their research it is paramount that geographers understand the mutually constitutive relationships that exist amongst masculinities, space, and discourse.

Critical Discourse Analysis

I will now turn to critical analysis discourse as a focus of inquiry as it is what I employed when examining the data I gathered in Southeast Kansas. When considering the role that discourse plays in the formation of hegemonic masculinity, as well as the propagation of neoliberal ideology, it is evident that language plays an essential role. Language, and the subtle power it carries, is a key element in the establishment of taken-for-granted cultural norms, conventional wisdom, as well as processes of socio-spatial subjectification. One of the primary goals of this research is shedding light on the roles that language and power play in the formation of neoliberal ideals and masculinities in rural

Kansas. In order to highlight the importance of how social practice and knowledge are arranged as discourses, I turn to the theories of Michel Foucault.

Drawing on Foucault's (1980: 133) ideas concerning 'regimes of truth,' described as the 'ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements,' it can be seen that definitions ascribed to social phenomena often result in the perpetuation of inequalities based on race, class, gender, ability, nationality and a host of other social identifiers. Put differently, Foucault's truth effects can be viewed as the tacit understandings, unspoken rules, and general conventions that govern society. When analyzing masculinities, discursive constructs become particularly powerful as distinct lines can be drawn between and amongst individuals and groups. In looking at gender, it can be noted that definitions implying that men are certain things (tough, in control, aggressively heterosexual, etc.) and that women are inversely different things (weak, unstable, passively heterosexual, etc.) all factor into the formation of a given society's regulatory norms. By analyzing these discourses, in conjunction with scrutinizing the ways knowledge is produced, researchers are better able to understand how power is something that circulates through the assemblages, institutions, and spaces that constitute society.

What results are certain knowledges, discourses, and epistemologies becoming privileged and hegemonic, whilst others are marginalized and excluded. Poststructuralist and anarchist feminists have shed light on these dynamics by underscoring how hegemonic discourses governing gender legitimizes and validates masculinist supremacy through the privileging of knowledge that has been formed by men (Crow 2000, Crow 1997, Rose 1993 Hekman 1992). Decolonial and anti-capitalist perspectives have also deconstructed the discursive legitimacy of neoliberalism as a philosophical ideology and have shown that it has

been afforded great degrees of validity solely based upon the spurious rhetoric it employs (Marcos 2011, Giroux 2008, Jiwani 2006, Smith 2005, Mohanty 2003, Razack 2002)

Discourses also tell us what members of society can, and cannot, say at given times and in particular spaces (Rose 2011, Foucault 1980). Consequently, discourse is not comprised solely of what people say, but it also encompasses the images, media, landscapes, environments, art, music, governments, laws, institutions, and practices that constitute society. Because discourses permeate all social relations, it is evident that they then send influential cues as to what is perceived as legitimate knowledge (Rose 2011, Jiwani 2006, Mills 2004). This is noteworthy because the productive capacity of discourse then creates a status quo that governs, alters, and modifies the perspectives, actions, languages, and practices of both societal structures, as well as individual people.

Discourses thus become enmeshed in the cultural milieu of particular locales, and over time certain axioms, idioms, and even colloquial phrases are reaffirmed as certainties and become commonplace social conventions. As a consequence, the most commonplace of interactions can be ascribed normalized connotations and viewed as verifiable truths and hard facts. Examples of these subtle conversational proclamations from Southeast Kansas including ‘men are the breadwinners,’ ‘women are just emotional,’ ‘the male sex drive,’ ‘boys will be boys,’ ‘a woman’s place is in the home,’ ‘the old ball and chain,’ and ‘its just her time of the month’ contain cultural suppositions that are reasserted in everyday circumstances. Accordingly, these discursive realities are accepted as ways-of-being and produce individual subjects (as well as societies) that accept culturally constructed norms that can be oppressive and exclusionary (Whitehead 2001). .

It also remains critical to reemphasize the point that discourse is not solely made up of words and expressions (Rose 2011). From a Foucauldian perspective, discourses drive the processes of how subjects come to understand themselves as individuals. In this way, authority, or the perception of authority, from the societal institutions of government, family, media, economy, education, religion, medicine, and entertainment, etc. can all pressure subjects to conform to the hegemonic discourses that are operating in particular spaces. Thus, understandings of power and normalcy, as well as the images, signs, and symbols that produce them, highlight how discourses are not based exclusively in language and the spoken word. This is made clearer in the fact that discourses influence members of society to act, or not act, based on expectations. Hence, these expectations surrounding what members of society are supposed to do are derived from a wide variety of unspoken sources that often demand obedience, conformity, and submission.

The application of poststructuralist, feminist, decolonial, and anarchist perspectives to discourses pertaining to masculinity and femininity provide opportunities to see how social spaces are produced, structured, and formed by gendered interactions, thoughts, and performances (Rose 2011, Jiwani 2006, Hall 2004, Mills 2004, Mohanty 2003). This is worth mentioning because analyzing discourses raises awareness not only about the power of language, but also how language and practice interlock and interpellate subjects and institutions. In turn, discourse can legitimize and sanction particular truths surrounding the perceived differences attributed to masculinity and femininity.

In asserting that men are active, assertive, and sensible, and conversely, that women are submissive, obedient, and illogical, members of society engage in hegemonic discourses that reify hierarchical binary sex roles as natural truths. The reaffirmation of a dualistic

masculine-feminine dichotomy serves to support an illusory gender order that, while by no means a part of objective reality, does have considerable influence on both individuals and institutions. It should also be noted that while the hegemonic discourses present in a given space may seem to result in the most powerful truth effects on society, there do remain marginalized discourses in constant negotiation and resistance against the dominant ‘truths’ in operation (Foucault 2003).

With the recognition that gendered binaries of male/female, man/woman, and masculine/feminine seem to permeate many societies, it can be noted that such formations have become hegemonic. Masculinity is thus a discourse comprised of the regulatory thoughts, actions, and practices that a male body is supposed to follow, that in turn, creates the very conditions in which male bodies become signified as men (Whitehead 2001). In applying a poststructuralist perspective to the discourses of a society (i.e. cultural norms, social mores, and gender order) a clearer understanding of how all members of society become constituted as subjects can be arrived at (Hall 2004).

To effectively deconstruct the power dynamics, discourses, knowledge(s), ‘truths,’ and hegemonic perspectives and practices regarding gender and neoliberalism in rural Southeast Kansas, I needed a pragmatic and practical way to gather empirical evidence as to how the lived ‘realities’ of masculinity took shape. The next section describes the details of my research project in Southeast Kansas and explains the rationale behind the methods that were chosen.

Qualitative Methods and Research Design

As my research seeks to expand comprehensions of contextualized gender orders, as well as the interlocking nature they have with neoliberal ideology and space, it makes use of explicitly geographical theories. The analysis in the following chapters also draws from anarchist, feminist, decolonial, and poststructuralist identity theories in an attempt to understand the influence that hegemonic masculinity has for people who self-identify as men in Southeast Kansas. As the focus was on the reproduction of hegemonic social relations in rural spaces, I moved to the research area and utilized qualitative methods that included participant observation; in-depth, semi-structured interviews (both with individuals and focus groups); as well as aspects of photovoice (photojournaling).

In selecting participants⁶ I used criterion sampling as I was specifically aiming for perspectives of people who self-identified as ‘men’ and who described themselves as being ‘from the area’ where the research was based (specifically Southeast Kansas). Ultimately, 60 participants were a part of the project, and all self-identified as white, heterosexual, men⁷ with ages ranging from 19 to 77. Of the 60 participants 51 were Christian (either practicing or non-practicing); with seven stating they were not sure (agnostic), and two noting they were atheist. Incomes of the participants ranged from \$10,000 to \$80,000 per year, with an individual average of approximately \$19,000. Most participants (56) had a high school

⁶ All participants have been given an alias.

⁷ It should be noted that I did not screen, intentionally exclude, nor deny anyone from participating in the project based upon an imposed social signifier that I ascribed to their bodies or personal choices for self-identification. Rather, I simply posted flyers and had conversations with people noting that I was seeking to interview people who described themselves as ‘men who were from the area.’ The fact that all the participants also identified as ‘white,’ and ‘heterosexual,’ and ‘male’ is coincidental ...but not necessarily surprising.

diploma, eight had undergraduate degrees from university, four had vocational/trade school degrees, and four had dropped out of high school.

Of the 60 participants, 50 self-identified as ‘middle class,’ seven stated being ‘working class,’ and three (who were unemployed) simply replied ‘poor.’ The employment of the participants included work as farmers, construction workers, loggers, electricians, heavy equipment mechanics, mill and factory workers, hydraulic fracturing (‘fracking’) crewmembers, firefighters, industrial plant managers, semi-truck drivers, police officers, and high school teachers. As I wanted to immerse myself in the everyday routines of the men who were a part of the research I acquired part-time work as a farmhand in order to become a participant observer.

Participant Observation

My employment as a labourer was not acquired through any formal application and interview process; rather I was able to obtain a position with a local farmer through a series of informal discussions regarding my research, my desire to live in the field, and my wish to be involved in the day-to-day minutiae of the lives of the individuals who live in rural Kansas. Discussions surrounding my research with the participant who employed me began with an informal phone call in which I mentioned that I was moving back to Kansas to conduct field work, and that I was seeking a job in order to experience the routine of rural life. After our initial conversation, we talked on several more occasions where I noted that anyone involved would be given pseudonyms, that anything he was not comfortable with could be omitted, and that he could remove himself from the project at anytime. These discussions aided in building rapport and also provided my contact with the opportunity to

ask questions about any aspect of the research that he wanted. After a few weeks of discussions and going over the details of what aspects of rural life in Kansas I was investigating (and due in part to my knowing him for nearly 15 years), he enthusiastically agreed to allow me to record and observe any and all aspects of daily life on his farm.

I had also spoken with several of the potential participants before starting the research as a result of growing up there and wanting to make sure they were comfortable with all aspects of their involvement. One of the more compelling conversations I had before starting a focus group addressed the tendency for people to alter their behaviour as result of being observed, tape recorded, and possibly quoted. A participant in the group named Mike, an acquaintance I had known since 1998, broached the subject and noted that he would do his best not to pretend he was something that he was not. Mike also provided cautionary warning stating that since I was an ‘academic type’ that I may not be comfortable with all the things that took place in the area. When asking him to elaborate he noted: ‘down here, we are pretty much set in our ways ...and we don’t mind it like that.’

Mike then went to suggest that what I may be exposed to might make me uneasy at times because he knew that my views were ‘liberal’ (which, in partisan politics in large swaths of the rural United States is associated with *not* being Republican) and ‘kind of un-American.’ As it seemed like he had something specific in mind that he was envisioning, I asked him if he could give me any brief examples as to what he meant. We then had a discussion centering on two primary topics, both of which he noted were ‘only a couple of the things I was getting into.’

The first topic centered on the use of the word ‘nigger.’ Mike mentioned that he does not use the word ‘to describe another man, or a group of them at least,’ but that he did use it

in certain contexts that he deemed not to be inappropriate or offensive. He went on to say that circumstances when the word was not improper, nor insulting, were times when it describes situations surrounding work. These included phrases such as ‘being worked like a nigger’ (long, strenuous, work hours, monotonous, demanding, and physically taxing conditions, all with little or minimal pay), or saying that a person had to do ‘nigger work’ (unskilled tasks that require little technical or mechanical know-how, and are physically demanding such as splitting wood, setting fence posts, bucking hay, digging post holes, burning brush, spraying chemicals, etc.). Another participant, Eric, also noted that from time to time I would probably be told to ‘nigger-rig’ (a short term, temporary fix using whatever materials are necessary) equipment in order to keep things going. I stated that I grew up working in the local sawmill, and that I ‘had heard it all before,’ to which Mike knowingly nodded in agreement saying, ‘oh yeah, for sure.’

My mention of previously working in the sawmill proved beneficial for a few of reasons. The significance of having grown up and held a job in the community cued that I was familiar with the work environments found in the region, and it also signified that, as one participant noted, I had ‘put in my time’ performing blue-collar work. This dynamic also ended up aiding my research as the experience earned me a bit more credibility as a ‘local,’ as I was introduced as such in several future meetings with potential participants whom I did not know. In reality, the reference of working at the sawmill was beneficial mainly because it implied that I was familiar with the hegemonic norms of the spaces that I would be a part of. Alternatively, it signified that I formerly had been part of the loose fraternity of rural, white, working-class men in the area which made me seem less threatening and immediately (to some degree) gave me status as being ‘part of the club.’

That personal history partly garnered recognition for me as a former insider and also earned me social standing as a ‘worker,’ as a ‘man,’ and as one participant noted, as someone who had ‘earned his stripes.’ Consequently, these dynamics eased the apprehensiveness of several participants surrounding my role as a researcher because I had an association with several of the well-respected locals. Most importantly, my previous experience served as a silent and subconscious reaffirmation of whiteness and working-class background. These aspects of my subject position granted me privileges in that I was easily able to fit in well with the dominant demographic of the area. Thus, my positionality of sharing similar social identities, having family and friends in the area, and having lived in the area, meant that I had social ties with many of the members of the community, who subsequently could vouch for me.

The second discussion I encountered early on in setting up the research project pertained to some of the work I would be doing. My employer explained to me that at times I would be spraying chemicals (herbicides and pesticides) in order to control unwanted weeds, shrubs, bushes, and insects that were populating fence lines, crops, and waterways. I was also going to be managing the burning of brush and trash piles (many that would contain insecticides, pesticides, oil, plastic, and other petroleum based products). One of the participants and an occasional co-worker of mine at the time named Dan, anticipated what he thought would be reluctance on my part to burn trash with used oil, as well as spray chemicals, went on to explain that used oil can be a huge burden to deal with, but can quickly and easily be disposed of simply by pouring it on a brush fire.

He also noted the utility of used oil, old gas, and kerosene in the application of killing undesirable weeds found around overgrown ditches and hedgerows stating that if used in

small amounts used oil did not seep into the ground and was really effective in killing nuisances. While driving along one pasture the participant pointed towards a brush pile roughly 10 meters wide by 10 meters long and approximately two meters high and pointed out that burning such a pile could easily get rid of 100 gallons of used oil in no time at all, and that the oil would not even make it into the ground. He then admitted that it was probably not the best thing for the atmosphere, but that since the it was so extensive, and since the fire was relatively small, that it was not even a ‘drop in the bucket’ and that the atmosphere could handle it without any problems.

In the initial meetings I had with several potential participants similar situations were described quite often that lead to regular inquiries as to whether working in the area was still something that I felt comfortable doing. During these conversations I explained that the aim of my research was to experience working with men in rural settings and get a sense of what life was like in the area, particularly for people such as themselves. I mentioned that whatever it was that I was going to be exposed to, whether it is deemed offensive, provoking, or insulting by others or myself, is something that is present in nearly any locale that one could research. I stated that my main objective was to get a glimpse of the reality of living in Southeast Kansas, analyze it from an anarchist and feminist perspective, and in doing so I wanted my presence to alter things as little as possible.

I then explained that in order to write a piece about life in Southeast Kansas that it would be most beneficial if I were involved in the normal, everyday, routines of the area. I also noted that as my research was addressing the language, actions, and behaviours of men in rural Southeast Kansas that I would be not be making overt attempts to change or sway their perspectives. Rather, I explained that the less influence I had upon their typical

practices and actions – the better. Upon discussing these dynamics on several occasions one of the interviewees named John summed up the overall sentiment of many of the participants when he said he understood and replied with a smile saying: ‘Well, the feminist stuff seems a bit ridiculous, but I think it’ll work out just fine.’

With this transparent and agreed upon understanding I began my participant observation and research. In order to effectively observe the socio-spatial relationships and contexts where they were operating I worked approximately eight to ten hour workdays and simply completed jobs as needed by the local farmer who employed me. During this time, I kept a field journal and made notes and daily entries regarding the actions, practices, and comments of participants while we were at worksites. I followed up on the workday fieldnotes that I took with individual, semi-structured interviews that commonly took place while relaxing after work around an old rustic barn or in the evenings over suppers at local restaurants, pubs, bars and in some cases participants’ homes.

In addition to the work I performed as a farmhand, I participated in several hunting, fishing, and camping trips during which I was able to hold focus groups and individual interviews. Selection of the interview sites was strategic rather than random in that I was seeking to provide the participants with a comfortable environment and build rapport. The entries in the journal, along with the tape-recorded interviews, I later transcribed, coded thematically, and added notations to regarding context, tone, and atmosphere.

Personal Interviews and Focus Groups

The interviews and focus groups were composed of a variety of forms of inspective tactics that included descriptive, storytelling, opinion, structural, contrast, and devil’s

advocate question types (Hay 2010). The majority of my inquiries were open-ended in order to allow participants to guide the focus of the conversations and to prevent me from influencing their responses with any suggestive prompts. I followed up the open-ended questions with secondary questions as needed regarding the experiences and feelings of the participants as they reflected upon the events and phenomena that we were discussing in relation to rural Kansas.

I also made use of descriptive questions in order to gather background information about the participants and seek out specific details regarding the places, events, and phenomena that was discussed. The descriptive questions focused on such things as how long they have lived in the area, how many family members they have, what their job is, what political affiliation they are, what religion they are, what they do for leisure, etc. In addition, I employed the use of storytelling questions in order to persuade participants to elaborate on the descriptive elements they shared. These questions were also utilized in order to hear more of each participants' nuanced personal histories, as well as gain insight into their perceptions, emotions, and viewpoints about living in rural Kansas.

The questions used to elicit opinions from the informants were more pointed and direct in nature, were formulated later in the project, and asked after all of the initial interviews had been completed. As my goal was to build rapport with the participants and communities, and so that they were able to understand my positionality a bit better, I refrained from soliciting personal opinions on seemingly controversial topics until after I had spent a few months in the area. Upon ensuring that the participants were comfortable with questioning about such topics, I then proceeded to try to draw out their personal emotions, feelings, and theories regarding politics, religion, relationships, leisure, the environment, the

economy, and so forth. What needs to be stressed here is that the formation of my questions was not fixed and static, but rather developed as an iterative and flexible process. In this way, the formation of my inquiries was subject to change as I got to know my participants, and as they got to know me.

In follow-up interviews and focus groups (once I was more established in the area and had developed rapport with all of the participants) I began asking structural, contrast, and devil's advocate questions. The structural questions primarily focused on the perceptions, ideas, and assertions of the men I was interviewing by asking them what societal institutions they were most involved in, what and who they deemed trustworthy sources of information, and what leads them to put faith in such structural entities and influences. These questions served to highlight how the governing institutions on local, regional, national and global levels have shaped the personal beliefs, experiences, and events of each individual.

Contrasting questions were also used in order to enable the participants to reflect upon their circumstances and compare them to the lives they thought they might have had if they had been born, raised, or lived in a different place. Questions surrounding the social construction of race, gender, (dis)ability, class, sexuality, age, and other axes of identification were also asked in order to steer participants toward introspective insight regarding the factors that constitute them as particular subjects. These questions not only elicited information about the significance of place in their lives, but it also gave rise to the topics of marginalization, oppression, (dis)advantage, and privilege, that are present in the social environment where we were living.

Lastly, I used devil's advocate type questions in order to mention countervailing opinions that starkly contrasted with the belief systems and hegemonic ideologies of the local

area. These questions were framed not as personal moral stances, but rather, they mentioned alternative perspectives that are present across differing cultural contexts. The devil's advocate questions stimulated responses in which the participants explained their own values and principles, and gave further details as to how they arrived at their socio-political values and refuted other contrasting ideologies.

The questions I selected and asked allowed for flexibility in our discussions, and did not restrict participants from speaking about topics they deemed important. The primary interviews I conducted touched upon a variety of experiences pertaining to men and masculinity in rural Kansas, and the social axes of identification (race, class, gender, (dis)ability, age, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, etc) that shape and influence their perspectives and actions. I followed up my primary interviews with secondary focus groups that encouraged participants to explain and elaborate upon what it means to be a 'man,' and how one earns 'respect,' (a very significant factor in the lives of men) within the context of the predominantly Christian (Catholic), white, working-class, rural environment we were in.

Consent forms detailing the structure of the project were provided and each individual was given the option to forgo signing and opt-out of the research. It was stressed to each participant that they were also able to withdraw at any time, and any information they provided would remain undisclosed and unused in the analysis if they so chose. I also ensured that each individual participant had a pseudonym and that the identity of each person remained confidential.

Critical Autoethnography and Positionality

As my approach to this research project is founded upon feminist, decolonial, anarchist, and poststructuralist perspectives, the subsequent chapters that include the empirical evidence taken from the field and my personal experiences will be somewhat of a critical autoethnography. I attempt to avoid placing myself at the centre of the writing so as to remain focused on the perspectives, voices, and socio-spatial subjectivities of the participants. This style of writing most appropriately fits my research due in part to the fact that I was conducting research in the area of Kansas (regularly referred to as ‘The Heartland’ of the United States) where I was born and raised for the first 25 years of my life.

Throughout the thesis, I will reflexively analyze my own involvement in the field and will speak to the implications my presence had on the participants and the research in general. This self-critical introspection will seek to scrutinize myself as a member of the groups I actively interacted with, as well as highlight the subjective nature of knowledge in that it touches upon the experiences and emotions of the individuals who were included (Hay 2010).

Critical autoethnography also allowed me to address my own perspectives and interactions as a researcher and expand on the consequences that arose as a result of my time in the field. In doing this, I will be not be suggesting that my research is an exposé of a fixed culture, distinct identity type, or detached community. Rather, my aim is to illustrate the complex assemblages and social relationships that the participants, as well as myself, were a part of due to our experiences and interactions (Butz and Besio 2009). Thus, my time in the field, and subsequent writing, is a critical narrative that positions myself as a subject within a

contextualized social space, but also on that does not centre solely upon my thoughts and experience.

Insiderness/Outsiderness, Limitations

The category of ethnographic practice that I conducted can most accurately be considered insider research because I travelled back to the rural area where I lived for the majority of my life (Butz and Besio 2009). In moving home I wanted to study the processes of socio-spatial subjectification that were operating in the area, as well as attain first-hand experience as to how politics of scale and alterity were negotiated. In this way, the information I gathered pertaining to social axes of identification was observed through the lens of what qualitative researchers suggest is a ‘deep insider’ position (Edwards 2002: 71). Consequently, I had to be vigilant and mindful to avoid framing myself as a detached, objective, observer. It was also essential for me to be aware of, and articulate, my position as a subject in the project and note that it is continually changing and influencing the dynamics of the participants with whom I interacted.

As a researcher with an insider’s perspective, I was also required to negotiate the power relationships that existed as I conducted my interviews (Hay 2010, Chavez 2008). No matter how fair and unbiased I tried to be, there still remained a perceived (and quite real) underlying hierarchical relationship between each participant and myself (Hay 2010). Although the group members viewed me as an insider at some points, I still remained outside of what I was researching to some extent (Chavez 2008, Edwards 2002). Every interaction involved the possibility of my subject position as being seen entirely as an academic interrogator who was dictating the terms of conversations by exercising control over what

questions were asked, what information was deemed noteworthy (through the subtle bodily act of writing things down), and what elements of conversations were worthy of being recorded.

Edwards (2002) notes that the most seemingly trivial and ordinary of acts can significantly alter the dynamics that take place during individual interviews. Instances of these seemingly commonplace actions, such as the practice of quickly jotting down notes during a conversation or placing a tape-recorder on the table, can carry a great deal of weight when it comes to talking with participants. At times it may result in apprehensiveness, trepidation, and even distrust. As a result, the fact that participants may have been more guarded about the answers they offered remains, and may have been a potential limitation of the research.

There also remains the prospect that participants may have been influenced to develop responses that were not accurate representations of what they actually believed due to the presence of a researcher ‘studying’ what they were saying. Ultimately, the result of navigating the balance of power and recognizing that I could not be an objective insider (coupled with an awareness of the personal dynamics between the participants as well as myself) hopefully has led to a more thorough and in-depth understanding of how masculinities are exhibited by white, working-class men in rural Kansas. However, the unknown boundaries, restrictions, and alterations of what the participants were thinking, sharing, and saying will never be fully known, which also serves a limitation in trying to fully understand the intricacies and internal thoughts of participants.

With these considerations in mind, I moved closer to developing, outlining, and structuring my questions. As I prepared for my observation, interviews, and focus groups, I

wanted to be as transparent and self-reflexive as possible, as is common for critical researchers to do when interacting with participants (Hay 2010, Edwards 2002). By considering the implications of my presence in the research, I took steps to make certain that I avoided harming, deceiving, and exposing my participants. Ultimately, the ethical guidelines used by critical autoethnographers within human geography helped me safeguard, and make comfortable, those individuals who were generous enough to partake in the work I was doing (Butz and Besio 2009). The end result is not only a critical analysis of the subject area I am studying, but is also a reflection of my own situated knowledge and perceptions.

In addition, I was sure to steer away from the insinuation that my position as an insider gave me privileged access to the research participants (Chavez 2008, Edwards 2002). Such an outlook reaffirms an artificial dichotomy of insider/outsider. If this type of binary is perceived by a researcher, it can potentially lead them to the exploitatively use their accepted position within a particular social group merely as a tool. An approach based on an discrete insider/outsider dualism can also convince researchers they are operating with complete and total access to the thoughts and lives of the participants involved in the research, which is a false assumption and is never the case (Butz and Besio 2009).

There is also a great deal of literature suggesting that although being an insider may appear to give the researcher more access, insight, and rapport, that in reality quite the opposite can actually be true (Chavez 2008). Scholars have highlighted the fickle nature of being an insider and how such a precarious social position can subsequently lead to difficulties when conducting participant observation, interviews, and focus groups (Hay 2010, Edwards 2002). It is therefore more accurate to see 'insiderness' as falling along a continuum contingent upon context and space. This is significant in research as a participant

observer because at times researchers may occupy a certain degree of acceptance as an insider, but at other times they will face differing levels of ‘outsiderness.’ Being aware of this constant state of flux, and the continual fluidity of the subject positions of the participants, as well as myself, aided me in avoiding drawing clear and discrete lines around being an insider/outsider, that ultimately, is a discursive trap built upon potentially fabricated understandings (and misunderstandings) surrounding what degree of access one has.

Photovoice

Photovoice was one of the qualitative methods used during the project. For research pertaining to masculinities, the photovoice element provided a visual journal in which the participants took pictures of, and reflected upon, those elements of their lives that were most important to them, and that best represented things they did as ‘men.’ After I conducted a briefing session with each participant regarding what photovoice entailed, they were each given a digital camera and asked to take pictures of whatever they felt was pertinent. During the initial photovoice meeting, I explained that I was seeking to gain a ‘sense of place’ for rural Southeast Kansas, and would like for them to take photos of that best represented themselves, as well as the community. I also had them photograph objects, activities, and places that represented masculinity and ‘things guys did’ to them. In order to accomplish this, I framed the project as an exercise that asked them to take pictures of what signified masculinity, how men earned respect, as well as where they spent most of their time, who they spent most of their time with, and what material items were most important and useful to them.

Over the course of the fieldwork I met with individual participants once a week to discuss, analyze, and reflect on the photographs they had taken. I asked them to provide brief, self-descriptive, paragraphs explaining the significance of the photos they selected. Thus, the photovoice aspect of the research was an ongoing endeavour for the participants that went through several iterations as we meet weekly to discuss their visual journals. After gathering the photographs, notes from individual meetings, and the personal narratives of the men who took the pictures, I then coded the material thematically and prepared it for the discourse analysis that is elaborated upon in the last three chapters of this thesis.

The photographs that the participants took revealed the material reality of their everyday interactions. They also highlight how place can be a significant factor for people as they make meaning in their lives (McIntyre 2003). The men involved in the research were asked to take photos of those things that have significant meaning to their personal and collective identities. Ultimately the components of photovoice utilized strives to offer a snapshot of what exists in the socio-spatial environment of the community that I was a part of, as well as provide audiences a clear portrait of the rural cultural setting that is found within Southeast Kansas.

While meeting with the men individually and discussing their selected photographs, I was certain to respect their reasoning and justifications regarding the pictures they chose to include. I asked them to explain the reasons behind each picture carefully so I did not misinterpret or misrepresent any of their thoughts in my eventual findings. The images and individual narratives that the participants provided gave thorough personal accounts of how masculinity, rurality, neoliberal ideology, and respect operate in Southeast Kansas.

In asking the participants to reflect on the topics of exclusion, disadvantage, privilege, and power, as well as the routine actions and material items that are part of their lives, I hoped to shed light on the ideologies and assumptions that men have regarding what it means to be masculine. By investigating these themes I gained an in-depth understanding of how race, class, gender, sexuality, age, nationality, religion, and (dis)ability interlock to influence the practices, actions, values, and subjectivities of men in rural Kansas.

Space and Place in Research

As Peter Jackson (1991: 210) notes:

We must begin to explore the various instabilities and contradictions that are inherent within the notion of masculinity and make a concerted effort to uncover the spatial structures that support and maintain its dominant forms.

Thus, the subsequent chapters seek to understand the socio-spatial production of subject-positions in relation to the changing conceptions of ‘manhood’ under neoliberalism. The examination of the data and material I gathered in the field also centers upon Foucault’s assertion that ‘the production of space is fundamental in any exercise of power’ (1984: 252). As such, the empirical evidence that is analyzed and theorized explores the foundational themes associated with regionally contextualized constructions of masculinity, place, identity-formation, and self-perception.

What follows is a critical discourse analysis of masculinity that draws upon the conceptualizations of power, gender, and space that has been discussed earlier. My aim is to question conventional, taken-for-granted norms surrounding long-established hegemonic discourses operating within Southeast Kansas. In doing this I will explore how culturally

constructed ideals surrounding masculinity, neoliberalism and rurality become pervasive influences in the lives of men and constitute them as subjects. Ultimately, my primary objective is to gain an in-depth understanding of, and expose, the interlocking social forces of colonialism, capitalism, white supremacy, racism, heteronormativity, nationalism, ableism, patriarchy, and religious conservatism that reproduce both masculinity and neoliberal ideology across space.

Chapter 4: Settlers on Parade

I think its just time for them to get over it; people need to quit feeling sorry for themselves and get on with their lives at some point.

-Rob, 32-year-old construction worker
(speaking about Indigenous people)

*They had been wiped out in the worst way, through the greatest kind of human crime...
Through forgetting.*

-Subcomandante Marcos, spokesperson of the EZLN
Zapatista Army of National Liberation
(speaking about Indigenous people)

Over 150 Years of History

The academy has a long and exploitative record of researching Indigenous people, their cultural practices, traditional languages, and the intricacies of social circumstances they face within settler colonies (Mahtani 2014, Berg 2013, Smith 2012, Mohanty 2003, Razack 2002, Tuhiwai Smith 1999). This type of research can further reinforce colonial oppression through ‘othering,’ fetishization, cultural appropriation, as well as continuing material and discursive enclosures. Oftentimes, such research is done despite the fact that it stems from well-meaning sources. Nonetheless, it serves as the recapitulation of patriarchal, white supremacist knowledge production alongside the erasure, muting, and misrepresentation of Indigenous accounts and epistemologies, due in part to the fact that the majority of institutions sanctioning the research are patriarchal and white supremacist themselves (Morgensen 2011, Smith 2010, Lawrence and Dua 2005, Trask, 2004, Monture-Angus 1995).

In addition to the voyeuristically exploitative relationships that result from ‘research

about' Indigenous people, is the unjust fact that often times Indigenous cultures, practices, knowledges, and histories are then offered up for consumption in one-dimensional, discrete packages by individuals laying claim to authorship over the information they are publicizing. It is from this vantage point, and with these trappings in mind, that I note this investigation into formations of hegemonic masculinity in Southeast Kansas, traditional *Wah-Zha-Zhi* (Osage) Territory begins.



Illustration 1: 'We have a rich and proud history here.' (A 45-year-old local teacher commenting on a highway billboard that greets travelers upon entering the town.)

One cannot tell a story of masculinity in rural Southeast Kansas without mention of the dispossession, alienation, repression, and negligence employed by settler colonialism. The aim of this chapter is to provide an account of what the socio-spatial dynamics of

Southeast Kansas are through a feminist, decolonial lens. The intention is *not* to further subject Indigenous people and culture (in this particular case, the Osage Nation) to the interrogative magnifying glass of a white settler (myself) who is not an epistemic authority regarding their customs, practices, or knowledge. What this chapter sets out to do is critically examine localized conceptions of hegemonic masculinity and the relationship that colonialism has with space by concentrating on what white settlers have to say, the reasons why they say it, and ultimately, what is produced from their subjectivities and practices.

From this standpoint, this chapter, when read in totality with the empirical evidence that follows, attempts to provide an interlocking analysis of what many anarchist, decolonial, and poststructural feminists have come to see as how social axes of identification (race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, nationality, citizenship, age, etc.) mutually constitute one another, are not dissoluble, and are not monocausal in the socio-political relationships they produce (Berg 2013, Jiwani 2006, Razack 1998, Collins 1991, Mohanty 1991).

More specifically, the times in which contrasting signifiers of social identity are highlighted should not be seen as efforts to draw disparate lines of demarcation around race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and so forth and suggest they are separate and unrelated. In the same way, the analysis of social space that follows should not be seen to be the additive result of discrete lines of intersection that happen to cross at given times in explaining how and why social hierarchies exist within Southeast Kansas. Rather, the analysis suggests that the complex matrix of marginalizing, privileging, subordinating, and enabling tendencies that position people, cultures, identities, and institutions differently on account of space, context, and subjectification are enmeshed and inseparable.

Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism indicates the process of invading colonists forcing or coercing Indigenous people from their traditionally lived-in territories (Veracini 2010, Wolfe 2006, 1999). The settler population that is moving in carries it out in order to create new politico-ethnic communities, structures of governance, and claims of ownership. The principal, but not exclusive nor entirely independent, difference between colonialism and settler colonialism involves acquisition of land and eradication of people (Smith 2012, Veracini 2006). White settler nation-states (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, United States) came to exist not with the primary goal of exploiting and using Indigenous people for economic profit and consumption of natural resources, although these elements are present, rather, white settlers came to remove Indigenous people who were in the spaces they wanted.

As Elkins and Pedersen (2005, 3) suggest, settlers ‘wished less to govern Indigenous peoples or to enlist them in their economic ventures than to seize their land and push them beyond an ever-expanding frontier of settlement.’ In many cases, upon arriving in what they chose to view as ‘new’ lands, white settlers pursued the project of manufacturing narratives that rationalized their strategies of dispossession by citing ‘freedom’ and ‘discovery’ as their justifications for occupation. Thus, the goal of settler colonialism was eradication (via both assimilation and death) of Indigenous people. This was done through the implementation of permanent settlements and was oftentimes fueled by imperialistic interpretations of religious doctrine in conjunction with a desire for nationhood (Wolfe 2006, Johnston and Lawson 2005, Razack 2002).

In turn, settler nation-states did not set up shop for temporary economic gains that were to be left behind when profits dried up. On the other hand, settlers squatted on

Indigenous territories in order to claim rightful ownership of land. From this perspective, it can widely be recognized that settler occupation was, and continues to be, an ongoing process. The incursion of white settlers into Indigenous territories can thus be more accurately viewed as iterative and evolving courses of action that have never ceased, and are still taking place in current times, rather than isolated events that happened at different points in history.



Illustration 2: ‘The Catholic Church is the foundation of everything here ...you can see it from miles away - its what we are known for.’ (A 52-year old truck-driver commenting on a photo of the local Catholic Church)

In rural Southeast Kansas, the glorification of a settler colonial past is deployed widely and readily, but is done in banal and innocent ways. Many participants I interviewed

spoke with pride about the community's missionary history, the noble intentions of the white Europeans who arrived there, and the pioneering attitudes that many of the town's original settlers were imbued with. What was often missing in many of the narratives of the participants was recognition that the area the community is located in is the traditional territory of the Osage Nation.

The Osage, who hunted, planted, and lived in the region well before missionaries arrived, were mainly located in the Ohio River Valley until the mid 1600s (Burns 2004, Rollings 2004, 1995). They shifted into what is now known as Missouri and Arkansas as a result of white settlement and compulsory dislocations during early colonial advancement throughout the eastern United States (Burns 2004). As settler expansion continued westward during the early 1800s (a time of intense land dispossession and ethnic cleansing that included the Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears) the Osage were forced into Southeast Kansas. They resided in the region until the early 1870s, when they were again pressured into ceding their lands and being forcibly displaced into present day Oklahoma (Osage County) where they currently are based (Burns 2005, Rollins 1995).

If the settlers I spoke with did mention the Osage Nation, the conversations quickly made reference to the 'good' and 'kind' work that the Catholic missionaries were doing for the 'Indians' by protecting, educating, and helping them. Several participants spoke of the priests who arrived in Southeast Kansas as being the best examples of what the history of the community represented. Two priests mentioned in particular were Father John Schoenmakers and Father Paul M. Ponziglione. Father Schoenmakers is noted for his Catholic 'zeal and perseverance,' and is still referred to by some locals as the 'Father of Civilization in Southeast Kansas' as well as the 'The Apostle of the Osage.' In addition to

the propagation of Christianity on the frontier that he is credited with, Schoenmakers also happened to be in charge of maintaining the *Manual Labor School for Osage Boys and Girls*. This institution was built in 1847 to further ‘integrate’ and ‘educate’ members of the Osage Nation in the ways of the ‘white man’ (Graves 1916).

Father Paul M. Ponziglione, another bygone stalwart in the area, is known for being an ‘extraordinary and prolific’ missionary. Ponziglione’s arrival has subsequently been valorized and lauded by the local community over the generations. One local historian, W.W. Graves (who the town’s public library happens to be named after), is widely cited in the community’s historical records and writes that the arrival of Father Ponziglione meant:

The coming of one who was to liberate the natives from the bondage of savagery and bring them to the ways of civilization, Christianity, peace, happiness and plenty. (Graves 1916: 9)

It was in discussing figures and narratives such as these that participants spoke fondly of how far back their settler ancestry in the area went, as well as how much significance the land, history, and church had to the community. Many men also spoke of the generational ties they had to the region and how a ‘rugged pioneer mentality’ and ‘pull yourself up by your bootstraps work ethic’ are still passed on as core values in area.

In this way, the narratives the participants held about the spaces that their white settler ancestors encroached upon, as well as the subject positions they occupied as men themselves, were dependent upon links to private property, individual landholding, and the incessant drive for ‘freedom,’ ‘progress,’ and ‘production.’ What can be gathered from such admissions is that the local hegemonic ideals of the area are rooted in liberal conceptions of the self. In turn, the practices those liberal subjectivities promote were initiated, and

continue to be carried out, in the name of God. As a consequence, colonially established Christian discourses remain the ways in which settlers lay rightful claim over the spaces they occupy.

Dispossession

The dispossession that Indigenous people face in the United States commenced in practice when settlers arrived in order to find land and natural resources. Extensive migration from Europe into the ‘New World’ was often driven by entrepreneurial aggression, as well as uncompromising individualistic perspectives of what ‘ownership’ meant (Barker and Pickerell 2012, Veracini 2010, Wolfe 2006). The vociferous appetite that white settlers had for the possession of land, inaccessible to them throughout much of Europe, meant that masses of settlers would make their way into the colonies in order to extract resources, practice their belief systems freely, erect physical structures, as well as establish their own cultural practices and perspectives (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007). Many of the settlers in the early 1600s were able to colonize land quite freely upon arriving as a result of permanently having left their original countries (Hixson 2013, Batemen and Pilkington 2011, Veracini 2010). They faced little regulation and few limitations upon reaching their destinations in light of fact that the aristocracies and monarchies they were leaving did not have immediate access to surveilling them. Thus, white settlers were subjected to less bureaucratic authority from their imperial governments as they reached the overseas territories they set out to ‘explore’ (Hixson 2013, Wolfe 1999).

This unregulated nature of the settler presence facilitated an increase in land occupations, private property claims, as well as prospecting ventures. In turn, the

relationship amongst settlers, the imperial nation-states from where they were coming, and the Indigenous populations they were invading, serves as one of the hallmarks of settler colonialism (Hixson 2013, Wolfe 1999). Those white Europeans who were ‘discovering frontiers’ and distancing themselves from their own governing hierarchies throughout the 1600 and 1700s, widely did so with the intent to dislocate and supplant Indigenous people in their efforts to build new communities, escape religious persecution, and secure economic opportunities (Smith 2012, Veracini 2010).

Put another way, white settlers strategically shaped their colonies by anchoring them in territories from which Indigenous people were to be extinguished. In the eyes of many white settlers, the Indigenous populations would slowly be exterminated, while simultaneously, the colony would slowly go about withdrawing its dependency from its former central authority. In the United States, this was eventually made manifest with the Declaration of Independence, the American Revolution, and the numerous subsequent juridico-discursive edicts that the new ‘nation’ would institute in order to further eliminate Indigenous people from the land it claimed dominion over.

What resulted was a vigorous campaign of dispossession and enclosure that swept over the countryside and decimated numerous Indigenous populations (Hixson 2013, Blaut 2012, Smith 2005, Alfred 1999). Masses of white colonials sought to establish a nation through the imposition of private ownership, property boundaries, the domestication and commoditization of nature and animals, sedentary agricultural practices, as well as the construction of large-scale environment-altering transportation networks, manufacturing bases, and urban centres (Elkins and Pedersen 2005, Wolfe 2006, 1999). Because the rationale of white settlement typically infused ‘spreading civilization’ with capitalistic

conceptions of production and consumption, the pace at which land expropriation occurred was astounding.

In the United States, the justification for purging Indigenous people from the landscape was tied to claims of knowledge. More specifically, settlers often asserted they better knew how to use resources and that they needed to educate savages, save an inferior race, and protect themselves from the barbarity of Indians (Veracini 2010, Taylor 2006, Smith 1999). Upon spending time in Southeast Kansas it was evident that such perspectives still remain influential as reflected by the comment of Ray, a 19-year-old participant who when asked about the history of the area noted:

Well, I know the Indians were treated badly in some parts of history, but you cannot say they were not always kind to the guys coming here. I mean, sure lots of them died, but that is what happens when a more powerful group of dudes starts to grow and expand ...just look at all of history, its full of war and death. And I am sure that if the Indians owned everything nowadays we would be telling stories of how white guys were massacred and this and that. It just happens that in the U.S. a lot of the pioneers had better technology, were smarter, better at doing things, and more advanced. Naturally those things are going to take over. And its not like all of them came here looking to start shit, here in this area the priests were just trying to help out you know, just to be build churches and spread the message.

Reflected in the comment above is the reliance upon a discursive regime of truth that suggests that the masculine white settlers who were perpetrating violence and taking land in order to further their nation-building project were doing so with moral and noble intentions.

It also signifies a normalization of the belief that conquest, accumulation by dispossession, and genocidal actions are natural and inevitable. This is in part accomplished through the seemingly palatable and innocuous use of terms like ‘pioneer,’ and even ‘settler.’ Many of the participants referred to white colonialists in such ways, and often cited stories they had heard during their upbringings and education that pointed to the freedom-seeking, hard-working, self-reliant qualities of those men who were dislocating Indigenous populations. Thus, benevolent claims of adventure and exploration allow settlers disaffiliate from the declarations of racial superiority and imperial violence they are sidestepping, and that colonialism has, and continues, to sanction.

Space, Place, Religion

Illusory cultural constructions of space and place also factored significantly into white settlement’s scheme of asserting ownership and dominion over land and Indigenous people. The role that geography plays in colonialism is crucial because as Massey (1994, 265) notes ‘space is by its very nature full of power and symbolism, a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and cooperation.’ Numerous other critical scholars have also noted the significance that space plays in the development of racialized and gendered colonial hierarchies, particularly in regard to law and governance (Chatterjee and Subramanian 2014, Blaut 2012, Alfred 2010, Johnson 2008, de Leeuw 2007, Razack 2002). Thus, the ways in which space is invented, conceptualized, and discussed gives rise to the political power it wields. As a result, the interplay between space, law, and governance become key sites where control and authority, as well as resistance and rebellion, are carried out.

For white settlers arriving in United States, space was viewed to be an unknown frontier. This meant that the Indigenous people who were found in those spaces needed to be reigned-in, assimilated, confined, removed, or killed. Either way, what settler colonialism demanded of the spaces it so desired was that Indigenous people and cultures be cleansed from them. Thus, the proprietary perspectives regarding spatiality, as viewed from the lens of white settlers, saw their own arrival, presence, and claims of discovery as fait accompli. This colonial myopia, along with the weapons and diseases settlers carried with them, then allowed them to impose legal doctrines of enclosure and levy declarations of ownership as they saw fit. Conveniently, as colonial settlement continued to spread across the landscape, those legal doctrines of the settlers would then be deemed to be rule-of-law.



Illustration 3: ‘This land has been in our family for generations ...I’ve been working it for over forty years myself now. I have quite an attachment to it. Guess it’s a pride-of-ownership thing.’ (A 57-year-old farmer commenting on a photo of his property.)

White settlers also developed fabricated meanings regarding their possession of space that fortified the rationale they used in legitimating the construction of their new nation-state (McClintock 2013, Smith 2012, Marcos 2011, Mohanty 2003). Imperialistic expressions such as ‘Empire of Liberty,’ ‘Manifest Destiny,’ ‘The American Frontier,’ as well as legal policies backing homesteading, annexation, discovery doctrines, ‘Indian Removal,’ and the relegation of Indigenous people to reservations known as ‘domestic dependent nations,’ all carry significant cultural and legal ramifications. In addition to validating white settlers’ notions of governance as official rule-of-law, these discursive constructions also manufactured strong emotive connections for settlers who benefitted from the dispossession, marginalization, and deaths of Indigenous people. Thus, the emotional affinity settlers developed for the *places* they were occupying further reinforced their defensive assertions of ownership over those *spaces*.

Largely missing from the white colonialists definitions ascribed to the land and nature, as well as their legal statutes, was the perspectives and viewpoints of the Indigenous people who originally inhabited it (Barnes 2013, Marcos 2011, Tuhiwai Smith 1999). As such, the development of the settler nation-state that imposed its will, exercised disciplinary power when it saw fit, and defined its own rules through neglect and violence, convinced itself that it was the legitimate governing authority. Several participants, when discussing their thoughts on who had rightful claim to land in the area, expressed these enduring sentiments of American nationalism and liberalized notions of ownership. Karl, a 28-year-old participant, summed up the prevailing sentiment of one focus group area by noting:

We have every right to be here and I don’t feel bad about it at all. I was born here, I didn’t steal anything from anybody, and a lot of Indian tribes signed

over their land anyway. It pisses me off to hear somebody say this land is not ours, or that it is stolen. A lot of good people (settlers) worked their asses off trying to make a simple living when they got here and I don't think they complained one bit. That is what America is all about. These Indians nowadays need to get with the program. They got their tax breaks, they got their reservations, they got their free hunting and fishing licenses, and they got their casinos...

As is the case with the historical colonial practices of settler societies, it was not uncommon for men in the area to defend and contest any countervailing perspectives that arose when their possession of the land was questioned. A few participants did express sympathy about the way Indigenous people were treated in the past, but those instances were predominantly surrounding what was often framed as a one-time, isolated event (i.e. The Trail of Tears), and there remained little recognition that the violence and aggression of white settlement was part of widespread and ongoing process of eradication.

There was also a good deal of rationalization surrounding the oppression that Indigenous people faced under the colonial project. Mack, a 54-year-old participant, emphasized his point when he stated:

I think there were just as many violent Indians as there were Caucasians. I mean, they had braves and chiefs that were kidnapping, stealing, raping, and burning things themselves. I realize some of them were peaceful, but some of them were out for blood too. The open frontier was a brutal place. It was not an easy life for anyone ...and in times like that only the strong survive.

It was with ethnocentric conceptions of white superiority such as these that settlers asserted

notions of natural selection and carried out building a new nation. It also remains readily evident that such perceptions still remain a common trope in and across those spaces that have been colonized. White settlers in the past, as well as numerous participants in the research, often dismissed and devalued the ‘simple,’ ‘crude,’ and ‘primitive’ manner in which ‘Indians failed to use the land to its maximum potential.’

Accordingly, a discursive binary could be drawn between resources misused and squandered by Indigenous people, and the techniques settlers used in preparing and organizing the land for production and economic development. Matt, a 49-year-old participant, reflects these polarized and hierarchical dichotomies when he contends:

Sure, an Indian can use all the parts of the buffalo, but who do you think brought him electricity, technology, education, and even those guns to shoot that buffalo? ...they should be thanking us in my opinion.

Stereotyping Indigenous people as stolid, senseless ‘primitives,’ or as archaic, stoic warriors and coupling such perspectives with a sense of entitled gratitude for what was magnanimously ‘given’ to them as a result of colonization thus continues to reaffirm the racial superiority that white settlers used as justification for the widespread theft of land, and subsequent genocide, they engaged in.

Enclosure, Borders, Nation-building

Settler colonialism advances in conjugation with the discursive and material construction of the nation-state. As new settler societies take shape, people are categorized, marginalized, subordinated, and privileged on account of their race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, and citizenship (Kobayashi 2013, Wolfe 2006, Smith 2005, Warrior 2005,

Mohanty 2003). These hierarchical processes of acceptance and rejection allow colonial states to galvanize due in part to the how those social axes of identification interlock with ideals surrounding the ‘nation.’

In the case of white settler societies, they have taken up the task of defining themselves, as well as the nation-state they are manufacturing. As a result, the settler society then claims the right to exercise self-determination in expanding, surveilling, and regulating their invented borders and boundaries. Thus, the racialized and gendered social orders they set about developing become reified over space and have acute material impacts. The progression of colonial exclusion in constructing a settler nation thereby produces ‘othered’ people, bodies, places, and discourses, while simultaneously enabling those that are able to fit into hegemonic notions of what is acceptable and tolerated (Spivak 2013, Said 1980, Fanon 1967, 1965).

In reality, social categories of identification, and in this example, race, remains a cultural construct that is used as a tool to constrain, segregate, and confine those who are not endorsed as a part of the normalized standard. The ‘Indians’ that many of the participants spoke of, whether inferiorized and degraded through latent and overt racist myths (or in some cases lauded as ‘noble savages’) do not in fact exist. In actuality, those ‘Indians’ that hegemonic currents of mainstream culture in settler societies like to put on display in their colonial histories, are rooted in fantasy, white supremacist folklores, and settler inventions formed in an imperially negligent imagination.

What is produced from the racialized inventions of a given settler society is their own delusional perception of a nation-state. More specifically, colonial framings of ‘newly discovered peoples’ as inferior and subordinate attracted settlers from all walks of life to rally

around the call of embracing their ‘pioneer spirit’ for the purposes of exploration and discovery. These narratives of magnanimous adventure cloaked the actual existing imperial conquest that was taking place and thereby authorized the oppression, domination, and even extermination of entire populations of Indigenous people. Such perspectives have been successfully reproduced over the course of white settlement and still exist across Southeast Kansas. This can be noted when looking at the statement of George, a 30-year-old participant, who in regard to Indian reservations stated:

Those places are fucking awful. I think they are breeding grounds for poor, lazy, drunks. A lot of them have shit houses and nobody is working, I do not think they (reservations) should have ever been a part of America. The government should have done a better job absorbing the Indians into American way of life when they had the chance. And the Indians should have got on board with it ...it would have been better for everyone.

Comments such as these underscore how settler societies do not become racist, but in fact, are founded upon racism and exclusion. This foundation of white supremacy also highlights just how large of a part racial superiority played in the founding of America as a nation. Violent white supremacist formations seeking to isolate, segregate, and quarantine racialized people were not simply aspects of America that came to exist only after curious explorers landed on an undiscovered open frontier, rather, they were part of the settler project from the outset.

Hierarchies of class also become intimately enmeshed with racial politics as white settlers carried out their land and resource takeovers (Blaut 2012, Razack 2002, Bannerji 2001). Part of the appeal of coming to the ‘New World’ for European colonists was the

prospect of securing economic stability and acquiring wealth. Thus, upon their arrival, settlers held the notion that prosperity and financial gain awaited them. As the expulsion of Indigenous people from their native lands did foster greater profits for some settlers, there were still numerous white settlers who remained poor and in precarious positions. This in turn led to intensifying expansionism of America countryside through the deployment of liberal doctrines of ‘patriotism,’ ‘rugged individualism,’ and religious proselytizing. These rhetorical inventions convinced white settlers that because they were ‘hard working,’ ‘good’ people building a new nation that they were then entitled to the wealth and resources that could be extracted from the area.

Other settlers, who simply desired a small plot of land upon which to homestead and farm, or who were seeking to convert others to Christianity, were not as violently capitalistic. Nonetheless, they did still carry the same sense of entitlement with them and saw fit to usurp land as it was deemed ‘open’ by the colonial authorities. This meant that more and more Indigenous people would be displaced, subjected to forced removals, and in some cases massacred. Thus, the class tensions that arose between different groups of whites often meant that the subsequent backlash, an amplification of colonial policies expropriating property, fell squarely upon the Indigenous people who were residing in the areas settlers ‘needed.’

Southeast Kansas was not immune to the trappings of the individualism, enclosure, and dispossession running rampant across the new ‘frontier.’ Chris, a 28-year-old participant, explains the historical sentiment of the local area when settlers arrived by noting:

The early priests and pioneers who got here were not trying to get rich or anything. They had good intentions, were doing the right thing, and were

simply trying to save people. It is part of the faith you know, you go out and spread the gospel. Its not like they were trying to outright take anything from the Indians, or even kill them off. They actually wanted to them to stay, convert, and become a part of the community. They were there to help.

Despite this account of altruism, the outright confiscation of land from the Osage Nation, as well the ensuing deaths of a large percentage of their people, is precisely what took place as a result of white settlement. A brief look at the timeline of dispossession the Osage faced shows that in 1808 they were coerced into signing a treaty that ceded nearly all their territory in Missouri, as well as the majority of the land they had in Arkansas (The Osage Nation 2006). Only a few years later, in 1818, a second treaty took the remaining land they were living on in Arkansas. That treaty was followed up by another forced secession in 1825 causing the relinquishment of their title to land in western Missouri and sending them to a reservation near the Neosho River, in what is now present day Southeast Kansas (The Osage Nation 2006).

Thus, by 1825, a total of three treaties had forced the Osage to give up over 96 million acres of land (The Osage Nation 2006). Over the next half a century another series of land annexations, including the Canville Treaty of 1865 and the Drum Creek Treaty (also called the Sturgis Treaty) of 1868, would send the Osage Nation to Indian Territory (present day Osage County, Oklahoma), where they are currently based. It was also during this period that a series of epidemics wreaked havoc on the Osage population (Rollings 1995).

From the early 1800s up until the Osage Nation's relocation to Indian Territory, members were subjected to an ongoing series of epidemics that included influenza, cholera, scurvy, measles, typhoid, smallpox, tuberculosis, as well as droughts and insect invasions

that resulted in crop failures and famine (Burns 2004, Rollings 1995). In total, the Osage population went from an estimated 12,000 members in the early 1800s, to just over 3000 at the time of the forced removal into Indian Territory shortly after 1870 (Burns 2004). What this signifies, is that despite the good intentions and generous benevolence that missionaries and ‘pioneers’ thought they were offering, colonial settlement meant dislocation and decimation for the Osage Nation.

Gender, Race, Hierarchy

Gender regimes also interlock with racial formations in contemporary settler societies (McClintok 2013, Smith 2006, 2005, Mohanty 2003, Razack 2002, Mills 1996). The pervasive subordination and oppression that many women currently face in colonial nation-states is due in part to the masculinist ideologies that formed the subjectivities of the settlers arriving in the ‘New World.’ The labours of settlement were seen as tasks that fell upon the shoulders of ‘men’ (in the case of the United States - white, Christian, able-bodied, males). As a consequence, the patriarchal notions of superiority that settlers maintained were then embedded in their structures of governance, economy, and education, in addition to the everyday social hierarchies that developed in their communities (Smith 2006, Razack 2002).

These gendered power dynamics allowed colonialism to valorize ‘manliness,’ thereby leading to the creation of spaces (as well as an entire nation) founded upon notions of masculine supremacy. Chris, a 44-year-old participant, elaborated upon the participation of men in colonial history in Southeast Kansas by noting:

Picking up everything, moving a family overseas, providing for the kids, and protecting a wife was not something that just any ole’ guy could do. The

pioneers who came here to build homes and make honest livings were cut out of different cloth. They were a different breed. They had balls. It took a lot of guts to walk into something unknown like that. Those guys were badasses back in the day ...they were real men.

This statement highlights how the defining characteristics of colonial settlers are conspicuously masculinist. Self-reliance, austere individualism, defensive aggression, and the exercise of power all became trademarks of settler masculinity, and continue to be revitalized through the preservation and promulgation of colonial histories. Several conversations with the participants referenced settler men who were ‘taming the frontier,’ as well as who were ‘tough,’ ‘brave,’ and ‘courageous.’ Many participants were also concerned with emphasizing the humility, modesty, and devoutness of the white men who originally settled the area, as well as how such attributes were still present. Carl, a 64-year-old participant, affirmed this perceived benevolence by suggesting:

Well, history around here is still with us you know. The area is built around the church, and that church was built by a lot of good, respectable, hardworking men. I don’t think they were trying to conquer anything ...just here to build a home, raise a family, and practice their faith. The priests were only trying to help out, educate, and take care of others. I think that is still what the community stands for - a lot of guys around here come from good stock.

These perspectives underscore how settler masculinity is both romanticized and idealized within local spaces. They also shore up justifications for white settlement by disaffiliating from the violent erasure of Indigenous people from the region by omitting the several acts of

forced removal and captive institutionalization that took place. Those aspects of colonial aggression are conveniently muted by making reference to the reputable nature of the men who were carrying out and benefitting from the imperial project of conquest.

Of particular interest in many of the conversations was the place-specific nature of such rationalizations. While some participants were aware of the fact that colonialism had very detrimental consequences for Indigenous people, they were also careful in pointing out that the local rural assemblage they were a part of had a history of white male settlers controlling the region who were exceptions to such violations. Several participants noted that the priests and settlers who arrived in the area were unique because of the compassion, understanding, and care they offered the Osage. What was also overlooked in many conversations was recognition of the fact that despite the ‘good intentions of the pioneers and priests,’ was the fact that white settlement did occur, and that members of the Osage lost land, were displaced, forced to assimilate, and died as a result. Thus, localized claims of innocence serve to obscure the fact that masculinist colonialism did remove the Osage Nation from the region, regardless of the fact that those who were a part of process were ‘nice’ in doing so.

In addition to lionizing white masculinity, settler colonialism bifurcates social relations through the imposition of oppositional gender binaries (McClintock 2013, Oswin 2008). White males were positioned as the ‘providers’ and ‘defenders’ of new settlements and women were often framed as defenseless and vulnerable, thereby relegating them to the realm of domestic servitude (McClintock 2013, Morgenson 2012, Smith 2005). This gender regime resulted in the assertion that the decision-making, protection, and labour performed by white men was more valuable, essential, and vital for the stability of the family, and

community. This consent to a gendered hierarchy led to the devaluation and dismissal of socially reproductive work (i.e. childcare, emotional labour, educating children, household chores, gardening and foraging, etc.) - work that was typically performed by women (Hixson 2013, Lugones 2007, Smith 2005). Those masculinist trends and remnants of white settler colonialism continue to be normalized and reaffirmed in contemporary social relations. Normalized gender oppression is evident because the reverberations of colonial patriarchy arose during participant interviews on several instances, particularly in regard to capability. Earl, a 32-year old participant, elaborated on the division of labour in 'pioneer families:'

Women were just not as capable of doing a lot of the things men were. I mean, men are naturally stronger so a lot of the more important work and heavy lifting back then was stuff that men had to do. Imagine that! There was a lot of danger and physical work to do. I mean fighting off threats and building things is basically what men are born to do – and that is what life back then basically was. Plus, it would not be fair to send women out to defend the home if things got bad or war broke out. Women are better at some things than us, and have a proper place, just as we men do ...I really do not see anything wrong with that.

These dichotomous naturalized binaries were mentioned quite often during conversations in Southeast Kansas, and despite the fact they are essentialist and marginalizing, what intensifies the oppression and discrimination that women face in light of them is that they diminish the work of women. Subsequently, women are impacted altogether through the formation of a gendered hierarchy that places masculinity at the top.

Further complicating the cultural relations of settler societies is that despite the fact

that women were oppressed within patriarchal colonialism, they were also a part of the undertakings of settlement (Hixson 2013, McClintock 2013). Numerous missionaries, including those in area where the research took place, relied upon white women settlers to serve as teachers in boarding schools, endorse assimilation programs, and contribute to child removal policies that separated Indigenous children from their families (McClintock 2013). In this way, white women were complicit and actively taking part in colonial violence. While this served as a way for settler women to exercise personal autonomy in the face of the patriarchal oppression they were being subjected to, it also meant they were perpetuating discrimination across racial lines at the same time. Dynamics such as these show just how intimately racial formations, white supremacy, patriarchy, and colonial domination interlock and mutually constitute each other within settler societies.

Land, and the way land was conceptualized, also became gendered under settler colonialism (Winchester, Kong, and Dunn 2013, Hixson 2013, Marrubio 2006). The landscape was feminized and men often referenced it as something that could be ‘domesticated,’ nurtured,’ ‘tamed,’ ‘raped,’ or that was ‘virgin and pure.’ Thus, it became the objective of white masculinity to control and regulate both the harsh lands it was in, as well as the perceived savagery of Indigenous people that resided in those places. Colonialism’s aggressive policy of land seizure, assimilation, and ethnic cleansing thus became highly gendered. This is evident in the fabricated representations of Indigenous women that were often symbolized as alluring Indian princesses, or exotic eroticized primitives (McClintock 2013, Smith 2005, LaRocque 1996).

As white settlers expanded across the country, the repressive perspectives on sexuality associated with conservative Christianity often spread with them. Consequently,

settler colonialism, and its largely Christian contingent, was threatened by the imagined and speculative ideas surrounding the perceived sexualities of Indigenous people (McClintok 2013, Smith 2003, Eisenstein 1996). The heterosexual white settler men who were colonizing the area took it upon themselves to safeguard their white women from the contrived hyper-aggressive threats of rape, kidnapping, and violence they believe stemmed from Indigenous men who were alleged to be wildly running rampant across a foreign and brutal land.

Another aspect of white settlement was how ‘uncivilized Indians’ were going to be ‘educated,’ ‘dealt with’ and assimilated. Colonialism employed to the use of parochial and paternalistic narratives that framed Indigenous people, and their families and children, as backward and unrefined (Veracini 2010, Wolfe 2006, 1999). This rationale allowed Christian missionaries to justify their presence, perspectives, and eventual structures of indoctrination as being part of a project of enlightenment. As many of the Christian settlers believed that their journey was divinely inspired, it meant that the people, children, and minds of those who did not share the same belief systems as they did required re-education and instruction.

This education, often held in boarding schools and labour academies, utilized captivity, discipline, and punishment in ‘lifting’ Indigenous people out of their uncultured existences and into ‘civilization’ (Hixon 2013, Churchill 2004, Wolf 1999) Such sentiments are still reflected in Southeast Kansas to this day. One participant noted that the local Catholic mission that was established served as a ‘gateway for commerce and exploration in the frontier territory,’ and also noted that the town’s rich Catholic history meant that during pioneer times the settler community was the ‘Great Distributing Center of Civilization in

Southeast Kansas' (a title the town has taken upon itself in light of the Catholic missionaries who arrived in the region in the mid-1800s).

In light of the historical and contemporary narratives that pervade Southeast Kansas, it can be seen that white settlers, in conjunction with patriarchal interpretations of Christian doctrine, reaffirm the gendered subjectivities and practices of the area. As masculinist religious views served as a central part of the colonial process, the social relations of the area thus reflect the culturally imperialistic tendencies that stem from perspectives of masculine supremacy. As a result, at the time of the research there were no members of Osage Nation in the community, or surrounding area. Participants knew of no Indigenous spirituality being practiced around the area, and none were regularly exposed to the historical perspectives of the Osage people, nor had heard or seen much of any of the Osage Nation's language, art, or cultural practices.

What has been produced in the region as a result of settler colonialism is a massive Catholic Church that serves as the pillar of the community. The church is referred to as the 'Beacon of the Plains' and stands upon the open plains as an imposing verandah of power that both represents the most widely accepted historical narrative of area, as well as serves as the town's most influential symbol. In mentioning the lack of indigeneity in Southeast Kansas, as well as the Christian hegemony that operates there, I should note 'Indians' can be found in the community; however, those 'Indians' are seen in very particular ways that will be explained in the next section. But before those ways in which Indigenous people remain a part of the community are elaborated upon, what can be surmised about Southeast Kansas is that the markers of gender, race, class, religion, and space all interlock in its current cultural landscape - a cultural landscape that has profoundly been scarred, and continues to be

dominated by masculinist settler colonialism.

Emotion, Ambivalence, Paradox

Colonialism settles upon the minds and discourses of those whom it serves, in addition to lands and people it lays waste to. Any thorough analysis of a white settler society needs to take into account subjectivities and affective experiences, along with the economic capital, territorial acquisition, and political influence gained and lost, when describing the repercussions of what it produces. In looking at the subjectivities and emotional terrains that constitute settler legitimations of colonial invasion, what surfaces is a series of paradoxes and inconsistencies. Frantz Fanon (1967) makes the argument that under colonialism there exists an existential complex in which those who are being subjected to colonization are offered no other destiny than that of becoming 'white.' In his writing on imperial aggression, Fanon (1968: 311) notes that the enlightened and benevolent Anglo-centric project of colonial settlement stemmed from Europe, 'where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them.' He continues his analysis colonial nation-building by stating:

A former European colony decided to catch up with Europe. It succeeded so well that the United States of America became a monster, in which the sickness and the inhumanity of Europe have grown to appalling dimensions.

(Fanon 1968)

As Fanon articulates, this 'monster' was the settler society within the United States that saw fit to impose its will, culture, and rules upon the original inhabitants of the lands it wanted. What this produced for Indigenous people was trauma and death. And as noted earlier, what

efforts to build a fictive nation provided for the white settlers implicated in colonial endeavours, was a series of rationalizations, justifications, and excuses that were deployed in attempts to assert their innocence from the violence and dispossession that occurred. As seen in the comments of the participants throughout the chapter, defensive narratives of colonial denial continue to echo today. Consequently, what has resulted from the complex interplay of the historical trajectories of colonialism, the discursive constructions of masculinist white supremacy, and the enclosed and expropriated spaces that settlers now reside in - is contradiction and ambivalence.

Homi Bhabha (1994) elaborates on ambivalence by deconstructing the rigid lines of demarcation that separate those who are colonized from those who are colonizing. He also suggests that the identities of the colonial settlers are in actuality, dependent upon the purportedly docile and disempowered colonized other (Bhabha 1994). What this relationship intimates is that white settlers are then positioned as subjects themselves, and thus rely upon those whom they deem inferior and want to erase for the formation of their own subjectivities. In this way, settler societies, and the socio-spatial processes of subjectification that occur iteratively within them, are never static or fixed. Rather, the colonial identities that are produced as a result of white settlement are socially constructed, tenuous, and demand continual reaffirmation in order to be legitimized as existing. Such dynamics therefore create social conditions in which colonial ambivalence and emotional contradictions become routine and widespread within settler societies.



Illustration 4: 'I bleed Indian blood.' (A 28-year-old white 'Kansan' speaking about playing for his former high school football team, whose mascot is the 'Indians')

The colonial ambivalence that occurs within Southeast Kansas, as within most settler societies, sees fit to simultaneously patronize, cherish, appropriate, praise, and exploit the Indigenous culture that it has infringed upon. While some of the participants in Southeast Kansas noted that the treaty violations, death marches, and massacres that Indigenous people faced were horrible aspects of colonial settlement, they also maintained narratives that suggested that the white settlers and Christian missionaries in their local area were propelling members of the Osage Nation into civilization and guiding them towards salvation. And while none of the men interviewed stated that Indigenous people had 'lawful' claims to the land they themselves had acquired through settler colonialism, they did suggest that Osage culture and history was important to them. A 46-year-old participant named Glenn summed

up his perspective on why Indigenous people did not have legitimate claims to land in the area when he stated:

Well, I remember a few years back there was some sort of a proposal being talked about because a few Indians wanted to build a big casino close to here. But I mean, if you honestly look at it – they signed over their land and left a long time ago. Plus, what we built here it kind of gives you a good idea of what their priorities are compared to ours. We have a beautiful church, a great school, a safe community, successful businesses, and good family farms ...they wanted to come in and build a giant place to gamble so they could make a quick easy buck.

Several participants also noted that they were paying respect to the Osage Nation because the high school mascot, in particular the football team, carried the name ‘Indians.’ They noted the reasons it was a way to ‘honour Indians’ was because of the warrior mentality they had. Numerous participants also referred to the Indian mascot as a symbol of the ‘fighting spirit’ they embodied when they took the football field because were preparing to ‘go to war and do battle.’ Further appropriating indigeneity in what they suggested was a respectful manner, many participants told stories of how important ‘home games’ were (sporting events that took place within the local town as opposed to traveling to an opponents venue) because they were coming into ‘our house.’ One 27-year-old participant named Rick asserted that: ‘No one came into our territory and took what was ours – that is what St. Paul Indian football was about.’



Illustration 5: ‘Football was a religion for us... and we had a reputation. Other guys knew they were in for a dogfight when they had to plays us ...that was what “tribe football” was all about.’ (A 30-year-old former graduate of the local high school commenting about the team’s playing style, widely branded by players as ‘Tribe Football.’)

Also falling in line with typical patterns of paternalistic notions of caring about and respecting Indigenous people that exist within settler societies, participants often conveyed pity and sympathy for the Indigenous people of the area due in part to the recognition that the Osage Nation had been displaced and suffered thousands of deaths due to a series of epidemics. These sympathies were not without qualification. Participants suggested that the Catholic missionaries in Southeast Kansas were ‘different from’ other settlers because they were willing to help, care for, and teach the Indigenous people whom they encountered during periods of settlement, displacement, and dispossession. This rationale was often referenced as a way the community ‘remembered and held on’ to the Indigenous culture that was present during the time of settlement.

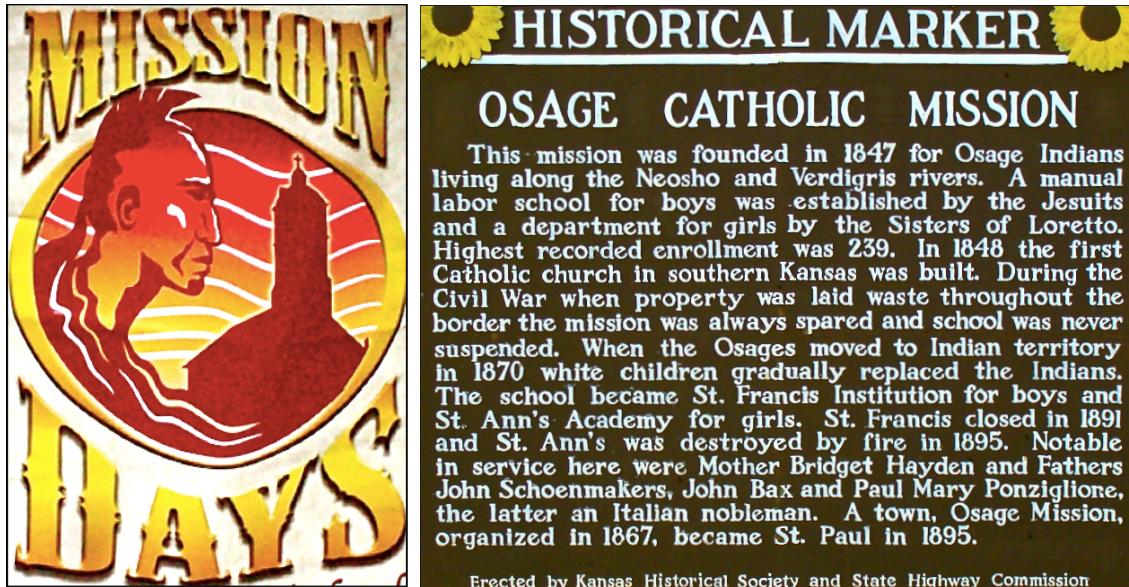


Illustration 6: ‘We have a wonderful history and still remain very respectful towards the culture those Indians had...they are big part of why we are here, so we do our best to honour them.’ (A 59-year old business owner commenting on a local historical marker, as well as about the town’s annual heritage celebration, ‘Mission Days.’)

The feelings of affinity, pride, and satisfaction that were noted by participants have also become a major ongoing theme in the production of the community’s traditional lore. Upon being asked from what sources of information they received their local history, many participants stated it was taught to them in elementary and middle school; from their parents, relatives, and going to church; from displays and documents at the local museum; as well as during the town’s annual Memorial Day celebration known as ‘Mission Days.’ Based upon these sources of historical reproduction, it can be gathered that a highly unstable and ambivalent exercise of disaffiliation from colonial violence, along with the simultaneous maintenance of a white messiah complex, is an ever-present element in the subjectivities and hegemonic discourses of settler communities.

Denial, Disaffiliation, Negligence

As a white settler society attempts to create and reproduce its own version of 'history,' there then arises the need to pen the saga of that nation's beginnings. Through the discursive assault of writing history, in addition to conceptualizing space, indigeneity is often removed and excised from the colonial authors story. Negating, modifying, and refuting history have thus developed into some of the most routine practices of settler societies. In manufacturing serviceable historical records, settler colonialism often validates and reaffirms its biased versions of past events by diluting its violent tendencies down into benign stories of pioneer homesteading.

For the settler nation-state that is the United States, a fairy-tale pathos of Manifest Destiny, American Exceptionalism, and patriotic frontier myth often displaces the historical accounts and oral traditions of the varied Indigenous cultures that one point freely lived and thrived across the land. These fabricated settler narratives then serve to continue the imperial project that was initiated some 500 years ago, whilst denying that it is actually taking place. Robyn Wiegman (1999) refers to such processes as 'white liberal disaffiliation,' and based upon the accounts gathered during the project, 'America' is serving as one of its practitioners par excellence. Consequently, the colonial hostilities that target Indigenous people and cultures today are banal and less visible, but nonetheless, they do remain.

Despite the numerous ongoing attempts of white settler societies to wash themselves clean of the people and cultures they deem inferior, they have not been able to do so. The resistance and resilience of Indigenous people all across the world, and in the case of this study what is now the United States, still remains an enduring part of the story. As Indigenous people continue to contest imperialism, confront cultural genocide, and refuse to

be abolished from existence altogether, settler societies then turn to disaffiliation as an alibi for the traumas they have inflicted and benefitted from. What disaffiliation produces on the part of the settler societies are spurious attempts to sterilize history and refute the suffering and anguish they have caused. And if settler societies fail to purge their pasts of the colonial violence they have perpetrated - they then simply try to forget.

However, the process of forgetting is no easy endeavour. It requires the constant expenditure of extensive amounts of energy, effort, and emotion on the part of a settler society, and results in a futile race to innocence that will never be realized. Despite the uselessness those claims to innocence and attempts at forgetting are imbued with, they do remain permanent tasks on the agendas of settler societies. Disavowal and negligence have thus become some of the most effective weapons that colonialism has at its disposal in contemporary times. It is evident that these weapons are discharged quite readily. Denial thus remains an omnipresent specter floating across the solemn fields of rural Southeast Kansas, just as it also permeates the highest and most powerful levels of government, military, and corporate industry within all colonial nation-states.

The indisputable reality that remains is that settler societies have the propensity to indifferently overlook their roles in profiting from, and reproducing, colonial suffering. Such propensities perpetuate white settler fantasies of nationhood, individuality, and benevolent altruism - assertions that remain an often-utilized tool that is frequently taken out of the colonial repertoire. But because settler societies still deem it necessary to employ such white supremacist rationalizations, it means that Indigenous resistance and decolonial struggle in the face of such imperial justifications also continues. In the final analysis, Indigenous people have survived colonialism's onslaught of forced enclosure, dispossession, ethnic

cleansing, and genocide for over 500 years – so it is safe to say that they will also survive colonialism's violent attempts at forgetting.

Chapter 5: Constructing the Individual

'We don't have time to fuck around out here ...time to go to work.'

-Rick, 27-year-old farmhand

Burning Daylight

I received the brusque comment above in jest (along with a firm pat on the back) from a smiling, long-time friend of mine from Southeast Kansas as we prepared to start work for the day. After being away for nearly seven years, I had just returned to my home community to conduct participant observation research regarding masculinity, neoliberalism, and rural space. The statement caught me off guard (much to the delight of both Rick and my co-workers), as I had not been exposed to such directives in quite some time. It caused me to falter a bit in my thoughts as I was still in somewhat of a 'researcher' frame of mind, or what was referred to several times by my friends as 'being up in my head too much.' Thus, after abruptly redirecting my behaviour so that I was no longer 'standing around and daydreaming,' nor was I 'burning daylight' anymore (as I was apparently prone to do from time to time), I began physically moving once again and started loading up the truck with gear and fencing supplies.

As we finished tossing in the dull, dented, and grime-caked tools, my current boss/long-time acquaintance started the choking, sun-faded, tan, 1987 Ford F-150 pick-up while the rest of us jumped into the back, took our respective seats along the truck-bed, gripped the rusty siderails tightly with our worn and beaten cowhide gloves, and headed down a dusty gravel road towards one of the many sprawling wheat fields and enclosed cattle

pastures that lay ahead. It was during this moment (and what would prove to be several to follow) that I began to further examine the statement I just been exposed to.



Illustration 7. ‘There’s a lot to love out here, I started working this land with my dad when I was eight years old.’ (A farmer commenting while standing in a wheatfield in Southeast Kansas)

I realized that the comment, while highly laden with gendered power dynamics, hierarchical subject positioning, and masculinist framings of capitalist production, did very much resonate and ‘make sense’ to me. I had grown up amidst such assertions. They had become normalized over the course of my childhood, teenage years, and early twenties, and, up until my introductions to feminist praxis, decolonial theories, and critical discourse studies, served for the most part as the edifice upon which my ideological perspectives were built. As it was my first morning of work back in Southeast Kansas, I quickly realized that

the discursive practices and material actions of masculinity regarding gender, work, and rurality in such a place are loaded with complex social relations (as well as a multitude of interpretations) that serve to reinforce both overt and veiled hierarchies of authority, control, and dominance. What follows is an examination of how hegemonic masculinity is culturally constructed through neoliberalism, rurality, and discourses of ‘work ethic’ that operate in Southeast Kansas.

Work Ethic, Neoliberalism, Place

Recent research on masculinities, work, and neoliberalism in geography has tended to centre upon the gendered power dynamics that exist amongst corporate hierarchies, transnational businesses, and companies engaged in the service and technology sectors (Pollard 2013, Cowen and Siciliano 2011, Yeoh and Willis 2005, Dixon and Grimes 2004). Often times, this focus analyzes the productive forces that neoliberalism has upon socio-spatial configurations found in concentrated sites of the city: business practices, marketing firms, boardrooms, corporate headquarters, universities, government offices, service industries, factories, sweatshops, maquiladoras, etc. and the impacts this has for people who find themselves in such environments (Mackintosh 2012, Hubbard 2004, McDowell 2003, Herod 2000). What can be added to such conversations are empirical investigations and in-depth analyses of masculinities found in rural spaces, and how they are mutually constituted by neoliberal ideology. Distinct from those studies that investigate corporate, academic, advertising, and military masculinities, this chapter adds to the literature pertaining to rural masculinities. It does so by shedding light upon the relationality of rurality to work, and how those elements of ‘country life’ influence people to think of themselves as ‘men’

In taking spatiality and masculinity into consideration, one of the major themes that arose upon analysing the empirical data gathered during my participant observation pertained to *place*, particularly ‘the country’ (i.e. rurality) and its relationship with work ethic. More precisely, ‘work ethic’ is framed as a source of pride, respect, and status for many men in Southeast Kansas. The ability (and individual decision) to be ‘a hard worker’ was emphasized in numerous conversations pertaining to labour, athletics, history, politics, fathering, family, and overall contributions to society. Another theme that surfaced in the majority of the interviews was identification *against* what it meant to be considered a hard worker, meaning that it was not uncommon to hear participants speak of feeling anger, resentment, and disrespect towards those individuals whom they judged ‘lazy,’ ‘dishonest,’ ‘freeloading,’ or ‘sucking off the welfare system.’ Within this socio-spatial framework this chapter concentrates on the subject of ‘work’ and how neoliberal subjectification, social conservatism, and hegemonic masculinity influence rural men in the social construction of what it is to be a ‘man.’

This chapter examines the formation of hegemonic masculinity as constructed in Southeast Kansas through a discussion of how masculine subjectivities – as socio-spatial configurations of cultural practices and ideals – produces, and are produced by, neoliberal, socially conservative perspectives pertaining to work ethic. The following analysis will thus highlight the influence of rurality in the production of localized hegemonic masculinity by focusing on gendered interpretations of embodiment, work, and competition. As such, each section will analyze how men use their bodies and rhetoric, both materially and discursively, in the ways they position themselves as masculine. More pointedly, what follows is an

examination of the discourses that are deployed by individuals in framing their actions and practices as guided by attempts to be ‘good,’ ‘hardworking,’ ‘respectable, and ‘men.’

Rural Masculine Embodiment

This section provides a basis for the suggestion that masculinity is partially produced, and reproduced, through the material performances and actions of the body. I follow a line of thought that suggests that any efforts made in conceptualizing masculinities needs to take note of the ‘expectations, norms, and assumptions that surround the body,’ and that the body is not naturally given, but socially constructed, reflecting society’s values and power relations (Little 2006, 183). From this perspective, I also argue as many feminist geographers have, that material actions are spatialized and that space is a functional mechanism in the navigation of embodied practices and gendered performances (Gorman-Murray 2013, Hopkins and Noble 2009, Berg and Longhurst 2003, Longhurst 1997). With this in mind, it is essential to note that the body itself is a relational space; a space that is a representation of identities and is inscribed with culturally produced meanings and values.

In taking this stance regarding the production of masculinity and its relationality to the body, I want to be clear to note that the body is not simply one side of a dualistic mind/body dichotomy, nor is it simply a passive receptacle that becomes unknowingly marked by social norms. It is important to steer away from reductionist, biologically deterministic, and essentialist perspectives that suggest that the body is imbued with innate and natural characteristics that cause particular behaviours and actions. It is also vital to realize that the body is not merely a blank canvas that cultural values are written upon and is in a process of ‘always becoming.’ I adhere to the critical perspective, as offered by

numerous social theorists and taken up by feminist geographers, that the body, and its relationship to gendered social constructs, is a key part in the reproduction, performance, and variability in the formation of masculinities and femininities (Nunn 2013, Rose 2011, Lawler 2008, Hopkins and Pain 2007, Longhurst 2005, Grosz 1994, Butler 1990, Foucault 1977).

In following this approach, I also note how power influences embodiment and masculinity as the body becomes a space where the expectations, along with the contestation and challenging, of social norms are made manifest through material practices. Bodily categorization based upon the false illusion of a female/male binary does indeed matter. More accurately, bodies matter not because they are the origin or genesis of masculinity and femininity; rather, they matter because they are the sites where masculinity and femininity are signified, implied, or assumed to be (Abrahamsson and Simpson 2011, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, Butler 2004, Longhurst 2001).

This theoretical framework similarly echoes Judith Butler's conceptualization of performativity (1990). Butler suggests that bodies are not merely the objects that are covered by gender, rather gender is 'a continuing performance between bodies and discourses' (Brook 1999: 14). As such, the body, and its association with gender, is a site of iterative social construction and individual agency that is discursively and materially produced by the complex interlocking relationships of social identifiers including race, class, age, nationality, religion, sexuality, ability, etc.

Using the concept of performativity as a theoretical lens thus allows us to recognize that biological sex is indeed tied up in the discursive production of gender, and as such, both sex and gender simultaneously govern the body, as well as interpretations of what it is, and what it should do (Butler 1993). One aspect of these relational dynamics that feminist

geography is positioned particularly well to explore is the mutual constitution of space and the body. This is due to the recognition that space and place influence how the body is used and regulated, whilst those spaces are simultaneously shaped and defined by the presence of the bodies within it (Simonsen 2013, Longhurst 2001, Gregson and Rose 2000, Rose 1993).

The interlocking composition of space and the body is particularly salient in specific regard to rural spaces and gendered bodies. In making the argument that space is shaped by embodiment, and that embodiment is shaped by space, scholars have turned to the rural as a rich context where bodily practices and gendered discourses produce cultural values and social norms (Pease 2010b, Hopkins and Noble 2009, Campbell, Bell, and Finney 2006, Little and Leyson 2003). For many capitalist, settler societies, images of the rural maintain a distinct place in the cultural milieu. The rural signifies a setting of bucolic, agrarian, serenity and is often perceived to be a site of natural purity, calm family life, idyllic safe communities, as well as a space where, what one participant I spoke with noted, ‘good, hard-working, salt-of-the-earth folks make honest livings.’ With images such as these in mind, I now turn to a discussion of how rural spaces reflect the cultural values that are practiced and embodied in Southeast Kansas.

Hard Work

‘...some guys are cut out for it, some guys ain’t.’
Jeffrey, 58-year-old mill worker

The notion of work ethic is intimately implicated in the production of masculinity in rural Kansas. How work ethic becomes a measure of manhood is varied and complex, but at the same time it does have generalizability in terms of the rhetoric participants used when defining it. One common theme that all the men mentioned in conversations is being able to

‘provide,’ ‘pull their own weight,’ and contribute in some way. The focus on the ability to provide is largely tied to capitalist production; attaining waged labour, working for a living, and what many of the participants note as ‘earning a paycheck.’ In short, the conversations we had surrounding work were neoliberal in form. In suggesting that the discussions were ‘neoliberal,’ I am suggesting that they were neoliberal in a socio-spatial and ideological sense of the term, rather than neoliberal simply as a set of specific economic strategies and policies (Berg 2012, Smith and Stenning 2010, Giroux 2008).

The perspective from which I work proposes, just as various scholars across disciplines have, that neoliberalism is not solely an arrangement of economic policies, but rather, it produces ways of thinking and configurations of practices that condition people to understand social relations as discrete, individual choices that can be described through the use of masculinist market metaphors (Fraser 2013, Peck 2011, Foucault 2010, Dean 2008, Lemke 2001). These metaphors (e.g. ‘pulling yourself up your bootstraps,’ ‘business as usual,’ ‘a rising tide lifts all boats,’ ‘being an entrepreneur,’ ‘competing to win,’ ‘letting the market decide,’ etc.) serve as hallmarks of neoliberal ideology and permeate the social spaces of Southeast Kansas. Several participants noted that success, achievement, competition, pride-of-ownership, and having an entrepreneurial spirit were important goals to have, part of being a ‘man,’ what they wanted to attain in life, and ultimately, is what earns one respect.



Illustration 8. ‘This is basically my bank account. Running a farm and owning property is just the same as managing any other business ...I think it’s a little more work for a guy actually, but I get to live the American Dream.’ (A 55-year-old local cattle owner commenting on the work he does.)

The ways in which these ambitions and ideals are embodied, and ultimately linked to masculinity and neoliberalism, are a result of the socio-spatial subjectification and material practices that exist in particular places (Larner, Fannin, MacLeavy, and Wang 2013, Berg 2011, Razack 2002). Such practices of neoliberal embodiment are observable in that the statements of men in rural Kansas in how they position themselves as subjects under the umbrella of nationalistic capitalism. The occupations (hydraulic fracturing, highway/bridge/building construction, heavy equipment operation, auto-mechanical, trucking

and transportation, factory work, logging, carpentry, and farming) of the participants were described on several occasions as jobs that ‘guys from the country’ (rural areas) typically do, and the work they performed was framed as being ‘what the country (United States) was founded upon,’ ‘what keeps the economy going,’ and what is ‘good for all Americans.’

In describing their work, many participants pointed out that the labour they performed was heavy, dangerous, hard, difficult, tiring, demanding, that ‘it was not for everyone’ and that it ‘separates the men from the boys.’ The majority of the men also noted that in their work they are ‘not afraid to get their hands dirty’ and describe their mentality towards work ethic as ‘blue-collar,’ ‘lunch pail,’ ‘roll-up-your-sleeves’ and that what it took to perform these tasks was someone who was hardworking, dedicated, tough, and who took pride in their work. As such, the narratives operating within the area shore up bonds of neoliberalism, masculinity, and rurality.

These constructions are also tied to discourses that extol individualism, self-reliance, and independence. Many of the men intimated that the ability and aptitude for ‘hard work’ was primarily something that someone had in them, or that they learned at an early age and made a conscious decision to embody and take upon themselves. Given this reliance upon the belief that people are assumed to be innately liberal subjects, the governmentality of neoliberalism (i.e. the internal discipline, self-control, and motivational drive that many of the men respectfully spoke of) suggests that ‘work ethic,’ ‘pulling your weight,’ and ‘holding down a job’ are personal choices that everyone has the option of making. These ideals are eerily reminiscent of the infamous liberal dogmatic decree of Margaret Thatcher who stated ‘...there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women...’ (Margaret Thatcher Foundation 2014). This interpretation of society, or rather entire dismissal of it,

negates any recognition of underlying structural socio-political relationships by omitting the oppressive forces of racism, classism, sexism, ableism, colonialism, nationalism, heteronormativity, and ‘othering’ that marginalize and subordinate multitudes of people on cultural and institutional levels.

The individualized ambitions mentioned by the participants in the context of work relate to notions of how masculine subject positions have become linked to capitalist economies. While I would like to steer away from archetypes and generalizations in terms of theorizing masculinity, it became clearly evident that in the discourses of Southeast Kansas that work ethic and employment provided spaces where men could define themselves as loyal, competitive, entrepreneurial, reliable, skilled, and independent, widely reminiscent of those characteristics of the ‘Self-Made Man’ (Kimmel 1996). Of the many values stressed, ‘being competitive’ featured prominently. One 30-year-old participant named George noted that his financial stability and ‘success’ in life was attributable to being raised in a competitive household. This is underscored in his statement:

Everything we did was competitive ...we were taught to win, we were taught to push hard, we were taught to be better than the other guy. I mean everybody likes to win, its in our blood. Being competitive is natural and I work hard in all that I do ...if a guy sticks with it long enough eventually all that hard work will pay off.

When asked whether he thought any form of privilege (race, class, gender, able-bodiedness, religion, nationality, etc.) was a factor in any of his success, George responded accordingly by stating:

No one gave me shit in life. I worked my ass off for all I have ...never complained, never was on welfare, and never asked for a damned hand-out. I got too much pride and self-respect.

These discourses that exalt the capacity to work hard as an individual in order to attain achievement, whilst simultaneously denying the privileges and benefits of colonial, white, masculinist supremacy, further reinforce neoliberal ideology by reducing social relations to the product of individual actions and decisions. Consequently, any form of collective social order that could potentially be based upon mutual aid, public welfare, equitable redistribution, and communalism remains anathema to the neoliberal ethos governing capitalist settler societies.

Hetero-Patriarchy

As noted earlier, the rural has particular implications in terms of how men use their bodies and how differing spaces are negotiated. Literature pertaining to rural masculinity up to this point has focused primarily on the association that masculinity has with rural space (predominantly nature) by concentrating on the connections that images of remote, secluded, landscapes have with ideas surrounding of hegemonic masculinity (i.e. control, assertiveness, domination, and power) (Little 2002, Campbell 2000, Brandth 1995). There is also research suggesting that the countryside is a liberatory sanctuary of queer eroticism, in that the rural can be theorized as a place of unregulated purity where non-conformist sexualities can be freely practiced and seek refuge (Kayzak 2011, Little 2003, Bell 2002, Bell and Valentine 1995). This section will add to the growing body of literature examining how rural social spaces and masculinity mutually constitute heteronormative subjectivities.



Illustration 9. ‘This reminds me that the Lord is always looking down on us ...it really is God’s country out here...’ (A 29-year-old local resident describing Southeast Kansas.)

In rural Southeast Kansas hegemonic perspectives pertaining to bodies are heavily influenced by conservative Christian doctrines, and thus rely upon unspoken conventions of compulsory heterosexuality. More specifically, sexualities and bodies are identified *against* each other, and the prevailing discursive constructions employ the use of taken-for-granted male-female binaries that presume that the male body desires the female body, and that female bodies are incomplete without the unifying bond of its male counterpart. The normalization of heterosexuality for rural Kansas is mainly rooted in the Christian ideal that monogamous, marital, and procreative sex is the ‘natural, moral, and correct’ type of sex. As

a result, discussions surrounding sexualities that are gay, bisexual, queer, or non-conforming are pathologized, pitied, denigrated, and in some cases vilified. The heteronormative, oftentimes homophobic, regimes of truth governing sexuality are highlighted in the statement of Jesse, a 28-year-old, who noted:

I do not think you are really a man if you want cock, you know ...that is something that women should want. ...it is just not right to want to take it in the ass. It is not a mechanical fit, God did not make us that way – just look at biology and nature.

At a fundamental level the reliance of binary oppositions in theorizing bodies and sexualities reaffirms hierarchies that frame heterosexuality as ‘right/natural,’ and label anything else as ‘wrong/abnormal.’ I also came across numerous underlying patriarchal suggestions that the male body is thought to be dominant and assertive, while the female body is in want of, and lacking, a penis. This is evident in the statement of Chris, a 44-year-old who suggested:

...well, womenfolk have a clock ticking you know. They get older and want to start making babies. Nothing wrong with that, but they need a good, strong, man to take care of them and give them what they need ... if you know what I mean (laughs). I don’t reckon a fag is much good for that at all.

From a statement such as this, it can be noted that the dominant perspective regarding male bodies is that if they are not ‘giving them (women) what they need’ that they are not fulfilling their purpose. As such, any attraction, stimulation, or desire of a male body that is not directed at a female body is consequently positioned as ‘different,’ or more specifically, abject, dysfunctional, or flawed. These perspectives were widespread throughout the majority of the interviews conducted, as nearly all of the men I spoke with regarding

sexuality noted that gay, lesbian, and any non-hetero sex was ‘unnatural,’ ‘abnormal,’ ‘wrong,’ or ‘a sin.’

These normalized ‘truths’, predominantly established through conservative interpretations of white setter imposed Christian dogma, highlight how ideas of morality (particularly when targeting the body and sexuality) that naturalize procreative heterosexuality ultimately position any other sexual activity as aberrant and corrupt, and thereby situate such acts on the periphery of cultural acceptance and inclusion. As a consequence, the social customs, traditions, and laws that govern sexuality through the commonplace practices and everyday spaces of rural Kansas routinize and prescribe heteronormativity. This is particularly salient in constructions of hegemonic masculinity as can be highlighted in the statement of Fred, a 33-year-old participant, who noted:

I just do not understand gays. It is not what we were created for and it is not what men are supposed to do ...I guess they cannot really help it, but in reality, it is not right and it is their cross to bear. At the end of the day they will have to answer for their choices when they meet their maker.

Statements such as these, when reaffirmed as conventional, underscore how pervasive heteronormative subjectivities are in the area by emphasizing that sexuality, particularly anything not heterosexual, is deviant and something to be controlled, disciplined, and ultimately punished.

Over the past 20 years, feminist and queer theories within the discipline of Geography have been concerned with how non-hegemonic sexualities are marginalized across space, as well as how assumptions reaffirming bodies as either distinctly male or female are spatialized (Lewis 2013, Myrdahl 2013, Gorman-Murray 2009, Browne 2006, Oswin 2004, Binnie and

Valentine 1999, Knopp 1992). Taking up on this research, the results I of what I discovered in rural Kansas sheds light on the fact that bodies that are intersex, queer, or vary from cisgender norms widely remain subordinated and pushed to the social periphery. Instances in which interviews touched upon the topic of people who have intersex conditions quickly produced responses that centred on pathology and pity. Walter, a 22-year-old speaking in a focus group, summed up the general perspective of the participants regarding intersex people when he noted: 'I understand some people are hermaphrodites, and I feel bad they were born that way, but they have ways to fix it now.' He later went on to state:

I feel bad for them (people who are intersex), and I know if I were that way I would feel like I was not man enough you know ...I mean seriously, I do not think you could work as hard, or take a hit ...and what girl is going to want a guy like that? Seems like it would be embarrassing.

When asking Walter to elaborate on what 'taking a hit' meant, he noted that it applied to playing football, and more generally, fighting and physical strength. He explained that (American) football was an important part of growing up in the area and that one had to be 'tough, strong, and physical' in order to succeed in it. He continued by stating:

They (people who are intersex) just would not fit in. I think being born abnormal and having woman parts is weird and that everyone would probably notice. No one may say anything to be nice about it ...but I just don't think that type of thing ...or set up ...or whatever, would be able to as much as a normal guys body.

When queried why someone who was intersex would not 'fit in,' he said it was because 'hermaphrodites are so different.' Walter also explained:

I don't think most guys around here would be violent or hurt someone like that, but they would definitely get made fun of a lot and have to take a lot of shit. Probably get called a fag or a queer ...especially in school, at work, or out at the bar, but I think most of it would just be good-natured ribbing – person would just have to have a thick skin you know.

Through exclusionary and oppressive statements such as this we can see how the body's corporality becomes directly tied to conceptions of gender, and more expressly masculinity, particularly in and across spaces where masculinity is ascribed, reproduced, and monitored by other men. Such comments also highlight the interlocking nature of compulsory able-bodiedness, heterosexuality, and individualistic notions of work ethic, thereby exposing neoliberalism and embodiment as intimately enmeshed, and mutually constitutive.

Competition and the (neo)Liberal Subject

Ironically, many participants did stress the importance of their 'tight-knit community,' however, many did so by suggesting that the community would be stronger if individuals looked out for themselves by being competitive, working hard, not complaining, and not expecting a free ride. Thus, discussions of the 'community' come down to scenarios in which individuals perform, or not do not perform, particular practices typically associated with religion, employment, and for many male participants, football. Several participants suggested that the community was safe and tight-knit because they learned their values at an early age from their parent's (in many cases their father's) work ethic, through the guidance of the church, and the 'life lessons' they learned playing football. One 31-year-old participant named Steve noted:

Some of the most valuable lessons that we learned in life came on the football field. We learned discipline, we learned what hard work was, we learned that we all had to do our individual job if we wanted to succeed, and most importantly - we learned to compete.

This emphasis placed upon self-discipline, competition, and individualism is thus very prominent in the construction of masculinity in rural Kansas, and oftentimes those markers of masculinity are tied to neoliberalism in very subtle and hidden ways. As a result of the covert influence that discourses of competition have in producing neoliberal subjects, men are persuaded to engage in alpha-status seeking, hierarchical practices. Carl, a 64-year-old participant, elaborated on success in life when he stated:

I learned from an early age that if you are going to succeed in life you have to look out for yourself ...you have to pull yourself up by your bootstraps to make a go of it. That goes for all walks of life. If you want to be a stud on the football field, if you want to do right by the Lord, if you want a good job, if you want to be a good father, if you want to be respected; you got to put in the work. No one is going to do it for you. There are a lot of people out there nowadays who want something for free ...not much honour in that.

A statement of this nature highlights how masculinity is scrutinized across contrasting social spaces (i.e. the football field, the church, the workplace, the home) in rural Kansas. These perspectives also show us that spatialized hierarchies of masculinity are actively reiterated and surveilled across rural contexts. As a result of the association of masculinity with place, male bodies become positioned as subjects that are implored to remain obedient to certain practices and ideals so as legitimate themselves as men. Consequently, the practice of

competitively ‘earning respect’ becomes a vital part of the socio-spatial production of hegemonic masculinity.

Pride and Tradition

Men in Southeast Kansas hold ‘pride and tradition’ in high esteem. The reverence and veneration offered to both was consistent amongst participants, and each was regularly noted as being of high importance to the community. Two rural spaces in particular where pride and tradition were passed down from generation to generation were described as *fields*. One field related to athletic competition, as many participants spoke of how they learned the value of hard work, as well as ‘a lot about life in general,’ on the football (or practice) field. The other field reflected upon by many participants related to economic agricultural production (wheat, corn, soybeans, hay, etc.).

Nearly all the participants interviewed had spent at least some time in their childhood or adolescent years working in rural spaces; on farms, bucking hay, fixing fences, tending to livestock, or doing maintenance repairs on equipment (tractors, combines, bushhogs, farmtrucks, etc.). Through their experiences of ‘working out in the fields’ they maintained the perspective that hard work was cultivated in rural countryside, that it was part of a rural tradition, and that being from the ‘country’ is something to be proud of. These discursive rural badges of honour were evident in a variety of the statements from most participants, and summed up aptly by Bruce, a 66-year-old who noted:

Growing up out in the country you learn what hard work is when you are young. Hell, we were probably doing chores from the time we could walk.

When we got to junior high and high school we would go help out in the fields

...it was backbreaking work, but I will tell you what - we were all better for it. It kept our priorities straight, we learned the value of a dollar, and we could go to sleep at night knowing we were earning our keep. Most everybody around here knows what its about, that is what I like about this area, guys know how to man-up and work.

This statement also sheds light on the disciplinary capitalist practice of ‘learning the value of a dollar,’ as well as the (neo)liberal expectation that individuals ‘earn one’s keep.’ Such regulatory rhetorical clichés have become naturalized across many settler colonial ruralities, and in the case of Southeast Kansas, they have consequently become obligatory rites of passage for men. Bruce’s comment also exposes how masculine subjectification is intimately associated with the practices that male bodies perform in rural spaces. The individualized actions associated with economic production, masculinity, and performing work are reaffirmed as being an inherent part of ‘growing up out in the country.’



Illustration 10. ‘I took this because it is where we learned to work ...try finding an office like this anywhere else.’ (A 43-year-old local farmer describing a field in Southeast Kansas.)

The other 'field' where masculinity is legitimized is the (American) football field. Based on my interviews and focus groups, it was evident that football is a site where a man can earn a great deal of respect, or ridicule. As several critical scholars have noted, the places (locker-rooms, practice fields, workout facilities, weight rooms, conditioning camps, etc.) associated with sports and athletics become concentrated spaces of masculine subject positioning (Kidd 2013, Anderson 2009, Guttman 2006, Majors 2001, Gems 2000, Messner 1990).

In discussing the prominence of football Earl, a 32-year-old who graduated from the local high school, explained that 'young guys' benefit from football because they learn 'valuable lessons' that can be applied to all things in life regarding 'discipline, hard work, and dedication.' He noted that these values were bestowed upon them from coaches, as well as upperclassmen (older adolescents also attending the same school). Earl noted that coaches and upperclassmen were 'the guys who came up before us and set high standards,' as well as 'the men who taught them how to compete.' He continued by emphasizing:

The practice field is where you find out what you are made of, it is where you learn who you are deep down inside ...and it is where you find out what guys you can count on, what guys can produce, and what guys will puss out.

Earl's statements demonstrate how the characteristics of productive neoliberal subjects (self-reliant, individually disciplined, conditioned by obedience to hierarchical authority) are typical qualities that are needed in order to succeed, compete, and 'toughen-up' in life. The rhetoric employed by participants also accentuates how the discursive formations found in spaces of American football rely upon gendered and oppressive masculinist ideals.

As used in the quote above, the sexist notion of ‘pussing out’ was brought up in several interviews, and in rural Southeast Kansas, it carries heavy social repercussions. Such repercussions were reflected in many conversations through normative statements that suggested that ‘being a puss’ was *not* what a male body should do. Glenn, a 46-year-old participant, stated that adolescents who could not overcome the physical and mental challenges of football practice, ‘two-a-days’ (training sessions that are held in both morning and afternoon sessions daily), or the off-season strength and conditioning program were ‘pussies who couldn’t take it.’ Another 30-year-old participant named David referenced adolescent males who did not remain on the team by stating: ‘Quitters are the worst ...I can’t respect a guy who quits.’ And finally, one participant named Tom expressed his dismay for ‘quitters,’ and the negative association it has with femininity, by suggesting:

That is one of the worst things you can do – a *man* does not just quit. Plain and simple – it’s a total bitch move. And like the old saying goes: ‘Quitters never win.’

The sexist discourse of football surrounding discipline, competition, and dedication; and its association with aggression and a capacity for violence; emphasizes how gender identities are relational, and how they are individualized. More specifically, as several feminist theorists have noted, these statements also show us that masculinity is defined in opposition, and relation, to femininity/female bodies, as well as other masculinities (Hopkins 2009, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, Longhurst 2000, Mac an Ghaill 1996). In this way, football becomes a social space where the ideals of neoliberalism are covertly reproduced and deceptively interlock with the hegemonic practices of masculinity (asserting power, control, aggression) thereby reinforcing social hierarchies and gender regimes.

The hierarchies that result suggests that gendered subject positions and bodily practices that are *not* masculine are flawed, lacking, incomplete, and weak. Consequently, anything perceived as ‘feminine’ is heavily regulated, ridiculed, and denigrated, which in turn reinforces the patriarchal notion that what men do as work is more significant, logical, and reasonable, than what women do as work. These notions, when historically and spatially accepted, lead to a devaluation and dismissal of the day-to-day, socially reproductive work that women typically do. The implication is that if one fails as a man, then the category they naturally fall into that is below the rank of ‘man’, that being, anything associated with ‘woman.’



Illustration 11. ‘I owe a lot to Coach ...he taught what it meant to be a man, he was a good leader.’ (A 30-year-old construction worker commenting on his experience playing football. The photo is of a preseason training camp session held for the local high school football team)

Several participants also reminisced about their time on the football field and the satisfying feelings they got when using their body for physicality and asserting dominance over other men. This involved comments describing the use of the body in ‘making a good

hit,' 'putting it to someone,' and 'lighting someone up.' Anthony, a 47-year-old participant, suggested that the perennial success that the local football team enjoyed was due in part to the condition that men (male bodies) were in as a result of the community's old-fashioned sense of work ethic:

When you think about it, most of us were 'hard.' We grew up eating meat and potatoes, we busted our asses in the summers, and we earned most of our victories in the weight room and practice field. Our coaches made sure of that. Looking back, it was probably the best shape most of us have ever been in. The older guys on the team set a good example for us, they were good leaders ...we were basically just bunch of fired-up country boys out there looking to bust heads and kick some ass.

Another 58-year-old participant named Ben picked up on Anthony's point by emphasizing the importance of football when he stated:

It is all about pride and tradition ...you want something to hang your hat on, you want to leave a legacy behind, and at the end of the day, you want to be satisfied with what you did.

Ben went on to explain that the success of the local football team was something that galvanized the community, brought people closer together, and is where 'boys learned to be men.' Several other interviews and focus groups addressed the proud tradition of football in the community by valorising the rural patriarchs (i.e. fathers, older brothers, school board members, local business owners, and most significantly coaches) that passed down such traditions. As can be seen in the statements of the participants, the ritualistic customs of football centre upon how men regulate their bodies and emotions, and the ways in which they

are individually disciplined under the shadows cast by those ‘men’ and ‘leaders’ who came before them.

Bitching and Complaining

The patriarchal regulation of masculinity does not come without consequence, particularly when enmeshed with neoliberal ideals in the arena of paid employment. Vince, a 34-year-old participant, when asked how respect is earned in the workplace, as well as why it carried so much weight, noted:

Some guys bitch a lot about having to work, some guys don’t. I mean, if you do not want to do the work then don’t sign up for the fucking job – it’s as simple as that ...I don’t have a lot of respect for guys who complain. They will never make foreman or go anywhere in life. Plus, if I wanted to hear someone bitch all the time I’d just go work up in the office with the secretaries. I listen to enough complaining at home.

What is particularly interesting about Vince’s statement is that it offers ‘respect’ to individuals who submit to the rules, dictates, and regulations of workplace managers, hierarchical supervisors, and on-the-job ‘foremen’. It also shows us that if one does not acquiesce to the desires of capitalist production, they face the prospect of being labelled as someone who ‘bitches,’ are not afforded respect, and face scrutiny from co-workers. Also of note in the quote above is the assumption that women are naturally more inclined to ‘bitch and complain.’ This became evident because upon asking who the secretaries were, I found out they were four women, to which Vince followed up by saying ‘you know how women get.’

I also inquired as to what ‘complaining’ Vince had to listen to at home. He stated that his wife gave him ‘grief’ about not contributing to unpaid domestic labour (‘cleaning the house, vacuuming, folding clothes, women’s shit like that’), spending too much time with his ‘buddies,’ as well as the amount of ‘drinking’ (alcohol) and ‘chewing’ (tobacco) he did. Instances such as these, in which men referenced being scrutinized for non-contributions to domestic labour, and then who subsequently derided it, arose in numerous (it should be noted, not all) my conversations.

Based on these discussions, as well as subsequent interviews, it is evident that the masculinist discourse operating in rural Southeast Kansas implies that women are naturally more sensitive, emotional, and even hysterical. This regime of truth, when collectively reaffirmed across varying social spaces by men, re-establishes a gendered hierarchy – a hierarchy that is reductionist and essentializes women and femininity into a category thereby situating them as subordinate to men and masculinity. Over time, and if prevalent across a wide array of local places, these patriarchal assumptions become naturalized within the communities (as well as entire regions) where they operate. The suggestion that women are inherently less able to repress their emotions, as well as the idea that they are innately more irrational in both the workplace and home, have thus become normalized cultural perspectives across numerous social spaces in rural Southeast Kansas.

The Emotive Contradictions of Masculinity

It should also be mentioned, that not all men in Southeast Kansas engaged in discursive and material practices of masculine supremacy. As critical research has shown, identity ‘isn’t founded on the notion of some absolute integral self’ (Hall 1993:137), thus

essentialist framings of ‘men’ as a homogenous category is reductionist and can produce negative results in itself (Talbot 2008, Cleaver 2003). Numerous feminist scholars have also noted that in some settings it is not uncommon for men to candidly speak about emotions, affect, and feelings (Coen, Ofliffe, Johnson, and Kelly 2013, Aitken 2012, Smith Davidson, Cameron, and Bondi 2012, Barlett 2006, Parr, Philo, Burns 2004, Laoire 2002, Pease 2000).



Illustration 12. ‘I took this one because it reminds me of the books we read about Kansas when we were in elementary school ...the flowers, sunset, and the clouds sum up the countryside here.’ (A 54-year-old local resident who grew up in the area.)

Several participants in Southeast Kansas spoke quite tenderly and with sensitivity about their relationships, the affinity and appreciation they have for their partners (all women in this particular project), their desire for intimacy, and the love they have for their families. While men were willing to engage in these discussions surrounding emotion, attachment, and vulnerability, they often did so privately, and without any other participants present. The tone that was taken in focus groups (all that consisted of three or more men in a group setting) surrounding emotions and experiences with their partners, and women in general,

became much more sexist, oppressive, and hierarchical. This is highlighted by the discussion I had with a 36-year-old participant named Jeff regarding a relationship he was in with a woman that ended abruptly and without expectation. When speaking to Jeff individually he stated:

When she decided to leave I was totally surprised. It hurt and confused me at first because I tried to treat her right, but I guess there were some things about me that were not so great. I still think about her from time to time ...she is the only woman to ever really break my heart.

In a subsequent focus group, Jeff described the situation in the following manner:

The crazy bitch could not make up her mind so things did not work out. I think she ended up whoring around. You know how women get, sometimes they get so caught up in their emotions they don't appreciate a good man when they have one.

While such dynamics are not generalizable to every situation, the diametric and polarized perspectives that Jeff spoke of emphasizes the capacity of male peer group policing to influence the narratives that men construct. The contrasting accounts of what happened in the relationship also underscores the masculinist panopticism and unspoken surveillance that Jeff felt as he was not comfortable honestly sharing his underlying emotions openly. This reluctance was primarily due to the presence of other men in the room, as clarified to me later by Jeff. Interestingly, several other participants who spoke in similar contradictory narratives regarding emotions and relationships later noted the same phenomenon, and went on to explain their inconsistent accounts and hesitations in sharing was due to not wanting 'to catch hell' or 'deal with bullshit.'

Consequently, the denial, repression, and disavowal of emotional vulnerability and personal insecurities that heterosexual men experience is heavily regulated across particular rural spaces. The rules governing what men can say/not say, as well as what they can feel/not feel, are typically policed and enforced by other men. In light of this compulsory self-surveillance, it can be gathered that men in Southeast Kansas are expected to remain stoic, calm, and collected in the face of pain, grief, and sorrow (especially in contexts in which emotions apply to experiences with women), so as to bolster their masculine subject positions.

Holding your Liquor

Another practice often tied to the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity is alcohol consumption (Jayen, Valentine, and Holloway 2011, Carrington, MacIntosh, and Scott 2010, Alston and Kent 2008, Campbell 2000). In rural Southeast Kansas, drinking alcohol, in addition to the spaces where it is consumed, serve as important factors in the formation of social bonds for the majority of the participants. When asked about alcohol, all the participants stressed that the ability to ‘hold your liquor’ was something that young men learned from an early age, whether they drank or not. For the participants who did consume alcohol, the average time when they noted actively seeking it out and getting ‘drunk,’ or a ‘heavy buzz,’ was grade seven, an average age of around 13.



Illustration 13. A series of photos shared by participants from Southeast Kansas.

Of particular interest was the tie that consuming alcohol had to working. In conversations about the reasons why they drank, the men often discussed the reasons primarily in terms of deserving it and rewarding themselves. The commonplace and pervasive consumption of alcohol in Southeast Kansas is summed up quite aptly by the account of one 55-year-old participant named Ed who stated:

Oh, I do not think it is as bad as everybody makes it out to be. I mean, I drink after work most days, more during the summer, a guy has got to cool off somehow, so I will work on a twelve pack or so after work into the evenings.

I don't get shitfaced or sloppy drunk ...I just drink to relax a bit, helps take the edge off after a hard days work.

Ed's quote underscores a point several participants noted during interviews regarding alcohol use, the point being that for them drinking is 'not a problem.' Almost all the participants mentioned 'problems' they had seen, and in some cases experienced, from alcohol. These ranged from 'guys thinking they were bullet proof' to facing criminal charges of DUI (Driving Under the Influence), DWI (Driving While Intoxicated), MIP (Minor In Possession), to much more serious and traumatic events such as the paralysis and death of local friends, family members, and acquaintances. When asking a focus group of five male participants whether alcohol consumption by men was a noticeable problem in the area, one 44-year-old participant named John summed up the general perspective for the group when he stated:

There are a few guys around with alcohol problems, just a handful ...they will get aggressive, or fly off the handle, stick their chest out, make a bunch of noise, and shoot guns - stupid shit like that. Every once in a while you'll hear about a guy hauling off and hitting his wife you know, that shit does not fly around here though. I mean, sure, we can put a few back, but we are not hurting anyone with it, and to be honest, I do not think one guy here is an alcoholic.

As a result of statements such as this it can be gathered that the embodied regulation of emotion, physicality, and aggression is critical in determining what is suitable masculine practice in the context of male homosocial bonding involving alcohol. Many of the discussions surrounding alcohol were prefaced with rationalizations regarding why many of

the participants did drink, with a strong emphasis on the fact that it did not create ‘problems’ for them.

Several participants also noted that drinking did not make them ‘violent;’ however, there were numerous stories in which participants described fights, brawls, and physical altercations where they did engage in violent acts. Thus, men who contradictorily identified as not being violent as a result of drinking, often described the nature of the alcohol-involved violence they engaged in as ‘necessary,’ ‘deserved,’ and ‘appropriate.’ Accordingly, men who did become violent in spaces where alcohol was a factor disaffiliated from it by associating blame to men who ‘could not hold their alcohol,’ were ‘popping off at the mouth,’ or who were ‘stirring up shit they could not handle.’

More specifically, violence that occurred as the result of a potent mix of hegemonic masculinity and alcohol consumption took place because of the failure of certain male bodies to regulate their emotions and behaviours in socially acceptable ways as determined by other men. As such, the participants who noted being involved in violence oftentimes left it up to themselves to police what was acceptable for other men to do and say when under the influence of alcohol.

The consumption of alcohol mentioned by many of the participants was also linked to neoliberal ideals. This was evident as a result of the justifications men gave for their drinking habits. Typically, the reasons they consumed alcohol directly related to having ‘worked hard and earned it.’ They noted that drinking was regularly done at ‘beer thirty’ (after work) in order to ‘shoot the shit,’ ‘blow off some steam,’ or ‘relax after a hard days work.’ Other contexts men spoke of involving the consumption of alcohol referenced leisure activities and normalized fraternizing including ‘watching a game’ (e.g. American football,

basketball, or baseball), golfing, playing cards, working on cars, gambling, or shooting ‘skeet’ (projectile targets shot with guns).



Illustration 14. ‘I took these because they sum up a typical day ...a lot of guys I know bust their ass out here then have a few cold ones after work. That’s just the way it is around here.’ (A 44-year-old farmer describing photos taken of the back of his farm truck.)

Participants also noted consuming alcohol on their days off and in contexts relating to homosocial recreational activities that were often described as ‘typical guy stuff,’ or as one 19-year-old participant named Ray noted, ‘sometimes we crack a few cold ones when we are doing stuff that is in our DNA.’ When asked to elaborate on what those activities were, Ray as well as three other men in the focus group, listed fishing, camping, hunting, watching sports, playing pool, hanging out at the bar, ‘country cruising’ (leisurely driving around the outskirts of town on gravel roads), shooting guns, doing yardwork, and ‘fixing thing and building shit’ amongst the pastimes encoded in rural male DNA.

As can be seen from these notions, the rural places where alcohol is consumed factor significantly in the construction of localized masculinities. Therefore, it is across and within spaces and places where rural masculinities become embodied, reaffirmed, and made hegemonic. Consequently, ‘the good ole boys’ (as Ray referred to himself and his friends in Southeast Kansas) reassert their taken-for-granted male supremacy through claims of having ‘worked for it’ and because of the fact that ‘boys will be boys.’ It is via discourses such as these that neoliberal ideology, masculine subjectivities, and conceptions of the rural are mutually constituted and shore up each other through subtle, yet incredibly influential, discursive practices and material actions.

Localized Masculinities

As can be seen in Southeast Kansas, hegemonic masculinity, neoliberalism, and rurality all play significant roles in the socio-spatial subjectification occurring in localized spaces. Place, as well as the specific sites and locations of where masculine actions are preformed, all profoundly influence the how ‘men’ use their bodies in relation to work, sexuality, and consumption. In this way, local space(s), perceptions of rural masculinity, and the ideals of neoliberalism interlock and serve to reinforce normalized conceptions of individualism, heteronormativity, American nationalism, and hierarchical gender orders.

While many aspects of the status quo in Southeast Kansas are indeed oppressive when taking into consideration the lack of inclusion and diversity resulting from the hegemonic social relations that exist, there also remain instances in which those marginalizing forces are problematized and resisted. In trying to answer questions surrounding *what masculinity is*, all that can be fully determined is that no undisputed answer

completely exists. There are tendencies and propensities operating in the rural area that certainly are reactionary, fundamentalist, colonial, and sexist; but after analyzing the dynamics at play in the production of masculinity for the participants living there, it remains clear that accurately examining masculinity is an iterative process contingent upon the fluidity of space, as well as localized contexts. It is with this insight that it should be stressed that critically assessing the practices and perceptions of masculinity can expose, challenge, contest, and transform the socio-political traditions responsible for masculinist inequalities.

It is in this line of thinking that researchers should continue to uncover the banal, unquestioned, and spatialized hierarchical social patterns that reproduce oppression across all scales. In order for the field of critical research on masculinity to progress, a particular emphasis should be placed upon the privileges and benefits that result from masculinist colonial practices and discourses. Doing such allows researchers to more fully recognize the historical, social, and spatial processes that sustain systematic of injustice in which people, and populations, are left disadvantaged and marginalized due to the discursive social borders of race, class, gender, sexuality, able-bodiedness, and nationality.

By refocusing attention to the practices of localized masculinities, the policing of bodies across differing social spaces, and the supremacy and entitlement gained from engaging in masculine acts, researchers will be able to further challenge and dismantle the unbalanced power structures that are sustained through silence, indifference, and complacency.

Chapter 6: Gun Rites

'You want to know when a gun becomes dangerous? When someone tries to take it from me.'

-Ryan, 34-year-old truck driver

Power, Control, and Dominance

Recent literature has noted the symbolic meaning that guns have in the social construction of masculinity. Critical scholars have also highlighted how guns represent several attributes that are ascribed to what it means to be man: power, control, authority, forcefulness, and dominance (Kellner 2012, Stroud 2012, Melzner 2009). These links show the underlying principle that in the practice of masculinity owning a gun earns one masculine capital, or rather, handling a gun reaffirms that a 'man is man,' and knows how to show it. Such outward displays of what is commonly associated with manhood reinforce traditional conceptions of masculinity and reaffirm taken-for-granted assumptions of binary gender roles. This is particularly noteworthy in regional and local spaces as the assumptions of what men/women are supposed to do, and be, can largely be contextual and dependent upon the places where they exist (Gorman-Murray 2008, Bell 2006, Little 2002).

The body of literature regarding gun use and masculinity has steadily been increasing over the past years as media attention focuses on incidents involving shootings, violence, and death: Columbine, Virginia Tech, Lancaster County Pennsylvania, Fort Hood, Tucson Arizona, the death of Trayvon Martin, Aurora, Colorado, and Sandy Hook Elementary to name just a few (Muschert 2013, Kellner 2008). This body of work points to the association between possession of firearms and current cultural formations of masculinity and how the

image of the gun has become increasingly gendered (Stroud 2012, Leonard 2010). It also highlights how hegemonic masculinity is often implicated with gun ownership and how the political and economic conditions of particular places often create the perception that having gun ownership is a sign of maturity, power, life experience, and control for men (Felson and Pare 2010). The symbolic value of a gun is inextricably tied to the performance of hegemonic masculinity, particularly in rural areas, as the socially sanctioned characteristics associated with both are linked to authority, dominance, power, and independence.

In this chapter I explore how gun culture influences the subjectivities of men, and by using the concept of hegemonic masculinity, I examine how gun use reasserts traditional perceptions of manhood for white, working-class, men in rural Southeast Kansas. My research suggests that the interlocking nature of hegemonic masculinity, neoliberal ideology, and a history of colonial violence converge to produce discursive formations and material practices that reinforce white, masculine supremacy and normalize the possession, display, and use of guns. I also explore how race, class, gender, sexuality, able-bodiedness, nationality, and religion are tied to masculinity, gun ownership, and living in rural spaces.

More specifically, I investigate the widespread support of gun culture in rural Kansas and how gun use is endorsed by narratives men use in expressing their desire to uphold traditional family values, defend individual freedom, and protect what is rightfully theirs. In analyzing masculinity and its link to gun use from anarcha-feminist and decolonial perspectives it can be seen that such narratives serve as veiled discourses that sustain colonial white supremacy, neoliberal-capitalist ideology, and masculinist domination. I also seek to elaborate upon the significance that rural space has in the formation of local hegemonic

masculinities, and how discourses tied to masculinity and gun use is materialized through the everyday practices and actions of men.

Gun Culture and Hegemonic Masculinity

For my analysis of gun culture, I again turn to the construction of masculinities using R.W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity. As noted in chapter one, the term examines how and why some types of masculinity become a particular society's prevailing representation of what a man is, and does (Connell 2005, 1995). Connell (1995: 76) moves beyond focusing on men as a distinct category by stating that:

Hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations.

As was discussed in chapter one, this definition effectively moves the focus away from the notion that men form a homogeneous and static group, and concentrates on the premise that masculinities exist and are multiple in their forms.

Within the discipline of geography, several other scholars have also noted that the pluralistic nature of masculinity thus gives rise to hierarchal social relations in which certain masculine practices and ideas are legitimized and venerated, whilst other actions and beliefs are marginalized and subordinated (Hopkins and Noble 2009, Berg and Longhurst 2003, Jackson 1991). Connell has also emphasized the point that men are not capable of enacting the dominant form of masculinity all the time; rather, there are certain instances when men choose to engage in practices that are customarily seen as masculine, so as to affirm their status as a 'man.' What is important to note, is that the construction of social norms does not

allow all men to enact masculine practices, and those men who do engage in hegemonic practices cannot carry them out at all times (Connell 2005). In some contexts symbols of masculinity factor into the formation of hegemonic masculinity. In rural Southeast Kansas, one of those symbols is the gun.

It is also essential to underscore how masculinity, and the gun, are positioned against femininity, and men as a social category are afforded more power, influence, and material benefits than women. The inequitable distribution of power, influence, and material resources that result are what Connell defines as the ‘patriarchal dividend’ (Connell 1995: 79). Connell notes that the patriarchal dividend is a consequence of the social constructions of masculinity and femininity, and how masculinity is placed above femininity in many social contexts. She suggests that particular social conditions, in particular spaces, give rise to processes that produce an established set of behaviours that signify normal and natural ways of being masculine and feminine. In Southeast Kansas, part of the patriarchal dividend is accessed via gun ownership, as is evident in the statement of Earl, a 32-year-old participant, who stated: ‘owning a gun around here means something, not many people are gonna fuck with a guy who is carrying.’

In approaching masculinity as a concept that is dependent upon historical and spatial situations Connell also emphasizes the complex and fluid nature of masculinities, particularly the association it has with place (Connell 2005). Rather than suggesting that hegemonic masculinity is a static archetype, Connell approaches the meaning of the term as one that is indefinite, contradictory, and constantly shifting. Through taking a fluid perspective on masculinity, the classification of gender thus becomes disrupted, contested, and problematized due to the continuous interactions between the material and discursive acts

operating within particular spaces. My examination of masculinity in rural spaces seeks to illustrate how social hierarchies result from the relational nature of gender, and how gun use factors into such constructions.

Gender, Rurality, and The Gun

Another key element contributing to the formation of masculinities, as well as the associations they have with the gun, is the concept of the rural. Several scholars note the significance that rural spaces have for the geography of gender (Woods 2009, Cloke 2005, Little 2002). During my research project I investigated meanings of masculinity tied to gun ownership for men who reside in rural Kansas. Such an inquiry naturally lead to the question of what is meant by the ‘rural,’ and what association does the gun have with the rural. From a practical perspective the rural is most often considered to be what is not urban, or what many of the participants I interviewed who live in rural areas would say is ‘outside the city,’ or ‘in the country.’

As many scholars who study the rural have noted, definitions such as these, while carrying significant meaning for people who use them, remain ambiguous and vague (Woods 2012, Cloke 2006, Saugeres 2002). As suburban development, urban sprawl, and the consumption of natural resources continue at a steady pace, it is increasingly becoming difficult to make clear the boundary between what is urban and what is rural. Mike Woods (2012) notes that as the material boundaries between what were once distinctly urban and rural areas have gradually become more blurred and indistinct, what results is that the discursive boundaries between the two have become just as complex and imprecise.

What is helpful in determining cultural formations of what it means to be rural is turning to relational definitions of how the rural is identified, what it is associated with, and against what it is compared to. The rural is never static or fixed and definitions of it are most readily available through personal experience and by collecting narratives about the rural, which are particularly helpful for social scientists interviewing participants because what is perceived to be rural will change depending upon the location, the individuals who experience such places, and the communities and assemblages of people who are located in such spaces (Little and Panelli 2003, Pratt 1998). The information that exists about what is rural can be sought out, analyzed, and discussed by soliciting information from the people who define the rural, and by examining how such spaces are given meaning in relation to spaces that are not rural.

In much of the same way that definitions of masculinity are recognized as multiple and contextualized, the meaning of rural is now seen to exist along a continuum that changes depending upon time and place (Heley and Jones 2012, Pratt 1998). As a result, certain individuals, assemblages, and communities may self-identify as being ‘from the country’ or point to others who are ‘city-folk,’ but such labels are subjective in nature and not based on any set quantitative population or physical location. Rather, what constitutes being ‘rural’ is most accurately defined by the discursive and material practices, as well as symbols and representations, of the rural space in question. Conversely, those who are identified against what it means to be rural (e.g. ‘urban’ or ‘from the city’) are often defined how they are *not* like people who are seen as being ‘from the country.’ Consequently, urban/rural and city/country binaries are reproduced by the everyday practices and local discourses of people who self-identify as being urban or rural. As I will point to in the following sections, for

rural Southeast Kansas those representations of the rural often hinge upon masculinist discourses; one aspect of which includes the gun, as well as how it is used.

A large and growing amount of literature has put forth the perspective that steers away from dichotomizing the urban and rural, and suggests that current conceptualizations of space take note of the fluidity and ever-changing nature of the urban-rural divide (Heley and Jones 2012, Cloke 2006, Little and Panelli 2003). Once again, rather than having a distinct archetype for what is rural, scholars now speak of rural as a subjective and shifting term that is determined largely by the context where it is set (Gorman-Murray, Darian-Smith, and Gibson 2008, Bell 2006, Pratt 1996). This move from an objective, static classification of the rural has opened up understandings of the term by seeking out how it is practiced and given meaning through both material acts and discursive formations. It is with a focus on the practices and experiences of the rural, in conjunction with personal narratives of participants who live in such spaces, that I am primarily concerned with in my investigation of how guns and masculinity are conceptualized by men who reside ‘in the country.’

My research suggests that gun culture, hegemonic (rural) masculinity, and neoliberal ideology mutually reinforce one another, are not static, and exist in particular spaces at particular times. The empirical data that follows highlights how masculinity is enacted, practiced, and discussed in multiple ways, and is intimately tied to the local places within which it exists. In some instances this chapter depends upon the use of language that utilizes modernist epistemology that reinforces the existence of binary categories (men/women, heterosexual/gay, able/disabled, good/bad, etc.), but this is done so due to the fact that it is because those are the discourses that operate in such spaces. The gendered binary classifications that are used fluid, flexible, and should be placed along a continuum. The

understanding of what exists from the participants' perspectives, and from my analysis of gun culture in the rural, is subject to multiple interpretations.

The Crisis of Representation

In order to become more familiar with the relationship between gun use and masculinity I conducted fieldwork in an area of rural Kansas where I was (as we would say) 'born and bred' for the first 25 years of my life. The quotations, values, beliefs, practices, and actions of the participants are all things that I can relate to, and at one point in time may have even engaged in myself during my childhood, adolescent years, and young adulthood. I note this background because it is not uncommon to hear the voice of an academic author as being disaffiliated from the participants, their perspectives, and the empirical evidence that is acquired. As I still consider the research area as 'home,' and given that I was a part of the community for most of my life, I am nonetheless accountable for the perpetuation of some of the perspectives, norms, and practices that exist in the area.

As noted in the chapter three, being considered a 'local' in the small, rural space where I was living aided my research greatly as my previous experience with guns, growing up in the area, and already having been 'out shooting' with the participants in previous years eased their (as well as my own) anxieties surrounding gun use. Returning to my hometown to work, as well as to engage in recreational outings (some including firearms), signaled to the participants that I was familiar with the activities and discourses of the region and that I could 'fit in,' or, as one participant noted, it was 'not my first rodeo.'

As noted earlier, the community is predominantly Christian (Catholic), working-class, rural, and the politics that govern the population often align with socially conservative and

economically liberal perspectives. What results are hegemonic currents of highly individualized subjectivities in which the value of ‘handling yourself’ often serves as a discursive regulatory statement that earns one credibility, respect, and masculine status. The acts of my research that involved occasionally ‘going out shooting with the boys’ enabled me in building rapport with participants. It was during the course of this participant observation, as well as subsequent interviews, focus groups, and photovoice discussions that one of the major themes of the project arose that did happen to center upon gun culture. More specifically, the topics of gun use, gun rights, and gun ownership. Guns were ubiquitous in the area and mentioned in several conversations pertaining to recreation, history, politics, fathering, providing for the family, self-defense, protection, as well as individual rights, civil liberty, and personal freedoms. What follows is an analysis of masculinity and gun use as it pertains to the rural community I lived in during my time in Southeast Kansas.

Before delving into the empirical data that I gathered in the field, it is at this point that I want to stress and emphasize what many poststructural theorists discuss as the ‘crisis of representation’ (Nagar and Geiger 2007, Mansvelt and Berg 2005, Bondi 1997). The position I write from is biased with my own perspective and politics, and is an account from my standpoint and theoretical underpinnings. What I experienced and critique in regard to the social relationships of the area, as well as gun culture, is subject to scrutiny in itself. The interpretation that many of the participants may have regarding my analysis may very well be significantly different, and in addition, contested and challenged. It is important for me to note the potential trappings of, as well as steer away from, overgeneralizations and stereotypes in how men and gun culture are represented, characterized, and constructed in Southeast Kansas.

I have done my best to describe accurately and report what I experienced, and it should be noted that not all men in the area engage in the activities and language that is reported in this chapter (some actively resist the oppressive elements that are included in this account). In an attempt to be as transparent and fair as possible, it should simply be emphasized that participants' involvement in the practices and perspectives that follow are done for a variety of contrasting reasons depending upon their subject positions in relation to personal, cultural, and institutional influences. Accordingly, any mistakes, errors, or misrepresentations, are of course, my own. With that being said, this chapter, along with the following empirical evidence, concentrates on the topic of gun use and how the influence of neoliberal ideology, social conservatism, and hegemonic masculinity influence rural men in the reproduction of what it is 'to be a man.'

Protectors and Providers

Being considered a 'good family man' and fulfilling the role of 'protector and provider' of the home were major themes that surfaced in many of the interviews I conducted. The emphasis for men to be in a heterosexual relationship, and ultimately fulfill the duty of being a provider for the family, is well researched in current literature (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009, Pascoe 2005, Butler 1999). Heterosexuality is the compulsory norm that is the standard for men in the area. It is presumed as naturally what all men should be, and is perceived to be necessary in order for men to fulfill their role as men. Ryan, a 34-year-old participant, articulated such notions:

As a man it's my duty to make sure that my family is the most important thing and comes first. There are certain jobs that I have to do, and there are certain

jobs my wife has to do. God designed us that way, that's just the way it is. I can't have a baby, and she is not as strong as me ...so it's like we were made to be able to do different things. I'm not saying one is worse than the other, it is just natural for it to be that way. I do not try to control my wife or anything like that, but she knows that she is better cut out to do some of the mothering stuff, and I am cut out to do other things. I can work harder, I don't have to miss work to raise a baby, I can support the family by earning a paycheck and making sure they are safe. Maybe its just the way I was raised, but that's the way I see it...

Due to fact that the area I was living in is predominantly Catholic, the cultural norms governing the population overwhelmingly stem from conservative interpretations that Christianity takes on marriage (i.e. it is between a man and woman who are different in nature, it is permanent and recognized by God, and it is done for procreation and raising a nuclear family). The impact of these religiously sanctioned gendered binaries further reinforce rigid sex roles that validate the perceived roles that a 'man and his wife' must fulfill. It is from the pulpit that some of the most commonplace masculinist and patriarchal influences are given that implore men to reestablish traditional gender roles based upon static binaries.



Illustration 15: ‘All anybody needs in life is a good dog, a woman who can cook, a sharp knife, and a straight shooting rifle. It ain’t no shit. In that order.’ (A local resident displays his AK-47, used for protection, hunting, and recreation.)

A gendered hierarchy is formed with women, and what a handful of participants described as ‘womanly qualities’ (e.g. being emotional, nurturing, irrational, and often times fragile), positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy. Men, on the contrary, were typically described as being tough, rational, aggressive, and strong. Based upon this reasoning, which is supported by the pervasive conservative Christian doctrine in the area, the underlying message is that men are, and should be, the sole providers and protectors of the home and family. Women are situated as bodies to be owned; that are in need of protection and who

are deficient if not partnered with a man. John, a 44-year-old father of two, highlights these discursive formations when he states:

Part of making sure my family is safe and taken care of is to protect them, and if owning a gun helps me protect my wife and kids, as well as provide for them, then I'm surer than shit going to have one. Don't get me wrong, I know guns can be dangerous and all, but I took hunter's ed' (education) and I respect the hell out them. I keep them around just in case I ever need to use them cause you never know when a criminal may be on the loose, or all drugged up, or when a pervert may come sneaking around. It's those times when a guy has to 'man up' and protect what's his. And if that requires shooting some nutcase then that's what he's got to do.

One outcome of these discourses of conservative Christianity, capitalism, and masculinity is that in order to protect their families men often own guns as a way to fulfill the role of protector. Guns are viewed as one of the most powerful weapons that can quickly and easily be used when it comes to defending oneself, or one's family.

Several of the participants not only noted that they have guns 'just in case,' but also because they were living 'out in the country.' As a result of residing in rural areas, 'out in the country,' many participants are able to further justify owning firearms so as to protect 'what is theirs' from both possible criminals, and from other outside threats including wild, rabid animals and wandering stray vermin that may be diseased or attack their livestock, garden, or crops. Several theorists have suggested that the reasons men own guns are often times associated with disillusionment, powerlessness, and despair that they are facing in their social and economic situations (Page 2009, Cox 2007, Cook 2004, Resnick and Wolff 2003).

Despite such studies, from the perspectives of the participants, gun use is not an attempt to compensate for feelings of helplessness, insecurity, and vulnerability that may result from an exploitative position within a neoliberal capitalist labour market, rather, owning a gun serves a purpose and is a necessary tool that can be used to safeguard their family, possessions, and way of life.



Illustration 16: ‘I have around 20 ...I keep a loaded gun nearby at night just in case. I know a lot of people who do the same thing.’ (A local resident target shooting with a few guns from his collection.)

Woven into the fabric of the capitalistic and Christian beliefs regarding family protection and self-reliance is a set of guiding principles that afford men social status and masculine capital as a result of their participation in the paid workforce, their adherence to compulsory self-discipline (‘earning a paycheck for the family’), and the maintenance of a ‘competition-improves-us-all’ mentality. These practices and perspectives ultimately produce an everyday existence that valorizes standardized material production, rugged individualism, and self-

defense. Several geographers have noted how paid labour, capitalistic production, and being a part of the workforce are tied to notions of masculinity (McDowell 2011, Brandth and Haugen 2005, Longhurst 2000). To further explain the masculinist norms governing the rural space where the research was conducted, it is necessary to look at the development of neoliberalism within the United States, how economic well-being has been fused with individualism, the values of conservative Christianity, and as well as narratives of defense and protection.

For many of the participants, the discursive formations of neoliberalism and conservative Christianity have manufactured subjectivities that hold fast to the belief that what one does in life (or does not do) in relation to Catholic doctrine, work ethic, and the ability to provide, determines one's social standing, as well as what happens in the afterlife. As a result, many participants expressed a desire to be seen as 'successful,' 'good,' and 'respectable.' Several men noted that achieving these things is solely a matter of personal responsibility, is based upon the decisions they make, and is closely linked to religion. Such morally bound neoliberal subjectivities leave little room for factoring in the larger socio-political structures and cultural influences that impact the decisions people are allowed to make within society. The structural interlocking influences of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, age, and nationality that reproduce privilege and oppression within local communities often go unnoticed, are taken-for-granted, or are dismissed altogether.

In Southeast Kansas, the process of individualization, as well as the ascription of gender roles upon individual bodies, means that the role of 'protecting the family' generally becomes the duty of the man. This entrenchment of a masculinist subjectivity stems from socially conservative yet liberalized perspectives that suggest that the well-being of a family

is an extension of a man's dedication, commitment, and concern for his loved ones. This promotion of patriarchal neoliberalized social relations is a direct result of the indoctrination that community members are subjected to from clergy members, the colonial education system, and a corporatized media that endorses capitalistic ideals. The reification of an increasingly atomized mindset in which participants believe they are solely responsible for their own social position in life occurs. For men in rural Southeast Kansas, this is made manifest in their belief that they are in exclusive control of their own, as well as their family's ability to succeed and thrive. As the well-being of the family is a core value for many men in the area, the subsequent safeguarding of the 'wife and kids' is paramount. Owning a gun is thus understood as an act that ensures the protection of the family, and is simultaneously reaffirmed as a symbol of masculine power, conviction, and devotion.

Rites of Passage and Fathering

Various research has noted that gun ownership is closely tied to the role a man has in providing for his family, educating his children, and making sure to pass on knowledge, expertise, and know-how to future generations (Stroud 2012, Price 2011, Cox 2007). The role of the gun for many young children has become a prominent rite of passage and symbol of time spent with their father. In Southeast Kansas such narratives of father-son/daughter bonding are usually couched with qualifiers noting that safety and respect are first and foremost when handling guns.



Illustration 17: ‘Oh, it’s better nowadays for kids to learn how to respect a gun at an early age. We learned that when we were kids, and I think it just makes everything safer.’ (A participant commenting on a .22 caliber rifle that was a gift to his daughter.)

Several participants mentioned being taught (and teaching this to their own children) to ‘respect’ guns that firearms are to be used primarily for sport/hunting, and that gun handling caution is always stressed in order to ensure safety. These narratives serve to disaffiliate firearms from both violence, as well as the word ‘weapon,’ by positioning firearms as symbols of familial wisdom and ancestral skill. This discursive positioning of detaching guns from violence, and framing them as objects used for family bonding is highlighted in the statement of Ron, a 32-year-old participant who when asked about his thoughts on whether guns lead to violence stated:

I guess they can, but really I think of them as tools ...they can be used for good or bad. Personally, I have been around guns most of my life. Always been for shooting clay pigeons, target practice, or hunting. I, like most of the kids around town who hunted, took a hunters safety course and have always treated guns with great respect. My Grandad and uncle were the ones who got me into hunting and shooting. My uncle was in the military and both he and Grandad always stressed the importance of safety in handling guns. We never carried loaded guns in vehicles...we never had a shell in the chamber, and always kept the clip away from the gun so it would not go off accidentally. Most of the hunting I did was for deer, turkeys, doves and quail. That is why we had different guns – rifles for the bigger game, and shotguns for some of the smaller stuff. As for guns being violent ...guns can be fun, but they can be extremely dangerous ...most of what we do around here is safe stuff, we go out hunting or shooting, it's a way to get outside, relax, and get back to nature. It's just something that has been passed down through the generations you know. When we go out to hunting we are walking around on land that's been in the family since the 1800's, we use it and take care of it ...so hunting keeps that connection going. I have went out shooting with my dad, grandpa, uncle, and cousins over the years – still have a rifle that's been in the family for years - its something I'll pass on to my son, or my daughter if she's interested, and it's probably something they'll pass down as well.

As can be gathered from the quote above, the ownership and use of guns signifies a tie to family history, a link to past relatives, an appreciation for the land, and a connection to the

pioneer spirit of ancestors who settled the area. Such bucolic, sentimental images of guns function to whitewash settler colonialism and effectively negate the imperialistic genocide that was enacted upon Indigenous people during the time of settlement.

Such narratives successfully create a regime of truth that venerates colonialism and expresses admiration for white settlers with guns. For men in rural Southeast Kansas, the regime of truth serving as the area's local history has been codified with images of settlers taming a chaotic landscape into a tranquil agrarian homestead. The ties to the past that men reference in speaking of the region's frontier history, as well as the gun culture that is a part of that history, veil the underlying colonial violence that eventually displaced the local Indigenous population (Osage Nation). Several participants also spoke fondly about the number of previous generations of ancestors they have had in the area, what land has been passed down through the years, and how the pioneer mentality of protecting and providing for the family (involving the use of the gun) is still retained and passed on as a set of traditional practices and beliefs.

Citizenship and Nationalism

The justification for gun ownership in the United States is often directly linked to the Second Amendment that states:

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

The interpretation of this clause has spawned widespread debate and a plethora of analysis and research (Hobbs 2012, Tweedy 2011, Burkett 2008, Cramer 2006). From a decolonial perspective, the Second Amendment can be seen as a juridico-discursive rationalization that

aided the sanctioning of a violent and oppressive colonial project - a project that is steeped in racist rhetoric, individualistic conceptions of survival-of-the-fittest, and has been used to carry out the mass eradication of Indigenous people and cultures (Brown 2008, Cornell 2006). Part of colonial discourse has been the framing of parts of the United States as the 'Wild West' and 'Frontier Nation.' The settler narratives that have developed rely upon mytho-poetic stories of missionaries and pioneers arriving in undiscovered lands to domesticate nature, conquer the wilderness, attain territorial rights from uncivilized populations, bestow Christianity upon 'savage natives,' and ultimately control the area through moral codes of honour and self-reliance (Hao 2012, Tweedy 2011, Melzner 2009, Wright 2001, Slotkin 1992, 1985, 1973, Kennett and Anderson 1975).

The Second Amendment was also developed as an assurance for the newly invented American citizenry to bear arms against the state, or against potential state violence. Such sentiments were a libertarian reaction against Britain, which the recently fashioned United States defined itself against, and saw as a paternalistic and authoritarian overseer. For those English citizens who were disenchanted with Britain, the establishment of a new republic in which individuals had as much power as the state was incredibly attractive. However, the formation of such a republic (the United States) was framed in deeply individualistic terms, and carried out by white settlers with patriarchal and racist conceptions of citizenship who remained deeply suspicious of state power. Such suspicions led white settlers to draft the Second Amendment so as to ensure their right to take up arms against anything that infringed upon their individual freedoms, regardless of whether it was the state, or perceived threats they saw from Indigenous people.

Colonial narratives espousing the exercise of individual rights and freedoms have often involved the gun. And as time has passed, imperial, survival-of-the-fittest rhetoric has galvanized notions of settler nationalism across many rural spaces throughout the United States, including Southeast Kansas. In turn, local community members often expressed unifying ties rooted in paternalistic moral traditions, market-based work ethics, and the belief in independent meritocracies. These perspectives have spanned the entire process of white settlement in the area, and when subsequently tied to gun ownership, have produced a shared American national identity that extols the virtues of defending individualism, freedom, property, and religion - oftentimes with firearms. Despite the historical narratives of the area being discussed as righteous and well intentioned, they have nonetheless been used to inflict ongoing colonial trauma. The valorization of the gun, its association with settler history, and its status as a symbol of dominance in rural spaces, still resonates with many men.

Critical research on settler nationalism also illustrates how many spaces in the United States maintain conventional notions of American 'pride and patriotism' are rooted in colonial discourses, masculinist viewpoints, and reactionary conservatism (Hixson 2013, Smith 2012, 2006, Cramer 2006, Olster 2004, Zinn 2003). Several participants performed this sense of 'American Pride' by noting an acute distrust of 'the government,' often pointing to gun control, paying taxes, precarious employment situations, and restrictions placed on Christianity being taught in schools as 'unfair,' 'not right,' and 'discrimination.' A review of past literature shows that notions of white male victimization are quite prevalent when men seek to justify the oppressive and marginalizing practices they engage in (McIntosh 2003, Kimmel and Ferber 2000, Goveia and Roussaeu 1995).

Allegations of persecution, while simultaneously claiming innocence and disaffiliation from the privileges and benefits of interlocking systems of white male supremacy, have also been noted by many critical scholars, and were present in many conversations in Southeast Kansas (Smith 2012, Jiwani 2006, Razack 1998, Collins 1991). One 68-year-old participant named Hank aptly summed up the widespread disillusionment and sense of victimization some men feel when he stated:

...I pay my fair share of taxes, and that is my hard earned money. I busted my ass for it and I need to feed my family with it. I don't think it should be given to some lazy freeloaders on welfare who are working the system looking for a handout. And the same people taking our money are the ones saying we shouldn't have guns. I just don't get it – it's even in our Constitution – we have the right to bear arms, its what the founding fathers wrote wanted our country to be, free to do what we want, and owning guns is a part of that freedom. They were also looking to freely practice their Christian beliefs - that's why they came over here. And now you see 'under God' being taken out of the pledge of allegiance, you see the 10 commandments being removed from schools, you see abortion being legalized and said it is okay to do ...it's all connected. Obama and people running the government are trying to make America socialist: they are trying to take our guns, take our money, and make schools more anti-Christian. Don't get me wrong, I love my country, but I don't trust the government.

The emphasis on being a liberal subject, or being 'individuals who are free to fail or succeed' as described by one participant, thus serves as an influential force for many men in the

community. Such subjectivities of classic liberalism, particularly when infused with currents of fundamentalist Christianity, do not come without repercussion. As Foucault (1998, 1988) emphasized in his comprehensive analysis of technologies of the self and biopower, nothing is more suited to be subjected to power than extreme individualism.



Illustration 18: ‘I bet abortion kills more people per year than guns do.’ (A 34-year-old participant commenting on gun violence and a billboard on the town’s main highway.)

As a result of these processes of individualization, and given that they are founded upon the United States’ historical pillars of colonialism, capitalism, nationalism, and religious conservatism, people are positioned as subjects who in perceiving themselves as ‘individuals,’ are paradoxically much more likely to unknowingly submit to manipulation, conformity, and obedience. The religious surveillance that regulates the actions, practices, and perspectives of the area reduces social relations (as well as the decisions people make in their lives) to individual choices that are persistently described as ‘good or bad’ or ‘right or wrong.’

One major aspect of being an individual in Southeast Kansas is tied to citizenship and nationalistic belonging. Ironically, in expressing their independent liberal-sense-of-the-self several participants spoke at length about having a shared collective identity of being ‘American.’ Many stated being proud of the country’s religious heritage, proud of the United States standing as a ‘military superpower,’ and ultimately, ‘proud to be American.’ Numerous participants also gave glowing accounts of American history, and described the perceived Christian values and imperialistic practices of the ‘country’s forefathers’ as ‘patriotic,’ ‘visionary,’ ‘fair’ and ‘good.’ Such accounts can readily be seen in the comments of a 30-year-old named Billy, who when asked to describe his thoughts on the history of gun use in the area, stated:

Well, the missionaries and priests came here to help people – they built the church, started educating people, and shared their way of life. Then, when others started arriving they basically were here to do the same, I’m sure the guns they had were mainly for protection and hunting. And its still like that to this day - guys know each other, we know our neighbors, our families get along, and overall, we have a safe, tight-knit community. It’s a great place to raise children and have a family. Its what our country was founded on. The pioneers that came over here were not be treated too well, they were looking for freedom, and they needed guns to protect themselves from some of the Indians, or other criminals, that would attack them. And I know not all the Indians were dangerous, but you can’t say that some innocent people were not attacked. Our ancestors were looking for a place to be free, work hard, and own some land to live off of. You can’t fault a guy for that...

When we got here its not like the Indians were all living peacefully with each other anyway – just look at the history, it’s a fact. There were tribes stealing and attacking other tribes, and if you look at how big the country is I think they (Indians) could have done a better job of living with each other. It wasn’t like it was some paradise before our Founding Fathers got here. In the end, pioneers were protecting their families and defending what they believed in...

Several scholars have noted how the symbol of the gun is conspicuously entwined in the United States’ historical tapestry (Brown 2008, Cramer 2006, Wright 2001 Slotkin 1992). As reflected in Billy’s account above, the perceived threat of aggression and hostility from Indigenous people on the vast, open plains meant that from its genesis, America was a society that depended upon a populace that was heavily armed (Cornell 2006). Consequently, this endorsement for, and normalization of, gun use would have significant impacts not only upon material Indigenous-settler relations, but it would also affect the discursive formations associated with masculinity as well.

Frontier Masculinity

Recently, scholars have theorized upon the creation of ‘frontier masculinity’ that features prominently in the gendered narratives reinforcing American nationalism (Via 2010, Melzner 2009). Oftentimes, these ‘frontier masculinities’ rely upon guns as signifiers of manhood. There also continues to be a growing body of literature noting the significance that guns have as emblems of power, security, and self-reliance, and how such representations shore up glorified fabrications of white settlers coming to conquer the frontier (Carrington, McIntosh, and Scott 2010, Via 2010, Melzner 2009). Relating to these invented

historical constructions, it was not uncommon to hear participants fondly tell stories of playing ‘Cowboys and Indians,’ or pretending to be characters from their favourite war movies and popular Westerns. Many recalled with sentimental nostalgia the fun times they had growing up playing with toy guns pretending to embody the wholesome qualities that their cowboys idols and war heroes stood for in protecting and defending the nation.



Illustration 19: ‘We use them (guns) to salute our vets, pay honour to those who died defending our country and protecting our freedom ...part of that freedom is allowing a guy to own a gun – its in our constitution’ (A 57-year-old participant commenting on a photo of a Memorial Day Mass with ceremonial gun salute at a local cemetery.)

Critical scholarship also points out that settler myths of national defense and safeguarding property are linked to historical notions of Manifest Destiny, as well as ‘discovering the New World’ and ‘spreading civilization’ through homesteading, establishing churches, and the assimilation and elimination of ‘backward Indians’ (Smith 2012, 2006, Via 2010, Cornell 2006, Smith 2006). Such discourses of destiny and defense are particularly

interesting given recent research that shows that the promotion of gun ownership for the purposes of ‘safety’ contradictorily ends up eroding away at a society’s sense of security (Cornell 2006). This paradox can be observed due to the fact that as gun possession rates rise in communities, so does fear and suspicion (Cornell 2006). The proliferation of guns may end up reducing the peace of mind they are meant to offer because they create a more defensive and heavily armed assortment of atomized individuals who are often governed by mistrust and doubt, rather than by their own free will as they claim to be. Nonetheless, numerous participants stated that the reasons they owned guns was for ‘safety and protection.’

Despite the semantics that many participants used as being part of a ‘safe’ community, alternative perspectives regarding Southeast Kansas’ past suggests otherwise. The benevolent Christian narratives that dominate the history of the area, when analyzed from a decolonial perspective; show that ‘safe’ may not necessarily be the most accurate descriptor of the region. Such contradictions can be recognized due to the lack of Indigenous histories and accounts of the region’s past, the chronological attempts at cultural assimilation and displacement that took place locally, and the fact that when the research was taking place less than .03 percent of the county population identified as Native American (United States Census Bureau). Given this information, it is readily apparent that the local community has been primarily exposed to masculinist narratives of colonial white supremacy on both institutional and cultural levels, and has also underwent the massive dislocation of Indigenous people since settlement began. Consequently, the configuration of practices and discourses that exist for men in the region reproduce social hierarchies along the lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and ability.

Good Guys versus Bad Guys

In looking at the social hierarchies that operate in Southeast Kansas, I once again borrow from Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity that suggests that the discourses surrounding manhood in particular local contexts produce marginalized, subordinated, and complicit masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Given the particular (local) version of hegemonic masculinity that permeates most spaces in the area; one of white, heterosexual, Christian, able-bodied, citizens; such marginalizing and subordinating processes can be readily observed in the discourses of everyday interactions.

Several scholars have noted that processes of 'othering' and the politics of alterity that exist in settler societies predominantly take place along lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality; thereby reinforcing structural white, male, supremacy (Pease 2010a, Razack 2002, Tuhiwai Smith 1999, hooks 1989, Mohanty 1984). The discursive formations of who are defined as 'bad' guys and 'criminals' operate as regulatory measures that allow certain men to attain higher levels of masculine status, and keep others from gaining hegemonic acceptance. Such policing of masculinity can readily be seen in the following exclusionary statements made by Tom, a 22-year-old participant, who when asked about news stories pertaining to gun violence stated:

I mean hell, look at all these crazy people doing all these shootings here lately.

A lot of the shootings I hear about are done by guys from the city, you don't see a bunch of farm boys murdering each other all the time. Most of the people killing each other are either psychopaths or terrorists with radical views who hate America. You can't tell me they had good Christian

upbringings. The guns ain't the problem, it's the criminals who get a hold of them and use them that cause the problems. And think about it, if guns were outlawed people like that would still find a way to kill other people. They'd just use homemade bombs, or knives, or rocks, or something else. People on TV keep blaming the guns, but that is just an excuse.

One interesting discursive formation to note in the statement above that is particularly salient to geographers is the positioning of violence being perpetuated by 'guys in the city.' The participant engages in rhetoric that suggests being 'from the city' is in direct opposition to what many participants referred to as 'being from the country.' Critical scholars have noted that the ways in which being 'different' is constructed can lead to oppressive and exclusionary effects (Kobayashi 2013, Berg 2012, Goldberg 2009, Sibley 2002). While not explicitly stated outright, the connotation of what being 'from the country' versus being 'from the city' means is often times rife with racist, sexist, and homophobic tendencies.

These discourses of subordination are further highlighted by the follow-up statement offered by Tom, who when asked to elaborate upon who he thought was responsible for gun violence stated:

Its not that I'm a racist, but most of those guys shooting each other from the city are criminals. I bet most of them are niggers, or spic drug dealers, or gang members. I bet they were never really taught how to treat a gun, or that you need to respect them. And when I say nigger I don't mean all black guys, I've worked with some good black guys, I've also been around some hard working Mexicans. ...when I say nigger, I mean that anyone can be a nigger. It's more of how someone acts you know - a white guy can be a nigger, a

Mexican can be nigger, an Asian can be a nigger, its not just a skin thing, just a way to describe how a guy goes about the way he acts. Most those shootings are guys trying to be tough, or hard, or whatever...

Angela Stroud (2012: 22) notes the significance that race, class, gender have in relation to masculinities and gun use when she states that the gun can be 'a symbol that at once signifies violence and protection.' Other critical scholars researching gun culture suggest that the meaning attributed to gun use can be interpreted differently depending on who is holding the gun, the place in where it is being held, and subsequently, by who is allowed to assign meaning to the context where it is being used (Stroud 2012, Brown 2008, Cramer 2006, Wright 2001).

Noting the fluid and flexible nature of giving meaning to gun violence based upon categories of race, class, and gender, is key in the understanding how white supremacist discourses come to dominate local understandings of gun use. Abby Ferber notes the feelings of being threatened that white men experience when encountering visible minorities, particularly black men (2007). Other scholars have also noted that the increase in fear and anxiety that white people undergo oftentimes causes them racialize 'non-white' bodies as criminal, threatening, animalistic, hypersexual, and aggressive (Feagin 2009, Ferber 2007 Collins 2005).

In analyzing the quote from Tom above, it can be noted that the process of subordinating other male bodies based upon the racial epithets of 'nigger,' 'spic drug dealers,' and 'gang members' creates direct associations between Black and Latino masculinities as being typical attributes of 'criminal' bodies. This racist discourse underscores the significance of 'whiteness' and how it is enabled to label others from a

position of privilege. From this seat of power, white masculinity thus enjoys the luxury of obliviousness, or rather, the comfort of freely going unnoticed because it is seen as the normalized standard that others are compared to. Consequently, white masculinity remains free from criticism because of its invisibility. In turn, the influence that hegemonic (white, masculinist) discourses have in particular local spaces effectively excludes, and oppresses, racialized people from acceptance and inclusion.

The Banal Weaponization of the Rural

A major line of reasoning that arose from many interviews is that gun use is ‘not that big of a deal.’ Several participants mentioned that media stories involving guns oftentimes seemed overblown, biased, and exaggerated. Many noted the presence of guns in their own lives, and cited the fact that aside from the occasional ‘freak accident,’ or violent outburst by someone who was ‘fucked up in the head,’ that guns were not as bad as they seemed, particularly in the local rural area where they resided. These rationalizations were quite common and expressed by many participants.

From a critical perspective, such statements can be seen as rhetorical tactics that excuse guns from the violence, trauma, and suffering that results when they are used as weapons. In a sense, participants were absolving guns from the violent acts that they were involved in, making the presence of guns seem routine, innocuous, and harmless. These discursive formations produce a banal weaponization of the rural, which was perhaps one of the most prevailing underlying themes that surfaced during my time investigation guns while in the field.



Illustration 20: ‘It’s a hobby and a pastime for a lot of guys around here, just kind of a normal thing to do.’ (A local resident takes aim at a target with his Bushmaster AR-15.)

Foucault goes on to write how the power of normalizing judgments within a society can produce socially acceptable arrangements of practices, actions, and standards (Foucault 1977). The normalizing gaze thus forces members of a community to learn what practices are deemed convention and, in contrast, what practices are punished. All of the men involved in the project owned guns (the average number was six), all had started handling them in their childhood (most younger than the age of 10), and rarely described gun use as violent. Keeping in line with Foucault’s (Foucault 1977) suggestion of the power of the normalizing gaze, societal observation is as an influential disciplinary mechanism that gives individuals permission to do, or not do, certain things. In many places within Southeast

Kansas, gun use is widely seen as permissible, and in some instances, is actively promoted; thus the normalizing gaze surveilling (or in many cases, lack thereof) gun use, widely gives it a pass.

In the setting and context of the research area, it can readily be observed that the general consensus surrounding gun use is emotionally rooted in acceptance and understanding. Antonio Gramsci (1971) notes that the widespread, routine approval of cultural ideals that are found in particular social orders oftentimes reaffirms a status quo that is in direct opposition to the best interest of the members of the society who continue to endorse to them. In giving widespread support to gun ownership members of the rural assemblages found in Southeast Kansas reestablish gun use as natural, normal, and ordinary. This consent to the gun is highlighted by Ed, a 55-year-old participant, who when asked about how many firearms he thought there may be in the area stated:

Oh, I don't know a specific number in total, but I bet most guys have a handful or so (around 5). It's pretty common around here. Some of mine were passed down from my dad, and some of them are presents I got for birthdays, anniversaries, and such. I don't use them much, I hang on to them cause they mean something, or have been part of the family - things like that. I use a couple of them from time to time, to shoot wild animals, and I have a .22 pistol that is handy in case something happens, but other than that they more or less just stay in the gun cabinet. When we was younger we carried them in our pickups and stuff, would go out and shoot stop signs for fun, or hunt, or shoot bottles ...shooting turtles used be real fun. Hell, I remember even having them (guns) in the pickup at school. That probably geta guy in

trouble today, but I would not be surprised if someone had one under their front seat or something, not for anything bad, just that it probably got left there...

Such nonchalant descriptions of gun possession happened numerous times over the course of the research and illustrate the ubiquity of guns in the area. The statements also draw attention to the hegemonic position that the gun has in the area as many participants continue to support gun use due to their significance as generational heirlooms, tools for protection and provision, and symbolic historical meaning. What can be taken from these perspectives is that the social sanctioning of guns for this particular rural space falls directly in line with Gramsci's notion of hegemony, as well as Foucault's articulation of the normalizing gaze, and thusly has established gun use as an ordinary, commonplace, and inevitable occurrence.



Illustration 21: 'I just like to be prepared ...its not big deal' (A local resident commenting on his collection of handguns, rifles, and ammunition.)

Over the course of several interviews patterns began to emerge that highlighted the guiding principles behind the justifications for owning guns. The statements explaining why guns were normalized in the area were numerous, but tied together by a thread of common rationalizations that primarily mentioned the following: 'it's in the Second Amendment,' 'I

have a right to self-defense,’ ‘it’s part of our Constitution,’ ‘we have the God-given right to bear arms,’ ‘it even helps feed my family,’ ‘guns don’t kill people – people kill people,’ and even ‘the apostles of Jesus carried swords, that was the equivalent of carrying a gun back then - so its nothing new’ (this being a Gospel reference to the arrest of Jesus during which one of his disciples cuts off the ear of a officer with a sword). Such justifications reinforce gun ownership as part of the quotidian reality of the community.

These assertions, when coupled with participant statements that describe guns as ‘tools,’ ‘...just like cars, they can be dangerous so people should be trained to use them,’ or ‘...like a hammer, you can build a house with it, but you can also smash someone in the face with it,’ suggest that guns are innocuous, that they are not inherently associated with violence, and that it is the person who is using the gun that is violent, not the item itself. The perceived neutrality of guns as being objects that are not weapons but, conversely, are toys, collector’s items, recreational hobbies, and tools to be mastered is highlighted in the statement of a Dwayne, a 43-year-old male, who stated:

When we was young kids we played guns, army, war, Cowboys and Indians, and things like that, so we always wanted to own real guns. At first it was beebie guns, then air rifles, and then when we got old enough we could get real guns. I still have the first rifle my dad bought me for my tenth birthday, I don’t use it at all much now, but it has a lot of sentimental value for me. After that, around junior high and high school, I got into hunting and shooting clay pigeons with my buddies. We’d go out depending on what season it was and hunt ducks, deer, quail, or turkey ...those were fun times. And the guns you use for each different type of animal can be different, so that’s why we ended

up owning more than one. Before long you start knowing more about them and you build up a collection. Hell, I have even traded them with friends, kind of like baseball cards from when we were kids. Everyone wants the coolest gun, or the most powerful one, or the most accurate, so it sort of becomes a hobby as well. Over time your collection grows but eventually most of us had to kind of move on, you know, when you get more responsibilities and things to take care of. When I got married and had kids I couldn't go hunting as much, but I still have my guns, still love to hunt, but I don't have a lot of time for it now. Plus, if my son shows an interest in hunting its something we'll probably do. I want him to be safe and know that guns need to be respected - so I'll show him the ropes and teach him how to handle it and how to treat it.

What this passage signifies is that owning guns is not anything out of the ordinary. It is conventional, it is traditional, and it is everyday. Therefore the perception of gun ownership as 'no big deal' is readily allowed to reaffirm itself from generation to generation. For many men in Southeast Kansas, the quantity of guns is not the problem; it is the quality of the individual who possesses them that is at issue. The responses of the participants suggesting how an individual is deemed 'qualified' enough to own a gun directly relates to definitions of being 'trustworthy,' 'a law-abiding citizen,' 'having Christian values,' and often times, having a connection to, along with the respect of, the local community. Consequently, those people who are most often seen as 'good guys' are men who look the same, have the same values, and engage in the same practices as the men are offering the descriptions of what being a 'good guy' means.

Criminalization, Pathologization, Exclusion

The notion of violence is of particular interest as well. While participants did identify guns as having the potential for being used for violent purposes, such scenarios were qualified in their statements by pointing out that the individuals who do so are typically ‘crazy’ or ‘criminal.’ The emphasis that was placed upon people who engage in gun crime as ‘crazy’ highlights the embedded ableist norms that exist in the region. It also dilutes the potential for gun violence to be discussed when involved in domestic violence or hate crime because it grants exemption to individuals who have not been defined as ‘crazy’ by local community members. Many of the participants thought of themselves, and the people who they know as ‘good, law-abiding, Americans’ and were quick to disaffiliate from anything that would associate them with being defined as ‘unstable,’ ‘not right in the head,’ or a ‘mental case.’

Critical research on (dis)ability notes the significance that masculinity and neoliberalism both have in the formation of ableist societies (Puar 2013, Ostrander 2008). The act of labeling of people as more likely to commit acts of gun violence because they have a mental illness reinforces the pathologization and criminalization that people with mental disabilities face within ableist societies. It also underscores the power and influence that an unseen and unchecked fraternity of enabled whiteness can give rise to. White privilege is evident because several participants noted that the people in the local community, as well as in the news and media, whom they ‘trusted’ and ‘respected’ were predominantly other white, able-bodied, heterosexual, Christian, American, males.

The impact of ableist discursive formations results in depicting mental illness as something that is to be feared, quarantined, and excluded. In other words, people with mental disabilities become potential threats, objects to be guarded against, and they have bodies that are more likely to be aggressively violent. As noted by several scholars, the rationale behind carrying guns for many men, including the participants in this research, is to protect themselves, their loved ones, and others from what they see as potential victimization (Stroud 2012, Felson and Pare 2010, Ferber 2007, Kimmel and Ferber 2000). In many instances participants stated that carrying a gun is something that can ‘level the playing field,’ or as Ray, a 19-year-old, asserted:

If someone fucked up in the head starts shooting up a school, or a theatre, or a business, or whatever, everyone else is going to be real damn happy that one of the good guys was packing a gun.

The presumption of society needing to be defended by an ever watchful and diligent white male saviour points to the significant patriarchal and individualistic ideology that influence the subjectivities of many of the participants in the area.

As can be seen from participant responses, the desire to earn the label of ‘good family man who protects and provides’ reaffirms the neoliberal subjectivities that men approach in their perspectives regarding gun ownership and masculinity. The outcome of these subjectivities leads to the widespread acceptance and normalization of gun use for particular bodies, whilst others face exclusion and marginalization. The influence of the gun as an integral component of the community, its culture, and its customs is summed up quite explicitly by Henry, a 52-year-old participant who when asked about the gun use stated:

What people need to understand is that it's not really a big deal. I mean a lot of us grew up around guns, we've been around them all our lives and we know how to handle and respect them. A lot of what you see on TV and the news seems to be unfair. I think a lot of people from the city think we are dumb rednecks just shooting up the place. That's not really how it is at all. We've all taken hunter's education courses, we all learned how to treat a gun, and a lot of guys around here know a hell of a lot about how guns work, what the laws are, and how they should be used. But what you see on the news is some fucking crazy asshole go off on a rampage and people want to blame the guns. I know it gets said a lot, but it gets said because its true: 'Guns don't kill people, people kill people.' There is a reason that saying has stuck around so long. So I don't think we need to take guns away from people, I think we need to keep criminals from getting them. And think about it, if a criminal does get a gun, and all the other people around the place have guns, do you really think he's going start shooting people up? Hell no, I think having guns around and in the hands of good guys is a smart idea – it gives us more protection cause you just never know. It'll make crime go down and those psychos who fly off the handle will think twice before killing a bunch of innocent people. It just makes us safer if people who know how to use guns have them around, that's just the way it is...

The continual reference to crime, violence, and attack occurring 'at any time' cited by participants, along with their professed need to own guns because 'you just never know' is central to Michael Kimmel's (2006) argument that being a man is not necessarily about

dominating or controlling other people, but rather, achieving masculine status is something men attain by *not* letting others dominate, control, or exercise power over themselves.



Illustration 22: ‘I just keep it in a plastic sack under the seat, sometimes I just toss it on the dash. There is nothing to really worry about around here, but you never know.’ (A local resident displays the pistol he carries on a daily basis in his pick-up truck.)

In sum, those traits that are regularly associated with masculinity: being assertive, tough, domineering, aggressive, imposing, courageous, and physical are not innate characteristics of male bodies; rather, they are often the reactionary manifestations men have when experiencing fear and instability in their lives. The symbol of the gun is quite influential in relation to masculinity because both can symbolically represent power, control, and dominance. Despite such representations, gun use can alternatively be seen as one

possible way in which hegemonic masculinity copes with the feelings of vulnerability and insecurity that it gives rise to.

Violence: The Debate Continues

After leaving Southeast Kansas and upon revisiting and analyzing the material I gathered in the field it is evident that further research is still needed. Despite having a plethora of empirical data to investigate, assess, and evaluate, it seems that in critically looking at what neoliberalism and masculinity produce there remain more questions than answers. Future research regarding the material acts and discursive formations that other marginalized, subordinated, and complicit populations experience would add more nuance, and understanding, to the reasons why, and how, gun use is so engrained in particular spaces. The literature on hegemonic masculinity and neoliberalism, while at times noting the importance of place, is also still in need of more of the multiple accounts that exist surrounding gun use, hegemonic masculinity, and neoliberal ideology. Exploring the discursive formations and material practices that are enacted on local levels for people in their everyday experiences will add a more refined, sophisticated, and holistic depiction of what exists.

What also remains unanswered is a seemingly untenable debate surrounding the gun. Gun rights, gun control, gun culture, and gun politics are all common topics that make their way into the everyday experiences of people at all levels of society. In paying attention to the media; the global, national, and local news, it is not difficult to find mention of the gun being discussed in regard to government legislation, police reports, domestic violence, mass shootings, suicide, jury trials, as well as stories of war, sport, adventure, and leisure. Guns

find their way into the arena of pop culture through movies, books, video games, websites, chatrooms, and advertising. Guns permeate many of the images we come across, both historical and contemporary, on a daily basis.

Guns are ubiquitous; they are present in conversations ranging from international arms trafficking to small-town childhood pellet gun adventures. And while no consensus remains as to what the correct answer is regarding gun use, gun control, and gun rights; what is left - is the fact that violence, death, and suffering all remain a part of the conversation as well. Little progress has been made in the way of curtailing such violence, and seemingly there will never be a consensus as to what can be done to most effectively prevent it. I do not claim to have a solution to the debates surrounding gun use, but what I can give account of, is that based on my experience in rural Southeast Kansas, what needs to be added to the conversation is a more comprehensive, thorough, and critical interrogation of masculinity, neoliberal ideology, and colonialism. Until these taken-for-granted, unquestioned pillars of exploitation and oppression are taken to task, what will remain is simply the status quo.

Chapter 7: Concluding Reflections

Summary

Recent critical research on subjectivity formation has shed light on the continuum of identities that can exist and shift across differing social spaces. In regard to gender, literature shows how people who ordinarily self-identify as ‘men’ are widely influenced to adhere to normative conceptions of masculinity. Scholars are also currently expanding on these theories of subjectivity in order to understand the key role that masculinity has in the social arrangement of gendered hierarchies. They are identifying how race, class, gender, ability, age, religion, citizenship, nationality, and other axes of identification interlock and constitute people as subjects.

In addition, academic literature has started to focus on the normative functions that hegemonic masculinity and neoliberal ideology have upon people and space. Currently, there is mounting evidence showing that hegemonic masculinity and neoliberal ideology work in conjunction with one another to influence social relationships, value systems, cultural practices, societal institutions, as well as the prevailing discourses that operate across differing social assemblages. In focusing on the spatiality of these processes, geographers have thus begun to make important contributions to questions of masculinity and neoliberal ideology.

In light of these new contributions, there are indications that both hegemonic masculinity and neoliberalism draw upon discourse that endorse self-reliance, the entrepreneurial spirit, and competitive drive. The rhetoric utilized by both also suggests that success is most readily acquired through the accumulation of economic stability, the

attainment of socio-cultural status, and the ownership of private property. Hegemonic conceptualizations surrounding how these successes are ‘earned’ are widely believed to be the result of personal ambition, individual work ethic, and self-motivation. These values, while framed as being independent and unaffected by any other underlying socio-political forces, are in fact, heavily influenced by a host of other socially constructed cultural identifiers including race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, nationality, religion, and citizenship.

Ultimately, what results from this complex myriad of socio-spatial interactions and power dynamics is that the most accepted ways in which masculinity is embodied and practiced is mutually constituted by both neoliberalism and place. Thus, what is produced as a consequence of the relationality between routine masculine actions and unquestioned neoliberal ideals are spatially normalized ways-of-being that become hegemonic. These socio-culturally legitimated relationships then remain in a constant state of negotiation, change, and reiteration, whilst simultaneously remaining covertly influential in the authority they wield in shaping, structuring, and altering society and space.

Findings

My research is part of the growing field of interdisciplinary studies that utilizes feminist, decolonial, and anarchist perspectives in providing an interlocking analysis of socio-spatial subjectification. A fundamental theme of my investigation was to critique how masculinity, neoliberal ideology, and rural space are produced through settler colonialism, patriarchal white supremacy, ableism, heteronormativity, religious conservatism, and liberal conceptions of the self. My analysis offers an evaluation of the oppression, enablement,

violence, and privilege that are found within white settler societies as a result of the iterative banal practices of white supremacy and ‘everyday’ masculinist domination. My examination of the material gathered during the my fieldwork primarily relies upon Michel Foucault’s concept of governmentality, Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, R.W. Connell’s notion of hegemonic masculinity, as well as a host of other critical perspectives being expounded upon by feminist, decolonial, and poststructuralist scholars. The thesis thus explains how neoliberal ideology, gendered discourses, and colonial narratives continue to influence the subjectivities, perspectives, and practices of people who self-identify as men in rural Southeast Kansas.

In applying relational and interlocking approaches, as well as a critical discourse analysis, to the empirical data I gathered in Southeast Kansas, I have underscored how colonial, racialized, and patriarchal narratives reproduce settler nationalism, religious superiority, and social hierarchies. The evaluation of the material exposes how these formations are often reconstituted through the normalization of imperialistic discourses and the naturalization of gendered actions. The project also elucidates the complex and contradictory relationships between the neoliberalization of the rural, the production of gendered subject formations, and the reaffirmation of spatialized hegemonic masculinities.

The empirical data gathered informs us as to how space and normalcy are being transformed by neoliberal ideology and masculinist subjectivities. It also highlights the ways in which colonial histories are reproduced and interlock with the already-existing exclusions of patriarchy, classism, ableism, heterosexism, and racism. The findings go on to expose how localized rural masculinities are tied to settler history and are individualistic and (neo)liberalized. This can be noted due to the numerous accounts that participants gave

emphasizing the importance of rugged individualism, providing protection, being competitive, remaining self-reliance, and owning private property.

My examination of the material also suggests that hegemonic masculinity in Southeast Kansas stresses both the material and discursive preservation of its position as a benevolent colonial authority. This safeguarding of settler colonialism became clear in the discussions that took place regarding past accounts of settlement, the perceived righteousness of area's founding white Christian missionaries, and the framing of colonialism as a process of exploration and discovery that was both natural and necessary. Those white supremacist notions of racial superiority were upheld through altruistic and virtuous claims of innocence, as well as attempts at disaffiliating from the colonial practices of dispossession, enclosure, displacement, assimilation, and ethnic cleansing.

In addition, the research underscores how the reproduction of gendered hierarchies is part of the quotidian experiences of members living in the area. Patriarchal social relationships were made obvious in many of the interviews because they included gendered narratives that paternalistically framed 'women' as fragile, weak, emotional, irrational, and less capable than men to perform a wide variety of practices and tasks. My analysis examines how the capitalist economic system of the United States is depoliticized, valorized, and upheld by firmly entrenched socially conservative ideals tied to values associated with fundamentalist currents of Catholic Christianity. It also examined the most widely consented to characteristics associated with masculinity and highlighted how they are linked to the rhetorical tenants of neoliberal capitalism. What is shown to be produced as a result of these dynamics is the perpetuation of a hierarchical social arrangement that typically affords both

institutional and cultural privileges to normalized members of a settler society profoundly reliant upon the hegemonic discourse of a white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchy.

This is made apparent in the ongoing structural violence, systemic oppression, and institutional subordination that members of marginalized populations experience in the face of the white settler society that is the United States. During the research, and subsequent analysis, it became clear that structures of privilege, oppression, enablement, and subordination are all reaffirmed and sustained based upon socially accepted conventions ascribed to both rural masculinity and the ideals of neoliberalism. The varied configurations of social practice that exist within the region thus serve to individualize, fragment, and atomize the subjectivities of those people living in the area through claims of spreading civilization, settler homesteading, and helping ‘others.’ This settler concealment is due in large part to the ongoing propagation of historical myths that glorify systematic practices of colonial aggression, which were often discursively obscured and codified into being metaphorical acts of embracing ‘American’ nationalism. These white supremacist narratives also continue to be coupled with discourses of masculinist domination, racial superiority, and heteronormative conservatism thereby shoring up socially sanctioned hierarchies of exclusion and subordination.

Ultimately, my research illustrates how hegemonic masculinity operates across a wide array of cultural ideals and social spaces and subsequently becomes a source of power that can be utilized as a basis for exclusion, marginalization, commodification, and oppression. It also reemphasizes the stance that masculinity is not a single, static, entity; rather; it remains a fluid, flexible, and relational concept. Accordingly, the project shows that it is crucial to recognize that masculinities are pluralistic and dynamic in form and

function. And given these realizations, it becomes clear that the ways in which masculinity is spatially embodied and practiced produces hegemonic forms of what it means to be a positioned as a masculine subject. In turn, localized conceptions of hegemonic masculinity are developed and reaffirmed, but they do not remain fixed. Thus, masculinity, in all of its various configurations, can be engaged in, altered, performed, denied, offered, employed, and transformed across a wide array of differing contexts and places. And from this perspective, it becomes obvious that masculinity is a fundamental component in the production of space, and equally, space is an essential aspect in the construction of masculinity.

Contributions

It is my hope that this project has the potential to contribute to future scholarly work centering on the production of subjectivities, critical gender studies, neoliberal ideology, discursive constructions of racial superiority, rural geographies, the sociology of the masculinities, and the formation of cultural landscapes. More precisely, the efforts I am making in this thesis are also trying to serve researchers studying rurality, American nationalism, gun culture, discourses of settler colonialism, white privilege, fundamentalist Christian hegemony, as well as radical perspectives examining the relationality of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, nationality, and citizenship in producing oppression, exclusion, and entitlement.

In regard to methods and methodology, my approach can provide entry points into conversations surrounding qualitative research involving critical self-reflexivity, situated knowledges, insiderness/outsiderness, the crisis of representation, as well as positionality. In addition, my chosen methods specifically apply to ethnography involving participant

relationships, ethical obligations, and issues of validity and authenticity. I also focus on methods that employ the practice of participant observation, the collection of fieldnotes, interviewing techniques, the dynamics of focus groups, and photovoice projects. In addition, I am attempting to contribute to the growing body of literature that applies both critical discourse analysis, and interlocking analysis, to empirical data gathered while in the field, as well as the subsequent thematic coding and communication of the qualitative data.

My project most precisely pertains to future investigations involving spatial theory and the recursive relationship between space, place, and masculinity. My analysis and perspectives are thus attempting to expand upon the current literature surrounding the socio-spatial production of subject positions in relation to changing conceptions of masculinity under neoliberalism. In turn, my interpretation and understanding of the theories used and material gathered endeavours to hopefully be used as an example of scholarly work that takes an interdisciplinary approach to scholarship that engages with wide array of perspectives that rely upon Feminist, Decolonial, Anarchist, Queer, Poststructuralist, Anti-Racist, and Critical Disability theories.

In this regard, my research promotes the (1) Contestation of (2) Resistance to (3) Dismantling of: ongoing colonialisms, the white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, heterosexist oppression, ableist normalization, hierarchical social relationships, contemporary practices of border imperialism, processes of racialization, reactionary conservatism, neoliberal violence, and the banal reproduction of individualism. Ultimately, I am seeking to contribute to research that is self-reflexive and strives for social justice, collective liberation, and dignity for all.

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