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[Back to Top](#)▼ **Abstract**

Bridging the gap between the individual and social context, methodology that aims to surface and explore the regulatory function of discourse on subjectivity production moves nursing research beyond the individual level in order to theorize social context and its influence on health and well-being. This article describes the feminist, poststructural, psychoanalytic discourse analysis and multiple methods used in a recent study exploring links between cultural discourses of masculinity, performativity of masculinity, and practices of male violence.

NURSING IS increasingly concerned with moving beyond the individual level to theorize social context and its influence on the health and well-being of individuals.¹⁻⁶ The assumed separation between a fixed biological body and social context, and the view of language as a transparent tool of representation, however, constrain theoretic work and research in this direction. Theoretical frameworks that collapse the individual/social separation and understand social context as structured by language enable a view of the influence of social context at an intimate, subject-producing level.⁷⁻¹³ From this perspective, all forms of language are important for investigation (eg, media images, professional discourses, research participant accounts).

This article describes the multiple methods and feminist, poststructural, psychoanalytic research methodology used in a study exploring masculinity and new directions for ending practices of male violence.¹³ This research and the methodology are fundamentally about language. They focus on ways that masculinity is constituted, understood, and enacted through reproduction of

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cultural discourses constructing hegemonic masculinity, as well as marginalized masculinities. Discourses producing "normative" and "nonnormative" masculinity were surfaced using several methods simultaneously. Data collected from numerous media sites and from individual interviews and discussion groups with adolescent boys provided access to social context through numerous pathways. Interpretive discourse analysis developed by Hollway 12,14 provided the feminist, poststructural, psychoanalytic analytic tool to explicate and analyze the discourses of masculinity that surfaced in the research.

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PHILOSOPHICAL BACKDROP

Methodology that aims to surface and explore the regulatory function of discourses on subjectivity production takes as its focus circulating cultural discourses within which people living in a culture participate. Males, for example, can only exist and function within the language that is available to them. They understand themselves by placing themselves within the available language that is deployed by the discourses within which they participate. In using the available language, males are placed within it, and they can be understood as subjects of the frameworks of knowledge that the discourses reproduce and circulate.

Subjectivity, from this perspective, is a performance of multiple, complex, and contradictory positionings in cultural discourses influenced by lived history in available language. 7-15 The discourses constructing hegemonic norms of masculinity and marginalized masculinities are the context within which subjectivity is continuously produced and projected into an already constituted social milieu. The meanings signified by different positions in discourse shift across time and cultural systems of representation. Identity and sense of self are not expressions of internal reality from a body and mind detached from the social context that continually (re)births it. Social context, understood as cultural constructions and enactments of masculinity, therefore, is an important area of focus for ending gendered practices of violence.

The poststructural, psychoanalytic, philosophic perspective underpinning this methodology views both cultural representations and study participants as radically social. 11-13 This theoretic perspective assumes no division between the subject and the social. It shifts the scientific gaze to cultural discourses that produce subjectivities. Exploring the role of language and discourse, feminist, poststructural, psychoanalytic discourse analysis is a useful way to explicate links between cultural discourses of masculinity, performativity of masculinity, and practices of male violence. This methodology enables research that focuses on the social that is brought into being through repeated performances of masculinities enacted by subjects and by numerous other cultural representations. Social context, from this perspective, is these diverse, pervasive, and continuous daily enactments of masculinity.

In order to better understand the reproduction of masculinities and male gender norms within the complex discursive networks reproduced by cultural systems, I relied on a feminist poststructural psychoanalytic reading of a variety of cultural sites of discourse reproduction. From this methodologic perspective, there is no division between cultural systems, such as the justice system, the educational system, popular culture, and the health care system, and the discourses that structure them. Discursive sites of masculine performativity and discourse reproduction examined in the research included television, advertisements, radio, music, movies, video games, research participants' accounts, online conversations, newspapers, magazines, and professional and popular writings about masculinity.

The first section of this article describes the primary methods used to surface cultural discourses constructing masculinities. The second section describes the interpretive discourse analysis used to analyze the multiple sites of discourse

reproduction and the production of knowledge about masculinity within relations of power, such as gender, race, and class. In order to operationalize the methodology and show how this approach moves away from the individual level and toward social accountability, brief findings from the research are included in all sections.

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METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected from cultural artifacts, primarily from television, radio, and print media; movies; computer and video games; three discussion groups meeting weekly for 5 weeks; and 32 individual interviews. The interviews and discussion groups were part of a study described as "cultural influences on teenage boys' lives: how do teenage boys learn about being male in US culture?" Conducted at a large-city public school, the participants were male, socioeconomically and ethnically diverse, and ages 12 to 18 years.

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Media discourses

Media discourses are treated seriously in feminist, poststructural, psychoanalytic methodology as important sites of cultural reproduction. Giroux argues that "under the rubric of fun, entertainment, and escape, massive public spheres are being produced through representations and social practices that appear too 'innocent' to be worthy of political analysis [and human science research]".^{16(p45)}

Media discourses are treated seriously in feminist, poststructural, psychoanalytic methodology as important sites of cultural reproduction.

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Television, movies, video games, and computer games

A recently published study *Kids and Media @ the New Millennium* showed pervasive participation in media discourses by a nationally representative sample of 3,155 children, ages 2 to 18 years.¹⁷ Boys ages 8 to 18 years averaged 6.53 hours of media use everyday, including 2.56 hours per day watching TV, 38 minutes per day on computers (primarily playing games), and 31 minutes per day playing video games. The boys participating in my research participated in popular media similar to the participants in the study. Only two participants had parental time restrictions regarding media on school nights. None had (parental) limitations on content. In addition, a majority of boys responded on a written preinterview questionnaire that members of their families participated in popular media through modes such as newspapers, TV, radio, and movies. Participating in these circulating cultural conversations, parents and other people with whom boys interact (teachers, peers, health care professionals, other adults, etc) are implicated in the reproduction of discourses of masculinity that position boys in normative and nonnormative subject positions.

The most popular television show with the majority of the adolescent participants was "The Simpsons." Bart is constituted as "slick" and produced through a discourse of masculinity whose main productive function and effect is verbal and physical humiliation of other boys, girls, and adults, thereby reinforcing the hegemonic norm of masculinity by marginalizing others.¹³ Twenty-two boys regularly watched daily reruns (2 half-hour shows) in addition to the new weekly episodes. When the participants watched an excerpt of "The Simpsons" in the discussion groups, all of the boys seemed very familiar with the characters and the discourses of masculinity reproduced by Bart and Homer Simpson, the show's main characters.

Other popular shows viewed regularly by about one quarter of the participants and occasionally by some of the other participants were "Friends," "Family Guy," "South Park," "Brotherly Love," the World Wrestling Federation's "Raw" and "War Zone," "PJs," and "Frasier." Seventeen of the boys reported regularly watching "Jerry Springer," a talk show that regularly features talk show participants and, occasionally, audience members fighting. Television shows watched by few participants, and explicitly rejected by the majority as "girls' shows," were "Dawson's Creek," "Boy Meets World," and "Will and Grace."

Twenty-three episodes (13 hours) of these shows were analyzed for discourses of masculinity.¹³ Also analyzed were the 382 commercials contained within the 23 episodes. Discourses of masculinity constructed 279 of these commercials. The hegemonic norm was signified primarily by cars, sports, clothes, physical strength, body size, toughness, risk taking, Whiteness, and economic status. Masculinity also was signified by violence, beer, boats, around-the-house fix-up, and the military.

All of the boys in the study watched R-rated (17 years and older) action and/or horror movies, with the majority reporting frequent, regular viewing from ages as early as 3 years, but with the majority beginning to watch R-rated movies at ages 5 to 10 years. Most of the participants watched these movies with male friends, fathers, brothers, and other male relatives.

The majority of participants had computers or access to computers and played, almost exclusively, violent computer games.¹³ The majority of boys also played violent TV video games. Not being familiar with video or computer games, I asked participants to describe games that they play. I include some of their descriptions here as evidence of cultural reproduction of discourses of masculinity through these modes of representation and the need for methodologic approaches that surface and attend to these forms of cultural reproduction. These are some of the games referred to by the *Kids and Media @ the New Millennium* study as "action" and "combat" games. Tim, a 12-year-old participant who played video and computer games daily, described a first person shooter game:

You're looking out of the person's eyes, you see the barrel of the gun in front of you. And then you have a status score at the bottom recording your health, ammo.... If a monster runs up to you and slashes you across the head, it'll do like 30 points of damage, you'll be down to 70% health...if you're really beat up, really bad you'll be bleeding like out your nose and mouth and stuff. And so you're fighting to survive and get out.... The point is not just to kill people, it's just to get out.... And then there's "Duke Nukem Three-D," that's a really, really bloody game. It's really for mature people, they have nudity and stuff like that.... I don't really like those first person shooters anymore, though. They get boring...

Jacob, a high school participant, described "Duke Nukem" as "shooting people with a gun, to, like explode them." He also described a game called "Mortal Combat:"

You can do fatalities at the end of your match and one of them is you can rip a guy's head off and hold it up. His spinal cord's hanging on it. That was one of the first real violent games.... I played it in 3rd grade. When I play it now...I think it's a crappy game.... The only thing appealing about it is its violence. It's just blood and violence, not strategies...

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News media

Print, television, and radio news media are a massive cultural arena for the production of hegemonic and marginalized masculinity. Twenty of the 32 boys in the study reported that their families received one or more daily or weekend newspapers. Twenty-eight of the boys in the study reported that their families

watched television news regularly. Because the boys in the study and the people around them participate in cultural discourses such as news media that construct images of normative and nonnormative masculinity, these potent sites of discourse reproduction need interrogation to explicate their effects in producing the structures and conditions necessary to support unhealthy norms of masculinity, such as practices of violence. For example, during the data collection period, 53 front pages of a large-city newspaper were analyzed for discourses of masculinity.¹³ The findings revealed that of the 251 front-page articles, 193 (77%) were discourses constructing and reproducing norms and nonnorms of masculinity. There was no indication in any of the articles grouped into the eight categories that women were an explicit or implicit focus in the article. It can be argued, however, that a socially constructed normative female presence is an implicit trace against which discourses of masculinity construct normative and nonnormative subject positions.^{13,18,19}

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Discussion groups: postmodern consciousness raising

Although I conceptualized the discussion groups as postmodern consciousness-raising groups and as a place/space where multiple, similar, and different experiential versions of cultural discourses of masculinities would be available for resonance and resistance, this did not happen. The groups were constrained in the sense that discourses of heteronormative masculinity structured the groups. Some of the assumptions about groups for research, however, were important in the process of the groups that occurred.

Group discussions facilitated data collection in several ways.^{20,21} First, they provided an opportunity to observe participants' interactions in the context of group discussions about masculinity, "male" behaviors, and popular culture. The groups helped to surface multiple subject positions and negotiations among positions. Second, group interactions triggered discussion in directions that I had not previously considered. Because I was interested in both dominant and marginalized understandings of masculinity enacted in group, I had hoped that the discussions would provide many opportunities over time to surface diverse cultural conversations. If there were alternative discourses, and I assume that there were, they were mostly silenced in the group. Discourses did not stray far from normative accounts of masculinity, although there were debates on occasion over things like: Was Bart Simpson gay? What were the acceptable school sports for "popular" boys to play? and Should "White guys" sing rap songs, and if they do, is it really rap?

Another assumption that I made about the groups was that the participants might benefit from hearing each others' experiences, and this sharing may, in turn, facilitate comfort to express perspectives. Most of the boys seemed to like the groups, but I am not sure if it was the payment, the food, getting out of class, or the time together with other boys and some of their friends that they enjoyed. Only a few boys out of the three groups missed one of the five group sessions. For the most part, I was easily ignored, as most of the participants seemed to be performing and trying to outperform each other with various displays of heteronormative masculinity. In addition, it seemed that some of the more quiet boys on the margins (as well as the other boys) got lessons in hegemonic masculinity that may have been helpful to them if they were hoping to negotiate positions closer to the norm and popularity and/or to protect themselves from transgressing the boundaries marking normative and nonnormative masculinity. The groups provided a view of performativity of the hegemonic norm in the context of discussions that visibly surfaced the often unstated and implicit rules of masculinity.

Lastly, the groups provided a low adult/researcher to student ratio, which helped decrease any power imbalance that may have inhibited conversations. Sharing of thoughts and feelings beyond a narrow normative framework, nonetheless, was inhibited by the discourses of masculinity within which the boys were embedded. The problems normally anticipated in adolescent groups, such as conformity, censoring, silent group member(s), and dominating group member(s),

were present in these groups.^{20,21} These problems were present in large measure because of gendered subjectivity and consequences of hierarchic relations among subject positions within discourses of masculinity, not because of neutral or nongendered notions of group dynamics.

Attending to group interactions was one of my primary responsibilities. In order to do this I had to adjust my expectations about what was "normal" group dynamics, especially for the middle-school groups. It was not uncommon for one boy to take another's chair, and then the boy who had his seat taken would sit on or punch the boy who took the chair. Boys would grab chip bags from each other and yell at each other for taking more than their share of the snacks. During one middle-school group, I left the group room for about 5 minutes while the boys had a written exercise to complete. Using brief writing and drawing exercises was another form of data collection. It was also a strategy to assist participants in gathering their thoughts, and it functioned to facilitate participation and discussion. The boys wanted to leave the tape machine running in case any spontaneous conversation about the topic that day erupted. From the sounds of the tape, some of the boys did not stay in their chairs, only a few sounded as if they were trying to complete the exercise, and the discussion that ensued was a nonstop, outperforming banter about masturbation. Most of the boys did not seem concerned that I would hear the tape, although a couple of them made comments that reflected they may be slightly embarrassed.

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Individual semistructured interviews

The 1- to 2-hour semistructured interviews were conducted with the 22 boys in the groups after the groups had ended, and with 10 additional boys who were not in the discussion groups. The additional participants were included because they seemed to sincerely want to do the interviews and earn some money, and because I assumed that they might surface discourses uninfluenced or conditioned by previous group participation. These participants also expanded the racial and ethnic diversity of the sample.

At the beginning of each interview, I asked the participant to fill out a questionnaire about his media participation, popularity, sports, experiences feeling scared at movies, and other issues. I found that the questionnaire gave the boys an opportunity to prepare for the interview in a way that helped them to discuss and elaborate on what they had written. It also functioned as an interview guide.

The interviews provided a wealth of information by themselves, but when combined with the discussion groups and media data, they provided many more opportunities to analyze production and reproduction of discourses and subject positions and movements among positions in different networks of power relations. Moreover, combining analysis of popular culture representations of masculinities with individual and group accounts is crucial to shifting attention away *from* these "personal" accounts as the source of "truth" about masculinity, to more visibly implicate the social in the production of subjectivity, the hegemonic fiction of White heteronormative masculinity, and practices of violence.

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FEMINIST, POSTSTRUCTURAL, PSYCHOANALYTIC DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The primacy of language as a site for investigating subjectivity, social practices, and health is an assumption underlying poststructural psychoanalytic discourse analysis research.^{8,9,12,14,22,23} The practice of discourse analysis and the inclusion of diverse cultural discourses beyond the accounts of research participants in human and social science research, however, is not common primarily because of firm boundaries around "science" and diverse academic disciplines. The time for bringing the sciences (eg, human, social, nursing, and biological) together with the humanities (eg, literary and cultural studies and

literary criticism) in understanding social practices, human health, and subjectivity is long overdue.²⁴ Reconceptualizing knowledge of masculinity as discursive terrain, this methodology turned the research gaze toward cultural discourses that function to produce subjectivity, popular media representations, and participants' performative accounts.

The primacy of language as a site for investigating subjectivity, social practices, and health is an assumption underlying poststructural psychoanalytic discourse analysis research.

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Interpretive discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is both methodology and method. As both, in this project it addressed the relationships between the participants' accounts and other forms of cultural conversations. This methodologic approach enables the researcher to explore similar and contradictory discourses that constitute and shape understandings while recognizing the contingency of all knowledge on historic and available cultural discourses.^{12,14,22,23,25} Primary goals of discourse analysis informed by feminist, poststructural, and psychoanalytic positions are to analyze the production of knowledge within relations of power, such as gender, race, class, and age, and to explicate the social relationships and ideologies that are reproduced or are erased or obscured. Hollway argues that the aims of discourse analysis are "to produce an account which acknowledges contradictions, to describe the details and diversity of events, and to analyze experiences in terms which go beyond the unitary, rational subject."¹²(p81) In order to analyze knowledge/power as the mutual production of the social (discourse) and the psyche within power relations, Hollway developed an interpretive discourse analysis method composed of four strands of analysis.^{12,14} She describes the four strands as "a simple discourse analysis; a psychodynamic account of reasons for reproducing or modifying the take-up of positions in discourses; an analysis of the part played by individual history, both conscious and unconscious;... and an emphasis in each of the above analysis on intersubjectivity as formative in the ongoing reconstruction of self, in past and in present."¹⁴(p93)

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Simple discourse analysis

The simple discourse analysis in my study identified discourses constructing masculinity.¹³ Discourses are understood as frameworks of knowledge in the forms of written, spoken, performed, and enacted cultural conversations and representations that function as authoritative ways of describing that divide up the world in particular ways. Included in the simple discourse analysis are accounts that emerged in popular media representations, groups, and interviews, as well as accounts produced by feminist discourses shaping this research. Hollway¹² notes that it is important, for several reasons, to give feminist discourses the same status as other discourses. First, feminist discourses figure in the accounts because of my deeply embedded history and positions in these discourses. Second, feminist discourses are culturally available sites for the (re)production of understandings about gender and masculinity and, therefore, figure in popular media and participants' accounts. Lastly, feminist discourses are productive. That is, they are implicated in knowledge/power the same way as other discourses.

I identified eight discourses under the broad umbrella "discourses of masculinity." These discourses served as a heuristic, or tool, to organize accounts.¹² Similar to other ways of categorizing, these discourses do not refer to actual entities or ways of being masculine, but they are discourses that I deemed were useful for the purposes of the research. Their stability and tendency to act as a unifying force were destabilized through practices of discourse analysis and deconstruction, such as the ones described below. In addition, although division into eight discourses implies separateness, each of the discourses is connected and can be revealed as a trace in each other, functioning much like unstated assumptions to support and reproduce each other without notice.³ Moreover,

because discourses are diverse and unified, conflictual and cohesive, contradictory and congealing, the subjectivities produced through these networks or matrices of power do not stay in a fixed, ontological space or position in discourse.

The two broad discourses analyzed for my initial project were "popularity and the necessity of the outcast" and "reproduction of hegemonic masculinity: practices of punking."¹³ "Popularity and the necessity of the outcast" describes reproduction of a hegemonic masculine norm through significations of popularity and reproduction of marginalized masculinities through significations of unpopularity and the "outcast" (from the norm). The second discourse, "reproduction of hegemonic masculinity: practices of punking," describes "punking" as a performative, or a doing of humiliating verbal and/or physical assault. This repetitively enacted performative simultaneously constitutes the hegemonic norm and marginalizes masculinity. In addition, it reproduces their binary and oppositional construction. Six other organizing discourses will be explicated in future work. They do not have firm titles, but I include them here to provide a larger sense of the overall discourse analysis.¹³ "Proving masculinity" encompassed such broad, complex, and important aspects of the production of masculinity that I divided it into two broad discourses, "discourses of daring and risk," and "heterosexuality and homophobia." Other organizing discourses are "slick masculinity: in your face," "masculinity as domestic incompetence," "enforcing masculinity: discourses of violence," and "fathers and sons: bonding and the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity."

The simple discourse analysis strand also included analysis of conditions that enabled discourses of masculinity to emerge.^{12,14} Conditions are understood here as power relations that enable or constrain particular discourses and movement among subject positions within discourses. For example, my questions surfaced some discourses and not others. They enabled more or less movement among subject positions, depending on the particular discourse and how a participant was positioned. I asked questions about popularity, sports, how adolescent boys might respond if a boy in a group of boys decided not to see a movie because it was "too scary," and favorite TV shows, movies, and computer and video games. Tapping into my ready supply of discourses about masculinity, my questions can be understood as conditions that enabled particular discourses to emerge and that constrained the emergence of others. In addition, my initial explanation of the study, as well as the information flyers and consent forms, also can be understood as conditions that enabled particular discourses and inhibited others.

Other conditions that enabled or constrained discourse emergence were my relationships with individual participants and with boys in the group context, and the boys' relationships with each other in the groups. For example, compared to the group discussions, conditions in the interviews, with the absence of male peers, enabled more discourses to emerge, a wider range of discourses to emerge, and greater movement among subject positions. The groups were constraining on all accounts because of the boys' constant surveillance of each other, which seemed to promote hyperperformativity of the norm.

To surface effects of discourses, I asked participants about their everyday practices and concerns. My question about what makes a boy popular or unpopular, for example, surfaced a wealth of discourses constructing normative and nonnormative practices of masculinity. My questions about TV shows, movies, and computer games, and the boys' descriptions of their favorite media representations surfaced discourses constructing practices of masculinity taken up by boys in the study.

In addition, I asked questions of the discourses that emerged, such as: does this discourse reinforce or contradict other discourses, and what are the effects of reinforcement or contradiction? Hollway ¹⁴ notes that contradictions between discourses produce the possibilities for alternative or marginalized practices and subjectivities. This was the case in my findings, although the most visible alternative masculinities almost exclusively were positioned at the inferior end of the norm/nonnormative masculinity binary.

Another aspect of the simple discourse analysis strand was differentiating subject positions available to participants in the identified discourses. Areas of analysis included movement in accounts among subject positions, conditions necessary for particular positions to be taken, power conferred in different subject positions, and contradictions produced by different subject positions in an account and between accounts.¹² The interviews, groups, and popular media excerpts included in the analysis are rich with these complexities of subject production.¹³

In order to explicate my use of Hollway's method and the other three pathways of discourse analysis, I include here brief analysis examples from my research.¹³ For the purpose of understanding the analysis strands described in the rest of this section, I refer to simplified, collapsed products of the eight organizing discourses. The hegemonic masculine norm reproduced in the discourses that surfaced in the research is signified by a field of possibilities, such as toughness, strength, tall or large size, the ability to fight, independence, heterosexuality, popularity with boys and girls, particular clothes, and middle or high socioeconomic status. Marginalized masculinity is signified by weakness, the inability to fight or win fights, poor socioeconomic status, unpopularity, small size, being ridiculed, being childish, particular clothes, and homosexuality.¹³

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Reproduction and modifications of subject positions: psychodynamic accounts

The second strand of Hollway's discourse analysis method is a psychodynamic account.^{12,14} This analytic is necessary "to look for a motive to account for someone's emotional investment in specific positions in discourse in order to understand the reproduction of gender-differentiated discourses." ¹⁴(p93) Attention to the effects of lived history in cultural discourses on the unconscious and the effects of the unconscious on positioning in discourse are fairly unique aspects of Hollway's method. I found them intrinsically important to discourse analysis that aimed to explicate simultaneous production and regulation of the social and subjectivity based on popular media and participant accounts. Social practices such as masculinity are "informed by individual histories, which are themselves located within discourse and power relations, but with meanings achieving unique significance through the workings of the unconscious." ¹⁴(p100)

Of the 32 adolescent boys in the study, 22 participated in both the discussion groups and the individual interviews. Spending time with these 22 boys in five group sessions and then in 1- to 2-hour individual interviews provided many opportunities. Not only was I able to analyze how individual boys took up different subject positions in different contexts, but it allowed me to use the stories that boys shared in the interviews to further analyze the previous group discussions. Simultaneously looking back from the present and forward from the past enabled me to understand a particular boy's investment in subject positions that reflected his history of participating in discourses of masculinity. In this way I was better able to understand the effects of these discourses.

In the individual interviews, many of the boys shared deep and broad histories of participating in discourses of masculinity that they did not disclose in the discussion groups. For example, in the interviews I learned about personal participation in nonnormative practices and in practices of violence. I heard accounts of proving masculinity through very serious risk taking, through heterosexual display, and by taking up and reproducing homophobic discourses. I also heard about being repeatedly positioned on the margins of hegemonic masculinity and the effects of this positioning. These histories of participation in discourse surfaced motives that could account for a particular boy's investment in particular subject positions within particular discourses and power relations (discursive context).

In her research with women and men, Hollway found that the positions people

take in "gender-differentiated discourses ...[make] sense in terms of their interest in gaining enough power in relation to others to protect their vulnerable selves"¹² (p60) Consciousness is not an unmediated product of experience. It is mediated by the unconscious, which is not neutral, but has a continuously forming and changing history within discursively produced power relations. This analytic was particularly evident when I looked at gender performativity across group sessions and individual interviews. In groups, masculine performativity, in general, was heightened both in physical enactments of the hegemonic norm and also in taking normative positions in the discussions. Taking alternative positions in discourses of masculinity was, in general, suppressed or avoided in the groups. In the interviews, hegemonic gender performativity was significantly different in several ways. Physical normative gender performativity was decreased drastically and was more subtle, such as sprawling out on the couch instead of jumping on the boy sitting in the next chair. There also was more diversity in subject positions taken up by boys in the interviews. In addition, the boys positioned on the margins in the groups, although also primarily positioned on the margins in the interviews, seemed to negotiate more among subject positions and to feel enabled to take up normative positions in the interviews. These same boys rarely took up or enacted normative positions in the groups, where strict hierarchic power relations among subject positions were in place through performativity of normative discourses.¹³

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Individual histories, discourses, and subject positions

The third strand of analysis focuses on the part played by individual histories, constituted within discourse and power relations, on subjectivity.^{12,14} That is, the unconscious has a social basis because of its continuous and conflictual historic development in relation to meaning and discourse. Individual histories in discourse, Butler ⁹ argues, continually structure the unconscious through interiorization of the psyche and, thereupon, are implicated in the constitution of subjectivities. Discourse analysis can show how persons may be positioned similarly in a discourse but also *situated* differently because of individual histories within discourses and power relations. In addition, analysis can reveal how a subject may be positioned one way in a particular discourse in a particular context (eg, interview) and be positioned differently in the same or a similar discourse in another context (eg, group).

Discourse analysis can show how persons may be positioned similarly in a discourse but also situated differently because of individual histories within discourses and power relations.

Once again, incorporating group discussions and individual interviews enabled this strand of analysis. The interviews alone were rich in complexities and provided histories in discourses suggesting relations to later events and to motives for investment in particular positions. Discussion groups were constraining in these aspects. Juxtaposing interviews and group discussions, however, enabled analysis of the historic effects of the force and rigidity with which hegemonic masculinity is reproduced among young and adolescent boys. There were few pathways to the norm (popularity), and boundary maintenance was particularly evident in the groups. For example, some boys occupying positions on the margins of hegemonic masculinity at some period in their histories clearly described understanding themselves as marginalized or nonnormative in the past (eg, "I was weak," "I was a nerd") and as closer to the norm, currently, by strategically taking up normative practices of masculinity (eg, violence, heterosexual display) in order to achieve more normative positions. Although this pathway to the norm seemed like a mostly conscious acceptance and participation in the norm, what seemed to remain unconscious were the effects of histories in multiple discourses constructing the norm that worked simultaneously with the conscious negotiation of subject positions. Many boys in the study, for instance, described histories of primary bonding experiences with their fathers that centered on watching R-rated male action and horror movies from ages as early as 3 years. These popular media sites are intense reproductions of the hegemonic masculine norm, as well as marginalized masculinities. The effects of immersion in these cultural discourses as bonding experiences with fathers helps me to understand emotional investment in

the norm and normative practices of masculinity and in continuous reproduction of marginalized masculinities to support the norm.

Another example shows more directly how this strand of analysis is useful in surfacing unconscious effects of participation in cultural discourses reproducing the norm. A high school participant described himself as "alternative." Alternative masculinity in this case was signified by being Buddhist, listening to underground alternative music from New York City, being nonviolent, not caring that he was not popular, rarely watching TV, and criticizing fairly harshly most adolescent boys as "programmed." What I read as unconscious effects of reproduction of the hegemonic norm and normative practices of masculinity, such as violence, surfaced throughout the interview. Two examples are given here. First, this participant described an instance when a boy, 4 or 5 years younger and quite a bit smaller than the participant, challenged him to a fight. Although this participant, positioned in his account as nonviolent, expressed amazement and disgust that this young boy would challenge him to a fight, and he seemed to discount that this challenge, he described going to the place where the fight was to take place "not to fight him but just to throw him on the ground and walk off." This face-saving practice of masculinity surfaced in most of the boys' accounts and is a common theme in popular culture representations of masculinity.¹³

In the second example, this participant described his regular participation in paintballing, a billion-dollar, contemporary form of entertainment (business), primarily enjoyed by White, elementary and adolescent boys in North America. Theme parks include mock Vietcong villages and Rambo hotels. At these parks, boys rent safety masks and guns that shoot small plastic balls filled with paint at a speed of about 300 feet per second. The guns look like real handguns and are potentially lethal. Parents of children and underage teens are required to sign a release of liability before their sons can play, claiming that they will not hold the paintball park responsible if their children are hurt or *killed*. The object of the game is to shoot other players, marking them with paint if they are hit, while trying not to get shot. This participant describes being hit by a paintball as "really hurting," and causing "big welts and stuff." Seemingly conflicting with the discourses of nonviolent alternative masculinity taken up by this participant, I read his fight with the younger boy and his desire to play paintball as unconscious effects on subjectivity produced through the widely circulated norms of masculinity, including practices of toughness, proving masculinity, and violence, not as an innate sign of an essential masculinity.

This third discourse analysis strand also revealed how boys were positioned similarly in the hegemonic and marginalized discourses but were *situated* differently because of individual histories within discourses and power relations. Boys occupying positions as "popular" (close to the norm), for example, were not positioned exactly alike. Some appeared to be "born" into their positions because of significations like Whiteness, "money," particular looks and abilities, and heterosexual displays. Maintaining this inherited privileged positioning usually meant reproducing it and not "losing it." On the other hand, some boys appeared to enforce or strategically work to achieve their positions as close to the norm through more visible, and sometimes exaggerated, practices of masculinity necessary to secure their positions. Similarly, boys positioned on the margins of the dominant norm were situated differently in the discourses that produced them as marginalized. Within these discourses, at least one boy in the study was positioned as a "smart," "quiet," and "nerd"; several other boys were positioned as "dumb," "quiet," and "nerds"; and another boy was positioned as "stupid," "weak," "annoying," and a "pansy." An effect of these different positionings in relation to marginalized and normative masculinity was different treatment by boys positioned closer to the norm. For example, the boy positioned as a smart nerd seemed to be mostly left alone or not harassed by boys closer to the norm. On the other hand, the boy positioned as weak, annoying, stupid, and a pansy was repeatedly humiliated through practices of verbal ridicule and physical assault (practices of punking).

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The last strand of Hollway's discourse analysis method focuses on intersubjectivity and its involvement in the three other strands of analysis and as formative in the ongoing production of subjectivity.^{12,14} This analysis explicates how subjectivity is produced continually in relation to others or, rather, in relation to how others are produced and positioned. Hollway sees intersubjective relations functioning consciously and unconsciously. She describes that "since infancy, we have used significant others as vehicles for containing some of the ambivalent feelings which it is difficult to acknowledge in ourselves. Defense mechanisms such as projection and introjection operate intersubjectively."^{14(p94)} In the analysis "popularity and necessity of the outcast," excerpts from popular TV shows and from the boys' accounts demonstrate that their positioning depends, in part, on how others around them are positioned.¹³ For example, similar to numerous interview and group accounts, "Brotherly Love," a Disney channel sitcom, produced and positioned females as objects or objectified resources to affirm the heteronormativity of males. In addition, the hegemonic norm and marginalized masculinities were reproduced continually in hierarchic relation to each other, although the relation and the norm and marginal were never exactly alike. Subject positions are situated differently because of lived histories in discourse, effects of the unconscious, and current context that includes intersubjectivity and power relations producing multiple subject positions.

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Discourse analysis methodology/method summary

This discourse analysis method incorporates Derridian inspired strategies of deconstruction and Foucault's analytic positions on knowledge/power.²⁶⁻²⁹ Keeping the political endpoint in view meant a methodologic approach that interrogated universalist versions of masculinity and normative practices of violence that are constructed through numerous cultural systems and that interarticulate with race, class, and sexuality. Cultural discourses function to unify experience and suppress contradiction and multiplicity. Participants strive for consistency and coherence in the accounts they produce. Antiessentialism or deconstruction of essences is an emancipatory strategy that aims to show how essences have historically evolved, how they structure what is known, and how they function in people's lives.

Compared to media representations, the participants' accounts surfaced greater variability and subtle movements among subject positions, foregrounding the contingency of performativity and revealing the possibilities of agency through resignification.¹³ In an effort to move away from boy's voices and behaviors, however, as the implied a priori source of innate masculinity and toward problematizing cultural discourses within which we all participate, I decentered the participants' accounts by using several strategies. I began analysis with excerpts from popular media sites and included other excerpts juxtaposed with boys' accounts throughout the analysis text. Another decentering strategy was use of language, such as subject positions, positioning in discourse, occupying positions, and taking up positions. In addition, surfacing and analyzing conflicting and contradictory positions within seemingly unified discourse helped to explicate connections and interarticulations among other, presumably unrelated, discourses.

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SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The overall goal of this methodologic approach in relation to my research project was to begin to expose the discursive cultural dimensions of masculinities by enlarging the study of subjectivity, masculinity, and practices of male violence to press forward in areas of cultural accountability in relation to prevention of, and intervention in, male violence.¹³ The account of hegemonic masculinity and practices of violence explicated in my project will be taken seriously only when there is no assumed individual/social or mind/body separation. When cultural discourses in all forms of representation are understood as power/knowledge that takes hold of the body through performativity, bringing into being the social it

names, health and social science scholars can begin to understand that what is at stake can be existence itself, that is, for example, existence as a "man" in a dominant fiction of "natural" White male supremacy and in a reality of a society structured by "his" imaginary and unachievable presence.

This methodologic approach to subjectivity shifts attention to the importance and the workings of cultural discourses in (re)producing a White patriarchal world view. It bridges the gap between the individual and social context. Deconstruction and a poststructural perspective on language undermine assumptions that meanings of masculinity are coherent and secured by reference to a "natural" male body or "God given" gender roles. These positions destabilize the common sense assumption that relationships among signifiers, such as those that signify masculinity, remain the same over history and in different cultural contexts. Feminist, poststructural, psychoanalytic discourse analysis directly addresses the consequences of normative discourses in a multicultural and increasingly gender-blurring society. The language of subjectivity, discourse, performativity, and positionality allows us to decenter the individual, free-will subject and to foreground shared cultural discourses, regimes of truth, and our participation and complicated complicity in reproducing discourses not of our own choosing or benefit. Deconstructing knowledge about masculinity and practices of male violence, for example, decreases the regulatory and oppressive consequences of a hegemonic view of gender and masculinity and increases receptivity to alternative knowledges. Moreover, it foregrounds the instability of all knowledge and of subjectivity.

Attention to the instability of language and knowledge is especially important in nursing, where definitions, concept clarification, and standardized research instruments normally are anchored in the assumption that they represent realities outside of language. Instead of universal and unquestioned application, the theoretic and methodologic positions put forward here suggest a tentative, open, and questioning approach to nursing research, practice, and education. Poststructural methodologic perspectives on language function as revolutionary critical thinking tools that enable nursing research to move beyond the individual level and to explore critically subjectivity in the context of complex social conditions and practices.

In addition, methodologic approaches attending to the gendered nature of society are necessary and critical to the everyday work of nursing and to nursing research in a diverse and global society. Not noticing gender, race, class, and other structuring mechanisms in a gendered, racialized, and classed society works against health and well-being. For example, distancing strategies in examining male violence, such as focusing only on "deviant" men, function to maintain silence about the gender of violence and the complicated ways that race and class structure societal vision to look away from White middle and upper class heteronormative masculinity and normative violent practices.¹³ Calling attention to the gendered and racialized processes by which norms are constituted helps reveal their consequences in peoples' lives and the purposes they serve in maintaining the status quo and conditions of oppression.

Other implications for nursing research approached from poststructural, psychoanalytic, and feminist methodologic perspectives include: use of multiple sites of cultural representations beyond individual accounts, interdisciplinary collaboration that brings together theories and scholars from the human sciences and humanities, and extending and complicating "standards" for research validity and reliability.^{30,31} Poststructural psychoanalytic methodology encourages more complicated and contingent understandings of individuals and the cultural forces that act upon them. It enables research that understands persons as multiply positioned in changing contexts and influenced by performativity of the unconscious. The notion of subjectivity as socially produced, for example, foregrounds the vital capacity of cultural systems of representation to simultaneously regulate identity, produce the subject, and reproduce the social. Presuming the possibility of diverse and multiple effects on subjectivity, feminist, poststructural, psychoanalytic research excavates regulatory discourses for these effects. It explores the functions and consequences of cultural discourses that

structure society and affect the health and well-being of people constituted within the available language.

In summary, research exploring the effects of knowledge/power shifts the nursing research focus to the social and to the individual as radically social. The methodologic shift to a perspective on language as socially produced encourages a research focus on the unacknowledged conditions and unintended consequences of the production of knowledge on subjectivity. Research that questions the discursive ground upon which nursing concepts, theories, and interventions are produced prevents static and fixed assumptions about people and health. Furthermore, research integrating a poststructural psychoanalytic approach to language and cultural representations and a feminist deconstructive approach to gender enables analysis that focuses on discourses constructing gender norms and marginalized gendered subjectivities and the functions of significantly problematic fictions of "normality" in people's lives.

The discipline of nursing has a role in examining its own participation in cultural discourses, such as the structuring presence of White heteronormative masculinity. It has a political role that demands research that does not shy away from complicated issues, including our participation in structures of domination. Methodologies that explicate the regulatory fictions of any society are methodologies that aim for social accountability.

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Key words: adolescent; discourse analysis; feminism; language; masculinity; methodology; poststructuralism; psychoanalytic; subjectivity

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