“ITS SOMETHING I HAVE TO DO” MASCULINITIES IN SPACES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

McMaster University MASTER OF ARTS (2021) Hamilton, Ontario (Geography)

TITLE: “It’s something I have to do” Masculinities in Spaces of Higher Education

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NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 119

Abstract

Social and cultural geographers have developed an important body of work on men, masculinities, and masculine spaces in recent years (e.g., Hörschelmann, & van Hoven, 2004; Gorman-Murray and Hopkins 2016). Informed by feminist scholarship and critical men's studies, this work has examined masculinities as provisional, place-based performances, situated within a broader field of structured gender relations. In this thesis, I contribute to this body of work through an analysis of performances of masculinity within the space of post-secondary education. Drawing upon interviews with a small but diverse sample of participants, I examine the ways in which young-adult men draw upon, adapt and challenge masculine norms as they transition from high school to university, and as they plan for future careers. My analysis demonstrates that while some men understand their career trajectory, others express anxiety about futures. This anxiety reflects the increasing uncertainty of securing 'good jobs' in the current labour market set against the enduring norm of the male breadwinner.

Acknowledgements

Throughout this thesis I have learned a great deal about both the subject matter I am writing on, but also about myself and the men in my life. I have had to really reconsider my connections with others as a man and turn my lens inward towards myself.

For this, I would like to thank deeply, Dr. Rob Wilton for his incredible direction, support, and mentorship throughout this process. It has been a wonderful three years working on this project (and prior ones), and I have him to thank for that.

I would secondly like to thank the fourteen men who participated in this research. I admire your vulnerability and openness in participating, and my work would be nothing without you.

I would finally like to thank my friends and family. Thank you to both of my parents for their ongoing support throughout my education. Thank you to Nia and Allison as my support and confidents. Thank you for your all your support assistance, and love, you have all been indispensable during this process.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Rationale

This research is concerned with the ways in which young men enact masculinity in the spaces of post-secondary education. It examines the ways in which gender is constructed through the pursuit of educational capital, using qualitative data drawn from undergraduate student participants at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada. The landscape of Canadian universities is changing as shifts in the ways in which we utilize universities to prepare and educate the future workforce occurs in tandem with the continuing entry of women into Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs. According to Statistics Canada, more women graduate from post-secondary institutions than men in Canada, although many programs within the STEM umbrella are still male dominated (2022). More broadly, these changes are happening in reaction to decades of advocacy, activism, and hard work to erode some of the structural barriers women face in education and the workforce, but also are occurring alongside largescale industrial decline within the western hemisphere and a loss of traditional blue collar, 'masculine' work and the growth of more precarious work in the service sector and gig economy (McDowell 2000; McDowell, 2003; McDowell, 2005, McDowell, 2020; McDowell & Dyson, 2011; Nayak 2003a; Nayak 2003b; Nixon, 2009). Within the context of these social changes, the acquisition of a university degree serves a key role, taking in high school graduates and producing labour force ready workers.

Men in university occupy a distinct space in that they are an increasingly smaller number in a space that is widely regarded as the key to providing access to good, middle-class jobs. While there has been a wealth of research regarding the experiences of men in university, much of it is focused on the experiences and culture around the American University system and fraternities

(Laker & David, 2011; Grazian, 2007; Paul, McManus, & Hayes, 2000; Sweeney, 2014). We can see that within the literature, there is a clear gap regarding the acquisition of university degrees in reference to paid labour and gender. Informed by feminist scholarship and critical men's studies, this work examines masculinities as provisional, place-based performances, situated within a broader field of structured gender relations. Moreover, Connell (2005) calls for future research to be done in analyzing masculinities in spaces of education. In this thesis, I contribute to this body of work through an analysis of performances of masculinity within the space of post-secondary education. Drawing upon interviews with a small but diverse sample of participants, I examine the ways in which young-adult men draw upon, adapt and challenge masculine norms as they transition from high school to university, and as they plan for future careers.

1.2 Research Question

This research is guided by a central question is; how does gender impact the decisions of men in university related to paid employment, and why do men select and enroll in the programs and fields they do? This in itself stems off into other questions – how spaces of higher education produce masculinity, and what do men feel is masculine labour.

1.3 Gender as a Concept

This research approaches gender utilizing the frameworks of West and Zimmerman (1987) and Connell (2005). West and Zimmerman develop a framework focused on the performance of gender, as an act built through interactions, rather than that of the early social sciences which focused on differentiation of gender. In the framework of West and Zimmerman, *Doing Gender* involves the production of differences between men and women, and boys and girls through acting out gender (1987, p. 137). They argue that the biological sex and social gender mutually co-construct each other, impacting the way in which they formulate and develop within the social

consciousness (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Relatedly, Connell's (2005) work argues for a 'middle way' in terms of interpreting gender, advocating for a change from the dualism of biological essentialism, and social constructionism, in favour of using a hybrid that understands the body is a biological being that is the stage for the social actor, and both influence and alter each other (pp. 50-53). Connell (2005) defines Hegemonic Masculinity as the configuration of gender practice that holds the position of being the socially accepted answer to questions of the legitimacy of patriarchy. Hegemonic masculinity is brought into existence through the cooperation of individual actors and institutional power (p. 77), which is important in understanding the ways in which the men interviewed discuss and interpret the gendered significance of employment and breadwinning. These works are both seminal within the interdisciplinary field of gender studies, as well as key sources for understanding the performance of masculinity within this thesis.

1.4 Outline

This thesis is comprised of four substantive chapters that follow the introduction. In Chapter 2, I review a broad swath of literature, tying together work on gender, capital, and class to make an argument about the nature and importance of breadwinning to masculinity. In Chapter 3, I set out the methodology utilized in this research. In Chapter 4, I present the results of my analysis, focusing on the ways in which the men who participated define masculinities, their life histories, and in specific their experiences with school, followed by a discussion on the ways in which they selected to navigate university and why they made the choices they did. In Chapter 5, I discuss the broader significance of the research, tying it back to the literature.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I engage with existing scholarship that informs my research on masculinities in spaces of post-secondary education. First, I look at the field of critical masculinities scholarship. This work, which spans several disciplines including sociology and geography, provide an important framework for exploring the analysis of gendered bodies, masculinities, and identity. Subsequently I look at the work of Pierre Bourdieu, focusing attention on the concepts of capital, habitus, field. This work is important for thinking about the ways that access to education helps to reproduce class and gender privilege in capitalist society. Drawing these two bodies of literature together, I suggest that capital is used within the field of education to acquire certain accepted gender roles for men in the form of breadwinning.

2.2 Critical Masculinities

2.2.1 Defining Masculinity

As Berg and Longhurst (2003) note, the Oxford English Dictionary definition of masculinity understands it as being part and parcel of what it means to be a man and presenting manliness, failing to explain what a man actually is, grounded in the taken-for-granted notions of sex/gender divisions (p. 351). Against this taken for granted conceptualization emerges the field of critical masculinities, spearheaded by R.W. Connell. The practice of gender is in part what informs the social structure of gender, but in turn, the social structure of gender informs practice of gender. To Connell, this relationship is a key facet to understanding gender. To describe structure is to specify what part of a social situation constrains the 'play of practice' (Connell, 1987, pp. 93-5). Then, social structures are the rules of the game that inform how we perform gender, not the determinants, and in this sense as actors we have a *limited* agency in our

interaction with the world through this arena. Gender is continually reconstituted and reconfigured through our social interactions with one another, and so, importantly, the gendered self can become contradictory as we interact with others (Messerschmidt, 2018, p. 114).

Connell's historical analysis shows that the enlightenment's shift of focus away from religion helped to entrench the differences between men and women within science and specifically biology, giving way to a long-standing tradition of naturalizing gender (Connell, 2005, pp. 46-7). The enlightenment served as a turning point whereby sex came to be understood as innately tied to gender, and with that a model of gender was constructed with the two sexes in opposition to each other. Before this change, sex had been understood as a sociological category and not an ontological one (Messerschmidt, 2018, p. 110).

Drawing from Foucault, Connell argues that science and technology are used to discipline and control the way bodies are used, noting that "[i]f social discipline cannot produce adequately gendered bodies, surgery can." Connell further argues that society uses medicine as a disciplinary function to keep ambiguously sexed bodies within the safe and socially familiar gender binary (2005, pp. 49-50). Metaphors of machinery are used to interpret and understand the body, using language such as 'biological mechanisms,' 'hardwiring,' or 'programming' (Connell, 2005, p. 48). In the contemporary interpretation of gender, we largely understand genitalia to be the ultimate criteria for determining someone's gender, even if the vast majority of assumptions we make about someone's sex is based on other criteria. Understanding this means that we present sex externally without the use of genitals (Messerschmidt, 2018, pp. 112-3).

There are several ways that Connell argues masculinity has typically been understood. The four primary ways of defining masculinity are essentialist definitions which argue there is a core feature to masculinity, positive definitions which argue that masculinity is what men are,

normative definitions which argue that masculinity is what men ought to be, and semiotic definitions which argue that masculinity is a series of symbolic differences in masculinity and femininity (2005, pp. 68-70). By contrast, Connell offers a definition in which masculinity is understood to be simultaneously 1) a *place* in gender relations, 2) those *practices* conducted by men and women that engage that place in gender relations, and 3) the *effects* these practices have on the bodily experience (2005, p. 71). While all men derive benefits from the patriarchal order, a majority of men do not occupy positions of power and occupy a wide variety of subordinated positions within society, and many are negatively impacted by existing gender regimes (Walker and Roberts, 2017, p. 7).

According to Connell, a gendered hierarchy is enshrined within the social order through three domains: labour, power, and cathexis. These three domains present themselves within structures of relationships - within the division of labour within the workplace and home, and through authority, control, and coercion (Connell, 1987, p. 96). The gender division of labour is reproduced through multiple mechanisms, including hiring practices within the workforce. For instance, while men might be hired to be salesmen or software engineers at a computer firm, women are hired to do data entry (Connell, 1987, p. 99). In this sense men, historically, have maintained a financial dominance in the labour force, even when women have become a major factor in many workplaces. As Myers (2016) found in looking at breadwinning and household equity, that many families, and men in specific still heavily rely on the ideology of breadwinning to understand a man's role, even as women have by and large entered the work force. Skills, training, and education further contribute to this division, with jobs like nursing created as a concession from the professional male doctors to the semi-professional career path of female nurses (Connell, 1987, pp. 100-1). Higher paying jobs, while open to women, are still largely

reserved for men. The field of healthcare, for example, is a well-mixed if not woman-dominant workforce, but the role of nurse, a lower paying and lower status role, is still largely a majority women.

The second domain gender presents itself through the social order is through power relations. Connell argues that men control the majority of forms of institutional power and thereby get to define the social situations where gender is played out (1987, p. 109). Notably, there are four key hierarchies that form the institutional power of masculinity; the workforce and institutionalized violence, the labour force of heavy industry and high technology, the planning and core machinery of the state, and the working-class milieux that emphasizes men's association with machinery (Connell, 1987, p. 109).

The final domain in which gender presents itself is within cathexis. According to Connell, cathexis, the social structure of sexuality and the body, serves to be a key area in which gender is policed. Though the legal process, cathexis is regulated and dictated via permissibility of which types of relationships are acceptable with the core intent of reproducing heteronormativity (1987, 112). Sexual desire is further created and defined in ways that reproduce the gendered difference, such as the promiscuity of men being socially acceptable and the unequal nature of heterosexual relationships (Connell, 1987, pp. 113-7).

It is within these three structures that Connell notes that crises of masculinity occur. Within labour, crises of masculinity occur when there is a disruption of the historical division of labour. Within power, crises occur when there is a collapse in the legitimacy of the power of the patriarchy. Finally, crises of masculinity occur through cathexis when disruptions to the heteronormative order occur (Connell, 2005, p. 85).

Connell advocates for a balanced approach to interpreting gender, arguing that both social constructionism and biological determinism do too little to explain the interaction between the body and the social in a meaningful way. Connell instead proposes that gender scholars take an approach based around the impact bodily experiences have within our lives and how bodies inform who and what we are (2005, pp. 51-3). The example of sports serves well to illustrate this point. Bodily performance is quintessential to success within sports. Moreover, sports continue to serve as a justification and illustration of gender inequality, exemplifying and advocating the superiority of men. It also creates hierarchies *between* men, those who are capable and those who are not. In these ways Connell argues, the body represents and helps to define social organization, and plays a vital role in the understanding of gender in ways that neither Social Constructionism nor biological determinism can account for (2005, p. 54).

2.2.2 Hegemonic and Non-Hegemonic Masculinities

Given that there is not one standardized practice of masculinity, masculinity is always in flux and changes from performance to performance. Hegemonic masculinity, according to Connell, can be understood as the configuration of gender practice that holds the position of being the socially accepted answer to questions of the legitimacy of the patriarchy and coming into existence through the cooperation of individual and institutional power (2005, p. 77).Some masculinities, which Connell calls Hegemonic Masculinities, take pre-eminence, and are largely the dominant performances in a given space (2005). In their work on revisiting Hegemonic Masculinities, Connell and Messerschmidt define hegemonic masculinities in a couple of key ways. They first identify it as something that only a small number of men actually achieve, it is rather a valorized and idealized understanding of being a man, that embodies the most honoured way of being a man, and finally that all men position themselves in relation to hegemonic

masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832).Messerschmidt further defines hegemonic masculinities as "those masculinities constructed locally, regionally, and globally that legitimate an unequal relationship between men and women, masculinity and femininity, and among masculinity" (2018, p. 75). Hegemonic formulations can be distinguished from dominant masculinities, which can be understood as the masculinities that "are not always associated with and linked to gender but refer to (locally, regionally, and globally) the most celebrated, common, widespread, or current form of masculinity in a particular setting" (Messerschmidt, 2018, p. 76). In this sense, a form of masculinity might only be hegemonic if it persists within the context of a larger social order, otherwise it might just be a dominant form of masculinity.

There are three forms of masculinities and femininities that might be categorized as non-hegemonic, subordinate masculinities and femininities, incongruence with sex-gender-heterosexuality connections, and positive masculinities (Messerschmidt, 2018, pp. 126-7). Subordinate masculinities and femininities refer to gendered presentations that are situationally constructed as lesser or deviant from hegemonic masculinity, especially those constructed around race, class, sexuality, etc. (Messerschmidt, 2018, p. 126). Incongruence with sex-gender-heterosexuality connections refer to a defiance of the heteronormative order, for example, men who are seen as unassertive or cowardly are called sissy, these groups of men are seen as defying the normative order and subordinated (Messerschmidt, 2018, p. 126). The final categorization Messerschmidt outlines, positive masculinities, refers to practices that support an egalitarian order between the genders (2018, p. 127).

A key emphasis of the critical masculinities' scholarship is the potential for changes to, and contradictions within, existing gender regimes. As part of this emphasis, Connell and others have examined how diverse groups of men attempt to do gender differently. For example,

Connell found that in interviews with men involved in the 1980s eco-feminist movement, many men were ready to adopt and value feminine traits such as sensitivity or expressiveness, while also utilizing masculinizing language to embody such traits, such as 'the mental strength to put one's feelings aside' (2005, pp. 122-3). In interviews with gay men not directly involved in the gay movement, Connell found that many men were compliant to heteronormative practices such as monogamy and conformed to more traditional masculine norms. These men also were critical of other gay men for flaunting their sexuality and fluidity with gender practices (Connell, 2005, pp. 153-6). These groups of men, while completely different, illustrate examples of non-hegemonic masculinities in Connells understanding. While the second set of men were unable to achieve true hegemonic masculinity because of the challenge to sexual order homosexuality provides, they tried to achieve it in other ways by 'acting' straight. Similarly, the men involved in the eco-feminist movement challenged their masculinity while also being enabled to embody it in different ways without meaningful changes to their relationship with patriarchal norms. This emphasis on change and contradiction within masculinity is something that informs my own work in this thesis.

Similar to that of Connell's examples, Messerschmidt's study of a men's meditation centre trying to challenge negative masculinity showed an unintended consequence of this counter-hegemonic practice; men began to identify with a new dominant masculinity in which they would police behaviour within the centre, and outside the centre face ostracization for not embodying appropriate masculinity. Messerschmidt uses this example to illustrate the shortcomings of positive masculinities as a challenge to hegemonic masculinity, noting that instead these men had recreated inter-masculine hierarchies and failed to spread these changes beyond their context of the meditation centre (Messerschmidt, 2018, pp. 140-1).

In recent work, Bridges and Pascoe (2018) focus on the emergence of what they call 'hybrid masculinities'. They suggest that while gender is susceptible to significant change, gender inequality is much more durable. While the emergence of new gender styles (e.g., the hipster, the metrosexual) may appear to challenge traditional forms of masculinity, Bridges and Pascoe argue that they actually conceal and exacerbate existing gender inequities through three common mechanisms. The first of these is *discursive distancing*, whereby one form of masculinity creates distance between itself and marginalized groups, such as using bro to enshrine heterosexuality amongst a group. The second trait is *strategic borrowing*, whereby a dominant form of masculinity will borrow from marginalized forms of masculinity, something Bridges and Pascoe refer to as symbolic tourism, where a member from a dominant group gets to realize the pleasure of being transgressive without any of the marginalization of the group that transgression is associated with. The final mechanism is *fortifying boundaries,* whereby masculinities might accept concessions to equality by redrawing boundaries to assert power in new or other ways (Bridges and Pascoe, 2018, pp. 261-7). Men, according to Bridges and Pascoe, might accept and promote feminism but by increasing their role in parenting children, claw back the authority or power of women in the household (2018, p. 267). In this sense, concessions of masculine power are granted but often come with the caveat of gaining authority or power in other domains of the social order.

2.3 The Geographies of Masculinities

While Connell understands masculinity as a performance that changes and alters between interactions, geographers have largely focused on how such gendered performances are situated within, and shaped by, different places. The geographies of masculinities, both pluralized because there is not just one of either seek to understand the ways in which this performance,

"we should not speak of a singular masculinity, but rather, of multiple masculinities… [they] are temporally and geographically contingent" (Berg and Longhurst, 2003, p. 352). Noted by Berg and Longhurst (2003), "feminist geographers have long been engaged in discussions of masculinities in a rather indirect way, by focusing on the androcentric and masculinist character of much work being done in the discipline" (p. 353), however by the 1990s, the field had evolved past this and began to explore the geographies of masculinities more directly and explicitly (2003).

Hopkins and Noble (2009) note that "it is the peculiar domain of geography to explore not simply how masculinities are played out in different spaces, but how those spaces shape the very nature of the experience of masculinity, and how it articulates with other key dimensions of social relations" (p. 814). Geography is aptly equipped to handle and analyze the distinct nature of a shifting and altering masculinity. Berg and Longhurst (2003) note that as definitions of masculinities have evolved, they have come to understand and foreground the "temporal and geographic contingencies of masculinities (p. 356). Hopkins and Gorman-Murray (2014) also find that since the 1990s, when geography made its entrance into the study of critical masculinity, the arenas of home and paid work have served as critical vessels for understanding "changes in masculinity and masculine identities, attitudes and behaviours" (p. 16).

The geographies of masculinities constitute a broad and expansive subfield in both social geography and the geographies of gender specifically. Longhurst's work on men's bodies illustrates a more biologically based and physical basis for the studies of men within geography (Longhurst, 2000; Longhurst, 2005). She discusses the ways in which men's bodies are disciplined or represented in contrast to the hegemonically masculine and culturally appropriate body. For instance, in her work on fat bodies, Longhurst's (2005) suggests that geographers are

well equipped to deal with bodies in space (p. 256). We also see practical applications of the geographies at play with McDowell's work on working class men, labour, and masculinity illustrate the ways in which paid work interplays with gendered norms, especially in the domain of post-industrial spaces (see McDowell, 1983, McDowell, 2000; McDowell, 2003; McDowell, 2005; McDowell & Dyson 2011 & McDowell, 2020). McDowell's work illustrates the importance of place in the formation of masculinity in the context of work that uniquely can be seen through the methodology and lens of geography. Similar to the work of McDowell, Nayak (2003a; 2003b; 2006), illustrates that within the context of industrial decline, men must find new ways to assert and reassert conventional forms of masculinity in the absence of 'masculine jobs.' In his research on the 'Real Geordies,' Nayak illustrates that without the work in industry that once defined 'Real Geordies,' these men now turn to consumption as a signifier of their masculine-working- class culture (2003b).

In a recent assessment of the field, Hopkins and Gorman-Murray (2019) note that while there have been major advancements in the field of critical men's study in geography there are still noticeable gaps in the literature within and beyond the discipline, most notably relating to the formation of masculine identity in spaces (also van Hoven and Hörschelmann, 2005). van Hoven and Hörschelmann (as cited in Hopkins & Gorman-Murray, 2005) find that "a key focus for geographers interested in masculinity has been about exploring the contested constructions of gender identities and how these are constructed, negotiated and contested in different localities or places" (p. 4). Significantly, Hopkins and Gorman-Murray call for increased attention to three specific areas at the conclusion of their review: indigenous masculinities, masculinities in the academy, and masculinities and place-based relations (2019). The research contained in this thesis offers additional insight into masculinities within the space of the academy.

2.4 Employment, Class, and Masculinities

Capitalism is in part defined by and structured around male-oriented hierarchies where organization of power and profit are generated in sexed relationships (Connell, 1987, p. 104). The production of a class hierarchy is innately tied into this structural organization. To Connell, gendered divisions of labour "are an ideological addendum to a class structured mode of production. They are a deep-seated feature of production itself" (1987, p. 103). Lower class workers face an increasingly deskilled and casualized workplace, while middle-class work is increasingly defined as skilled (Connell, 2005, p. 55). This is echoed by McDowell, who identified that lower-class men are at a specific disadvantage within the late capitalist, post-industrial economy (2020, p. 975). These men are socialized in such ways that the traits most valued by the newly developing and changing service economy are not embodied by these young working-class men, and so they are further disadvantaged (McDowell, 2020, p. 976). Nayak (2003) notes that the industrial infrastructures that support traditional masculinities have diminished greatly and are now dominated by the service economy. In the long term, due to broader shifts towards more precarious work, many men are growing up without a sense of stable employment (Connell, 2005, p. 93). As the service economy increasingly shifts away from more long-term jobs, and towards the gig economy, further economic barriers are put up for working class men to enter the job market. Nayak's (2003a) study of the 'Real Geordies' yielded critical results in understanding the white, post-industrial working class. This set of working-class men identified that manual labour was preferable work, and that mental labour and service work were "soft" or "babyish" (Nayak, 2003a, p. 152). However, with the industrial labour that defined their fathers' identity all but gone, these men are limited in how they might identify as Geordie men,

and so, as Nayak observes, they seek to reconfigure ways of being masculine to suit the current day and age, rallying around non-labour-oriented celebrations such as football teams (2003a, p. 155). Similarly, Mac an Ghaill (1996) notes that young working-class men do not have very good expectations of finding a real job, specifically noting that many men still view the post-war perceptions of domestic and wage labour being divided along the lines of women and men respectively (p. 391).

McDowell, in her 2020 work on how men navigate the distinctly masculine-gendered gig economy, notes that the costs of cellphones, vehicles, or even a bike prohibit these low-income men from engaging in a workforce that is already highly unequal (2020, p. 984). Culturally, the working class is placed within a unique and noteworthy position. As Walker and Roberts note, working-class men are simultaneously valorized through media representation and discourse surrounding the hard work and 'grit' involved in manual and blue-collar work, while at the same time blamed and resented for the contemporary political crises of our age, such as Brexit or the election of Donald Trump in the US (2017, p. 3).

In the neoliberal context, redefining the notion of 'self-made' has allowed for an alteration in conceptualizations of how the working class asserts masculinity and manhood, recognizing that hard labour has been merged with a competitive mindset in order to coexist with settler nationalism (Walker and Roberts, 2017, pp. 15-6). Central ideals of the neoliberal era, such as individualism and meritocracy have largely been absorbed into conceptualizations of masculinity, illustrating both the adaptability of hegemonic masculinity, and the co-optation of working-class traits and beliefs into the broader cultural understanding of masculinity (Walker and Roberts, 2017, p. 16). The gig economy observed by McDowell, for example, lends itself to many traditional masculine traits, such as speed, endurance, or geographic orientation (2020, p.

977). However, many working-class men prefer to engage in more masculine work, and it was found that a majority of the participants in McDowell's research back this claim up (2020).

Exclusion from, or marginalization within, the labour market can provoke compensatory acts in the form of gender and race-based discrimination. For example, in Willis' study of young white working-class men, 'the lads' replicate the domesticity of their working-class home lives with their own relationships, engaging in oppressive behaviour towards women. At the same time, the men are hostile towards racialized workers who appear to be more masculine than the white working class by merit of their hard manual labour. This willingness to labour is designated undesirable to prevent the racialized class from achieving a more masculine status (Willis, 1977, pp. 194-5). The observation of the white-working-class' hostility to racialized groups perceived as more masculine carries over to their relationships with other marginalized groups, such as Polish immigrants, in the case of the British working-class observed by McDowell, who noted that the participants felt the Polish immigrants were uncompetitive for wages, stereotyping them to generally accepting lower wages (2020, p. 981). Notably, however, McDowell's participants also looked upon the Polish migrant workers with admiration, for lack of a better word, rather than disdain or resentment in the case of racialized workers with Willis.

2.5 Masculinities of/in Education

Much of the research around masculinity and post-secondary education emerges out of the United States and focuses heavily on the cultures and experiences of male students (see, Paul et al. 2010; Grazian, 2007; Sweeney, 2014; or Laker & Davis, 2011). However, as Connell (1987) noted, the gendered division of labour is reproduced by skills and training. In this sense, post-secondary institutions help to produce a gender-divided workforce. Connell argues that reason – in the form of fact, information, and technical knowledge, gives status and credibility to

hegemonic masculinity within the context of academia. Universities replicate and distribute credentials, which are representative of the technical knowledge one acquired, which help to re-establish the current group of academics. Connell identifies reason as a masculine-coded expression of intellectualism and notes that it is dominant within the spaces of universities (Connell, 2005, pp. 164-5). Culturally, western societies believe on the whole that those who possess technical knowledge should be in positions of power and if they are not, then eventually they will be (Connell, 2005, pp. 173-4).

Willis's work on studying the reproduction of the working class through education systems in England seemingly sets out to establish a similar, yet contrary note to Connell. Willis found, largely, that the working-class students in his research were pushed, by their own actions and the actions of their teachers into groups of outsiders who largely rejected their education, and subsequently replicated the working class they came from (1977). Willis further notes that within the shifting culture of the late Fordist period, career counselling and courses increasingly valued the service economy (1977, p. 177). Noting that the industrial economy was predominantly propped up by the government, Willis found that the schools were heavily pushing service work onto students (1977, p. 177), creating a divide between conformist students who were being prepared for white-collar employment, and 'the lads' who are more funneled towards blue collar labour.

Broader cultural and social norms also seem to replicate themselves within the school environment, as Willis notes in describing the facets of working-class culture that are produced within the group of the lads in school (1977). According to Mac an Ghaill (1996), educational institutions, and their (hidden and overt) curricula reflect the dominant ideologies in society, but further, and arguably more importantly, they serve as an arena to produce a range of

masculinities and femininities for students to adapt and take on (pp. 385-386). In her work studying the gig economy, McDowell observed that many of the young men looking for work within the predominantly low-income gig economy had been disadvantaged by educational institutions, and largely understood that their academic environments did little to support them (2020, pp. 980-1).

As mentioned earlier, one of the foremost ways that children are socialized within schools in terms of labour is through career counselling. Willis notes that the work and films assigned within the career course was one of the clearest modes in which gender appropriate work is conveyed to the students (Willis, 1977, pp. 198-202). Willis also identifies another way that ideology is delivered to the students through the school, and that is that careers are taught as ways to achieve human aspirations, while also assigning work that is largely uninteresting, "boring and mostly tiring." (1977, pp. 202-3). In this sense, school illustrates cultural beliefs about work being the medium to achieve success and meaning within western life, while also illustrating the unfortunate reality of most work, that it is hard, unfulfilling, and often pointless. The overt curriculum advocates for the cultural beliefs while the practical curriculum demonstrates the cultural reality.

Importantly, Willis was writing at a time when manual labour in industry was still available to young working-class men. By contrast, Ward's (2014) study looked at the academic experiences of similar men in the context of deindustrialization. He focuses on a group of self-identified 'geeks' who seek educational success as a route out of an economically disadvantaged working-class community. In the predominantly working-class region of South Wales, the geeks transgress normative behaviours by being successful within school or having 'weird' interests (Ward, 2018, 129-30). Some of the geeks understand the acquisition of a post-secondary degree

as a means to attain hegemonic masculinities not afforded to them within their locality, noting that by moving away they can achieve autonomy and acquire some freedom (Ward, 2018, p. 132). Importantly, within their school environment the geeks utilize masculine metaphors for their traditionally unmasculine activities, such as using "mental muscles" to play scrabble, masculinizing the activities in some ways while being deprived of it in others for their status as weird (Ward, 2018, p. 135). At the same time, they also engage in practices (e.g., drinking) that mirror the practices of other working-class youth. As Ward (2014, p. 722) notes:

> "These working-class 'achieving boys' offer a hybridised form of masculinity, not only trying to escape but also falling back and feeling the pressure to perform traditional classed masculinities."

More broadly, education systems are changing and evolving with the times. As Mac an Ghaill (1996) states, there has been a notable shift within education away from "a liberal-humanist schooling paradigm to a technical training paradigm" which, in practice, has led to new forms of masculine identities emerging, and new inter-masculine hierarchies forming between high and low vocational spheres (pp. 388). In this we see the emergence of a split between the conventional form of masculine labour – blue collar work, contrasted with the newly technicalized and credentialized university system, high and low vocational spheres.

2.6 Breadwinning and Masculinity

As Connell notes, disruption in the world of labour produces disruption to the gendered order (2005). We can see this happening in the post-industrial restructuring around the service economy in western nations, and effectively we can also observe the crisis of masculinity that has been produced by the labour disruption. In Nixon's work on men in the service economy, he notes that it requires men to abandon certain types of masculinity, in favour of more submissive

presentations (2009). In the absence of traditional blue-collar labour, men are largely shifting into sectors of the economy such as the service economy, illustrating Connell's disruption. In the literature on masculinity, understanding what is defined as masculine is contentious and far from ubiquitous. However, one emergent theme that is demonstratively relevant is the role of breadwinning in masculinity.

In their work on post-secondary students in the United States, Munsch and Gruys (2018) found that even while college men supported egalitarian views, such as equality with woman and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals, their self-reported experiences of feeling emasculated revolved around subordination of women and other men. Notably, one trend which appeared in 45.2% of their participants, was the specific mention of breadwinning as a major theme in their narratives about emasculation (Munsch & Gruys, 2018, p. 382). Munsch and Gruys find that these men are largely concerned with their earnings. They cite one of their participants as saying " A lot of guys define themselves by their career. Without that, you don't feel like you're living up to the expectations that are set for you to bring home the bacon" (Munsch & Gruys, 2018, p. 382). In their study, Myers and Dementas (2016) discuss the role that failure to achieve breadwinning has on men, especially in an economic landscape that is eroding away the middle class (p. 1122). They argue that for men, failure to achieve breadwinning status is a leading cause in unhealthy behaviour in men (p. 1123), indicating that for the construction of a valued masculinity, breadwinning is still held in high regard.

Having outlined relevant work on masculinities, education and work, I now shift to review work by Pierre Bourdieu and others on the relationship between education and cultural capital. While not directly concerned with gender, this scholarship provides a framework to understand how educational credentials as a form of cultural capital can be used to secure access

to forms of skilled work. As I suggest below, the capacity to acquire educational capital relates in important ways to men's aspirations to approximate the masculine norm of 'breadwinning'.

2.7 Bourdieu, Education, and Capital

2.7.1 Bourdieu and Structuralism

The writings of Pierre Bourdieu sought to prove that there was an approach to sociological work beyond conventional ways of thinking that could bridge gaps in social theory produced by the dichotomies of different schools of thought. The individual and the structural must interact in ways that reproduce each other over long periods of time. Mutually constitutive, they inform and form each other through social interaction. In his writing, Bourdieu places an emphasis on the role and social importance of education and presents an inherently geographical approach to sociological work, the locations in which transfers of social knowledge and capital occur within specific fields (or places). Bourdieu's work helps to scrutinize the reproduction of social strata and is therefore apt to answer questions about post-secondary education and the potential for class mobility within education. A Bourdieusian framework aids my own research which seeks to ask why men might make certain career and education decisions, employing concepts like field, habitus, and capital.

Bourdieu's work has been described as structuralist, although he might hardly describe himself in this way. The most succinct definition of structuralism that I have encountered comes from Lechte (1995, p. 36), who argues there are two key criteria of structural thought: it understands the primacy of different relations in forming and understanding culture and society, and that structure is not observed beyond the confines of society, meaning we are confined by society in our observation of society. All human action, to Bourdieu, is situated within

determining structures that are not readily available to the conscious individual (Swartz, 1997, p. 57).

Much of Bourdieu's influence comes from the prominence of Marxism in the mid-twentieth century, and much of his work is in reaction to or addressing such ideas/thinkers (Swartz, 1997, p. 20). Seeing so much emphasis on macro-level thinking by contemporary French sociologists, Bourdieu felt there was no space given to individuals, yet the reaction to Marxists by micro-level constructionists also troubled Bourdieu. Bourdieu, however, did not see these two camps as mutually exclusive. He argued that the subjective's emphasis on micro-level transaction meant a reliance on volunteerism and individualism, meanwhile the Marxists' emphasis was further set towards abstraction of models of social realities (Swartz, 1997, p. 53-5). Bourdieu, however, felt that much of this thinking led to too many shortcomings and failures, and advocated for a new solution to the longstanding academic disagreement between society and the individual. "Habitus" and "field", as Bourdieu refers to them, resolve these academic disagreements and instead configures them as one in the same.

2.7.2 Habitus, Capital, and Field

The core of Bourdieu's work on education is focused on quantifying the reproduction of class within the education system. However, by far, the most transferrable aspects of his research are contained within the concepts of habitus, field, and capital. The three concepts interact to capture conflicts within space, a scarcity of capital means actors might come into conflict in order to succeed and inevitable establish oneself within the social hierarchy of a given place. Each of these three concepts will be explored more thoroughly within the following section.

Habitus

Bourdieu's concern with practice begs the question of how an individual or institutional actor acts. Habitus is the guide for an individual's practice. It is not only our internalization of social norms; it is also our external reflection of our social positioning, our demeanor, body language, way of speaking, and outlook on life, among other things (Swartz, 1997). The concept of habitus serves as a vital bridge between macro-level theory and micro-level theory. To Bourdieu, the habitus is a structuring structure that generates action (Swartz, 1997, p. 102). Navigating between macro and micro, Bourdieu fixes the habitus as a disposition, one that forms within our earliest socialization experiences in which we begin to internalize external structures (Swartz, 1997, p. 103). Bourdieu theorized that certain life chances and experiences would generate the same habitus (Swartz, 1997, p. 103). Bourdieu thus sees the habitus as the way that structural social norms reproducing themselves within the individual.

Capital

To Bourdieu, the Marxist notion of capital in relation to economic and financial capital is somewhat limiting. In Bourdieu's imagining of the social configuration fields are places in which we contest for capital and social relations are formulated around these contestations for capital, which he believes appear in different forms. Capital, to Bourdieu, includes all forms of power, including but not limited to material, social, cultural, and symbolic resources (Swartz, 1997, p. 73). Possession of any of these forms of capital advantages individuals or institutions within fields, allowing for success within internal hierarchies.

Cultural capital presents itself in three forms: embodied forms, meaning individuals can appropriate or consume it; objectified forms, such as books, art, or instruments; and finally institutionalized forms, such as education credentials (Swartz, 1997, p. 76). Economic capital still maintains primacy at large within society but social and cultural capital, however, take on a

more vital role in Bourdieu's analysis because they help actors to navigate and succeed in these exchanges. Swartz gives the example of academia, noting that understanding how to navigate the academic world itself is a major part in gaining notoriety and status within your discipline. In the case of Spigel's work on entrepreneurs, capital takes on a further meaning, whereby the symbolism of some types of social capital impact their value, which is referred to as Symbolic capital. In Spigel's case, the symbolic value of a mentor impacted how hard an entrepreneur was likely to try in order to seek out a mentor (2017, pp. 301-2). In places where the symbolic capital of a mentor was less valued, institutions such as universities that partook in the local field developed few programs around mentorships, and in places where mentors were more valued, the opposite was true for universities there (2017, p. 302). Within this framework, capital can be expanded to the advantage of some individuals and groups. For example, Archer et al. (2012) look at how some boys who are good at science acquire a form of 'science capital' which covers all of the connections, background, or advantages accessible to them to help create a person capable of science (2012, p. 5). A non-exhaustive list of what scientific capital could be expanded to would be contacts, social networks, qualifications, scientific literacy, or knowledge of how the world of science works (Archer et al., 2012, p. 5).

Field

Bourdieu argues fields are the places where we interact with one another in exchanges for capital. Fields are the arenas in which practice occurs, where institutional and individual actors are in conflict (Swartz, 1997, p. 9). While the field seems to be a less than physical place for Bourdieu, it is no less applicable to tangible, material space. Fields can be understood as "a structured system of social positions occupied by either individuals or institutions engaged in the same activity and are defined internally in terms of power relations" (Thorpe, 2010, p. 181). Of

all Bourdieu's conceptual framework, field, by far, best lends itself to geographic analyses. Fields, according to Bourdieu, can exist on multiple scalar levels, and can differ from place to place. A local field, for example, might be one that is practiced predominantly by people within the same region (Spigel, 2017, p. 295). A global field is further of note especially in geographic analyses. As Spigel notes, different local fields might lend themselves to distinct interpretations to a global field (2017, p. 305). Fields contain shared norms and values upheld by the members and actors within the field (Thorpe, 2010).

2.7.3 Applying Bourdieu

The formation of the habitus occurring within the context of education systems is a key facet of Bourdieu's social theorization, and while Bourdieu may not be the only one who noticed the importance of education in formulating and reproducing our social realms, he articulated it well. The specific working-class habitus might then be of note in much of the work contemporary underperformance of working-class men within western education systems.

Paul Willis's ethnography *Learning to Labour* exemplifies many of Bourdieu's ideas. Willis observed that within the culture of British schooling systems, subcultures around 'laddishness' there appeared to be certain patterns – both the systems of power and the cultural norms of these lads helped reproduce working class men. In their encounters with teachers, the students were rowdy and bad students, but the teachers were also operating in a constant state of defence against these students in order to preserve authority and hierarchy (Willis, 1977). Willis' key observation was that certain aspects of working-class culture permeated the lives of working-class children, which then informed their practice within the school. The culture of the lads predominantly embodied working-class ideologies which Willis calls penetrations, facets of larger structures appearing within smaller social organizations (1977). These penetrations

resemble habitus in several ways, but primarily, the embodiment and adoption of structure into individual practice might be a major piece. Willis' focus on the role of school in educating students on social class within the covert curriculum also ties deeply into what Bourdieu is arguing.

Beyond Willis, there is a more direct application of Bourdieu's work within both sociology and geography. In their analysis of why some boys excel at the sciences, Archer et al. (2013) draw several important conclusions. Despite a substantial number of the children interviewed expressing interest in the sciences, the boys noted as 'young professors were the most likely to pursue sciences and further most of them aspired to be socially prestigious 'scientists' (2013, pp. 11-3). Of these boys, they note that only one aspired to be less, and he was from a lower socioeconomic stratum than the rest (Archer et al., 2013, p. 13). Success within the field of science education delineated the young professors, as they are able to navigate the rules of the field with great ease (2013, p. 13). Similar to this, Arne's work on English professors within Southern Ontario universities showed that most students within the discipline who went on to get PhD's had a much greater access to capital, which aided their success within the field (2021). Arner further notes that the reproduction of the class divide within the field was likely due to the difficulties of class mobility within academic institutions (2021).

While not directly concerned with education, other authors have used Bourdieu's concepts to engage with gender and masculinity in particular. For example, Thorpe's work on masculine cultures and snowboarding exemplifies this approach, using Bourdieu to critically engage Connell's work on hegemonic masculinity. Thorpe advocates that a Bourdieusian framework can help account for fluid relationships between gender categories (2010, p. 178). Within the global field of snowboarding, several types of masculinities occur. A notable facet of this work is that

Thorpe, in looking at the different categories of snowboarders, identifies how access to different forms of capital shapes how snowboarders interact within the field. In a field that so highly values youth and dedication, older snowboarders lose access to both as they age and settle down with their lives, becoming more casual. These boarders, compared to their younger counterparts see a tamer interaction with snowboarding, a relative sense of self-reflection is acquired, and less hostility towards other groups is illustrated (Thorpe, 2010). On the opposite end, boarders who are too young are not afforded the capital of status or prestige, are far more intense, competitive, and risky in an attempt to establish themselves (Thorpe, 2010). Throughout one's life, access to capital changes and so does the interaction of the individuals within the field.

Spigel applies Bourdieu's work to the discipline of geography in a way that I find distinct from the other work here. Spigel, in analyzing entrepreneurialism between the Universities of Ottawa and Waterloo finds a distinct utility for Bourdieu's framework. Comparing two cities with functionally the same legal settings and opportunities, Spigel analyzes the different fields in the two cities to identify how each city has its own field of entrepreneurialism (2017). Spigel illustrates how different programs at different universities result in the emergence of different fields. Spigel further shows how the professional environment impacts the curriculum of each place respectively, and how then the curriculum prepares students for their respective field (2017). Here, we can see the co-constructive nature of professional fields and university degree programs when placed in proximity to each other. The resulting analysis reveals that the economic histories of each locality result in different types of entrepreneurs. In Ottawa, entrepreneurs were found to be less risky and less likely to venture outside of their own networks, whereas entrepreneurs in Waterloo were far more willing to take risks and explore

outside their own networks, with Waterloo entrepreneurs being more guru-like, and Ottawa entrepreneurs being quieter about their success (Spigel, 2017).

2.8 Applying Theory to My Work

The field I anticipate analyzing is the field of McMaster University. The rules of the field are the norms and commonalities between all the faculties, but we might also observe subject specific fields, such as Archer et al.'s conceptualization of science capital to analyze students in STEM (2013). The individual's habitus aids them in making decisions about what they might want to pursue, and how they should make choices. Using semi-structured interviews about the life histories of each participant, I plan to explore the development of their habitus, as well as their access to different forms of capital within the different fields of education they have to navigate through their careers.

Class divides in educational performance are well documented, especially in the case of post-industrial societies, and can be seen in the specific context of Southern Ontario (Robson et al, 2018; Davies et al, 2014). Robson et al. specifically find that under-representation of low-income students in Southern Ontario universities was related to poor experience within primary schooling, later resulting in difficulties for students within their education, and therefore failing to attend a post-secondary institution (2018). Davies and colleagues identify that within the Greater Toronto Area, advantaged youth are overrepresented in universities, and further they are more overrepresented within more prestigious universities (2014, 48). They further identify two streams of students: socially mobile, and socially reproductive students, indicating a social stratification within Canadian, and more specifically Southern Ontario universities (2014). Given these social characteristics, the application of a Bourdieusian framework makes sense. There is

evidence that a social stratification and reproduction of the social order within education systems in Southern Ontario, and so the characteristics of the field of education might then be explored to help explain the success of some groups and the failings of others. What sort of habitus advantages one group within the field of education?

Spigel's work on entrepreneurialism at face value does not necessarily transfer well to the study of education; however, there are some crucial takeaways that should be noted. First, Spigel observes how the field and habitus mutually co-define each other. In fields where mentorship is less valued, education systems are less likely to promote mentorship, and therefore students going through those programs are less likely to value mentors (2017, p303). Further, the "choice not to pursue a mentor is not necessarily a purposeful decision but more a subtle one based on entrepreneurs' habitus-based understanding of their goals" (Spigel 2017, p303). In this sense the field forms the habitus within the context of the field, which goes on to reform the field. The role of education systems in reproducing the gendered norms of the field should not be missed in Spigel's work.

In drawing upon the work of gender scholars, I want to examine how labour, gender, and education interplay together to inform the experiences and identities of men. As noted previously, Connell identifies labour relations as one of the key avenues for gender hierarchy to become established (1987, p. 96). Connell explains these replications of gender through the ways that work – men occupy positions that are generally higher paying and higher status, meanwhile women occupy lower status positions with lower pay – with training being a major factor in this differential 1987, p. 99). Practical application to this research then, becomes relevant in seeking out what the reasoning for why men pick certain academic careers. With women occupying a majority of most university programs and increasing enrolment in faculties where they are a

substantial minority (see Figure 1.), we might be curious as to why there are still gender imbalances in many fields beyond university. Connell identifies that this disparity can be explained by the different roles offered in a specific field, such as nurses versus doctors.

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Class divides in underperformance in education are well documented, especially in the case of post-industrial societies, and further replicated in Southern Ontario (Robson et al, 2018; Davies et al, 2014). Robson et al. specifically find that under-representation of low-income students in Southern Ontario universities was related to poor experience within primary schooling, later resulting in difficulties for students within their education, and therefore neglecting to attend a post-secondary institution (2018). Davies and colleagues identify that within the Greater Toronto Area, advantaged youth are overrepresented in universities, and further they are more overrepresented within more prestigious universities (2014, p. 48). They further identify two streams of students: socially mobile, and socially reproductive students, indicating a social stratification within Canadian, and more specifically Southern Ontario (2014).

Given these social characteristics, the application of a Bourdieusian framework makes sense. There is evidence that a social stratification and reproduction of the social order within education systems in Southern Ontario, and so the characteristics of the field of education might then be explored to help explain the success of some groups and the failings of others. What sort of habitus advantages one group within the field of education? The analysis of first-generation students and non-first-generation students might then further yield valuable results in answering this question. The lack of passed-on capital, as noted in the work of Archer et al. in discussing science capital, might then be an explanation for different opportunities, enrollments, life choices, or capabilities within the education system.

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CHAPTER 3: METHODS

3.1 Research Objectives

To conduct this research, men attending McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario as undergraduate students were asked to partake in a semi-structured interview that would cover topics such as external influences on their choice of program or faculty in university, what type of work they can expect once they complete their education, and their thoughts and beliefs surrounding the notion of masculinity. The goal of the semi-structured interview was to answer questions related to the gendered nature of the experiences of the participants, and how their decisions and life courses might be informed by masculinity and seeking out appropriate performances of masculinity. *Appendix A* contains the interview guide which covers the broad topics mentioned more generally above. This work sets out to answer the questions, how does gender impact the decisions of men in university related to paid employment, and why do men select and enroll in the programs and fields they do.

3.2 Research Design

Semi-structured interviews were selected for this research as they provided me with the opportunity to adapt to and explore more in-depth the responses of the participants (Dunn, 2021, p. 158). This method was chosen over unstructured interviews and other qualitative methodologies primarily because this research was not based in grounded theory. Building upon my own prior research, it made the most sense to me to have a clear direction of where the interview guide should take discussions. Due to my own apprenticed level of experience with qualitative methods, I also wanted to select something that did not require a high degree of skill on the part of the researcher for successful execution of the interview. Semi-structured interviews, while having a handful of short comings in terms of understanding the actual

performance of gender, help to get right to the core of discourse on gendered norms. As outlined by Catungal and Dowling (in Hay and Cope, 2021), semi-structured are not the most effective methodology to capture the actual practice of human behaviour (pp.18-39), and so ethnographic research was considered but finding a population that could be observed to answer the overall research question made it not feasible given the two-year time limit of the master's degree program, which does not allow for more lengthy research methodologies such as ethnography. Since part of what is being investigated is the experiences of men in relation to their families, education and gender, semi-structured interviews lend themselves well to conducting this kind of discussion, were they are given some form of direction about what is being covered, and there is overall consistency between the participants' interviews in terms of what is being discussed. Life histories play a key part in this research, as noted by Connell (2005), help to establish a "relation between the social conditions that determine practice and the future social world that practice brings into being" (p. 89), yet it does not comprise the entirety of the research, such as education or the gendered coding within their programs might go untouched without prompting.

3.3 Recruitment

Prior to recruitment, special ethics approvals were required for in-person human research from the university due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was eventually lifted right before I received approval from the Faculty of Science. Students in their undergraduate degrees at McMaster were recruited. Recruitment was done via online flyers, in-person recruitment in classrooms, on campus postering, and social events on campus in order to maximize outreach and variety within the sample populations. sample also was found through snowballing, but this approach was not preferred. Given the unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic, online recruitment was primarily considered in order to achieve a strong variety of participants within

the university. Given that the participants are students, it made the most sense to recruit through the school, and so in-class announcements, posters, and snowballing were all avenues explored to recruit participants. I reached out to professors, lecturers, educational resources, and student clubs to promote my research, however, some of those did not yield successful avenues. As noted in more depth within the section on screening, participants were be recruited in two groups, first generation participants and non-first-generation participants. To ensure that an acceptable amount of each group was recruited, the groups were initially recruited utilizing separate recruitment materials. This research sought out approximately fifteen to twenty participants, or until saturation had occurred within the interviews, however, only fourteen participants were recruited due to the difficulties finding participants through the pandemic and summer term in which participants were recruited. With first generation students being a minority of the overall population, they were intended to be over-represented within the sample making up approximately one half of all participants, however, only three of the fourteen participants were first-generation students, as I had an incredibly difficult time locating first generation students, and so the comparative element was dropped due to logistical reasons.

In the recruitment phase, participants were sought out from two separate groups with separate recruitment materials to attempt to ensure a balanced sample was taken from the student population. Materials for first-generation students were put up to recruit this group independent of the larger student population, and then non-first-generation students were recruited, so that the first-generation group would be appropriately oversampled. While postering for first-generation students was done, it did not yield the results I had hoped for. The general posters were more successful and yielded eleven of the fourteen participants through the general recruitment alone.

3.4 Analysis

The first part of the analysis was transcription. Given my past experiences with transcription of audio recordings, the interviews will be transcribed manually by the myself. Careful attention to paralinguistic cues such as silences was given when available. Using the framework laid out by Dunn, non-verbal or unspoken cues were coded into the transcripts (2021, p. 170). These symbols helped in transcribing the research accurately, as more than just words are important within an interview. However, given the time of year much of the research was conducted in, many of the interviews were done via telephone, rather than in person, losing the opportunity to note body language.

Taking up these methods assisted in the analysis, ensuring that the research had validity and meaningful consequences. To assist in developing initial codes, the transcripts were carefully read, and memos were left within the margins of the transcript. This was in line with the method laid out by Cope which advocates that memos help to develop a critical review of the research and might allow for considering alternative interpretations of the data (2021, p. 356).

Initial codes were developed using descriptive coding. The transcripts will be combed through once again, this time finding thematically relevant points within the interview. A preliminary codebook was developed from the initial read through of the transcripts in as a means to assign basic codes. Utilizing the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006) for thematic analysis, I carefully read the text of all 14 interviews, searching for key themes and commonalities between the transcripts that were tied to the central research question. However, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), some of this work was inductive, and so many of the key themes were emergent from the data itself rather than established beforehand along with the central research question.

Special attention was to be paid to any commonalities between both groups, and any major commonalities amongst groups that did not appear in the other groups. However, there were too few first-generation participants to make major comparisons between first-generation and non-first-generation than I had originally hoped, however, some conclusions were still able to be drawn from the first-generation group.

3.5 Data Collection and Sample

The 14 men interviewed were all undergraduate students at McMaster university. While I did not collect their specific ages, they did range from their second year of university to fifth years, and noticeable divergences between the lower and upper-year students existed in the dataset. These men occupied a wide variety of degree programs within the university, and so for context, the gendered breakdown of these programs in both 2015 and 2022 have been provided in Table , both to illustrate the current gender breakdown of their programs in 2022, when the research took place, and also to demonstrate the shift in the gender breakdown within the context of the university over time, as it shows, every program the men were enrolled in, sans two, had a decrease in the proportion of men in the programs.

Displayed in Table 1 are brief summaries of each student, including some key demographic and background information that informs much of their stories according to their own account. Displayed in Table 2 is a breakdown of all faculties and degree programs that the participants of this research were enrolled in, as a change in the percentage of male identified students between 2015 and 2022. As an indicator of change over time, we see that men within university programs as a total have decreased nearly across the board, however, the students'

experiences of gender-difference within their programs serve to be just a snapshot in time along this change.

TABLE 1: PARTICIPANT SUMMARIES		
Name	*Program*	*Description*
Adam	Health Science	Adam is a fourth-year health sciences student, hoping to go off to medical school. He is of Indian descent, and both his parents attended post-secondary in India. His mother is employed within the field of health science. After growing up for some period in Singapore, his family relocated to southern Ontario, where he grew up from fourth grade onwards. He strongly identifies with his program and credits his teachers with pushing him to be a hard worker. He feels he is succeeding in university in terms of attaining his goal of getting to medical school.
Alex	Integrated Science	Alex is a second-year integrated science student. Alex was raised in a South Asian in Southern Ontario to immigrant parents. Alex was a very serious student and always tried hard to succeed in school. He feels his ethnicity plays a major role in his life and decisions he has made, including the choice to go to university. Alex hopes to go on to do graduate school upon completing his undergrad.
Ben	Life Science	Ben is a fourth-year life sciences student, with the hopes of going to dental school because he feels it has a better work-life balance than being a doctor. Ben's parents both attended universities, with his mother attending university in southern Ontario, and his father attending school in Lebanon. He feels he struggled with school until late high school when he decided to take school seriously and he is now confident in his ability to get into dental school.

Carlo	Mechatronics and Integrated Biomedical Engineering and Health Sciences	Carlo is a second year Mechatronics student, within the faculty of engineering. He grew up in Southern Ontario, where both his parents worked as teachers. He describes himself as always incredibly studious and feels a lot of pressure surrounding school and school decisions. He has a strong affinity for music but felt it was 'unrealistic' as career. He cites his parents as major influences for his decisions. He doesn't have a specific job in mind but desires his career to be well paid.
Gabriel	Environmental Science	Gabriel is a second year Environmental Science student who grew up in Southern Ontario. His grandparents were immigrants and felt that attending university was incredibly important and saved up to put him through post-secondary. Gabriel's mother works as a teacher and his father works in IT at a bank. Gabriel himself desires to become a teacher, but he feels his degree may not have set himself up well for that path.
Grant	Health Science	Grant is a fourth-year health sciences student with the hope of going to medical school. Grant generally likes his program and feels positively toward the climate of his peers, unlike the other two participants in health sciences. Grant feels he has always been a strong student and has few concerns about getting into medical school. His father is disabled and does not work, and he identifies this as a driver for him and his career to find and be successful.
Jamie	Engineering Physics and Society	Jamie is a fifth year (final) Engineering, Physics, and Society student, hoping to work in the energy sector after university. He feels he has always enjoyed what he did and that it was a logical conclusion for him to end up in engineering. He grew up in a suburb in the Greater Toronto Area and was raised in the middle class.
Joey	Math & Stats and History	Joey is a fourth year Math & Statistics and History student, from Southern Ontario. He grew up in a small town, where his father worked as a grocery store manager and then as a pastor and his mother is a registered nurse. Joey, after his degree, wants to attend teacher's college and eventually become a teacher.

Rick	Computer Science	Rick is a second-year computer science student, growing up in Southern Ontario. Rick describes himself as a very social student, and that his academics came second until he was further along in life. His father was injured and unable to work, and his mother worked as an early childhood educator. He grew up in a low-income neighbourhood, in community housing, and views his degree as one of the possible ways to climb the socioeconomic ladder. He feels that becoming an entrepreneur is his main goal and that university is a good backup plan.
Samuel	Material Engineering	Samuel is a second year Materials Engineering student, who grew up in Southern Ontario. He considers himself to be studious and hard working. His father works as a corrections officer and his mother is a facilitation worker in the public sector. When he is done school, he aims to be an engineer.
Theseus	Health Science	Theseus is a fourth year Health Sciences student. Born in the UK and raised partially in Brunei, he has grown up all over before setting finally in Ottawa in high school. He was raised in a British Military family, and has a strong passion for medicine, hoping to eventually go to medical school after undergrad.
Tony	Business	Tony is a fourth-year business student, focusing on becoming an accountant. With his parents being both being teachers in the area, he feels a need to acquire a business degree and find a good stable job.
Trent	Computer Science	Trent is a second-year computer sciences student from Honk Kong, moving to Canada with his family and settling in southern Ontario for third grade. In Canada, he describes himself as a quiet, introverted hard working student. He identifies the COVID pandemic as a particularly difficult period in his career as a student and feels it set him back. He is unsure what he aims to achieve from his degree.
William	Life Sciences	William is a fourth year Life Sciences student. He is the only participant that is actively trying to change his entire career trajectory. Growing up in an immigrant family in Southern Ontario, he discusses how his Indian ethnicity pushed him to go into health sciences but that he doesn't enjoy it for find it fulfilling. William describes himself as a loud and talkative student in school and hopes now to go into comedy upon finishing his degree.

TABLE 2: MALES AS A PERCENTAGE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS (%)			
PROGRAM	**2015**	**2022**	**Change**
ENGINEERING			
Computer	89.0	82.6	-6.4
Mechatronics	89.2	79.3	-9.9
Engineering Physics	89.6	62.2	-27.4
Materials	73.5	50.8	-22.7
All Engineering & Society Programs[1]	*63.5*	*44.6*	-18.9
SCIENCE			
Math & Stats	56.1	60.2	4.1
Integrated Science	41.3	30.7	-10.6
Life Science	34.3	28.7	-5.6
HEALTH SCIENCE*	38.9	30.3	-8.6
BUSINESS*	56.6	57.8	1.3

* Indicates a program with no subordinate programs
[1]Engineering and Society are a mixture between any of the core engineering programs, and so it is impractical to display each niche program with the subset of and society.

3.6 Position Statement

I approach this work as white, cisgendered man. As a university student in a similar position to that of my participants, I approach this work firstly with a sense of empathy, but also

with a sense of commonality with the men I worked with. There is no doubt that I come at this research from a position of power, most importantly as a master's student to undergraduate students of mixed race, upbringings, socioeconomic status, or sexuality. As a student in a thesis-based geography program, much of my research methodology has been informed by my studies. Given the limited time frame of a master's degree, more thorough and detailed methods were not considered in favour of a more reasonable time frame. While I have done my best to accurately represent these men and their words in this research, there are unavoidable spaces in communication. The position statement is vital as a way to further serve as a tool to help develop and understand the criteria outlined by Baxter and Eyles to achieve rigour in qualitative research, by disclosing the subjectivity and positionality of the researcher in order to improve the reflexivity of their research (1997).

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will cover firstly how the participants identified what masculinity is and how they understand themselves to be masculine. I will then cover their early lives and individual trajectories towards university and what led them there. Thirdly I will examine participants' understanding of university as their goal after secondary school. Finally, I look at their experiences in university, how they navigate their degree programs, and what they expect in the ways of future work. Through the chapter, I will explore the role breadwinning norms and the pursuit of educational capital play in the decision making these men make and pressures they have on them.

4.2 Masculinities

Understanding the ways in which these men negotiate masculinity sheds light on the gendered nature of their educational journeys, which will be explored further in the analysis. Subsequently, I will illustrate the changing landscape around masculinities and how that impacts what matters to these men and their conceptualization of masculinity. I will argue that participants acknowledge changing ideas about the emotional and physical performance of masculinity, careers and breadwinning still occupy a large part of the understanding of the role of men.

4.2.1 Approaching Masculinity

All of the participants self-identified as men and further said they conformed to some form of masculinity. However, when conceptualizing masculinity, the men in this study drew from two different framings of masculinity, one rooted in biological essentialism with masculinity understood as biological fact and another grounded in social constructionism, with

masculinity understood as an imposed construct, or learned behaviour. Importantly, many participants drew on both of these framings in their definitions of masculinity.

The framing we might first look at is biological essentialism. From this perspective, men interpret biology as the foundation for being a man and defining what masculinity is. For example, when asked what made him a man, Theseus stated, “you know, simple answer in my head is, "I've got a, uh I mean, y chromosome.” (Theseus, Health Science). Theseus’ simple definition sets out a very straightforward arrangement within biological essentialism of gender, male sex organs make one male according to this line of thinking. We can see further instances of this in Rick and Ben’s statements that they understand masculinity in this way;

> The thing is with masculinity, it's all biology based. So, when I think of masculinity, for example, I think of more testosterone, for example… let's say there was a female that has more masculine traits. It might be because of a boost in testosterone in her system, which would make sense biologically. So, I would say, well, it could be testosterone. Another one could be sperm because it could relate to testosterone input so that could also - they are all biology based, so like, I guess you could say, sperm, testosterone, and maybe something - something else. (Ben, Life Science)

And;

> Jake: What is it that makes you a man, in your opinion?
>
> Rick: Biology. (Rick, Computer Science)

These men see masculinity as explained by biological factors such as hormones and bodily fluids; the body as the determining factor for their gender presentation.

A social constructionist framing understands masculinity as something learned or imposed on participants. From this perspective, participants identify masculinity based on what

men do (and are taught to do). For instance, Ben describes activities he felt were masculine or feminine stereotypically and how he felt he was constrained by these norms:

> Cooking is not masculine because most women and girls cook and not guys, which is not true because cooking is a huge, I love cooking. But that's - that's another example I would say in terms of masculinity, it's mostly related to historically what men predominately did. (Ben, Life Science)

Ben feels that historically, while men did not cook, he enjoys cooking, and it is not necessarily an exclusively feminine thing to cook. We can observe here a relational and dynamic interpretation of masculinity, in that masculinity is formed in opposition to femininity. To Ben, it was important to establish that something that might be seen as feminine such as cooking could be, in his view, masculine. There is a vital inclusion of something seen as traditionally feminine to illustrate that he is open to a changing ideation of masculinity, which will be explored to a greater depth further in this chapter. Joey, similarly, discusses feeling pressured to embody negatively masculine traits:

> I thought that I should, like, dress and act and like, carry myself and express my emotions and stuff like that, right? Like very traditional, like toxic masculinity traits, which I sort of realized were there like later on in life… I just always feel like I always feel like masculinity can be quite constricting and like very rigid. And its expectations of how men should look and behave. (Joey, Math & Stats and History)

Joey felt that socially valued norms of masculinity were restricting and harsh. We can also see a relational assessment of masculinity in Adam's statements regarding himself and his sister and how they were treated differently:

> Like I like as a as a man, I had more or less restrictions, like when I was a child, like, for example, like I could stay out for however long, like my sister had like a certain time she

> had to come by or like, like when she was younger, like, um. She'd have to come back before sundown. (Adam, Health Science)

Like Joey, Adam's understanding of himself as different from women stems from the differential treatment of himself and his sister. He sees that, relationally, he as a boy was afforded more autonomy than his sister. In this sense, we see that the young boys are shown and taught gender difference, which we can connect largely to the notion that gender is done within the context of a gender binary.

Others' views were similar to those of Adam. Theseus, for example, commented: "It's a silly thing to say, but, um my manliness is rooted in growing up in a household that had definitive roles and expectations for the boys as opposed to the girls." (Theseus, Health Science). We once again see the emergence of relational masculinities in Theseus' remarks. He identifies the necessity for boys and girls to be differentiated from each other, and the role that played in his development in gender roles within the home. Jamie had much to say on what he characterized as the sociology of gender:

> Well, you know, there is a sociological reason. You know, women are encouraged to go into STEM when we were very young. That was sort of very much still well back in the early 2000, still very much considered man's occupation or like occupation stereotypically associated with men. I think more women going into society than Eng. Phys really shows sort of like what society values more in women, you know, they're taught to be more extroverted and taught to be more communicators. Whereas with men, you know, sort of when you're younger, it's like you're more prized for being smart. You're more prized for being logical, you know, stuff like that. I think it just, you know, a lot of it comes down to like topics I'm not qualified to talk about sociology, how we

> psychology, how we perceive ourselves, what kind of things appeal to us because of that… I really like looking at the way like toys are marketed to kids, right? You know, with men's toys, it's all about like it's either war and fighting or it's some kind of like vehicle or some kind of like system you assemble and like play with, play around with. With women's toys there's a lot more focus on like social situations and like play acting various like relationship dynamics, you know, like dolls and things like that. And so, this I feel like this is echoed through a lot of things in our society, but this is something I'm really interested in. And it essentially shows how, you know, we sort of chart a path for both genders, for either gender and how there's sort of like expectations put upon them very young to behave a certain way or like if not like consciously then sort of unconsciously through what kind of media we give them to interact with when they're kids. And so that comes all the way up until university, in my opinion, like all the way up until like what kind of career choices they make. (Jamie, Engineering and Physics)

For Jamie, the world, and media seem to be keystones in his formation of gender identity. He identifies the roles toys played in separating boys and girls as the starting point in gendered differentiation, but also ties it further into his pathway, all the way to career choices. Jamie sees the toys and play boys are encouraged to engage with, such as fighting, war, vehicles, or assembly as conduits for teaching boys about what it is men should do. We might associate his focus on building as part-in-parcel to his eventual entrance into engineering as a career path.

4.2.2 Defining Masculinity

In interviews, participants were asked to identify themes that they thought defined masculinity. The analysis revealed two prevailing themes. First, a majority of the men, ten of the

fourteen, identified the word “strong” when discussing what they felt masculinity was. Within this theme, there is variance of meaning and those are also important. Many of these definitions lean on the idea of mental strength, endurance or stoicism, the ability to weather emotional tribulation. We can see this in William’s statements, “Emotionally resolute. So resolute, basically, I guess you could say like sort of like not very expressive, emotional” (William, Life Science). William identifies stoicism as a key part of masculinity, which sits in line with broader stereotypes of western masculinity. Similarly, Gabriel states, “So I think for the first word I would say it is probably, tough- I think in society we're supposed to - I think men are viewed as they're supposed to be the tough ones.” (Gabriel, Environmental Science). Interestingly enough, we also get a discussion of the physical body being strong, which we can see in Samuel’s statements, “Strong. Everyone's using that as physically strong, but I feel like there's a lot of time where they have to send emotionally strong because of the social implications that people push onto them” (Samuel, Materials Engineering). Samuel identifies firstly the importance of physical strength, but also circles back to the idea of emotional strength, connecting the idea that men are expected not only to be endurant and mentally strong but also match that with a physical appearance of strength. This is an important connection that many of the participants made, in that men have standards to live up to both in presentation character wise but also physical standards. We might also take note that mental strength, as in ‘intellectual muscles’ are also discussed, such as in Grant’s discussion, “you don't have to be physically, you know, the physically strong, although. [laughing] Well, I'm saying that because I'm not that physically strong but and yeah, I mean, more so in terms of the mental aspect.” (Grant, Health Science). Grant quite aptly illustrates another point which is in the failure to present a standard or commonly recognized trait of masculinity, men may reappropriate meanings to better fit their

own personal experiences. While he feels that he lacks the physical stature associated with hegemonic masculinity, he is however smart and mentally endurant. Ben adds, similarly, “in terms of stereotypical views, I think for example, when I think of think of masculine traits are someone who is very strong, buff - does not act as a female whatsoever, which again, makes no sense. There's not there's no way a certain female like, everyone acts differently” (Ben, Life Sciences). The essential use of ‘does not act as a female whatsoever’ provides another example of the relational framing of masculinity as something defined in opposition to femininity.

A second key theme of masculinity centered on economic provision and breadwinning. Of the fourteen participants, twelve identified some form of breadwinning, economic independence, or provision to a family as key parts of masculinity either in their own definitions and/or as something they learned growing up. As we can see in a few of the participants statements, “I would say that in society being a "breadwinner" is seen more as a masculine trait.” (Gabriel, Environmental Science), and “I think mostly taking care of my family as well and sticking up for myself and sticking up for the people I love is basically what makes me a man and also taking care of my responsibilities and duties as a person.” (Ben, Life Sciences). To Ben and Gabriel, we see similar definitions emerge here, while Gabriel outright states that generally breadwinning is a more masculine trait, Ben discusses responsibility to family and other as the reason for it. This family provision narrative was more forcefully expressed by participants from immigrant families. Alex, whose family immigrated from Pakistan, made the following statement:

> Ever since I was little, I always had a sense that I needed to be financially stable. As an individual, I needed to be financially stable and as a man as well, because usually in South Asian households, what it's like is even though now it's changed um, the oldest son

> is - like what happens is when a woman gets married, she goes to her husband's house in a South Asian household. But when a man gets married, he stays in his house and usually it's like a joint family system. So, they live with their parents, even if they're financially stable, which is, which is, um, which you'll hear a lot of South Asians say… So even though my parents did not go to university, so I think all would help in the understanding of that was basically in Pakistan, where I'm - where I'm from or like my parents are from. They usually encourage you to go to school, but they also like put a lot of emphasis on the male head or like anyone is male, to go out of the country to like build a better life for themselves as well as send money back. (Alex, Integrated Science)

Here, Alex explicitly makes the connection between the importance of breadwinning and his South Asian heritage. He feels that it is important for the oldest son to be able to provide for himself and his parents. We might further draw from Alex' statements the notion of expectations as an individual vs his expectations as a man. He first remarks that as an individual it is the expectation that he be financially stable, but he clarifies that, specifically, as a man he is expected to care for and provide for his family. Alex is therefore, drawing a distinction between the expectation to be independent for persons and the expectation for men to provide.

Not surprisingly, breadwinning also surfaced as a theme in discussions about the men's future. References to breadwinning vary from an explicit connection to masculinity to a larger concern over financial stability. Grant discusses the importance of breadwinning and success to him, stating:

> First of all, I mean, if only if I had a daughter or anything, I would support her in becoming a doctor. I don't think like exactly any gender specifications when it comes to that with that profession. But for me specifically, I felt that like you need to be a man and

> I guess a successful one - you need to be - the most important thing will be financial independence, that's all. (Grant, Health Science)

Grant's statement is interesting because he emphasizes that a woman can do any job a man can, but at the same time he stresses that a man needs to be financially independent. In this, he makes an interesting point about the importance of independence to masculinity, that providing for oneself is a key tenet of masculinity, something that was not directly outlined in other discussions about masculinity. There is an emergent theme here that will be explored in more detail in the subsequent section; there has been over time, an erosion in the gendered division of paid labour, women are by and large major contributors to the work force, and many workplaces once dominated by men are now of equal gender composition. The more important part of what Grant says, however, is the emphasis on the importance of breadwinning and financial success on what we conceptualize as masculine. We might see that, then, within the context of the erosion of 'masculine' dominant workplaces, the importance of breadwinning remains front and centre to a sense of successful masculinity. The extent to which participants link breadwinning to specific types of masculine occupation is something I examine in greater detail below.

Gabriel discusses breadwinning as something important to his parents for him to achieve, "my goal to find a career path to become independent is based on my parents' expectations of me and their hopes that I won't need to rely on them in the future. I would say that in society being a "breadwinner" is seen more as a masculine trait," while also stating "I do not believe that there is a connection to masculinity in [finding a job to secure financial independence]" (Gabriel, Environmental Science). We might see here contradictions in the definitions of masculinity the men provide, wherein, breadwinning is culturally seen as something masculine, and breadwinning is something one ought to attain, but also that paid work is not tied to masculinity.

We can outline a difficulty here that resonates in much of the conversation about masculinity with these men, since masculinity is in a state of flux, altering itself constantly, these definitions can freely be contradictory and alter from situation to situation.

There is one individual within this research that is worthwhile to flag here. William, while identifying the role of breadwinning within masculinity, consciously rejects it, and he is the only participant to actively do so. William discusses breadwinning in masculinity here;

> I think you can say that like so my mom really wanted me to be a doctor…My parents, what they would view [as masculine], is someone who has a job, they're well paid and they're sustainable, financially sustainable/self-sustaining…What's actually funny is as an Indian, like a like a South Asian myself, the stereotype is that women become doctors, men become engineers. So, you could say that like, there's probably this like things like of trying to perform your masculinity more explicitly. (William, Life Sciences).

William acknowledges the cultural and familial pressures that drove him into 'appropriately' breadwinning fields, such as medicine, broadly through life sciences. William, however, does not desire this, and throughout his interview expressed a desire for the creative arts, and noted to me his desire to abandon his current path and pursue comedy,

> You have to do what genuinely draws you in. Whether that comes from the soul or whatever, that's up for debate. For me, it was comedy. I was acting and it was like writing. It was just artistic fields like that that drew me towards them… I think there's like a bunch of things that I want to do because I have so many ideas, but it's like you can really only do one thing at a time. So, I think either writing for a show, acting in a show, maybe doing stand-up comedy or like perhaps even making movies, like film and stuff like that. Stuff like that would be really interesting for me. (William, Life Sciences).

In spite of his parents' wishes for him, William wants to pursue something that he feels comes from the soul, something that stands out against the other participants, as will be shown throughout. While identifying the importance of providing and breadwinning to masculinity, he seeks something that he wants to fulfil him, and of the fourteen men, he is the only one where he indicates that is in contrast to financial success and or masculine performance. William also illustrates a counternarrative against the drive to accumulate educational capital for labour – while he is not outright rejecting the value of education, he indicates that he felt pressured into enrolling into university and finds himself unsatisfied with the results.

Much of what William talks about in reference to masculinity is in contrast to his parents' wishes for him, which segues nicely into the next section, where I will discuss changes between the participants and their parents' generations on the topic of masculinities.

4.2.3 Generations of Masculinities

On the question of changing gender norms, many participants indicated that understandings of masculinity had and were continuing to change over time. Their perspectives on the nature of this change relate to the themes outlined in the previous section. We can see two key observations emerge in the discussion of changing masculinities in comparison to their parents' generations.

The first major theme in discussions about intergenerational masculinities is the shifting of conceptualization of what it means to be a man. Many of the men, as will be shown here, identify a 'warming' of stoicism, and a shift to more emotional openness in men. In discussing the first major stream, we see Joey discussing the erosion of stoic masculinities.

> I sort of feel like strong and… maybe desirable definitely would be like really, really big aspects, especially maybe like 20 years ago or so. I feel like that identity is definitely

> changing for the better. But I think that like a lot of young men nowadays don't hold on to that toxic idea, right? Like I can't share my emotions; I can't express myself. But I think that a lot of people are starting to understand that it is like a really negative and hurtful way to live your life and not just yourself, but like the people who you care about that are around you as well, right? So, I think that like, the identity is definitely changing and like, obviously it's going to be in constant flux as, like people are, are thinking and growing and developing." (Joey, Math and Stats and History).

Here, Joey identifies that in his opinion, men are at large doing away with that toxic idea he identifies of strong and unfeeling masculinity.

We can also see it in just observing that a change has happened such as Gabriel's notes "I know masculinity, like especially for the last hundred years, has changed quite a bit… it's definitely changed behaviour as well, just because a lot of men are starting to show more emotion. And I think it's you don't have to be as tough as it's made out to be" (Gabriel, Environmental Science). Gabriel identifies there are large scale changes happening to masculinity, and we can see that the men understand changes in masculinities have occurred. It is interesting to see the ways in which these men observe and discuss the differences between their own generation and their parents. Theseus, for example, discuss how his father's relationship with masculinity shaped his own views about masculinity:

> My dad had a very hard-working class upbringing in the UK, um, where you know, um, homosexuality was very looked down upon, um, feminine features were very looked down upon. …. I remember my dad telling me - this was just a couple ago when we were in the UK, - um that when you a certain age I think it was past the age of six, you didn't wear shorts anymore. And I was like, what does that mean? And he was like, "boys don't

> wear shorts. You just don't wear shorts; you wear trousers, or you get beat up." I was just pushed to wear what is what is this fear around wearing shorts as like what, you're seven years old. Suddenly your legs have to be covered in, are your legs are feminine? Um, but anyways. But as much as my dad has shaken much of his, um, you know, the perspectives and views of his youth. Um, I would certainly still describe him as having, um, conservative views of, of being a strong, tough man shaped by the military and shaped by his upbringing. (Theseus, Health Science)

We can see further that Theseus reflects upon much of this, and sees these relationships with masculinity his father holds being replicated in his own life:

> With my first couple girlfriends in high school, I thought, it's very important that I was, you know, quite, you know, I wanted to be like, I don't know, I am searching for the word here, but, um, I just, I had a certain image of how a relationship should work based on, I think in many ways my parents relationship, where it was important to me that I would, you know, buy and, and serve them in terms of, you know, uh, buying gifts, paying for things, um, not opening up about my emotions, being a shoulder to cry on, um, just sort of taking things, um, because that's what a man does in a relationship. He just shuts up and gets on with it. Um, which obviously led to a catastrophic - the relationship collapses. This is a terrible way to try and, um, have a relationship with someone. But it was, you know, what I was raised in and what I thought was expected of me. (Theseus, Health Science)

In Theseus, we see a resistance to the kind of performances of masculinity embodied by his father. The generational changes in masculinity might have points of contention for the men, and it is evident in the way that they react to their father's masculinity.

The second key takeaway from the statements of these participants regarding intergenerational masculinity, is that while masculinity is being identified by these participants as changing, it is still staying on course in some respects. Although the men disagree with their parents on the emotive elements of masculinity, the majority still agree on the importance of breadwinning to a successful performance of masculinity. For instance, we see with Alex, even if he disagrees with his parents on many of the core ideas of masculinity. He still aligns with a core principle: "ever since I was little, I always had a sense that I needed to be financially stable. As an individual, I needed to be financially stable and as a man as well" (Alex, Integrated Science). Alex illustrates here, the cornerstone of what he learned at home. As shown earlier in this excerpt, breadwinning and stability continue to be a dominant part of the conceptualization of masculinity. We see similar sentiments in William's experience, "my parents, what they would view is like someone who's who has a job, so they're well paid and they're sustainable, financially sustainable, slash, self-sustaining, whatever." (William, Life Science).

Holistically, we might take away from these men's statements that there has been a change in the way men are allowed to express themselves. These men feel that they have greater latitude to express emotions and identify this as a change from their parents' generation. Simultaneously, they identify that not all elements of a 'traditional' masculinity have been set aside. These men still feel a sense that breadwinning is still of a vital concern and is linked in important ways to the normative performance of masculinity.

In the sections that follow, I examine participants' experiences of schooling and spaces of post-secondary education. I focus attention on the extent to which their experiences are guided by efforts to secure the educational capital needed for labour market success. The analysis

highlights the ways in which participants navigate the university in pursuit of the right kind of credentials with varying degrees of certainty and success.

4.3 "Getting/Being Serious" – Life Histories and Trajectory

In the context of the interviews, I asked participants to talk about their educational histories, reflecting on the kind of student they were, and the influences on their route to post-secondary education. Many of the participants had similar experiences with the predominant influences on their lives being their families, their teachers, and their school friends. As will be shown throughout this section, all three play a noticeable role impacting these men's decisions to firstly go to university, but also on their program and career choices. While not one single rule presented itself across their interviews, many of the participants came to be where they currently are through a complex intermingling of all three influences.

Generally speaking, students self-identified as studious or hardworking. Nine of the fourteen participants directly referred to themselves as having always been 'good students' as they put it and felt that they liked school. Gabriel notes that he felt that he "was relatively a good student. I studied quite often. I worked very hard for my grades" (Gabriel, Environmental Science). Similarly, Tony felt that he was "high achieving. Um, I did my best. I didn't slack off too much" (Tony, Business). While their self-reported study habits were noted, they also discussed struggling with school in a variety of ways. Gabriel, while noting that he was a hard-working student, also felt that he had problems with school but commented, "I think I just didn't want to seem like I needed help" (Gabriel, Environmental Science).

In contrast to the students who succeeded within school, there were five participants who characterized their schooling as more of a struggle. The five participants that did not directly

identify as good students did, however, note that they came to be studious as they got older, and so all of the participants identify this way to some degree. One of the men, Joey, notes that for him elementary school was "pretty easy, so I didn't really, like, dedicate a whole ton of time to it" (Joey, Math and History). Similarly, other participants described not taking school seriously,

> "I was really energetic - I wasn't - I never really did the homework. So, whenever I came back to school, just playing games, going outside, going to sleep, going back to school. So, my grades didn't really reflect that - sorry, my grades did reflect that, and it wasn't the greatest" (Ben, Life Science).

Ben gets at the experiences of several of the men – that they did not take school 'seriously.' As children, play might be understood here as synonymous with boyhood and so, abandonment of play is leaving behind a facet of boyhood for manhood. In Ben's sentiments we see conflict between play and boyhood, and educational capital. Play is set up as directly at odds with success in school, educational capital. These 'boyish' engagements are what keep them from doing schoolwork, and therefore succeeding in school meant 'getting serious' later in their educational careers.

For instance, Ben understands that his switch to 'getting serious' happened "once I got to grades 11 and 12 - that's when my grades really got way better and I did good in those two specific years" (Ben, Life Science). To these participants, moving on from boyhood is innately tied with becoming serious about their future. We can see this in the way that Rick, describes his trajectory through education.

> Rick: Uh, in elementary school, I think school was just fun to me is something I went to for fun. And then I started taking school more seriously in, like, middle high school.

> Yeah, that's when I started taking it, like, as an academic thing. More than just something you go to socialize.
>
> Jake: So that changed over time for you. Would you care to expand on that a little bit more? So younger you, you were more social?
>
> Rick: As a kid, you just want to play that's how school was. And if I got a C or a low grade then it didn't matter to me. But I started taking grades more seriously when I when I grew older into like, middle school, especially, like eighth grade. Applying into some high school programs or whatnot.
>
> Jake: And was there any kind of like reason for that change that you could think about?
>
> Rick: I think the main reason why I tried that early was because I grew up in a low-income household on the worst neighborhoods in Canada. I wanted to get out of that situation, so I feel like it kind of circumstances pushed me to work harder. Yeah. So that's I think the main motivation for that change. (Rick, Computer Science)

For Rick, getting serious is linked directly with being able to find financial success in order to achieve class mobility, and it first starts with achieving educational capital via success in school.

As Grant, who admittedly reports he always had taken school seriously, puts it, "I was always kinda - always like that. I mean, I was always told that [you] got to do well in school to get a good job, etc. And I didn't have any other particular goals in life" (Grant, Health Sciences). Here, what Grant describes as having always had, the notion that doing well in school was correlated to having a good job, indicates a level of planning from earlier childhood that one must apply themselves to find success, and Grant further admits that this was his primary goal for a substantial portion of his early life. Similarly, we see with Tony the same sentiments about school appear; "I like to think I was high achieving. Um, I did my best. I didn't slack off too

much. (Tony, Business). While the men such as Grant or Tony did not 'get serious' per se, we might consider that they always were serious, or did so earlier than the other men. But, and more interestingly, we might understand what he is saying as the motivation and catalyst for why the other men decided to get serious. Teachers and other adult figures also play an important role in influencing the men to take school seriously in early life. Alex, in his interview discusses how one teacher told him:

> In terms of having fun and focussing on your career, there's a certain ratio you can have, having fun and focussing on your career. And if you use all the having fun at the beginning of your life when you're ten, oh, and you don't focus on anything at all in terms of school, once you use that portion of the rest of your life is just going to be working. You're not gonna have any more fun anymore because you used all that portion up basically (Alex, Integrated Science).

As noted previously the participants identified playfulness as something negative, or at least something hindering them from success in school. We might speculate that Alex' teacher conveys to him a cultural notion that fun is a luxury, and that failure to be mature and serious in school will prevent him from experiencing fun or leisure later life. In this way, pressure and success within the educational system is linked to financial independence and access to leisure in later life. We might understand getting serious as a learned norm of gender embodied by these young men in order to succeed in educational, and by extension employment, fields. Alex' teacher illustrates the importance of taking school 'seriously' and its direct connection to the ability to go to university, acquire academic capital, and exchange that for a stable or breadwinning career.

Ten of the fourteen participants felt that their teachers in their later years of school were large influences on them selecting to go to university. Either in helping them discover a topic to

study, inspiring them to apply themselves in school, or aiding them in succeeding at school; these men identify teachers as major influences on their lives beyond their parents and their peers. To these men, teachers serve as early life role models, people in positions of power over them, but also people who are introducing them to educational fields. Adam remarks how his 7th grade teacher influenced him to get serious and go to university:

> She was a good influence, she saw a lot of potential in me, and I would say like whipped me together, in a good way. She was like an old Italian… [hesitates] teacher. She had a very mom vibe, you know? Yeah, I would say she's one of the most influential people in my academic… learning, because she kinda like, I don't know, I didn't think I would be able to get like above a ninety, but she was able to show me that I could do that and she sparked an interest in certain subjects and stuff in me so I thought, like that was pretty sick" (Adam, Health Sciences).

In this sense, being 'whipped' together serves to illustrate the role Adam' teacher played in getting him to take school seriously. His teacher is a demonstrable example, similar to that of Alex's teacher, of how adults convey appropriate forms of gendered behaviour – seriousness is the appropriate behaviour for a boy in school, and seriousness is rewarded with success later on in life.

As the participants acknowledge, playfulness is something left to children, and with that they come to understand themselves and their interactions with school in the context of becoming adult men. Getting serious requires a letting go of boyhood in the search of educational capital which these men come to understand is required for social and economic success, as exemplified in Alex' statements about fun and focusing on your career.

4.4 Post-Secondary as the Destination

Eleven of the fourteen participants felt that university was the inevitable destination. To many of these participants, attending university is the logical consequence of being serious about school, as Carlo, notes "I have always strived to succeed, and whatnot through since the beginning of school more or less. I suppose that continues through to university." (Carlo, Mechatronics & BioMed). We can also see that minimal thought given to the possibility of *not* going to university, such as when Tony remarked "I think university was always my plan from the get-go" (Tony, Business). To these eleven men, university was always the destination. They were raised to believe that university was where they were supposed to go after high school and before permanently entering into the work force. Of the participants that did not feel determined to go to university – Rick, Grant, Carlo - all of them expressed concerns or doubts about attending university. These three men had put some consideration into other post-secondary directions before arriving at university as their choice. In Rick's case, he feels that university for him is a safety net, a backup plan if his hopes to become an entrepreneur fall through; "University was the goal the whole time, but I have thought about, for some form of entrepreneurship, that obviously that was, in my opinion, the safest path is getting a university degree. You always have something to fall back on" (Rick, Computer Science). In Carlo's case, his reluctance to pursue a university education was part of his hopes to pursue music as a career, one he inevitably gave up on;

> so, university was, has been my goal since I was – I can remember but throughout the last few years of high school I really considered pursuing music – probably in a college program. I was considering University of Toronto, and I was considering Humber college quite a bit to pursue. But I ended up choosing McMaster for a STEM program… it was a

> combination of expectations from my parents and peers, and potential career outcome – that definitely was a huge factor… I suppose that, definitely my parents expected me – would probably have seen me doing music as a career to be not living up to my full potential, and I suppose that just how society values, you know, jobs within the STEM field, vs jobs within an artistic field, how the value to those it kind of gave me the same impression. (Carlo, Mechatronics & BioMed).

The final holdout, Grant, was avoidant to go straight to university but ended up doing a degree because he did not know what else to do; "I didn't we didn't really know what else to do. So that was kind of seen as the only logical next step, the only choice forward" (Grant, Health Sciences).

While most of the participants felt university was their only path, considering how they came to that conclusion provides us with some key insights on their attitudes about university and further about work and gender. While getting serious provided the attitude change necessary to begin succeeding academically within school, the participants listed several external influences on their choices to go to university. It is here, then, that we might see a vital influence on attending university being parents. While it might be evident that parents have influence on the ways their children envision the world, there are some interesting divergences about how they might influence their children on attending university. For example, in a discussion around whether or not his parents were a major part of his decision to go to university, Carlo stated;

> it was a little bit of nature and a little bit of nurture. My parents were good motivators, you know. They were stable and always positive motivators, so I felt confident in my decisions, and I felt confident in how I worked through high school and what not. (Carlo, Mechatronics & BioMed)

Here we can see that Carlo felt his parents supported him and as a result empowered him to attend university. This is not exclusive to Carlo and is replicated in other participants. For instance, Theseus noted a similar experience with his parents, stating "university was always the expectation. Um, it was very much achieve well in high school, so you can attend a university" (Theseus, Health Science). Moreover, we can see this replicate in the experiences of Trent;

> My parents are like, 'has to be university. If it's college, you're not going to go anywhere in life.' And I'm just like, that's I mean, you're still getting a degree. And they're like, 'No university, that's the way to go.' But, you know, it's very important to them. I don't think I don't think like not going to university was even in the question. (Trent, Computer Science)

These three men illustrate the role parents might play in exerting pressure over their children to take the correct path.

A distinct narrative about pressure emerges in the discussions with participants from lower-income and immigrant families. Here, we see an external pressure to acquire a university degree in order to provide for their families. We see this Alex's discussion about whether or not attending university was an important thing to his family, to which he stated:

> Yeah. So, from the very beginning and like South Asian households, we're always told to, that university is the only way to success…So even though my parents did not go to university, so I think all would help in the understanding of that was basically in Pakistan, where I'm - where I'm from or like my parents are from. They usually encourage you to go to school, but they also like put a lot of emphasis on the male head or like anyone is male, to go out of the country to build a better life for themselves as well as send money back. (Alex, Integrated Science)

We can see here in this response there are two factors at play here. One, which is particularly interesting is the importance of men attending university. The second is that men must attend university in order to provide for their families. Alex demonstrates this in that he was taught from a young age that university is a must in order to provide for his family. We might see similarities in narratives about immigration, as another man, Adam identifies that attending university was important to his family because "One of the reasons we came to Canada was because of the education system." (Adam, Health Science). To Adam, there is a pressure to go to university because of sacrifices he understands his parents made for him, and many of the other participants who had parents who immigrated had similar narratives or experiences.

Across the interviews, participants identify their decisions to attend university as being an important part of supporting their families or themselves. To Rick, the choice to attend university was in some ways a safety net, stating; "university was the goal the whole time, but I have thought about some form of entrepreneurship, but obviously in my opinion, the safest path is getting a university degree. You'll always have something to fall back on. (Rick, Computer Science). To Rick, university is a guarantee of some form of educational capital and financial stability should the riskier path of entrepreneurship fall through. Adam falls under a similar notion, identifying that to him; "I always wanted to go to university. I thought it would help with my career and goals, and I thought it would be a good experience" (Adam, Health Science). In these instances, we can identify an explicit connection between acquiring educational capital and attaining financial success. New-Canadian or not, these men understand university as a vessel for career success. Beyond this, however, we see other participants interpreting the value of a university degree as a gateway to class mobility. For example, William remarks about how he felt this way:

> Because not only there's they're like the cultural you could say, if you were to think about it, like, from an intersectional perspective, there's also the class angle that you have to take into consideration that because I grew up like relatively from lower middle class to middle class, you know, you want to like escape. You want to have that ability to be socially mobile or socioeconomically mobile. So going into a university, going into STEM specifically would be very like helpful for that. (William, Life Sciences)

William's comments here capture the intersection of immigrant status and social class, but also indicate a key point that many of the participants implicitly discuss – a university degree is perceived as a way to transcend class barriers, to acquire middle-class status, or to find financial security.

Peers were also seen to be influences on these men and their decision making and can been seen to affect these men in tandem, "I would say that it was a combination of expectations from my parents and peers" (Carlo, Mechatronics & BioMed). In other instances, we see the participants cite their family and friends. When discussing whether or not he wanted to pursue music Carlo stated;

> Carlo: Um – so, university was, has been my goal since I was – I can remember but throughout the last few years of high school I really considered pursuing music – probably in a college program. I was considering University of Toronto, and I was considering Humber college quite a bit to pursue. But I ended up choosing McMaster for a STEM program.
>
> Jake: So, what kind of influences, then, would you say, impacted your choice there? Why did you decide not to do music?

> Carlo: Um… I would say that it was a combination of expectations from my parents and peers, and um… potential career outcome – that definitely was a huge factor. (Carlo, Mechatronics & BioMed)

In the broader argument of utilizing university as a steppingstone, Carlo feels that due to the expectations of his peers and relatives, he opted to instead to select a program that he feels would have afforded him more educational capital. Carlo's choices reflect a larger concern with the transferability of educational capital into the workforce – whether or not his degree will help him get a good, well-paying job. In this we can see that breadwinning might be a key concern when the men are selecting career paths.

In one way, we see their friends and peers' experience as a draw towards going to university, such as Adam's friends, which he noted, "all my friends were very university oriented." (Adam, Health Science). Similarly, Trent remarked about his own friends, "I don't think a single person in any of any of my friends had even a trace of the idea that they were not going to go to university." (Trent, Computer Science). We can see that there is potentially a pressuring factor in seeing one's peers attend university as a factor deciding to go off to university yourself. Gabriel, as well as the other participants who self-described as middle-class have the influence of their peers to drive them towards attending post-secondary. It is a common narrative among the men in this position that all their friends were doing university, so it made sense for them to go. In this we witness a distinct note about university being a heavily classed space, and going to university a keystone middle-class achievement, in that it is something expected of middle-class men.

Participants who grew up in low-income neighbourhoods talked about associating with other students like themselves who wanted to attend university. For example, Rick states his

driving force for going to university; “I grew up in a low-income household on the worst neighborhoods in Canada. I wanted to get out of that situation, so I feel like it kind of circumstances pushed me to work harder (Rick, Computer Science). Rick also notes that “In high school I'd say people were drawn to myself with were all were trying to go to university” (Rick, Computer Science). Like Ward’s (2014) working-class ‘geeks’, Rick surrounded himself with ‘serious’ students who were driven to go to university. Rick further identified that in his neighbourhood,

> My parents really don't want us associating with anybody, any the people in the neighborhood. Cause its community housing. We are there just because we were poor, no other reason. And of course, like in poverty, comes like - you'll see a trend with low-income communities and violence drugs and all of those negative things. (Rick, Computer Science)

We might draw from this that Rick selected to have friends set on going to university as individuals who stuck out in a poorer neighbourhood. Rick’s decision to surround himself with peers going to university might be seen more as a conscious rejection of his social standing and attempting at class mobility. We can also see participants positioning themselves in opposition to peers who, for whatever reason, did not continue into post-secondary education. In many of the discussions about choosing university, participants discussed what other alternatives they might have considered. In one exchange, Theseus talked about a high school friend who had enrolled in trade school.:

> He was very involved in youth politics. Um, he was going to go to university to get a degree in political science and then sort of ride out a successful political career. Um, until he, one day he came to me and changed his mind and decided he wanted to go to college,

> become an HVAC electrician, um, and, and start a trade. And I remember being, like, flabbergasted by this, right? I was just like; you are one of the smartest guys I know. Why would you throw it away? You know, these grand ambitions of yours? Why would you throw them away to become a tradee. (Theseus, Health Science)

In this context, Theseus refers to his friend as a tradee, or trade worker as a pejorative, indicating some negative feelings Theseus in this discussion of his friend, we can see that doing a trade job – something strongly linked to a working-class masculinity – Is perceived as settling for less or giving up, something many of the participants identified as less than ideal for themselves. We can see similar opinions arise in a discussion with Joey, who states:

> I think what drew a lot of people to the trades was this this whole fast track to this basically is so rare because when you go to school for a year and then they immediately apprentice and they're making money and then they make money for the rest of their life. (Joey, Math & Stats)

While not as critical about his peers, Joey identifies not going to university as a shortcut to beginning financial independence. Explicitly though these men do not identify the trades as incredibly successful work opportunities, and not observe them as appropriate for themselves to work in, but rather they see their peers who become trades workers achieving financial independence to a lesser degree than their own perceived outcome, but much sooner than themselves. Negative perceptions about trades, entering directly into the workforce, or even college programs, play a key factor in deterring these men from considering alternative options to university, and the pursuit of a distinctly middle-class masculinity.

4.5 Post-Secondary Experiences

I will now turn to the participants' experiences within the space of post-secondary. I will begin by discussing their transitions into first year, then move to discuss their specific experiences in their individual programs, paying specific attention to the ways in which they navigate certainty and uncertainty within the context of their programs.

4.5.1 Transition into Post-Secondary

Chronologically, the men, upon completing high school, all went off to university. As a pivotal point in their lives, some of the men discussed the transition into university. In these conversations two key themes emerged, the first being academic transition, and the second being social transition.

I will begin with the social transition. Ten of the fourteen participants directly discussed the difficulty or ease they experienced upon moving from high school to university. We see that Adam's experience of adapting to university was highly dependent on the social,

> I thought it was alright. I had a good summer after high school ended, so honestly, I wasn't very stressed starting university. Riding off that high, and I found it pretty easy to make friends, I am a pretty outgoing guy I would say so I found it easy to make friends and that kinda stuff. (Adam, Health Sciences)

Adam describes the ease at which he moved on to university, adapting well to new networks. Similarly, we see Ben's experiences of adapting to university, where he notes;

> I actually enjoyed it a lot and the transition weren't bad at all. So basically, specifically because even when I'm living at home, I actually lived on campus for my first year. So, when I went to first year, it was not much different because when I was at home in grade 12, I still had a bunch of freedom. (Ben, Life Science)

We might take from this primarily that the social liberty of going off to university was offset by having a rather large degree of autonomy prior to going away. Among the students who struggled with the social transition, two key factors emerged. The first of these was the issue of race. For example, Alex explained that his social transition had been really difficult because of this whiteness of his peer groups in the iSci program.;

> So, I would say it was - it hit me like a truck. So, it was - I was basically always... I was struggling a lot in the very beginning because even though there's only, I believe, 50 students in in my class, so in first year for iSci, there aren't a lot of people that I would say I was able to connect with right away. But that's also because the way they - the way they use their... um... their work ethic, the way they thought and like, just like their overall personality was very different than mine… in my class there is a lot of people who are white, and I wasn't really surrounded by white people growing up until I went to university. So, it really took me time to start, like, you know, getting to know them, talk to them and that's when the experience really started to improve. (Alex, Integrated Science)

The social transition in the case of Alex first begins with difficulty finding new people and making new social groups in the context of university, however it has the overarching narrative that his race and class are part of his alienation from his peers. In this instance, he feels university is an overwhelmingly white space and it acts as a barrier for him to experience university and transition.

A second factor was the impact of the COVID pandemic and the fact that some participants started university in an entirely online environment. As Gabriel notes;

> "The social jump was hard, like going all the way to like online school cause my first semester was completely online and I get distracted very easily. So, sitting at my monitor for like hours a day was a little hard for me. And then when school got in person, I haven't really like socialized in like three years, so it was like, trying to make new friends was hard as well." (Gabriel, Environmental Science).

We can draw from this experience that, while participants who had in-person years of post-secondary, Gabriel loses out on the ability to network and find success and support through acquaintance. In a similar vein to that of Gabriel's experience, we can also see this replicating within an in-person environment.

Second, participants talked about the academic transition to university. Here as well, a major theme was the impacts of online education during the COVID-19 Pandemic. For instance, Gabriel mentions how his condensed 12th grade year impacted him;

> For me in grade 12, all my courses were like day periods. So having to learn like a whole chemistry and physics course in that amount of time was a lot and then when I got to university, I took those same courses there was like a big gap because honestly, I do not remember much about those days. It was just I was just worried about cramming knowledge so I could do good in the courses. So then once I got to university was like, although it was a lot harder trying to close that gap in for me, so kind of, yeah, killed that passion for me. (Gabriel, Environmental Science)

Here, Gabriel is discussing the condensing of education during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically the move to 'day-periods' whereby full days were for single classes as opposed to a 5-period day, learned over the course of a month rather than a semester. Primarily, we can see that his compressed experience of twelfth grade had detrimental effects on his ability to adapt to

the educational standards of post-secondary, with key gaps in knowledge inhibiting his ability to succeed. As we might take note for further in the analysis, this also altered Gabriel's path of what he wants to do within post-secondary.

Alex indicates a similar sentiment with academic troubles in university, "I really felt like high school could have done a better job at preparing me because my - my work ethic was not good" (Alex, Integrated Science). Not unlike Alex, we see Adam having a similar experience, "in terms of academics and the academic culture of health sci, was definitely like the biggest holy f-. Like I'm not used to this at all because they're really competitive" (Adam, Health Sciences). To Adam, it is important to note that he identifies his peers in health science as alienating due to the aggressive nature of his program, as will be more thoroughly explored in the subsequent section.

4.5.2 Navigating University

Navigating university serves to be one of the key ways these men seek to the educational capital essential to breadwinning. Demonstrating a concern for whether or not they will attain work that will afford them financial stability and breadwinning status, the men make decisions that aid them to attain educational capital and differentiate themselves from their peers. We can see in this section the explicit decisions these men make in order to best secure themselves breadwinning and successful positions through their programs. In the context of interviews, participants had varying opinions on whether their programs would afford them the 'right kind' of educational capital, and how they could best position themselves to succeed.

At one extreme, participants in health sciences and life sciences showed the most confidence in the value of their program with respect to future career. Participants in both programs claimed they offered ideal pre-med training, setting them up for medical school, and offered a large variety of courses for each student to tailor to their own experiences. Within the

context of the program, participants make clear specific choices about what to study and why. Six of the men identified the notion of prestige as a reason for selecting the program they did. The status of their programs on a global stage, to them, helped distinguish them from other students. As Theseus notes "I chose it because I had come across it is scrolling and, and it seemed prestigious" (Theseus, Health Science). Theseus' perception of the prestige of his program is important, especially in a competitive job market. As other participants noted, getting into a qualified and high caliber program might help distinguish them in a wide field of potential candidates in competitive areas. Distinction serves as an important part of the decision-making process. The men feel they need to stand out to potential employers amongst crowded and over qualified fields of others, and so distinction operates as a form of educational capital – which they can then exchange for economic capital in the form of employment.

We can further see this in the statements made by Ben, who discusses how he navigates through his undergraduate degree:

> let's say you want to go to medical school, dental school, optometry school, anything. There are certain prerequisites that you need. And for a more demanding program that requires more courses that you need to take, and you might not have time to fit all those prerequisites. Well, with honours life sciences, because it's so flexible you can take any courses you want, basically, and then you can basically suit your uh... suit your course selection towards every single career choice that you have… I would say the flexibility [of Life Science] allows you to really explore your interests and it kind of limits burnout as well, because since it does that, I want to take for example, I took some astronomy courses and I found them amazing that some of the best courses I've ever taken just learning about space spaces. (Ben, Life Science)

To Ben, we see that he opted to select a program that he feels offers him a high degree of autonomy, and opportunity to select the courses that he feels best prepare him for medical school. Comparable to other programs, he feels that is the advantage of Life Sciences. We see similar experiences being displayed from the other science students – being able to have a high degree of agency over their course selection helps them feel like they are setting themselves as stand out candidates for highly competitive next steps – medical school, graduate school, for some examples. Similar to Ben, we see Adam, discuss how Health Sciences helps him prepare for medical school:

> For Health Sci, it's pretty easy to have high grades, and you have a lot of electives, and so that allows me to free up my time to do extracurriculars like volunteering and research and stuff. And so that in itself, having the extra time, and having high grades knocks out two of the three things I need for med school, does that make sense? (Adam, Health Science)

Similar to Ben's experience we see that Adam feels that freedom to choose electives allows him the agency to choose how to best prepare himself for medical school, in his case, taking courses that give him acceptable grades and time to do extra-curricular activities. In this sense, the right kind of educational capital refers not just to the substantive knowledge provided but also the grades and extracurriculars necessary to stand out from the crowd. At the same time, not all participants reflect an enjoyment of this style of programming. For example, Theseus' said:

> So, my frustration was I felt that general science students were being better prepared to take the MCAT, which would give them an edge to getting into medicine over me who was sat learning about the health system, which, although that might come in useful later

> on, my focus was getting into medicine and my degree wasn't satisfying me in those regards. (Theseus, Health Science)

For Theseus, feeling that his lack of agency and 'railroading' in the context of his program preventing him from his focus of getting into medical school. For him, his goal is medical school, and so he blames his program for failing to prepare him for his next steps. Theseus' frustrations reflect a concern of being disadvantaged in the field, set behind others with similar credentials. Theseus feels that other science students in other programs were better equipped for his current path towards medical school, despite the fact that his program markets itself as a preeminent pre-med school vessel. Here we clearly see the link between the need to differentiate and the impact it has on how these men perceive their prospects in regard to educational capital.

Among the health and life science participants, William stands out as an anomaly. He is the only one in the core pre-med style programs and is the only participant who actively does not feel he is on the path he wants to be on regarding his career. William, throughout our interviews, illustrates a lack of passion for his current trajectory, and mentioned that he would like to do something more creative. He was very reflective about his relationship to masculinity, labour and education and stood out as the one participant who actively rejected the breadwinning framework, a point to which I return below.

Beyond health and life sciences, participants expressed varying degrees of confidence in the educational capital available from their programs. Studying in the faculty of business, Tony thought that his program prepared him for many possible pathways:

> I think there's a lot of jobs in it. I think that's the biggest advantage to it - to a degree in business, I think you could go in many directions with it. Um, that's my personal number one reason. Um. I think it teaches you a wide array of, uh, perspectives, so to say. I think

> there are certain things like H.R. that are very social, and, um... I don't want to say like philosophical, but more so like ethical based sort of how humans are. Um, management as well as another thing that's sort of like how to be a leader. Um, but then there's also sort of numerical accounting, finance that are more so, um... mathematical. (Tony, Business).

Many of the engineering participants also expressed similar levels of confidence to the pre-med students. For example, Carlo, in Biomedical Engineering, had deliberately picked this program over health sciences, with the aim of setting himself apart from others in more traditional pre-med programs:

> I was going to gun for medical school and I felt that the easiest way to do that was to go into another sciences program – like life sciences… like something coming out of life sciences in first year so I was going to try and apply to Psychology, neuroscience and behaviour in second year and then try to go for med school there because I felt like it would be easier to keep my GPA high, um instead of doing the biomedical engineering which, you know, people say is hard to get a higher GPA with that program… um… so that's why – I know I was talking earlier about that I took – I just finished physics in the summer – that's a course I actually dropped because I was so deadest on going into the other… going into the psychology program, that I dropped that physics class because I didn't need it, but now that changed my mind… I changed my mind because – I don't know why I changed my mind [laughing]. But yeah, I think I just saw a lot of potential and a lot of the things I enjoy within the engineering aspect, so I decided to stay here. (Carlo, Mechatronics & BioMed)

Carlo illustrates a concern with the importance of courses and programs in terms of the competitive nature of medical school. He understands that there is a relevance to what he does and expresses concern over which things he needs in order to attain that goal.

Among most of the engineering students, we see little in the way of variance across specific programs. Each participant feels their choices of program is the best one over the others for one reason or another. For instance, Jamie talks about how engineering and physics has a broader coverage that allows for him to know a lot of information:

> So compared to other engineering degrees, engineering physics definitely gives you a much deeper theoretical knowledge base than a lot of other engineering. It's often a joke in engineering physics that we do every other kind of engineering more or less because we do… it's very it's a very wide berth of different engineering topics. I think it's a big advantage because a lot of engineering projects are not confined to one specific type of engineering. They're very much multidisciplinary… And then society [program], I feel like the advantage of it is you get more soft skills, you get a - you can explore topics outside of engineering, you get more knowledge of sustainability, things like that. (Jamie, Engineering and Physics)

To Jamie, we see first off, two programs emerging. The first one is Engineering and Physics, which he describes as more hard-skill focused, knowledge based, and theoretical compared to Engineering and Society, which he describes as soft-skill focused, and interpersonal-based. He feels, however, that these choices allow him to come out a more well-rounded student overall, as seen by how he discusses the two programs.

In some fashions similar to Jamie, we see Samuel's experience of Materials Engineering to have much the same traits as Engineering and Physics:

> If you just take a general material science degree, you won't be able to touch the design side of engineering. If you take another engineering degree, then you won't be able to touch any of the other science that I'm going to learn in mine. (Samuel, Materials Engineering)

Nearly indistinguishable in traits from Jamie, Samuel also identifies his program as covering a wide breadth of engineering and science topics that he feels makes it competitive.

A notable exception to the confidence expressed by engineering students comes from the two participants in Computer Science. There is an expressed sense of frustration conveyed by these students in discussions that relate to the content and perceived educational capital afforded by their program. Both Trent and Rick feel that while their degree is administered by the Faculty of Engineering, they are not true engineers, a label that they feel harms their odds in a competitive job market. The first one we see in the interview with Rick, who states:

> Jake: Okay. Yeah. So, I guess kind of building on that, you're feeling is that the program doesn't adequately prepare you for jobs and your kind of field?
>
> Rick: Yeah, it does not, but it will definitely prepare you for the route through academia, 100%, it will prepare you for a master's that's what it's supposed to prepare you for you.
>
> Jake: So, they kind of want you to go on with your degree?
>
> Rick: I guess that is the purpose of university. That's the purpose of your undergrad and that is to prepare you for the masters, but most people doing a computer science degree want to go into the practical field. Yeah. I don't think it prepares you for the practical field at all (Rick, Computer Science)

While not innately expressing frustration, it was clear in the broader interview that he did not like the way that this program was structured. In my notes on this interview, Rick seemed

frustrated by the lack of access to jobs compared to other fields. To Rick, graduate school is the only way to distinguish oneself in an already tight and competitive field of computer engineering. Trent had similar feelings about his program's short comings:

> Computer science is theoretical. We learn more about databases and programing while software engineering learns more about the practical side, learns more about design and stuff, which is apparently the more important of the two. If we're looking at everything that computer science does in software engineering does, the most important thing out there is design. And we don't really focus on that. Software engineering does. And they also have BCEAB accreditation, whatever that means. (Trent, Computer Science)

To Trent, the lack of accreditation compared to software engineering, and the heavier focus on theory sets him back. In the instance of both Trent and Rick, we don't see a justification for why they are in their programs, but rather a frustration or concern with the outcome.

Reflecting on the iSci program, Alex felt that the program was providing the kind of educational necessary for post-graduate training and a future academic career. He noted that his program places a lesser degree of emphasis on examination, which he believes contributes to a higher focus on soft-skill development. He feels that this way of learning, within his program, allowed for him to better stand out against other students in competition for his next steps:

> I feel like my compared to other programs, I feel like integrated sciences would be the best to actually prepare you for postgraduate. Because I know like usually people, people also decide to go into academia, so, master's or PhD and a lot of that is conducting research, um, depending on what you go in, but mostly it is research from what I know. So, I feel like they really prepare you to like getting into contact with professionals who are already in masters and PhDs and since it's a really tight knit community, in iSci we

> know people who are like in different sectors… It's really, I feel like it really prepares us for what we're going to do after graduation. (Alex, Integrated Science)

The two remaining students – Joey and Gabriel – were much less certain about the value of their degree programs in relation to future careers. Joey, for example, struggled to articulate the value of a pure math degree, particularly when compared to programs like engineering.

> So, I'm in I'm in a pure mathematics program as opposed to like a statistics program. And like a lot of my friends are going into like actuarial science and stuff, and even actuarial science and statistics is like a hard program to graduate out of. But I think, like I talked to one of my provosts and he's like, we usually get around like 20 kids who graduate with like a pure math degree, like every year, and that's it. So, it's nice to have a desirability as opposed to like direct pros and cons, like compared to like a science like or general STEM degree and like a math degree. I kind of feel like. Maybe like a more general STEM degree would probably help you find, like, a job and like. Like almost like a wider market, I suppose. Like an engineering degree is like, considered very valuable by most people and like a lot of people don't really know what a math degree is, kind of myself included. But it's very much like if I say, like I want in math and science, people are like, oh, like, what is that? Like, what do you do? Like, what do you want to do with. What if I say like all I'm an engineering, people are like, Oh, okay, you're an engineer. (Joey, Math & Stats, and History)

In Joey's statements we can clearly see his feelings about where his degree in Mathematics can get him. He feels there is a short-coming with his degree. His response has been to plan for a future career as a Math teacher, a job that he feels adequately prepared for, rather than face a

broader job market where the educational capital afforded by other STEM degrees might get you further.

Gabriel had also decided to pursue a teaching career once he had completed his Environmental Science degree. However, in his interview Gabriel expressed concern over whether he had picked the right program to get into teachers' college:

> Gabriel: So, for me, I want to go to teachers' college afterwards and I want to teach like younger kids. So, university more for me is finding like doing what I like, and I really like science. So, I think it was just more taking what I like so I can do well and get into teachers' college.
>
> Jake: Have you found there are, like, disadvantages to your degree, or they're any kind of, like, regrets around it?
>
> Gabriel: Um for me I do it like I don't want to be like - I don't know but like I have some thoughts now about whether I chose the right university or not just because I did get into a different school for Con Ed [concurrent education] and I didn't really consider my what like how much that would benefit me in which way. So, I've had some regrets about choosing - not choosing Con Ed.
>
> Jake: What is it about Con Ed that might have been, like, a better choice?
>
> Gabriel: For Con Ed it's just like you're guaranteed to get into teachers' college. Like, once you're in the program, you're - you're done. You don't have to apply to anything. So, I think it's just for me, like having to apply to teachers' college now and then, like the worry about not getting in because I do stress out about not getting into programs and stuff. So, it's just knowing that that stress is coming eventually. (Gabriel, Environmental Science)

While Joey is confident in his credentials for teachers' college, Gabriel is concerned with whether or not his degree provides him with distinction against other potential teachers, and further feels the educational capital afforded by doing a concurrent education degree place him behind his peers and colleagues. Meanwhile, Joey's sentiments might also reflect a feeling of being funnelled into teachers college over the lack of prospects he remarks he feels he has as a result of doing a mathematics degree versus other STEM degrees, while Gabriel is concerned with his lack of distinction to get into the job market of teaching because of the educational capital his degree affords.

On the whole, these excerpts illustrate a few key points. A primary point is the extent to which many participants are consciously in pursuit of the right kind of educational capital to ensure future career success. The students feel that the decisions they make now matter and can be seen retroactively justifying their choices as a means to increase their odds of success in a tight field of hundreds if not thousands of other students. That is why those considering medical school are particularly concerned with their course choices and program choices compared to the engineers, who illustrate more concern with adaptability and breadth of knowledge. We see here that the men with a clearer path towards the workforce tend to face a higher degree of competition in their fields and emphasize differentiation to stand out against other students. Career paths like medical school are singular destination, in that all of the students wanting to go to medical school are all competing against each other, unlike the field of engineering where the students are directly trying to appeal to prospective employers in most cases. The more defined the path in these cases, the more competition amongst students, and therefore the greater need to differentiate through educational capital.

The strategic and intentional navigation of their university programs highlights how these participants make conscious decisions to do some things over others in exchange for educational capital, whether that be course selection, program selection or other resume-boosting activities, the men are intentionally making these choices. The second thing is that the men are aware of their competition. They see and plan accordingly that there are a finite number of jobs in their career paths and make intentional decisions to stand out from the crowd.

4.5.3 Un/certainty

The participants' experience of university varies significantly; however, we might tie their experiences within their programs and the unique ways they navigate them to their own understanding of their occupational futures. Feelings of certainty and uncertainty about career prospects play a crucial role in the ways in which each man decided to navigate their respective field.

We might start with the students who had the most clearly defined path. Within the health sciences, all three of the men were amongst the most certain of their future, and felt they were in most ways prepared for their next step. For this sample, a disproportionately high number of them desired to go to medical school – five of the fourteen participants mentioned medical school as a possible destination for themselves, and almost all of them identified university as a steppingstone to get there. However, in viewing university as a steppingstone, we begin to see a specific form of navigation of the field of university present itself amongst this subset – how to best prepare yourself for medical school while competing with your peers who have the same objective. In some ways this presents itself with a more cutthroat culture within the program itself, leading to scepticism or distrust in one's peers. For instance, participants from the Health Sciences characterized certain students as 'Keeners', slang to describe "kids who were smart and

hardworking but acted superior and vindictive because of it" (Theseus, Health Sciences). The Keeners, seem to strike a nerve with the participants in Health sciences;

> During Welcome Week the [Bachelor of Health Science] program goes on a trip on the Grand River as a bonding experience for the new cohort. Students are organised in the groups of around 10 that they will spend the next year within the class HTHSCI 1E06: Inquiry. As we were putting our lifejackets on at the start of the day the group started talking about IB classes and their high school grades. They went around the group interrogating each member on their grades and those with the highest separated themselves to begin planning group projects and plans to succeed in their classes. I was staggered that this group of people who hadn't known each other for an hour had already stratified based on a metric as vapid as high school marks. I didn't want to engage with it and so was cast off with the lower grade students. There was this cold, practical viciousness that carried through the cohort and the year. (Theseus, Health Science).

Adam had similar views on the 'toxic' atmosphere within health sciences, and both participants saw themselves as outsiders, critical of the 'normal' experience of their programs. They felt alienated by the competitive nature and intense character of their peers. By contrast, Grant was much more positive about the atmosphere within the program. Here, he recounts the same trip to the grand river as Theseus:

> First year during welcome week get every faculty holds events - every faculty has events for their people and first week we have a chance to go like kayaking on a river, which is something I had never done before. And as far as I know, no other faculty has that for their program …then this year in I'm in fourth year, everything's gone back to in-person, and they took us kayaking again I think last week. And I mean my friends, the other

> programmes are pretty jealous that they don't get to do that. So that's like the one key thing that stands out for me. (Grant, Health Science)

From this statement, we might argue that Grant sees himself as an insider, he is more alike the culture of his program and is not bothered by it. This is further served by his description of other students not in health science, being "jealous" of his program and how good it is.

None of the participants outside of Health Sciences noted any form of program culture similar to this, and we can assume this might be related to the highly competitive nature of the program being so heavily tied to medical school. As Adam notes, the health sciences program is so competitive "just because people know it's a program with a high acceptance rate into med school, so everyone is just going into this trying to use it as a steppingstone." (Adam, Health Sciences). The health sciences program itself markets itself as a steppingstone to medical school. Arguably, the narrative language used by the health science marketing itself is conducive to this behaviour and contributes to the certainty these men have towards their futures. According to the website recruitment material for health sciences;

> The BHSc (Honours) Program is the **only program in Ontario that draws on a full range of departments within health sciences** [bolding is in the original text], including clinical departments of Medicine, Pathology & Molecular Medicine, Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences and Clinical Epidemiology & Biostatistics. Exposure to health care practitioners and applied researchers will lend relevance and scope to the foundation sciences, which will form the basis of the students' experiences. (Future Students, McMaster, 2023)

Aside from the certainty presented from the health science students, we can see that similar and adjacent programs such as life science and integrated sciences provide more

individual freedom for each student at the cost of certainty for their future. Not dissimilar to the health science students, we can see that other science programs oriented around preparing students for work within the field of health care and provision produce competitive students.

> I would really say everyone in the program is - I wouldn't say competitive. They all help each other out. But there is a sense of competition within the program in terms of because in my year I'm seeing that everyone is all going towards one goal, which is the health care field. And I don't think that's very like that's very shocking because I mean, it is a sciences program and mainly - and usually people come in thinking that they're going into health care. So, there is a sense of competition within the program. (Alex, Integrated Science)

The medical school trajectory is still present within this program; however, we do see that Alex feels his peers are at least less competitive and more helpful to each other. Nonetheless, we do see a sense of competition in that the students in these programs understand there is limited space within their future paths and that everyone around them is up for the same positions. In this, we might say that a relative sense of uncertainty produces a competition, however the high degree of certainty in where to go also produces uncertainty. Given that he thought to bring up competitiveness as a trait even indicates its presence within his program and allows him to define his program as less than compared to other programs. In Alex' understanding, other students are competitive, and his peers in integrated science, while still competitive, are not as bad as the other students.

The less clear career paths become, the less competition we notice in the experiences from the participants. For instance, Jamie, who is in engineering, finds that;

> "In engineering physics specifically, you have a lot of people, they're passionate, really passionate about physics, really passionate about science. Um, so, you know, usually they're very academically inclined, they're very, very serious with their schoolwork. A lot of them like to do research with profs, that go on to do masters and things like that." (Jamie, Engineering & Physics).

Jamie's experience of his peers is noticeably different from the students in Health oriented careers, his discussion of his peers is more about their character and studiousness rather than their competition against him. But we also see his feelings about his future differ from the health sciences and life science students. Rather than an essence of concern, Jamie, is uncertain but rather he just has to choose his path.

> I think it just depends on what opportunities are around where I want to sort of live after university, you know, the kind of lifestyle I want to have because if you go nuclear, you got to live in like Pickering. I live near Darlington. Yeah, I live like places like that. Now, if you're in solar, you've got a bit more flexibility when there's other like options other than nuclear power. You can develop isotopes in Toronto and things like that. But um, yeah, it just sort of depends on how I'm feeling after I graduate, what kind of jobs are available. I don't really know. (Jamie, Engineering & Physics)

Jamie's statements are illustrative of a non-anxious uncertainty, in that he is unsure of what he will do, but feels he has many options open to him. His engineering degree allows for more flexibility after university, which allows for him to feel less anxiety than his peers. Similar to Jamie, we see Tony state;

> Like past university, so to speak… I think a CPA, sort of having a title to my name because that's what allows me to do better within accounting... besides that, securing a

> safe job position, something that I can maybe grow within, I think is also very important. (Tony, Business)

We can see here that in discussing his future, Tony's responses seem to lack direct certainty, but do have a sense of clarity as to what he needs to do, he feels there is a path for him to take, and that reflects in his less anxious demeanor, similar to that of Jamie.

Certainty and uncertainty are not necessarily always indicators of anxiety about the future of these men, but rather illustrate the ways in which they choose to navigate their respective fields. Participants with low levels of perspective job security were the most anxious about their futures. For instance, Gabriel, who wants to be a teacher feels that his program is a worse pathway for teachers' college compared to more vocational teaching programs:

> For Con Ed it's just like you're guaranteed to get into teachers' college. Like, once you're in the program, you're - you're done. You don't have to apply to anything. So, I think it's just for me, like having to apply to teachers' college now and then, like the worry about not getting in because I do stress out about not getting into programs and stuff. So, it's just knowing that that stress is coming eventually. (Gabriel, Environmental Science).

We can see here that Gabriel knows what he wants to do career-wise but is concerned about whether or not he has made the right choices to get there with minimal resistance. In this sense, he is uncertain about the quality of the educational capital he has received and set himself up to receive.

Students who know they want to do medical school are certain of their path, but uncertain if they will get in, which is reflective in the culture of their program, competitive and concerned with sticking out from the pack, getting ahead. While William stands in contrast to his peers in terms of accepting this path, he observes the structure of the program he is in and notes what it

sets out to accomplish. Regardless of the clarity of his future path, however, William stands as an outlier within this set of men, in that he was the only participant who actively spoke against what he did and desired to change to something entirely different. William, by his own accounts, reflects a unique kind of uncertainty. His uncertainty is not grounded in whether or not his program will help him find a job, in fact, he seems to understand that his chances of a job are good with life sciences, rather he feels that he will not be fulfilled within this path:

> "Over time I realized that even though I really like science, I love learning, learning it. It's not something that I would want to do as a job because ultimately, I think I'm a very creative person. So, if I can do something that like sort of merges, like even if it's just creative, like stuff like comedy or whatever, which is what I want to get into, that's fine." (William, Life Sciences).

To William, his current path is not uncertain, but rather what he will do once he changes gears in untreaded territory, a new start into something else, and therefore uncertain.

4.5.4 Gendering Future Careers

Many of the men interviewed were reluctant to directly attribute gender to their specific fields and career paths. They identified a changing landscape, far more tolerant and accepting of women in the workplace, "Um. I feel like it's definitely changing a lot more as more. Women got into university over time. I think the amount of doctors in the field definitely shifted. Like the gender ratio." (Adam, Health Science). We can begin to see however; a key point arises in the gendering of specific forms of work especially in the context and understanding of breadwinning. While the men didn't necessarily acknowledge that they were searching for "appropriately masculine" work, they did desire jobs that afforded capital and economic success.

Many of the men were enrolled in programs with a majority of female students, which they used as a defence to say their careers were not gendered paths. We see this come up in discussions with Health and Life science students in particular, where of those participants all save one considered medical school as their destination with not a single one identifying a career such as nursing as a possibility. For example, Ben states,

> I think the field that I went to is completely based on my interest. And I would say, like the field I went into again is more is more dominated by women. I was thinking, like most people in my program or in most important sciences, not sciences mostly really. My specific science field was in biology are girls and women. So um, I would say not really. I just wanted to because I love the, a lot of the content I learn, and I loved that I had an interest towards all the really anything to do with sex or gender I would say. (Ben, Life Sciences)

Ben's remarks indicate that he feels that gender was not a factor in his choice of program, a sentiment that was reflected in many of the other men's statements. By and large, these men did not directly identify that they were picking careers based on a gender. Ben identifies the healthcare industry is one heavily occupied by women. Ben, and the other participants aiming to work in healthcare note this, however, they all strive to be doctors (or dentists in one instance). I, however, find this note quite compelling. The men desire jobs in healthcare, that while is heavily feminized, still has gendered divisions. For instance, it is intriguing that none of the men desire to become nurses. Alex was one of the few participants to acknowledge this when he talked about how his views differed from his parents:

> My parents come from background where they separate what a man can do in terms of occupation and what a woman can do in terms of occupation. So, let's just say nursing.

> Nursing is whenever they would think about nursing, they would think, oh, it's a female's job. Or, um, and like because I was actually thinking of going into nursing after, um, after grade 12 to really get exposed to the health care field, but my parents actually said no because my parents influenced my decision to say no to that because they said, um, because I felt like in the back of their head they were thinking that this is like a woman dominated field and they associate nursing with women. So, I really feel like it really differs in what I think of masculinity and what my parents think of masculinity. (Alex, Integrated Science)

Jamie also acknowledged that his interest in an engineering career was likely linked to the gendered nature of his play as a young child. He commented: "I think so. I think definitely the like, again, the toys I got as a kid were all like Legos, all like build your own little circuit kits, things like that. And those definitely impacted how I perceived myself and the kind of stuff I wanted to do." (Jamie, Engineering Physics).

While many participants were reticent to talk about the gendered nature of occupations, a much more apparent theme throughout the interviews was the importance of financial stability linked to breadwinning. This returns us to the theme outlined earlier in the analysis. Alex, for examples, said, "I always had a sense that I needed to be financially stable" (Alex, Integrated Science). Ben, in a discussion about what career he wishes to pursue, states that;

> Because generally when you go to medical school or when you become a physician, um, they're both really lucrative professions, which is, which is really nice. But you spend a long, long workweeks as a physician and you can be spending 60 hours a week just in the hospital working, whereas you could be making almost just as much or a bit less as, for example, a dentist. (Ben, Life Sciences).

To Ben, dentistry is preferable because it is a comparable salary to that of a doctor while also working substantially less in his mind. He feels he needs a well-paying, successful job that doesn't over work him. Similarly, Tony states, "securing a safe job position, something that I can maybe grow within, I think is also very important." (Tony, Business). To these men, pay is important, and arguably more important than whether or not the job is adequately masculine in intrinsic way.

Summarily, we see that while the men do not consciously select work that is appropriately masculine for men to do, they are still concerned with breadwinning and its innate tie to labour. To these men, many of the traditional values of masculinity do not matter, as shown prior, and breadwinning is seemingly the most consequential part of their decision making in selecting a career in post-university.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In this final chapter, I highlight some of the key findings from the preceding analysis. I then draw out the broader significance these findings in relation to the existing literature on masculinity. Finally, I address the shortcomings of the project, and consider avenues for future research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

Within the discussion of defining and understanding masculinities, a few key findings that are worthy of further discussion. As discussed in chapter 2, Connell (1987) understands gender to be defined discursively through social structures and practice of gender, which was by-and-large a response to the common definition of masculinity derived from the enlightenment perspective that gender was determined through biology. We see these two streams of thought at play in the ways that participants talk about gender. They rely on a combination of both biological essentialism and social constructionism to understand masculinity. The men define masculinity in terms of two key aspects. The first is strength. The men discuss physical strength as part of the male body, something they identify as masculine. Secondly the men identify breadwinning as a key facet of masculinity. The men interviewed discuss how there has been a shift in the way masculinity has been conceptualized between their generation and their parents' generation. They talk about how there has been a breakdown in the importance of emotional strength – men are 'allowed' to show emotions and feelings. Of fundamental importance, here, is that the men interviewed still illustrate that breadwinning is a key facet of masculinity and remains unchanged from the previous generation.

The changing forms of masculinity and shifting employment landscape, with women being major contributors to both the workforce and household incomes does not seem to reduce

the significance of breadwinning to participants' understandings of masculinity. While they do not always make direct statements such as "a real man is a breadwinner" we see men such as Alex say it is expected of them to be successful and independent, codes we might associate with breadwinning.

The next major set of findings this research produced is in the section on life history. We see in this section the importance of seriousness as a mode of being for academic success and in turn, acquiring academic capital. The men describe themselves as taking school seriously, however more significantly, men like Ben discuss being playful as boys and then being taught or told to take school seriously such as the instance with Adam with his teacher "whipping him into shape" and teaching him that he needs to balance school and leisure so he can have a good job later in live. This explicit connection between working hard in school and employment prospects is illustrative of a theme in the analysis and many of the men understand that to be the case. They need to acquire academic capital by taking school seriously in order to succeed and exchange that academic capital for financial capital in the job market. The importance of taking school seriously is set up in juxtaposition to having fun and helps illustrate the formation of a style of doing adult masculinity that is relevant to success in education and employment. Playfulness and boyishness are seen by the men as not conducive to their success and they favour seriousness and maturity.

We also see in this section a tendency for middle class participants to note that university was always their goal since it was expected of them. This is in contrast to the lower-income students who were much less certain about university as a destination, such as in the case of Alex and Rick. There is also a distinct presentation of the role parents play in influencing their children here. From the perspective of the middle-class students, we see external pressure in the

sense that they are expected to attend university as part of the normative life course. Many of these participants say how university was the only option their parents would allow. The men themselves also internalize this notion of the superiority of a university degree. In some instances, such as Theseus and Joey, we see a negative description of fellow students who selected the trades, as taking shortcuts or selling themselves short. A similar form of hierarchical thinking emerges once the men are on campus, in the way that they judge their own and others' degree programs. We can see this, for example, in Carlo's discussion of choosing engineering over music. The consideration of the exchange value of their educational capital is a primary driving force in their decision making. Conversely, we see a distinct arrival of the pressure to provide from the lower socioeconomic stratum. To these participants, pressure to go to university was directly linked to a normative expectation that they needed to support their families and be able to be independent.

The sections about the experience and navigating university yield similar results. Participants described the transition to university as difficult in many instances. For some, the issues arose over academic difficulty, feeling like they were not adequately prepared for university, such as Gabriel, or just feeling overwhelmed by work, having to adapt to keep up. Other men identified a social transition as the sphere they had difficulty with. To these men there was a sense of alienation, and out-of-placeness in going to university. In some of the perspectives of the students who grew up in non-white and immigrant communities stems from the overwhelming whiteness of campus. On the other hand, we see alienation from peers when the culture of the program is intense, such as Health Science, where the presence of 'Keeners' produces a near hostile competitive academic environment amongst students. Some of the participants acknowledged the COVID-19 pandemic also impacted their transition to university,

both in preventing them from making new friends and networks, and academically through condensed curriculums.

Overwhelmingly, the men interviewed talk about distinction as a key driving force behind their decision-making in the pursuit of educational capital. When it comes to picking a university, a program, or courses, distinguishing oneself from peers helps them stand out in a crowded field of competitors for limited spots in post-university fields. For the participants who desire medical school as their next destination, this is most prevalent. They have an explicit concern for whether or not they will get in due to the sheer number of other students going for the same goal, and so they strategically navigate their programs to best set themselves apart from their fields. Students in Health Science, Life Science, and Integrated Science programs all thought that their program was the best avenue to access medical school, and yet they also expressed some uncertainty as to whether they would accomplish that goal given the intense competition for places. We can see within the research that distinction is a form of academic capital, meant to be exchanged for breadwinning work post-university. These men discuss distinguishing themselves as a means to better their chances of good work.

With respect to employment, many participants see an explicit gendering of occupational fields as something outdated. In this sense, they acknowledge changing gender norms in relation to paid work, but at the same time they see breadwinning as a major consideration when discussing future work. The men do not express concern with finding particular kinds of 'masculine work' and rather note that anyone can do any job – trying to establish an egalitarian approach to their understanding of the workforce. However, we do see that of the men interviewed, none are picking jobs that are prototypically feminine jobs, and rather do not want them. However, it can be said that the jobs these men desire are relatively higher paying and

have a greater perception of success than the typical feminine jobs, for example, for the ones considering medicine, we see all want to be doctors, and none want to be nurses.

One major finding was the inherent contradictions in the way the men defined masculinity in terms of breadwinning, along with advocating that 'anyone can do anything.' The importance of men succeeding financially stands in stark contrast to the narrative that women can work "manly" jobs. It shows that gendered norms can be eroded for women and not men.

5.2 Significance to the Literature

My analysis resonates with the literature referenced in Chapter 2 of this thesis. We see themes of masculinity and studiousness, breadwinning, and the multifaceted approach to understanding masculinity all tie back specifically to the literature.

As called for by Hopkins and Gorman-Murray (2019), this work contributes to the larger geographies of masculinities by looking at the spheres of work and education. These men, as denizens and users of academic settings within McMaster university, illustrate the performance of masculinity within spaces of the academy. While there is further work that might be done to analyze and observe the masculinities of post-secondary education, these men illustrate that the concern for breadwinning could be a possible facet of the form of masculinity that educated men valorize.

Ward's (2014; 2018) work focuses on working class men in post-industrial spaces, and the separate 'bookish' identity of the students going off to university in his study also emerges in this research. The notion of seriousness parallels Ward's observations, when he states that "The Geeks were able to validate a form of masculinity through their high grades and by performing a studious presentation of self" (2018, p.137). While the men in this research did not explicitly make a tie between studiousness, academic success and masculinity, they do establish the

importance of academic success to their identities. We see throughout Chapter 4, a tendency to refer to 'getting serious' as the most appropriate way to navigate secondary and post-secondary education. Contrasted with boyishness, the men illustrate a performance of masculinity similar to the one that Ward (2018) observes in that studiousness is the way in which the 'geeks' can perform masculinity.

We see within the work of Myers and Demantas (2016) the role breadwinning plays in the construction of masculinity in the 21st century. Men, in the absence of traditional male work still are shown to value breadwinning and out-earning their spouse (Myers and Demantas, 2016). Within Chapter 4, we observe a similar theme amongst the young men in this research, and while they are not discussing the role of breadwinning in the context of spousal earnings and the domestic context, we can attribute that to them not being in a domestic situation where that would matter – and so breadwinning in this more youthful form becomes about success and a high numerical value associated with paid labour. According to the findings of Myers and Demantas (2016), "[f]ailure to achieve breadwinner status was the most important factor contributing to men's unhealthy behaviors" (pp. 1122-1123). We see that while the young men in this project have not yet reached the point of failing to achieve breadwinner status, they express varying degrees of anxiety over their potential inability to find successful, stable, and breadwinning jobs in their futures.

The next major set of connections we see to the literature are with the framework of Bourdieu. We see in Bourdieusian work the role of capital, habitus, and field – and how all three interplay and interact when navigating the field. The two most relevant facets of Bourdieu's work to this research are Field and Capital (Swartz, 1997). Within the study we see the role in which

capital, in the form of academic capital is harnessed and acquired to be exchanged for success in the field of the participants future job prospects. In a sense, the field is navigated in specific ways in order to best achieve capital, which will then be used to acquire breadwinner status upon later life. Academic capital is accumulated by taking courses, extra curriculars, and high grades and, in the future, exchanged for either a 'good' job, or entrance into a post-graduate institution such as medical school which leads to breadwinning via success within the work sphere. The notion of field is imperative in the ideas of differentiation and navigating university discussed in Chapter 4 and help us establish the means in which the men interviewed aim to achieve appropriate forms of masculinity in the form of success and breadwinning.

Bourdieu's work then helps tie the themes of this work together, showing that the nature of the navigating university is founded in finding work within the context of the current socio-economic arrangement. The credentialization of university degrees indicates to individuals navigating university that appropriate and successful navigation of the field that is university is grounded in finding ways to stand out in order to appeal to employers and graduate school programs, in order to find financial success. The idea of financial success is intrinsically tied to a university degree in this order of thinking, producing a notion that a degree is more about the exchange value you can get from it than anything else, and so students are thereby concerned with the value they can extract from their degree in the form of breadwinning and financial success.

To conclude this section, the most applicable work to this research is that of R.W. Connell, whose research on masculinities, men, and academia informs my overall approach to this project. One of Connell's key concepts is that masculinity emerges through relational performances. In my research, participants' construct masculinity through distinctions drawn

with other men. They are clear that they differ from earlier generations of men, like their fathers, in that they are more emotionally expressive. They also differ from other less educated men, in their desire to pursue post-secondary credentials that will give them access to professional careers rather than the 'easier' route to skilled trades. While toughness is still something of value, participants have a sense that this can be performed mentally as well as physically. While participants may agree that women can and do pursue professional careers, they also have a sense that breadwinning is not something optional for men (see Thebaud 2010).

We see in participants' definitions of masculinity an adherence to, similar to Connell's (2003) observations, biological determinism, and social constructionism. The men predominantly understand gender using these perspectives. Connell also writes about the role of rationality within the academy as an emergent performance of masculinity (2003), and we see that within these men and the discussion surrounding getting serious, an adherence to this notion. We might interpret getting serious as, in fact, and embracing of rationality as a form of adult masculine performance, as noted prior, in contrast to playful boyishness. `

Connell (2003) discusses how men in the environmental movement are welcoming and accepting of changing norms around women, but less open to changes around masculinity, and in fact felt that their acceptance of women was enough to absolve them of privilege (pp. 125-130). We see in this research a very similar concept arises in the way the men talk about how women can do the work of men. They acknowledge that barriers for women are coming down, yet none of them feel that 'women's' work is suitable for them. Breadwinning remains a major part of their definition of masculinity, and this continues to reproduce financial and patriarchal dominance in domestic relationships.

5.3 Limitations

As mentioned in prior, there are several notable limitations to this work. The first relates to the difficulty in finding participants. As mentioned in Chapter 3, there was a real difficulty in recruiting participants. On the whole, the period of the school year, combined with online education due to COVID-19 led to an increase in students being off campus, but even into the fall terms as students returned to campus *en masse* I did not observe a dramatic change in the number of participants. This small sample size further exacerbated something this research had initially set out to explore – first generation students. Initially, the goal would have been to analyze students whose parents did not attend university and see if their experiences were any different from those whose parents did. The class dimension would have helped to flesh out a larger intersectional approach, as well as connect back to the literature focusing on working class men. The absence of these men in the research might point to one of two things. The first conclusion we may draw from this is that these men are not on campus – students whose parents did not attend university might come from a lower socioeconomic-strata, and do not have the means or capital to attend university, and might be in college, the trades, or the workforce. This would help to explain the difficulty in finding these students. The second possibility, however, is that first-generation students just don't have the time or resources to participate in this research. This is not to make generalization about whole groups of students but rather to speculate why it was so hard to locate them. This might also point to the fact that university is largely a middle-class venture, with high expenses, and class-reproduction. Of the three students that were first generation, all of them were of a racialized identity.

Further limitations of this work are merely the composition of the sample. Of the students' interviewed, there is a notable overrepresentation of STEM students, with only 2 of the

participants in degree courses outside of these two – Joey in History and Tony, in business. The experiences of university might be distinct, and it might be worthwhile to see differences between this study and a keener focus on the liberal arts, humanities, and social sciences to see if those experiences would differ amongst the groups. For example, do arts students have a different view of the academic capital afforded by their degree compared to STEM students?

5.4 Future Research

Future research could further replicate this study. Additional focus would benefit on analysing the presence of masculinities and course navigation in the health sciences and engineering in specific. The sample sizes in this research were not large enough to draw significant conclusions about specific programs but further research might yield interesting results in regard to the culture of 'keeners' and the inherent genderedness of pre-med programs. Further work could also stem off into the multiple disciplines approached here, there is both interesting geographic analysis and interesting sociological analysis. For example, future work could look at the direct influence of university curriculums have over the formulation of gender identity in ways that are more explicit and focused than this research. Future work could also look at the differences in the ways men navigate university in different spheres, such as post-industrial spaces to centres of new commerce. Research would also benefit from looking at class stratification and experience of university.

5.5 Concluding Thoughts

I was recently speaking with a friend of mine who graduated from Health Sciences about the findings in my research, and about how so many of my participants felt they had the right answer to get into medical school. He turned to me and said, "it's funny, because we aren't allowed to know what they look for, for medical schools, so no one has a clue what they actually

want." I believe he hits at something that underscores a lot of this research. These men are just guessing at what they feel will best prepare them for breadwinning jobs. They are not certain. In fact, they are highly uncertain. While I was undertaking much of this work, I know the world around was changing rapidly, a highly unstable economic world, swinging towards labour power then away, dramatically changing the landscape these men will soon have to enter out into. And on top of that, a global pandemic that dramatically reformed how we do university education and our social realms.

With all of this is an uncertainty about what masculinity means allowing for a more open and expressive form to take hold of this group. While acutely aware of things like 'toxic masculinity', gender inequality, these men redefine masculinity to be about financial success. Summarily, this research shows that these men sought out academic and financial success to attain breadwinning status with the understanding that university produces success. While success is far from guaranteed for all of these men.

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APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. **Life History**
   - What kind of student were you?
     - Did you like school? Hate school?
     - Did that change over time?
   - What were your friends like?
     - Were you similar to your friends? Different?
     - Did your friends aspire to go to university?
   - What was your neighbourhood like? → how were the people around you…outside of school**?
   - Was post-secondary education important to your family?
   - Did you consider other pathways?
     - College, trades, working etc.
   - Do you have any role models from growing up? What were they like?
     - Were you close with them?
     - How did they influence you?
   - What did your parents do for work?

2. **Choosing to Go to University**
   - What other people or experiences do you feel might have informed your choice to attend university?
     - Role models, cultural values, and influence, self-driven?
     - Would you have chosen differently
   - What things might have held you back? What made you hesitate to go to university?
   - Why did you decide on going to McMaster?
   - Why did you pick the program you did?

3. **Nature of the Program**
   - How did you find the transition to university?
   - What was your first term like? Did you struggle? Was it okay?
     - Did you encounter any difficulties?
     - Financial, academic difficulties?
   - What is your program like? What do you learn?
     - Do you feel like you are learning a lot?
   - What sorts of skills are developed in your program?
   - What are the people in your program like?
   - What are the qualities of your program?
   - Are there more men than women in your program or vice versa? Why do you think that is?
   - What do you feel are the advantages of your degree? Are there any disadvantages?

4. **After University**
   - When you complete your undergraduate degree what do you want to do?
   - Do you think you have adequately been prepared for your future career path?
   - If not, what else will you need to do post-graduation?

SCRIPTED INTRODUCTION: OK, now I want to ask you a few questions about gender in relation to university education and careers. Men and women take a wide range of programs at university, but we know that some programs have a majority of female students (e.g., social work or nursing), some have a majority of male students (e.g., engineering or computer science), and others are more balanced. These differences also feed into gender differences in careers after university. I'm interested in your sense of how ideas about gender shape choices about education and career. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. I'd value your opinion.

5. Masculinity

- If you had to use three words to describe what masculinity is, what would you say?
    - OR What do you think masculinity is? How would you describe masculinity?
    - How else might you describe masculinity?
    - If not personally, how do you think others would describe masculinity?
    - Why do you think that is/isn't?
    - Any other words you might use?
- How might others describe a man? Do most people share your views?
- How do your views on masculinity differ from your parents?
- What do you do that makes you a man?
- Do you feel your ideas about gender were a factor in your choice of field?
- Do you feel that what your studying is a common field for men to go into?
    - Is it a masculine field?

APPENDIX B – LETTER OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT

LETTER OF INFORMATION / CONSENT
McMaster Study: Learning to Be Men: The Masculinities of Education in Undergraduate Men in Hamilton, Ontario

Principal Investigator:
Jake Woodcroft
School of Earth,
Environment,
and Society
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
E-mail: woodcrj@mcmaster.ca

Supervisor
Dr. Robert Wilton
School of Earth,
Environment,
and Society
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
Email: wiltonr@mcmaster.ca

Purpose of the Study:
I am conducting this research for my master's thesis project under the supervision of Dr. Robert Wilton of the School of Earth, Environment, and Society. In this study, we are hoping to learn how men make decisions about their post-secondary education and future careers. We are particularly interested in how gender norms influence in a person's life and the choices they make about their education and employment.

Procedures involved in the Research:
Once you have indicated a willingness to participate, we will arrange a 60–90-minute interview to discuss your educational experiences and choices about career. With your consent, the interview will be audio recorded for transcription and further analysis. Here are some sample questions:
- What kind of student were you in school?
- Was post-secondary education important to your family?
- What other people or experiences do you feel might have informed your choice to attend university?

The interviews will be conducted either via phone or in-person on the McMaster campus. While it is preferred to do the interview in-person, you must be able to present you Mac Check screening upon arrival to the interview, as well as wear a surgical mask. If you cannot provide a surgical mask for yourself, it will be provided by myself. Should you feel uncomfortable with the in-person process, an alternate interview over the telephone can be arranged at no cost to yourself. There will be no repercussions for opting to participate via telephone.

You may be contacted for a follow up interview after your initial interview, but participating in this is completely optional, and you reserve the right to decline with no penalty to you. You will still be entitled to the full compensation for completing the initial interview.

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts:
The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. You may feel uncomfortable with some of the content discussed, but do not need to share anything you are not comfortable with disclosing. You further do not need to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with answering.
While there is little risk associated with this data, and I will do my best to ensure that your participation will be anonymous, you should note that we are often identifiable through the stories and things we share, so please keep that in mind when participating.
*Page **2** of **3***
Potential Benefits
While this research will not benefit you directly, I hope that what is learned as a result of this study will help us to better understand how gender is used and understood by men and how we develop and perform gender.
Incentive/Payment or Reimbursement
For your participation in this study, we are offering a $25 incentive to thank you for your time and participation. Withdrawal from the interview will not impact whether you will receive the honorarium, but not participating in the interview at all will mean you do not receive the $25 honorarium. The honorarium will be sent to you either via e-transfer or mail depending on your preference. Refusing to participate in a follow up interview will not impact your eligibility for the honorarium.
Confidentiality
Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and privacy. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. However, we are often identifiable through the stories we tell. Please keep this in mind in deciding what to tell us. Upon completion of the interview, your information will be deidentified to the best ability possible without compromising the value of the data, and most if not all personal identifiers (name, place names, neighbourhoods etc.). Only I will have access to the raw data pre-deidentification. As soon as the interviews are transcribed and de-identified, the data will be deleted permanently to best protect your confidentiality. All data will be kept on a secure and password protected computer to best protect your confidential participation in this study.
Participation and Withdrawal:
Your participation in this study is voluntary and it is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can stop the interview for whatever reason, even after giving consent or part-way through the study or up until January 1, 2023, when I expect to be submitting my thesis. You may refuse a follow up interview without fully withdrawing from the study.
If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study. If you choose to withdraw once the interview is completed, please reach out to me (woodcrj@mcmaster.ca) and request to have your data removed.
Information about the Study Results:

I expect to have this study completed by approximately February 2023. If you would like a brief summary of the results, please let me know how you would like it sent to you.
Questions about the Study: If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact me at:
woodcrj@mcmaster.ca
This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted,
please contact:
McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
C/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca
*Page **3** of **3***
Consent
• (*If via telephone)* Since you are conducting your interview over the phone, your answer to these questions
will be logged and recorded as opposed to your signature, do you understand this?
□ I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Jake
Woodcroft of McMaster University.
□ I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional
details I requested.
□ I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up
until January 1, 2023.
□ I have been given a copy of this form.
□ I agree to participate in the study.
□ I agree to potentially be contacted for a follow-up interview
□ Would you like a copy of the study results? If yes, where should we send them (email, mailing address)?

_____
• How can we best get you your incentive (i.e. via Mail, e-transfer)?

_____
□ I agree to audio recording.
Signature: _____ Date: _____
Name of Participant (Printed) _____

APPENDIX C – RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

Participants Wanted

For research on how **first-generation male students** make decisions about their education and careers.

Who Can Join?

- Any undergraduate student (1) who identifies as male and (2) whose parents have not attended postsecondary college/university.

Why Join?

- As a thank you for your time, you will be given a $25 honorarium

What's Involved?

- A 60-to-90-minute interview
- In-person or over the phone

What's the focus of the Interview?

- Topics covered will include school experiences, choice of program in university, career aspirations, and gender norms.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions about the study, please email Jake Woodcroft at:

woodcrj@mcmaster.ca

McMaster University

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McMaster University

Jake Woodcroft: Woodcrj@mcmaser.ca
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Topics covered will include school experiences, choice of program in university, career aspirations, and gender norms.

If you are interested in participating or have questions about the study, please email Jake Woodcroft at
woodcrj@mcmaster.ca

This study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance by the McMaster Research Ethics Board.

In-class/In-person recruitment script (First-Gen)

Hello, my name is Jake Woodcroft, and I am a Masters student in the School of Earth, Environment, and Society. I am doing a study about [sunder the supervision of Dr. Robert Wilton.
We are looking for volunteers who attend identify as men, who are in their 3rd, 4th, or final year of study at McMaster, and have had neither parent attend university.
The study involves an interview that will take approximately one hour and will involve a single session. The study will take place either over the phone or on zoom.

The study will cover topics involving your experiences of your university education, family, and your identity. While minimal risk is posed to you, some of the materials we cover might be upsetting to you.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at:

- Email me at **woodcrj@mcmaster.ca**
- Contact me at the email address on the Letter of Information or study brochure that is being handed out.

Thank you.

Study Title: First Gen Men

In-class/In-person recruitment script (Non-First Gen)

Hello, my name is Jake Woodcroft, and I am a Masters student in the School of Earth, Environment, and Society. I am doing a study about [sunder the supervision of Dr. Robert Wilton.
We are looking for volunteers who attend identify as men, who are in their 3rd, 4th, or final year of study at McMaster, and have had either parent attend university (you are not a first-generation student).
The study involves an interview that will take approximately one hour and will involve a single session. The study will take place either over the phone or on zoom.

The study will cover topics involving your experiences of your university education, family, and your identity. While minimal risk is posed to you, some of the materials we cover might be upsetting to you.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at:

- Email me at **woodcrj@mcmaster.ca**
- Contact me at the email address on the Letter of Information or study brochure that is being handed out.

Thank you.

Appendix D - Study Title: Learning to Be Men

Recruitment Email Script sent DIRECTLY to Participants

Subject Line: Looking for participants in research about career and education decisions.

Hello. I'm Jake Woodcroft. I am conducting research about how McMaster undergraduate students come to make decisions about their undergraduate degrees and careers. This research is part of my Master's project at McMaster's School of Earth, Environment and Society.

As part of the research, I'm inviting you to participate in an interview that will take approximately 60-90 minutes, and for which you will receive a $25 honorarium. The study will take place either via phone call or at a location of your choosing.

To be eligible to participate in this study we are looking for students that identify as male and are doing an undergraduate degree at McMaster University.

For the full details of the study, please read the attached Letter of Information.

I would like to thank you in advance for your time and consideration. I will send you a one-time follow-up reminder in a week.

If you are interested in participating or if you have any questions, please contact:

Jake Woodcroft
woodcrj@mcmaster.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance from the McMaster Research Ethics Board.

Study Title: Learning to Be Men

Snowball Recruitment Script

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH ON HOW MEN MAKE CAREER AND EDUCATION DECISIONS

Thank you for participating in my study, Learning to Be Men. Would you be willing to pass along my name and contact information, and the following short description of my study, to any friends or peers that you think might be interested in the project? There is no obligation for you to pass along this information, and there will be no consequences if you do not provide this information.

I am looking for volunteers to participate in this study who are undergraduate students at McMaster that identify as men.

Participation involves an interview that will take approximately 60-90 minutes, for which participants will receive a $25 honorarium. The study can take place either by phone call or at a location of the participant's choosing.

For the full details of the study, read the attached Letter of Information.

If you are interested in getting more information about or taking part in this study, please **CONTACT JAKE WOODCROFT DIRECTLY** at the contact information listed below:

Jake Woodcroft
Woodcrj@mcmaster.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance from the McMaster Research Ethics Board.