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Daddy Issues: Facilitators and Barriers to Gender Transformative Father-Son Communication
about Gender Based Violence, An Exploratory Study

by

Morgan Jones Benner

A Dissertation

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee

of Lehigh University

in candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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"Above all, I think that the willingness and the courage to keep on trying develops best if there is someone we love close by who can lend us some of the strength we do not yet have within ourselves."

-Fred Rogers

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Abstract

Cisgender boys/men perpetrate the vast majority of gender based violence (GBV) globally, including intimate partner violence and sexual violence. GBV has many devastating consequences including physical injury, reproductive issues, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, inability to work and lost wages, and homicide. It is important to create effective prevention and intervention programming to target GBV among boys/men. Emerging evidence exists that targeted programming for boys/men that incorporates a *gender transformative* approach may be more likely to shift men's gender and violence related attitudes and behaviors more effectively. Gender transformative programming explicitly focuses on critically examining gender-related norms, expectations, attitudes and behaviors. Father-son GBV communication that involves gender transformative tenets may be a new avenue of GBV prevention. This study aimed to be the first to examine how fathers who have discussed GBV with their adolescent sons may use gender transformative features to conduct these discussions. Additionally, to inform future GBV prevention programming efforts with fathers and sons, the study investigated facilitators and barriers that fathers perceive for conducting these gender transformative GBV conversations with their sons. Results indicated that several fathers in this sample used gender transformative traits in their father-son GBV conversations, and most fathers saw utility in a gender transformative approach in father-son GBV conversations. Implications, recommendations and future directions based on insights from this study are included.

Chapter I

Introduction

Cisgender men/boys perpetrate the vast majority of gender based violence (GBV) globally, including intimate partner violence and sexual violence (Black et al., 2011; Jewkes et al., 2015). Intimate partner violence is any abuse that occurs within a romantic relationship or after its end (Breiding et al., (2015), and sexual violence is defined as any sexual activity where consent is not gained or freely given (Basile et al., 2014). GBV is defined as acts of violence or abuse that are perpetrated solely or predominantly because of the gender, or perceived gender, of the victim (e.g. partner violence, sexual violence, harassment, and murder [Westmarland, 2016]). This term is inclusive of violence perpetrated against people of any gender based on their gender identity. However, it is often equated with violence against cisgender women and girls, as they make up the majority of survivors and victims of GBV (UN Women, n.d.). GBV has serious negative impacts on individuals and society broadly, including increased rates of physical injury, reproductive issues, mental health issues like depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, inability to work and lost wages, and at its extreme, homicide (WHO, 2021). It is important to investigate avenues of intervention and prevention for this serious public health issue.

GBV Prevention Programming

For several decades, GBV prevention programming has targeted many proposed prevention points for GBV among adolescents and young adults. Training women and girls to recognize warning signs in dating relationships (e.g., Rizzo et al., 2018), teaching young people bystander intervention techniques to step in when witnessing GBV (e.g., Park & Kim, 2023), and prevention specifically targeting boys and men as potential perpetrators and interveners are recent programming foci (e.g., Jewkes et al., 2015). A systematic review of the GBV prevention

programming targeting men/boys revealed that evidence for the effectiveness of this programming is questionable and that rigorous evaluations of programs are few. Thus, few programs have demonstrated that they can effectively prevent GBV perpetration among adolescents (DeGue et al., 2014). Additionally, 90% of the articles reviewed by Jewkes et al. (2015) focused on interventions that took place in school settings, which face cost, time, and regulatory hurdles due to their setting.

Emerging evidence exists that targeted programming for men/boys that incorporates a *gender transformative* approach may be more likely to shift men's gender and violence related attitudes and behaviors more effectively (Barker et al., 2007). Gender transformative programming focuses on critically examining gender-related norms, expectations, attitudes and behaviors (Barker et al., 2007; Gupta, 2000). Casey and colleagues (2018) proposed a conceptual model for engaging men/boys in gender transformative GBV prevention efforts that involves initial outreach to men/boys, attitude and behavior change interventions, and ongoing social action, with the hope that men/boys themselves will eventually engage others in these efforts. The authors state that formalized prevention events and interventions can hold promise for fostering men/boys' activism beyond the intervention and integration into advocacy for broader gender equity work. Some criticism of gender transformative work has cited that it puts too much emphasis on individual responsibility to fight gender inequity without taking into account societal structures that enforce it (Dworkin et al., 2015). Casey and colleagues (2018) argue that incorporating an emphasis on community advocacy and the result of creating more gender equitable policy within participants' communities helps to alleviate some of the personal responsibility for GBV prevention. The authors also emphasize that previous GBV prevention programming that does not explicitly prompt participants to reflect on their own gender identity

and expression are side-stepping the inherent societal power dynamics that support GBV perpetration. In their review of the literature, Casey and colleagues found that gender transformative interventions for GBV with cisgender men/boys in community settings demonstrated some statistically significant improvements in gender equitable attitudes, decreases in IPV perpetration over time, and decreases in social acceptance of GBV (Casey et al., 2018). Given this promising research, exploring gender transformative interventions for GBV prevention among boys and men in other arenas could be promising, especially considering that gender socialization is theorized to begin much earlier than middle/high school ages, and involve many different influences (Katz & Ksansnak, 1994).

Masculine Gender Socialization

Gender-socialization theory posits that individuals develop schemas about gender from an early age through interaction with socializing agents (e.g., caregivers, family members, peers) and exposure to socializing channels (e.g., school and media [Eccles et al., 1993; Katz & Ksansnak, 1994]). In addition, from a social cognitive and learning perspective, parental influence on gender development may be exerted through modeling processes (Bussey & Bandura, 1999) and direct parenting practices (McHale et al., 2003). Through direct education on values and roles (e.g., commenting on gender or gender expression, or controlling the media children are exposed to) as well as observation of parent behavior, children learn their parents' gendered expectations and about how gender is performed. Additionally, in families where children have one male and one female parent, children may pay more attention to gendered modeling from the parent who shares their sex assigned at birth, more so than to their different-sexed parents, particularly for gender-related issues (Cichy et al., 2007; Kulik, 2002; Platt & Polavieja, 2016).

A frequently theorized risk factor for men/boys' GBV is gender socialization (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Reidy et al., 2009; Yllo & Strauss, 1984). Gender roles, which are socially constructed expectations and norms about appropriate male and female traits, roles, and behaviors, create cultural scripts and expectations that many men/boys feel the need to enact and meet. For example, in the United States, traditionally dominant Western, White, hegemonic cultural expectations are that men/boys should be tough, strong, dominant, and sexually aggressive (Mahalik et al., 2003). Unfortunately, given the precarity of masculinity, men/boys may use violence and aggression to affirm their masculinity (Vandello & Bosson, 2013). Research shows that men/boys who identify with and adhere to traditional masculine norms, also called traditional masculinity ideology (Levant et al., 2013; Levant & Richmond, 2016; Pleck, 1995) are more likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence (Moore et al., 2008; Parrott & Zeichner, 2003; Reidy et al., 2009).

Men's use of violence in their romantic or sexual relationships with women is associated with adherence to traditional masculinity ideology that encourage dominance over and hostility towards women (see, for review, Flood & Pease, 2009). Violence, specifically violence against women and people with minoritized genders, is a tool not only for boys/men to prove their masculinity, but also, according to feminist theorists, to maintain and reproduce a social hierarchy that places men and masculinity over women and femininity (Anderson, 2005; Connell, 2005). Many layers and intersections to masculine identity are similarly hierarchical, for example, cissexism, heterosexism and the gender binary are also inherent to traditional gender inequalities and hierarchies. Utilizing an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1989), we can also integrate knowledge of other forms of oppression, like racism, classism, ableism, and xenophobia into our understanding of GBV and their use as tools to enforce traditional social

hierarchies. Masculine gender socialization and related concepts like experiencing masculine discrepancy stress or gender role strain (i.e., the stress that men/boys may feel when they perceive they are not meeting traditional standards of masculinity; Pleck, 1995) are all theorized to be a result of socialization to male gender and longstanding hierarchies of power. Considering how traditional men's gender socialization is related to violence perpetration, more intervention in this socialization process may help to reduce GBV perpetration in men/boys.

The relationship between fathers and their sons may offer the opportunity for men to socialize their sons to value gender expression that does not esteem violence, dominance, or the subjugation of women/girls and gender diverse peoples. Parents are essentially their children's first gender socializing agents (Leaper & Friedman, 2007). The extent to which a boy identifies with his father may also impact how much they take on their father's traits, relational patterns, and beliefs (Bandura, 1961; Floyd & Mormon, 2000) which can also be impacted by how affectionate, supportive or emotionally close a father behaves towards his son (Mormon & Floyd, 2002). Further, recent research on father-child communication has found that more recent fathers are reporting that they desire more emotional closeness and affection with their children (Gerson, 2010; Marsiglio & Roy, 2013). While research specifically on father-son relationships is limited, there is also some support that fathers report increased emotional intimacy in their relationships with their sons, more so than with their own fathers (Morman & Floyd, 2002). Overall, how much a father and son feel emotionally close, and subsequent increased child identification with their parent, could provide the foundation for fathers to have open, caring conversations about manhood and GBV, which may result in lower levels of GBV perpetration among sons. Further, this socialization has the opportunity to occur earlier within the father-son relationship than GBV prevention programming in schools and more consistently throughout the

parent-child relationship than in-school GBV prevention programming. Part of this socialization, direct parent-child communication about GBV, could be an avenue of intervention that allows fathers to directly discuss gender, masculinity, violence, and sexuality with sons in an open, frank, and exploratory way.

Parent-Child GBV Communication

Little research exists regarding parent-child GBV communication outside of the context of formalized programming (Edwards et al., 2022). One study by Rothman and colleagues (2011) found that 55% of surveyed parents reported having discussed dating violence with their adolescent children in the past year. Markedly, mothers were more likely than fathers to discuss dating violence with both male and female children (59.0% vs. 50.2%). Overall, dating violence was significantly less likely to be discussed between parents and their adolescent children than school work, drugs, alcohol, family finances, the economy, money management, dating relationships in general, and sex. Rothman and colleagues (2011) emphasize that dating violence poses risks to the health and wellbeing of children and adolescents and thus should be discussed at a similar level to other risky behaviors like using drugs and alcohol, as there are personal and public health impacts of all these behaviors. Edwards and colleagues (2022) surveyed 142 parents about their discussions of different violence-related topics and found that parents talked less with their adolescent children about “sensitive prevention topics” (p. NP3866) like sexual harassment, sexual assault, and dating violence than about less sensitive prevention topics, like bullying, healthy relationships, and family values/traditions.

Child gender is also correlated with differences in the frequency and content of parent-child GBV conversations. Rothman and colleagues (2011) found that parents’ likelihood of discussing dating violence with their adolescent children in the past year varied by their

children's gender; parents were 1.5 times more likely to report having discussed dating violence with their 15 to 16 year old daughters than with sons in the same age group. This discrepancy may indicate that parents find it easier to discuss GBV with their daughters, who stereotypically are potential victims of GBV, rather than with their sons, who stereotypically are potential perpetrators. In a similar vein, other sampled parents of adolescents expressed more acute concern for their daughters than their sons when it came to IPV perpetration and victimization (Akers et al., 2011).

Given that discussions of GBV are not ubiquitous amongst parents and children, barriers to discussing GBV are important to identify. The only study that has investigated barriers to these discussions was Rothman et al. (2011), in which they surveyed parents who had not talked to their children about dating violence about the reasons they did not engage in these conversations in the past year. Parents indicated that they did not discuss dating violence because their children were not dating, they considered their children too young, that their children would learn about GBV through experience, that the conversation would embarrass/be uninteresting to their adolescent, and/or that that the parent would not know what to say or were too embarrassed to discuss these issues.

Though the literature is limited, preliminary evidence supports the potential of parent-child discussions of relationships impacting GBV perpetration among men/boys. One intervention specifically targeting the facilitation of parent-adolescent conversations about dating violence in order to prevent perpetration was STRONG, an online intervention for adolescent boys (Rizzo et al., 2020). STRONG incorporated interventions in emotion regulation, relationship health knowledge, and communication between parents and sons. Results indicated that participants in the intervention group were significantly less likely to have perpetrated dating

violence behaviors in the following three and nine months, compared to their control group. However, the parent sample was 90% mothers (Rizzo et al., 2020), and no analyses about differential effectiveness between father-son or mother-son dyads were included. Additionally, no discussion of the specifically gendered aspects of dating violence that would be part of gender transformational interventions was involved.

A little over half of parents are engaging in conversations about GBV with their children. What is not yet known is the content of these conversations about GBV, and whether gender transformational aspects, like a discussion of gender norms, attitudes, and expectations (Barker et al., 2007; Gupta, 2000) are a part of these conversations. Additionally, the limited research about barriers to these conversations indicate that the prompts that push parents to have these GBV conversations with their children seem to be limited to the child beginning to date, which, given past research showing that parents underestimate their children's sexual involvement, particularly young children (O'Donnell et al., 2008), parents may not be fully aware of their children's dating activities as well. Parents may be missing potential opportunities to not only respond to cues in the environment or from their children to discuss GBV and gender expression, but also to the circumstances that they believe should prompt these conversations (e.g., their children dating without their knowledge). A deeper investigation into both barriers to having these conversations and prompts/facilitators of these conversations can better inform future intervention programming to arm parents with the knowledge and confidence in their ability to have these conversations and recognize opportunities to discuss these important topics with their children.

Additionally, because the limited literature has involved primarily mother samples, we may be missing an insightful resource in these conversations in fathers. Fathers' unique insights

into how to discuss GBV transformationally in the context of traditional gender norms, attitudes, and expectations could help better utilize gender transformational tenets within the family unit.

The Current Study

The current study endeavored to investigate barriers and facilitators to fathers discussing GBV with their sons. Additionally, the manner in which GBV is discussed, especially whether it includes gender transformative themes like discussion of gender roles, was investigated. The thesis of this study was that fathers talking to their sons about GBV through a gender transformative lens (e.g., pushing against traditional masculinity ideology) may be an important avenue for preventing GBV. The current study's research questions were 1) What do fathers who talk to their sons about GBV think about the utility of a gender transformative lens? and 2) What do fathers identify as facilitators and barriers to having gender transformative discussions about GBV with their sons?

Chapter II

Literature Review

Gender based violence (GBV) is a global health issue that impacts millions of people. GBV is defined as acts of violence or abuse that are perpetrated solely or predominantly because of the gender, or perceived gender, of the victim (e.g. partner violence, sexual violence, harassment, and murder [Westmarland, 2016]). This term is inclusive of violence perpetrated against people of any gender based on their gender identity. However, it is often equated with violence against cisgender women and girls, as they make up the majority of survivors and victims of GBV (UN Women, n.d.). The World Health Organization has estimated that around one in three (30%) of women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime (Garcia-Moreno & Pallito, 2013). GBV against transgender and gender nonconforming people is also common: While global research in GBV experiences amongst trans and gender-nonconforming individuals is nascent, epidemiologic and behavioral data from the United States suggest that between 7% and 89% of trans persons in the U.S. experience GBV (Wirtz et al., 2020). Though likely to be vastly underestimated, over 2,343 murders of trans or gender variant persons were reported globally between January 2008 and December 2016, with 165 known to have occurred in the United States (Nuttbrock et al., 2014; Reisner et al., 2014; Trans Respect Versus Transphobia, 2017). Transgender women and men report higher rates of violent victimization (86.1 and 107.5 per 1,000 people, respectively) than cisgender women and men (23.7 and 19.8 per 1,000 people, respectively; [Flores et al., 2021]). GBV has serious negative impacts on individuals and society broadly. Impacts include increased rates of physical injury, including death, unintended pregnancies, gynecological issues, sexually transmitted infections, including HIV infection,

chronic pain issues, and mental health issues like depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicidality (WHO, 2021). GBV also incurs costs on society, including the impact of victims' inability to work and lost wages, lower academic achievement as a result of victimization, and increased healthcare cost and social service utilization (Duvvury et al., 2013; WHO, 2021). Given these impacts, it is important to investigate avenues of intervention and prevention for this serious public health issue.

GBV Prevention Efforts

Researchers have pursued many avenues for GBV prevention programming. Common themes in GBV prevention programming involve healthy relationship psychoeducation, increasing knowledge of GBV, and attempting to lower acceptance of GBV (De La Rue et al., 2017). Other recent programming involves consent education, working under the assumption that perpetrators of sexual GBV lack the ability to attain consent (Beres, 2020), and bystander education, which emphasizes that non-perpetrators should be trained to step up to prevent potential perpetration they are witnessing (Franklin et al., 2017). Unfortunately, these interventions have mixed results when it comes to actual bystander behavior and prevention of GBV perpetration (Beres, 2020; Wong et al., 2023). GBV prevention researchers have criticized the use of activating or emphasizing “positive” traits within traditional masculinity, like *warrior*, *protector*, or *leader*, to encourage men to “protect women” from GBV or prevent them from perpetrating GBV themselves. Critics are concerned that emphasizing any traditionally masculine traits, like being strong and dominant, in the absence of critical discussion of gender norms could reinforce traditional gender inequitable masculine ideals as well (Jewkes et al., 2015). Other interventions, like the Men’s Program, used with university men (Foubert & Newberry, 2006) focus on increasing empathy for victims of rape and decreasing rape myth

acceptance. This intervention is based on the belief systems theory and the elaboration likelihood model. Belief systems theory states that interventions should be designed to maintain people's existing conception of themselves, such that we do not have discussions with men that frame them as potential rapists, as men, regardless of whether they endorse that they have perpetrated acts consistent with rape themselves, rarely view themselves as rapists or potential rapists (Scheel et al., 2001). The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) works under the assumption that attitude and behavior change occurs under conditions that people are motivated to listen to a message, can understand it, and believe it to be relevant to their own lives (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The Men's Project also encourages men to enter the role of bystander interveners, teaching participants how to notice when a potential sexual assault may be about to occur, and how to helpfully intervene. The Men's Project has seen success in decreasing participant's likelihood of committing sexual assault, lowering rape myth acceptance, and increasing rape survivor empathy (Foubert & Newberry, 2006).

Men, Boys, and GBV Perpetration

A major theme in GBV perpetration is perpetrator gender. Over 90 percent of perpetrators of GBV in the United States, including intimate partner violence and sexual violence, are cisgender men/boys (Basile et al., 2022; Black et al., 2011; Breiding et al., 2014). GBV researchers have found predictors of men/boys' GBV perpetration, including the endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology and other related constructs, like gender role discrepancy stress. Traditional masculinity ideology involves the rigid adherence to hegemonic and historic ideas of what men should value and how they should behave. In the United States, traditional masculinity ideology can involve highly valuing competition and winning, professional success, and emotional stoicism, which are tied to behavioral expectations like the

need to dominate others, control women, be sexually aggressive, perform heterosexuality and police others' gender and sexual expression (Mahalik et al., 2003). Although dominant masculinity norms may be becoming more flexible in recent years (Donnelly et al., 2016; Scarborough et al., 2019), many men and boys endorse feeling pressure to adhere to these traditional expectations of masculinity and manhood. For example, in a 2017 study, 59% of sampled men endorsed that their parents taught them to act strong, even if when nervous or scared, and 52% endorsed receiving societal messaging that that it was not good for a boy to learn how to cook, clean, or care for children (Heilman et al., 2017). Another national study of gender equitable attitudes, which surveyed 1,006 10- to 19-year olds in 2018, found that 35% of U.S. boys (ages 10–17) believe that society most values strength and toughness in boys. Markedly, 44% of older boys (14 to 19) feel pressure to be “willing to punch someone if provoked,” and 82% of surveyed boys have heard someone tell a boy he was “acting like a girl,” which they interpret to mean behavior that is emotional, crying, sensitive, weak, feminine, and implicitly negative (Plan International, 2018).

Heilman and Barker (2018) investigated how adherence to masculine norms influence the likelihood for boys/men to perpetrate or become victims of violence. They identified that traditional masculinity norms require men to continually achieve and re-achieve socially recognized manhood as well as police their own and other boys'/men's masculine performance. They also identified that traditional masculinity norms encourage inflexible and limiting ideas of where men and women belong and how they act in their assigned social spheres, with an emphasis on men being encouraged and empowered for enacting violence. Finally, they identified that traditional masculinity norms discourage boys/men from showing emotional vulnerability, and encourage the reinforcement of hegemonic patriarchies, with violence being

used as a tool to reinforce structures of power that allow men to have power over women, and certain men to have power over other men.

Men and Masculinities scholars, based on Crenshaw's (1989) theory of intersectionality, have found that hegemonic patriarchy and its expectations can differentially impact and empower men depending on other intersecting identities (Connell, 2005; Coston & Kimmel, 2012; hooks, 2004a; Franklin, 1999; Leek & Kimmel, 2015). However, there is empirical evidence that many men across diverse sociocultural groups endorse traditionally dominant Western masculine behaviors and avoid traditionally feminine behaviors (Chu et al., 2005). Similarly, traditional masculinity ideology has been found to be related to GBV perpetration among men from all racial and ethnic backgrounds in the United States (Fleming et al., 2015; Murnen et al., 2002; Santana et al., 2006; Shuemaker et al., 2001). Krivoshchekov and colleagues (2023) conducted a metanalytic review of the relationship between traditional masculinity ideology and similar constructs and attitudes towards and perpetration of violence against women, including sexual harassment, psychological abuse, and sexual and physical violence. Results revealed that the largest observed effect size for the relationship between traditional masculinity and attitudes towards violence was for the traditional masculinity ideology, followed by conformity to masculine norms. When it comes to the specific type of violent attitudes, the strongest effect size was for attitudes towards sexual harassment, followed by rape, physical violence, and psychological violence. For actual violent behavior, traditional masculinity was observed to positively correlate with violence against women. The effect size for traditional masculinity ideology on attitudes and perpetration of violence against women was found to be medium to large (Krivoshchekov et al., 2023).

Similar results of the relationship between traditional masculinity ideology and GBV perpetration exist with adult men and adolescent boys. Adolescent boys between the ages of 13 and 18 who endorse hegemonic masculinity ideology (a construct similar to traditional masculinity ideology, including entitlement to sexual access to and control over women, endorsing homophobic ideas, and condoning GBV perpetration; Miller et al., 2020) were significantly more likely to perpetrate dating abuse, sexual assault, and sexual harassment ($p < .001$; Miller et al., 2020). Further, this relationship seems to continue into adulthood. Ross and colleagues (2022) found a predictive relationship between adolescent male gender performance and IPV perpetration in adulthood. The authors found that adolescent boys who perform masculinity more similarly to their same-sex peers (e.g., stereotypical masculine performance) were more likely to perpetrate GBV, specifically IPV, in adulthood, while adolescent girls' gender performance was unrelated with perpetration or victimization. The authors concluded that stereotypical masculine gender norm beliefs are linked to higher rates of IPV perpetration and cite the theory of precarious manhood to understand how masculinity in the US is related to GBV perpetration (Ross et al., 2022).

Precarious manhood/masculinity is a framework of masculine performance that theorizes that performing masculinity involves not only performing heterosexuality in a way that rejects femininity and abhors homosexuality (Connell, 2005; Kimmel, 2004; Pascoe, 2007; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009), but also that this masculinity requires constant effort to prove and maintain and can be easily lost (Pascoe, 2007). Further, engagement in aggression and violence is a way in which men can assert and/or maintain their masculinity (Bosson et al., 2009; Bosson & Vandello, 2011). Given this link between rigid traditional masculinity ideology and GBV perpetration, intervention and prevention programming that encourage building understanding of

these gender dynamics and their impact, as well as building flexibility in one's gender ideology, like gender transformative programming, is necessary.

Gender Transformative Programming

gender transformative programming (GTP) has emerged as a potential frame for intervening in the relationship between traditional masculinity ideology and GBV perpetration. GTP is defined as programming that explicitly focuses on critically examining gender-related norms, expectations, attitudes and behaviors (Barker et al., 2007; Gupta, 2000). Emerging evidence exists that targeted programming for men/boys that incorporates a *gender transformative* approach may be more likely to shift men's gender and violence related attitudes and behaviors more effectively (Barker et al., 2007; Barker et al., 2010; Casey et al., 2018; Jewkes, et al., 2015; Kato-Wallace et al., 2019; Peacock & Barker, 2014; UNFPA and Promundo, 2010). GTP involves promoting debate and critical reflection on gender roles, gender norms, and gender expression to build knowledge and deconstruct myths about what it means to "be" a gender, generally through group discussion, roleplay, and other techniques that encourage participants to think critically and reflect on their own beliefs and behaviors related to gender (Pérez-Martínez et al., 2023). Interventions focused on promoting gender equity via critical discussion of gender dynamics have been shown to reduce violence perpetration and substance use, and increase condom use and higher quality communication within romantic couples (Barker et al., 2006; Pulerwitz et al., 2015a; Pulerwitz et al., 2010; Pulerwitz et al., 2015b). Several meta-analyses of GTP for men and boys have been conducted. Casey and colleagues (2018) found in their review of GTP for GBV with men and boys that most research emerged from studies in African countries involving samples of men/boys between the ages of 15 and 49 years. All unique interventions in the African samples demonstrated decreases in at least one

type of GBV after intervention (Casey et al., 2018). Casey and colleagues (2018) also reported on one GTP intervention that took place in the United States amongst undergraduate men, which also demonstrated a significant decrease in GBV perpetration. It seems that GTP interventions are now crossing into U.S. prevention work. Several other explicitly gender transformative interventions that were developed internationally are now being adapted for American men/boys, including Manhood 2.0 and Program H (for Hombres or Homens in Spanish and Portuguese, respectively; Bell, 2020).

Casey and colleagues (2018) proposed a conceptual model for engaging men/boys in gender transformative GBV prevention efforts that involves initial outreach to men/boys, attitude and behavior change interventions, and ongoing social action, with the hope that men/boys themselves will eventually engage others in these efforts. The authors state that formalized prevention events and interventions can hold promise for fostering men/boys' activism beyond the intervention and integration into advocacy for broader gender equity work.

Criticism of Gender Transformative Interventions

Some scholars who research GTP internationally and who laud its results for many health and GBV outcomes also express some caution about this form of intervention. Dworkin and colleagues (2015) expressed concerns about an overemphasis on “harmful” masculinities (pp. S132), neglecting an intersectional perspective, a fear that GTP will cause men to engage in backlash violent behaviors against women, and concerns about whether GTP improvements will last long term. While concerns about lacking intersectionality in interventions may be warranted, as interventions should be as culturally sensitive as possible (Dworkin et al., 2015), concerns about overemphasis on “harmful” masculinities, masculine backlash to experiencing GTP, and about long-term results can be addressed through more strictly adhering to GTP tenets. For

example, emphasizing an exploration on how men/boys are negatively impacted and constrained by traditional masculinity ideology is a core part of GTP that helps to decrease defensiveness when discussing women's experiences in patriarchy (Dworkin et al., 2015). Additionally, research has shown that many forms of progress towards gender equity internationally have been associated with male backlash behaviors against women, including increases in GBV (Chon, 2013; Chon & Clifford, 2021; Xie et al., 2012). Although every effort to prevent violent backlash should be taken, it is likely a common result of societal efforts towards gender equity that there may be some temporary increases in violence perpetration, and not a feature specific to GTP.

Brush and Miller (2019) take issue with GTP's basic theoretical paradigm. They point out that several GTP interventions have mixed results, including lowering GBV supportive attitudes without a decrease in GBV perpetration, or vice versa. They also state that GTP interventions overemphasize social norms theory interventions as the catalyst to decreasing GBV-supportive attitudes and behavior. Social norms theory interventions often involve correcting an individual's overestimate of their peers endorsing normalization of GBV (Dardis et al., 2016; Fabiano et al., 2003). The authors argue this is ineffective given the broader systemic support of GBV and traditional masculinity ideology. They also take umbrage with how little men-on-men, especially homophobic, violence is discussed in GTP. They argue that to improve these interventions an emphasis on trauma-informed intervention is critical, as boys and men who perpetrate violence are more likely to have witnessed violence or been abused themselves (Miller et al., 2011). Dworkin and Barker (2019), on the other hand, argue that Brush and Miller (2019) take a reductionist perspective when stating that GTP only relies on social norms theory for intervention, and that several GTP interventions have now highlighted intersectionality,

homophobia, and feminist thought in several countries. They also argue that structural and community change, alongside challenging traditional masculinity ideology, is built into many different GTP interventions. Rather than being primarily founded on social norms interventions, the authors emphasize that GTP is founded on feminist psychological concepts and in conjunction with women's advocacy, based in Freire's theorization of critical consciousness, and undergirded by ideas of community and collective action (Dworkin & Barker, 2019).

Given the potential of gender transformative interventions in creating flexibility in gender expression and expectations, the possibility of these interventions in the family context is an exciting prospect. Rather than a one time intervention or one that happens when young men reach adolescence or adulthood, a family context for GTP holds the possibility for personalized, repeated long term prevention programming. To understand these possibilities, it is important to understand what is known about how parents impact their children's gender socialization and what direct conversations about gender may look like between parents and their children.

Theories of Gender Socialization

Gender-socialization theory posits that individuals develop schemas about gender throughout development through interaction with socializing agents (e.g., caregivers, family members, peers) and exposure to socializing arenas (e.g., school and media [Eccles et al., 1993; Katz & Ksansnak, 1994]). In addition, from a social cognitive and learning perspective, parental influence on gender development may be exerted through modeling processes (Bussey & Bandura, 1999) and direct parenting practices (McHale et al., 2003). Through the choices parents make in what they expose their children to (e.g., controlling the media that children interact with) and through direct education on gendered values and roles (e.g., parents commenting on gender or gender expression) as well as observation of parent behavior, children learn their parents'

gendered expectations and about how gender is to be performed. Parents are essentially their children's first gender socializing agents (Leaper & Friedman, 2007). Additionally, in families where children have one male and one female parent, cisgender children may pay more attention to gendered modeling from the parent who shares their sex assigned at birth, more than to their different-sexed parents, particularly for gender-related concerns (Cichy et al., 2007; Kulik, 2002; Platt & Polavieja, 2016).

In the same vein, gender equitable or inequitable attitudes have also been found to be transmitted intergenerationally from parent to child (Casey et al., 2022). Several studies based in social-learning theory found that children learn foundational concepts of masculinity and femininity from their male and female parents, respectively, and that parents who fulfill or endorse traditional gender roles are more likely to have children with less egalitarian gender beliefs and attitudes, especially when studying sons (Burt & Scott, 2002; Crouter et al., 2007; Fulcher, 2010; Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2016; Kulik, 2002; Sutfin et al., 2008). O'Bryan and colleagues (2004) also found that homophobia and sex-role stereotyping in children were affected by fathers, but not mothers.

Ideas about gender and gender expression are known to be flexible and change as a child develops. One theory, gender intensification theory, is based on research that has found that upon adolescence, children feel increased social pressure to express and behave in more traditionally gendered ways (Galambos et al., 1990; Hill & Lynch, 1983). Way and colleagues (2014) interviewed 55 boys repeatedly between 6th and 11th grade who attended urban, public, co-educational schools about their resistance to traditional masculinity ideology (e.g., the need for emotional stoicism, physical toughness expressed through aggression, and avoiding interdependence with others). The authors found that 71% of their sampled boys, who came from

diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, implicitly or explicitly resist traditional masculinity ideology in 6th or 8th grade. Ultimately, though, only 43% indicated such resistance in 11th grade, indicating that boys are most likely to decrease resistance to these norms as they approach adulthood (Way et al., 2014). Notably, family influence on resistance to traditional gender norms was not evaluated in this study and has not been investigated as of yet in young boys/men.

Direct Conversation about Gender & Gender Inequality

Several studies have investigated the direct gender-related messages that adolescents and young adults report receiving from their fathers. Latino college aged men reported hearing messages from their fathers that encouraged manly or “macho” behavior and sexual initiation, while discouraging emotional expression (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). Epstein and Ward (2011) asked adolescents and emerging adults about direct gendered messages they received from their parents, boys/men in both adolescent and college-aged groups reported receiving more messages than did girls/women that encouraged toughness, whereas girls/women reported greater exposure to egalitarian gender roles. Undergraduate men also reported receiving more communication than undergraduate women about traditional gender roles. This could potentially indicate that parents feel more comfortable encouraging adopting more androgynous traits to daughters than towards sons (Fagot & Hagan, 1991). Additionally, greater reported exposure to parents’ traditional gender messages was associated with stronger endorsement of traditional gender beliefs for both adolescents and emerging adults, and for both women and men (Epstein & Ward, 2011). Klann et al. (2018) specifically focused on father to son intergenerational influence on son’s sexism, gender role conflict, and subjective masculinity stress. Gender role conflict and subjective masculinity stress are psychologically distressing constructs that are thought to be associated with rigid adherence to traditional masculinity norms (Wong et al., 2013). The authors

investigated these impacts through several avenues, focusing on adult men's perceptions of their father's masculine modeling, paternal sexist communication, and their perception of their father's parental authoritarianism. Paternal authoritarianism was defined as the father's endorsement of right-wing authoritarianism, associated with "old fashioned values" related to traditionalism, conservatism, power, and social hierarchy. Right-wing authoritarianism has been tied to many forms of discrimination, including sexism, homophobia, and racism (Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009; Crawford et al., 2016; Goodnight et al., 2014). The authors surveyed 170 majority white and heterosexual college student men who endorsed "significant contact" with a male father figure throughout their first 18 years. Results indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between perceived paternal authoritarianism and perceived paternal sexist communication as well as perceived paternal modeling of masculine norms. This relationship was supported by existing literature that links authoritarianism to other traditional hierarchies of power, like patriarchy and sexism (Cohrs & Asbrock, 2009; Duncan, 2006). Additionally, perceived paternal authoritarianism was related to sons' sexism through perceived paternal modeling of masculine norms and perceived sexist communication from fathers. Interestingly, perceived paternal authoritarianism also was indirectly related to son's gender role conflict and subjective masculinity stress, only through perceived paternal sexist communication, not through perceived paternal modeling of masculine norms. Thus, it may be that the fathers' direct sexist rhetoric more strongly impacts their sons' sexism, gender role conflict and subjective masculinity stress, rather than their father's modeling of masculine norms.

Concerningly, the Plan International (2018) survey of U.S. adolescents found that negative or objectifying beliefs about women and girls are commonly modeled to U.S. boys. 47% of surveyed boys aged 14 to 19 endorsed having heard their dad or other male-identified

family members make sexual comments or jokes about women (vs. 34 percent of girls). 62% have heard other boys making sexual comments or jokes about girls at least once per week, and 36% say they hear such comments daily. One in three boys (34 percent) say that several times a week or more they hear male characters on TV or in movies who make sexual comments and sexual jokes about women characters (Plan International, 2018).

The Need for Parent-Child GBV Communication

One avenue for gender transformative prevention of GBV perpetration may be in the parent-child relationship. Rossetto and Tollison (2017) discussed a similar concept, which they framed as a “postgendered sexual script” (p. 62) within family dynamics that rejects traditional gender or sex roles and reflects gender equality. The authors state that sexual scripts that promote traditional gender dynamics and gender roles lead to sexual assault, and that starting to rewrite these scripts in early family dynamics is a way to prevent later GBV perpetration. They argue that postgendered approaches to sexual scripts would remove gender-specific behavior and expectations, deconstructing traditional gendered power differences. The authors also offer suggestions for postgendered family communication that encourages openness and emotional expression, particularly noting that open communication within the father–son relationship could encourage emotional connection and help prevent rigid adherence to traditional masculinity (Odenweller et al., 2013). Additionally, the authors encourage that parents actively discuss sex-specific topics, like objectification, traditional sexual scripts, and sexual violence, encouraging parents to use opportunities like family dinners and consuming media together for these conversations. This postgendered family communication model to prevent GBV echoes many components of gender transformative interventions, including having open and reflective

conversations about gender and power, and outright discussing GBV to promote gender equality (Barker et al., 2007).

Little research exists regarding parent-child GBV communication outside of the context of formalized programming (Edwards et al., 2022). Rothman and colleagues (2011) surveyed parents of adolescent children and found that 55% of surveyed parents reported having discussed dating violence with their adolescent children in the past year. Markedly, mothers were more likely than fathers to discuss dating violence with both male and female children (59.0% of mothers vs. 50.2% of fathers). The likelihood of discussing this topic compared to other “risk” related behaviors was also notable: dating violence was significantly less likely to be discussed between parents and their adolescent children than school work, drug use, family finances, the economy, dating relationships in general, and sex. Rothman and colleagues (2011) emphasize that dating violence poses risks to the health and wellbeing of children and adolescents and thus should be discussed at a similar level to other risky behaviors like using drugs and alcohol, as there are personal and public health impacts of all these behaviors. Edwards and colleagues (2022) surveyed 142 parents about their discussions of different violence-related topics and found that parents talked less with their adolescent children about “sensitive prevention topics” (p. NP3866) like sexual harassment, sexual assault, and dating violence than about less sensitive prevention topics, like bullying, healthy relationships, and family values/traditions.

Related to how intersecting identities may impact GBV perpetration and victimization, identities besides parent gender may also impact how parents discuss GBV with their children. Edwards and colleagues (2022) study of rates of discussion of “sensitive” versus “less sensitive” topics between parents and their adolescent children found that race also correlated to differences in parent-child GBV discussions: White parents were found to be significantly less likely to

discuss sensitive topics, like GBV, with their children than non-White parents. Researchers have also incidentally studied the specific African American experience of parent-child GBV communication. Akers and colleagues (2011) aimed to study how 19 African American families with adolescent children ages 15-17 years old communicate about sex, dating, and how these families think parent-child communication interventions may be most helpful via qualitative interviews with both parents and children. While not part of the semi-structured interview questions, GBV, specifically intimate partner violence (IPV) as a concern emerged in family interviews. Parents expressed concerns about their children being affected by IPV as either victims or perpetrators, though they expressed more intense concern for daughters' victimization rather than their son's victimization or perpetration of IPV. From the adolescent perspective, son participants felt that GBV, especially sexual violence, was more important for parents to discuss with girls than with boys. Overall, parents emphasized that they wanted to teach sons to take responsibility for their behavior towards women and that treating women with dignity and respect was a family value (Akers et al., 2011).

Similar to Akers and colleagues (2011) findings, another study found that child gender is correlated with differences in the frequency and content of parent-child GBV conversations. Rothman and colleagues (2011) found that parents' likelihood of discussing dating violence with their adolescent children in the past year varied by their children's gender; parents were 1.5 times more likely to report having discussed dating violence with their 15 to 16 year old daughters than with sons in the same age group. This discrepancy may indicate that parents may find it easier to discuss GBV with their daughters, who statistically are more likely to be potential victims of GBV, rather than with their sons, who are statistically more likely to become perpetrators.

Parents may unfortunately be missing the opportunity to try to prevent their sons from becoming perpetrators of GBV through neglecting these conversations about GBV.

In contrast to previously noted parent-centered research about parent-child GBV communication, Weiser and colleagues (2022) qualitatively surveyed 438 individual college and graduate students (60% cisgender women) about their recollection of their parents discussing GBV. Specifically, they asked about conversations their parents had had with them about sexual consent, sexual assault, or unhealthy relationships. Interestingly, their results differed from Rothman and colleagues' (2011) roughly 50% of reported discussion about GBV from the parents' perspectives. Weiser and colleagues (2022) reported that around 75% of participants reported they had at least some communication about consent and sexual assault, and roughly 88% reported at least some communication about healthy relationships. Women participants were more likely to have received communication regarding how to give consent, that they should not be pressured for sex, that they should seek help if they are sexually assaulted, and also that sexual assault is not the victim's fault, though they also received messages encouraging them to monitor sexual assault risks. Men were more likely to receive the messages that "consent is important," about "how to ask for consent" and that "sexual assault is wrong." Unfortunately, men also reported greater endorsement of unhealthy relationship patterns from both mothers and fathers, and women were significantly more likely than men to hear the messages that physical and emotional abuse are not acceptable. Parents were additionally more likely to discuss "healthy relationships," like communicating ideas that healthy relationships involve trust, love, and respect, than sexual assault and consent, likely reflecting parents' greater comfort discussing positive relationships. The authors also point to the emphasis on men receiving consent and women knowing how to give consent and avoid sexual assault as evidence

of parents reinforcing traditional sexual scripts that label women as gatekeepers of sex and men as sexual aggressors (Wiederman, 2005).

Parent-Child GBV Conversation Interventions

Though the literature is limited, preliminary evidence supports the potential of parent-child discussions of relationships impacting GBV attitudes and perpetration among men/boys. One intervention specifically targeting the facilitation of parent-adolescent conversations about dating violence in order to prevent perpetration was STRONG, an online intervention for 7th and 8th grade boys (Rizzo et al., 2021). STRONG incorporated interventions in emotion regulation, relationship health knowledge, and communication between parents and sons. Results indicated that participants in the intervention group were significantly less likely to have perpetrated dating violence behaviors in the following three and nine months, compared to their control group. However, the parent sample was 90% mothers (Rizzo et al., 2021), and no analyses about differential effectiveness between father-son or mother-son dyads were included. Additionally, no discussion of the specifically gendered aspects of dating violence that would be part of gender transformational interventions was involved. Safe Dates, another GBV intervention for adolescents, also incorporated families into an iteration of the intervention, called Families for Safe Dates (Foshee et al., 2012). The study involved caregivers and their adolescent children participating in a family based teen dating abuse prevention program. The authors aimed to investigate factors motivating and facilitating caregiver engagement in teen dating abuse prevention activities, as well as risk factors for teen dating abuse. Post intervention, parents were more likely to understand the severity of dating abuse, and feel more self-efficacy for discussing and preventing teen dating abuse. Treatment was also associated with caregiver knowledge of abuse, decreased acceptance of dating abuse, decreased caregiver use of negative communication

with the teen, and belief in the importance of parental monitoring of teen dating, which was only significant for male but not female teens. Results for the adolescent participants were more mixed: while the treatment was significantly associated with lower acceptance of dating abuse among participants and delayed potential onset of physical dating abuse victimization of treatment participants, there was no treatment effect on adolescents' perceived negative consequences of dating abuse, conflict resolution skills, or whether their caregiver were actually monitoring their dating experiences. Remarkably, while the gender split of the adolescent participants was relatively even, caregivers were once again overwhelmingly mothers (96%).

Barriers to Parent-Child GBV Conversations

Given that discussions of GBV are not ubiquitous amongst parents and children, barriers and facilitators to discussing GBV are important to identify. The only study that has investigated barriers to these discussions was Rothman et al. (2011). Rothman and colleagues (2011) surveyed parents who had not talked to their children about GBV, and asked what reasons they had for not doing so in the past year. Parents indicated that they did not discuss dating violence because their children were not dating, they considered their children too young, that their children would learn about GBV through experience, that the conversation would embarrass/be uninteresting to their adolescent, and/or that that the parent would not know what to say or were too embarrassed to discuss these issues.

Even less is known about what may prompt parents to discuss GBV with their children. The limited research indicates that prompts that push parents to have GBV conversations with their children seem to be limited to the child beginning to date. Given past research showing that parents underestimate their children's sexual involvement, particularly young children

(O'Donnell et al., 2008), parents may be missing opportunities to have these conversations before their children begin to date without their parents' knowledge.

Father-Son GBV Communication: Why Dads?

Given the relationship between gender socialization, traditional masculinity ideology and GBV perpetration, the father as a socializing agent for cisgender sons is an avenue for gender transformative intervention exploration. In the last half-century in Western cultures, fatherhood as a parenting influence has experienced changing levels of significance, from historically trivial to “essential” (Pleck, 2010). Norms around Western father involvement have changed such that fathers are now viewed as contributing significant and specific impacts on their children (Pleck, 2010), and cultural and social encouragement for fathers to be involved in their children's upbringing and lives has increased. Many fathers have changed their parenting involvement and behaviors as a result, moving beyond a traditional breadwinning role to becoming more involved in nurturing (Cabrera et al., 2000; Harrington et al., 2011; Rossetto, et al., 2017). Additionally, “responsible fatherhood” programming, in which at-risk and non-residential fathers engage in activities focused on encouraging paternal involvement and an adaptive coparenting relationship, have become common-place in the United States (Holmes, et al., 2020). As a result, more recent research exists specifically about how fathers may try to influence their children's behavior and gender socialization.

Recent research in Australia has found that fathers are invested in being participants in their children's sexual education, including relationship health education. Thomas et al. (2022) surveyed 612 Australian fathers about their priorities with sex education for their children. The fathers' top reported priorities for their children's sexual education were avoiding violent relationships, understanding consent, and being able to recognize and report sexual abuse.

The literature reflects that fathers are often actively attempting to influence their sons' gender socialization, with specific agendas for their sons' gender expression. Research shows that fathers are less comfortable on average than mothers with their children's gender nonconforming behavior (Our Watch, 2018), and make greater efforts to enforce gender stereotypical behavior with preschool aged sons, especially when their sons' show explicitly "feminine" behaviors or interests (Kane, 2006). These efforts seem to continue and change as their sons age, as evidenced by Solebello and Elliott (2011). These authors interviewed 23 fathers of teenage sons and daughters (between 13 and 19 years old) about the strategies that they use to talk to their teens about sexuality. These interviews occurred between 2008 and 2009 in an urban area of the southeast United States. The fathers were majority White (84%) and all identified as heterosexual with an average age of 50 years old. Most fathers mentioned talking briefly about issues related to puberty, sex, and dating with their teen children, but most could not recall details of the conversations. Sixteen of 23 fathers stated that they had not had explicit discussion of puberty, sex, and dating with their children because they assumed they got this information from other sources. Most fathers indicated engaging in "spot checks," episodic teaching moments with their children around sexual issues. While this lack of outright involvement echoes previous research, it may also reflect the sample of mostly White, educated and middle class fathers.

The same fathers, however, had much more specific desires for how they socialized sexual identity with their sons. Most sampled fathers of adolescent sons described discussing sexual identity explicitly or implicitly with their sons and stated that it was very important to them that their sons were heterosexual. Fathers described how disappointing or difficult it would be to have a gay son, though those who identified as politically liberal expressed ambivalence or

be grudging tolerance of homosexuality. Further, sampled fathers indicated a sense of responsibility for instilling heterosexual identities and behaviors in their sons. These results align with the literature on precarious masculinity, especially its tenets that men have to constantly prove and effortfully maintain heterosexuality and manhood (Connell, 2005; Kimmel, 2004; Pascoe, 2007; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). To encourage the development of heterosexual identity, father participants encouraged their sons to engage in objectifying activities, including watching porn, pointing women out in public or in media that the fathers view as attractive, and providing their sons heterosexually focused pornographic magazines (Solebello & Elliott, 2011).

Some research and measure development has been conducted regarding fathers' expectations of their sons' masculinity. Martin-Fernandez and colleagues (2021), and Levant and colleagues (2018a, 2018b) surveyed demographically diverse community and college men, investigating their perceptions of their fathers' expectations for their conformity to seven specific traditional masculinity norms, and whether expectations were rigid and/or poorly fitting for the sons. They found that rigid expectations of masculinity were negatively associated with sons' self-esteem and relationship satisfaction (Martin-Fernandez et al., 2021).

Given this evidence that fathers may actively engage in conversations and encouragement around their adolescent sons' masculinity, it is important to investigate whether fathers may be having similar conversations with their sons surrounding GBV attitudes and behaviors. These conversations may impact attitudes and behaviors associated with individual traditional masculinity ideology.

Father-Son Relationship Dynamics

Another aspect of father-son relationships that may impact whether conversations about GBV are impactful is parent-child relationship quality. The quality and closeness of the parent-

child relationship may also impact whether parents discuss GBV with their children, and the quality and effectiveness of that conversation.

Research has shown that when fathers treat their children in a close and affectionate manner, their children are more likely to develop less stereotyped gender attitudes as teenagers and young adults (Hardesty et al., 1995; Williams et al., 1992). Fathers thus may build in the flexible gender ideologies necessary to combat potential traditional masculinity ideology social pressures for young boys/men later. Additionally, specifically for fathers and sons, the extent to which a boy identifies with his father (e.g., feels similar to his father) may impact how much they take on their father's traits, relational patterns, and beliefs (Bandura, 1961; Floyd & Morman, 2000) which can also be impacted by how affectionate, supportive or emotionally close a father behaves towards his son (Morman & Floyd, 2002). Research has demonstrated that children of emotionally warm fathers are more likely to gain social skills and exhibit prosocial behavior towards peers, which is associated with lower interpersonal aggression (Padilla-Walker et al., 2016; Webster et al., 2013). Thus, there may be support that affectionate, nurturing fathers are more likely to have sons who not only identify more strongly with their fathers' behavior and beliefs, but also are more likely to already have more flexible gender ideology. This may be because fathers who are emotionally vulnerable and affectionate with their sons are already in one way breaking away from traditional masculinity ideology, which encourages emotional stoicism and the policing of boys/men's emotionality (Klann et al., 2018; Levant, 1992; Petts et al., 2018). Encouragingly, there is evidence that today's fathers are reporting more emotional closeness, affection, and relationship satisfaction with their sons (Morman & Floyd, 2002; Fellers & Schrod, 2020).

Specific to the conversations that parents have about GBV, family relationship quality as a potential GBV perpetration risk factor is supported by several psychological theories. Once more, social learning theory, which emphasizes the family as a model for a child's behavior, has been implicated in how parents promote the expression of emotion and resolve conflict (Bandura, 1977; Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Foshee et al., 1999; Kaufman, 2015; Simons et al., 2012). Additionally, attachment theory, which points to quality and closeness of parent-child relationships as critical to a child's psychosocial development, is thought to allow the parent and child to have emotionally vulnerable discussions (e.g., Burton et al., 2002; Ward et al., 1996). In summary, parenting practices that encourage emotional vulnerability, sharing, and support likely model emotion regulation and communication strategies for youth, and also likely provide a safe space in which parents and youth can engage in violence prevention-related discussions.

More research on the impact of relationship quality on the ability to discuss GBV is needed. What is known is that low parent-child relationship quality is a consistent predictor of GBV, specifically sexual violence, in adult sex offender samples (e.g., McCormack et al., 2002). Specific to father-son relationships, in two college samples (Lisak, 1994; Ouimette & Riggs, 1998) and one sample of adult sex offenders (Smallbone & Dadds, 1998), sexual GBV perpetrators reported worse relationships with their fathers than non perpetrators.

Unfortunately, father-son relationship closeness may not always encourage gender equitable attitudes. Two studies in particular have found that when father-son relationships were stronger, the correlation between fathers' and sons' masculinities was stronger (Carlson & Knoester, 2011; Huttunen, 1992). Thus, it seems likely that a strong father-son relationship might be both a risk and a protective factor for GBV, depending on the kind of masculinity that fathers model. Klann and colleagues (2018) posited that father-son relationship quality would

strengthen the association between perceived paternal sexist communication and perceived paternal modeling of masculine norms and the adult son's own gender related ideas, such that young men who felt emotionally closer to their dads may be more receptive to sexist and traditionally masculine norms. Their results indicated that father-son relationship quality significantly moderated the indirect path between perceived paternal sexist communication and son's sexism, such that this effect was significant only at high and average levels (but not low levels) of relationship quality. This result affirms previous research that fathers who are emotionally close to their sons more strongly influence their son's gender attitudes and behaviors. In contrast, and also on a hopeful note, the relationship through which perceived paternal sexist communication was associated with sons' subjective masculinity stress was significant only at low relationship quality, suggesting that a close father-son relationship could protect sons against the experience of subjective masculinity stress. It seems that the close bond between some fathers and sons can provide an emotionally supportive buffer against sons' experience of gender related stress (McKelley & Rochlen, 2016). The authors noted that these findings demonstrate how the father-son relationship can be protective against certain psychological harms (subjective masculinity stress), yet continue to perpetuate the intergenerational transmission of sexist norms (Klann et al., 2018).

Fathers, especially fathers who share emotionally close relationships with their sons, may have the opportunity to maximize traits of effective gender transformative interventions for GBV. For example, fathers may be uniquely able to specifically target interventions to their sons' specific identities and life experiences (WHO, 2007), insight that emotionally close father-son relationships could provide. It is important to explore whether fathers' own feeling of emotional distance from their sons may be a barrier to them discussing GBV with their sons, and

whether fathers who endorse closer emotional relationships with their sons may be more likely to have these discussions in the first place.

Why Not Dads?

Some may argue that by adolescence, boys may be less likely to be interested in engaging in conversations about masculinity, gender expression, and GBV with their fathers. Research shows that adolescent children more highly value their peers' perspectives compared to their families (Knoll et al., 2015; Steinberg & Monahan, 2007) and that peer networks and features significantly influence GBV perpetration (Casey & Beadnell, 2010). However, especially early adolescents may value their parents' influence more strongly when it comes to longer-term developmental choices, and early adolescents express a desire to spend more time with parents than peers (Wang et al., 2007). Research on father's masculinity influences has similarly ambivalent conclusions. Nielson and colleagues (2022) investigated different potential influences on young men's adherence to masculine norms, including fathers, peers, and the media. They found that fathers' pressure to adhere to masculine norms did not directly relate to their sons' adherence to masculine norms. The authors caution, however, that fathers pressure to adhere to masculine norms did correlate with son's adherence to masculine norms in zero-order correlations, and only when accounting for variance with other socializers that father pressure lost significance. Additionally, the authors theorized that fathers who strongly endorse traditional masculinity norms along with fathers who more intensely pressure their sons to conform to those norms, may have more influence over their young adult sons than fathers who do not. It is likely the task of future researchers to investigate these nuanced interactions.

As a response or, as some argue, backlash to feminist movements and advocacy, "men's rights" activists have emerged to fight perceived social oppression of men (Mann, 2008).

Common men's rights group arguments are against legislation and support surrounding IPV against women, emphasizing the comparative lower attention paid to IPV against men. Another common argument of men's rights activists is that family court systems are biased against men and fathers in alimony, child support, and child custody proceedings (Fox, 2004). Men's rights activists (and some pro-fatherhood organizations in general) may argue that this study's argument and associated research evidence may indicate that fathers are essential to successfully raising boys, for example using the argument that involved fatherhood is associated with children being less likely to perpetrate crime in adulthood (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2024). The current study makes no argument about the essentialism of fatherhood or fathers, as many families do not contain or involve fathers and research has demonstrated their children of these families are equally well adjusted and well functioning, including in families where children have two mothers (Chan et al., 1998; Goldberg & Smith, 2013). The current study focuses not on the essentialism of fathers, but on the potential unique influence that fathers may capitalize on to help their sons have healthier, more satisfying sexual and romantic lives.

The Current Study

Given this review of the literature, investigating the current status of father-son GBV conversation is a novel avenue to expand knowledge of potential intervention points. Focusing on fathers of adolescent sons will help to target the specific child age range, adolescence and emerging adulthood, in which parents are most likely to be concerned about GBV and in which they may feel most comfortable potentially having conversations about these sensitive topics. Additionally, In the U.S., adolescence is considered to be a time of identity exploration and increased ability to reason and critically consider complex topics, including beliefs about gender, and also a time that has been linked to parental influence on youth gender identity development

(Cunningham, 2001; Epstein & Ward, 2011). Though previous research has investigated how adolescents have viewed their parents' gendered messages, the current study would be the first to involve the father's perspective of conversations specifically about GBV with sons, and to investigate whether fathers utilize GTP tenets and discuss GBV's link to traditional masculinity ideology. Insights specifically from fathers who have had GBV conversations could help to inform future GBV prevention programming involving fathers. Learning about barriers and facilitators to having these conversations could help future interventions to make these conversations easier and smoother between fathers and sons. This study was an opportunity to learn from fathers' lived experiences of already doing this work.

Chapter III

Method

Participants

I attempted to recruit a minimum of 13 cisgender fathers who had sons between the ages of 12 and 18 years old at the time of the interview. Participants were also required to be fluent in English (the initial survey and interview language); and currently living in the United States. Additionally, to narrow the sample and therefore increase the likelihood of providing some consistency across participants, I targeted fathers who reported having had at least one conversation about GBV with their son(s), and who endorsed being able to discuss the memory

of having this conversation with their son(s). Hill and Knox (2021) suggest utilizing 13-15 participants when conducting interview based data collection that will be analyzed using Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR). Although Hill and Knox (2021) suggest that having a narrow recruitment criteria can lead to a more homogenous sample, a desirable trait in CQR research, further narrowing of recruitment criteria by demographic traits (e.g., race, age) was thoughtfully decided against. This decision was based on concerns that while limiting the sample further may lead to more homogeneity, it may limit insights based on intersecting identities and cultural experience.

A total of 14 participants were interviewed, with 11 cases being included in analyses. Two participants at the beginning of recruitment were eliminated from evaluation as a result of probable fraudulent participation. One further participant withdrew from participation partly through the interview. For further details about the elimination process, see Recruitment.

Participants' age ranged from 39 to 74 ($M = 43.9$, $SD = 10.6$). Their sons ranged in ages from 12-18 ($M = 14.5$, $SD = 2.0$). The majority of participants ($n = 9$; 82%) identified as White, with one participant identifying as Black or African American (9%) and one participant identifying as multiracial (9%). When it came to their ethnicity, participants' entered responses can be seen in Table 1. All fathers in the sample identified as heterosexual. Fathers demonstrated a range in education level, from two participants with a high school diploma (18%), to two participants who had doctorates (18%). The majority of participants were married ($n = 9$; 82%). Average income ranged from less than \$20,000 to \$200k+ per year, with almost half of participants ($n = 5$, 45%) earning \$45,000 to \$139,000 per year. For a full breakdown of each participants' demographics, see Table 1.

Procedures

Recruitment

Recruitment initially began utilizing social media, including posting study information onto professional X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook accounts, as well as through word of mouth, APA-affiliated listservs, and contacting community organizations focused on fathering and parenting. Recruitment materials included the phrase “fathers who can discuss a conversation that they have had about sexual or dating violence (e.g., sexual assault, physical or emotional abuse in romantic relationships) for any reason or in any context with their adolescent sons.” The phrase “for any reason or in any context” was used to reduce the potential that fathers view that the conversation would have needed to be punitive in nature (e.g., that the father will be warning their son not to engage in sexual harassment).

Initially, the study was broken into two parts. The first consisted of screening and demographic survey questions, as well as contact information for scheduling the interview. The second part consisted of a one hour to one hour and 15-minute Zoom interview. After completing the screener survey, participants were asked if they were interested in participating in the demographic survey and follow-up interview. Eligible participants were contacted via email to inquire about scheduling the Zoom interview. After scheduling the interview, participants were provided another copy of the consent form to review prior to the interview.

Shortly after opening recruitment, the screener survey on Qualtrics was flooded with thousands of potential participants. Through investigation and literature review, the primary researcher discovered that it was likely that the majority of these participants were fraudulent participants. Recently published literature outlined other researchers’ experiences with being overwhelmed with questionable screener data, contacting potential interviewees, and completing interviews with participants that raised consistent red flags across several studies and identifying

potential warning signs for fraudulent online qualitative interview participation (Drysdale et al., 2023; Pellicano et al., 2024; Ridge et al., 2023; Sharma et al., 2024). The current study's initial research data and first two interviews matched several of these potentially fraudulent warning signs. Email addresses were often identically configured from the same email platform (e.g., initialname####@gmail.com), email content was short, curt, and similar in format and style across purportedly different participants, sometimes without subject lines or signatures. Interview scheduling was significantly more straightforward than usual (unlimited participant availability, and urgent desire for it to occur quickly). Participants were difficult to understand, sometimes due to patchy internet connections. Interviews were shorter in duration (< 30 minutes) compared with the expected length of interview, and elicited vague and confusing responses. Further, a series of inconsistencies in participants' stories or accounts of their own perspectives were identified, including differences between prescreening questionnaire responses and personas presented in the interview (Drysdale et al., 2023; Pellicano et al., 2024; Ridge et al., 2023). Complicating the process of differentiating potentially real participants from fraudulent participants, the majority of screener/demographic survey participants in the study at hand used IP addresses that identified their location within the USA, and it was only through further investigation that the majority seemed to be using VPN, or virtual private networks, that allow users to appear to be using servers in different locations from which they are actually using the internet (Cisco, n.d.).

Prior to this literature review that identified red flags for fraudulent participants, two Zoom interviews were scheduled from screener participants that seemed to demonstrate the lowest level of potential fraudulence from this initial recruitment effort, in that they had complete screener and demographic survey participation with few typos, and had IP addresses

that indicated they were living in the United States. However, following the completion of the interviews, both of these initial participants demonstrated features identified above that indicated that they were likely fraudulently participating in the interview and likely did not meet study participation requirements. For example, participants indicated that their sons' ages were several years different from the age they indicated on the screener forms, and both shared interview information with very similar features. It was also found that these participants likely used VPNs. At the time of these first two participants' participation, there was no protocol yet in place to follow up on inconsistencies in demographic information between survey and interview information that would allow the interviewer to terminate the interview. Following the completion of the first two interviews, further IRB amendments were submitted based on suggestions for screening out potentially fraudulent interview participants from the existent literature (Drysdale et al., 2023; Pellicano et al., 2024; Ridge et al., 2023; Sharma et al., 2024). These modifications included allowing for screening at the time of the Zoom interview and prior to asking the study relevant research questions, requiring participants have their cameras on for at least the interview introductions, and for terminating interviews in which participants did not respond consistently between screener information and interview information.

It was concluded that the majority of fraudulent survey submissions likely occurred due to listing the study on social media, and thus social media recruitment was terminated. IRB amendments were submitted in order to increase recruitment options, specifically through paper flyer recruitment. Continued word-of-mouth recruitment and attempted recruitment through APA-associated listservs were pursued. After extensive recruitment efforts through these avenues, three participants were yielded and it was determined that it was unlikely that sampling would be successfully completed through these avenues. Another IRB amendment was submitted

to allow for recruitment via Prolific, an online research recruitment site that pre-screens potential participants for location and other demographic information, including gender, sex, and parental status. In order to further screen for study requirements, an initial paid screener and demographic survey with 100 potential participants was created, which yielded 25 eligible participants. From these eligible participants, eight further interviews were completed. Recruitment was terminated at 11 participants, as repeated requests for interview were left unanswered from the remaining eligible participants. While recruiting a sample between 13-15 participants is suggested by Hill and Knox (2021) for ideal data saturation, the authors also state that in their experience, they have found that "new categories or subcategories rarely emerge after 10 or 11 cases have been included in the cross analyses," indicating saturation or stability (p. 61). Thus, it is likely that with 11 participants in the current study, data saturation may be achieved (Sharma et al., 2024).

Screener Survey

Fathers who followed ads to the Qualtrics screener were asked for informed consent and asked several screening questions for the required traits (i.e., gender, English language fluency, USA residence, having a son within the range of 12 and 18 years old). People who did not meet these criteria were directed out of the survey and thanked for their time. Those that met criteria were asked to provide demographic information, including age, race, gender identity, sexual identity, education level, immigration status and age of son(s) (see Appendix A) prior to interview scheduling. Participant data from the screener were confidentially stored. When I began using Prolific for recruitment, participants were also paid for participation in the screener.

After meeting criteria through the screener, potential participants were prompted about whether they would be interested in participating in an interview and filling out a brief demographic questionnaire for further compensation. If they consented, they were provided an

additional link that asked them to provide contact information for follow up (name, email, and phone number, and for Prolific sourced participants, their Prolific ID number in place of name). Follow up occurred via email, where a calendar with interview slot availability was provided for participant convenience with additional options available upon request. Their phone numbers were only used in case of connectivity issues during the virtual interview, in which case the interview could occur via phone call and be recorded on speaker phone through the Zoom meeting.

Research Questions

Thesis: Fathers talking to their sons about GBV through a gender transformative lens (e.g., pushing against traditional masculinity ideology) is an important avenue for preventing GBV. Semi-structured interview questions will center these research questions:

1. What do fathers who talk to their sons about GBV think about the utility of a gender transformative lens?
2. What do fathers identify as facilitators and barriers to having gender transformative discussions about GBV with their sons?

Semi-Structured Interviews

Prior to beginning recruitment and interviewing, the semi-structured interview protocol was reviewed by two experts in the field (one active in men and masculinity research and one in gender transformative research). The interview protocol initially included four sections: informed consent, introduction, semi-structured interview questions, and a closing. After issues emerged with the veracity of potential participants outlined above, a screener check-in that included their son's age, and the father's education level was added in order to match this demographic information to the demographic survey they completed. The semi-structured

interview questions included three primary areas: 1) questions about the father-son conversation about GBV, 2) the father's perceptions of his and his son's masculinity ideology and 3) questions about the use and utility of several gender transformative tenets in father-son GBV conversations, as well as the participants' perceived role as fathers in preventing GBV. The fathers were purposefully asked to reflect on their own understandings of manhood and masculinity, as well as their understandings of the challenges of traditional masculinity ideology expectations, prior to prompting them to reflect on incorporating gender transformative tenets in father-son GBV conversations. This was planned in the order of the interview because I expected that some fathers may never have personally critically considered masculinity as a construct or reflected on their own identity and societal standards for manhood prior to this conversation. For such fathers, this conversation prompted them to do some of the work and build the awareness that 1) they have a personal understanding of manhood, 2) that society generally may have expectations of manhood, and 3) that these societal expectations may cause what the literature refers to as gender role strain or gender discrepancy stress (Levant & Richmond, 2016 Pleck, 1995). Though this should be potentially considered as having an order effect on the conversation that follows these prompts, I believe that it likely helped facilitate fathers to think about what topics gender transformative conversations may involve when prompted to consider their usefulness later in the interview.

I was the interviewer for all participants in the study, to reduce the potential impact of different interviewer identities (e.g., gender, race) on participant responses to sensitive interview questions. I made efforts to increase participants' comfort, including acknowledging my identities at the beginning of the interview. I acknowledged that discussing gender based violence in general can be challenging, and that how they feel and what they share in the

interview may be impacted by the fact that I am the interviewer. To attempt to decrease social desirability bias concerns, I stated,

I want to encourage you to share as much as you feel comfortable with today, as we're not here to judge, either positively or negatively, any of your perspectives or experiences, but rather to better understand this experience for dads like you. I believe you have really valuable insights to add to our research.

Other research about decreasing social desirability bias concerns in qualitative research, especially when interviewers were outside of the social group that was being interviewed, emphasized the use of signals of respect and transparency about confidentiality procedures and what the interview information would be used for to help make participants more comfortable and less likely to shield answers (Bergen & Labonté, 2020). In the consent process prior to the interview, I provided information about confidentiality and storage of information, as well as that the information will be used to help us learn more about father-son relationships. This information was briefly reiterated prior to beginning recording as well.

After recording commenced, participants were thanked for their willingness to participate, and I as the interviewer introduced myself. I then introduced the general topic by saying,

I want to ask you some questions about your experience as a father raising a preteen or adolescent son. My plan today is to ask open-ended questions to understand how you might address concerns about how your son interacts currently or might interact in the future in romantic or sexual relationships.

Depending on participant answers to initial questions, optional query questions and optional clarifying statements were asked or provided to inform the broader first questions.

Further, given the semi-structured nature of the interview, additional clarifying questions that would improve depth or understanding were included as needed. The interview was advertised as being between an hour and one hour and 15 minutes, and the majority of interviews fell within this range, with several being slightly longer with fathers who were especially forthcoming in the interview. See Appendix B for interview protocol. Automatic transcription of the interview via Zoom was used to provide written data for qualitative analyses, alongside recording of the interview (with consent from participant). I anonymized and reviewed all transcriptions for accuracy. Recordings of the interviews were securely stored on a password protected personal computer. Participants were compensated for participation after interview participation, regardless of completion of the interview. Participants sourced through non-Prolific recruitment efforts were compensated via \$30 Amazon gift card, and participants recruited through Prolific were compensated \$30 through Prolific's payment system.

Analysis – Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR)

Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR; Hill et al., 1997; 2005; Hill & Knox, 2021) was utilized to analyze the interview transcripts. CQR is predominantly a constructivist approach, with some post-positivist elements (Hill et al., 2005). Thus, CQR as a research technique encourages the acknowledgement of a multitude of equally valid socially constructed versions of the “truth,” and thus, embraces the uniqueness of each participants' experience while also exploring and elucidating potential experiential commonalities, which are quantified, across participants (Hill & Knox, 2021). CQR also encourages the use of a semi-structured interview protocol, which allows for more standardization. Additionally, CQR requires not only reflection on how the researchers as individuals interact with the data (constructivist aspects), but also consensus among researchers during codebook creation, and calculating domains and categories'

frequency to understand an “objective” identifiable reality, reflecting more of a post-positivist lens (Froidevaux et al., 2024; Hill & Knox, 2021). CQR creators Hill and Knox state that the technique is ideal for gaining an in-depth understanding of participants’ experiences, attitudes and beliefs, particularly for investigations of inner events about which participants may have ambivalent or suppressed feelings or which may occur infrequently (Hill & Knox, 2021). The topics discussed in this study, especially parents discussing GBV with their children, are personal and emotionally charged topics about which parents have expressed hesitation (Rothman et al., 2011). Thus, CQR can assist in investigating this often challenging topic for participants.

CQR was also chosen because of the quantification of themes inherent to the method. This trait could aid in understanding the frequency of specific subcategories of the father-son GBV gender transformative discussion, which prior to this study has never been evaluated to the authors’ knowledge. The quantification of themes can inform future research, including measure development and intervention programming related to these topics.

Through its rigorous research process, CQR also aims to achieve trustworthy qualitative analyses. Patton (2002) identified dependability (a process systematically followed), and triangulation (capturing and respecting multiple perspectives), as important components of qualitative research quality. In accordance with these components, CQR outlines a clear step-by-step process, which can be clearly articulated for training and adherence purposes, as well as publication. It requires that researchers openly reflect on how their biases and identities may impact their interpretation of the data and present these reflections to consumers of the research results. Further, CQR’s required coding team and external auditor allows for a very thorough evaluation of the data that a single researcher may not be able to uncover alone (Hill & Knox,

2021).

Another important component of ensuring accuracy of qualitative data is saturation or redundancy of the data (Morrow, 2005), which indicates the point in the coding process where new information stops emerging. Hill and Knox (2021) refer to this concept as data stability. In previous iterations of CQR, two participant interviews in the qualitative sample would be set aside to code after the rest of the sample to test that saturation had been reached (Hill et al., 1997). These cases would be later added after the cross-analysis of the rest of the sample to check for the emergence of new themes. In Hill and colleagues' (2005) CQR metaanalysis, they found that researchers were not utilizing the built-in stability check. Further, they noted that the criteria for stability or instability were not clear, and that issues of timing differences if researchers were to find out that their data was unstable and later recruit more participants could confound results. As a result, Hill and Knox (2021) no longer recommend holding out cases for a stability check. Instead, they encourage the consistency of results to be increased by vigorously following CQR protocols, including having a well developed interview protocol, at least three coders and one external auditor. Further, they stated that in their own research experiences, new information rarely emerged after 10 or 11 cases had been cross-analyzed (Hill & Knox, 2021). Additionally, Morrow (2005), in a review of validity and trustworthiness in qualitative research, suggested further criteria to increase trustworthiness in primarily constructivist qualitative methods, like CQR. These include the extent to which participant meanings are understood deeply, and the extent to which there is a mutual construction of meaning between and among researchers and participants. Morrow (2005) suggests that context, culture, and rapport will impact the extent to which participant meanings are understood deeply. Several of my interview questions touched on the context in which fathers are discussing GBV with their sons, the

fathers' specific cultural experience and construction of manhood and how that might impact GBV and gender transformative conversations. Morrow (2005) also states that researchers who are “outsiders” to the sampled population or the phenomenon being studied must make efforts to prepare to discuss the topics credibly. This preparation is in hopes of improving rapport and the quality of data collected, and to encourage adequate co-construction and explication of meaning between researcher and participant, as well as co-researchers during later analyses.

In efforts to adhere to these recommendations, I attempted to collect a sample of 13 participants, which would have exceeded Hill and Knox's (2021) protocol, consulted with experts in the field to increase the relevance and effectiveness of my protocol to gender transformative and father-son research, and carefully trained my coding team to follow the CQR protocol. Additionally, as I am an “outsider” in the phenomenon of father-son gender transformative GBV conversations, as I am neither a son nor a father, I read relevant materials (e.g., Pollack, 1998) to make sure I was as familiar as possible with the experience of masculinity socialization processes and other topics relevant to conducting these interviews with fathers.

Researchers. The primary team of researchers included me, a counseling psychology doctoral student, one master's student in Mental Health Counseling, and one research team member with whom I have a personal relationship outside of academia. My advisor, Dr. Nic Johnson, served as my external auditor.

Prior to data analyses, all team members read the introduction and literature review for the study to understand the research questions and rationale. As a member of the coding team, whom I have a personal relationship with, was less familiar than the rest with the CQR process, he was provided a copy of the CQR manual (Hill & Knox, 2021), an overview of the CQR

process was explained to him, and any questions he had about the process were answered using information from the CQR manual. The first coding team meeting was spent reviewing the CQR process and potential timeline, answering any questions about the study, and having an open discussion of biases, expectations, and potential issues that may interfere with the consensus process as is required by the CQR process (Hill & Knox, 2021). The team discussed the potential influence that dual relationships and power differentials may have on the consensus process. Namely, it was noted that two coding team members were in the mental health field and generally had experience conducting GBV-related research and in CQR, whereas one did not have such experience. Additionally, I and another team member were engaged in a romantic relationship, and I am also friends with the other coding team member. I was aware that these dual relationships could potentially complicate the lively process of reaching consensus if not acknowledged and discussed. Thus, potential power imbalances and challenges to egalitarianism during the consensus process were continuously discussed, including discussions of how to ensure that all participants were able to assert themselves when they had differing viewpoints. This was assisted by adopting a rotating speaking turns strategy (Hill & Knox, 2021) where we took turns with who first would reflect on coding processes. Additionally, all coding team members were encouraged to challenge each other during the consensus process, whether in disagreement during coding or in confronting biases, in order to strengthen the quality of analyses. My role as PI, interviewer, and coding team member was also discussed, as well as my personal investments and biases specifically in the project that may have been stronger than my other coding team members. I was especially open to and mindful of these dual relationships and power dynamics, and also empowered my coding team members to challenge me specifically if they felt that these motivations were unduly influencing my coding or conceptualization of the

data. Next, the researchers engaged in a bracketing process (Hill & Knox, 2021) wherein we identified possible biases about gender, men and masculinity, intersectional feminism, GBV, and fathers. As I identify as a cisgender bisexual woman, and my coding team members identified as a cisgender heterosexual man and a nonbinary person, my coding team members came to the data with a wide variety of experience with gender. This experience was especially discussed amongst the team given the research questions and interview topics. We also discussed, as we all identify as White, how it may be especially important to pay attention to how this dominant identity may impact our understanding of White participants' responses to questions about culture and race, as well as those of participants of color. Finally, none of us have any parenting experience, which likely impacted how we perceived the fathers' parent-child relationship and parenting practices. As we proceeded with the coding process, we continued to discuss and confront biases and consulted with each other about the potential influences and bracketing of these biases as needed. Additionally, throughout the coding process the coding team was careful to attend to concerns related to sub-group development and differences (e.g., if fathers of different identities from each other grouped together in responses and were substantially different in responses).

Data Coding Process

Data analysis began as we reviewed the data for general domains, identifying 13 domains, including an "other" domain, as indicated in Hill and Knox (2021) to contain interview data that did not fit neatly into established domains. Next, we divided up the interview data into segments by topic, and assigned these segments to appropriate domains. Domaining the interview segments was first completed as a full coding team for the first four full interviews, until a shared understanding and consensus of the domains and what was contained in them was

established. Then, the fifth through eleventh interviews were dual-coded by either the lead researcher and one of the two additional coding team members, alternating each interview. Whichever coding team member was not in the dyad would review each domain interview to check for accuracy and consensus. Then, we worked as a team to create core ideas from the domain interview segments, or more concise summaries of the main points made by participants in these segments. Consensus on core ideas were established within the full coding team for the first five interviews, and then when a shared understanding of the level of detail to be included in the core ideas based on research questions were established, dyads of the coding team were used to continue creating core ideas for the remaining six interviews. The third coding team member reviewed the core ideas created by the dyads for clarity and consistency and any issues the third coding team member had with the core ideas for any particular interview were discussed as a team until consensus was reached. The “Other” domain was analyzed for any consistencies amongst responses within it to identify potential additional domains, and because none emerged, the domain was eliminated. My external auditor reviewed the final list of domains and core ideas within them for clarity and provided feedback that was discussed by the coding team and integrated. Finally, the core ideas within each domain were reviewed in cross-analysis, to determine shared themes, or categories, and subcategories across interviews and within domains. The core ideas were then placed in each appropriate category, which prepared the data for frequency calculations. The cross-analysis process involved all three coding team members throughout the coding process. The final list of categories and subcategories were reviewed by the external auditor for clarity. Then, frequency for each category and subcategory was calculated and labeled. To clarify the frequency of specific categories, Hill and Knox (2021) suggested that “general” categories would be those that apply to all participants or all

participants but one in the sample, “typical” categories would occur in 50 percent or more of the participant data up to the cutoff for “general,” and “variant” categories would be those that occur in at least two or three up to the cutoff for “typical” frequencies. Participant quotes were selected to serve as examples in each applicable category and subcategory (see Results). In accordance with Hill and Knox (2021), to increase trustworthiness, my external auditor with previous experience with CQR reviewed coding at each stage and provided feedback for clarity and consistency. Necessary changes were made to categories and definitions based on this feedback from my external auditor, which were discussed with my coding team to determine consensus on change. As we had attended to the potential development of subgroup differences, particularly on fathers of color versus White fathers, we also discussed whether their answers, at each level, were substantially different from each other and would prompt the creation of subgroups within the sample. It was determined through consensus that while fathers of color may have had different insights, for example regarding the influence of culture on masculine identity, their general domains and categories were not substantially different to necessitate the creation of subsamples within the sample.

Chapter IV

Results

As all participants were fathers, I will be using the term ‘fathers’ in reference to the current study’s participants throughout the remainder of the results. See Table 2 for the CQR frequency table summary of these results.

Prompts to GBV Conversations

All fathers discussed what brought about their conversations about GBV with their sons in the past. Some fathers also noted what would elicit them in the future to have further GBV conversations. Categories and subcategories are listed below in order of most frequent to least frequent. Categories include 1) *Prompts to Past Conversations About GBV*, and 2) *Prompts for Future Conversations-Son Starts Dating*.

Prompts to Past Conversations About GBV

This category contains what all 11 fathers’ reported as what prompted the father-son GBV conversation(s) that they discussed in the interview. Subcategories, in order from most to least frequent, were 1) *Son Showing Interest in Sexuality Or Relationships*, 2) *Seeing GBV In Community/Media*, and 3) *Son Bringing Up GBV*.

Son Showing Interest in Sexuality or Relationships. Seven fathers stated that GBV conversations were prompted by their sons expressing interest in sexuality or dating, including when their sons started consuming online pornography, shared their interest in dating, began dating someone, or started a sexually intimate relationship with someone. Notably, sometimes these expressions of interest were not directly communicated to the fathers, but rather the fathers saw pornography or erotic material in their sons’ internet search histories or accidentally walked in on their sons engaging sexually with partners. This subcategory was one in which the majority of

conversations were started by the participants, rather than the son being interested in dating and bringing up GBV as a conversation topic independently.

For example, Participant 10 stated,

It was because of check-in. I take their phones, and I go through history and such. I've found a site where he had researched. It's like a nude scene from a movie. So we, we were talking about porn and the exploitation of women, and how a lot of those women are trafficked. And yeah, so not necessarily like violence, like physical violence on a date. But the first conversation was just more the like when we participate in porn, like, we're like part of that system that is violent against women. He's got two sisters and a mom. So he understood their connection.

Seeing GBV in Community/Media. In discussing what prompted the GBV conversation with their sons, seven fathers discussed being prompted by events, on the news, in their community, or in their son's school or friend group, that involved GBV. Most frequently conversations were prompted by the fathers hearing or witnessing community events alongside their sons, or independently, and then the fathers would proceed to have conversations with their sons about GBV. Participant 1A was prompted both by a community event, as well as his son bringing up the topic and asking questions about it. He stated,

...there was a sexual violence incident at a high school that was in our news, and that was the first time we [Father P1A and his son] had a conversation about sexual violence, and so he just flat out[...] My son's very intuitive, and he just, and we have a very good relationship. He doesn't live with me. But we have very good relationship. And he just was like, 'Dad. What is this story that they're talking about?' So we discussed at that time it was a young man with a young woman that had done something inappropriate. And he

hadn't, the young man had not raped her, he had just sexually assaulted her. And so we had to have that conversation about what was sexual violence. What did that mean?

Son Bringing Up Topic. Five fathers stated that GBV conversations were prompted by their sons directly bringing up the topic to them, rather than them as fathers starting the conversation or bringing up GBV. Fathers who fell in this subcategory may have also fallen into other prompt subcategories because their sons may be bringing up the topic in response to community events. For example, Participant 8 stated,

Maybe there has been instances where he's brought it up because he's heard it somewhere else. He saw a double standard in that. Why can girls hit boys? Boys can't... It's like, but no one can really hit anybody. You know, it's the culture we've got, you know, specific rules for men, and how they're supposed to treat women, and there's expectations of that. And while it might not seem totally fair. It's, you know, that's kind of just how our culture is.

Prompts for Future Conversations: Son Starts Dating

Five fathers named that if their sons started dating in the future (for some of their sons, for the first time, for others, if they begin dating again), this would likely prompt an additional conversation. To further illustrate this category, Participant 1A stated, “And like I said he, cause my son has not had a girlfriend since 6th grade. So I know that at some point he's going to have a girlfriend, and then it'll be a whole different set of conversations[...]”

Other fathers who are not included in this category either said they did not feel that they needed to engage in another GBV conversation with their sons, or named prompts that were not shared by other fathers and thus not indicative of a common experience.

Preparation for GBV Conversations

This domain was established based on responses provided when fathers were prompted to reflect on how or whether they had done any preparation for GBV conversations with their sons. This included whether they had talked to anyone or done any reading or searching the internet about the subject, which were provided as potential examples of preparation. Categories in this domain in order from most to least frequent are 1) *Reliance on Personal Experience/Struggles in Relationships*, 2) *Consuming Media Related to Topic*, 3) *Seeking Guidance from Others*, 4) *Emotional Preparation* and 5) *Experience Working with Youth*.

Reliance on Personal Experience/Struggles in Relationships

When prompted to reflect on how they had prepared themselves for GBV conversations, three fathers reported that they relied on reflections of their own relationship histories to inform what they discussed with their sons. This sometimes included issues related to conflict in the fathers' previous relationships, as well as fathers' reporting having exerted power and control over their previous relationship partners, which they want their sons to avoid and "learn from" their fathers' "mistakes." For example, Participant 1A stated,

Now, obviously, through lots of therapy, I've understood the roots and the basis of where a lot of that stuff came from, and then how better for me to deal with it! But because of all of that, I had to do a lot of prep work. That prep work is what allowed me when it was time to talk to my son about those conversations. I had already done the work, so I already had a lot of resources.

Consuming Media Related to Topic

Three fathers reported that they had engaged in online searches or consumed media related to GBV or relationships as preparation. Their media viewing (e.g., reading, listening to

podcasts or lectures) was either based on their personal interests or efforts towards self-growth, or to purposefully prepare for the conversation with their sons. For example, Participant 3 stated,

I know this is always a risky thing to say. I would consider myself to have slightly better than average knowledge in this area, mostly because for many years I was a dedicated Dan Savage listener, and I'd be reading all his articles and following all the links.

Seeking Guidance from Others

Three fathers whose responses were assigned to this category reported that they had consulted with another person about the issue that prompted the need to discuss GBV with their sons, or discussed strategizing for the GBV conversation that they planned to have with their sons. Fathers generally named their spouse, or religious leader as their source of guidance. To further illustrate this category, Participant 6 stated,

Well, I talked to my wife about it, and we decided that I would be the one to talk to him. But I always check everything with her. I didn't just talk to him out of the blue. So it's basically a conversation I had with her, and we bounced ideas off of each other pretty much.

Emotional Preparation

For preparation, the two fathers in this category reported that they had engaged in “psyching up” or trying to ready themselves emotionally for the father-son GBV conversations they were planning to have. Fathers in this category expressed that they perceived that the conversation could be an emotionally challenging or uncomfortable conversation with their sons and therefore required intentionally preparing themselves emotionally. Fathers separated this individual emotional preparation from the potential emotional support that they sought from their relationship partners or religious leaders. Participant 6 demonstrated this category by stating,

I just psyched myself up. Yeah, I just thought about it. Thought about it, said, it has to be done. It's now or never. So I don't want to wait until you know in the future, and it was pretty much something I just wanted to get over with. So yeah, I just pretty much psyched myself up.

Experience Working with Youth

The two fathers in this category discussed how their previous work with children or young people, as teachers, coaches, or in higher education, had prepared them to discuss these issues with their own sons. Their previous work provided practice having challenging conversations and providing mentorship relationships with other young people. For example, Participant 1A stated,

Coming into the middle school, I put a lot of work into understanding middle school children. And how was I going to approach conversations with them, which in turn allowed me to carry that on to my son, because I had that opportunity with him, because, as I said, I grew up through middle school with my son in those ages. So I got to work out a lot of those kinks. I knew what was coming for him.

Conversation Characteristics

This domain contains categories that describe general characteristics of the father-son GBV conversations in this sample. General characteristics include the son's age at which the father reported that the first conversation about GBV occurred, the number of father-son GBV conversations reported and whether participants were interested in having more, the location of the conversation(s), and whether anyone else was present for the conversation(s). In order from most to least frequent, categories are 1) *Son Age at First Conversation*, 2) *Number of GBV Conversations and Interest in More*, 3) *Location of GBV Conversation*, 4) *Excluding Mother*

from Conversation, and 5) Including Mother to Offer "Woman's Perspective."

Son Age at First Conversation

All fathers were asked, "Approximately how old was/were your son(s) when this conversation first occurred?" Responses were categorized in age groups. One father's response is not included, as his singular response did not share traits of other responses. Subcategories in order from most to least frequent are 1) *Middle Childhood to Preadolescence (12 and Below)*, 2) *Early Adolescence (13-15)*.

Middle Childhood to Preadolescence (12 and Below). Seven fathers reported that the first conversation about GBV that they had with their son occurred when their son was under the age of 12, with the majority of sons being between 7 and 12 years old at the time of first conversation. For example, Participant 8 stated,

I don't know. Specifically, maybe when he was like 10 years old. I think 10 years old, it's probably starting 6th grade. I think that's when some of his friends might have been, you know, girlfriending and boyfriending and stuff like that.

Early Adolescence (13-15). Three fathers reported that the first conversation about GBV that they had with their son was when their sons were between 13 and 15 years old. Participant 6 stated, of conversations with both of his adolescent sons, "And but I would say, probably in the 13, 14 year old range, we started having the conversations, and once they started dating regularly, and they both had a significant other of some sort."

Number of GBV Conversations and Interest in More

All fathers were prompted to reflect on the number of conversations that they had had about GBV, as well as if they believed they would have more conversations in the future.

Subcategories from most to least frequent are 1) *2-6 Times*, 2) *Want to Have More*, and 3) *One Conversation and No More Conversations Needed*.

2-6 Times. Eight fathers reported having between two and six conversations about GBV with their sons. For example, Participant 5 stated,

Yeah, two. It's I mean, probably two or three specific conversations that were based on it. But me and the boys both have been pretty open.... All my kids were pretty open as far as communication, so I mean, things have come up over the years.

Wants to Have More. Three fathers stated that they were interested in having more conversations with their sons in the future about GBV. Participant 4 stated when prompted about whether he would ever want to have another conversation about GBV with his son, "Oh, yeah, once he gets like 16, probably. Yeah, I would definitely reiterate it back to him again, for sure."

One Conversation and No More Conversations Needed. The two fathers in this category reported that they had had just one conversation about GBV with their sons, and they believed that they did not need to have another conversation about GBV. These fathers expressed that they believed that their sons had understood and would not need another conversation about it. Participant 7 stated, "No! Just the once[...] I don't think he needs it again. He's, he's been doing pretty well so far. No problems. It seems like he's been having some good dates. They turned out pretty good."

Location of GBV Conversation

This category pertained to the setting of the GBV conversations that fathers had with their sons. Some fathers reported having several conversations in several different locations.

Subcategories in order from most to least frequent are 1) *Home* and 2) *Vehicle*.

Home. Nine fathers reported having at least one conversation about GBV with their sons in their own home, including specific locations in their home that create accessibility for conversations such as the “man cave,” in private places like their son’s bedroom, or in areas of the home where frequently the family gathers and talks, like the dining table. Participant 6 stated, “In his bedroom. So, I went to his room. It was private. No one else was around, just me and him.” Similarly, Participant 8 stated, “And then just a lot of conversations in the house. Usually the kitchen is the main focal point where we're all together as a family.”

Vehicle. Five fathers reported having at least one conversation about GBV with their sons in the car. Most reported these conversations were productive because they were private, their sons could not avoid the conversation, and their sons seemed to feel more comfortable due to the orientation of the car. For example, Participant 2A stated,

Yeah, that's funny, yeah, generally the best place. Well, that wasn't the best, but generally the most commonplace, where we'll have conversations in the car. One cause I find he can't go anywhere, so... That's helpful and like we, you know, like generally, you know, I'm driving so like I'm not kind of like directly looking at him. So I think there's like a space for him to not feel so much pressure. And there's like, you know, other things for him to look at as well.

Excluding Mother from Conversation

This category was based on six fathers’ discussions of their choices to exclude their sons’ mother from conversations about GBV. Fathers sometimes listed several reasons for excluding their sons’ mothers from the conversation and therefore, may be represented in multiple subcategories. Subcategories in order from most to least frequent are 1) *Avoid Awkwardness*, and 2) *Father and Son Relate Better*.

Avoid Awkwardness. Seven fathers reported that they excluded their sons' mother to avoid discomfort or awkwardness either their own, their sons', or his mother's, while discussing GBV and often, at the same time, sexuality. To illustrate this subcategory, Participant 7 stated,

Just because a father to son that's dealing with sexual things. You know what I mean. Realm of that me and my mother, or him and his mother. I, you know, would have been, it would have been more awkward. I just felt like I was the person to talk with him about it. Now, if I was having a conversation with my daughter, I probably would. My wife would probably taken over that role. You know what I mean. So yeah, it was gender based is what I would say. I, I just felt just overall- Sorry to interrupt you. I just felt it was, it was less awkward for everybody. If the father to the son versus the mother to the daughter. You know what I mean?

Father and Son Relate Better. Two fathers reported that they excluded their sons' mothers because as fathers, they were better able to relate to their sons. This often focused on the shared gender experience between fathers and sons, but also sometimes included relating better over shared traits or activities. For example, Participant 3 stated,

So you, you know, now, having more of those conversations, there's a little bit more where, on top of like, for whatever value I have in relating better to him as a guy. You know, we also have, like, we have more common interests in terms of video games and TV. My wife is, you know, more opera and art museums. So I've been able to approach those, you know, bonding moments over shared activity.

Including Mother to Offer "Woman's Perspective"

Two fathers reported that they included their sons' mothers in GBV conversations with their sons in order for their mothers to offer their "woman's perspective" on the topic for their sons' benefit. Participant 3 stated,

But there have also been times when I've specifically wanted to bring my wife into it to first of all, make the point that this isn't just a dad and son issue, but also to get her to verify some of the things I'm saying. And then places where I know I can't give the authentic answer. And so I feel like it's important to have, for lack of a better term, a female viewpoint on the topic.

Goals/Motivation for GBV Conversation

This domain involved the fathers' reported goals, motivation or aims for the GBV conversations that they had with their sons. Categories in order from most to least frequency are 1) *Teach Son to Be a "Good" Person*, 2) *Help Son have Healthy, Meaningful Relationships*, 3) *Help Son Avoid Perpetrating GBV*, 4) *Provide Accurate Information Related to GBV*, and 5) *Help Son Avoid Being Falsely Accused of Sexual Assault*.

Teach Son to Be a "Good" Person

Five fathers reported that their goal for the GBV conversation(s) that they had with their son(s) was to teach them to be a "good person." Fathers defined this as being respectful towards others and their boundaries, as well as being able to be responsible and achieve goals as an adult. To illustrate this category, Participant 6 stated,

Pretty much, ultimately to learn to treat people with respect. Women with respect. It's not cool to make suggested sexual comments to them, to do anything to them that is not consensual. That's not, you know. To read the signs. He doesn't have to impress other classmates by being verbally harsh to, you know, a female classmate. You know what I

mean. You know how kids are. They can make comments sometimes. You know what I mean like. So I just wanted him to realize that respect is the ultimate thing.

Help Son have Healthy, Meaningful Relationships

The reported goal for the GBV conversations for the four fathers in this category was to help their son to have healthy, meaningful romantic relationships and teach them the knowledge needed for healthy relationships. Participant 8 stated that he aimed to teach his son to be,

Someone who, like, more long-term, can have a healthy, long-term romantic relationship with somebody. That he can be mature and not, like, only care about himself and what he wants and what he desires, but also be aware and open to the other person and what they want and desire. So, it's a lot of, like, trying to mold him into that.

Help Son Avoid Perpetrating GBV

Three fathers reported that their goal for the GBV conversations that they had with their sons was to help to prevent their sons from perpetrating GBV in the future, and avoid facing legal and social consequences. For example, Participant 9 stated, "I don't want anything to happen to him. You know you could get in trouble with the law. You could do something you regret, and you know I don't want him to have to go through that."

Provide Accurate Information Related to GBV

Three fathers reported that their goal for the GBV conversations that they had with their sons was to provide accurate information related to consent, sexuality, and GBV. Examples of conversation topics that fathers discussed being related to this goal are information about the process of getting sexual consent, information related to sexual health and pornography consumption, and information about different kinds of GBV and its impacts on partners. Fathers sometimes stated that they wanted to make sure their sons were receiving more accurate

information and to correct misinformation that their sons may be hearing from other sources, like their friends or the internet. Participant 1A stated,

And so that's what I've been trying to teach my son the last two years is as you enter this dating world. Dating violence takes lots of forms. It can be verbal, physical, mental, emotional. It's all of these things. And so, as he's gotten older I've explored more of the things that are not seen. Because it's easy to see, 'Oh, you have a bruise on you', 'Oh, you have a black eye', 'Oh, you have marks on your arm from where somebody grabbed you', like those, those are obvious. You can see those. But the mental abuse that people use and the emotional abuse that people use to manipulate people to get them to do what they want. I've talked, trying to work with him the last two years we've shown him. That's just as detrimental to your relationship and to your relationship with women, just as much as you grabbing her arm because you're mad and you're upset and you're angry. It's going to have the same mental and same impact.

Help Son Avoid Being Falsely Accused of Sexual Assault

Two fathers discussed that they wanted to make sure that they taught his son to avoid situations in which he may be falsely accused of sexual assault. Participant 3 stated,

We have a family, a very good family friend, whose son is in college and is having an issue with this. Now that I'll spare you the details, it sounds like it's a false accusation, but he put himself in a situation where he could be accused of something that's now getting him in a lot of trouble. It's making a lot of issues like, I want my son not to, to have enough information to not wind up in that situation.

Content of Conversation Related To GBV

This domain contains the actual content of the GBV conversations that participants described having with their sons. Categories from most to least frequent are 1) *Gupta's Continuum of GBV Intervention Programming Traits in Conversations*, 2) *Discussion of Consent*, 3) *Explicit Acknowledgement of Relationship Between GBV and Traditional Masculinity*, 4) *Conflict Resolution Skills*, and 5) *Discussing Pornography*.

Gupta's Continuum of Progress Traits in Conversations

This category came from discussion amongst the coding team about the main research questions and the gender transformative theoretical framework. As discussed earlier, the gender transformative framework is based on Gupta's (2000) lecture where she delineated a continuum of specific categories of approaches to the efforts to address gender, sexuality, and HIV prevention, a framework that has been adopted within GBV prevention programming internationally (Casey et al., 2018; Dworkin et al., 2013). Within this continuum, subcategories in this category reflect four of Gupta's five categories of interventions. In order on a continuum of 'progress,' Gupta outlined that programs that focus on gender inequality could be 1) reinforcing damaging gender and sexuality stereotypes, 2) gender neutral, 3) gender sensitive, and 4) gender transformative. There is a fifth category that is not included in these analyses, which Gupta calls gender empowering. Gupta (2000) describes gender empowering programming as seeking to empower women or free women and men from the impact of destructive gender and sexual norms. "These are programs that empower women by improving their access to information, skills, services, and technologies, but also go further to encourage participation in decision-making and create a group identity that becomes a source of power[...]" (p. 6). Casey and colleagues (2018) state that in comparison to gender transformative programming, gender-empowering programming is much rarer, which is supported by Gupta

(2000) as well. Casey et al., (2018) cites this as the reasoning that gender transformative programming has more attention, evaluations, and guidelines, and shares many traits with gender empowering programming. Additionally, gender empowering programming includes enacting systems-level change through legislation and policy that puts power in the hands of the historically powerless (e.g., women and gender minorities), which typically requires significant time and resources, and therefore, are less common, although critical. The current study suggests that GBV conversations between father-son dyads may be one setting for GBV prevention, and thus the proposed intervention takes place on an individual level, rather than on a societal or legislative level, as would be required for gender empowering prevention work. As such, the current study focused on the inclusion of gender transformative traits, rather than gender empowering traits.

As conversations between fathers and sons in this study were not purposefully developed by the fathers or led by prevention programming with this framework in mind, data about them are dependent on participant self-report and recall. Additionally, conversations between two people are not equivalent to fully developed and delivered, multi-step interventions, as most GBV prevention programming involves. Thus, gender sensitive or gender transformative traits that may apply to group-based gender transformative programming with a trained facilitator may not apply to father-son conversations. With this in mind, it was important for my coding team to be able to identify traits of these different levels of gender-equitable interventions that are particularly applicable to father-son GBV conversations. This would allow us to most effectively answer research questions and make conclusions about what gender transformative father-son GBV conversations look like. Therefore, to increase this likelihood, orientation to what ‘gender sensitive’ versus ‘gender transformative’ traits may look like was facilitated by readings

including Marcus et al., (n.d.), and Interagency Gender Working Group (2017). All fathers' responses were labeled within this category. Subcategories along the Gupta spectrum are presented here in the order of highest to lowest participant frequency in each category: 1) *Gender Neutral Traits*, 2) *Gender Sensitive Traits*, 3) *Gender Transformative Traits*, and 4) *Damaging Traits*.

Gender Neutral Traits. Eight fathers were assigned to this category, as they reported that the content of their GBV conversations with their sons were not related to gender or gendered dynamics at all. Gupta (2000) defines gender neutral interventions as “a step ahead on the continuum” beyond damaging and biased interventions that play on gender stereotypes, because such approaches “at least do no harm” but they “often are less than effective because they fail to respond to the gender-specific needs of individuals” (Gupta, 2000, p. 5). Examples of gender neutral messaging from participants would be not to have sex with anyone when they were intoxicated, to de-escalate and disengage from a conflict with anyone if tempers were getting heated, and to respect one's partners in general. Participant 7 stated, “Well, I really wasn't concerned, because I know him, and you know, but just, just for the conversation of it, I just probably said you shouldn't be rough or demanding, or anything like that towards his partners.”

Gender Sensitive Traits. Five fathers endorsed what Gupta (2000) would call ‘gender sensitive’ traits, in that they recognized the differential needs and constraints of individuals based on their gender and sexuality. Gupta (2000) further states that gender sensitive interventions are superior to gender neutral interventions, and are necessary for social change in gender-based issues, but are not sufficient to fundamentally alter the balance of power in gender relations. We conceptualized this category in the traits described by participants in this study as acknowledging gendered differences and perhaps even power dynamics when it comes to sexual or dating

violence, but not critically discussing these gendered dynamics or encouraging their sons to attempt to correct power imbalances inherent to GBV. Participant 3 stated that when discussing sexual consent with his son,

We approach a little bit more from the other side of helping him understand that, you know men are taught to seek this out, one way or another, and women may be taught that they're not allowed to say 'No'. He should be aware enough that he may need to say no to something for someone who doesn't...

Interviewer: Feel safe to do it?

P3: Yeah.

Gender Transformative Traits. The five fathers in this subcategory described traits in the content of their GBV conversations with their sons that most closely matched traits of gender transformative interventions according to Gupta (2000), Marcus et al., (n.d.), and the Interagency Gender Working Group (2017). Such traits include fostering critical examination of inequalities and gender roles, norms and dynamics and working to challenge the structural barriers that uphold gender inequality, including discriminatory norms, stereotypes and values. It also involves recognizing and strengthening norms that support equality, working with boys and men to embrace gender equality and exercise positive and diverse masculinities. Additionally, not just working with boys and men, but also working intersectionally, which involves taking into account other intersecting factors that may also increase gendered vulnerabilities, including those related to caste, class, religion, disability status, sexual orientation, refugee or migration status. Finally, having dialogue and communication between generations to address discriminatory practices/norms would be encouraged (Marcus et al., n.d.). Participant responses categorized within this subcategory included at least one of these traits.

Participant 1A stated,

But more about that as a man that you have to understand number one, you typically are bigger than in this case, my son, he does like females. So you're bigger than most girls that you would talk to. You're typically stronger than them. And with that comes a power. And that's what I tell them. You have power. Are you using that power for good or for bad, and understanding what that relationship is like? And then how do you use that power? And we talked. We've talked specifically about understanding that you are, strength is not just about muscles. Strength is having the strength to walk away. Having the strength to know when what you're doing is not right. And if you understand that dynamic that you'll be okay.

Damaging Traits. The four fathers in this subcategory described traits in the content of their GBV conversations with their sons that most closely match a *damaging* approach to discussing gender and gendered dynamics according to Gupta (2000). This is also known as “gender exploitative” in other representations of the continuum of progress, also called the gender integration continuum (Interagency Gender Working Group, 2017, p. 10). These traits can include talking points that intentionally or unintentionally reinforce or take advantage of gender inequalities and stereotypes. The Interagency Gender Working Group (2017) emphasizes that this approach is harmful and can undermine gender equity objectives in the long run. We conceptualized ‘damaging’ traits as inclusive of both hostile sexism, which involves overtly negative, competitive and dominating attitudes towards women (e.g., women are manipulators), and benevolent sexism, which involves viewing women as pure and moral, yet weak and passive, deserving men’s protection and admiration, as long as they conform to traditional gender roles (e.g., women are treasures who need to be protected; Glick & Fiske, 1997). We also included

participant responses that espoused rape myths, which are generally unfounded beliefs about sexual violence that serve to deny and justify it (e.g., women are lying about rape; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994) and beliefs that endorse general acceptance or utility of violence in boys and men. This is exemplified in Participant 4's statement, "Don't go in bathrooms or rooms with people that are of the opposite sex of you, that one, because, you know, they can say, Oh, we were in the bathroom together. What do you think happened? And then, yeah."

Discussion of Consent

This category contains participants who discussed sexual consent with their sons during GBV conversations. Subcategories included both 1) *Simple Understandings of Consent* and 2) *Complex Understandings of Consent*.

Simple Understanding of Consent. Six fathers discussed sharing simple or straightforward rules about sexual consent with their sons, such as "no means no" or "don't have sex with someone who is drunk." For example, Participant 5 stated,

You know, that was kind of as I'm looking back, what prompted, you know, was the fact that he didn't understand how that [spousal rape] can be a thing, you know, and that's when it was kind of, you know woman's body woman's choice. You have the right to, you know. It doesn't matter if you're married, if you know that whole, no means no type thing.

Complex Understanding of Consent. Four fathers discussed how they encouraged their sons to think about sexual consent in a more complex or dynamic fashion, including discussion of enthusiastic consent, or how to seek out sexual consent. To illustrate this subcategory, Participant 2A stated,

[...] those conversations generally initially, just kind of dealt around like even like kind of consent to be like, hey, you know, can I be your boyfriend or your girlfriend, or you

know those questions? And then you know the kind of major things of around sex or intimacy, or kissing, or just kind of you know, making sure, I think for me, it was just kind of making sure I hear from him like what he would do. So one of the strategies that I use with both my kids was kind of like doing like role play like, you know, pretend like you can, you know, I give them the choice. You can pretend you're the person, or you can pretend you're you, and I'll be the person and just, you know, share what you would want to say, you know, and, and so we do that. And that's that part is actually fun, like, it's really fun. And we laugh, and we have a good time.

Explicit Acknowledgement of Relationship Between GBV and Traditional Masculinity

This category reflects responses in which 10 fathers discussed whether they included any discussion of traditional masculinity when they discussed GBV with their sons in the past. The ten fathers in this category either stated that they had discussed traditional masculinity in previous GBV conversations (*Present in Conversation with Son*) or they did not discuss traditional masculinity in previous GBV conversations (*Absent in Conversation with Son*).

Present in Conversation with Son. Six fathers endorsed that they had previously discussed traditional masculinity or masculinity in general with their sons as part of previous GBV conversations. Sometimes this looked like Participant 6 explicitly telling his son, “being a man is not how is not treating a woman badly.” For other fathers, it looked like fathers discussing objectification of women and violence against women in music videos, and how this kind of masculine behavior is glamorized in the media. For some, it included discussing how traditional gender roles teach men to be sexually aggressive and women to be passive receivers of sexual aggression. Participant 10’s contribution to this category explicitly named how he

discussed with his children that traditional masculinity is associated with the abuse of power and exploitation of others:

Yeah, you know, we actually talk a lot about power and justice, because that's our world, right, where we live. And I want my kids to see and be able to see how power can corrupt you. And it feels like it's much more masculine-centered now with the examples that they have, and the danger that comes from... yeah, just being selfish and having little accountability. Taking advantage of people.

Absent in Conversation with Son. Four fathers stated that they had not previously discussed traditional masculinity with their sons as part of previous GBV conversations. For example, Participant 11 discussed how rather discussing masculinity, he discussed what he felt was right and wrong with his son in their father-son GBV conversation,

So, that's never really been a part of any conversation, nor do I see it ever being a part of the conversation, as far as masculinity goes. It's more just a conversation about what's right and wrong, what I believe to be right or wrong, which I think, or I feel like, is pretty consistent with society's view of right and wrong.

Conflict Resolution Skills

This category contains the responses of three fathers who described how they discussed conflict resolution skills, such as conflict de-escalation and emotion regulation in romantic relationships, in previous conversations with their sons about GBV. Fathers noted how they named to their son(s) that relationship conflict does not need to lead to violence. To illustrate this category, Participant 9 stated, "My main point was to keep any kind of aggression. So that's what I'm about. Controlling his anger, his temper. So that was the main focus."

Discussing Pornography

For two fathers, discussing pornography and their sons' potential interest in it was part of their father-son GBV conversations. Both conversations about pornography were prompted by the fathers finding out from monitoring their sons' internet searches that they were looking at sensual material online. For Participant 10, quoted below, his son had googled a scene with nudity from a film that his peers were discussing. The fathers in this category both discussed that online pornography sites could have violent or sexually aggressive material and that pornography should be consumed with caution.

Participant 10 stated,

I mean, I know with porn there's a lot of shame involved. So I tried to negate that by telling him he wasn't in trouble and that it was just something that, as a young man, he's gonna have to think through. He received it well; he's a great kid. I think he sat with it—it took him a little bit to process everything. He said he had heard friends at school talking about the scene, so he came home and Googled it.

Domain 6: Facilitators and Barriers to GBV Conversations

Fathers were prompted to reflect on what had made it easier or helped facilitate GBV conversations in the past, or what could help facilitate them in the future. They were also prompted to reflect on what may have made it harder or been a barrier to the GBV conversation in the past, or what could be a barrier in the future.

Facilitators of Conversations

This category contains what all 11 fathers described as facilitators of the GBV conversations they have had with their sons, as well as potential facilitators for future conversations they might have with their sons. Facilitator subcategories in order from most to least frequent are 1) *Close, Communicative Relationships within Family*, 2) *Son Receiving*

Comprehensive Sex Education Including GBV, 3) Resources/Opportunities for Conversation, 4) Fathers Modeling Healthy Relationship Skills, and 5) Previous Experience Discussing GBV.

Close, Communicative Relationships within Family. Nine fathers endorsed that the father-son GBV conversations were made easier by having close and open relationships within their family unit or directly between them and their sons. They often stated that having such open communication with their sons made the conversations natural and helped their sons take the conversations seriously.

For example, Participant 10 stated,

I would want to say that we have a really good relationship. Yeah, there's certain things that he feels more comfortable with me, and certain things that he feels more comfortable with my wife, which is fine, but with sexuality and the opposite sex, he seems more inclined to connect with me. And, you know, we've just always had that.

Son Receiving Comprehensive Sex Education Including GBV. Six fathers stated that their GBV conversations with their sons were or could be facilitated by in-school sexual education that included discussion of GBV. They emphasized that their sons already having learned about the topic in school helped establish a shared baseline understanding of GBV that they could build on in their discussions at home.

For example, Participant 11 stated,

But I think, you know, in general, we have special programs at our schools that the students have to actually take. It's an initiative in our district. The students, every year, have to go through these programs with different teachers. We're tasked with doing this in the school. Depending on the year, there's a different curriculum, but they cover dating

violence, they cover drugs, they cover abuse—all the aspects of things that might trouble adolescents, like suicide, drug use, alcohol use. He gets exposure that way.

Resources/Opportunities for Conversation. This category involved six fathers who discussed that having opportunities to discuss GBV with their sons (like when there were news stories about GBV) helped to facilitate the conversation. It also contains fathers who discussed the potential utility of new resources, like discussion guides, assignments for discussion from their sons' sexual education class, or YouTube video guides for the discussion, in making future GBV conversations easier. Participant 6 emphasized that he would like resources to engage his son more in the conversation to avoid it feeling like a lecture and increase the likelihood that his son reflects on his own understanding of the topics.

He stated,

Maybe a list of topics is a way to segue into it, maybe more of a general outline. Like a guide I could read, I'm sure I could maybe find that, but I never really looked for it. Just like a bunch of topics, and trying to think of how to do it in a natural way that doesn't make your child get on the defensive, or to reject or tune out what you're saying. Also, to engage your child more, so methods to get their opinions on it rather than me just lecturing, like I said. So, probably topic suggestions and strategies and that sort of thing.

Father Modeling Healthy Relationship Skills. Two fathers discussed how their own modeling of healthy relationships to their sons was a facilitator of their father-son GBV conversations. They articulated that “leading by example” led to more credibility when fathers were talking about how GBV is inappropriate. Participant 6 highlighted the discrepancy between his words and actions if he was not behaving consistent with the anti-violence messaging he is trying to give his son,

I'd say it starts with the foundation of you leading by example leading up to that conversation. If I was doing all the things that I now suddenly are telling him not to do it would be, you know, it'd be odd. But I'm saying, if I were someone who hit his wife or something in front of my son or in general, and then I told my son not to treat women that way, or I'm verbally abusive, but then I tell my son not to be verbally abusive[...]

Previous Experience Discussing GBV. The two fathers in this subcategory stated that they had previously led discussions about GBV with others, generally with young people and this eased their father-son conversations. Fathers in this category either were a classroom teacher, or had worked with a violence-prevention oriented youth organization, and had had multiple discussions with other young people in the past prior to talking to their own sons about GBV.

For example, Participant 1A stated,

[...] because I'm a middle school teacher. So I encounter these conversations on a regular basis. I am having multiple conversations with boys about keeping their hands to themselves and about being smart about the choices that they make and understanding, dating violence and their relationships[...] But because of that, when stuff happened in my middle school, I would talk to my son about it, because I had access to all these conversations, all these my 1st year teaching.

Barriers to Conversations

This category contains all 11 fathers' responses in which they discussed what may have made it harder or been a barrier to past GBV conversations with their sons, and what may be a future barrier to such conversations. Subcategories include, in order of most to least frequent, 1) *Father/Son's Discomfort*, 2) *Son's Traits or Identities*, 3) *Son's Perpetration of GBV* and 4) *No*

Barriers.

Father/Son's Discomfort. The six fathers in this subcategory named that their or their son's discomfort, embarrassment, or feelings of awkwardness were or could be barriers to GBV conversations. Sometimes discomfort was about how GBV can be adjacent to topics of sex, which they or their sons found uncomfortable to discuss.

For example, Participant 4 stated,

Getting ashamed, getting like you don't want to talk to your mom and dad about that's kind of about your sexual activity. Things like that, like kids get, as they naturally progress into maturity and getting into in their own secrets.

Sometimes participants' discomfort was about how in order to have the conversation with their sons, they had to acknowledge that their sons were growing up and may participate in sexual relationships or have interest in sex. For example, Participant 3 stated,

You know. It's just like, doing that work in my brain that okay, he's now not a child that I have to, you know, have the very clinical, simple terminology, sterilized conversations with. But now we need to actually talk about what is sex and what is fucking, and what is desire and what is rape and like. We have to talk about that thing. Which means that in, I need to, not to be melodramatic about it, I need to kill the child that exists within my head in order to do that, and I don't want to do that yet.

Son's Traits or Identities. Five fathers named traits of their sons, including their developmental stage or sexual identity (or potential sexual identity) as barriers to GBV conversations. Several fathers in this subcategory named that if they had known their son(s) were gay, or if they would come out as gay in the future, they may feel unprepared to have these conversations with them. They further articulated that they would not be able to relate to their

sons because the fathers themselves are heterosexual.

For example, Participant 6 stated,

If I found out one of my sons was into, you know, same sex, or whatever I'm not, gonna judge, but that would be a more challenging approach to me. And how do I deal with that? Because I can't necessarily relate you know what I mean. So that would be something. I that would change how I approached it, and would make it challenging, and perhaps even more awkward for me, just being honest.

Fathers also named their sons' developmental stage, especially in adolescence, as a barrier that may make their sons less receptive. Several dads in this category stated that when their sons become older adolescents, they may be less willing to engage in GBV conversations with their fathers. For example, Participant 4 stated,

Just like as you mature more, you know, you don't really want to have those conversations with your parents anymore. You're just like, 'Oh, Dad. Hush! I don't want to talk about this, not something I care about, or blah blah' [...] Things like that, like kids get, as they naturally progress into maturity and getting into in their own secrets.

Son's Perpetration of GBV. The three fathers in this subcategory identified that if their sons were ever to perpetrate GBV in their relationships, this may be a barrier to conversations. Reasons for this included that the father would not know how to discuss his son's perpetration, as this is inconsistent with how the fathers view their sons, or like Participant 1A, that their sons may not feel comfortable coming to his father to discuss his perpetration,

If anything, could make it harder, it would be him having his 1st argument or fight or disagreement conflict with his partner and him reacting in a way that he didn't think that he should react, and not knowing if he should talk to me about it, or if he should talk to

myself or his mom about it, or how he should go about it, because of how it makes you feel, because I know how it made me feel, so. I'm like, I think, that that would probably maybe.

No Barriers. Three fathers denied that there would be or had been anything to make the father-son GBV conversations more challenging or less likely to happen. An exchange with Participant 9 exemplifies this subcategory:

I9: What might get in the way of, or maybe, make it harder to talk about sexual or dating violence with your son in the future?

P9: nothing really.

I9: Nothing, would make it harder?

P9: No, I don't think so.

What Fathers Would Change About the Conversation

This domain contained information that participants shared about what they would change about the father-son GBV conversation(s) they had engaged in in the past or if they would change anything at all. Categories from most to least frequent are 1) *No Changes/Not Sure*, 2) *More Preparation*, 3) *Engage In More Personal Conversation*, and 4) *Provide More Specific Education*.

No Changes/Not Sure

Six fathers stated that if they could go back and change anything about the conversation, they probably would not change anything. They perceived that the conversation had gone well and they felt good about the results. Some fathers in this category also stated that they were not sure what they would change about the conversation if they could go back. To illustrate this category, when prompted about whether he would change anything about his father-son GBV

conversation, Participant 7 stated, “Oh, no, no, it turned out pretty good. We communicated pretty good together, and he understood it.”

More Preparation

Four fathers stated that if they could change anything about their father-son GBV conversations that they had with their sons in the past, they would have done more preparation prior to the conversation. This included emotional preparation such as coming to terms with and pushing through anxiety about awkwardness that may occur in the course of the conversation, or logistical preparation such as research into how to best engage in such conversations about GBV. Participant 3 was especially concerned about preparing a checklist to make sure that he has covered all the important topics in the discussion,

I think we probably need to start having them more intentionally. I feel like, because so many of them have kind of happened opportunistically. You know, I feel like almost I need to go back with the checklist, and be sure, do we cover this and this and this, but I'm also concerned with that, because and again, kind of drawing a lot of my own experience here.

Engage in More Personal Conversation

Two fathers discussed how they wish they had encouraged their sons to share their perspectives on the topic, or that they wished they had personalized the conversation to be more relevant to their sons' experience.

For example, Participant 6 stated,

Yeah, I kind of wish I mentally like, or even wrote out more of a way to introduce it and to engage it more into it. I felt like it was pretty much me doing most of the talking, and I probably if I could do it again, I probably would have asked him for more of his thoughts

on things. Because, you know, I'm the one that's just doing the talking, and he's given no indication of any problems at all. So I didn't have anything specific to ask him about or anything, because, like I said, it wasn't about him at all. I probably would have had more of, I would have engaged more, so he could actually express what he feels more about it.

As another example, Participant 5 discussed how he wished he had known more about language that might be helpful when talking to his son, who is gay, about sexuality and violence. He stated,

With the climate of things changing, I might have used different terminology at the time, because again, it's kind of like with the gay thing, you know, learning all the new words. And my son understands when I say this, it's not meant to be crude, but like there's so many different flavors of gay now... When I was a kid. Either you like dudes or you like girls. It was real simple, you know, and now you're you know, there's a bunch of different words. It's like I'm learning new vocabularies at 50. Yeah, but, I mean, I might have some of the specifics. I might have done differently.

Provide More Specific Education

Responses in this category involved two fathers naming that they wished they had provided more specific information or education to their sons during their father-son GBV conversations. For example, fathers stated that they wished they had provided more education on what different kinds of intimate partner violence (e.g., emotional, physical, sexual) were, or that they had provided more concrete skills they associated with healthy relationships (e.g., de-escalation of conflict, healthy communication skills), rather than just telling their sons not to use violence.

Participant 10 stated,

I mean, maybe. I mean, for the sake of this conversation, I could have done a better job of applying that to specific contexts that he'll face going forward, right? So, more than just like, "Don't do this, don't do this, don't do this," but more like, "Listen, there's gonna come a time where you're gonna have these relationships, and wanting the best for the other person comes into play in what you don't do as well as what you do." I probably could have been much more explicit with application.

Personal and Societal Expectations of Manhood

Fathers were asked to reflect on their perceptions of their own definition of what it “means to be a man.” They were also asked what they perceived broadly societies’ expectations were and what society may mean when one says, “be a man.” Categories from most to least frequent are 1) *Father’s Perceived Societal Expectations of Manhood*, 2) *Father’s Personal Expectations of Manhood*, and 3) *Conscious of Challenges of Societal Expectations of Manhood*.

Father's Perceived Societal Expectations of Manhood

This category contains 10 responses in which fathers discussed their perceptions of what society broadly believes it means to “be a man.” Responses were categorized into those that indicate that society still expects traditionally masculine standards for men, or that society may itself be moving beyond gendered expectations of behavior or gender-stereotypical traits (e.g., moving beyond the gender binary). Fathers also reported some uncertainty about societal expectations of manhood. Several fathers’ responses fell into multiple subcategories, as they may have said that they believe that society largely has traditionally masculine expectations of men, but that they also believe society’s standards are changing or have changed. Subcategories in order from most to least frequent are 1) *Traditionally Masculine*, 2) *Moving Beyond the Gender Binary* and 3) *Unsure*.

Traditionally Masculine. Ten father responses in this subcategory identified that in general, broader society holds traditionally masculine standards for men's behavior. This included standards of emotional stoicism, strength, being independent and in control, being a leader, and being socially and sexually dominant. Participant 6 also extends this definition of traditional masculinity into objectification and domination of women.

He stated:

Oh, well, you gotta be strong. You have to be in control. You have to always be the person that fixes things when they go wrong. I mean, you know, the 80's sitcom dad type thing, always be in control, never show emotion. And again, up here, you see a lot of guys, it goes into the relationship area. Women are property, shut up, do the dishes, have some babies type thing.

Moving Beyond the Gender Binary. The two father responses in this subcategory identified changes in societal standards for men in which traditional masculinity is not as relevant anymore. This also included perspectives that today, androgyny is more affirmed and considered 'positive' for men, and that men can take on traditionally feminine traits and it is considered positive. Or, another father in this category stated that traits that we associated with being a man are now branded as being "for everyone." For example, Participant 3 stated, "All the traditional signifiers of masculinity had been stripped away, and all those values that we had learned as traditional masculine values had become, you know we're now being broadcast as female values, or they're for everyone."

Unsure. The two fathers in this subcategory did not have a solid concept of what they believed societal standards broadly were for men's behavior or masculine presentation.

For example, Participant 10 discussed how achievements that generally affirmed one's manhood and status are no longer as achievable anymore, like buying a house:

I think it's so hard to define society's expectations of a man now. It feels like a moving finish line. When I was growing up, it was: you go to school, you get a job, you get married, you get your house. That was a man, right? It was very specific, like the boss of it. And it feels like that's been diluted, at least here in [city]. I mean, to get a house, you're in your thirties now, not right after college.

Father's Personal Expectations of Manhood

Fathers in this category were asked what they personally believed it meant to "be a man." All 11 fathers are contained in this category. Responses were categorized based on whether they matched traditional masculinity ideology, were a mix of traditional and 'new' masculine expectations, or whether they were moving beyond the binary concept of gender dynamics in general. Some fathers also expressed uncertainty of their personal understanding of manhood. Subcategories in order from most frequent to least frequent are 1) *New Masculinities*, 2) *Traditionally Masculine*, 3) *Unsure*, and 4) *Moving Beyond Gender Binary*.

New Masculinities. Nine fathers provided explanations of their personal understanding of their own masculinity that we labeled as new masculinities. *New masculinity* refers to a range of expressions of masculinity that challenge traditional norms. It refers to behaviors, attitudes, and practices that deviate from the traditional expectations of what it means to be a man (Connor et al., 2021; Elliott, 2016; Kaplan et al., 2017). New masculinity is viewed as an alternative but not a rejection of traditional masculinity, which integrates values such as authenticity, emotional expressivity, and holistic self-awareness (Kaplan et al., 2017). Others may conceptualize this modern integration of traditionally masculine traits with traditionally feminine or androgynous

traits as *positive masculinity*, which is thought to promote more inclusive, empathetic, caring, and egalitarian forms of manhood (Lomas, 2013). Participant 3 discussed how the men that he admires and wants to emulate are good teachers and nurturers, as he stated here,

But when I think about the men that I most want to be like the phrase that's resonated with me is compassionate competence. That it's the people who... it's kind of, you know, King Arthur's "might for right." But it's not about might. It's not about being strong. It's not about, you know, carrying a shield and swinging a sword, ironically, as I have both within reach. But that's not what makes me a man. It's about like, when I'm at fencing practice. I'm willing to stop and teach, and you know, not have to be the toughest, biggest, baddest whatever out there on the field. You know. It's that I'm going to go learn something new, and thank the people I'm learning from, and then turn around and teach for others. And when there's a problem, I'm going to be the one who stands strong and says, Okay, let's work now to solve this problem and use everything I have to get that solved, whether that's strength or cooking, or listening, or whatever.

Participant 8 also discussed how he feels that he fundamentally does not adhere to the concept that there is an "ideal" way to be a man that society,

I kinda don't agree with there being one way to be. There's no one way to do it. There's lots of ways to do it. It's kind of silly that we assume that there is one way to do it. Half the population in the U.S. are men. They're not all having the same personality and doing the same things. It's a silly concept—not to scold you for asking me the question. I'm scolding society for making that question make sense.

Traditionally Masculine. Eight fathers reflected that their own personal standards for masculinity have traits that align with traditional masculinity ideology, including emotional

stoicism, strength, being independent and in control, being a leader, and being socially and sexually dominant. Participant 4, for example, highlights being a protector and provider for one's family as a personal standard for manhood,

You don't take any shit from other people. I guess you could say you don't let people talk about your family as in your wife and your kids without, you know, saying something to them, trying to defend them, basically check them, I guess you'd say in modern day terms, And you get a job, or do the best you can to hustle and make the money that you can to pay your bills and support your family, and make sure they always have a roof over their head and food in their bellies, and you know, if it's warm or cold, whatever it needs to be, for whatever season it is.

Unsure. The three fathers in this subcategory were not uncertain about their personal expectations of masculinity, and were unable to reach any conclusions through further thought or questioning during the interview.

Participant 11 stated,

P11: Honestly, I really have no idea. I'll be—I'll be honest. What does it mean to be a man? I can't say that, you know, you're supposed to be the head of the household because it's a joint thing. I can't say that it's you have to be the strength or the breadwinner because that's also a joint thing. It wasn't in my household growing up, but that's the way I feel. I don't have a sense that it's my job to do this or my job to do that.

Interviewer: It's kind of a hard question.

P11: But I think a female can do everything as well as a male can do now. In my household? Do I do more of the grunt work, you know, taking care of things on the

physical things of the house—fixing this, building that? Yes, that's just the way it is. It wasn't like, "either that's what you're gonna do, and this is what I'm gonna do."

Interviewer: So it sounds like you're—I'm noticing you're kind of naming, like, it's not this traditional idea or it's not that traditional idea of what a man is. But it's hard to say what it means to actually be a man.

P11: Right, like I said, I really don't know.

Interviewer: And that's totally fine.

P11: If you're looking for, like, a "this is what a man is," I just don't—I don't have, like, what is an ideal man. I don't really have a sense of what is an ideal man.

Moving Beyond the Gender Binary. Two fathers identified that they had evolved to have a more gender neutral understanding of their experience and their sons' experience, or that manhood/masculinity was not a particularly salient or relevant identity to them. Fathers differentiate this from new masculinities (mentioned above) in that it is less about adopting traditionally feminine traits, like compassion, reframing them as now masculine, and including them amongst more preferable or beneficial traditionally masculine traits in one's masculinity. Moving beyond the binary for these fathers is more about how firmly defining and enacting manhood is less relevant to them and their families, and they may not even know how to define it at all. For example, Participant 5 discussed how he feels that he and other parents of his generation encouraged their children to express themselves freely, and as a result his sons have very different ways of enacting their genders. He seems to reflect that any particular valuing or socialization of one type of masculinity or another is not as relevant as his sons are just being themselves, as he stated here,

That's another one that's kind of evolved over time, you know. I mean, when I was a kid it was go to work. Be strong burp a lot, you know. Watch, football, drink beer, you know. It was very, my idea of being a man. But seeing as the world has changed, and most of that's because of our kids. You know, my generation spent the whole time in the eighties and nineties telling our kids, be whatever the hell you want. Well, they listened, you know, and now, unfortunately, half the country wants to hate him for doing that. But, you know, it's, I've kind of had to play it by ear with the kids. One, you know, the gay son like I said. He's frail and very effeminate. The other one burps a lot and watches football, and you know. So it's more. I don't really think, being a man, at least for me and my family, it's not even a really relevant term anymore.

Conscious of Challenges of Societal Expectations of Manhood

Eight fathers stated that they were aware of potential hardships that boys/men face when trying to meet societal expectations, and generally were able to name one or more examples. Participant responses generally indicated challenges related to standards of emotional stoicism, even in the face of physical or emotional pain, compulsory heterosexuality and eschewing of the feminine, social dominance and assertiveness, the pressures to be or of being the financial breadwinner and head of household, and the social policing and punishment that results from any violation of traditional masculine expectations. Participant 6 cites the difficulty of having to always be cautious about showing emotion freely or expressing vulnerability,

If you get too emotional, or you really let people know what's bothering you. Sometimes they feel, I think that you should just suck it up and deal with it and bottled up inside.

And you know, because that's what men do, you know what I mean? So yeah, I think that that's still an issue. It's getting a little bit better. But yeah, it's still an issue. You have to

read the audience to see if they're going to be receptive to you. How you behave, so to speak. And that sounds hard, too, it's like, kind of always trying to read how or whether people are gonna accept who you are really.

Influences on Developing Masculinity

Fathers were asked who or what informed their own understanding of manhood, including people in their lives and cultural influences. Fathers also discussed influences, in addition to themselves, that they perceived may be affecting their sons' masculine identity development. Categories within this domain in order from most to least frequent are 1) *Online/Media Influences*, 2) *Family Member Influences*, 3) *Peers/Community Influences*, and 4) *Cultural/Identity-Based Influences*.

Online/Media Influences

Ten fathers discussed the influences of social media, the news media, social movements (e.g., the Men's Rights Movement; LGBTQ+ Rights movements), and political events and high profile politicians, particularly (at the time, former) President Donald Trump. Discussions related to Donald Trump focused on his public statements related to being sexually aggressive towards women (e.g., the 2005 Access Hollywood recording of him discussing grabbing women's genitals; Lemire, 2016) and to his perpetration of sexual abuse (Neumeister et al., 2023) and his engagement in illegal hush money payouts to adult film actress Stormy Daniels during his first presidential campaign (Bubalo & King, 2024). When discussing the influence of politics, and discussing media controversies about Donald Trump, Participant 8 stated,

Because I don't know if you've heard of the President of the United States [Donald Trump] and some of the things he's quoted as saying, that is not been on my son's radar,

where we've had to kind of step in as parents, and I guess, help, interpret, and unpack and steer him in the right direction about how that's not appropriate.

Participant 6 seemed to allude to “trans stuff” on social media, likely reflecting the current media cycle and right-wing politicians’ targeting and fear mongering about transgender people in sports as well as gender-affirming care for transgender youth (Washington & Yilma, 2024). It is unclear how Participant 6 himself feels about this media influence on his sons’ understanding of gender as he stated,

So I think he's getting a lot of conflicting things, and that's my opinion. I haven't discussed that with him, but just based off the wide variety of stuff you see on social media. Everything's on there. So there's a lot of stuff going on right now. There's, I'm not having opinion an opinion on it. Just what's out there. There's a lot of trans stuff and things like that. So he's getting exposed, I'm sure, to a lot of different ideas of gender and all that. So yeah, I think as most kids are these days. So.

Family Member Influences

Eleven fathers discussed the way that their family members, including their fathers (sons’ grandfathers), other male role models in their families, and other family members impacted their personal understanding of masculinity, or their son’s perceptions of masculinity. Subcategories in order from most to least frequency are 1) *Participant's Father/Male Role Models In Family*, 2) *Other Family Members/Family Nonspecific*, and 3) *Participant's Children*.

Participant's Father/Male Role Models in Family. Responses in this category contained nine fathers’ reflections on the influence of men in their family, including their own fathers, on their masculinity development. It also contains responses about how male family role models in their sons’ lives may influence their sons’ masculinity development. Sometimes,

fathers discussed how their own fathers modeled how to work hard in their careers and take ownership and responsibility for their households financially. For example, Participant 9 stated, “My own father. You know, he just taught me to make sure you have your things in order as far as your job and your income and just being able to take on responsibilities.”

Other examples of what their fathers/male role models in their families modeled were skills, like fishing or car maintenance. They also discussed how their sons’ uncles and grandfathers may model different masculine expressions, especially different ways of expressing emotions and relating to others. For example, Participant 10 stated,

My father-in-law is just a big kid, and I think for guys who are serious like me and my son, you know, being able to find joy, like on a walk or just playing catch or just being goofy and silly, I think is an important part of growing up and just being alive, right?

Sometimes fathers discussed learning that they did not want to adopt certain aspects of their fathers’ masculine performance, especially when discussing their father’s behaviors in romantic relationships. Participant 11 stated,

I don’t want to sound harsh, but I didn’t want to be like my father[...] how he treated my mother, I wouldn’t want to be that way. He was never physically abusive, but he’d often put her down, especially over things like her level of education. There was a lot of yelling, and that’s not my way. I learned that if that’s being a man, it’s not what I want to be a part of my manhood.

Other Family Members/Family Nonspecific. Responses in this subcategory contained five fathers’ reflections on the influence of other family members, like their mothers, siblings, and cousins, on their or their sons’ masculine identity development. For several fathers in this category, another primary influence on their masculine identity development was their own

mothers. Participant 1A cited his mother as a positive influence on his understanding of the interaction between his racial and gender identities,

So I think that this is where my mom comes in. My mom is a highly educated, she was in the last school in [current state] that integrated in [town name], in [county name]. I think it is. That experience led her to becoming a Black panther, and she was the shaper of me, understanding my identity as a Black man, understanding the level of importance that it took in my life... and so, understanding who I was as an African American, was important for my mom for my mom to teach us. And my dad really let my mom take the lead.

In contrast, Participant 8 discussed an interaction early in his life with his mother, who, seemingly because of discomfort with what she perceived as her young son's feminine style of play, gave him messages about how it was inappropriate for him to play "like a girl,"

Mostly my parents and classmates, I would say. I always think back to when I was in kindergarten. I think it was kindergarten. I had a teddy bear, and I was playing with the teddy bear, and I noticed he had no clothes on, and I wanted to put clothes on him, and I asked my mom for some clothes for the teddy bear, and she gave me one of my baby shirts that fit on him. I played with him when I was okay, and I noticed after a while that he didn't have any pants on. I wanted to get some pants, and I asked my mom for some pants. She said, "No, stop! You're playing like a girl. Do something else." Squash it right there. So like learning appropriate ways to play and appropriate ways to play would be kind of my first memory of that of learning it.

Other fathers discussed how their partners/the mothers of their sons are influences on their own masculinity and their sons' masculinity as well. For example, Participant 10 stated, "I would

hope that it's more nuanced than... I feel like I've evolved from eighties football culture to now. My wife's been like an amazing help with that.”

Finally, some fathers discussed their family in general trying to influence their sons' understanding of masculinity, especially in contrast to messages they perceive as negative that he may be learning from society. Participant 8 stated, “I wish society was different. But it's not something I can change on my own. It's just something that we have to explain and counter in our household as best as we can.”

Participant's Children. Three fathers stated that their own children changed their understanding and expression of their masculinity. For example, Participant 5 named the influence of one of his sons being gay and how this made him adjust his own understanding of what manhood looked like. In another example, Participant 10 discussed how his daughters changed his relationship to expressing his emotions, “ I mean, my wife would say that having two daughters really softened me in terms of the emotional side that really only they can solicit. You know, that soft side.”

Peers/Community Influences

Nine fathers disclosed that their peers or community members, or their sons' peers or community members, influenced their or their son's masculine identity development. For example Participant 4 discussed how his peers changed his views of GBV through modeling a different kind of masculinity,

[...] when I was younger, like, maybe when I was like 17 or 18 I got into the whole controlling thing, but I never was really violent with it. But yeah, I tried to control my ex-girlfriend, things of that nature, but I've got out of that completely, to control people no more.

I4: What kind of got you out of that from that, as a young man?

P4: Just hanging out with other people and seeing that they weren't all controlling like that. And they didn't believe in beating on women. And you know things like that. Just being out with other guys.

Cultural/Identity-Based Influences

This category contained nine responses in which fathers discussed how their own personal identities/cultural experiences (e.g., race, religion) may impact their understanding of masculinity. Some participants were able to identify that their specific cultural identity may impact their understanding of masculinity, but were unable to name the explicit impact of those cultural identities on their understanding of masculinity. Other fathers named societal subcultures that do not reflect specific identity-based culture, like “football culture”, and sometimes fathers would reflect on how cultural movements may also be impacting their sons’ understanding of masculinity in this category. Other fathers were unable to think of how any cultural experiences or identities that they had would influence their understanding of masculinity. Several White participants in particular struggled to understand the question or think about the influence of White American culture on identity. Subcategories in order from most to least frequent are 1) *Names Cultural/identity-Based Influences* and 2) *Not Sure How Culture Impacts/See No Cultural Influences*.

Names Cultural/identity-Based Influences. The six fathers in this subcategory were able to name a cultural impact on their understanding of masculinity, whether it was from their own cultural background and experience informing their personal conceptualizations, or of broad cultural movements or influences, like “football culture,” for example. Fathers were included if they were actually able to expand on what influence they believe a particular identity or cultural

experience had on them or their sons' masculinity. In general, except for Participant 1A, cultural influences were discussed as having a neutral or negative impact on their understanding of masculinity. For example, Participant 10 stated,

Yeah, I'm a mixed baby. My biological dad is Caucasian, with all sorts of European background, and my biological mom is Chinese. Growing up, it was my mom who had the biggest influence on me, so her side of the family. Asian culture is very stoic—always in control of their emotions, even to their detriment, I think.

Similarly, Participant 3 reflected on the influence of midwestern White Masculinity as,

I really see midwestern White men as being stuck in a box. But unable to complain because we were the ones who built the box. And you know, when I was in college is when movies like American Beauty and Fight club were coming out, and American pie, which, you know, all kind of really get to in different ways that, like emptiness of you know. I mean Fight Club was a very important movie to me for a long time... because that was so much a movie about this contrast of "am I going to be the flashy man, or am I going to be the one who's connecting to others and building a community?" But it's at that heart of that is just that emptiness of, "We did all the things that they told us to be to be a man. And it's left us empty and trapped." But we can't like, I can't go off now and explore art because I have a mortgage and a family. I can't, you know, you know, go back and pursue my dreams, because I was told it was noble to put my dreams on hold, you know, and I think that's a lot of what it means to be a white man. And you know, middle American white man, and like that's you know, where the Andrew Tates, he's really my go-to example of negative. But you know where they get so much power from, because you know, you can drive your boxy car from your boxy house to the boxy office, you

know. Spend nine hours sitting at a desk twiddling thumbs for a paycheck, and then come home and do it all again tomorrow, or, you know[...]

Not Sure How Culture Impacts/See No Cultural Influences. The four fathers in this subcategory either were not sure how their cultural experiences or identities influenced their understanding of masculinity, or believed that culture has no influence on masculinity, including their own understanding of masculinity, or their son's, at all. Participant 9 stated,

Well for me, I don't think it plays a part. I think it – the way I see it is, goes the same, no matter where you come from. And I think that my perspective, everyone, no matter what your color is, if you're a man, then let's do. Let's just, they should go the same.

Active and Passive Masculinity Socialization

This domain contains responses in which participants discussed how they were, purposefully or incidentally, socializing their sons to understand masculinity. Fathers were asked if they had ever talked to their sons about masculinity, what it means to be a man, or the societal expectations that we have for men. Often fathers named that they had actively discussed challenging traditional societal expectations of masculinity or had set standards for their sons' masculine performance verbally. Fathers also discussed the more passive socialization that they gave their sons to masculinity based on the masculine performance that participants modeled to their sons, or based on the behavior or activities that they allowed their sons to engage in (e.g., dance classes or sports) or did not allow their sons to engage in (e.g., having a feminine-themed lunchbox). Finally, some fathers stated that they had never discussed masculinity or manhood at all with their sons. Categories in this domain in order from most to least frequent are 1) *Actively Discussing Expectations of Manhood*, 2) *Passively Modeling through Father's Behavior/What Father Allows Son to Do*, and 3) *Denies Critically Discussing Masculinity or Manhood with Son*.

Actively Discussing Expectations of Manhood

The nine responses in this category indicated that participants had outright had conversations with their sons about masculinity and manhood. This may have meant that participants told their sons, “being a man means _____” as a means to set standards of behavior, or they may have critically discussed some of the messages that their sons may be receiving about manhood and behavioral expectations for manhood from society broadly. Generally these direct conversations were labeled into either challenging aspects of traditional masculinity ideology, or affirming aspects of traditional masculinity ideology. Subdomains in order from most to least frequent are 1) *Challenging/Critically Discussing Traditional/Societal Expectations* and 2) *Endorsing Traditional/Societal Expectations of Manhood*.

Challenging/Critically Discussing Traditional/Societal Expectations. Seven fathers described critically discussing traditional ideas of masculinity that their sons may have brought up or enacted with their fathers. Fathers sometimes engaged in interactive conversations with their sons, in which they ask their sons questions about their opinions that they have about issues related to masculinity. They also discussed how masculinity can look many different ways (e.g., men can wear pink and paint their nails if they want to). For example, Participant 3 stated,

but then one day he came home, and he was like, No, I can't wear pink. That's too girly. I don't want the, you know, and like he was very. And we were like, where did this come from? So a lot of the conversation around that has really been more like not so much, here's how to be a man, but like no, men dance. Men wear pink, men wear dresses if they so choose. You know, paint their nails, make up, whatever.

On the other hand, some fathers engaged in critical messaging with the goal of being morally instructive in nature, such as Participant 5's response below.

Or another example, and one thing I was horrible at this and pardon, but when I was a kid we call each other "f**s" and "Homos", and it wasn't offensive. You know, but he [participant's son] was doing that. There was a stretch. He was about 15, you know, because it was before his brother came out. And you know I had to have the conversation with him then, too, because again, that's something that's perpetuated by masculinity is seeing homosexuality as an insult. Yeah, you know. And again, something I was super guilty of, too.

Endorsing Traditional/Societal Expectations of Manhood. Three responses in this subcategory included those that indicated that fathers were reinforcing traditional masculinity ideology in their messaging about manhood to their sons. Particularly, responses often focused on being a good worker and provider for your family, and protecting your family once you have them. Participant 4 went further and stated that he told his son that one is not a “complete” man until they have children and provide for them. He stated,

Yeah, yeah. And to make sure you're able to take care of your duties before you lay down and do stuff like trying to make kids or anything like that that requires you to really grow up and be a man, because, like you can grow up and be 21. If you don't have any children yet, you're still a man, yes, you're an adult, because you have to take care of your own bills and stuff, but you're not a complete man until you have a family[...]

Passively Modeling through Father's Behavior/What Father Allows Son to Do

This category contains eight responses in which fathers discuss the nonverbal messages that their sons have received from them about what being a man looks like or means. Fathers discussed modeling behavior outright, or about actions, activities or behaviors that they may have encouraged, discouraged, or passively allowed their sons to engage in related to masculine

performance. Notably, this category is not about outright messaging that participants gave verbally to their sons about what it ‘means’ to be a man. Participant 1A below discussed how choosing not to spank his son as discipline was purposeful, as he ties physical punishment to the normalization of violence in men and men’s use of violence to dominate others. He stated,

I'm a very strong proponent of not spanking children... because I think that it teaches this message that violence solves problems. And it's one of the reasons why I've never spanked my son because I believe, like I was spanked a lot, and because of it, it caused me to not want to spank my child, because I always was like, why do we teach men that the way to get people to do what you want is to harm them? Like, it's a very odd message, so I'm going to get you to respect me by hitting you. Very weird. It's similar to the concept of when you see these guys in bars and getting drunk and fighting. And you're like, what are y'all fighting about? I'm a man. You stepped on my shoe. You looked at me. You was looking at my girl all this crazy nonsense, and it's like. But why and to what end does that solve for you?

Participant 8, on the other hand, provides an example of a father selectively choosing what activities and behaviors that are not stereotypically masculine that he and his wife allow their son to engage in. While they allow him to engage in some activities or interests that may not be “manly,” they drew the line at having a Disney’s Frozen lunchbox with princess characters on it due to concerns that he would be mocked for it because of its femininity. He stated,

At the same time, though, I've never tried—well, most of the time, I've never tried to steer him away from certain interests or pursuits because I don't see it as manly. I try to let him follow what he's interested in, whatever that is. Most of the time, it's typically

activities that boys mostly like, but I've tried to not emphasize gender that much intentionally. My wife as well. There are exceptions. Which we justified in saying we're trying to protect him from being made fun of way young in preschool, like assigned to pick out a lunchbox. Which one do you want? He's like, I want the Frozen lunchbox with the Frozen Princess on it. It's like, are you sure you want that? Is that what boys are bringing to school? Just guiding him to avoid other problems.

Denies Critically Discussing Masculinity or Manhood with Son

Five fathers denied discussing masculinity, actively or passively, at all with their sons. Notably, fathers in this category generally stated that they did not think that discussing masculinity or manhood was relevant to their sons or their families. Other fathers in this category, like Participant 11 quoted below, stated that he did not have “deep conversations” with his son, apparently precluding the opportunity for discussing masculinity. He stated,

No, you're, I think you, I don't know you, maybe you're not assuming this, I guess, but maybe you're thinking that he and I have these deep conversations. Like I said, we are very like, ‘Hey, what's going on with sports? Hey, who's on your fantasy football team?’

Interviewer: Gotcha, yeah, these comfortable topics.

P11: ‘Wanna, let's work chemistry. Let's do some calculus,’ you know.

Interviewer: More constructive stuff, too. Yeah.

P11: So unfortunately, yeah, we don't really have those deep conversations.

Father’s Understanding of Relationship Between Traditional Masculinity and GBV

This domain contains categories in which fathers were prompted about whether they thought there was a relationship between traditional masculinity and GBV perpetration and if they did, what they thought that relationship was. Categories in order of most to least frequent in

this domain are 1) *Traditional Masculinity Leads to GBV* and 2) *Does Not Think there is a Relationship*.

Traditional Masculinity Leads to GBV

Eight fathers stated that they believed that there was a relationship between men's adherence to traditional masculinity ideology (the meaning of which had already been explored and discussed previously in the interview and is summarized above in the category and subcategories fathers' perceptions of societal expectations of manhood) and GBV perpetration. Subcategories below are mechanisms that participants listed as the way in which traditional masculinity ideology leads to GBV. Subcategories in order of most frequent to least frequent are 1) *Through Valuing Aggression, Dominance, and Entitlement* and 2) *Through Objectification/Devaluing of Women/Femininity*.

Through Valuing Aggression, Dominance, and Entitlement. The six fathers in this subcategory named that because men who endorse traditional masculinity ideology believe that they should be aggressive, dominant, or entitled to access to women's bodies, they feel that they should be able to use GBV to gain sexual access to sexual pleasure and affirm their dominant place in the gender hierarchy. Participant 8 also highlighted the idea of using violence as retribution for perceived disrespect as an aspect of this entitlement.

Participant 8 stated,

I mean, men are supposed to be aggressive and strong, and they're supposed to get what they want, not take no for an answer, and be dominant. All those things, you know, twisted a little bit could lead someone to be violent or to respond with violence, or to not take no for an answer. I think that's likely true. I think it's the cause of a lot of issues, like the whole idea of "I was disrespected, so I'm going to commit an act of violence,"

whether it's like a school shooting or something like that. The fact that someone's mind goes to this place—that violence is the answer. I think a lot of that is the toxic masculinity and ideas of toughness, saving face, and not being disrespected, or getting revenge for disrespect.

Through Objectification/Devaluing of Women/Femininity. Two fathers believed that traditional masculinity ideology leads to GBV in men because traditional masculinity ideology leads to men devaluing women and treating them like objects. Viewing women as less valuable than men and as objects, rather than full humans, means that violence against them can be seen as more acceptable or normal. Participant 2A highlighted the normalization of misogyny, objectification, and violence in sports and music and lyrics as an example of how traditional masculinity ideology can lead to the normalization of GBV.

Participant 2A stated,

I mean, yeah, I mean, definitely, I think so. I mean, I think a lot of the portrayal of like hyper masculine, hyper masculinity, you know, violence and sports, you know. UFC, for example, you know, misogyny and objectification and music and, you know, lyrics like, I think a lot of that plays into you know the idea that those behaviors are okay, or can even be welcome, you know, like, not welcome, but, like, you know, accepted...

Does Not Think There is a Relationship

Two fathers stated that they did not believe that there is a relationship between traditional masculinity ideology and GBV perpetration. They went on to state that they believed that men who perpetrate GBV do so because of individual differences (e.g., having grown up witnessing violence, or because they are mentally aberrant in some way). Participant 7 stated,

I don't think that's a part of manhood, if that's what I don't understand, or that you're

saying that the most traditional men bring as their expectation that that's what they should do...they're bringing up, I guess they were brought up that way, that's the only way I can look at it. They were brought up that way, and it stayed with them all their lives, and then seem like they have to be violent in their relationships. To keep up with their own background.

Fathers' Role in Preventing Son's Potential GBV

In this domain, fathers discussed what roles fathers in general should play with regard to preventing their sons from becoming GBV perpetrators. Fathers generally gave guidance and advice for other fathers. Categories in this domain from most to least frequent are 1) *Obligation to Influence their Sons' Development and Awareness of GBV, Even If Uncomfortable*, 2) *Model Healthy Relationships*, 3) *Discuss Relationship Between Traditional Masculinity and Violence*, 4) *Monitor and Be Present* and 5) *Reflect on Their Own Experiences*.

Obligation to Influence their Sons' Development and Awareness of GBV, Even If Uncomfortable

The 10 responses in this category involved fathers emphasizing that fathers have a particular duty to mold their children in a positive manner and to teach their sons to be aware of and avoid using GBV. Within this category, emphasis was also placed on the fact that fathers need to push through discomfort that they may associate with these conversations out of this duty to their children's wellbeing. Participant 5, when asked why he believes fathers should push through discomfort to socialize their sons against violence, stated,

Without buying into the whole male stereotype thing, I guess I mean it is still, as a father, it's your job to help mold who the kid's going to become at home. Whether it's male, female, gay, straight, it's still your job, and if that's the core value [non-violence]. Then

you're going to teach them that.

Model Healthy Relationships

10 fathers stated that to help prevent GBV perpetration in their sons, fathers should model healthy relationships within their own romantic partnerships. They believed that fathers should choose nonviolence in conflict with others, and should demonstrate bystander intervention when they see GBV, or generally any situation where people are being mistreated.

Participant 8 stated,

The very simple level would be as a model in a household. To model in ways that don't involve sexual or dating violence. You don't have to say anything to be an example. So there's definitely that. My wife and I very rarely fight at all. If anyone raises their voice, it would be my wife if she's annoyed at me because I say a lot of stupid things, as I demonstrated earlier. My kids' perception of fighting is so low. Stop yelling. It's not even close to yelling, right? We're discussing something and maybe it gets a little emotional, and my kids are like, stop doing that. What is this like? They're not used to it. We don't yell or fight or curse at one another and stuff like that. It's a very peaceful household, which is good[...] But that models what an appropriate relationship is. I mean, I don't know if in every circumstance it can be that way. But ideally, that would be the role of the father, to model the healthy type of behavior for the son in the realm of relationships, romantic relationships.

Discuss Relationship Between Traditional Masculinity and Violence

The 10 fathers in this category discussed that talking about the relationship between traditional masculinity ideology and GBV perpetration is important because it can help sons understand that adhering traditional masculinity ideology can have a negative impact on their

relationships, and lead them to act against their own wellbeing and their partner's wellbeing in attempts to affirm their masculinity. For example, Participant 1A reflected,

I do. And I think it's important, because it's important, just mainly because you have to understand that when you have these odd views or not odd, let me not say odd... But when you have mainstream views about masculinity. It has an impact on the way that you interact in relationships. Especially, for instance, I lose my job. I'm no longer the breadwinner for my family now. I'm mad because my wife is making more money than me. So I'm taking this anger about, oh, I can't provide. So I'm upset. And now I'm going to take this frustration out on this person that is my partner...

Monitor and Be Present

Five fathers discussed that fathers in general, in order to help prevent their sons from perpetrating GBV, should be aware of their sons' activities, know their friends, and be actively present in their sons' lives. They discussed that this allows fathers to see warning signs for risky behavior. Participant 9 emphasized,

[...]making sure they're a big part of their son's life, so that you know that everything's going on. That's the most important thing. That way, you can be there if you notice anything that you should address, make sure you steer him in the right direction.

I9: And what would that look like?

P9: Just asking him questions about his day about friends. Sometimes you get, it gets annoying. You can tell it, he feels like he's, you know, being bothered by questions. But it's something that's necessary.

Fathers also stated that being active and aware of what is going on in their sons' lives allows for more opportunities for conversations about GBV that are especially relevant to and

interactive for their sons. Participant 8, for example, believed that interactive conversations in which he will ask questions and express interest in his son's perspectives on the negative behaviors of others around him is important to helping his son recognize that GBV is wrong, and know how to act to intervene when he might see it. He stated,

Repeating being proactive and having conversations, asking questions, and being aware of what's going on with them. Asking those questions. That's one of the things I'd like to do. Not necessarily related directly to sexual violence, but I don't see why it couldn't. What other kids are doing, and when they get in trouble and they do bad things. I like to see how my son feels when he's witnessing that to get him to process it and understand that this behavior is wrong. How do I feel about it? Why is it wrong? What's the right thing to do in this situation? Hopefully, through doing that, he gets the tools to be able to recognize intervening. That's important. I mean, hopefully, through those tactics, it would come through. With modeling, with conversations, and with using real-life experiences as teaching moments.

Reflect on Their Own Experiences

Four fathers stated that part of fathers' role in preventing their sons' GBV perpetration should be the fathers themselves gain insight into their own thoughts on their identity as men, as well as in their interpersonal relationship experiences. Fathers stated that this reflection could happen in or outside of the context of psychotherapy, but that psychotherapy could be helpful in this process for fathers. Participant 10 stated that he felt particular pressure to reflect on his own "demons" when he had his son,

Like, guys need to do some work on their own, you know. I remember when my boy was born, like with the girls, I was thrilled. With the boy, I was a little more scared, right? I

know how easy it would be to really mess this kid up. There's just a whole different feeling, right? For dads to understand, though you've been given this amazing gift, and not to be scared of it, but it will require you to work out some of your own demons, right? Like failures don't necessarily negate our opportunity to speak into the life of our kid.

And Participant 1A stated that psychotherapy helped him learn more about himself, which allows him to share his wisdom with others, like his own son,

Along with that one is, educate yourself about your own stuff. Learn yourself, learn what's with you. So, along with resources and education. Go to therapy. Therapy changed my life like it changed my life, and I believe that every single man should go to therapy because there's parts of you that you don't really know, that through therapy you can learn more about yourself, and I know that that's 1 of those stigmas with men is they don't like to go to therapy like therapy's especially older men like. I don't need no therapy blah blah whatever, but I think that if you learn more about yourself you're then able to transport, pass down that wisdom to others[...]

Chapter V

Discussion

Findings

This project was an initial exploration of the phenomenon of father-son GBV conversations. It investigated these experiences with the hopes of informing future GBV prevention programming. Although fathers in this study had varying levels of critical consciousness, used various strategies on the Gupta (2000) continuum of “progress,” (p.5), and had varying intentions behind partaking in father-son GBV conversations, all fathers in this study demonstrated a purposeful effort to socialize their sons against GBV. They also showed insight into gender socialization processes and intervention avenues (e.g., modeling, monitoring alongside speaking to their sons) that have been shown to provide the reinforcement of anti-GBV socialization likely needed for young people to integrate these messages (DiClemente et al., 2001; Pollack, 1998; Pope & Englar-Carlson, 2001; Rogers, 1999; Rose et al., 2005; Wight et al., 2006).

In framing discussion of the current study’s results, I first outline characteristics of reported father-son GBV conversations. These conversation characteristics, or traits, are novel information about these intimate conversations and provide context for explication of the findings relevant to the research questions and future directions.

Conversation Traits

Conversation Timing and Multiple Conversations

Within this sample, the majority of first father-son conversations about GBV occurred when the boys were pre-adolescent (i.e., before the age of 12). Beginning to have conversations about GBV prior to adolescence is beneficial and leads to better GBV prevention pathways,

because although intimate partner violence is typically associated with older adolescent age (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2008), it often begins in early adolescence (i.e., ages 11–14 years; Goncy et al., 2018; Niolon et al., 2015; Simon et al., 2010). Although the current sample is not representative, this sample's early first age of conversation demonstrates a potential shift, as previous quantitative research found that parents of adolescent males were 1.7 times more likely to discuss domestic violence with 17–18-year-old sons compared with 12–13-year-old sons (Rothman et al., 2011). Potentially due to the young age of first conversations within the current sample, the majority of fathers reported that their sons were not dating or engaged in dating (to their knowledge) at the time of their first conversation about GBV. However, fathers frequently shared that their sons were expressing interest in dating or showing signs of interest in sexuality (e.g., googling movie scenes where nudity is shown) at the time of the first conversation. Having such conversations at this time is ideal, as research suggests that the optimal time to engage in prevention efforts with youth is before risky behaviors begin (Mueller et al., 2008; Ringwalt et al., 2010; Spoth et al., 2008) and that parents are not always aware when their children start dating (Picard, 2007). Parent-child sexual communication experts suggest talking with children about sexual topics (e.g., consent, safety, body parts, enforcing body boundaries) beginning in toddlerhood and preschool and building on this knowledge throughout childhood and adolescence (Jacobson, 2022; Planned Parenthood, 2022; Talk with Your Kids, 2021). Consistent with this recommendation, the majority of fathers stated that they had more than one conversation about GBV with their sons, and were open to having more conversations in the future.

Setting and Participants in Father-Son GBV Conversations

Consistently, fathers reported that their father-son GBV conversation(s) had occurred in

private settings, including at home or in the car. Participants stated that having conversations one on one in private settings were particularly helpful to facilitate the intimacy needed to have such serious conversations. Participants who had such conversations in the car, also cited the convenience of having their sons unable to “escape” the conversation by leaving the car, especially on long car trips. One father (Participant 2A) also cited that it was easier for his son to engage in conversation in the car with fewer distractions or activities to engage in, as well as having the body positioning to not have to look into each other’s faces as they discussed serious or discomforting topics. This may match previous research that finds that boys/men generally have more activity-oriented and side-by-side friendships (David-Barrett et al., 2015; Wright, 1982).

The majority of father-son GBV conversations reported were one-on-one, but some conversations involved other family members, generally the sons’ mothers, but sometimes other siblings as well. Conversations seemed more likely to have involved mothers or other siblings when GBV conversations were more spontaneous, prompted by the son, or prompted by events or news witnessed by the family collectively. Sometimes fathers discussed involving their sons’ mothers in GBV conversations purposefully, to offer their unique perspectives as women or to validate the messaging that fathers were sharing with their sons. Within the GBV prevention programming literature, there is debate about whether such programming with boys and men should be facilitated by men (Flood et al., 2009; Piccigallo et al., 2012). However, Flood (2015) argues that men and women working together in GBV prevention programming facilitation demonstrates men’s and women’s shared interest and investment in non-violence and gender justice, and give boys/men opportunities to hear of women’s experiences and concerns and to further mobilize their care for the women and girls in their own lives. Particularly considering

families in which sons have a mother and a father, these considerations likely apply, as well as thinking about transmitting non-violence and gender equity as a family value and having a united front as parents in messaging to their children.

When fathers purposefully had one-on-one conversations without their sons' mothers present, the most common reason for excluding mothers was for the comfort of the mothers, sons, or both when discussing GBV. Fathers discussed their wives being potentially uncomfortable talking about GBV, or their sons being potentially uncomfortable discussing sex-adjacent topics in the presence of their mothers. Fathers also excluded their sons' mothers from the conversation because they felt that their sons and them, as boys/men with shared experiences and sometimes shared interests, had more in common and could connect easier during a potentially challenging conversation.

Prompts for GBV Conversations

It is important to understand what may have prompted fathers to begin discussing GBV with their sons, as it can inform programming that helps other fathers recognize opportunities to discuss GBV with their own sons. The majority of fathers in this study engaged in father-son GBV conversations following their sons' demonstration of interest in sexuality or dating (e.g., pornography use or direct expression). Fathers also reported engaging in GBV conversations with their sons following witnessing or hearing about GBV events in the community or media. Notably, several fathers mentioned political events, specifically news related to President (at the time of interviews, former president) Donald Trump prompted conversations about GBV. Examples included his Access Hollywood comments prior to the 2016 presidential election in which Trump discussed grabbing women's genitals (BBC, 2016) and his legal battles related to sexual assault allegations being reported on the news (Robson, 2020). Fathers who cited Donald

Trump and his actions as a prompt to discuss GBV with their sons stated that they discussed the relationship between GBV and the abuse of power with their sons.

When asked what may prompt fathers to have future conversations about GBV with their sons, the only common prompt amongst fathers was if/when their son expresses an interest in dating. This is interesting as the same fathers usually had more organic and spontaneous prompts to their previously discussed and reported father-son GBV conversations. Several fathers reported that they felt that their sons were “good kids” who understood and took on the messages from the initial conversation(s) that they had and therefore, did not see the need for additional conversations. There will likely continue to be opportunities to discuss GBV in the media or in the dynamics that children observe in school or learn about in classes. As such, fathers ideally would continue to act on these prompts and reinforce anti-violence lessons and values that they want their children to learn, as repetition and reinforcement are thought to be important for learning and potential longer-term impact of GBV programming (Stewart et al., 2023).

Preparation for Father-Son GBV Conversations

Fathers participated in a variety of preparatory behavior for their father-son GBV conversations. Several fathers depended on their own personal experiences, including reflection on their previous engagement in problematic relationship behaviors, such as controlling behaviors with previous partners. Participants who discussed such behaviors denied ever using physical violence, and stated that they learned from and were influenced away from using coercive control by other men or by psychotherapeutic experiences. Participant 1A particularly reflected on how he wanted to help his son avoid making similar mistakes in his own relationships and used the insights that he gained from his self-reflection to help facilitate these conversations.

Several fathers also consumed media, not purposefully to prepare for the father-son GBV conversations, but that they felt had helped them facilitate these conversations. One of the only named media sources that a participant found helpful were articles and podcasts that discuss sexuality, like those produced by Dan Savage, an author and media personality who discusses sex and sexuality (Savage, n.d.), or Brené Brown, an academic, author and podcaster who researches and often discusses vulnerability, shame, and empathy (Brown, n.d.). Other fathers discussed general reading, and even a google search of the terms “first time dating” (Participant 7). An internet search of the terms *How to talk to kids about sexual violence* and *how to talk to kids about dating violence* reveal several resources from parenting and GBV prevention organizations produced to assist parents in facilitating these discussions, including educational information and statistics, talking points, questions, conversation starters, and safety resources (Central Coast Pediatrics, 2022 RAINN, n.d.; RESPOND Inc, 2019). Such resources, made easily accessible to parents, may be helpful facilitators of parent-child GBV conversations.

Several fathers also sought guidance from others, including their sons’ mothers and for one father (Participant 5), his religious leader, about how to conduct these conversations with their sons. Fathers stated that they found it helpful to discuss the potential challenges of the conversation, talk strategy, and receive emotional support from these trusted others. This strategy is encouraged by parenting and child health organizations and resources (Ruiz, 2023).

Several fathers also discussed emotionally preparing themselves or “psyching up” for what they expected would be an intimidating, awkward or difficult conversation with their sons. Participant 6 particularly discussed that he had to talk to himself about how the conversation had to be done, and that he wanted to “get it over with.” While emotional preparation for difficult

conversations with one's children is important, concerns related to rushing through conversation to complete the task may be a barrier to effective communication (Ruiz, 2023).

These father-son GBV conversation traits provide the foundation for new understanding of what this phenomenon looks like in situ. It also reflects how fathers are reporting that the timing, setting, prompts and preparation for these conversations share commonalities with other established research in parenting and parent-child conversation practices. With this knowledge in mind, the questions of the relevance and application of gender transformative tenets in these conversations can be discussed and expanded upon.

Research Question 1: What Do Fathers Who Talk to Their Sons About GBV Think About the Utility of a Gender Transformative Lens?

To reiterate, the goals of gender transformative programs are to foster gender-equitable attitudes, behaviors, and community structures that support both men and women in full community participation and (in the case of gender empowering strategies), “to free women and men from the impact of destructive gender and sexual norms” (Gupta, 2000, p. 11). Preventing GBV perpetration and victimization is one part of moving towards such freedom.

Prior to answering my initial research question, it is helpful to establish whether a gender transformative lens had been used by fathers in this study.

Did Conversations that Occurred Use Gender Transformative Tenets?

In general, the majority of interviewed fathers stated that they had included a discussion of traditional masculinity, a tenet of gender transformative programming, when talking about GBV with their sons. However, a review of the reported content of the actual GBV conversations using Gupta's (2000) continuum of progress (for a review of these categories on the Gupta continuum of progress, please refer to the results section) demonstrated that within the current

study the most commonly utilized category was Gender-Neutral Traits, which involve messaging about sexual or dating violence that has no specific gendered message. A generally anti-violence message towards one's children is not to be discouraged. However, neglecting a discussion of how sexual or dating violence, especially societally and structurally, can have a gendered component is ignoring the context in which cisgender boys and men are the vast majority of perpetrators of GBV (Black et al., 2011; Jewkes et al., 2015). It also disregards the normalization of violence that young boys and men in our society will likely be hearing from many other socializing forces.

Further, most fathers endorsed messaging that fit within three out of the four Gupta (2000) continuum of progress categories, with no commonality in the overlap (e.g., some had gender neutral, sensitive, and damaging traits, some had neutral, transformative, and damaging, etc). Unfortunately, three out of the five fathers whose conversation had gender transformative traits also had damaging traits (e.g., warning sons to avoid being falsely accused of rape, reinforcing gender stereotypes about men or women, benevolent sexism, general support of violence, and gender essentialism). This lack of consistent messaging likely reflects what Connell (2012) calls an "incoherence in gender relations" (p. 4) or a tension between a 'modern' masculinity characterized by egalitarian beliefs and practices and a 'traditional' masculinity, characterized by more patriarchal beliefs (2012).

While several fathers disclosed having conversations that had damaging traits, most notably telling their sons to be careful of false rape accusations, this is not unexpected. Unfortunately, a widespread assumption still persists that many individuals who report sexual assault to law enforcement are lying in order to harm alleged perpetrators or gain notoriety or some other personal gain (Jordan 2004; Venema, 2014). For example, in a survey of service

members at a large U.S. military base, nearly half (49%) of respondents believed that women lie about rape to get back at men (Berry-Caban et al., 2020). Additionally, police officers stated that they believed that on average 53% of the previous year's reported sexual assaults were false accusations (McMillan, 2016). In reality, The Uniform Crime Report of the Federal Bureau of Investigations conducted an analysis of around 85,000 reported incidents of rape between 2006 and 2010 and concluded that only approximately 5% were identified as false or baseless reports (DeZutter et al., 2018). Fathers may be particularly concerned about the rape myth related to concerns of high rates of false accusations of sexual assault as people may find it difficult to imagine that people they care about and believe to be 'good people,' like their sons, are capable of sexual assault (Orchowski et al., 2020). Fathers who fear and warn about false sexual assault accusations must be careful not to create a hostile narrative about survivors of sexual assault in their sons' minds.

In reality, sexual assault is unfortunately common and underreported. According to data from the CDC's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS), approximately 20% of American women and 8% of American men experience sexual violence at some point in their adult lives (Leemis et al., 2022). Further, results from the 2022 National Crime Victimization Survey indicate that only 21.4% of sexual assaults were reported to the police, representing the lowest reporting rate of all crimes measured by the survey (Thompson & Tapp, 2023). Srinivasan (2021) argues, "the anxiety about false rape accusations is purportedly about injustice (innocent people being harmed), but actually it is about gender, about innocent men being harmed by malignant women" (p. 5).

Future directions in gender transformative programming for fathers should include education on the negative impact of commonly believed rape myths and gender stereotypes,

along with education regarding real statistics about sexual assault and how to avoid utilizing these beliefs in attempts to prevent GBV perpetration in their sons. Their sons are likely hearing similar messaging from their peers, the media, and society at large, and fathers can help to provide correction of these myths and stereotypes in father-son conversations.

Bystander Intervention as a Gender Transformative Mechanism

When asked about how fathers can help their sons intervene when their sons see GBV or gender inequitable treatment in their own lives, the majority of fathers interpreted this question as to how their sons should intervene if they witnessed the physical assault of a woman by a man in public. Several fathers stated that they would not want their sons to physically intervene, because of the risk of physical harm that could come to their sons. This demonstrates a potential point of education for fathers, in that they only see GBV intervention opportunities at the point of physical violence, and not at any other level of discrimination (e.g., publicly disagreeing with rape jokes, distracting peers who may be trying to isolate intoxicated people at parties, advocating for equitable treatment of all genders). Boys/men often struggle to see that they could or should play a role in preventing GBV if they view themselves as non-aggressors. Rich and colleagues (2010) found that over half of their sample of early-adult U.S. men would not support or attend a voluntary sexual assault prevention program because they felt that as they were not sexually violent, it was not applicable to them. Additionally, even men who do not personally endorse traditional ideas about masculinity are impeded by such ideas from taking anti-violence actions. Men have reported fears of being viewed as weak by male peers as a barrier to intervening in another man's open disrespect or abuse of a woman, even if they themselves did not ascribe to traditional masculinity (McMahon & Dick, 2011). Gender transformative interventions must aim to reframe GBV from an issue of other, or *bad men*, to an issue for all

men, highlighting that failing to challenge GBV-supportive ideas and behaviors in other men is embracing the benefits and prestige that comes with the subjugation of women (Messner et al., 2015). As gender transformative interventions also aim to promote behavior in men that will disrupt GBV-supportive social norms and systems and prevent GBV in future (Gupta, 2000; IGWG 2017), helping sons to understand their role and opportunities to disrupt rape culture and other GBV-supportive norms with other men is vital. Future directions in gender transformative GBV prevention programming for fathers and sons could help fathers understand the multifaceted approaches to GBV bystander intervention that they could be helping to model and teach to their sons. Such a framework for fathers may feel especially empowering for both fathers and sons, as they can see how they themselves can interrupt and fight against patriarchal oppression in interactions with their peers every day.

By no means are fathers expected to ‘always get it right’ when it comes to having conversations with their sons about GBV, and the inclusion of gender-neutral (e.g., violence is never appropriate) and gender sensitive (e.g., acknowledging the unique safety needs of women) traits are not inherently problematic and could be necessary introductory material to establish shared understandings of GBV. However, to be the most effective at preventing GBV perpetration in their sons, fathers should further reflect on whether they are, even unintentionally transmitting benevolently sexist, patronizing, or stereotypical messaging about gender, sexuality, and GBV to their sons. The inclusion of such messages will likely dull the effectiveness of attempts towards gender transformative prevention.

What did Fathers Identify as the Goal of these Conversations, and How is it Related to Gender Transformative Work?

When discussing the goals of GBV conversations with their sons, fathers reported that they wanted to teach their sons to be ‘good’ people, closely followed by helping their sons to have healthy romantic relationships. These two primary goals are not conceptually the same as other goals discussed, such as helping their sons avoid perpetrating GBV, and helping sons avoid being falsely accused of GBV. The absence of sexual or dating violence in boys/men’s relationships does not specifically indicate that these relationships are healthy, for example. The goals of gender transformative interventions have also come to be similarly questioned. Critics of some gender transformative programming have stated that boy/men participants may unhelpfully separate themselves as “men of conscience” (Flood, 2015; p. S166) versus “other men” who use violence. This dichotomy could encourage a limited focus on obvious physical and sexual forms of violence and not also on other forms of coercion, violence-supportive attitudes, and gender inequitable systems (Flood, 2015; Messner, 2016; Pease, 2019; Seymour, 2018a, 2018b). McCook (2022) goes further, arguing that gender transformative programming may be held back by the emphasis on building ‘healthy’ masculinities that continue to allow for the privileging of masculinity and men over femininity and women, rather than moving beyond the binary and promoting becoming “good human being[s]” (p. 48). I would argue that fathers’ goal of raising their sons to be “good people” and helping them to have healthy romantic relationships are not incompatible with goals of gender transformative programming, especially if that programming’s underpinnings are not just anti-GBV, but provides reflection and relationship skill building that helps boys/men enjoy equitable and emotionally satisfying relationships with their partners. Additionally, if raising “good people” means not prizing specific standards of traditional masculine performance over others, and instead allowing children to express their gender in ways that feel genuine to them, this is a gender transformative practice. However, if raising

“good people” is allowed to mean not acknowledging the patriarchy and hegemony, it will likely be problematic and ineffective. Ignoring the presence of the real and relevant gender dynamics in our society, as well as the patriarchal and misogynistic beliefs that boys/men have likely already internalized, may more closely align with highly criticized colorblind approaches to racial socialization of White children and efforts towards racial equity (Hagerman, 2014; Perry et al., 2019). Colorblind racial ideology has been associated with the devastating consequences of racial inequity in education, the workplace, and health care, because it ignores the existence of racial inequality in these systems and thus implies that there is no need to advocate for equity (Neville et al., 2016). In contrast, color conscious racial socialization methods, which include a baseline acknowledgement of racial inequity in our society, are predictive of reduced racial bias in White people (Hughes et al., 2007; Katz, 2003; Vittrup & Holden, 2011). Willingness to acknowledge personal and system bias is one of the strongest predictors of increased empathy and reduced prejudice for those who are different from ourselves (Monteith & Mark, 2009; Monteith et al., 2010; Ozier et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2013). It seems that people with dominant identities can empathize with marginalized people best, and change their own biased behavior towards them, when they are able to acknowledge that some people are marginalized at all, and that they themselves may have biases towards them. In the same way, fathers of boys, especially boys need to first help their sons understand that patriarchy, sexism and misogyny have a long history and current societal implications. Future gender-transformative intervention programming should likely include a discussion that fathers may feel the desire to move beyond gender in raising their children, and move towards raising “good people,” but that part of raising good people will be acknowledging that different genders have different experiences.

Research Question 2: Do Fathers Believe that Discussing Masculinity When Talking About GBV Could be Useful/Helpful?

The majority of fathers in the current study reported believing that there is a relationship between adherence to traditional masculinity and GBV perpetration. Fathers who believed that there was a relationship identified several pathways for this relationship that are supported by the literature (Abrams et al., 2003; Bevens & Loughnan, 2019; Chung et al., 2008; Lisco et al., 2012; Reidy et al., 2022; Straus, 2008). That fathers identified evidence-based relationships between traditional masculinity ideology and GBV perpetration demonstrates that at least within this sample, fathers have a baseline understanding of this relationship, which may be able to be built upon through consciousness raising efforts. This is vital, as gender transformative interventions depend on intervention facilitators having a foundation of critical consciousness and awareness of gendered dynamics and gendered power, and its relationship to GBV (Keddie & Bartel, 2021; Stewart et al., 2023).

In addition to naming the relationship between GBV and traditional masculine ideology, ten out of eleven fathers stated that they believed discussing this relationship might be important in future conversations about GBV. This is an encouraging result as this discussion is a foundational trait of gender transformative GBV prevention programming. Future research would benefit from inquiry into *how* to move Fathers from agreeing that this might be a useful conversation, to actually *engaging* in this conversation from a critical lens.

Where does Fathers' Discussion of Sexual Consent Fit in Gender Transformative Programming?

Another topic of father-son GBV conversations in this sample was sexual consent. Over half of fathers stated that they had discussed consent with their sons during their father-son GBV

conversations. These discussions were separated by the level of complexity of the fathers' conceptualizations and teachings about consent into *simple* and *complex*.

Simple understandings of consent were defined as a classic 'no means no' or 'do not have sex with someone who is drunk.' This understanding of consent works from the understanding that a sexual partner must voice a verbal no/yes to signal declining or consenting to a sexual encounter, or defines consent by a simple ability or inability to give consent (e.g., in a situation where a partner is intoxicated). This conceptualization of consent does not incorporate more nuanced ideas of enthusiastic, affirmative consent, paying attention to body language during sexual encounters, understanding power dynamics in sexual relationships, or the issue of pressuring someone to have sex until they give a verbal yes, which are in line with a more complex understanding of consent (Jeffrey, 2024).

Although consent education has been shown to improve knowledge and attitudes about consent (Bedera, 2021; Borges et al., 2008; Hovick & Silver, 2019), there is little evidence that it actually reduces sexual violence perpetration (Jeffrey, 2024). Underlying the focus on consent as GBV prevention are several faulty assumptions including that consensual sex is necessarily wanted by potential perpetrators, free from coercion, and that teaching people about it will help them actually give and provide consent (Beres, 2010, 2014, 2018; Fischel, 2019). Jeffrey (2024) also identifies that normative heterosexual consent, which shares features with the current study's definition of 'simple consent', lies on a foundation of hegemonic heterosexual stereotypes such as: men are always seeking and initiating sex and women are the gatekeepers of sexual intercourse and responsible for controlling men's sex drives (Frith and Kitzinger 1997; Gavey 1992, 2005; Gavey et al., 2001; Waldby et al., 1993). Jeffrey (2024) outlines many consequences of emphasizing simple or normative heterosexual consent, including that it allows

for coercion and pressuring as a tool to ‘attain’ consent; men report trying to persuade their partners to have sex following more ambiguous refusals (e.g., “not now” or “later”; Jeffrey & Barata, 2018; Jozkowski et al., 2017). These findings suggest that men who adopt a ‘no means no’ and ‘yes means yes’ idea of consent may find it acceptable to continue trying to engage in sex if they do not receive a clear verbal ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ or ignore softened or nonverbal refusals or signs of discomfort (Jeffrey, 2024). This obviously leaves much to be desired when it comes to decreasing GBV perpetration.

Jeffrey (2024) argues that consent education in this context will always have a limited effect on sexual violence, and instead of focusing *only* on consent education, sexual violence prevention programming should focus on *ethical sex*, which would focus on care, empathy, co-determination, and ongoing communication.

Fathers who demonstrated a complex understanding of consent in their father-son GBV conversation seemed to align more with the ethical sex conceptualization of consent. They asked their sons to reflect on seeking out sexual pleasure for both themselves and their sexual partners, rather than just a ‘yes’, including how they might be able to tell whether their partners are enjoying themselves, and the subtle body language that may indicate that people are interested or not interested in what is happening sexually. They also discussed strategies for actively seeking out consent as an ongoing process during a sexual encounter, and how power differentials can be abused to coerce a dubious ‘consent’ (e.g., women may not feel able to tell their bosses ‘no’ during sexual harassment or assault). These conceptualizations of consent provide a more nuanced foundation for ethical sexual practices. Jeffrey (2024) argues that beyond consent, ethical sex must include meaningful empathy for and consideration of our own and partners’ desires and wellbeing, and how our own desires and actions impact our partners (Carmody,

2005, 2015). Jeffrey (2024) also argues that ethical sex involves meaningful co-determination of the conditions and quality of sexual interactions (Cahill, 2014; Fischel, 2019); and continual communication and negotiation of those interactions (Beres, 2007; Pineau, 1989). This foundational need for sexual partners to share equal power in sexual decision making, and view each other as agentic and equally human is also foundational to the ideals of gender transformative programming. Future directions in gender transformative GBV prevention programming for fathers should help fathers move from a ‘simple consent’ modality to a more ‘ethical consent’ modality, as proposed by Jeffrey (2021).

In summary, most fathers in the current study stated that they believed there was some utility in using a gender transformative lens while discussing GBV with their sons. Some fathers were also able to describe what they believed the relationship may be between adherence to traditional masculinity ideology and GBV perpetration, demonstrating a baseline intuitive understanding of what the literature has established. Several fathers, in description of the father-son GBV conversations that they engaged in, described traits that align with gender transformative programming. Encouragingly, fathers stated that they may find gender transformative tenets useful, and several had used them. Limitations to the utility of gender transformative traits in this reported conversation may exist in fathers’ simultaneous use of damaging traits, which may dull the power of gender transformative intervention in these contexts. Future directions in gender transformative father-son GBV prevention-oriented conversations may include more formal psychoeducation on the negative impact of these damaging messages, as well as ways to conceptualize and most effectively teach the topics that fathers feel are important (e.g., sexual consent).

Research Question 2: What do Fathers Identify as Facilitators and Barriers to Having Gender Transformative Discussions about GBV with Their Sons?

My second research question was about what fathers may find makes it easier or harder to engage in gender transformative GBV conversations with their sons. Considering that in the answer to Research Question 1 above, fathers stated they would find gender transformative conversations helpful or useful, the logical next steps would be to better understand how we can help fathers feel most capable of engaging in these conversations. Reported facilitators and barriers, and their implications, are explored below.

Facilitators

Fathers discussed how the father-son GBV conversations that they had were made easier by how close and communicative their relationships with their sons were, and how generally communicative and close the family unit was. Not only is a close, communicative relationship important for facilitating GBV conversations, but one study found that perceived parent caring was one of the most important protective factors against physical and sexual dating violence among adolescents highlighting the importance of parent communication and parent caring as buffers against dating violence (Kast et al., 2016). Close, communicative relationships likely set the stage for sons respecting and listening to their fathers' messages and internalizing family values related to non-violence and gender-equity. Future directions for helping fathers who do not already have close, communicative relationships with their adolescent sons have gender transformative conversations face an additional hurdle. High quality and close parent-child relationships are most likely to develop when fathers have effective interpersonal and parenting skills from their children's infancy (Brown et al., 2007). However, this does not mean that parents are unable to increase the closeness of their relationships with adolescent children

through learning effective parenting strategies and communication skills (Reigstad et al., 2022). Interventions to teach fathers to facilitate gender transformative father-son conversations should likely assess father-son relationship quality before the intervention begins. If needed, interventions should also encourage the positive parenting skills to help fathers increase parent-child relationship closeness. These skills could help fathers build the close, communicative relationship that they will need to effectively facilitate gender transformative conversations with their sons.

On top of a generally supportive parent-child relationship, fathers also discussed how they felt that their sons could take on anti-GBV attitudes better because fathers modeled healthy relationship dynamics and conflict resolution skills with their relationship partners (often, the son's mother). Fathers stated that if they behaved violently or disrespectfully in their relationship with their sons' mother, their anti-violence messaging would seem hypocritical and would likely not be internalized. Fathers stated that modeling these healthy relationships made it easier for them to talk about GBV or the importance of healthy relationships dynamics because their sons saw them enacting these communicated values themselves. This is consistent with research suggesting that fathers must take on this modeling duty to be most effective in preventing their sons' violence (Pope & Englar-Carlson, 2001). It also makes sense that fathers who want to transmit anti-GBV messaging to their sons would 1. Be more likely to have non-violent relationships patterns and 2. Would want to provide consistent reinforcement of those messages through modeling. However, non-violence is a minimum standard for modeling healthy romantic relationships, especially if the goal is to model respect and gender-equitable beliefs. Fathers who believe they are fulfilling modeling standards because they are not violent or verbally abusive to their partners are missing out on an opportunity to model gender-equitable relationship behaviors

through other aspects of the relationship. For example, modeling an equitable distribution of household labor and childrearing would also model their respect for and understanding of their partner's equal worth and humanity. While the gender gap in housework has decreased over the last several decades, the unequal division of household labor still persists in Western cultures, with women still doing a higher proportion of unpaid household labor (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016). Women's disproportionate contribution to housework is conceptualized as a result of persisting gender inequitable ideologies that assign household labor as a feminine duty, despite women now working commonly outside of the home as well (Carlson & Lynch, 2013). This is just one example of how fathers can even more effectively model gender-equitable relationships, above and beyond simply modeling non-violence with their partners. Indeed, teaching boys and men to take on more household labor and child rearing responsibilities is already reflected in international gender transformative intervention programming that targets GBV perpetration and other health outcomes (e.g., Omaida & De Frías, 2002; van den Berg et al., 2013). Future directions in gender transformative interventions for father-son GBV prevention could help fathers reflect on how not just non-violence, but also positive gender equitable behavior in their relationships and in their homes, can help their sons learn to enact similarly gender equitable relationships.

Some fathers discussed how comprehensive sexual education (CSE) in school had been or could be a facilitator of father-son GBV conversations, which is echoed by Wilson and colleagues' (2010) similar research about parent-child conversations about sex. CSE is sexual education that teaches knowledge, skills, and values that empower learners to develop healthy sexuality, relationships, and respect for their own and others' sexual rights (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2018). CSE has already been

associated with decreases in GBV perpetration (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021; UNESCO, 2018). CSE can have a positive impact on attitudes and values around gender norms and promote messages of gender equality (Rollston et al., 2020).

CSE that includes discussion of GBV and critical discussion of gender stereotypes and inequality would likely have a positive effect on boys, and as one father reflected, provide a prompt and opportunity for sons and fathers to connect while discussing material that the son learned in courses. As other fathers suggested, it may be an asset to CSE programming to provide resources for parents as well, not only so that parents are armed with accurate and appropriate information about GBV, but also that they could participate actively in their sons' GBV socialization.

Fathers also stated that for future conversations about GBV, they believed that resources, like YouTube videos, guides for conversations, or information sent home from school could be helpful for parents to make sure that they are providing high quality information and hitting the important points of GBV education. Research about parent-child discussions about sexuality found that strategies parents use to overcome barriers include reading to enhance their own knowledge of the topic, and using events from real life and TV shows as conversation starters (Eastman et al., 2005; Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2006; Rosenthal et al., 1998) which are both prompts and facilitators echoed in this study. Unfortunately, fathers rarely expressed that they sought out the resources that they later said they could benefit from, even though, as previously stated, such resources from reputable organizations are publicly available upon a cursory internet search. Therefore, future research may benefit from identifying *how* fathers *would* access this information. One such avenue that may reduce barriers for fathers, highlighted in the current study, is distribution of resources through schools. A future direction in investigating how fathers

may best utilize resources could include providing evidence-based resources, and investigating fathers' perceptions of the utility of such resources.

Generally, these facilitators can be organized into two areas of GBV prevention promotion: family dynamics, and resource related support. Family dynamics, like warm, emotionally close, and open communication, as well as respectful and egalitarian parent romantic relationship modeling to children, have many benefits to the family unit and individual functioning within it on top of the potential for better GBV prevention (Cowan & Cowan, 2014; Doss et al., 2020; Hawkins et al., 2022; Hosokawa & Katsura, 2019; Kershaw et al., 2014). These family relational skills could be encouraged by parenting and relationship skill-based education that builds upon fathers' desires to have healthy, happy romantic relationships and to have happy, healthy parent-child relationships. Prevention programming could encourage these skills alongside providing educational material and conversation guides that help fathers frame these conversations effectively. And finally, external scaffolding, like CSE that also discusses ethical sex and GBV, can provide further reinforcement for fathers who are already discussing these issues, or set the stage for fathers to continue reinforcing CSE messaging.

Barriers

The most common barrier identified by fathers was father/son discomfort. Discomfort is a common barrier to parent-child conversations across research (e.g., Livingston et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2010). Parents in Livingston and colleagues' study (2020) reported a barrier to talking about sexual abuse with their children was their own discomfort with discussing the topic, one source of discomfort being the desire to protect their children's innocence. This echoes a challenge to discussing GBV that Participant 3 reported in this study, the concern about having to "kill the child that exists within my head in order to do that, and I don't want to do that yet."

All of the fathers in this sample, by recruitment criteria, had been able to push through their own discomfort talking about GBV, and often about sexuality as an adjacent and relevant subject. However, the fact that the majority of these fathers highlighted discomfort as a barrier may indicate that fathers in the general population may find this a prohibitive barrier to GBV conversations and therefore, an important focus for future research and programming.

Associated with concerns about discomfort, a little less than half of fathers identified traits or potential traits in their sons that may serve as barriers to GBV conversations. Several fathers discussed that if they had known their sons were gay at the time of the GBV conversation(s) they had, or if their sons came out as gay in the future, their son's sexual identity may be a barrier to GBV conversations. Such fathers highlighted barriers related to not being familiar with issues of GBV and sexual relationships within the LGBTQ+ community, and not feeling uncomfortable talking about sexuality or dating within the same gender because they would not have this identity or experience in common with their sons. This discomfort is likely a product of heterosexism and cissexism. This is particularly concerning given that previous research has found that adolescents within the LGBTQ+ community face particular challenges when it comes to feeling prepared to navigate sex, relationships, and potential sexual or dating violence, due at least in part to heterosexism and cissexism. Previous research found that gay, bisexual, or queer-identified adolescent boys felt unprepared to negotiate sexual agency, particularly during their first sexual encounter (Pingel et al., 2013). For sexual minority and gender expansive adolescents, heterosexism and cissexism appear to increase the risks of experiencing dating violence (Stephenson et al., 2022) and sexual assault (Marx et al., 2021; Murchison et al., 2019) Among U.S. high school students, sexual minority and gender expansive adolescents experience significantly more dating violence than cisgender and heterosexual peers.

For instance, sexual minority boys experience higher prevalence of physical dating violence victimization in a 12-month period (12.2% vs. 5.5%; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021) Research on parent-child conversations with LGBTQ+ adolescents about sexuality indicates that among parents who are open to such conversations with their children, the majority recognize that they had little understanding of sexuality topics especially relevant to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning (LGBTQ+) community, and they are uncomfortable when speaking with their children about such topics because they cannot relate to these topics and concerns (Bond et al., 2023). It would make sense that parents discussing sexual violence, which many fathers in this study equated with discussing sexual consent practices, may shy away similarly. gender transformative GBV prevention efforts with fathers, taking an intersectional lens, should include a frank discussion of these issues and encourage critical reflection on where heterosexism and cissexism may be a barrier for fathers trying to help their sexual minority and gender expansive children avoid becoming either victims or perpetrators of GBV. Additionally, queer and gender nonconforming parents, or transgender fathers, may have unique experiences and insights to share about how to conduct these conversations in future research.

Several fathers discussed potential barriers emerging from their son(s) growing older into adolescence and no longer wanting to communicate openly with their parents. Children's communication with parents declines during adolescence as they are normatively seeking autonomy and differentiating from their parents (Keijsers & Poulin, 2013). However, some research suggests that adolescents still value the opinions of and seek guidance from their parents including surrounding sexuality and GBV (Black & Weisz, 2003; Ikramullah et al., 2009). As the majority of fathers in the current study spoke at first about GBV with their sons before the age of

12, before such adolescent differentiation tends to begin, guidance for continuing conversations into later adolescence may be particularly helpful to overcome this barrier.

Another potential barrier for fathers in this study was if their sons were to perpetrate GBV themselves, and how that would change the nature of the conversation. Fathers in this study were very likely to state that although they discussed GBV with their sons, they were confident that their sons would never perpetrate GBV, viewing their sons as “good kids.” This barrier has been identified in previous literature as well: two international qualitative studies found that parents did not engage their adolescent sons in conversations about pornography or sexual abuse perpetration with the explanations that their children would not engage in such behaviors (Davis et al., 2021; Simone, 2021). This feeling of confidence that one’s son would never become a perpetrator seems to be related to the rape myth that rapists are only deviants (e.g., strangers, criminals), and likely to the similar belief that false rape accusations are common and that women often lie about rape (Payne et al., 1999) which have already been discussed and were part of several fathers’ motivations for talking to their sons about GBV. Unfortunately, some parents who have such confidence in their sons are likely to find that confidence unfounded when their sons perpetrate GBV. Though fathers in this study stated it would be a potential barrier to discussing GBV, such conversations after their sons perpetrate, along with continued support in rehabilitation to avoid recidivism, are vital for adolescent perpetrators. Literature suggests that parental involvement in the treatment of adolescents who have committed sexual offenses is an essential component in interventions designed to reduce modifiable risk factors for future perpetration, to enhance treatment outcomes, and to provide long-term monitoring (see Zankman & Bonomo, 2004, for a review). Parents of adolescent sexual offenders may experience social stigma that increases feelings of isolation, anger,

frustration, confusion, personal guilt, shame, and helplessness that may be an impediment to successful treatment and support of adolescent sexual offenders (Worley et al., 2011). Father-son GBV prevention conversations after the son perpetrates GBV may be a particularly difficult task, and may require particular preparation and intervention for such fathers. Future intervention programming should focus on helping fathers in this situation cope with their own discomfort, find social support, and approach their children's rehabilitation most effectively.

Implications

Integrating the current study results with proposed guidelines for gender transformative intervention facilitators (Stewart et al., 2023), recommendations for what fathers need to be good facilitators of gender transformative conversations are outlined below. For a brief summary of key takeaways, see Table 3.

Fathers Need To Develop Critical Consciousness

Supported by Stewart et al. (2023), fathers in the current study reflected on the desire to have adequate preparation and resources for father-son GBV conversations. This also included, for several fathers, grappling with and desiring a workable definition and understanding of masculinity separate from traditional masculinity ideology. Whether this means that fathers learn to adapt their own understanding of masculinity to be more flexible, or that they move beyond a binary understanding or importance of masculinity as a concept in their lives, critical consciousness of the impacts, pressures and limitations of traditional masculinity ideology is vital to gender transformative work.

Gender transformative interventions are difficult endeavors that aim to engage the dominant social group in challenging and transforming the basis of their collective power (Burrell, 2018; McCook, 2022). People with intersecting dominant identities, like cisgender,

heterosexual White men, may struggle to perceive how their identities afford them privilege in our hegemonic power structures. High-status group identities, like Whiteness and Manhood, are treated as normative in our societal structures and institutions, which allows them to ‘disappear’ into the background (Acker, 1990; hooks, 1984; Ray, 2019; Ward, 2008). This is evidenced within this study by the majority of White participants struggling to identify the influence of their Whiteness and White American culture on their understanding of masculinity, while the single Black and single biracial (Asian/White) fathers were easily able to articulate the impact of culture on their masculine identity, and particularly for Participant 1A, the influence of racism on his and his sons’ Black masculine experience. Having truly gender transformative conversations about GBV between White fathers and White sons would likely require such fathers to develop White racial identities that move past what Helms (2020) calls phase one of racial identity development, or the use of strategies, perspectives, and behaviors that accommodate to norms of racial inequity, and its associated schemas. Only Participant 3 named an explicit influence of Whiteness, but his conceptualization of the impact of Whiteness was about how White masculinity is about doing “all the things that they told us to be to be a man. And it’s left us empty and trapped” which he later connects to White men identifying with far-right manosphere/Red Pill leaders like Andrew Tate, who promise financial success and sexual domination of women. Participant 3 also identified Youtube’s algorithm as a negative influence on his son’s behavior towards women in his life. He reflected on how Andrew Tate, and other Manosphere/Men’s Rights/Red Pill community-adjacent reactionary antifeminist influences cast boys/men, especially White boys/men, as the victims of the current societal focus on gender justice, which is radicalizing young White men to misogyny and White Supremacy (Bates, 2020; Ferber, 2000; Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Dignam & Rohlinger, 2019). Considering how

such radicalization can have lasting political ramifications (Dignam & Rohlinger, 2019) and can push radicalized boys/men to violence and harassment (Jaki et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2020; Kalish & Kimmel, 2010; Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.), White fathers may have a particularly important role in helping their sons develop a critical understanding of their intersecting power and privileges. Fathers' difficulty in this study reflecting on how Whiteness has influenced their masculinity is suggested to be echoed by the absence of interrogation of Whiteness in the field of the psychology of men and masculinities (Liu & Liu, 2024).

Similarly, as discussed above, father-son GBV conversations contained traits along the Gupta Continuum of Progress, including overlap between both problematic damaging traits and transformative traits. While the Gupta Continuum of Progress is a helpful framework for categorizing traits and helping to identify the already existing features of father-son GBV conversations, the fact that conversations do not naturally fall into one side of the continuum or the other brings into question the relevance of the continuum framework to this phenomenon. The Gupta Continuum of Progress, or gender transformative framework, may be helpful in building an educational intervention for fathers of adolescent boys in conjunction with the knowledge accrued within this study. Ultimately, human behavior and relationships are messier than a framework and guidelines may hope they will be.

The Gupta Continuum of Progress may benefit from integrating existent models that account for the complexity of human behavior, such as the transtheoretical model of change (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997) and White racial identity development (Helms, 2020). The transtheoretical model of change highlights the importance of utilizing different tools based on the individual's readiness for change, including consciousness raising, as well as the need to actively maintain behavior change, and the likelihood of returning to previous levels of readiness

(Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Considering this model, for fathers to engage fully in gender transformative conversations, or programs that want to teach fathers to do so, they need to first build consciousness of problematic damaging traits, such as of rape myths, and why they are problematic. Additionally, as evident in the current study, fathers may simultaneously hold gender transformative *and* problematic damaging traits, especially given their existence in a culture that reinforces problematic narratives and therefore, highlights the need to continually raise consciousness even among allied fathers.

Helms' (2020) theory of White racial identity development may be particularly helpful to supplement the Gupta Continuum of Progress for fathers' engaging in gender transformative GBV conversations with their adolescent sons given its emphasis on critical consciousness for individuals with privileged identities. Within this theory, White people start from a privileged identity that shelters them from the realities of inequality. Helms' (2020) theorizes that critical consciousness development in White people does not necessarily move smoothly stage by stage from uncritical to critical. Instead, White people can move from more advanced or conscious statuses to other less conscious statuses or vice versa, depending on the social situation they are encountering, or even never progress to White racial identity awareness and antiracist action (Helms, 2020). Fathers may similarly need to grow beyond their immediate experience of gender privilege to develop critical consciousness and learn, for example, that sexual assault is an act of dominance, power, and control that is both reinforced by and supportive of patriarchy. However, the same fathers may still fall back on rape myths that cast women as adversaries who are out to frame innocent men for sexual assault and ruin their reputations. This is just one example of how fathers may go through a similar anti-GBV identity development process. Therefore future prevention programming should explicitly integrate consciousness raising efforts that focus on

helping participants, especially those with highly privileged identities like White, cisgender heterosexual men, understand intersections of power and privilege and its impact on social hierarchies and their own lives.

Fathers Need to Provide Factual Information about GBV

A major challenge with parent-child education on any issue could be that parents do not know what they do not know. Participants in this study identified a need for resources that can help facilitate conversations, including educational YouTube videos or conversation guides, to facilitate GBV conversations. However, no fathers specifically sought out such resources prior to their conversations. This can leave fathers vulnerable to relying on faulty or biased notions of GBV that they learned from living in a society that is rife with patriarchal norms and rape myths. For example, Participant 10, upon finding out that his son was viewing online pornography, told his son that the majority of women appearing in porn are being trafficked. Meanwhile, there is little to no evidence connecting commercial pornography production to sex trafficking (Cawston, 2019). Well-meaning fathers like this participant may want to provide helpful information and context about issues of GBV to their sons, and to transmit ethics and values central to their family unit through such discussions. However, inaccurate and black-and-white understandings of such issues are not preparing children for how complex and nuanced such topics are in the real world. They are also not preparing them for how the choices and interventions to prevent GBV and create a more gender-equitable world are not always as straightforward as warnings not to watch pornography. Fathers would benefit from GBV prevention programming that involves providing an evidence-based education on what GBV is, its prevalence and impacts, and its relationship with hegemonic patriarchy and rape culture. This would best allow them to facilitate nuanced and evidence-based conversations about these topics with their sons.

Fathers need to Foster a Safe Environment for Conversation and Growth

Several fathers in the current study cited that one of the traits that they would change about their father-son GBV conversations would be involving their son more in the conversation and personalizing the conversation more to their sons, including their sons' needs and developmental levels. Such fathers stated that they regretted that the discussion was more like a lecture than one that sought out the sons' perspective on GBV subjects, and ended more in a "I know, dad" response from their sons. This aligns with Stewart and colleagues (2023)'s conceptualization of meeting boys/men "where they are at" (p. 53). Stewart and colleagues (2023) found that facilitators improve the chances of boys/men fully engaging in transformative content by first gauging the level of understanding and acceptance of topics being explored, and the group norms of the boys/men in the group. In doing so, facilitators can adjust their approach to best capture the group's attention and make the discussion most relevant to them.

Fathers in the current study also emphasized that fathers who want to prevent their sons from engaging in GBV need to have an awareness of the activities of their sons, which align with having an understanding of their sons' experiences and lives to better inform GBV conversations. Parental monitoring of children's activities and involvement in their lives is also supported by other risk-reduction research and guidance (DiClemente et al., 2001; Pollack, 1998; Rogers, 1999; Rose et al., 2005; Wight et al., 2006). Parental monitoring, conducted in a positive and supportive manner (e.g., behavioral control, including limit-setting, monitoring and providing structure without inducing guilt, public shaming, or conditional love; Bacikova-Sleskova et al., 2024) can also help parent-child relationships grow close, and increase feelings of emotional safety. The amount of discretionary time that parents spend with their adolescent children is indeed associated with how important adolescents feel they are to their parents

(Stevenson et al., 2014). Behavioral control and monitoring are often interpreted as a sign of parental interest by their early adolescent children (Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Pomerantz & Eaton, 2000). Combining quality time, age-appropriate parental monitoring, and warmth seems to set the stage for better child outcomes and better parent-child relationship quality (Bacikova-Sleskova et al., 2021; Milevsky et al., 2007).

Fathers Need Willingness To Repeatedly Engage and Tolerate Discomfort

Fathers in this study emphasized that fathers need to engage in conversations about GBV with their sons, even if it is uncomfortable. Similar to parent discomfort around the topic of sex, parents may struggle to discuss GBV with their child due to limited self-efficacy or a lack of knowledge or appropriate times to discuss GBV (Ballard & Gross, 2009; Holman & Koenig Kellas, 2018; Jerman & Constantine, 2010; Malacane & Beckmeyer, 2016). Gender transformative intervention participants, and sons in father-son GBV conversations, may also experience discomfort during these discussions, which may serve as a barrier to critical and meaningful dialogue. Stewart and colleagues' (2023) discussed the need to strike a balance between discussing the negative impact of rigid masculine stereotypes and norms, and avoiding preaching, lecturing, or using phrases like 'toxic masculinity', which were seen as barriers to authentic conversation and potentially prompting backlash based on the discomfort they cause. Facilitators, in this case fathers, may as a result try to avoid causing discomfort, fearing that it will push boys away from the emotional accessibility required to take on a new perspective of patriarchy and their complicity (Keddie, 2021). However, Keddie (2022) highlights the importance of *pedagogic discomfort* as central to gender transformative work when having men and boys consider their entitlement and participation in patriarchy and the subjugation of women. Pedagogic discomfort (Zembylas, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015) is the idea that facilitating awareness

that increases discomfort and carefully assisting fathers, and their sons, to move and learn through this discomfort can eventually strengthen understanding and activation towards social justice.

Keddie (2022) highlights the pedagogical principle of *mutual vulnerability*, that all learners and facilitators involved acknowledge their own fragility, emotions, and ability to err, and thus open themselves up to empathy for others' pain and suffering (Pease, 2020). Pease (2020) emphasizes the importance of cultivating vulnerability in the effort to open up boys and men to their privileged position, as it involves challenging deeply ingrained habits of invulnerability (which he defines as individualism, self-control and self-containment that align with hegemonic and traditional masculinities). Pease (2020) argues that becoming vulnerable for boys in their engagement with these pedagogies may be supported by drawing attention to the shared vulnerabilities of masculine experience, as discomfort can be shared and supported in this way. Building off this idea, shared vulnerability between fathers and sons could be fertile ground for navigating such emotional intensity identified in this study and facilitating growth together towards empowered action against gender inequity.

Fathers Need to Set Boundaries Around Appropriateness of Behavior

As important as emotional support and vulnerability will be with navigating pedagogic discomfort, concerns around the potential for gender-based power and privilege imbalances to be overlooked in this process, and the position of disadvantage co-opted by boys and men who are experiencing intense negative emotion are important to address (Keddie, 2021a). Stewart and colleagues (2023) thus suggest that facilitators must set boundaries for appropriate behavior in gender-expansive prevention programming. Setting boundaries includes the importance of calling out poor behavior and attitudes in a way that focuses on self-reflection as opposed to

shaming or embarrassing boys/men who are demonstrating such behavior. Appropriate boundary setting can include kindly correcting concerning behavior, and modeling appropriate advocacy against gender inequitable speech and action that sons will see in their own lives. These ideas about boundary setting around appropriate behavior and house rules are also encouraged in guidelines aimed at parents attempting to prevent GBV in their children (Respond Inc, 2019). Rather than shaming or punishing sons for having patriarchal beliefs or behaviors at home, or letting opportunities for correction pass by, fathers can firmly hold boundaries and emphasize that they expect respectful, gender-equitable behavior from their sons.

Fathers Need to Model and Surround Their Sons With Models of Flexible and Expansive Manhood

Fathers in the current study similarly identified the need for fathers to model healthy relationships in their identified roles. They also discussed how their own fathers and father figures model diverse masculinities and how they decided what masculine traits and ideals they themselves wanted to adopt as they developed their own masculine identities. When it came to how they themselves modeled expansive masculinities, the majority of insight was on how they modeled household duties that differ from traditional heterosexual nuclear family roles (e.g., doing dishes and cleaning). Less insights were offered on how fathers modelled emotional expression and vulnerability rather than strength and stoicism, which could also provide important modeling for emotional expression and regulation for sons. However, fathers also highlighted that they appreciated that their sons saw many different expansive expressions of masculinity in their families and communities (e.g., compassionate, caring, encouraging, respectful, loyal, silly, and humble ways of enacting manhood). Supporting the idea that sons need diverse representation of masculinities, Stewart et al.'s (2023) interviewees reflected that

facilitators of their prevention programming demonstrated diverse masculine performances regarding “their backgrounds, life stories, sexual preferences, religions, ethnicities, the whole spectrum” (p.58). Fathers themselves can work on challenging how they may enact traditional masculinity ideology in their interpersonal behavior and emotional expression, and they can also surround themselves and their children with other men who demonstrate a full spectrum of manhood. This can help their sons feel free to be whatever boy/man they want to be, a freedom that can lessen the need to enact traditional masculinity ideology themselves. Fathers must, however, be willing to let their sons enact their gender expression how their sons feel comfortable, rather than policing their sons’ gender expression or seemingly gendered interests. This is especially important when parents have seemingly well-meaning attempts to preserve the social benefits that their son may receive by adhering to traditional masculinity ideology, or in efforts to avoid the social consequences of their son demonstrating traditionally feminine traits or interests. One father discussed discouraging his son from showing public interest in things that are associated with femininity (e.g., a Disney’s Frozen lunchbox), to try to avoid the social punishment he may receive, even in kindergarten. Even if this policing in the interest of helping their sons avoid public scrutiny or social punishment, this behavior reinforces that their sons having any femininity is to be avoided, and unintentionally gives the message that if their son faces criticism for having feminine traits, it is their sons’ fault for displaying them. Parents can rather be a support system for their children in encouraging them to enact their gender genuinely, and provide emotional support and encourage critical consciousness if their children do face negative social consequences for not adhering to traditional masculinity ideology in their public behavior.

Limitations and Resulting Future Directions

The current study has several limitations, which are important to provide opportunities for further exploration in future research, which are distributed throughout the discussion of results above. There are limitations that come with my role as the interviewer. The fathers, since I was interviewing them as a woman, may have adopted a particular stance towards GBV. This shifting of men's responses about gender dynamics and masculinity due to a woman interviewing them is also reflected in other research in which men are interviewed about masculinity by women researchers (Eisen & Yamashita, 2019). Eisen and Yamashita (2019) conceptualized this shift as performing masculinity in a way that was trying to impress the women interviewers, which they attempted to combat by having a man conduct their interviews thereafter. Future directions in qualitative research on this topic may involve having men interview male participants, or splitting interview duties between women and men and assessing whether there were significant differences in participant responses as a result of interviewer gender.

There are always limitations to generalizability in qualitative and interview-based research, and indeed generalizability is not generally the goal of qualitative research (Hayes & Mckibben, 2021; Hill & Knox, 2021). I also did not restrict recruitment based on any demographic variables besides participants being cisgender fathers of cisgender sons, as I correctly anticipated significant struggles with recruiting participants. Regardless, my sample was majority White ($n = 9$), heterosexual, and married, though they ranged in age, income, and education level. Homogenous samples are encouraged in CQR to increase the likelihood of identifying of shared experiences (Hill & Knox, 2021) and while the fathers in this study demonstrated overlapping themes such that subgroup division was not required. However, the two fathers who identified as racial or ethnic minorities may have had significantly different

experiences that were not fully captured in the shared themes of the current study. Future studies may endeavor to recruit racial or ethnic minority fathers specifically to gain further insight into their unique perspectives as fathers and men. Additionally, the current sample was more highly educated than the general U.S. population; therefore, the current results may reflect a middle or upper class understanding of masculinity and GBV. Future research should investigate how working-class fathers may think or feel differently about these topics.

The stability of my data may be questionable due to my limited sample. I endeavored to recruit 13 participants, as Hill and Knox (2021) encourage 13 to 15 participants to ensure stability. However, due to the difficulty of reaching this population and concerns related to fraudulent participation, I was only able to complete and include 11 interviews in the current study. While Hill and Knox (2021) state that in their own research experiences, new information rarely emerged after 10 or 11 cases had been cross-analyzed, it cannot be certain that I reached data stability since I did not have data past this number of cases. Future qualitative research may include a larger sample of fathers to add additional context or confirm the current study's findings.

Within the current study, the coding team purposefully reflected on our identities and perceptions, and their potential impact on data analyses as we worked to consensus together. I believe that the diversity of experiences and perspectives related to gender were an asset to analyses. However, the entire coding team and my external auditor are all White, which may have impacted our interpretations and analyses of participant responses. Incorporating racially diverse perspectives on masculinity and manhood in the coding process should be a future direction of research related to this subject.

Critics of this study may argue that because GBV has such an intergenerational component (Davids et al., 2015; Hunter et al., 2007; Mathe, 2007), fewer perpetrators are likely to emerge from households in which fathers are not engaging in and modeling GBV themselves. For example, one study revealed that 54% of young sexual offenders reported witnessing an older male relative beat a woman, while 19% reported witnessing a father figure rape a woman (Hunter et al., 2007). While witnessing GBV in the home is definitely a strong predictor of future GBV perpetration, even Hunter and colleagues' (2007) statistics above, there is a portion of sexual offenders who did not witness GBV in the home. Witnessing or not witnessing GBV is not a one-to-one predictive relationship, which leaves the opportunity open for fathers who are not using violence to influence their sons away from GBV perpetration.

Finally, talking about GBV is not the only time that fathers are socializing their sons towards concepts of masculinity, misogyny, or violence. In fact, socialization of these topics is likely happening much more often through other means. Fathers are also always socializing their sons about what manhood looks like and how men act through their modeling, which fathers were not explicitly prompted to discuss in this interview protocol, although generally fathers did discuss this topic. I attempted to acknowledge this socialization process in the current study by asking fathers about their own masculinity socialization and about their perceptions of their sons' masculinity socialization, though less focus was placed on this topic in the interview structure. Future research could spend more time exploring with fathers, or even using observational studies, about how modern fathers are modeling masculinity and attitudes towards women in their daily lives, and how this may be related to GBV perpetration.

Conclusion

Fathers in the current study provided essential baseline knowledge of a previously unexplored phenomenon, father-son gender transformative GBV conversations. Their interview data reflected the nuanced and imperfect state of GBV prevention in the United States, and the complex and dynamic relationship that men and society in general have to traditional masculinity ideology, gender, and violence. This study's results also provide hopeful future directions for GBV prevention programming, including how fathers can best utilize facilitators and overcome barriers to deliver father-son GBV preventative conversations. Ultimately, it seems that fathers can best communicate and connect with their sons about this important topic if they first have an emotionally intimate and satisfying relationship with them, and if they know their sons and their activities well. Additionally, having purposefully reflected on their own perspectives on gender and power, and being armed with accurate information that they can share with their sons provides the accurate and relevant content that they need to encourage growth and nonviolence.

These future directions are built on faith in the power of emotionally close and satisfying parent-child relationships to raise healthy, functional adults. They also are a call to action for fathers, and all men, to take ownership for socializing their sons and other boys/men they encounter away from the need to place themselves at the top of a gender hierarchy that is enforced by coercion, control, and violence. Through the utilization of these tools of oppression, I believe that boys/men not only rob women and gender-expansive people of their autonomy, safety, and too often, their lives, but they also separate themselves from their own humanity. In *The Will To Change: Men, Masculinity and Love*, bell hooks (2004b) wrote,

The work of male relational recovery, of reconnection, of forming intimacy and making community can never be done alone. In a world where boys and men are daily losing

their way we must create guides, signposts, new paths. A culture of healing that empowers males to change is in the making. (p. 166)

I am hopeful about the future of boys/men dropping these destructive tools and following such gender transformative guides, signposts, and paths, to change their lives, and the lives of people around them.

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Tables

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Participant number	Participant Age (Years)	Son Age (Years)	Race	Ethnicity	Sexual Identity	Education Level	Income (\$)	Relationship Status
1A	Did not disclose	16	African American	African American	Heterosexual	Masters Degree	45,000-139,999	Committed Relationship
2A	45	12	Caucasian/White	Jewish	Heterosexual	Masters Degree	200,000+	Married
3	50	15	Caucasian/White	Did not disclose	Heterosexual	Masters Degree	200,000+	Married
4	44	14	Caucasian/White	White	Heterosexual	Trade/Tech/Vocational Training	45,000-139,999	Married
5	50	17	Caucasian/White	White	Heterosexual	Bachelors degree	45,000-139,999	Widowed
6	39	13	Caucasian/White	Italian American	Heterosexual	Bachelors Degree	140,000-149,999	Married
7	74	16	Caucasian/White	White	Heterosexual	High School Diploma	>20,000	Married
8	40	12	Caucasian/White	American	Heterosexual	Doctoral Degree	150,000-199,999	Married
9	39	15	Caucasian/White	White	Heterosexual	High School Graduate	45,000-	Married

							139,999	
10	46	14	Multiracial	Multiracial	Heterosexual	Bachelors Degree	45,000-139,999	Married
11	56	18	Caucasian/White	White American	Heterosexual	Doctoral Degree	140,000-149,999	Married

Table 2*Summary of General, Typical, and Variant Categories and Subcategories Presence*

Domains and Categories/Subcategories	Frequency/# of Participants
Domain 1: Prompts to GBV Conversations	
Prompts To Past Conversations About GBV	General/11
(a) Son Showing Interest in Sexuality Or Relationships	Typical/7
(b) Seeing GBV In Community/Media	Typical/7
(c) Son Bringing Up GBV	Variant/5
Prompts For Future Conversations-Son Starts Dating	Variant/5
Domain 2: Preparation for GBV Conversations	
Reliance On Personal Experience/Struggles in Relationships	Variant/3
Consuming Media Related to Topic	Variant/3
Seeking Guidance from Others	Variant/3

Domains and Categories/Subcategories	Frequency/# of Participants
Emotional Preparation	Variant/2
Experience Working with Youth	Variant/2
<hr/>	
Domain 3: Conversation Characteristics	
Son Age at First Conversation	General/10
(a) Middle Childhood to Preadolescence (12 & Below)	Typical/7
(b) Early Adolescence (13-15)	Variant/3
Number Of GBV Conversations & Interest in More	General/11
(a) 2-6 Times	Typical/8
(b) Wants To Have More	Variant/3
(c) One Conversation & No More Conversations Needed	Variant/2
Location Of GBV Conversation	General/11
(a) Home	Typical/9

Domains and Categories/Subcategories	Frequency/# of Participants
(b) Vehicle	Variant/5
Excluding Mother from Conversation	Typical/6
(a) Avoid Awkwardness	Typical/7
(b) Father & Son Relate Better	Variant/2
Including Mother to Offer "Woman's Perspective"	Variant/2
<hr/>	
Domain 4: Goals for GBV Conversation	
Teach Son to Be a "Good" Person	Variant/5
Help Son Have Healthy, Meaningful Relationships	Variant/4
Help Son Avoid Perpetrating GBV	Variant/3
Provide Accurate Information Related to GBV	Variant/3
Help Son Avoid Being Falsely Accused of Sexual Assault	Variant/2
<hr/>	
Domain 5: Content of Conversation Related To GBV	

Domains and Categories/Subcategories	Frequency/# of Participants
Gupta's Continuum of Progress Traits In Conversations	General/11
(a) Gender Neutral Traits	Typical/8
(b) Gender Sensitive Traits	Variant/5
(c) Gender Transformative Traits	Variant/5
(d) Damaging Traits	Variant/4
Discussion Of Consent	Typical/7
(a) Simple Understanding of Consent	Variant/6
(b) Complex Understanding of Consent	Variant/4
Explicit Acknowledgement of Relationship Between GBV & Traditional Masculinity	General/10
(a) Present in Conversation with Son	Typical/6
(b) Absent in Conversation with Son	Variant/4
Conflict Resolution Skills	Variant/3

Domains and Categories/Subcategories	Frequency/# of Participants
Discussing Pornography	Variant/2
Domain 6: Facilitators & Barriers to GBV Conversations	
Facilitators of Conversations	General/11
(a) Close, Communicative Relationships Within Family	Typical/9
(b) Son Receiving Comprehensive Sex Education Including GBV	Typical/6
(c) Resources/Opportunities for Conversation	Typical/6
(d) Fathers Modeling Healthy Relationship Skills	Variant/2
(e) Previous Experience Discussing GBV	Variant/2
Barriers To Conversations	General/11
(a) Father/Son's Discomfort	Typical/6
(b) Son's Traits or Identities	Variant/5
(c) Son's Perpetration of GBV	Variant/3

Domains and Categories/Subcategories	Frequency/# of Participants
(d) No Barriers	Variant/3
Domain 7: What Fathers Would Change About the Conversation	
No Changes/Not Sure	Typical/6
More Preparation	Variant/4
Engage In More Personal Conversation	Variant/2
Provide More Specific Education	Variant/2
Domain 8: Personal & Societal Expectations of Manhood	
Father's Perceived Societal Expectations of Manhood	General/10
(a) Traditionally Masculine	General/10
(b) Moving Beyond the Gender Binary	Variant/2
(c) Unsure	Variant/2
Father's Personal Expectations of Manhood	General/11

Domains and Categories/Subcategories	Frequency/# of Participants
(a) New Masculinities	Typical/9
(b) Traditionally Masculine	Typical/8
(c) Unsure	Variant/3
(d) Moving Beyond Gender Binary	Variant/2
Conscious of Challenges of Societal Expectations of Manhood	Typical/8
<hr/>	
Domain 9: Influences on Developing Masculinity	
Online/Media Influences	General/10
Family Member Influences	General/11
(a) Participant's Father/Male Role Models in Family	Typical/9
(b) Other Family Members/Family Nonspecific	Variant/5
(c) Participant's Children	Variant/3
Peers/Community Influences	Typical/9

Domains and Categories/Subcategories	Frequency/# of Participants
Cultural/Identity-Based Influences	Typical/9
(a) Names Cultural/Identity-Based Influences	Typical/6
(b) Not Sure How Culture Impacts/See No Cultural Influences	Variant/4
<hr/>	
Domain 10: Active & Passive Masculinity Socialization	
Actively Discussing Expectations of Manhood	Typical/9
(a) Challenging/Critically Discussing Traditional/Societal Expectations	Typical/7
(b) Endorsing Traditional/Societal Expectations of Manhood	Variant/3
Passively Modeling Through Father's Behavior/What Father Allows Son to Do	Typical/8
Denies Critically Discussing Masculinity or Manhood With Son	Variant/5
<hr/>	
Domain 11: Father's Understanding of Relationship Between Traditional Masculinity and GBV	
Traditional Masculinity Leads To GBV	Typical/8
(a) Through Valuing Aggression, Dominance, & Entitlement	Typical/6

Domains and Categories/Subcategories	Frequency/# of Participants
(b) Through Objectification/Devaluing of Women/Femininity	Variant/2
Does Not Think There Is a Relationship	Variant/2
Domain 12: Fathers' Role in Preventing Son's Potential GBV	
Obligation To Influence Their Sons' Development & Awareness of GBV, Even If Uncomfortable	General/10
Model Healthy Relationships	General/10
Discuss Relationship Between Traditional Masculinity & Violence	General/10
Monitor & Be Present	Variant/5
Reflect On Their Own Experiences	Variant/4

Note.

Table 2 outlines the frequency of participants in each category and subcategory.

General = present in all or all but one participant (10-11), Typical = present in 6 to 9 participants, and Variant = present in 2 to 5 participants (Hill & Knox, 2021). . Some participants were the only participant present in a single category or subcategory of note were included as “Single (Exception)” due to the significance of that one participant’s answer to the research questions. A total of 45 categories with 45 subcategories were identified within the 12 domains.

Table 3*Key Takeaways*

Implications For Future Father-Son Gender Transformative GBV Conversations

- Fathers need critical consciousness to facilitate father-son GBV conversations.
 - Fathers need factual and evidence-based information about GBV.
 - Fathers need to foster an emotionally close and safe environment with their sons.
 - Fathers need to repeatedly take opportunities to discuss GBV and gender inequity with their sons.

 - Fathers need to set boundaries and expectations of their sons for appropriate behavior.

 - Fathers need to model and surround their son with models of flexible and expansive masculinity.
-

Appendix A Screening and Demographic Surveys

Screener Survey

1. Are you a cisgender man (a man who was assigned male at birth) who is a father of a cisgender son?
2. What is/are your son(s) age(s)?
3. Have you had a discussion about sexual or dating violence with your son(s) that you can remember and discuss?
4. Are you fluent in English (read and spoken)?
5. Are you currently living and raising your son in the United States?

Demographic Survey

1. How old are you?
2. How would you classify your race?
 - a. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - b. Black/African
 - c. Caucasian/White
 - d. Hispanic/Latino(a)
 - e. Indigenous or Aboriginal
 - f. Middle Eastern
 - g. Multiracial/Biracial
 - h. Not listed
3. How would you classify your ethnicity?
4. Gender Identity _____
5. Gender Identity (select the **options** that most closely represents your gender identity):
 - a. Woman
 - b. Man
 - c. Non-binary
 - d. Trans
 - e. Prefer not to answer
6. Sexual Identity _____
7. Sexual Identity (select the option that most closely represents your sexual identity):
 - a. Asexual
 - b. Bisexual
 - c. Gay
 - d. Lesbian
 - e. Straight (heterosexual)
 - f. Prefer not to answer
8. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? *If currently enrolled, highest degree received.*
 - a. No schooling completed
 - b. Elementary school to 8th grade
 - c. Some high school, no diploma
 - d. High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (i.e., GED)

- e. Some college credit, no degree
 - f. Trade/technical/vocational training
 - g. Associate degree
 - h. Bachelor's degree
 - i. Master's degree
 - j. Professional degree
 - k. Doctorate degree
9. How would you classify your employment status?
- a. Employed
 - b. Self-employed
 - c. Out of work and looking for work
 - d. Out of work but not currently looking for work
 - e. A homemaker
 - f. A student
 - g. Military
 - h. Retired
 - i. Unable to work
10. Please select the value that best represents your annual household income [Note: per U.S. Census Bureau brackets]
- a. Less than \$20,000
 - b. \$20,000 - \$44,999
 - c. \$45,000 - \$139,999
 - d. \$140,000 - 149,999
 - e. \$150,000 - \$199,999
 - f. \$200,000 +
11. In what country were you born?
12. How would you classify your partnership status?
- a. Single
 - b. Committed relationship
 - c. Married
 - d. Separated, but still legally married
 - e. Divorced
 - f. Widowed
13. How old is your adolescent son in years?
14. What percentage of the time does your preteen or adolescent son live in your home with you?

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Pre-Recording:

1. For Prolific participants: What is your Prolific ID number for recording your attendance and submitting the compensation on Prolific?

Questions to check for eligibility and match with demographic survey:

1. How old is your son?
2. How old are you?
3. What level of education have you achieved?

Pre-Interview Introduction

First of all, thank you for filling out our first survey, and thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview! We truly appreciate your time and you lending your insights as the father of an adolescent boy or boys. You responded to an advertisement for study about fathers who have had conversations with their adolescent sons about sexual or dating violence, for any reason under any circumstances. I'm going to be asking you some questions about these conversations with your son, or sons, if you have multiple adolescent sons. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, we are just trying to gain an understanding of what's going on for you as their dad and for your son in these conversations, to the best of your knowledge. In being honest with your responses, you're really helping our research team understand if and how these conversations take place. I also want to acknowledge that as a woman, I obviously have never been a father or a son, and don't directly share your experience as a man or your son's experience as a boy navigating these conversations. So, I might ask some follow up questions just to understand your experience better. I also know that sexual and dating violence can be a challenging subject to talk about in general, and that talking to someone with my identities could impact how it might feel to discuss these topics in this interview, or maybe what you might want to share. I want to encourage you to share as much as you feel comfortable with today, as we're not here to judge, either positively or negatively, any of your perspectives or experiences, but rather to better understand this experience for dads like you. I believe you have really valuable insights to add to our research.

For the purposes of this conversation, I'm going to define a few terms so we're on the same page. I'm going to use the terms dating violence and sexual violence. By dating violence, I mean what is usually called domestic violence or intimate partner violence.. It encompasses physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and basically any way that a partner can coerce, control, or harass their romantic partner. By sexual violence, I mean what can be called sexual assault, rape, date rape, or other terms that mean coercing someone into having sex without consent.

Interview Questions

- 1) When have you had a conversation about sexual or dating violence with your son?
 - a) Approximately how old was/were your son(s) when this conversation first occurred?
 - b) What prompted that conversation?
 - c) What setting did this conversation occur in?
 - i) Clarification: some men say that more intimate or serious conversations between men feel more or less comfortable in certain contexts (e.g., in the car). I'd like to know if you think the setting that this conversation

occurred in impacted the conversation.

- d) What specifically did you discuss?
 - i) Query: What was the content of the conversation?
 - e) What did you hope for yourself and/or your son(s) to gain from this conversation?
 - f) Is there anything you'd change about how this conversation about sexual or dating violence occurred?
 - g) How many times have you had a conversation with your son(s) about sexual or dating violence?
 - i) If unknown: an estimate?
 - h) Is this a conversation you might consider having again or needing to have again with your son(s)?
 - i) What would prompt you to have this conversation again (son's dating status, something happening in society/in the news, etc.)?
 - ii) No: What informs this decision to not have another conversation about dating or sexual violence with your son(s)?
- 2) What might get in the way of talking about sexual violence or dating violence with your son(s) in the future?
- 3) What do you think would help to facilitate or make it easier to talk about sexual violence or dating violence with your son(s)?
 - a) If not mentioned in either 2 or 3: How do you think your relationship with your son(s) impacted how the conversation about sexual violence or dating violence went?

Introduce new section: There are many ways that boys may learn what it “means to be a man,” or what standards of behavior are expected for men. I’m going to ask you some questions about your experience with learning what being a man and acting like a man looks like, and also explore it in the context of your relationship with your son(s).

1. What does it mean to be a man?
 - a. Clarification: For example, how does one “act like a man?”
2. What do you think others mean when they say “be a man?”
3. Do these two ideas of manhood, yours and others, look similar or different to you?
4. Where did you learn what “being or acting like a man” means?
5. Men from different cultural backgrounds, for example men of different races or ethnicities, or different religions, may answer questions about manhood differently. I am curious, how do you think your cultural identities may impact your definition of masculinity?
6. How do you think your relationship with your son(s) might impact how the conversation went/may go in the future?
7. Do you believe there are challenges to trying to fit society’s expectations of being a man?
 - a. Clarification: for example, the traditional expectation that boys do not cry or show emotion, or that they are independent and strong, may make it hard for men to ask for help or feel emotionally close to others.
8. Have you ever talked about masculinity or what it means to be a man with your son(s)?
 - b) Yes:
 - i) What have you discussed with your son about masculinity or being a man?
 - c) No:
 - i) If you haven’t directly talked about it, what messages do you think your

- son(s) has gotten from you about what being a man looks like?
- 4) Have you ever discussed some of the more challenging masculine expectations that our society broadly has for boys and men?
- a) Yes:
 - i) What was the content of this conversation?
 - b) No:
 - i) What has stopped you from having a conversation about the more challenging masculine expectations for boys and men?
 - c) Have you ever asked or reflected with your son(s) about how these societal expectations may impact him as a teenage boy?
 - i) Yes:
 - (1) How did your son(s) respond?
 - (2) Query: How did your son(s) say that these expectations of masculinity impacted him/them?
 - ii) No: How do you think he/they would respond if you opened up that conversation?
 - d) No:
 - i) What might hold you back from talking to your son(s) about the challenges of societal expectations of masculinity or about how to act like a man?
 - ii) What kind of messages do you think your son(s) may have received from you about what being a man looks like?
 - iii) What kind of messages do you think your son(s) may have received from influences other than you (e.g., media, peers, other family members) about what being a man looks like?
- 5) Do you think there is a relationship between what society traditionally expects of men and men's likelihood to perpetrate sexual or dating violence?

Clarification: traditional expectations of manhood could mean the expectation that men are tough, dominant, sexually aggressive, and emotionally stoic. Some research has shown that men who perpetrate sexual or dating violence are more likely to have inflexible and traditional ideas about how they should act, and how other people should treat them, because they are a man.

- a) Yes:
 - i) What do you think the relationship is?
 - ii) When you talked about dating and sexual violence in the past with your son(s), has a relationship between traditional expectations of masculinity and sexual or dating violence come up in this conversation?
 - (1) Yes:
 - (a) What was said about this relationship?
 - (b) How did the topic come up?
 - (2) No:
 - (a) What has been a barrier to having this conversation about masculinity and sexual or dating violence?
- b) No: What would you say to someone who believed that there was a relationship between traditional expectations of masculinity and sexual and dating violence perpetration?

- 6) Do you think it is important to incorporate a discussion of masculinity in conversations about sexual or dating violence between fathers and sons?
 - a) Yes: What would you want that conversation to look like?
 - b) No: What would hold you back from having a conversation about masculinity or manhood when you talk about sexual or dating violence?
- 7) What role do you think fathers should play with regard to preventing sexual or dating violence with their sons?
 - a) What would this look like?
 - b) Why do you think fathers should play this role?
- 8) What do you think dads can do to help prevent their sons from using sexual or dating violence? Or how do you think dads can help their sons to have healthy, consensual, fulfilling sexual and romantic lives?

Thank you for answering these questions so thoughtfully and thank you for your time. I will be sending you follow up information via email about compensation for participating in this study

Curriculum Vitae
Morgan Benner, M.Ed. (She/Her)
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EDUCATION

Lehigh University Fall 2019-Summer 2025
Bethlehem, PA
Graduate Student in Counseling Psychology Ph.D. Program (APA Accredited)
GPA: 3.99
Master's of Education in Human Development Received Spring 2022

Dissertation Defended April 7th, 2025
Lehigh University
Bethlehem, PA
Title: *Daddy Issues: Facilitators and Barriers to Gender-Transformative Father-Son Communication about Gender-Based Violence, An Exploratory Study*
Faculty Advisor: Nicole Johnson, Ph.D.
Faculty Chair: Dr. Christopher Liang, Ph.D.

Qualifying Examination Presented January 27th, 2023
Lehigh University
Bethlehem, PA
Title: *Digital Abuse Safety Planning Needs Assessment in Domestic Violence Shelter Settings*
Faculty Advisor: Nicole Johnson, Ph.D.

University of Maryland, College Park Received May 2017
College Park, MD
Bachelors of Science, Psychology
Minor, Human Development
GPA: 3.78

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Predoctoral Internship (APA Accredited) July 2024-June 2025
Coatesville Veteran Affairs Medical Center (CVAMC)
Coatesville, PA
Internship Directors: Dr. Jessica Reinhard, Psy.D, Dr. Christy Rothermel, Ph.D

Rotation 1: CVAMC Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP) (Full Time)
July 2024-October 2024

Concentration: Couple and Individual Therapy
Clinical Supervisor: Dr. Jaimee Hartman, Psy.D

- Performed generalist outpatient psychotherapy for a wide array of presenting problems

- Evidence-based individual treatments provided: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Depression (CBT-D), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy for Depression (ACT-D), and Cognitive Processing Therapy for PTSD (CPT)
- Provided Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy (IBCT), an evidence-based couple therapy, to 6 couples weekly throughout rotation
- Co-facilitated an outpatient telehealth Women Veteran's psychoeducation and process group focused on stress management
- Utilized measurement-based care and treatment evaluation via weekly patient self-report assessments (e.g., PHQ9, PCL-5, GAD7, BDI-II)
- Completed behavioral assessments, shared decision making, and treatment planning sessions with each intake
- Completed required suicide screening, comprehensive assessment, and collaborative suicide safety plan with veterans as needed
- Gained foundational knowledge with EBPs through reading and practice exercises, case conceptualization, role play, recording of sessions, and live supervision to hone skills in particular interventions
- Collaborated with other members of treatment team including family or other disciplines from the medical center such as nursing, psychiatry, Suicide Prevention, Intimate Partner Violence Coordinator, Homeless Veteran Services, HUD/VASH, and peer support.
- Completed assessments for differential diagnosis and diagnostic clarification
- Implemented case conceptualization and treatment plans in line with veterans' goals, needs, and preferences

Rotation 2: CVAMC PTSD Residential Program (Full Time)

November 2024-February 2025

Clinical Supervisor: Dr. Thomas Bortner, Psy.D

- Provided intensive individual and group psychotherapy, as well as structured and psychoeducational groups for veterans with PTSD diagnoses and other comorbid diagnoses in a residential setting
- Treated PTSD related to combat, military sexual trauma, childhood trauma, work-related/recreational-related accident, motor vehicle accidents, or sexual abuse
- Delivered trauma-focused evidence-based treatments including Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) and Prolonged Exposure (PE)
- Facilitated and co-facilitated trauma-focused group psychotherapy and trauma-focused psychoeducational groups including: Skills Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation (STAIR), Posttraumatic Growth and Recovery, Compassion Focused Therapy, Sleep Management Protocol (Based on CBT for Insomnia), DBT skills-based and mindfulness-focused groups
- Completed Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) and VA Comprehensive Suicide Risk Evaluation (CSRE), an evidence-based evaluation to determine acute and chronic risk levels and inform an individually tailored risk management plan with each veteran upon intake
- Collaborated with veterans to create personalized and veteran-centered Suicide Prevention Safety Planning, an evidence-based clinical intervention

- Participated in daily with treatment teams, including psychology, psychiatry, nursing, social work, occupational therapy, chaplain and recreation therapy departments
- Provided team-based problem-solving and evaluation of veterans on unit presenting with complex clinical or behavioral issues
- Completed documentation of behavioral assessment, treatment plans and updates, suicide assessments and safety plans, group therapy progress notes, individual progress notes, and other documentation in a timely manner via CPRS, the VA's patient documentation and record system

Rotation 3: Power of Women Embracing Recovery (POWER) Program (Half Time) and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Outpatient Program (Half Time)

March 2025-June 2025

Clinical Supervisors: Dr. Brittini Gettys, Psy.D. (POWER), Dr. Gabriel Longhi, Psy.D. (POWER), Dr. Frank Angelini, Ph.D (SUD)

- In POWER Program:
 - Provided intensive individual and group therapy for female veterans in POWER program, presenting with comorbid mental health and substance use disorders
 - Provided individual Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Substance Use Disorder (CBT-SUD), and DBT skills training to veterans on unit presenting with trauma and substance use
 - Facilitated and co-facilitate groups group therapy including Seeking Safety, DBT, CBT-SUD, STAIR, Mindfulness, and Anger Management
 - Worked collaboratively with an integrative residential treatment team of psychology, psychiatry, nursing, social work, chaplain, occupational therapy, and recreation therapy departments to best serve veterans
- In Outpatient SUD:
 - Utilized integrated Motivational Enhancement and CBT-SUD model, particularly emphasizing Community Reinforcement (CRA) for veterans with substance use disorders and other comorbid diagnoses
 - Provided individual and group psychotherapy (process and psychoeducational) both in person and via telehealth
 - Collaborated and contribute to an integrated multidisciplinary treatment team and participate in daily team meetings
 - Provided psychological assessment and screening, program development and evaluations, treatment planning, family and system level interventions, caregiver support, staff education and training, and behavior management consultation

Veteran Affairs Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) National Rollout Enrichment Experience

National Provider Status Received April 2025

Clinical Supervisor and National Consultant: Dr. Alex Puhalla, Ph.D.

- Completed 2 day in-person comprehensive training in Cognitive Processing Therapy as required to achieve CPT VA Provider status
- Provided weekly or biweekly Cognitive Processing Therapy to at least two veterans with PTSD diagnoses to complete national provider status requirements
- Adhered to Cognitive Processing Therapy (2nd Edition) manualized treatment
- Utilized measurement-based care (utilizing PCL-5 and PHQ9) to assess treatment progress weekly and make required treatment adjustments to maximize outcomes
- Attended weekly CPT consultation and supervision meetings with national consultant, presenting case conceptualization and treatment progress
- Tracked and uploaded treatment materials (assessments, anonymized veteran home practice worksheets, stuck point logs) to CPT rollout site for review from CPT consultant
- Recorded CPT sessions for review and feedback from supervisors based on adherence and effectiveness

Other Year-Long Internship Requirements and Opportunities

- Completed 6 integrated psychological assessment reports throughout year
- Prepared a formal psychology continuing education (CE) presentation of 45 minutes to 1 hour duration, which must undergo the formal process of applying through the hospital's CE committee to obtain APA CE credit provision to attendees
- Provided a unit presentations to integrative treatment team based on individualized and relevant topics from my own clinical and research expertise
- Participated in interactive and didactic seminars related to psychological assessment, evidence-based psychotherapy interventions, diversity and ethics in clinical practice, peer consultation and supervision skills, professional development, case conceptualization, case consultation, and other topics
- Participated actively in weekly case conferences, diversity subcommittee, training committee meetings, and journal club

Advanced Practicum Student

July 2023-June 2024

Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospital

Good Shepherd Psychology Group

Allentown, PA

Supervisors: Dr. Kaitlin Fiedler, Psy.D & Dr. Luke Ciaccio, Ph.D.

Hours: Approximately 16 hours per week

- Trained in and administered integrative neuropsychological batteries for patients with strokes, TBI, dementia, and other neurocognitive presenting concerns
 - Assessment foci and assessments:
 - *Screening/brief batteries*: Modified Mini Mental State Exam, Mini Mental Status Exam, Dementia Rating Scale-2, NAB - Screening, RBANS Part A or B, WMS Brief Cognitive Status
 - *Sensory perceptual exams*: Visual Acuity (both eyes), Visual Field Exam

- *Symptom/performance validity exams:* Test of Memory Malingered, Medical Symptom Validity Test (computer), Dot Counting Test
 - *Motor assessments:* Finger Tapping Test, Grip Strength, Grooved Pegboard
 - *Personality assessments:* Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (4th Ed.), Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (3rd Ed.), Personality Assessment Inventory
 - *Intelligence measures:* Wechsler Abbreviated Scale Intelligence (2nd Ed.), Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (4th Ed.)
 - *Memory assessment:* California Verbal Learning Test (3rd Ed.), Continuous Visual Memory Test, NAB Memory Module, Rey Complex Figure Test & Recognition, Wechsler Memory Scale (4th Ed.)
 - *Achievement/career assessment:* Career Assessment Inventory, Holland Self Directed Search, Wide Range Achievement Test (5th ed) (Blue / Green), Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (3rd Ed.)
 - *Symptom checklist/emotional functioning assessments:* Adult Neuropsychological Questionnaire; Brief Battery for Health Improvement (2nd Ed.), Battery for Health Improvement (2nd Ed.), Cognitive Symptom Checklist, Pain Catastrophizing Scale, PTSD Checklist, Psychosocial Pain Inventory; Quality of Life Inventory, Symptom Checklist -90-Revised, Trauma Symptom Checklist
 - *Mood inventories:* Beck Anxiety Inventory, Beck Depression Inventory (2nd Ed.), Generalized Anxiety Screen -7, Patient Health Questionnaire -9
 - *Attention/processing speed assessments:* Conner's CATA (computer), Conner's CPT III (computer), NAB Attention Module, Trail Making Test A/B
 - *Visual perception/visuospatial construction assessments:* Judgment of Line Orientation, NAB Spatial Module, Benton Visual Form Discrimination
 - *Language assessments:* Boston Naming Test, Boston Diagnostic Aphasia Examination Complex Ideational Material, FAS/Animals - Controlled Oral Word Association, NAB Language Module
 - *Executive functioning assessments:* Booklet Category Test, Delis-Kaplan Executive Functioning System, NAB Executive Functioning Module, Wisconsin Card Sorting Test
- Learned assessment battery building and ordering
 - Performed assessment scoring and data entry
 - Integrated interpretation from objective test results into a cohesive narrative
 - Co-led assessment intake interviews
 - Co-led clinical interviews and assessments for spinal cord stimulator presurgical assessment and pre-organ donation assessments
 - Wrote integrated assessment reports within 2-4 weeks after assessment date

- Provided weekly psychotherapy to residents of hospital-associated long-term care facility, whose primary diagnoses include but are not limited to, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, quadriplegia, Multiple Sclerosis, traumatic brain injury, and spina bifida
- Provided inpatient rehabilitation hospital psychotherapy assessment and intervention
- Participated in capacity evaluations of inpatient rehabilitation patients
- Produced and delivered psychoeducational workshop about memory changes post-stroke to stroke recovery group
- Organized new testing office and assessment materials after office relocation

Practicum Extern

July 2022-June 2023

Thomas Jefferson University Hospital

Jefferson Center City Clinic For Behavioral Medicine

Philadelphia, PA

Supervisors: Dr. Hallie Kushner, Ph.D. & Dr. C. Virginia O’Hayer, Ph.D.

Hours: Approximately 16 hours per week

- Provided telehealth short term psychodynamic psychotherapy to 8-10 clients with affective and personality disorder diagnoses and comorbid chronic health issues
- Learned full-model Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)
- Co-led and attended weekly DBT skills groups
- Led weekly mindfulness meditation-based group, *Accessing Wise Mind*, for clinic patients, involving guided meditation and psychoeducation using Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) techniques
- Co-led weekly DBT skill review group, *DBT Graduate Group*, involving DBT skill review and troubleshooting, as well as patient Life Worth Living goal tracking
- Learned and delivered a 6 session standardized Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) intervention for patients with Cystic Fibrosis (ACT with CF) in a randomized controlled trial, with 95%+ adherence to manual according to researcher video-coding
- Delivered 6 “supportive psychotherapy” control sessions with study participants assigned to control group in ACT with CF randomized controlled trial, with 95%+ adherence to requirements for control group
- Presented on my qualifier project research to staff and faculty of clinic as professional development series
- Actively engaged in DBT consultation group
- Collaborated with staff psychiatrists to provide high-quality care
- Created Medicaid-compliant treatment plans
- Utilized Epic healthcare documentation management system

Practicum Extern

July 2021-June 2022

Lebanon Veteran Affairs Medical Hospital

Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP)

Lebanon, PA

Supervisor: Dr. Kristin Tosi, Ph.D.

Hours: Approximately 16 hours per week

- Provided telehealth and in-person psychotherapy to veterans with depression, anxiety, psychosis, trauma-related disorders, and relationship discord (and their spouses)
- Learned and administered Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy (IBCT), Imagery Rehearsal Therapy (IRT), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia (CBTI-I), and short term psychodynamic psychotherapy
- Administered biopsychosocial assessments and screeners including the PCL5, GAD7, PHQ9, and AUDIT-C to assess client functioning at baseline and throughout treatment
- Conducted intake assessments with veterans
- Assembled and co-administered psychodiagnostic test battery including MCMI, MMPI, BDI, and other assessments
- Co-wrote report alongside intern supervisor (responsible for background, mental status, neurocognitive screening sections, and part of recommendations)
- Provided psychoeducation on various diagnoses and the role of the therapist in the service-connected benefit process
- Collaborated with other VA care providers (social work, psychiatry, and medical) to integrate client care and ensure client safety
- Actively participated in individual and group supervision utilizing case presentations
- Utilized the VA Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS) program to document client sessions and progress
- Utilized VA Video Connect (VVC) for telehealth appointments with veterans

Practicum Student

August 2020-May 2021

Lafayette College Counseling Center

Easton, PA

Supervisors: Asmita Pendse, Ph.D. and Devin Hussong, Psy.D

Hours: Approximately 16 hours per week

- Provided teletherapy to college students with varying presenting concerns
- Conducted intake assessments
- Co-led virtual discussion groups: *Self-Care in Covid-19* and *Overcoming Procrastination*
- Co-led *Anxiety Toolbox* skill-building group session
- Created and presented outreach programming surrounding positive self-talk and a growth mindset
- Participated in training seminars, individual supervision, and group consultation utilizing case presentations
- Received professional development training weekly
- Utilized Doxy.me for secure telehealth sessions
- Used Titanium for session and progress notes

Support Group Co-Leader

July-August 2020

Turning Point of Lehigh Valley Domestic Violence Services

Allentown, PA

Supervisor: Dr. Nicole Johnson, Ph.D.

- Collaborated with supervisor and other doctoral students to create virtual support group programming for direct service staff at the domestic violence shelter
- Provided psychoeducation and DBT and mindfulness-related skill-building for coping with stress and prevention of burnout among staff
- Encouraged and supported group support and scaffolding
- Met monthly via Zoom with shelter staff

Outreach Rehabilitation Counselor

August 2018-June 2019

Key Point Health Services, Inc.

Catonsville, MD

Supervisors: Katherine Black, CPRP, Dorothy Curry, CPRP, and Kevin McShane

- Practiced rehabilitation counseling and case management for 15-20 clients with serious mental illness and varying degrees of independence in the greater Baltimore area
- Met 6 times monthly with clients in homes and around the community to facilitate rehabilitation goal planning and goal completion
- Provided education and mentorship to clients on topics involving symptom and stress management, self-care, and activities to develop and maximize independence
- Provided activities of daily living (ADLs) and social skills training to clients
- Liaised with therapists and psychiatrists associated with clients as part of the treatment team
- Created and led psychoeducation groups on symptom management, positive thinking, healthy lifestyle choices, and budgeting
- Trained in and practiced crisis intervention and suicide prevention in cases of client crisis
- Assisted clients with applying for and receiving benefits such as Medicare and Medicaid, housing assistance, WIC, SNAP, substance abuse resources, vocational training, and legal assistance via community resources
- Assisted clients with serious mental illness in applying for and receiving records and documentation, including birth certificates, social security cards, driver's licenses and identification cards
- Assisted and encouraged clients in pursuing GED prep courses and studying for the GED
- Facilitated meetings between clients and job training programs
- Advocated on clients' behalf in pursuit of appropriate medical and mental health care from service agencies
- Supervised community and social outings to teach ADLs and support socialization with clients

- Completed service notes, treatment plans, mental health assessments, risk assessments, progress notes and medication logs
- Completed 20 hours per year of training, including topics such as motivational interviewing, medication side effects, Wellness Recovery Action Planning, and Person-Centered Planning

Practicum Student

June-August 2015

Kennedy Krieger Institute, Neurobehavioral Outpatient Unit
Columbia, MD
Supervisors: Julia O'Connor, Ph.D. and Justin Boyd, Ph.D.

- Worked with children with disruptive behavior disorders, brain injury, autism, and learning disorders between the ages of 2 and 21
- Trained in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) behavioral assessments and treatment programs
- Recorded data on client behavior in clinical and naturalist settings
- Conducted statistical analysis on previously recorded data
- Created functional communication and learning materials for clients
- Conducted preference assessments on child clients to find preferred incentive
- Implemented intervention techniques during behavioral outbursts appropriately to ensure client safety

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant

September 2019-June 2025

The Resistance Lab
Lehigh University
Bethlehem, PA
PI: Nicole Johnson, Ph.D.

- Mentor masters and early doctoral students in research processes such as data cleaning, qualitative data coding, literature review, and analysis results interpretation
- Collaborate with members of research team on publications surrounding gender-based violence, involving quantitative analyses, Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR), and community-based intervention research
- Co-lead consciousness-raising gender-based violence prevention programming for fraternity and sorority life organizations
- Create gender-based violence educational video for Lehigh chapter of Phi Sigma Kappa's Blue Light Ball, a fundraiser for the Cleary Center
- Co-facilitate a discussion of gender violence statistics to a group of undergraduates in training for Break The Silence, a gender violence prevention group
- Represent the laboratory at undergraduate events
- Recruit and mentor undergraduate research assistants
- Present research at various conferences

Laboratory Interim Co-Manager

November 2022-March 2023

The Resistance Lab

Lehigh University

Bethlehem, PA

Supervisor: Nicole Johnson, Ph.D.

- During PI Dr. Nicole Johnson's parental leave beginning November 2022, co-supervised the Resistance Lab's research activities with another doctoral student
- Organized and co-led lab meetings with research progress check-in, goal-setting and evaluation, allocation of lab resources and assistance from research assistants
- Provided mentorship and support to students in laboratory as they pursued their qualifier projects and other research
- Supervised and met with Dr. Johnson's graduate assistant and assigned research and lab marketing-related tasks

Graduate Fellow

Summer 2020

Mountaintop Summer Research Experience

Project: *Preventing School-Based Violence through Gender Expansion and Equity*

Lehigh University

Bethlehem, PA

PI: Nicole Johnson, Ph.D.

- Managed team contributions to the literature review, assigned tasks, and taught undergraduates key elements of the research process
- Led weekly supervision meetings with undergraduate RAs
- Assisted undergraduate RAs in outlining introduction section for a manuscript
- Conducted literature review on school-based interventions for gender-expansion
- Introduced undergraduate RAs to SPSS package and data entry and cleaning process
- Presented weekly project check-ins with program directors
- Collaborated to create, present, and facilitate 2 press conferences to community members and stakeholders

Independent Study Leader

November 2017-2020

Counseling Psychology Research Center

University of Maryland

College Park, MD

Advisor: Karen O'Brien, Ph.D.

- Developed research study proposal about digital abuse
- Conducted review of previous literature surrounding subject
- Selected and developed measures for study's use
- Drafted proposal documents for the University of Maryland's Institutional Review Board
- Recruited ~350 participants for online survey

Research Assistant

September 2016-October 2018

The Counseling Psychology Research Center
University of Maryland
College Park, MD
PI: Karen O'Brien, Ph.D.

- Assisted coding schema development for a domestic violence bystander intervention project
- Entered participant data into SPSS
- Recruited adult research participants for a study of the effect of traditionally masculine appeal in domestic violence bystander interventions
- Transcribed focus group sessions of women discussing the loss of a close friend
- Maintained confidentiality of participant information in focus group sessions
- Attended monthly research meetings with a diverse team of undergraduate and graduate research assistants

Research Assistant

February 2018-August 2018

Counseling Center Research Unit
University of Maryland
College Park, MD
PI: Yu-Wei Wang, Ph.D.

- Transcribed interviews with food-insecure students for UMD Counseling Center's Food Insecurity Study
- Recorded field notes and asked questions during qualitative interviews with food-insecure UMD students
- Contributed to university census measure development and selection
- Maintained confidentiality of participant information
- Attended weekly research staff meetings with Counseling Center staff

Research Assistant

January 2016-August 2019

Child & Family Development Lab
University of Maryland
College Park, MD
PI: Jude Cassidy, Ph.D.

- Transcribed parent and child interviews for attachment and parenting relationships
- Coded attachment from video footage of child behaviors
- Scored parent interviews for empathy
- Researched and contacted schools, community centers, and service providers to recruit parent and child participants for research studies
- Designed and formatted Qualtrics online surveys for adult and child participants
- Screened possible participants using study eligibility criteria
- Assisted with literature reviews on attachment-related measures

- Insured attachment and emotion regulation research citation accuracy in graduate student thesis
- Created IRB-standard recruitment flyers for studies
- Edited videos for use in experiments
- Entered paper-recorded data for adolescent temperament tasks into SPSS
- Attended community events representing the laboratory for recruitment activities

Research Assistant

September 2014- June 2016

Center for Addictions, Personality & Emotions Research (CAPER)

Study: “Racial Discrimination and Risk Taking Propensity Among African American Young Adults”

University of Maryland

College Park, MD

PI: Cristina Risco, Ph.D.

- Assisted with literature review on the Balloon Analog Risk Task (BART) and Cyberball Task
- Obtained informed consent from adult participants
- Implemented experimental protocol with participants
- Reimbursed participants upon completion of study

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE/HELPING EXPERIENCE

Doctoral Level Supervisor

September 2021-May 2022

CPSY476: Supervision and Consultation in Counseling and CPSY477: Supervision Apprenticeship

Lehigh University

Bethlehem, PA

Supervisor: Dr. Bethany Detweiler

- Learned about established clinical supervision and consultation theories and practice
- Chose and established my supervision orientation and supervision style
- Supervised 2 masters level clinicians (counseling psychology and international school counseling) in fall 2021 and 2 in spring 2022
- Supervised international school counseling masters level trainees in Brazil and China, learning about legal and ethical guidelines for the field and specific to locations
- Received group supervision of supervision weekly from licensed psychologist
- Encouraged the growth of supervisees’ theoretical orientation and conceptualization skills in their chosen orientation
- Promoted the development of self-reflection and reflection on transference and countertransference in supervisees’ clinical work
- Encouraged multicultural humility and a social justice lens within supervisees’ conceptualizations and clinical application
- Provided resources to further professional development of supervisees

- Assisted supervisees in working through ethical dilemmas and provided support in applying professional ethics guidelines from their professional standards (the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American School Counseling Association (ASCA))

Academic Coach

Fall 2020-Fall 2021

Disability Support Services

Lehigh University

Bethlehem, PA

Supervisors: Kara Uhrich, Michelle Conrad

- Maintain a caseload of 8 academic coaching students with documented learning disabilities, meeting weekly
- Assist students with maintaining required documentation and academic accommodations
- Advise students with creating structure and skills to support their academic success, such as time management, organization, sleep hygiene, note taking, and study skills
- Document student progress and goals weekly
- Problem-solve with students to use online and academic resources to meet challenges
- Collaborate with students to create study schedules for midterms and final exams
- Receive training from academic coaching staff on building rapport and using academic coaching skills

Learning and Study Skills Graduate Assistant

August 2019-May 2024

The Center for Academic Success

Lehigh University

Bethlehem, PA

Supervisor: Kara Uhrich

- Advise undergraduate students seeking assistance to improve study skills such as time management, note taking, test preparation, test taking, academic goal setting, and coping with stress and test anxiety
- Provide ongoing weekly academic coaching support to 4-10 students referred for serious academic concerns
- identify and refer students to other support services on campus, including Counseling and Psychological Services, case management, and health center services
- Develop study skills handouts on various subjects based on empirically supported research
- Co-create and direct an undergraduate Peer Academic Coaching program
- Create and lead workshops for first year students on balancing social and academic lives and stress and test anxiety

- Create and lead specifically requested skills workshops for fraternities, sororities, athletic teams, residence halls, engineering departments and other student groups and organizations
- Meet with residential assistants who were on academic probation to improve study skills
- Create 2 presentations for first year students adjusting to college life each fall, including topics: time management, stress management, addressing procrastination (based on research), and adjusting to online coursework
- Represent the Center for Academic Success at university events
- Interview, select, hire and train a diverse group of 65 tutors for the Center
- Supervise residential tutors for 6 first year residence halls
- Supervise 1 work-study student as she researched similar academic success programming at other universities and managed Center's social media presence
- Collaborate with Lehigh University's Office of Communications to publicize the Center for Academic Success services

Student Leader

January 2017-December 2017

PSYC319D: Community Interventions: Service Learning: Domestic Violence II

Site: Family Crisis Center of Prince George's County

University of Maryland

College Park, MD

Supervisor: Karen O'Brien, Ph.D.

- Learned about domestic violence and its intersection with cross-cultural issues, and helping skills training
- Facilitated tutoring sessions in shelter with school aged children
- Developed one-on-one mentoring relationships with children in shelter
- Co-led psychoeducational groups concerning self-esteem, healthy expression of emotion, and healthy living
- Wrote and implemented 2 group sessions specifically regarding conflict management and the healthy expression of love
- Planned special activities with other volunteers for residents, including end of program/pizza party
- Responded appropriately and supportively to crises and behavioral issues among children at shelter

Administrator, Executive Board

June 2016-May 2017

Help Center, Peer Counseling & Crisis Intervention Hotline

University of Maryland

College Park, MD

Supervisor: Sharon Kirkland-Gordon, Ph.D.

- Collaborated with Drs. Karen O'Brien and Sharon Kirkland-Gordon to develop a training program and procedure for responding to calls involving domestic violence
- Oversaw the overall functioning of the hotline center

- Supervised and assisted in the fulfillment of projects and responsibilities of executive board members
- Maintained expertise on organization's constitution and bylaws
- Guaranteed adherence to the University's Student Government Organization policies
- Interfaced with representatives of the University, including the Title IX Office of Civil Rights and Sexual Misconduct, the University Health Center, the University Counseling Center, University police and security, and Maintenance offices
- Personally distributed required comments and statements to news and university agencies
- Oversaw executive board meetings and general body meetings
- Disseminated information to the organization's general body and alumni
- Appropriately disciplined culpable parties in any case of violations of policy, organizational or university-wide
- Facilitated the writing of new organizational policy to improve services

Shift Manager, Executive Board

January 2016-August 2016

Help Center, Peer Counseling & Crisis Intervention Hotline
University of Maryland
College Park, MD

- Created a weekly shift schedule and rotating weekend shifts for the hotline's sixteen 4-hour shifts
- Intervened in conflicts between trainers and trainees
- Maintained professionalism and confidentiality in private issues between volunteers

Peer Counselor & On-the-Job Trainer

2014-2017

Help Center, Peer Counseling & Crisis Intervention Hotline
University of Maryland
College Park, MD

- Provided peer counseling and crisis intervention services to callers and walk-in clients using Help Center services
- Disseminated mental health and wellness resources to callers and walk-in clients
- Maintained full confidentiality and anonymity of all clients
- Intervened to ensure safety of callers in life-threatening crisis
- Trained one to four Help Center trainees on each shift in Help Center's peer-counseling program
- Instructed trainees on Help Center policies and emergency procedures
- Fostered a safe and comfortable atmosphere for trainees

CONSULTATION

Doctoral Consultant

March 2022

Lehigh University Department of Health, Medicine and Society

Consultation Topic: Introductory Helping Skills for Future Health Service Careers

- Liaised with faculty members in the HMS dept. to assess need for introductory helping skills education for undergraduate students
- Created accessible and interactive lecture for exploratory helping skills and discussed their use in future careers
- Delivered consultation lecture to 6 interested undergraduates
- Assess pre and post-test confidence and understanding of helping skill use and application
- Shared results with faculty members and discussed future directions of training

Guest Speaker

March 2023

Community Voices Clinic (CVC)

Broughal Middle School

Consultation Topic: Gender and Sexual Identity Development in Early Adolescence, Working with Gender and Sexual Diversity With Clients

- Assessed masters level practicum students for understanding of gender and sexual diversity
- Provided developmentally appropriate education on gender and sexual diversity topics for group
- Prompted practicum students to reflect on how gender and sexual identity may come up with clients and how it has come up in the past
- Discussed barriers to comfort discussing gender and sexual identity with clients
- Prompted practicum students to reflect on their own gender and sexual identity development and how systems of power and oppression may impact how they feel about their gender and sexual identities and those of others

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant

Spring 2022

Psyc 298: How Can I Help?: Exploring Careers in Education, Human Services, and Health-Related Fields.

Lehigh University

Bethlehem, PA

Supervisor, Brook Sawyer, Ph.D.

- Assisted 25 undergraduate students in exploring select professions to “help people” in education, human services, and health-related fields
- Developed and presented six class sessions and co-developed/led two additional class sessions
- Took the lead in developing and presenting 5-class session series about the counseling psychology field, focusing on career options, core counseling psychology values, and controversial conversations in the field
- Organized a guest panel of practicing counseling psychologists who worked in a variety of settings and facilitated a class discussion about the day-to-day realities of being a counseling psychologist

- Suggested and led a class session on teaching students a framework for understanding and evaluating empirical articles
- Graded student assignments and reflections
- Reviewed student presentations on their chosen helping field
- Provided resources for students interested in further graduate study in applied psychological fields
- Attended and assisted course direction twice weekly for 75 minutes for a period of 14 weeks

Teaching Assistant

Fall 2020

CINQ-389: Inquiry to Impact Group Projects (Preventing School Violence Project)

Lehigh University

Bethlehem, PA

Supervisor: Nicole Johnson, Ph.D.

- Created syllabus and assignments for research course
- Mentored 2 undergraduate research assistants by reading peer-reviewed literature using the QALMRI method
- Collaborated with colleagues with previous undergraduate mentorship experience
- Assigned weekly laboratory-relevant literature readings
- Created and graded course assignments to assess research knowledge and skills
- Coordinated assigning undergraduate work to various laboratory projects

Laboratory Assistant

February-May 2017

PSYC433: Helping Skills

University of Maryland

College Park, MD

Supervisors: Jonathan J. Mohr, Ph.D. & Mrs. Mazneen Cyrus Havewala

- Assisted the graduate lab assistant with conducting lab procedures
- Co-taught different components of therapeutic counseling techniques to students, based on Dr. Clara Hill's Helping Skills theories
- Lead in-class discussions with students about helping skill use
- Reviewed and graded assignments
- Facilitated helping session implementation between students

Peer Mentor/Teaching Assistant

September 2015-January 2016

FIRE: First Year Innovation and Research Experience: Addiction Science (FIRE 257)

The Center for Addictions, Personality & Emotions Research (CAPER)

University of Maryland

College Park, MD

Supervisor: Cristina Risco, Ph.D.

- Guided 30 students in the FIRE program (a program facilitating hands-on laboratory research experience) in the implementation of research projects involving addiction behavior

- Assisted students in their research-oriented writing projects
- Mentored students in the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)
- Developed mentorship relationships to assist students in finding other research and volunteer opportunities on campus

ADDITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE & WORK EXPERIENCE

Student Faculty Representative Fall Semester 2023-May 2024

Lehigh University Counseling Psychology Doctoral Program

Supervisor: Dr. Susan Woodhouse, Ph.D.

- Soliciting feedback/suggestions/questions from counseling psychology doctoral students to bring to faculty
- Representing and advocating for the needs/voices of doctoral students about curriculum, leadership, research and program requirements
- Attending faculty meetings that occur monthly (sometimes twice monthly)
- Taking relevant meeting minutes to send to doctoral student body
- Providing updates to doctoral students on decisions made in meetings
- Facilitating ongoing communication between faculty and students

Evening Receptionist November 2017-May 2018

The University of Maryland Counseling Center

Supervisor: Ms. Eugina Becton

- Scheduled intake and emergency walk-in appointments for students
- Checked in clients and assisted with intake/follow-up form completion
- Connected students, staff and parents with appropriate Counseling Center and campus resources
- Ensured confidentiality of sensitive client information

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION MEMBERSHIPS

Student Affiliate 2019-Present

American Psychological Association

Division 17: Society of Counseling Psychology

& Member of Section for the Promotion of Feminist Psychology

Division 35: Psychology of Women

Division 43: The Society for Couple and Family Psychology

Division 51: The Society for the Study of Men and Masculinities

PUBLICATIONS

Johnson, N. L., **Benner, M.**, Lipp, N. S., Siepser, C. F., Rizvi, Z., Lin, Z., & Calene, E. (2024). *Gender inequality: A worldwide correlate of intimate partner violence*. Women's Studies International Forum. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2024.103016>

Corbett-Hone, M., **Benner, M. J.**, Lipp, N. S., & Johnson, N. L. (2022). Internalized sexism. In J. Estrellado, L. Felipe, & J. Celestial, (Eds.) *Clinical interventions for internalized oppression*. Cognella & APA Division 45.

Siepsner, C., **Benner, M. J.**, Lipp, N. S., & Johnson, N. L. (2020). Disrupting rape culture: Pyramid of action. *APA Div. 44: Society for the Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity Division 44 Newsletter, Fall 2020*

Benner, M. J., & Johnson, N. L. (2020). Book Review: Good sexual citizenship: How to create a (sexually) safer world. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 44*(4), 560–561.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684320927649>

RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

Benner, M. J. & Johnson, N. L. (2022, August). *Safety planning for digital abuse within domestic violence shelters*. Part of data blitz titled *Violence, Trauma, and Feminism*, presented at the American Psychological Association annual conference in Minneapolis, MN, United States.

Siepsner, C., **Benner, M. J.**, Lipp, N. S., & Johnson, N. L. (2021, March). *The Disrupting Rape Culture Pyramid: A model for future research & intervention*. Poster session presented at the Association for Women in Psychology annual conference, conducted online.

Benner, M. J. (2020, March). Cyber dating violence: Research, challenges, and future directions. In N. L. Johnson (Chair), *Contemporary consideration in intimate partner violence*. Symposium at the 51st Annual Meeting of the Association of Women in Psychology 2020, Austin, TX, United States.

Benner, M. J., Patton, D. A., Stern, J. A., Brett, B. e., Gross, J. T., & Cassidy, J. (2019, May). *Does child attachment security moderate the relation between maternal depression symptoms and child executive function?* Poster session presented at the Association for Psychological Science annual meeting, Washington, D.C., United States.

Patton, D. A., **Benner, M. J.**, Stern, J. A., Brett, B. E., Gross, J. T., & Cassidy, J. (2019, May). *Supportive parenting moderates the relation between corporal punishment and child prosocial behavior in girls*. Poster session presented at the Association for Psychological Science annual meeting, Washington, D.C.

Stern, J. A., **Benner, M. J.**, Patton, D. A., & Cassidy, J. (2019, March). *Social information processing of others' distress: Implications for parenting and children's empathy*. Poster session presented at the International Convention of Psychological Science, Paris, France.

O'Brien, K. M., Sauber, E., Kearney, M., Venaglia, R. B., **Benner, M.**, Picciani, J., & Lemay, E. P. (May, 2018). *Evaluating the effectiveness of an innovative online intervention to reduce dating violence*. Poster session presented at the University of Maryland Psychology Research Fair, College Park, MD.

Risco, C. M., Iwamoto, D. K., Rowe, A., Fonseca, F. T., **Benner, M.**, Mbonu, T., Espinoza, I., & Lejuez, C. W. (June, 2016). *Racial discrimination and risk taking propensity among African American young adults*. Poster session presented at the meeting of the College on Problems of Drug Dependence, Palm Springs, CA, United States.

Benner, M., Risco, C. M., MacPherson, L., & Lejuez, C. W. (April, 2015). *Depression among African American adolescents: The role of social support and environment*. Poster session presented at the University of Maryland Undergraduate Research Day, College Park, MD., United States.

JOURNAL PEER REVIEWER EXPERIENCE

Student Advisory Board Student Reviewer May 2023-May 2024
Psychology of Women Quarterly

Peer Reviewer 2023-Present
The Journal of Family Violence

Co-Reviewer with Dr. Nicole Johnson 2021-2023
the Journal of Family Violence

STUDY ABROAD

Student Participant January 2017
UMD Winter: *El Salvador: El Salvador's Children - Risk, Poverty and Education*
Suchitoto & Palo Grande, Cuscatlán Dept., El Salvador

- Created Spanish-language after-school activity lesson plans to assist children with homework, math skills, reading, English language practice, and health practices
- Created a Spanish-language women's health activity for a local health fair
- Learned about the culture and history of El Salvador in the context of post-civil war society
- Studied the issues of intergenerational poverty and gang violence and how it relates to education, migration patterns, and daily life of Salvadorans
- Toured local schools to observe education practices and infrastructure
- Spoke with survivors of the Salvadoran Civil War about their experiences in the conflict
- Learned about Liberation Theology and its emphasis in the Salvadoran Civil War