To Lance,

My Ghost Writer
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MULTIPLE MASCULINE SELVES, GENDER ROLE SELF-CONCEPT, AND WELL-BEING

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Major: Psychology

As times are changing for men, situational and contextual messages and contingencies regarding “appropriate” behavior for men are bound to be multiple and inconsistent. As such, differing social and spatial contexts and circumstances may now require different gendered repertoires or gendered selves from men in ways that have received little attention in the empirical literature. This dissertation explores the idea through the lenses of self-concept and ego identity as articulated by Higgins (1987) and by Marcia (1966). It assesses whether a conflicting standards paradigm may be extended to our understanding of men. Then it looks at how perceptions of discrepancy in messages about gender may relate to psychological well-being, as well as how these discrepancies relate to the use of male reference groups. It then analyzes whether any relationships between reference group identity dependence and well-being are buffered by self-concept clarity. I hypothesized that men would indeed report perceiving discrepancies in gendered trait expectations amongst self-guides, and that these discrepancies would predict decrements to self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and higher depressive symptomatology. Further, I predicted that perceptions of discrepancy would also predict feelings
of psychological connectedness to other men, and that lack of such connectedness would also predict decrements to mental health outcomes. Finally, I hypothesized that this latter relationship would be moderated by levels of general self-concept clarity. Findings indicate that men do in fact report significant discrepancies in social messages about both the preferred masculine and feminine traits they feel they are expected to possess. Further, self-concept clarity is found to moderate the relationship between lack of a male reference group, self-esteem and satisfaction with life. Some implications and limitations of these findings are discussed.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

How social messages about masculinity influence men’s psychological health is an important area of inquiry for gender scholars as well as practicing psychologists. Most of the research in the psychology of men thus far has focused on how traditional masculinity ideology, norms, and behaviors relate to negative psychological and physical health outcomes for men in American society. However, recent shifts over the last few decades in gender relations at home and at work have changed the terrain in which men now experience themselves as gendered (e.g., Aarseth, 2007; Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 1987; Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000). Increasingly, traditional notions of masculinity no longer match economic and social realities, increasing the attractiveness and prevalence of more nontraditional enactments of masculinity. During this time of transition from old to new guards, situational and contextual messages and contingencies regarding “appropriate” behavior for men are bound to be multiple and inconsistent. As such, differing social and spatial contexts and circumstances may now require different gendered repertoires or gendered selves from men in ways that have received little attention in the empirical literature.

In this dissertation, I seek to explore this notion of discrepancy in men’s gendered self-concepts by determining whether men report differing expectations across various social settings in the gendered traits they feel they are expected to possess. I explore whether the perception of such discrepancy relates to the use of male reference groups to define one’s gender role self-concept. Gender role self-concept, as it will be defined for this dissertation, refers to “one’s self-concept with regard to gender roles and includes gender-related attributes, attitudes, and behaviors” (Wade & Gelso, 1998, p. 384). I investigate how perceptions of discrepancy may have a link to decrements in men’s mental health, particularly in the form of depressive
symptomatology, satisfaction with life, and self-esteem. I also look into how the use of reference
groups to inform one’s gender role self-concept may be related to these aspects of well-being.
Finally, I assess a possible mitigating factor in the relationship between a certain type of gender
role self-concept and well-being outcomes. I begin by discussing some reasons that a study of
gender ideology conflict, if we may so describe this notion of discrepancy, may be relevant to
psychological study.

Despite the essentialist and popular psychology arguments that would lead us to believe
there is something deeply inherent and static about “masculinity” and “femininity,” we now
understand gender ideology and performance to be something that is socially constructed and
contingent (e.g., Butler, 1988; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Because these entities are
socially constructed, they have been subject to redefinition and revision throughout time and in
response to differing social contexts. In most recent memory in the United States, the
advancement of women during and after the 1970s, and the movement of women into labor
markets previously occupied almost exclusively by men, has required, to varying degrees, a
redefinition of what it means to be a man in American society (Kimmel, 1987). These societal
changes have increased the incentives for men to engage in relational behaviors that violate the
“codes” of traditional masculinity (Levant, 1995), such as being more emotionally
interdependent in relationships, or sharing in the childcare.

Prior research on self-perception theory (Bem, 1967) and dissonance theory (Festinger,
1957) suggests that as men’s gendered behavior changes, they will also be more likely to
redefine their beliefs and attitudes regarding masculinity and femininity. This expectation of
greater cooperation and the redefinition of the boundaries of socially sanctioned “manly”
behavior may be even more prominent among younger men, who have only ever known a world
characterized by women’s large-scale participation in the labor force (Singleton & Maher, 2004). Despite these new, more nontraditional mores that have come into effect and amplified over recent decades, there is little doubt that men are still subject to social pressure to conform to traditional gender repertoires as well (e.g., Korobov, 2005; Korobov & Thorne, 2006).

Research addressing “the hazards of being male,” (Goldberg, 1976) or more straightforwardly, the hazards of being a traditional male, has predominated the psychology of men. Thus, in many ways, most of this research has furthered our knowledge about men only insofar as they conform to traditional, hegemonic masculinity. Focusing only on traditional masculinity and its correlations with diminished well-being we may imperil research on gender more broadly, in that diversity and complexity amongst gendered constructions are largely ignored (Addis, Mansfield, & Syzdek, 2010; Ashmore, 1990; Hoffman, 2001; Lewin, 1984; O’Neil, 2008b). One possible source of complexity in gender self-definitions at this point may simply be the presence of the multiplicity itself: if one perceives and feels press to choose from many different options of how to define oneself as a gendered self, which definition does one choose, and will that definition be equally suited to all contexts?

As a burgeoning area of scholarly and empirical discourse, there are no doubt multiple ways to explore the presence and sequelae of harboring conflicting messages about masculinity. This dissertation will explore the idea through the lenses of self-concept and ego identity as articulated by Higgins (1987) and by Marcia (1966). I then seek to combine these more general concepts of ego development with gender role self-concept more specifically, and conjecture at how the former may inform the study of the latter. This discussion then leads to some hypotheses about how the organization of one’s gendered self may have implications for one’s overall well-being.
Self-Discrepancy Theory and Multiple Masculine Selves

One clue to understanding how individuals may be negotiating the multiplicity of options around gender may be seen in self-discrepancy theory, which addresses the self-concept more generally. Higgins (1987) advanced self-discrepancy theory to talk about how inconsistent or incompatible beliefs about oneself may lead to psychological discomfort, predicting that other negative emotional outcomes may also result when we experience these forms of internal dissonance. Higgins proposed the locus of this dissonance to be between self-states or selves. These selves are comprised of two standpoint dimensions (one’s own standpoint or a relevant other’s standpoint), and three domains (actual, ideal, and ought selves). The actual self is “a person’s representation of the attributes that someone (self or other) believes the person actually possesses” (p. 52, Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1985). The ideal self is a representation of what self or other would like the person to ideally have, and typically includes such things as goals and hopes. Finally, the ought self represents what self or other believe a person ought to possess as attributes, and this is typically in the form of rules, injunctions, and obligations. The ideal and ought selves may be further distinguished by the sources from which they are most immediately maintained, with ought selves most often reflecting social pressures and mores, whereas ideal selves generally refer more to personal injunctions. These domains and standpoints combine to form six self-state representations: actual/own, actual/other, ideal/own, ideal/other, ought/own, and ought/other. The latter four are what Higgins considered standards or self-guides (Higgins, Strauman, & Klein, 1986). These self-guides often contain “shoulds,” “musts,” and ideals of conduct and ability that may often conflict with one’s core actual/own self-concept, or what a person perceives to be their actual conduct and level of ability at various tasks. Relevant ideal/other, ought/other, and actual/other self-guides may be a father, romantic partner, society in general, among others.
According to self-discrepancy theory, dissimilarities between one’s primary (actual/own) self-concept and other representations would lead to characteristic patterns of negative affect, including guilt, shame, dejection, agitation, and/or embarrassment (Higgins, 1987). For example, if one possessed an ideal/other self-guide that valued muscularity as an attribute, but one’s actual/own representation of self did not include this attribute, Higgins theorized that the resulting feeling may be shame or humiliation. Whereas Higgins’ specific pattern of negative outcomes has only received partial support (e.g., Tangney, Niedenthal, Covert, & Hill Barlow, 1998), the relationship between self-discrepancies and negative outcomes more generally has a long-standing basis in the theoretical and empirical literature (Bandura & Walters, 1963; Freud, 1917/1957; Rogers, 1961). In fact, higher degrees of disparity in self-representations have been associated with experiences of shame and guilt (Higgins, 1987; Tangney et al., 1998), negative affect, agitation, confusion, and dejection (Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1985; Stroink, 2004), and neuroticism (Pavot, Fujita, & Diener, 1997).

The Costs of Conflicting Gendered Selves

While the research on self-discrepancies is clearer with respect to consequences when we look at the general self-concept, it is unknown whether multiple and conflicting gendered selves may be associated with psychological discomfort in some like manner. As with many new areas of inquiry, qualitative studies of discrete groups of men experiencing such conflicts may give the first clues as to how to study the topic of gender message discrepancy by quantitative means. A few qualitative studies that will be touched upon here have helped elucidate some of the potential issues of concern.

One example may be seen in the therapeutic context for men, an environment that traditionally has been more utilized by and associated with female consumers. Van Wagoner’s (2007) work with men’s groups led him to conclude that his clients experienced polarized
reactions to the demands of this group work in which open sharing of personal events and emotional expression are encouraged, as these activities break with traditional expectations of masculine behavior. He noted that the nontraditional context of the groups seemed to lead some of the more traditional men to feel uncomfortable and to behave more passively in their exchanges. In contrast, those he identified as sensitive men evidenced more efforts to become increasingly other-centered and reciprocal in their relationships. Van Wagoner noted that the latter group seemed to experience more inner conflict as they attempted to increase their comfort with expressiveness and interdependence in these relationships:

[S]ensitive man can often verbalize a desire for emotional intimacy, and can verbalize feelings, yet the depth of feeling is somehow lacking when one gets to know them. There is often a deep hunger for connection, and yet an inability to connect in an emotionally intimate manner. (p. 49)

Importantly however, Van Wagoner noted that the sensitive man does not represent a complete departure from the traditional man:

Sensitive man is not the opposite of traditional man on such dimensions as competition and success, emotional expression and homophobia, but he is a man who has a budding understanding of the pitfalls of such gender-role traps and is willing, at least on an intellectual level, to break free of traditional masculine gender roles. (p. 45)

So while these sensitive men may have chosen to adopt more nontraditional actual, ideal, and ought gendered selves in response to changing times, they appear to remain very much aware of, and beholden to, more traditional actual, ideal, and ought gendered selves.

According to Mahalik, Cournoyer, DeFranc, Cherry, & Napolitano (1998) more nontraditional men of this kind may struggle with feeling vulnerability and shame associated with expressing their emotional needs. In seeking to avoid the use of more traditionally masculine defense mechanisms such as denial and projection, Mahalik et al. posited that more nontraditional men may struggle even more to adapt when distressed. Further, some research has
shown that men who experience confusion about what it means to be characteristically male are also more likely to experience social anxiety, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, diffused ego identity, and a lack of feeling of social connectedness (Wade & Brittan-Powell, 2000; Wade & Gelso, 1998). However, there is also some suggestion that the link between confusion about masculinity and negative outcomes is mediated by nontraditionality in gender ideology. In other words, if one espouses more nontraditional beliefs about men, fewer of these negative psychological outcomes seem to result. Presumably, this link exists because these men, though unsure of what it means to be a man, are probably less likely to accept traditional masculine ideas and behaviors that increase one’s risk of physical, social, or emotional problems such as risk-taking, and avoiding help-seeking for medical and psychological services (Wade, 1998).

These studies provide some suggestion that the gender role self-concept may be related to broader well-being.

**Extending the Conflicting Standards Dilemma to the Study of Men**

Though researchers have only recently begun to understand how men may navigate conflicting or confusing messages about masculinity, the notion is not without precedent in gender research. Stroink (2004) investigated the manifestation, and some sequelae, of these conflicting standards in a sample of women in her proposal of the Conflicting Standards Dilemma. Although Stroink’s work focused on the experiences of women, the theory is discussed here as a potential framework for how one might approach the corollary in men’s experiences. The Conflicting Standards Dilemma, as informed by Higgins’ (1987) self-discrepancy theory, refers to “the ambiguity that results when one identifies with a group for which there are inconsistent and contradictory expectations” (p. 274). Stroink’s notion rests on the observation repeated by gender scholars (e.g., Falk, 1998, Heriot, 1983) that multiple ways of constructing and enacting masculine and feminine behavior are salient to members of
contemporary Western culture. In response to this multiplicity, she argued that individuals of either sex may lack a singular consistent basis upon which to define and understand their identities as either men or women.

Further, Stroink argued that “when one’s identity as a woman or man is made salient, there may be a bewildering array of often mutually exclusive expectations and potential characteristics that must be navigated and from which the woman or man must choose” (p. 274). Consistent with the basic notion advanced by Higgins (1987), she posited that these messages are propagated by guides—individual women’s representations of the specific behaviors and attributes that are expected of them by specific entities. These guides can be either specific or generalized. Specific guides refer to representations of specific others, such as a mother or partner. Generalized guides, in contrast, refer to particular social groups and our conceptions of what these groups think are gender-appropriate behavior, such as “women in general” and “society.” Stroink (2004) found that, consistent with previous research (Higgins, 1987;1989), discrepancies in femininity self-guides were predictive of negative psychological outcomes for women such as agitation, dejection, and confusion.

Presumably there may be a number of ways to process and respond to these discrepancies amongst one’s guides. Therefore, Stroink suspected that understanding women’s coping styles in relation to these conflicting social messages about gender may elucidate an important aspect of women’s experiences in a post-liberation age. For example, some women may align themself with a particular guide or consistent set of guides, while ignoring the expectations of the rest (e.g., aligning with the traditional expectations of one’s father and mother). Stroink also posited that some women may choose to adapt their behavior to the perceived expectations of each social situation or guide as it was salient, resulting in inconsistent gendered behavior across contexts.
(e.g., deferring in arguments with a romantic partner, while being competitive in a work environment). They may also simply fail to follow the expectations of any specific guide, and instead remain essentially “frozen” amongst all the possibilities for action (p. 287). Despite these various possible coping styles, Stroink had reason to suspect that the perception of discrepancy amongst guides would be associated with negative outcomes, regardless of the coping style employed. This prediction was based in part on self-discrepancy theory which posits that individuals experience a double approach-avoidance conflict when they are motivated to live up to mutually contradictory ideals (Higgins, 1989; Van Hook & Higgins, 1988).

**Ego Identity Development and the Gender Role Self-Concept**

We may be helped to understand how people resolve crises of gender role self-concept by better understanding how people resolve identity crises more generally. As Erikson (1968) proposed, people in late-adolescence face the central task of defining a stable self-concept amidst the multiplicity of possible identities available to them. Stroink’s discussion of the use of coping styles to mitigate gender identity confusion is in many ways reminiscent of this and Marcia’s (1966) theories of identity development. Therefore, Marcia’s theory is briefly discussed here and then applied to the notion of the gender role self-concept.

Much like Stroink later theorized with her coping styles, Marcia postulated four ego identity statuses to refer to the ways in which people resolve identity crises. According to Marcia, the resolution of this stage may occur through *ego diffusion*, *foreclosure*, *moratorium*, or *achievement*. These ego formations reflect varying levels of *self-exploration* and *commitment* to a particular identity. Self-exploration refers to the extent to which someone has explored different ideological beliefs, preferences, and interpersonal roles. Commitment refers to the extent to which one has committed to a particular set of ideas and practices. *Foreclosure* refers to a lack of exploration and premature commitment to an identity, such as when a young man
adopts the perspectives and practices of his father, without engaging in more serious exploration of alternatives. *Diffusion* refers to a lack of both self-exploration and commitment, and refers to those who are generally not concerned about their lack of direction or identity incoherence. *Achievement* refers to the presence of both self-exploration and commitment to an identity, and is thought to be the most autonomous and healthy way of resolving this stage in ego development. Finally, *moratorium* refers to the presence of self-exploration in the absence of commitment—someone who is amidst an exploration of their identity, but who has not yet settled on any particular one.

But how might these approaches to identity resolution inform the study of gender self-concept resolution? In an effort to extend the notion of ego formation to our understanding of men’s gender development, Wade (1998) posited a theory of gender role self-concept development. Just as identity development occurs within a social and comparative context, Wade proposed that men also define their masculinity with reference to their male peers. They hypothesized that the way a man conceives of and relates himself to other men carries implications for how his own gender-role self-concept develops (Wade, 1998). In this way, the male reference group is the “purveyor of masculine culture” (p. 6; Wade, 2008). Thereby, the diversity of masculinities we observe amongst men arises in part because men experience different characteristic types of psychological relatedness to other males, which is in turn related to ego identity development and to the development of masculinity ideologies in the form of the gender role self-concept. These gender role self-concepts are then related to men’s gender-related attitudes and the quality of their experiences as gendered selves.

Wade and Gelso (1998) found support for four characteristic types of psychological relatedness to other males in their validation of the Reference Group Identity Dependence Scale.
These types comprised the subscales labeled No Reference Group, Reference Group Dependent, Reference Group Nondependent - Similarity, and Reference Group Nondependent – Diversity. The same individual may score at varying levels on multiple of the subscale dimensions for this measure, and thus an individual will not always fit into a singular categorical type. Those who endorse content on the No Reference Group subscale indicate feelings of disconnectedness from other men and a lack of psychological relatedness to them. These men feel there are no other men like them and often possess gender role self-concepts that are undefined and/or fragmented. The Reference Group Dependent subscale taps into feelings of connectedness with a certain group of men with whom one identifies, but not other groups of men. These gender role self-concepts are characterized by being externally defined, conformist, and often rigid. Reference Group Nondependency is defined by feelings of connectedness to all men, and is divided into two types-- Similarity and Diversity. The Similarity subscale assesses feelings of similarity with all men, while the Diversity subscale assesses one’s appreciation of differences among men. Corresponding gender self-concepts are thought to be more internally defined and flexible (Wade, 2008).

As hypothesized, the four reference group types have been shown to be related to Marcia’s ego identity statuses. Wade and Gelso (1998) found that men who lacked a significant reference group in defining their male identity (No Reference Group) were also more likely to have a diffuse ego identity, to experience higher levels of depressive and anxiety symptoms, and to have lower self-esteem. Therefore, uncertainty about one’s identity more generally is related to uncertainty in one’s gender role self-concept as well. Reference Group Nondependency was associated with achieved ego identity, and unrelated to psychological outcomes, indicating that feelings of relatedness to all men are most associated with a healthier type of ego development.
(Kroger, 1993). The picture was slightly more complex for Reference Group Dependency, which was associated with both foreclosed and achieved ego identity. This seems to indicate that commitment to the ideals of one’s defined reference group may occur with or without significant self-exploration or consideration of alternatives.

**Reference Group Identity Dependence and Conflicting Standards**

An as yet unexplored idea is whether reference group identification may relate in some way to perceptions of conflicting standards around gender. The fact that self-exploration has been correlated with reference group identification may provide some support for the idea (Wade and Gelso, 1998). If in fact there is some relation between perceptions of discrepancy about masculinity (i.e., conflicting standards) and feelings of psychological relatedness to other men, we may predict that the reference group identity statuses that are related to a lack of self-exploration in ego identity (i.e., No Reference Group or Reference Group Dependent) could be related to lower levels of conflicting standards in the social environment. This may occur because environments characterized by less conflicting standards may reduce opportunity or incentive for self-exploration. Likewise, we might expect that high levels of perceived discrepancy in messages about gender would be related to reference group statuses that acknowledge and embrace diverse groups of men (i.e., Reference Group Nondependent – Similarity and Diversity). This possibility will be explored in this study.

Wade’s (1998) reference group dependency theory, Marcia’s ego identity theory (1966), and Stroink’s (2004) conflicting standards dilemma all suggest that there is a significant relationship between one’s social referents and how one conceives of themself. If in turn one’s social milieu has significant bearing on how the gender self-concept develops as well, it makes sense to understand both the content and the level of heterogeneity within that milieu. In other words, the development of one’s sense of masculinity may be impacted not only by the specific
attitudes and practices of one’s family and friends, but also by the level of diversity amongst these influences. The messages men hear about preferred masculine attributes may differ across contexts and create environments that may be confusing or difficult to navigate without choosing some strategy by which to sort out and make sense of these messages.

Stroink (2004) argued that the two most adaptive ways of responding to the existence of conflicting standards are (a) individuation, or relying on one’s own personal standards for behavior at the exclusion of others’ perceptions, and (b) alignment, or relying on only one of many possible guides to determine one’s own gendered conduct. These two coping styles presumably represent a more adaptive stance in that they manage multiplicity by in some way negating it, through commitment to a singular way of enacting gender. A central assumption of this ego identity based approach is then made visible—that any form of compartmentalization or inconsistency in behavior or attitudes as a function of one’s environment may represent some problematic incoherence in the individual. Similarly, Wade & Gelso’s (1998) model also predicts that a more diffuse or undifferentiated identity would be associated with negative psychological outcomes. This association was borne out in Wade & Gelso’s original scale development study, which showed significant correlations between No Reference Group scores and lower psychological well-being. The findings and theory therefore suggest that, if men indeed perceive discrepant standards, that the best way to manage it is to commit to an identity that is intransient across contexts.

**Lack of Commitment: Fragmentation or Specialization?**

However, there is also some suggestion that a more uncommitted or diffuse identity may not always be related to negative psychological outcomes. A significant amount of literature exists investigating a somewhat related notion: self-differentiation, or “the extent to which a person’s self-conceptions vary across different roles, (self as parent, self as employee)” (Bigler,
Neimeyer, & Brown, 2001, p. 396). Associations between levels of self-differentiation and psychological outcomes have been debated in both the theoretical and empirical literature, with mixed results (Bigler et al. 2001, Donahue, Robins, Roberts, & John, 1993; Gergen, 1991). On one side of the argument, self-differentiation is thought to indicate a flexible and highly adaptive specialization that is responsive to what parts of the self may be most useful or expedient within particular contexts (Gergen, 1971; 1972; Goffman, 1959). For instance, the father who is accommodating and nurturing when caring for a child, but uncompromising and assertive when negotiating the purchase price for a car is not necessarily evincing some lack of internal coherence, but rather readjusting to new contexts. Another side of the argument, in contrast, contends that this inconsistency reflects not specialization, but self-fragmentation (Donahue et al., 1993). In support of this notion, Donahue and colleagues found that high self-concept differentiation predicted poor emotional adjustment: higher levels of depression and neuroticism, and lower self-esteem.

However, Bigler and colleagues (2001) found that when levels of self-concept clarity were accounted for (Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavallee, & Lehman, 1996), the negative psychological outcomes associated with higher levels of self-differentiation no longer obtained. *Self-concept clarity,* or the degree to which one’s self-beliefs are clearly, confidently defined and internally consistent, has been associated with lower neuroticism, higher self-esteem, lower negative affect, and lower depressive and anxiety symptom endorsement (Campbell et al., 1996). Their finding led Bigler and colleagues to conclude that self-differentiation may not necessarily be associated with negative psychological outcomes when high differentiation occurs also within the context of a high degree of core-level self-concept stability.
To extrapolate from these results, the diminished well-being that has been associated with the No Reference Group ascription may then be buffered by the degree to which one holds a clear self-concept. In other words, it is possible that the No Reference Group type is comprised of two unique sets of individuals: those who lack self-concept clarity and experience negative psychological outcomes, and those who have higher self-concept clarity and do not experience as many negative outcomes. In other words, a non-committed gender identity may not in and of itself be a less healthy way of adapting to situations characterized by conflicting gender-related demands. Rather, some men who exhibit higher degrees of “switching” between contexts and social roles may possess greater responsiveness to environmental cues, or greater resourcefulness in response to changing demands (Gergen, 1971; 1972; Goffman, 1959), thereby circumventing some of the negative psychological outcomes associated with lacking a male reference group.

In sum, evidence exists to suggest that the experience of conflicting social standards, gendered or otherwise, may be associated with negative psychological outcomes. Therefore, to explore this idea further, this dissertation assesses whether a conflicting standards paradigm may be extended to our understanding of men. It then looks at how perceptions of discrepancy in messages about gender may relate to psychological well-being, as well as how these discrepancies relate to the use of male reference groups. It then analyzes whether any relationships between reference group identity dependence and well-being are buffered by self-concept clarity.
CHAPTER 2
PURPOSE AND SPECIFIC AIMS

The present study seeks to investigate whether men report experiencing discrepancies in social messages about preferred gender-related attributes, and whether this perception is related to well-being. Further, this study seeks to elucidate the relationship between perceptions of discrepancy in expected gendered attributes and a measure of male reference group dependence. Finally, various gender identity statuses will be analyzed for their relationship to psychological outcomes, and the potential buffering effect of self-concept clarity on these relationships will be assessed.

Specific Aim 1

To investigate men’s perceptions of conflicting social standards regarding preferred masculinity, and evaluate how these perceptions may relate to psychological outcomes.

- **Hypothesis 1a:** Men will report significant discrepancies among self-guides/contexts regarding preferred masculine traits.

- **Hypothesis 1b:** Higher rates of perceived discrepancy in masculine standards will be associated with (a) higher depressive symptomatology, (b) lower satisfaction with life, and (c) lower self-esteem.

Specific Aim 2

To discern the relationship between perceptions of discrepancy between self-guides/contexts and reference group identity dependence.

- **Hypothesis 2:** The extent to which a person’s gender identity is based in feelings of connection to all men will relate to perceptions of discrepancy, such that greater feelings of connection will relate to greater perceptions of discrepancy.

Specific Aim 3

To explore the relationship between reference group identity dependence and psychological outcomes.
• **Hypothesis 3a:** The extent to which men lack a reference group in defining their gender identity will significantly predict negative psychological outcomes, such that less identification will result in a) higher depressive symptomatology, b) lower satisfaction with life, and c) lower self-esteem.

• **Hypothesis 3b:** Self-concept clarity will moderate the relationship between lack of reference group and negative psychological outcomes, such that those men possessing high self-concept clarity will show a weaker association to negative psychological outcomes.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

Participants and Procedure

118 male and 311 female participants were recruited from undergraduate upper-level psychology courses at a large southeastern public university, and were compensated for their participation with a small amount of extra credit toward their course grade. Random responding was detected by embedding specific demand questions within each scale of more than 10 questions (e.g., “Answer ‘mostly agree’ to this question”). 41 participants’ data (12 male, and 29 female) were dropped from subsequent analyses for answering one or more these questions incorrectly. Five participants were dropped from analysis due to missing values for entire scales. No other participants had missing values, leaving 103 males and 280 females for subsequent analyses. Of the male participants, 63.1% (65) classified themselves as “White,” 11.7% (12) were “Hispanic,” 9.7% (10) selected multiple race/ethnicity categories, 6.8% (7) were “Asian,” 6.8% (7) were “Black,” 1% (1) was “Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander,” and 1% (1) was “Other.” Also in the male sample, 47.6% (49) classified themselves as being in their first year of college, 19.4% (20) as second year, 18.4% (19) as third year, 13.6% (14) as fourth year, and 1% (1) as fifth year or more.

Participants were given a web address for an online survey that they were able to complete on their own time. They were asked to consent electronically to participate in the study after reading an informed consent description. Participants were then shown a prompt (see Appendix B) that asked them to identify three relevant individuals, groups, or contexts in their life that are most relevant to them in defining their gender. Suggestions for self-guides in this prompt included “with male friends,” “at the park,” “on a date,” and “with your mother,” among others, although participants were also instructed that they may volunteer their own relevant
persons or contexts. After supplying these three guides, participants were then asked to complete three versions of a Bem Sex Role Inventory short form (BSRI; Bem, 1974) for each of their personally relevant self-guides with the following prompt: “Please rate how much you feel [self-guide inserted] believes you should possess each of the following attributes.” Participants were then asked to complete the Positive Affect and Negative Affect Scale for affect at the time of participation (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), Reference Group Identity Dependence Scale (RGIDS; Wade & Gelso, 1998), and Self Concept Clarity Scale (SCC; Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavallee, & Lehman, 1996). All participants first completed the three BSRI’s, followed by the PANAS, and then the remaining assessments were counterbalanced through computer randomization across participants. Only men completed the RGIDS, as this assessment is specifically pointed at the experiences of men.

**Measures**

**Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI)**

The BSRI (Bem, 1974) is a popular self-report measure of sex role orientation. The short form of the BSRI contains 30 items measuring traditionally masculine and feminine traits. The Femininity scale consists of 10 traits traditionally viewed as more desirable for a woman. The Masculinity scale consists of 10 traits traditionally viewed as more desirable for a man than for a woman. In the standard administration participants rate, on a 7-point scale from 1 = *never or almost never true* to 7 = *always or almost always true*, the degree to which they feel each trait describes them as a person. Sample items from the Masculinity scale include “independent,” “competitive,” and “aggressive;” sample items from the Femininity scale include “compassionate,” “sympathetic,” and “sensitive to the needs of others.” The remaining 10 items
were originally developed to measure social desirability, but are now generally used only as filler items. Internal consistency reliabilities for the scales were reported by Bem (1981) to range between .84 and .87.

Following the methodology devised by Stroink (2004) to measure discrepancies between self-guides in expected gendered qualities, this study asked participants to complete three separate BSRIIs wherein the views of various self-guides are elicited from participants. The rating of multiple adjective lists (such as the BSRI) to determine self-discrepancies has been utilized and validated by the work of Tangney, Niedenthal, Covert, & Barlow (1998), who found this method to be essentially equivalent to qualitative methods of assessing these discrepancies. Following Stroink, directions for the BSRI were altered to read “Please rate how much you feel [self-guide inserted] believes you should possess each of the following attributes.” Scoring was done by summing ratings for the traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine adjectives separately in order to two create continuous variables for each guide.

**Self-Guide Discrepancy**

Following the logic of Stroink (2004), BSRI Masculinity scale scores were summed separately for each of the three contexts, yielding a total of three BSRI Masculinity ratings. These values were divided by the total number of items in the scale (ten) to yield an average item rating for masculine traits. The absolute difference among the three possible parings of these item averages were then calculated (i.e., Context A-C difference, A-B difference, B-C difference). These three scores were then averaged on the participant level to give an estimate of average masculinity discrepancy (AMD) for each participant. The same procedure was used to calculate femininity discrepancy scores, yielding a total average femininity discrepancy score (AFD) for each participant. Higher AMD and AFD scores indicate a higher degree of average difference between self-guides expectations for preferred gendered behavior.
Positive Affect and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS)

The PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) is a 20-item self-report measure of positive and negative affect. It consists of 10 adjectives for the negative affect (NA) dimension and 10 adjectives for the positive affect (PA) dimension. Participants were instructed to rate how descriptive the adjectives are of them at the present moment (i.e., “RIGHT NOW”), with response alternatives ranging from 1 = very slightly or not at all to 5 = extremely on a 5-point scale. Ratings will be summed to provide separate total PA and NA scores. PANAS scale validity has been supported through correlations with general aspects of psychopathology (Huebner & Dew, 1995), as well as other expressions of affect (Watson and Clark, 1984). This scale had an 8-week test-retest alpha reliability of .85 for negative affect (NA) and .89 for positive affect (PA) in a sample of 660 psychology undergraduates from a southwestern university. This measure was included in order to control for the possible effects of negative affect covariance between the various measures. The Cronbach’s alpha for the negative affect subscale (NA) in this study was .84.

Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D)

The CES-D (Radloff, 1977) is a 20-item scale that measures levels of depressive symptoms. Each item is scored on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 = never to rarely (less than 1 day), to 3 = most or all of the time (5-7 days), and refers to participants’ experiences in the previous week. The items on this scale form four subscales assessing: (1) depressed mood; (2) psychomotor retardation; (3) lack of well-being; and (4) interpersonal difficulties. Scores for items 4, 8, 12, and 16 are reversed before summing all items to yield a total score. Total scores can range from 0 to 60. Higher scores (both item and total scores) indicate more depressive symptoms. A score of 16 or higher has been used extensively as the cut-off point for high depressive symptoms. Gatz and Hurwicz (1990) confirmed the original factor structure of the
CES-D, and reported subscale reliabilities of 0.85, 0.75, 0.78 and 0.57 for depressed mood, psychomotor retardation, lack of well-being and interpersonal difficulties, respectively. The CES-D has been shown to be a reliable measure for assessing the number, types, and duration of depressive symptoms across racial, gender, and age categories (Knight, Williams, McGee & Olaman, 1997; Radloff, 1977; Roberts, Vernon, & Rhoades, 1989). High internal consistency has been reported with alpha coefficients ranging from .85 to .90 across studies for the full scale (Radloff, 1977). Concurrent validity by clinical and self-report criteria, as well as substantial evidence of construct validity with the Hamilton Clinician’s Rating Scale and SCL-90 have been demonstrated (Weissman, Prusoff, & Newberry, 1975). The Cronbach’s alpha for the overall sample in this study was .90.

**The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)**

The SWLS (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) is a 5-item self-report scale used to assess life satisfaction and as an indicator of psychological well-being. It has been utilized with various ethnic minority groups and with various nationalities (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003). Participants will be asked to respond to items on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*, with higher scores indicating higher levels of life satisfaction. Construct validity was originally demonstrated with various other measures of well-being, including the Affect Balance Scale and the well-being subscale of the Differential Personality Questionnaire, as well as non-significant correlation with the Marlowe-Crowne social desirability scale. The two-month test-retest coefficient alpha was .87. The Cronbach’s alpha for the overall sample in this study was .89.

**Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)**

The RSES is a 10-item self-report scale devised by Rosenberg (1965) and is one of the most widely used measures of measure global self-esteem. Participants respond to each item on
a 4-point scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Half of the items are positively worded, while the other half is negatively worded. Positively worded items in the measure include: “I feel that I’m a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others,” while negatively worded items include: “At times I think I am no good at all.” Items written in a negative direction are reverse-coded and summed with positively worded items, yielding a score ranging from 10 to 40, with higher scores indicating higher global self-esteem. The RSES is the most commonly used measure of global self-esteem and there is substantial evidence for its reliability and validity (e.g., Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991). The Cronbach’s alpha for the overall sample in this study was .90.

**Self-Concept Clarity Scale (SCC)**

The SCC scale is a 12-item self-report scale developed by Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavallee, & Lehman (1996) to measure self-concept clarity, which was defined as “the extent to which the contents of an individual’s self-concept (e.g., perceived personal attributes) are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable” (Campbell et al., 1996). Participants responded to questions such as “My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another,” and “My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently” on a 5-point Likert scale anchored by “strongly disagree” (1) and “strongly agree” (5), producing a total score between 12 and 60, with higher scores indicating higher self-concept clarity. This scale had a 4-month test-retest reliability of .79 and an average alpha coefficient of .86 in a sample of 155 Canadian undergraduate students. Construct validity of the SCC was supported by correlations with measures of self-esteem which were theorized to be highly related to one’s level of self-concept clarity (Campbell et al., 1996). The Cronbach’s alpha for the overall sample in this study was .90.
Reference Group Identity Dependence Scale

The RGIDS (Wade & Gelso, 1998) is a 30-item scale used to assess “the extent to which a male is dependent on a male reference group for his gender role self-concept” (p. 384). Participants rate items on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree. Item 24 only is reverse-scored. The RGIDS postulates that three levels of ego identity are associated with four levels of psychological relatedness to other males: No Reference Group (corresponding to a diffuse/undifferentiated ego), Reference Group Dependent (corresponding to a foreclosed/conformist ego), or Reference Group Nondependent, which is subdivided into Similarity and Diversity subtypes (corresponding to an achieved/integrated ego). Example items include “I have little in common with most other males” (no reference group), “I only feel connected with a certain group of males” (reference group dependent), and “I feel comfortable relating to different types of males” (reference group nondependent). The No Reference Group scale assesses men’s lack of psychological relatedness and feelings of disconnectedness from other men. The Reference Group Dependent scale assesses men’s psychological relatedness and feelings of connectedness with some men perceived as similar to oneself but not other men who are perceived as dissimilar. The Reference Group Nondependent status is divided into two types, and is characterized by psychological relatedness and feelings of connectedness with all men. The two types of Reference Group Nondependent are Similarity and Diversity. The Similarity subscale assesses feelings of similarity with all men, while the Diversity subscale assesses one’s appreciation of differences among men. Higher scores on the scales indicate more endorsement of each subscale’s content. The subscales of the RGIDS were arrived at via factor analysis, and have been shown to have moderate internal consistency ranging from .70 to .78 (Wade & Gelso, 1998). There is also some evidence for the construct validity of this measure through correlations with subscales of the Gender Role Conflict Scale and measures of ego identity.
development. The alpha coefficients for this study by subscale were as follows: No Reference Group ($\alpha = .81$); Reference Group Dependent ($\alpha = .63$); Reference Group Nondependent Total ($\alpha = .78$). The subscales of the Reference Group Nondependent scale were Similarity ($\alpha = .83$) and Diversity ($\alpha = .65$).

**Demographics**

Information about gender identity was collected at the beginning of the survey, while information about race/ethnicity, and year in college were collected at the end.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

The main objective of this study was to examine the presence of conflicting social messages about preferred masculinity, and how these conflicts may relate to various measures of psychological health and relatedness to other males. Analysis of each of the study’s aims and the results are presented below. For analysis of the initial hypotheses, two variables were created from the three BSRI context ratings that gave an estimate of average masculinity discrepancy and average femininity discrepancy. Discrepancy scores were calculated on the participant level by computing the absolute difference in total BSRI masculinity scale scores for all possible pairings of masculinity self-guides (e.g., average Context A masculinity item response minus average Context C masculinity item response), yielding three masculinity difference scores. These three masculinity guide to guide difference scores were then averaged to yield a total average masculinity discrepancy score (AMD) for each participant. The same procedure was used to calculate the three femininity difference scores and an averaged femininity discrepancy score (AFD) for each participant.

Preliminary analyses of all dependent variables were conducted to determine the nature of distributions and any outliers present. Skewness and kurtosis estimates of all dependent variables showed no significant deviance from normality, with all values less than two (Table 4.1). Outliers were identified by creating Z-scores of all dependent variables and locating values equal to 3.29 or more standard deviations from the mean (p. 77, Field, 2005). By this method, CESD (Depressive Symptomatology) contained 1 outlier, RSES (Self-Esteem) contained 1 outlier, PANn (Negative Affect) contained 3 outliers, RGN (Reference Group Nondependent - Total subscale) contained 1 outlier, and AMD (Average Masculine Discrepancy) contained 1 outlier.
The strategy used to correct for these outliers was to replace these cases with a Z-score equal to +/- 3.29 (p. 79, Field, 2005).

**Specific Aim 1:** To investigate men’s perceptions of conflicting social standards regarding preferred masculinity, and evaluate how these perceptions may relate to psychological outcomes.

**Hypothesis 1a:** Men will report significant discrepancies among self-guides/contexts regarding preferred masculine traits.

Participants were given 21 examples of potential contexts in which their gender may be most noticeable to them, but were also instructed that they may choose examples that were not on the list (see Appendix B). A total of only 14.6% of the male participants (15 males) selected one or more context that was not provided to them on the list of examples. Some examples of these freely offered contexts were “as the head of a school organization,” “at the beach,” “when discussing sexism,” and “scout troop.” Of the contexts chosen verbatim or nearly verbatim from the list of examples provided, just over half of all contexts selected came from the first five items on the list. The five most popular contexts selected were “with a romantic partner” (53 males), “participating in sports” (32 males), “at the gym” (28 males), “on a date” (25 males), and “at a bar or club” (25 males).

Two analytic techniques were used to determine whether discrepancies among these contexts are indicated in participants’ BSRI responses (Table 4.2). First, two one-sample t-tests were conducted to test the null hypothesis that average masculine and feminine discrepancy scores differed from a test value of zero, or no difference, for the men in this sample. The results of these tests indicated that Average Masculine Discrepancy was statistically different from zero, $t(102) = 15.87, p < .001$, and that Average Feminine Discrepancy also significantly differed from
zero, $t(102) = 16.17, p < .001$, indicating that men in this study were reporting differences in expected gendered traits among self-guides/contexts.

As a more rigorous test, and in line with the methodology used to determine significant discrepancy in Stroink (2004), two repeated-measures ANOVAs were run to test for discrepancies in expected masculine traits and feminine traits separately. To test for discrepancy among self-guides regarding masculine traits, the three BSRI Masculinity scale average item scores from Contexts A, B, and C were entered as a three-level within-subject factor, rather than the averaged AMD and AFD variables used in the t-test analysis. Mauchly’s test indicated that the assumption of sphericity was not violated, $\chi^2(2) = 5.69, NS$. The overall effect for context failed to reach significance, $F(2,204) = 1.94, NS$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Although the test may have been underpowered, the small partial-eta squared may also indicate that context is not a significant factor in BSRI masculinity ratings for men. However, consistent with Stroink (2004), context was a significant factor in women’s ratings of masculine traits, $F(2,558) = 13.58, p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Another repeated-measures ANOVA was run to explore whether men reported significant discrepancies among contexts for feminine traits, with the three BSRI Femininity scale average item scores from Contexts A, B, and C entered as a three-level within-subject factor. Mauchly’s test indicated that the assumption of sphericity was not violated, $\chi^2(2) = 2.55, NS$. The overall effect for context was significant, $F(2,204) = 6.37, p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, indicating that femininity ratings differed across self-guides/contexts. Likewise, context was also significant in women’s ratings of feminine traits, $F(2,558) = 18.08, p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. These results were not further decomposed, given that such analysis would not be meaningful in this case (i.e., selection of particular self-guides/contexts varied across participants).
Overall, these results may be seen as supportive of Hypothesis 1a that men perceive significant discrepancy in social messages about preferred gender-related traits. Although perceptions of masculine discrepancy were significantly different from zero, this difference failed to appear in a repeated-measures analysis. Somewhat surprisingly, however, both analyses show that men are reporting significant discrepancies regarding the feminine traits others expect them to possess.

**Hypothesis 1b:** Higher rates of perceived discrepancy in masculine standards will be associated with (a) higher depressive symptomatology, (b) lower satisfaction with life, and (c) lower self-esteem.

A series of Pearson’s r correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationships between perceptions of discrepancy (Average Masculine Discrepancy and Average Feminine Discrepancy) and all psychological well-being variables (Depressive Symptomatology, Self-Esteem, Satisfaction with Life, and Negative Affect) for men and women separately (Tables 4.3 and 4.4), though only the results for men are reported below. Contrary to predictions, Average Masculine Discrepancy did not significantly correlate with any of the psychological health measures for men. Average Feminine Discrepancy for men, however, was significantly and positively correlated to Self-Esteem, \( r(103) = .21, p = .03 \), indicating that greater discrepancy in expectations for feminine traits was related to greater self-esteem. Average Feminine Discrepancy also significantly correlated with Average Masculine Discrepancy, \( r(103) = .34, p < .001 \). Expected significant correlations were observed in the appropriate directions among all psychological health measures (e.g., Satisfaction with Life and Self-Esteem were positively correlated). Negative Affect (assessing affect at the time of participation) also significantly correlated with well-being variables in expected directions: Depressive Symptomatology, \( r(103) \)
=.43, p < .001; Self-Esteem, \( r(103) = -.37, p < .001 \); and Satisfaction with Life, \( r(103) = -.25, p = .01 \).

These results failed to support Hypothesis 1b that masculine discrepancy would predict negative psychological outcomes. Femininity discrepancy was also unrelated to psychological outcomes with one exception: self-esteem. However, this relationship was opposite of the expected direction, in that greater perceptions of discrepancy in expected feminine traits related to greater self-esteem.

**Specific Aim 2:** To discern the relationship between perceptions of discrepancy between self-guides/contexts and reference group identity dependence.

**Hypothesis 2:** The extent to which a person’s gender identity is based in feelings of connection to all men will relate to perceptions of discrepancy, such that greater feelings of connection will relate to greater perceptions of discrepancy.

Pearson’s \( r \) correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationships of masculine discrepancy and feminine discrepancy to the four subscales of the Reference Group Identity Dependence Scale (RGIDS) for men (Table 4.3). The subscales of the RGIDS showed correlations of similar direction and magnitude as Wade & Gelso (1998). Contrary to predictions, Average Masculine Discrepancy and Average Feminine Discrepancy did not significantly correlate with scores on any of the gender role identity statuses. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported, as the perception of discrepancy in self-guides was not related to the Reference Group Nondependent - Diversity subscale of the RGIDS.

**Specific Aim 3:** To explore the relationship between reference group identity dependence and psychological outcomes.
**Hypothesis 3a:** The extent to which men lack a reference group in defining their gender identity will significantly predict negative psychological outcomes, such that less identification will result in a) higher depressive symptomatology, b) lower satisfaction with life, and c) lower self-esteem.

A series of Pearson’s r correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationship between the No Reference Group Identity (NRG) subscale of the Reference Group Identity Dependence Scale (RGIDS), and all of the psychological well-being variables. Consistent with predictions, scores on the NRG subscale were associated with higher depressive symptomatology, \( r(103) = .42, p < .001 \); lower self-esteem, \( r(103) = -.45, p < .001 \), lower satisfaction with life, \( r(103) = -.23, p < .001 \), and higher negative affect, \( r(103) = .22, p = .03 \).

Negative Affect and Satisfaction with Life are classified as small to medium-size effects, while Depressive Symptomatology and Self-Esteem could be classified as medium-to-large size effects (Cohen, 1992).

To further explore the relationship of NRG scores to the psychological well-being variables, an inverted hierarchical regression analysis was run in which Depressive Symptomatology, Self-Esteem, Satisfaction with Life, and Negative Affect were regressed onto NRG scores. The limitations and merits of this inversion of independent and dependent variables within this type of analysis are explored in the Discussion section. The ratio of valid cases to number of independent variables (103:4, or 25.75:1) exceeded both the minimum (5:1) and preferred (15:1) ratio (Field, 2005), indicating sufficient sample size for this analysis. The Durbin-Watson statistic (2.07) for testing the presence of serial correlation among residuals was in the acceptable range (Durbin & Watson, 1951), indicating sufficient independence of errors. Tolerance values for all independent variables (from .44 to .71) exceeded .10, indicating that
multicollinearity was not a problem in this analysis (Field, 2005). The hierarchical regression model was run in two steps. Negative Affect was entered into the first block to control for any possible negative affect covariance across subsequent variables entered into the model. Next, depressive symptomatology, self-esteem, and satisfaction with life variables were entered in the second block.

The first step (Negative Affect) produced a model with an $R^2$ of .05, $F (1,101) = 5.21$, $p = .025$ (Table 4.5), indicating that this variable accounted for 5% of the variance observed in NRG scores. The second step produced an overall model with an $R^2$ of .26, $F (3,98) = 8.50$, $p < .001$, indicating that Negative Affect, Self-Esteem, Depressive Symptomatology, and Satisfaction with Life scores together accounted for 26% of the variance observed in NRG scores. For the second model, the R square change statistic was significant, $F (3,98) = 8.50$, $p < .001$, indicating that a significant amount of the variance in NRG scores (21%) was accounted for with the well-being variables, even while controlling for the effects of negative affect covariance. This constitutes a medium-sized effect (Cohen, 1992).

Two of three well-being variables contributed significantly to NRG: depressive symptomatology, $\beta = .32$, $t (98) = 2.43$, $p = .017$; and self-esteem, $\beta = -.40$, $t (98) = -3.18$, $p < .002$. Self-Esteem had the largest standardized beta, indicating it made the greatest independent contribution to the fit of the model. While Satisfaction with Life (SWLS) was hypothesized to be related to NRG scores, it did not contribute significantly to the prediction of NRG when combined with the other predictor variables, $\beta = .21$, $t (98) = 1.75$, $NS$, despite a significant negative bivariate correlation between the two measures. This suggests that the significant correlation between SWLS and NRG may mostly reflect shared variance of SWLS with the other target predictor variables, and/or with negative affect.
Pearson’s r correlation coefficients were also calculated between each of the other subscales of the RGIDS and all well-being outcomes (Table 4.3). Although no specific predictions were made, no significant correlations were observed between psychological well-being variables and the Reference Group Dependent and Reference Group Nondependent – Similarity subscale scores. However, there was a significant, small to medium-sized correlation between the Reference Group Nondependent - Diversity subscale and self-esteem, \( r(103) = .24, \quad p = .013 \). Some additional analyses of this hypothesis may be seen in the analyses of Hypothesis 3b.

These results were partially supportive of Hypothesis 3a, that scores on the No Reference Group subscale of the RGIDS would be a significant predictor of negative psychological well-being outcomes. Self-Esteem, Depressive Symptomatology, and Satisfaction with Life were all significantly correlated in the expected directions with No Reference Group endorsement. While no specific predictions were made about the relationships of the well-being variables to the other subscales of the Reference Group Identity Dependence Scale, it was found that no significant correlations emerged excepting one. Self-esteem showed a positive correlation with the Reference Group Nondependent – Diversity subscale, indicating that men who expressed an appreciation for a diversity of male identities amongst men also reported higher self-esteem.

**Hypothesis 3b:** Self-concept clarity will moderate the relationship between lack of reference group and negative psychological outcomes, such that those men possessing high self-concept clarity will show a weaker associations to negative psychological outcomes.

Hierarchical regression analyses were then run to test for a possible buffering moderation effect of Self-Concept Clarity on the relationship between No Reference Group scores and well-being variables. A moderator variable alters the strength of a causal relationship, and indicates
the conditions under which a predictor variable has a relatively stronger or weaker effect upon an outcome variable. A *buffering* moderator reduces the strength of the relationship between a predictor and outcome variable. In this case, it was predicted that participants with high No Reference Group scores who also possessed high Self-Concept Clarity would show less of an association between NRG and well-being outcomes relative to those lower in Self-Concept Clarity. In other words, high self-concept clarity would serve to buffer the negative effects of lacking a reference group on well-being. The approach advocated by Frazier, Tix, & Barron (2004) was used for this test of moderation, which suggests first standardizing predictor and moderator variables by creating Z scores of each, and then creating a product term of those standardized variables to represent the interaction. The predictor and moderator variables are entered first, and the interaction term is entered separately. A comparison between these models gives an indication of whether a significant moderation is present. Two exceptions to the standard regression interpretation should be kept in mind when evaluating the following results. First, as all variables entered into the analysis have been standardized (in the form of Z scores), the unstandardized B values should be interpreted, rather than the beta weights (Frazier et al., 2004). Second, these B coefficients reflect the *conditional* effects of each variable, in that they represent the contribution of that variable to the model when all other variables are held at a value of zero.

Three separate hierarchical regressions were run using this method in which Self-Esteem, Depressive Symptomatology, and Satisfaction with Life served as the criterion variable, while No Reference Group scores (NRG), Self-Concept Clarity (SCC), and the interaction of NRG and SCC served as predictor variables. Consistent with analyses of Hypothesis 3a, Negative Affect was again included within these models in the first step, in order to control for negative affect
covariance. The Durbin-Watson statistics for the Self-Esteem and Satisfaction with Life regression analyses were in the acceptable range (2.16 and 2.11, respectively), indicating sufficient independence of errors. There was however a violation of the independence of errors assumption for Depressive Symptomatology (1.12), indicating that the results obtained from this test should be interpreted cautiously due to some serial correlation in error terms. Tolerance values for all independent variables (from .77 to .94) indicated that multicollinearity was not a problem in any analysis.

First, the possible moderating effects of SCC were examined with Self-Esteem serving as the criterion variable (Table 4.6). Three steps produced three separate models, though only the third model is discussed here, as this model indicates both the conditional effects of the predictors, as well as the presence of any moderation (Frazier et al., 2004). The third model including negative affect, NRG, SCC, and the moderator product term (NRG x SCC) produced an $R^2$ of .49, $F(4,98) = 23.20, p < .001$, indicating that 49% of the variance in Self-Esteem scores can be accounted for by No Reference Group scores, Self-Concept Clarity, and the interaction of these two variables. NRG, $B = -.23, t(102) = -2.82, p = .006$; SCC scores, $B = .52, t(102) = 5.99, p < .001$; as well as the moderator product term, $B = -.19, t(102) = -2.28, p = .025$ all contributed significantly to Self-Esteem. Most importantly, this model represented a significant increase in predictive power over the previous model which did not contain the moderator product term, with an $R^2$ change of .03, $F_{\text{change}}(1,98) = 5.21, p = .025$. The negative B value for the product term suggests that the interaction of self-concept clarity and No Reference Group reduces the impact of No Reference Group endorsement on Self-Esteem, and thereby moderates this relationship. The form of this relationship is discussed later in this section.
Next, the potential moderating effects of SCC were examined with Depressive Symptomatology serving as the criterion variable. The third model including negative affect, NRG, SCC, and the moderator product term (NRG x SCC) produced an $R^2$ of .53, $F(4,98) = 27.49, p < .001$, indicating that 53% of the variance in Depressive Symptomatology scores can be accounted for by No Reference Group scores, Self-Concept Clarity, and the interaction of these two variables. Both NRG, $B = .15, t(102) = 2.11, p = .037$ and SCC scores, $B = -.42, t(102) = -5.58, p < .001$ contributed significantly to Depressive Symptomatology. However, the moderator product term, $B = .07, t(102) = 1.03, NS$ failed to reach significance. Accordingly, this model did not significantly increase predictive power over the previous model which did not contain the moderator product term, with an $R^2$ change of .01, $F_{\text{change}}(1,98) = 1.06, NS$, suggesting that self-concept clarity does not moderate the effect of No Reference Group on Depressive Symptomatology. This result, as previously mentioned, must be interpreted cautiously, as the independence of errors assumption was violated in this particular analysis.

Finally, the potential moderating effects of SCC were examined with Satisfaction with Life (SWLS) serving as the criterion variable. The third model including negative affect, NRG, SCC, and the moderator product term produced an $R^2$ of .27, $F(4,98) = 6.06, p < .001$, indicating that 27% of the variance in Satisfaction with Life scores can be accounted for by No Reference Group scores, Self-Concept Clarity, and the interaction of these two variables. NRG failed to contribute significantly to Satisfaction with Life, $B = -.04, t(102) = -.45, NS$. However SCC scores, $B = .45, t(102) = 4.55, p < .001$, as well as the moderator product term, $B = -.18, t(102) = 4.55, p < .001$ contributed significantly to Satisfaction with Life. Most importantly, this model represented a significant increase in predictive power over the previous model which did
not contain the moderator product term, with an $R^2$ change of .03, $F_{\text{change}}(1,98) = 3.96$, $p = .05$.

The negative $B$ value for the product term suggests that the interaction of self-concept clarity and No Reference Group reduces the impact of No Reference Group endorsement on Satisfaction with Life, and thereby moderates this relationship.

To examine the form of these moderations, graphs of predicted values were created based on the regression equations for Self-Esteem and Satisfaction with Life (Aiken & West, 1991). The graphs represent the values of NRG and the outcome variables at one standard deviation above and below the mean value of NRG for men who scored low, average, and high in self-concept clarity (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). The pattern of the plotted interaction gives an indication of the conditions under which the moderation occurs. The moderation effect for self-esteem was analyzed first. Visual inspection of the separate SCC groups appears to show a stronger association between NRG and self-esteem for men high in SCC. Indeed, the simple slopes of these predicted relationships indicated that NRG was actually more strongly associated with self-esteem when self-concept clarity was high, $B = -.42$, $t(99) = -3.29$, $p = .001$, than when SCC was average, $B = -.23$, $t(99) = -2.75$, $p = .007$, or low, $B = -.04$, $t(99) = -.38$, NS.

These results indicate that, while self-concept clarity does moderate the relationship of No Reference Group scores with self-esteem and satisfaction with life, it does so in the opposite pattern of what was expected, with high SCC actually exacerbating, rather than buffering, the effect of NRG on negative psychological health outcomes, relative to participants with lower SCC. It appears that the significant moderation found may actually express the buffering effects of low self-concept clarity on negative outcomes, as there was no significant relationship between NRG and self-esteem in this group. Although participants with high self-concept clarity appeared to be more sensitive to the negative sequelae of NRG endorsement, they did also
appear to have higher levels of self-esteem overall compared to participants with lower levels of self-concept clarity.

Second, the pattern of the interaction for Satisfaction with Life was assessed. Visual inspection appears to indicate no association between NRG and Satisfaction with Life for men at average levels of SCC (Figure 4.2). However, there does appear to be a crossover interaction for men low and high in SCC, with participants high in SCC showing lower Satisfaction with Life as NRG increases, and participants low in SCC showing higher Satisfaction with Life as NRG increases. Again, high SCC was still on average associated with higher levels of Satisfaction with Life. Analysis of the simple slopes and their difference from zero, however, indicated that no slope was significant for high, $B = -.22, t(99) = -1.58, NS$, average, $B = -.04, t(99) = .44, NS$, nor low SCC scorers, $B = .14, t(99) = 1.30, NS$. The presence of the moderation effect in previous analyses does however indicate that these slopes significantly differ from each other. Therefore, the associations between NRG and Satisfaction with Life in this analysis are most properly understood as patterns of relationships at various levels of SCC, rather than as standalone bivariate relationships.
Table 4-1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Distribution Statistics for Study Variables by Gender.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SEM</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Average Masculine Discrepancy</td>
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<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Feminine Discrepancy</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>-0.56</td>
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<td>Depressive Symptomatology</td>
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<td>8.77</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.46</td>
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<td>Self-Concept Clarity</td>
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<td>8.91</td>
<td>0.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Global Self-Esteem</td>
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<td>5.28</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>-0.66</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with Life</td>
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<td>6.30</td>
<td>0.62</td>
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<td>7.69</td>
<td>0.76</td>
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<td>0.75</td>
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<td>Reference Group Nondependent</td>
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<td>7.60</td>
<td>0.75</td>
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<td>0.66</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Group Nondependent-Diversity</td>
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<td>Reference Group Nondependent-Similarity</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Average Masculine Discrepancy</td>
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<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.58</td>
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<td>0.67</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressive Symptomatology</td>
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<td>10.07</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept Clarity</td>
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<td>9.92</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Self-Esteem</td>
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<td>Satisfaction with Life</td>
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<td>0.41</td>
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<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative Affect</td>
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<td>6.06</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>1.36</td>
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</table>

*Note.* Male \( n = 103 \), Female \( n = 280 \).
Table 4-2. Means and Standard Deviations of Average Item-Level Difference Scores Between Contexts in Bem Sex Role Inventory Ratings.

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<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Context A to B</td>
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<td>.07</td>
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<td>.12</td>
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<td>Context A to C</td>
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<td>.13</td>
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<td>Context B to C</td>
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<td>Context A to C</td>
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<td>Context B to C</td>
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</table>

*Note.* Averages based on absolute values of differences. Difference scores have a possible range of 0 to 6. Male $n = 103$, Female $n = 280$. 
Table 4-3. Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Well-Being and Gender Discrepancy Variables for Men.

<table>
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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. Self-Concept Clarity</td>
<td>-0.59**</td>
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<td>3. Global Self-Esteem</td>
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<td>0.61**</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Satisfaction with Life</td>
<td>-0.60**</td>
<td>0.47**</td>
<td>0.65**</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Positive Affect</td>
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<td>0.22*</td>
<td>0.44**</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Negative Affect</td>
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<td>-0.37**</td>
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<td>0.08</td>
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<td>-0.21*</td>
<td>-0.23*</td>
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<td>0.33**</td>
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<td>0.04</td>
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*Note. * = significant at the .05 level; ** = significant at the .01 level
Table 4-4. Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Well-Being and Gender Discrepancy Variables for Women.

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<th>6</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Depressive Symptomatology</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>2. Self-Concept Clarity</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Satisfaction with Life</td>
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<td>0.28**</td>
<td>0.36**</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Negative Affect</td>
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<td>7. Average Masculine Discrepancy</td>
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<td>8. Average Feminine Discrepancy</td>
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<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.32**</td>
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</table>

Note. * = significant at the .05 level; ** = significant at the .01 level
Table 4-5. Hierarchical Regression Analysis of the Effects of Negative Affect, Satisfaction with Life, Self-Esteem, and Depressive Symptomatology on the No Reference Group Subscale of the Reference Group Identity Dependence Scale.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE(B)</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$R^2_{change}$</th>
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<td>.05*</td>
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<td>Step 2: Model</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>.14</td>
<td>-.04</td>
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<td>.21**</td>
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<td>Satisfaction with Life</td>
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<td>.15</td>
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<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>-.58</td>
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<td>Depressive Symptomatology</td>
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<td>.12</td>
<td>.32*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Criterion variable: No Reference Group; *p < .05, **p < .001
Table 4-6. Analyses of the Moderation Effects of Self-Concept Clarity on the Relationship Between the No Reference Group Subscale of the Reference Group Identity Status Scale and Self-Esteem, Depressive Symptomatology, and Satisfaction with Life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE(B)</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$R^2$ change</th>
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<td>.14**</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>.32**</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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*Note.* All predictor variables were analyzed as Z-scores; NRG = No Reference Group; SCC = Self Concept Clarity Total Score; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$
Figure 4-1. Predicted Graph of the Relationship of No Reference Group Scores to Self-Esteem, with Self-Concept Clarity as a Moderator. Note. Values are graphed as Z scores.
Figure 4-2. Predicted Graph of the Relationship of No Reference Group Scores to Satisfaction with Life, with Self-Concept Clarity as a Moderator. *Note.* Values are graphed as Z scores.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Review of Study Findings

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the presence and possible effects of conflicting standards of masculinity as experienced by men. Results were mostly supportive of the idea that men perceive significant discrepancy in social messages about preferred gender-related traits, though this discrepancy was reported most reliably with regard to expected feminine, rather than masculine, traits. Although perceptions of masculine discrepancy were significantly different from zero, this difference failed to appear in a repeated-measures analysis, though a power analysis predicted that an additional 60 male participants would have produced a significant effect.

While it is possible that the sample size was insufficient to detect a relatively small effect in masculine discrepancy for men, it cannot be concluded that the finding would have been significant given a larger sample size. However, another caveat should be added about the suitability of this analysis for testing this hypothesis. In Stroink (2004), the self-guides that were investigated were standardized across participants, meaning that all participants rated the same self-guides as suggested by the instructions (e.g., all participants were asked to rate the perceptions of their mother as the self-guide for Context A). In contrast, this study asked participants to select their own relevant self-guides, and therefore a comparison of means between contexts (as with a repeated-measures ANOVA) may collapse over significant differences that do in fact exist on the participant level. Therefore, t-tests using an estimate of discrepancy on the individual level (i.e., Average Masculine Discrepancy and Average Feminine Discrepancy) may be the preferable method in determining significant discrepancy given the nature of this methodology.
Contrary to hypotheses, the perception of discrepancy among masculinity self-guides was unrelated to any of the measures of well-being assessed in this study. Further, there were no relationships between perceptions of either feminine or masculine discrepancy and any dimension of the Reference Group Identity Dependence Scale. Taken together, these results indicate that while men do report perceiving conflicting standards with regard to expected masculine attributes from relevant guides, these discrepancies are unrelated to the measures of well-being assessed in this study. Discrepancy also appears to be unrelated to perceptions of psychological relatedness to other men, and to perceptions of similarity and difference amongst men.

Although these findings may reflect a truly null result, a few things may have impacted this result. The method used to estimate discrepancy relied on three participant-chosen data points. Presumably, many factors may have influenced participants’ selection of self-guides, not the least impeding of which may have been convenience. To ensure better compliance with instructions, participants received many examples of contexts and situations that could constitute a self-guide. Analysis of self-guides chosen by participants shows that the majority of contexts selected came verbatim from the list of suggested contexts. Though these contexts may have held the most relevance for some of the participants who selected them, it cannot be counted out that having provided such a list in the instructions may have reduced the amount of cognitive effort that some participants applied to the task. It is also possible that participants were inclined to select guides/contexts that were related for them in some way, thereby minimizing any discrepancy variance that might have existed among other, more unrelated guides. Participants were given no instruction to intentionally avoid such similarity in guides, to avoid creating any demand characteristics. In fact, many of the most popular contexts selected in this study were
associated with more traditional masculine environments (e.g., at the gym, playing sports). Additionally, as participants were asked to rate only three contexts to reduce response fatigue, this may have been an insufficient number of guides to represent the true variability these individuals might have experienced across the hundreds of contexts experienced in everyday life. Therefore, a more robust estimate of discrepancy may have had more power to reveal possible relationships to well-being or RGIDS measures.

Unexpectedly, greater femininity discrepancy was related to greater self-esteem. Though this finding may have been spurious, it may also indicate that men who enjoy greater latitude among significant contexts with respect to the “feminine” attributes they can display are less likely to restrict their expression to those behaviors and attributes deemed traditionally “masculine.” Perhaps being freer to adopt a range of human or androgynous attributes is related to a more positive self-image in that, at least in some contexts, these men are less confined by the rigid gender schemata that are associated with poorer psychological and health outcomes for men (Courtenay, 2000). This finding may also indicate that changes in social expectations of men have centered more on encouraging the adoption of more traditionally “feminine” attributes, rather than discouraging or redefining expected “masculine” attributes. Therefore, it may be more useful to focus on men’s feminine attribute discrepancy perceptions in any future research.

The results were partially supportive of the hypothesis that scores on the No Reference Group subscale of the RGIDS would be a significant predictor of negative psychological well-being outcomes. This result was consistent with previous demonstrations of a link between No Reference Group endorsement and poorer psychological health (Wade & Brittan-Powell, 2000; Wade & Gelso, 1998). Self-esteem, depressive symptomatology, and satisfaction with life were all significantly correlated in the expected directions with No Reference Group endorsement.
While this may provide sufficient evidence of an association between No Reference Group endorsement and well-being, the direction of causality, if any, is harder to determine statistically in a sample of this size. When No Reference Group endorsement (NRG) was treated as an outcome variable within a regression analysis, both self-esteem and depressive symptomatology were predictive, accounting for 21% of No Reference Group endorsement.

The use of a hierarchical regression analysis to explore this hypothesis must be qualified for its relative contributions as well as its limitations. The hypothesis stated that a single independent variable (No Reference Group scores) could predict multiple psychological well-being outcomes. However, NRG was entered as an outcome, rather than as a predictor variable. In other words, while this analysis has demonstrated how well certain well-being outcomes predict NRG scores, one may not conclude that NRG scores predict the well-being outcomes in the same way, as regression equations are not symmetrical in this manner. Despite, this analysis may still be a useful one in that it helps to parse out the effects of negative affect at the time of participation, which was hypothesized to have accounted for some covariance among these well-being measures, thus ensuring that the relationships observed through the Pearson’s r correlations are indeed unique and meaningful ones. Additionally, conducting this analysis gives a greater understanding of how these well-being variables as a pooled group may relate to men’s endorsement of content on the NRG subscale.

Limitations to the regression analysis notwithstanding, the significant correlations between No Reference Group scores and lower well-being deserve further discussion. The items on this scale reflect the feeling that one is unlike all other males and that one lacks a feeling of connection or identification with other males. In lacking a specific male group with which to identify, Wade and Gelso (1998) conjectured that these men also lack any specific sense of male
identity. Such a lack of identification seems as though it may carry both costs and benefits, however, given that identification a male reference group more often entails identification with the dominant gender ideology of traditional masculinity (Wade & Gelso, 1998). Holding more traditional views and favoring traditional norms of masculine conduct has been consistently associated with poorer psychosocial functioning and increased health risks (O’Neil, 2008a; Courtenay, 2000). Indeed, Wade and Gelso found that No Reference Group scores were unrelated to gender role conflict, a construct which measures negative psychological and interpersonal consequences of adherence to traditional masculine norms. The authors posited that no relation would exist between these constructs because high NRG endorsers would not have internalized or identified with traditional masculinity ideology enough to experience conflict as a result. Therefore, while lacking a sense of belongingness to a male reference group may carry costs associated with psychological or physical isolation from like others (Sherif & Sherif, 1969), lacking a reference group may also subvert some of the costs associated with alignment to more restrictive traditional norms. This raises the question of whether at least some high endorsers of items on the No Reference Group construct may lack a significant male reference group because they consciously or unconsciously eschew the expectations of traditional masculinity, yet feel at a loss for what other definition of masculinity to embrace. This idea would certainly require further exploration.

Interestingly, the Reference Group Nondependent – Diversity subscale of the RGIDS was positively correlated with self-esteem, indicating that men who expressed an appreciation for a diversity of male identities amongst men also reported higher self-esteem. While it is possible that this relationship is ecologically valid, it is also possible that this significant relationship may reflect the high risk for Type I error due to inflated familywise error. Additionally, as the
reliability of this subscale in this sample was below acceptable levels ($\alpha = .65$), this result should be interpreted cautiously. A similar relationship, however, was found by Wade & Gelso (1998) between another measure of self-esteem and the other Reference Group Nondependent (RGN) subscale: Similarity. As both the Diversity and Similarity RGN subscales tap a construct of relatedness to other men that is more internally-defined and associated with greater ego identity development, the association between these scales and self-esteem is perhaps not too surprising.

The final hypothesis, that self-concept clarity would moderate the relationship between No Reference Group endorsement and negative psychological outcomes was partially supported. Self-concept clarity reduced the impact of NRG on self-esteem and on satisfaction with life, but did not significantly moderate the relationship for depressive symptomatology. Lower self-concept clarity was consistently associated with the lowest well-being, regardless of NRG endorsement. The pattern of these relationships, however, was opposite of what was expected. NRG was actually more strongly associated with self-esteem and with satisfaction with life when self-concept clarity was high, such that there was more of a decrease in both well-being outcomes as NRG endorsement increased.

Somewhat strangely, there was no association between NRG and self-esteem when self-concept clarity was low. It appears that when self-concept clarity is low, the presence or absence of a reference group has little to nothing to do with one’s self-esteem. This may make some sense in that when an individual lacks of a clear or consistent enough sense of who he is on a day-to-day basis, it may be difficult if not possible to locate a referent in one’s peer group. If a referent is to be found in some group, they are likely just as confused and inconsistent in their own self-concept, and therefore possessing or lacking such a reference group may be
inconsequential to one’s self-esteem when there is no clear or consistent content in that social referent to help define one’s own identity.

The pattern of moderation for satisfaction with life was also difficult to decipher, given that the slopes for one standard deviation above, below, and at the mean were all non-significant. By more conservative standards (i.e., p < .01), this moderation interaction would have failed to reach significance, and so the possibility that this finding is spurious is not ruled out. However, visual analysis of the trends of these lines suggests that there was no relationship between NRG and satisfaction with life for those who were average in self-concept clarity, while those high in self-concept clarity saw more precipitous drops in satisfaction with life as NRG scores increased. Interestingly, participants low in self-concept clarity trended towards a boost in satisfaction with life as psychological relatedness to other males decreased. Perhaps those who identify with a reference group but remain unsure of themselves may be helped by abandoning these external referents. In other words, if one “fails” to introject the norms of one’s social group into one’s self-concept, greater internal dissonance may lead to lower satisfaction with life, while the lack of an external reference group may reduce this dissonance. These ideas would need to be explored.

It is important to note that all of these moderation results occurred within the context of a main effect for self-concept clarity, such that higher levels of self-concept clarity were associated with higher self-esteem, satisfaction with life, and lower depressive symptomatology, when matched for levels of NRG. Thus while self-concept clarity may provide a general boost to well-being outcomes regardless of one’s feelings of connection to other men, high self-concept clarity does not buffer an individual from the costs of lacking a reference group otherwise. This pattern suggests that while lacking a male reference group may be more detrimental to those with higher
than lower self-concept clarity, those with high self-concept clarity still, on average, enjoy higher levels of self-esteem and satisfaction with life regardless of the lack of a male reference group. The finding that some men possess high self-concept clarity in the context of low feelings of relatedness to other males, is somewhat difficult to understand within the context of Reference Group Identity Dependence theory, which posits that the self-concept is largely determined by these feelings of identification with a male reference group. In their original scale development study, Wade and Gelso (1998) indicated that much of the variance in their construct was still unaccounted for in explaining men’s attitudes and psychosocial functioning. Certainly, it is possible that men’s sense of self will transcend beyond gendered categories, and this may explain the finding discussed above. Namely, a man who possesses high self-concept clarity may possess this clarity within the context of some other significant reference group, such as a church or hobby group. This finding may also give some partial support to the idea previously suggested that at least some men who lack a significant reference group may be rejecting the prevailing traditional masculinity ideology, yet still perceive no suitable alternatives for identification in the gender terrain. Indeed, in a social environment where gender proscriptions are in flux, there may be considerable benefit to remaining flexible within one’s social performances (Goffman, 1959).

**Limitations of the Study**

This study is limited by many of the same issues as exist in all studies that seek to make inferences from self-reported attitudes and perceptions to more externalized outcomes. In making inferences from these results, one must place some modicum of trust in the idea that the various manifestations of gender are sufficiently discernable and articulable for respondents. A related limitation is that the construct of “gender” is comprised of not only attributes, as were focused on in this study, but also attitudes, self-perceptions, preferences, and behaviors, all of
which may have circumspect correlations to one another (Bartini, 2006). Therefore, one is limited in their ability to generalize from one domain of the construct to another. For instance, we may not assume that because some men perceive discrepancies in expected gender attributes that they also act differently or perceive themselves differently across dissimilar contexts. No singular methodology can shed light on the totality of how gender manifests itself in and amongst its actors, as it remains a complex social phenomenon.

In some ways, the use of a college setting to draw participants was ideal in that this population may still be grappling with the tasks of identity commitment (Erikson, 1968). In particular, more recent literature has suggested that contemporary men of college-age may experience an extended adolescence in which identity tasks are more drawn out (Kimmel, 2008). If this be the case, one might expect the effects of any perceived discrepancies in expectations to be most consequential at this time, when identities may be more in flux. However, because the sampling for this study was not more cross-sectional in nature, findings may be limited to college-educated men in their late teens and early twenties. The fact that certain contexts such as “at the gym,” “participating in sports,” “on a date” and “at a bar or a club” were for many of these men some of the most noticeable places where gender is salient may suggest that the set of normative developmental tasks at various life stages may have much to do with perceptions of discrepancy. One might imagine that there may be considerably more homogeneity among these contexts than, for instance, between the contexts “as a father” and “at work” which may be more readily selected by men in their thirties and forties. In this way, one might suspect that perceptions of gender discrepancy may fluctuate as life roles change, and therefore age may be of considerable importance in studying these effects.
Further, although the racial/ethnic composition of this sample did roughly approximate the U.S. population statistics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), we would have reason to suspect that not only level of educational attainment, but also socioeconomic status of the family of origin may be rather skewed in this sample, though no specific data was collected to this effect. An analysis of any potential cultural differences in the findings was not permitted, given the relatively small overall sample size.

The relationship of our findings to Higgins’ (1987) self-discrepancy theory is somewhat limited, as this study’s methodology focused essentially only on participants’ perceptions of the attributes they felt others expected them to possess, i.e., “ought-other” gendered selves in the language of Higgins. According to self-discrepancy theory, dissimilarities between one’s primary (actual/own) self-concept and other selves would lead to characteristic patterns of negative affect, including guilt, shame, dejection, agitation, and/or embarrassment (Higgins, 1987). Therefore, in that this study did not investigate these particular distinctions amongst selves, it may have missed some possible associations with negative outcomes for gender discrepancies between actual/own and the remaining self-states. Perhaps this study failed to find associations between gender discrepancy and poorer psychological outcomes because the ought/other self is less central to the core self-concept than is the actual/own self (Higgins, 1987), and thereby any dissonance that might exist there is insufficient to cause significant distress. In other words, while men may perceive discrepancies amongst others regarding gender expectations, these discrepancies may be less internalized than discrepancies amongst one’s own expectations around what constitutes masculinity.

Further limitations of this study center around issues of analysis for moderation effects. Aguinis (2004) has shown that moderation effects are often small, and therefore power to detect
them is often quite low in most studies. Aguinis has suggested that researchers typically need a very large sample size in order to have reasonable power to detect moderator effects utilizing a continuous variable. There is also some suggestion that power is particularly low when tests of moderation utilize two continuous variables, as in the case of this study (McClelland & Judd, 1993). Although insufficient power to detect a moderation effects was not an issue for the analysis of self-esteem and satisfaction with life as outcomes, the sample size may have been prohibitive in detecting moderation effects for depressive symptomatology.

Future Directions

It is important to understand how conflicting external standards are being negotiated by men, and how these negotiations relate to subsequent mental health outcomes. Though initial suggestion from this study indicates that such discrepancies may not be related to well-being outcomes, there is sufficient cause to continue to address a possible link via other outcome variables, and via different methodologies. Future studies should look at how discrepancies between self-states with respect to one’s identity as a male may relate to unique constellations of outcomes. In particular, discrepancies between gendered actual-own and other self states may be the most deeply internalized and therefore the most likely discrepancies to produce negative consequences.

Additionally, an analysis of how participants responded to the prompt in this study suggests some possible directions for modification of methods in future studies. Participants seemed to favor contexts that were provided to them, and in particular, seemed to exercise some economy in selecting the initial examples provided to them in the prompt. Although this may only reflect the author’s tendency to select more widely relevant contexts at the beginning versus end of crafting this list, randomization of the list order presentation in future studies may tease out whether there may be a potential confound of list order in this study. Further, the fact that
individuals (e.g., “mother”) were presented along with impersonal contexts (e.g., “at the park”) may have also led to differences in how well participants were able to respond to a prompt asking them to rate the extent to which those contexts “believed” they should possess certain traits. Therefore, future studies may attempt to improve upon the language in this study’s prompt to make it better fit the nature of the contexts selected.

Further, future studies could look at whether any characteristic differences appear between personal and more impersonal contexts in the extent to which men process or internalize concurrent gender expectations. For instance, might the accepted culture of the fraternity environment, for example, carry a narrative weight that is experienced more palpably by men than are the expectations of a given individual? In addition to these possible differences attributable to the nature of the self-guide, one could also expect that there will be considerable variation in how individual men assign meaning and value to the perceived mores of any given environment’s or individual’s expectations. Therefore, not only the nature of the context or self-guide will be relevant to explore in future studies, but also the valence of that context on the individual level.

In that lack of a reference group has now been more consistently shown to correlate with diminished well-being, further work should be done to elucidate this link and any other possible mediators or moderators of this association. Some of the findings here indicate that the reasons for lacking a male reference group may be multiple and more complex than originally theorized by Wade (1998). Perhaps at least some men who lack a significant reference group may be rejecting the prevailing traditional masculinity ideology, yet still perceive no suitable alternatives for identification amongst male peers. This segment of men may be increasingly aware of the costs associated with traditional masculinity (e.g., risk-taking, emotional restrictiveness, lack of
intimacy), feel compelled or enticed to expand their roles as fathers, friends, and partners that violate traditional codes of masculinity (e.g., Silverstein, Auerbach, & Levant, 2002; Singleton & Maher, 2004), and therefore lack a consistent definition of themselves as men in a way that translates into isolation from one’s male peers. Exploratory qualitative studies might look at the conscious reasons men feel a sense of similarity to all, some, or no other men, and how these feelings may be related to gender ideologies more broadly.

The link between reference group dependency and psychological health may also suggest new avenues by which counselors and psychologists may work with clients to treat mental illness and alleviate adjustment difficulties. It would also be interesting to investigate whether self-concept clarity in the context of some non-male reference group, such as a hobby group, may account for more or less variance in psychological outcomes than one’s relatedness to a male reference group. Further, how various psychological variables, such as lifestyle, values, and personality interact with the associations shown in this study needs further attention within the men and masculinities literature (McKelley & Rochlen 2010).

**Conclusion**

The findings in this study indicate that men indeed perceive discrepant standards around the masculine, and even more strongly, the feminine attributes they are expected to possess, though these discrepancies were not related to psychological outcomes or feelings of psychological relatedness to other men. There was however a link between the lack of a significant male reference group and diminished well-being, though this link was moderated by self-concept clarity. Although overall only some support was found for the hypotheses in this study, the results obtained suggested new pathways of inquiry that may expand upon previous work on conflicting standards and reference group identity dependence. Further work will be
required to understand what impact, if any, the perception of discrepancies in gender expectations may carry for men’s psychosocial functioning.
APPENDIX A
SCALE ITEMS

Bem Sex Role Inventory

Directions
Please rate how much you feel [self-guide inserted] believes you should possess each of the following attributes.

1. Defend my own beliefs
2. Affectionate
3. Conscientious
4. Independent
5. Sympathetic
6. Moody
7. Assertive
8. Sensitive to needs of others
9. Reliable
10. Strong personality
11. Understanding
12. Jealous
13. Forceful
14. Compassionate
15. Truthful
16. Have leadership abilities
17. Eager to soothe hurt feelings
18. Secretive
19. Willing to take risks
20. Warm
21. Adaptable
22. Dominant
23. Tender
24. Conceited
25. Willing to take a stand
26. Love children
27. Tactful
28. Aggressive
29. Gentle
30. Conventional
Positive Affect and Negative Affect Scale
This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you feel this way RIGHT NOW. Use the following scale to record your answers.

very slightly or not at all         a little      moderately     quite a bit          extremely

1) interested
2) distressed
3) excited
4) upset
5) strong
6) guilty
7) scared
8) hostile
9) enthusiastic
10) proud
11) irritable
12) alert
13) ashamed
14) inspired
15) nervous
16) determined
17) attentive
18) jittery
19) active
20) afraid

Satisfaction With Life Scale
Below are five statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1-7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding. The 7 point scale is 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = slightly disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = slightly agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree.

1) In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
2) The conditions of my life are excellent.
3) I am satisfied with my life.
4) So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
5) If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.
Self-Concept Clarity Scale
1) My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another.
2) On one day I might have one opinion of myself and on another day I might have a different opinion.
3) I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of person I really am.
4) Sometimes I feel that I am not really the person that I appear to be.
5) When I think about the kind of person I have been in the past, I’m not sure what I was really like.
6) I seldom experience conflict between the different aspects of my personality.
7) Sometimes I think I know other people better than I know myself.
8) My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently.
9) If I were asked to describe my personality, my description might end up being different from one day to another day.
10) Even if I wanted to, I don’t think I could tell someone what I’m really like.
11) In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am.
12) It is often hard for me to make up my mind about things because I don’t really know what I want.

Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale
Instructions for questions: Below is a list of the ways you might have felt or behaved. Please tell me how often you have felt this way during the past week.

Rarely or none of the time (<1 day)
Some or a little of the time (1-2 days)
Occasionally or a moderate amount of the time (3-4 days)
Most or all of the time (5-7 days)

1. I was bothered by things that don't usually bother me.
2. I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor.
3. I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with the help of my family or friends.
4. I felt that I was just as good as other people.
5. I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.
6. I felt depressed.
7. I felt everything I did was an effort.
8. I felt hopeful about the future.
9. I thought my life had been a failure.
10. I felt fearful.
11. My sleep was restless.
12. I was happy.
13. I talked less than usual.
15. People were unfriendly.
16. I enjoyed life.
17. I had crying spells.
18. I felt sad.
19. I felt that people disliked me.
20. I could not get "going."
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Please mark the option that best represents how you feel:
Strongly Disagree (1) Disagree (2) Agree (3) Strongly Agree (4)

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.*
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.*
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.*
9. I certainly feel useless at times.*
10. At times I think I am no good at all.*

* = reverse scored

Reference Group Identity Dependence Scale

Instructions: Below are a number of statements concerning how you may feel about yourself, other males, and your relationships with other males. Read each statement carefully and indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree by circling the corresponding number. There are no “wrong” answers, and the only right ones are whatever you honestly feel or believe. It is important to answer every item.

Use the following key to respond to each statement:

1 = Strongly disagree 3 = Probably Disagree 5 = Agree
2 = Disagree 4 = Probably Agree 6 = Strongly agree

No Reference Group
6) I find it difficult to describe who I am as a man.
7) I don’t feel connected with any group of males.
8) I believe there are no other males who think the way I do about things.
11) Basically I am different from my male friends.
12) I have little in common with most other males.
15) I often wonder whether there are other men like myself.
16) I don’t know of any particular group of males with whom I identify.
19) I am not like most males.
23) Men are confusing to me.
29) I don’t understand why some men are the way they are.
Reference Group Dependent
1) I only feel connected with a certain group of males.
4) Most of my social activities are centered around a particular group of male friends.
5) My male friends and I all share the same perspective.
9) It is important that I share a particular commonality with a certain group of males.
14) Others might consider my friends and I a clique.
17) There are only certain types of males with whom I relate.
27) I feel a common bond with my male friends, but not so much with other males.

Reference Group Nondependent - Diversity
2) I understand differences in men.
13) I feel comfortable relating to different types of males.
20) It does not matter to me whether my friends and I are all alike.
22) I find differences in men interesting.
24) I believe there is something wrong with guys who are very different from me, my male friends, and other males like me. *(reverse scored)*
25) I have different types of males as friends.
26) I feel connected with various types of males.

Reference Group Nondependent - Similarity
3) I am similar in many ways to all males.
10) I share a common bond with all males.
18) Although males may differ in some ways, we are essentially all the same.
21) To some degree I identify with all males.
28) Although I feel most similar to some males, I am also similar to all males.
30) I have much in common with most other males.
APPENDIX B
SELF-GUIDE DISCREPANCY PROMPT

Everyone experiences situations in which their gender is more meaningful and/or noticeable to them. These situations or contexts may consist of particular relationships with others, particular places, and/or social groups in which you may currently be involved. In the box below, please list the three most important and/or meaningful situations or contexts in which your gender is most apparent to you. The following are just some examples:

with your mother
with a romantic partner
at the gym
on a date
participating in sports
around women
around men
while shopping
at a bar or club
with your father
at work
with your brother
at a religious institution or ceremony
at school
talking to your professor
while doing household chores or activities
at the park
with male friends
with female friends
at your fraternity/sorority
with your children

Please select three situations that are most important or meaningful to you and enter them below. If you do not see an important situation/context for you above, you may add your own below:
LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Despite a singular focus throughout her adult life on becoming a psychologist, Kimberly’s journey to this point has been long and varied, and many of the places she stopped or detoured along that path have their ghosts in the lines of this dissertation. Kimberly began her education in psychology and sociology at the University of Florida, focusing on gender studies in the Sociology Department, and studying under Dr. Peter Delaney in the area of cognitive psychology. Following her undergraduates years, she studied the classic works of disciplines ranging from mathematics to religion at St. John’s College in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and worked as a case worker and behavior therapist with developmentally disabled adults. She continued her pursuit of professional work in psychology at Boston College, where she earned her master’s degree in mental health counseling. In 2008, she returned to her alma mater to study under Dr. Martin Heesacker in the Acceptable Prejudices Lab, where she focused on the contextual responsiveness of gendered expression from an interdisciplinary perspective. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Florida in the fall of 2012 and is currently completing a postdoctoral fellowship in geropsychology at the University of Colorado Aging Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado.