DROPPING OUT OR OPTING OUT?
A qualitative study on how young men of Portuguese ancestry in Toronto perceive masculinity and how this informs educational attainment

by

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Abstract
Young men of Portuguese heritage in Toronto continue to demonstrate lower levels of educational attainment. American and Canadian research increasingly points to gender and masculinity to address boys’ academic underachievement, yet studies have not focused a gender lens on Portuguese male youth in Toronto to interrogate educational achievement. This qualitative exploratory study explores gender through constructions of masculinity to better understand young Portuguese-Canadian men and their choices concerning education. Through their narratives, participants revealed that masculinity does inform their attitudes and choices concerning education and school. Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and field are used to explore how masculinity and educational mobility generate considerable struggle and tension in participants’ lived experiences. This study ultimately surfaced more questions surrounding resistance to help-related educational resources, effects of educational mobility on ethnic identity and cultural cohesiveness, and how and when young men of Portuguese ancestry arrive at decisions to de-select education.
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# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. ii  
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ............................................................................................... iii  
TABLE OF CONTENTS ............................................................................................... iv  
LIST OF APPENDICES ............................................................................................... vi  
LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................................................... vii  

CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION, METHODOLOGY AND METHODS .............................................. 1  
  METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS ............................................................... 3  
  RESEARCH QUESTIONS ......................................................................................... 6  
  METHODS: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND SELF-REFLEXIVITY .............. 6  
  DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS ........................................................................ 8  
  RECRUITMENT ........................................................................................................ 9  
  OVERVIEW OF DATA ANALYSIS ......................................................................... 9  
  GOING FORWARD: THESIS ROAD MAP .............................................................. 12  

CHAPTER 2  
LITERATURE REVIEW .............................................................................................. 15  
  CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ................................................................................. 15  
    Pierre Bourdieu ..................................................................................................... 15  
    Raewyn Connell .................................................................................................. 18  
    Summary ............................................................................................................... 19  
  LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................................ 19  
    Portuguese youth in Toronto .............................................................................. 20  
    Immigrant/minority youth education .................................................................. 29  
    Masculinity and gender relations ....................................................................... 32  

CHAPTER 3  
DIMENSIONS OF MASCULARITY .......................................................................... 36  
  INSIDE THE FAMILY: HUSBAND, FATHER, MAN AS PROVIDER ......................... 40  
  CONSTRUCTING MASCULINITY THROUGH WORK AND LABOUR ...................... 45  
  COMMUNICATION IN MEN: THE (UN)HEARD AND (UN)FELT ............................. 51  
  SEXUALITY AND MASCULINITY: AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP ...................... 60  
  MOVING FORWARD ............................................................................................... 66  

CHAPTER 4  
ANALYZING DIMENSIONS OF MASCULINITY ...................................................... 67  
  EDUCATION: A SOURCE OF TENSION BETWEEN FATHER AND SONS .................. 68  
  ORIGINS OF AGGRESSIVE RESPONSES AT SCHOOL / TOWARDS SCHOOL .......... 71  
  NOT ASKING FOR HELP: ATTITUDES OF INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-RELIANCE AT SCHOOL .......................................................... 76  
    Dropping out involves some element of choice: Educational de-selection ........ 82  
  PORTUGUESE “GHETTOS”: PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES FROM INSIDE AND OUTSIDE SCHOOLS WITH HIGH NUMBERS OF PORTUGUESE YOUTH ................................................................. 86  

CHAPTER 5  
GOING FORWARD .................................................................................................... 103  
  POLICY .................................................................................................................... 105  
  COMMUNITY CHALLENGES ............................................................................... 106  
  FUTURE DIRECTIONS ............................................................................................ 106
CONCLUSION ................................................................................................................................. 108
REFERENCES ................................................................................................................................ 110
TABLES ........................................................................................................................................... 115
APPENDICES .................................................................................................................................. 116
List of Appendices

APPENDIX A – Interview guide for MA research study 116
APPENDIX B – Interview guide for AEC1405/1406 pilot study 118
List of Tables

TABLE 1 – Participant Demographic Chart 115
Chapter 1
Introduction, Methodology and Methods

I have always been encouraged to excel in school. My Portuguese parents insisted that education would provide me with the opportunities they wished they had had for themselves. Their support was encouragement and financial assistance. Perhaps this is partly why I was a good student, putting up little to no resistance to their expectations. My parents never had to worry about me coming home with a poor or failing grade, or hearing that I had been misbehaving at school. My parents regularly heard positive feedback and praise from my teachers and school administrators, which I know was a great source of pride for them both. Any part-time jobs or hobbies I had could not affect my academic performance, otherwise I would have been made to quit or somehow improve my grades. My educational pathway had been laid out well in advance. My parents had specifically saved financially for my education and were engaged to the best of their ability in my academic success. When the time came for me to accept an offer at university, they were the ones making decisions in my best interest.

My parents were very involved in my educational success and I was very focused on my own academic achievement. To be honest, I never knew university to be, or thought of it as an option. But for Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto schooling is not the focus of their young lives. In fact, according to a four year study commissioned by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), Portuguese-speaking youth rank among the highest at-risk of dropping out or failing out of high school (Brown, 2006). In particular, boys appear to be at greater risk of dropping out or failing out of high school, which interests me greatly given my own experiences. What are the social, economic,
institutional, and cultural conditions that not only allow Portuguese-speaking youth to drop out or fail out of high school, and what is informing young men’s decisions to deselect education as part of their future?

This study aims to examine the cultural conditions contributing to high rates of educational de-selection among Portuguese youth in Toronto. Despite research acknowledging awareness of academic underachievement among Portuguese youth in Canada, and despite reports that explore various factors that contribute to this educational imperative, Portuguese youth in Canada continue to drop out of school. I decided to look at this issue through a new lens, from a new and different angle, to provide a new and unexplored perspective. Specifically, I decided to investigate how young Portuguese-Canadian men perceive and understand masculinity to inform their choices and attitudes concerning education and schooling. In other words, I decided to talk to young men about how they perceive and define masculinity in the Portuguese community to see if and how their perceptions inform their choices concerning education and schooling.

I went about talking to young men of Portuguese heritage through semi-structured interviews and analyzing the qualitative data using a variety of qualitative research methods. The methods section to follow serves three fold: to situate me as the researcher; to explain my methodological and epistemological approach to this work; to clarify how I gathered the data and who the participants were. Who I am, the skills I have developed and the experiences I have lived significantly inform this project. As the principal investigator on this project it is important to elaborate and contextualize my material and philosophical investment in this research. This research is qualitative in nature, and

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1 Throughout this paper I will use Portuguese-Canadian and Luso-Canadian interchangeably. Scholars, such as Fernando Nunes, who research the Portuguese in Canada, have used the term Luso-Canadian.
therefore must not be used to draw broad conclusions on a population, but, rather, to
stimulate new ways of looking at and considering the barriers and challenges young
Portuguese-Canadian men may experience in education and schooling.

Methodological Considerations

This in-depth interview study draws on particular insights from critical
ethnographic research that incorporates critical reading and interpretation of the
narratives shared by the participants to “apprehend the inner relations, causal processes
and generative mechanisms which are often invisible to actors/participants” (Jordan and
Yeomans 1995, p. 396). As a young man of Portuguese ancestry I have talked with others
in my community about masculinity and sexuality to better understand both my own
identity and that of other men in my community. These conversations revealed two
concerns, first, that masculinity continues to be defined in traditional and conservative
ways, (including gender roles and masculinity defined in opposition to femininity) which
continue to be taught, privileged and praised in the Portuguese community. The second
concern is that young men often dismiss or resist critiquing this definition for reasons of
tradition or lack of concern that it poses a real problem to the community or themselves.
In light of this I felt it necessary to reflect a critical standpoint (I could not simply report
the thoughts of the participants without considering what informed their opinions) in
analyzing the narratives.

Of course, this critical approach also extends to the ethnographer. My own
epistemological position informs the basis of my critique, and I endeavour to connect and
problematicize my institutional or material standpoint within the everyday world in relation
to my participants’ lived actualities (Jordan and Yeomans, 1995; Strega, 2005). As the principal investigator in this project, and the primary interpreter of the data, it is necessary to understand my epistemological and ontological standpoint in doing this work. Ontologically speaking, I enter this work acknowledging that sexism is at work in our world. The differences we attribute between men and women directly inform our understandings of not only gender relations but also gender identity, both masculinity and femininity (Connell, 2005). This acknowledgment indeed informs the manner in which this study’s data is interpreted, ensuring that gender, sexuality, and gendered ways of being are interrogated and critiqued based on the principals of standpoint feminism (Collins, 2006; Smith, 1988).

The data include the voices of those who are commonly silenced, dismissed or alienated from the community because of differences, particularly regarding their personal and conflicting notions of masculinity. Epistemologically, this study makes “sense” of communities by listening to the marginalized in the community, thus looking from the margins inward – towards centres of power – searching to explicate the contingencies of ruling that shape local contexts (DeVault, 1999). The young men in this study come from diverse backgrounds and many of them for one reason or another experience degrees of marginality within their community. Their reflections on how masculinity is performed and expressed in the Portuguese community reveal some of the ruling relations that cement a common definition of masculinity. At times their narratives revealed contradictions, essentially problematizing the sexist or heteronormative underpinnings of this definition of masculinity, but in a disembodied or unaffected way. Just as some qualitative methods, according to Jordan and Yeomans (1995), shed light on
the western hegemonic male terrain of traditional sociological enquiry to illuminate the marginalizing experiences and methods of knowing particular to women, this research also draws attention to the heteronormative and heterosexist assumptions of cultural knowledge. Admittedly, marginalizing experiences and methods of knowing particular to women are not identical, for example, to those of gay and/or gender non-conforming men, but in many cases the ruling relations silencing the experiences and knowledge of both these groups are similar in the Portuguese community.

The rigors, responsibilities and risks in qualitative research require that the researcher delve deep into the data to interpret meaning and move the data forward (Sandelowski, 2004). My interpretation is informed by my advocacy work with youth around issues of sexuality and gender, specifically around sexual and gender diversity. The transcript data in this study is examined through an anti-homophobia and anti-heteronormative lens (Eyre, 1997; Goldstein, 2004). This approach is critical to this study and is congruent with my epistemological, ontological, and methodological foundations.

As well, recognizing that forms of oppression and marginalization, such as race/ethnicity, gender, class, disability and sexuality among others, do not operate in isolation, this study adopts an intersectional framework (McCready, 2004). Intersectionality endeavours to consider intersecting/interlocking factors when interrogating social and cultural phenomenon. This includes when exploring the academic underachievement among young Luso-Canadians. However, research on Portuguese-Canadians has not taken an intersectional approach (a partial exception is Fernando Nunes’ (2004) work on Portuguese-Canadian youth). Furthermore, none of the research on Portuguese-Canadian youth looks at masculinity and gender relations as
interplaying with issues of class, race/ethnicity, sexuality and informing persistent rates of academic underachievement (despite existing studies that link the two). It is therefore important for this study to interrogate this issue using an intersectional approach.

**Research Questions**

As noted in the introduction, this study aims to explore perceptions of masculinity among young men of Portuguese heritage in Toronto to see if and how these perceptions inform their choices concerning education and schooling. More specifically however, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1a. What commonly defines masculinity for Portuguese male youth in Toronto? How are gender identities formed, achieved, challenged, threatened, etc. for these youth?

1b. How does masculinity along with other social identities (e.g. race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.) inform their attitudes, choices and beliefs about education?

2a. How do young Portuguese men in Toronto view educational mobility? What factors contribute to their choices to select or deselect educational mobility? Are young Portuguese men failing (is it too hard) or disengaged and / or under-encouraged/supported?

2b. How is education weighed against other pathways to mobility? Is this a conscious consideration and does gender identity (masculinity) inform the complex (de)selection process of educational mobility?

**Methods: Semi-structured Interviews and Self-reflexivity**
Like many other qualitative research projects of similar scale and scope, this study uses in-depth semi-structured interviews with eight participants as its main data gathering technique. These interviews do not strictly follow a questionnaire, as would a survey interview. Instead, semi-structured interviews aim to evolve depending on the participant’s responses while ensuring that each interview covers the main areas of inquiry laid out in the interview guide. In other words, participants were engaged in more of a conversation as opposed to a strict question and answer period with the flexibility to spend more or less time discussing what is pertinent to them regarding experiences and perceptions of masculinity and education in their community (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2004). The interviews were one-on-one and each lasted approximately 60-80 minutes.

Prior to engaging in, and throughout this study, I reflected on my personal experiences and struggles with masculinity, often reflecting on what appeared to be blind adherence to cultural norms and expectations concerning gender and sexuality. I carefully include instances of this reflexive process throughout this work. In order to hopefully ensure a balance between participants’ voices and mine, I chose to include reflexive thoughts that expose my current personal struggles alongside those of my participants. This process involved turning a reflexive gaze on myself to critically see how my assumptions, innate inclinations, and (repositioning) language work to constitute the world I knew (Davies et al., 2004). I found myself constantly questioning my assumptions and repeating the phrase “is that informed by masculinity?” when reflecting on various circumstances including: an argument with my partner, or my physical and
mental reaction to conflict in a social setting. Indeed, this research is as much a self-exploration as it is an exploration of others.

**Description of Participants**

Criteria for participation were minimal: participants were males between the ages of 18-37, living in Toronto and self-identifying as Portuguese, Portuguese-Canadian or Canadian of Portuguese heritage. A demographic chart of participants is provided in the appendix (Table 1). Participants were selected using a variety of sampling procedures. Maximum variation and opportunistic sampling allowed me to select participants of various origins linked to Portugal’s mainland and island regions, diverse professional and non-professional backgrounds, including but not limited to university students, graduates, skilled/trades-labourers, working professionals, and unemployed. Finally, these sampling procedures allowed me to select participants who identify as gay or heterosexual, and as married, common-law or single.

The desired diversity was represented in the participant pool using these sampling procedures. I intentionally set out to include gay men among the voices in this study. Not surprisingly, gay men of Portuguese heritage more clearly described and discussed masculinity for reasons that I will explore in chapter 4. This study should not be considered a predominantly gay informed research project, as heterosexual participants outnumbered gay participants five to three in this study. It is uncommon for gay and heterosexual men to come together and in relation to one another in the same study. My aim was always to include gay voices in the broader discourse on masculinity in the
Portuguese community in Toronto. To this end, all participants contributed significantly to every aspect of this research.

**Recruitment**

My main recruitment strategies for this study were flyers, posters and emails. Flyers and posters were distributed and posted in various locations in the city including the area known as Little Portugal, concentrated in the area surrounded by Dundas, College, Bathurst and Ossington Streets in Toronto. As a member of community listservs I sent a call for participants to other listserv members as well as sent emails to personal contacts to disseminate the call for participants to their networks. This strategy was much more successful than posters and flyers because participants needed a personal connection to the project. Often participants were shy to be involved, and needed to be assured I was a “good guy” or “easy to get along with”. My connections and reputation ensured others gave necessary references to convince participants to call. Adding to participants’ sense of confidence in me and my study was that they were in control of their interview. They could choose what they did and did not want to answer, as well as review their transcripts for accuracy. Participants also knew they could withdraw from the study at any time, essentially positioning the interview as no-risk.

Post-interview, I engaged in a process of member-checking. That is, participants who wished to were given copies of their transcripts to review and asked to check whether the transcript reflected our conversation and their thoughts accurately.

**Overview of Data Analysis**
A qualitative interview study does not prescribe a specific process or method for data analysis therefore, this section will describe the systematic process used to make sense of the data in this study. Given my critical approach as informed by my epistemological and ontological footings, this study does require certain practices and principles. Critical researchers must be reflexive and approach data analysis and findings through an inductive and recursive process. In exercising reflexivity I was sure to acknowledge my biases and preconceived notions of heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity when analyzing my participants’ transcripts. In addressing techniques of data analysis in phenomenological research, however, van Manen (1990) affirms “if we simply try to forget or ignore what we already “know”, we might find that the presupposition persistently creep back into our reflections” (p. 47). Therefore, I make no apology for the at times interpretive nature of my data analysis, and despite my efforts to follow the minimal emphasis afforded to interpretation in thematic content analysis by reserving interpretation for the chapter 4, my inductive process remains inherently critical (Anderson, 2007).

Interviews with each participant were transcribed word for word by the researcher and indication of feeling or hand gestures was added when appropriate or helpful. Transcription notes were also taken during this process to assist in my analysis of the data. The first challenge in data analysis is to differentiate what data is useful and what data is not. Much is said in semi-structured interviews, some of which is relevant to the research question, some of which is not. The breadth of topic and the lack of specificity in my questions provided the flexibility and lack of direction that allowed participants to comment on any experience or situation that came to their minds in which masculinity
was performed, evidenced, challenged, etc. As a visual and tactile individual, I read through the printed transcripts and made note of thematic data using a colour coding system. Data that particularly resonated with the thematic content it represented was grouped into data analysis worksheets separated by theme. Revisiting the data using the colour coding system was manageable with eight participants; therefore, it was not necessary to group all material into the data analysis worksheets. For example, when asked how sexuality informs issues of masculinity, one participant commented on scripture, specifically Laws of Corinthians, and how we operate based on context specific laws prescribed to ensure population growth. Although interesting, this narrative did not comment on how sexuality informs masculinity. When asked if he thought it was possible to be considered a masculine gay man in the community, his response summed up the community’s perspective succinctly; “I don’t see why not, but I guess he’d have to hide it. That’s an unfortunate situation.”

This study included a combination of qualitative data analysis methods. Although not an ethnography, this study remains focused on the stories and lived experiences of its participants. Therefore data analysis involved both Spradley’s technique of domain analysis for ethnographic research and a coding system familiar to various types of qualitative research outlined by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), namely thematic content analysis. I read the transcripts while identifying recursive themes or ideas of relevance to my research questions. Significant statements and thematic descriptions were classified in analysis notes while coding the data. For example, given this study’s focus on masculinity, dimensions of masculinity emerged as a clear domain from the data, and the included terms became evident provided the central litmus test for inclusion
remained that each was a way in which young men of Portuguese heritage perceived masculinity to be achieved. Other themes from the data, however, did not fit neatly into Spradley’s domain analysis, and therefore I turned to thematic content analysis to make sense of contained meaning units. Once the meaning units were determined, I grouped similar meaning units together to create broad overall themes again using a colour coding system, and again significant statements and thematic descriptions were classified in analysis notes while coding the data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

In summary, my data analysis borrowed from various methods of qualitative research. Throughout the data analysis stage interpretative forces were kept to a minimum (to the extent one can suspend critique and biased reading). Through this analysis a descriptive snapshot of masculinity emerged including gender relations. As well, new and interesting links between masculinity, education and attitudes towards schooling emerged by employing the data analysis techniques outlined. Presentation and discussion of this data follows.

**Going Forward: Thesis Road Map**

The literature review in Chapter 2 will further elaborate on how and why I came to explore perceptions of masculinity for this population as well as discuss and acknowledge a few but important studies concerning Portuguese-Canadian youth and the community more broadly. The literature review will also discuss conceptual frameworks that I bring to this research and mostly qualitative and some quantitative research data framed around three areas of inquiry: immigrant/minority youth education; Portuguese-Canadian youth and community; and masculinity and gender studies.
Many of the young men in this study had never engaged in a conversation about their identity before, particularly about their understanding of, or how they perceive their community to understand masculinity. Other participants had thought about and discussed with others the effects of masculinity on themselves and on their relationships, whether with family, partners or with institutions such as education. Necessarily, the data this research produced is complex and layered. In order to understand and reveal the meanings in the hours of in-depth conversations with participants I need to discuss about, instead of simply report, the findings. Regardless of the participant, a critical approach is necessary to making sense of the transcript data and chapter 3 will endeavour to present the data as they were discussed in the interviews. In chapter 3, Dimensions of Masculinity, I discuss masculinity and how it is understood and defined by the participants. In this chapter I also draw on data collected for a research project in the qualitative research methods course AEC1406 under the supervision of Dr. Bonnie Burstow. These participants were similarly asked about masculinity and sexuality, as outlined in the interview guide (Appendix B). However, participants in this research project were not asked about their attitudes and perceptions about education and schooling, and therefore their data will not be included in chapter 4. Throughout chapter 3, I necessarily discuss pressures described by participants that enforce normative notions of masculinity in their communities.

Chapter 4 is an analysis of participants’ relationships with education and school while considering their thoughts on masculinity. This includes an analysis of tensions and conflicts participants have with masculinity and proposing some links with educational underachievement or what I call educational de-selection. Finally, I will look at the
pressures and controls that exist in the community to enforce normative notions of masculinity on these young men, as well as the impact this has on their choices concerning education and school.

This study’s definitive conclusion asserts that young men of Portuguese ancestry are making decisions about their educational pathways that are informed by their understandings of masculinity. This relationship needs further investigation. This study suggests some areas of focus, but serves more to stimulate previously unimagined conversations concerning the relationship between education and masculinity. This final section lays out some next steps or future research in this area as well as collaborative projects among diasporas and with other communities to determine the possibility of a broader phenomenon of masculinity and education and its effects on young men.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

In this study I employ a unique set of theoretical and methodological concepts for data collection and analysis. I approach this research equipped with theoretical lenses that guide my investigation, interpretation, and critique of current perceptions of masculinity and attitudes towards schooling and education among young Luso-Canadian males. In particular I draw on theoretical concepts in the scholarly work of Pierre Bourdieu and Raewyn Connell, among others to better understand oppressive, homophobic, heteronormative and sexist practices and structures as I make sense of the data. These concepts not only inform this study, they also inform my work practice, personal life, and overall academic pursuits. I begin by discussing key concepts, or thinking tools in the work of Pierre Bourdieu that inform my research practice.

Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu’s antidualistic understanding of social behaviours, structures and (cultural) knowledge “strives to circumvent or dissolve the oppositions that have defined perennial lines of debate in the social sciences” (Wacquant, 1998, p. 217). The dualisms that surface in this study highlight the need for an antidualistic approach to this work. Dualisms including those found in participants’ narratives, but also in my own struggle to appropriately employ interpretation and explanation in analyzing the data using methodology that honours the research and discipline for which it is conducted, while respecting the community and participants involved. In adopting Bourdieu’s theoretical
concepts this research aims to challenge if not dissolve preconceptions that constitute cultural or everyday and scholarly common sense (Wacquant, 1998).

The conceptual tools Bourdieu uses to this end include what he terms habitus, capital and field. For my purposes I will discuss habitus and field. Habitus refers to a system of lasting and meaningful ‘dispositions’ through which we perceive, judge and act in the world. Wacquant (1998) states that, “these unconscious schemata (which layered form habitus) are acquired through lasting exposure to particular social conditions and conditionings, via the internalization of external constraints and possibilities” (p. 221 parentheses mine). People subjected to similar experiences, despite unique individual variance from the norm, share a common sense of habitus. Of particular interest to this study is the malleability of these systems of dispositions due to the influence of social milieu. “It is habitus itself which at every moment filters such influence” (Wacquant, 1998; p. 221).

For young Portuguese-Canadian men, if a system of meaningful and lasting dispositions concerning gender and sexuality, particularly masculinity, exists then it is useful to apply Bourdieu’s concept of habitus to explore how these unconscious schemata inform young men’s choices. In his explanation of habitus, Wacquant briefly comments that those achieving social mobility regularly have dispositional sets in conflict or tension. To put this into context, a student will experience education as a social influence. If education represents social mobility for said student then Bourdieu’s theory suggests that such intruding influences will produce tension or conflict that will inform the student’s dispositions.
Field, the second of Bourdieu’s concepts, refers to the various microcosms in which we act according to the unique rules and regularities for each particular microcosm. In other words we all exist and act in multiple fields, each of which has its own prescribed and enforced norms. Enforcing rules and regularities in each field nurtures a structured space of positions; a sort of hierarchical structure with gatekeeper(s) concerned with preserving things as they are, or using Bourdieu’s terms, preserving existing distribution of capital. But, this also manifests struggle to disrupt things as they are, making each field at once a force field (preserve) and battlefield (disrupt) in which each individual must navigate and negotiate his existence. A field emerges, develops, changes, and sometimes perishes, based on maintaining its own “criteria of evaluation” despite influences from neighbouring and intruding fields. This is known as its degree of autonomy. A field therefore depends on individuals acting according to its rules and norms to remain autonomous.

In summary, the three main properties of a field are its ability to preserve things as they are (a force field), it being an arena for struggle to maintain or overturn things as they are (a battlefield), and its insular nature and ability to uphold its own criteria for maintaining things as they are (degree of autonomy) (as cited in Wacquant, 1998). Field can therefore help us to understand the insularity of culture and community. The narratives in this study reveal the force field and battlefield metaphors that Bourdieu lays out for us. Participants discussed negotiating tensions relating to masculinity and education. Together, habitus and field are useful conceptual tools to think about and discuss how social knowledge and more specifically cultural knowledge is communicated and maintained among group members.
Raewyn Connell

Central to this research is a theoretical understanding of how masculinity comes to be understood and the conditions it produces. A single definition of masculinity represents a deterministic approach rarely embraced in sociology. Connell (2005) posits that sociobiological (positivist) notions of masculinity are fictional and that social constructivist understandings of masculinity are over simplified, and that merely combining the two is unlikely to produce a fuller picture. Instead, Connell believes that “knowledge of masculinity arises within the project of knowing gender relations” (2005, p. 44). Beyond the traditional notions of gender relations between men and women, Connell emphasizes the need to explore relations between different kinds of masculinities and I argue between masculinity and other aspects of social life, such as education. Willis (1977), Mac an Ghaill (1994), Connell (1989, 2005), McCready (2004, 2010) and others have looked at various masculinities of exclusion, inclusion, intimidation and exploitation, and many of these in relation to education. In this study, participants particularly discussed their experiences of exclusion, intimidation and ways they adjusted their behaviour to ensure inclusion based on perceived masculinity. Similar to other research, these experiences continue to suggest that masculinity is a socially constructed concept, not independent of sociobiological factors, but not determined by them either.

Gender structures daily social practice. We are restricted and permitted to behave, react, express, and emote (among other things) based on our gender. Through these practices masculinity can be asserted and reinforced not in isolation but in relation to other identities and categories of difference. As Connell (2005) states, gender intersects –
better, interacts - with race and class” (p. 75) Race, ethnicity/culture, class, sexuality, ability, among other categories inform masculinity and depending on the originating field act as intruding influences on one’s current understanding of masculinity, or habitus. Naturally, the men in this study were often unaware of how masculinity interacted with other categories of identity. The gay identified participants, however, discussed more connections between categories of identity. As a result it became necessary to include a theoretical framework that encouraged me to look at how masculinity interacts with other categories of identity, particularly categories of marginalization. To this end I turned to intersectionality, a term used by Patricia Hill Collins (1990) to emphasize the ways race, class, and gender are interlocking systems of oppression.

Summary

A theoretical framework informs how a researcher will investigate his research questions, and interpret and critique his data. Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and field, Connell’s relational approach to knowing projects of masculinity and Collins’ framework of intersectionality, which addresses the interconnectedness of systems of oppression, including gender, are usefully sociological tools. Combined, these tools form a multidimensional framework to begin to understand how young Portuguese-Canadian men perceive masculinity, and how these perceptions inform their choices concerning education and academic achievement.

Literature Review
The Portuguese continue to be among the least researched diaspora in Canada despite large waves of immigration to Canada and particularly to Toronto starting in the 1950s. Existing research on the Portuguese in Canada does not explore topics of masculinity. Therefore, this study necessarily draws on other sources to help understand the complex issue of academic underachievement among boys in the Portuguese community through a lens of masculinity. Overall, this literature review draws on three main fields of study including: studies on Portuguese youth in Toronto; studies on minority and immigrant youth education; and studies on gender and masculinity particularly on youth education. I include relevant research on Portuguese-Canadians and Portuguese communities in Canada to date, including the work of Fernando Nunes, Edite Noivo, Wenona Giles, as well as two Master’s theses by Debbie Pacheco and Frederica Gomes that explore expressions of Portugueseness and issues of identity among youth of Portuguese ancestry. Concerning minority and immigrant youth education I include theoretical texts by John Ogbu, ethnographic work by Paul Willis, and comparative statistical reports such as those conducted by Statistics Canada. Finally, to explore masculinity, this study is informed, among others, by the research of sociologist Raewyn Connell, whose pioneering work has revolutionized gender studies and in particular studies on masculinity.

**Portuguese youth in Toronto**

Portuguese youth in Toronto, especially males, continue to be characterized as academic underachievers. To understand what comprises these complex youth identities beyond their low levels of educational attainment I turn to research by and on the Portuguese community in Canada. Fernando Nunes has written the most on this topic
including *Portuguese-Canadian Youth and Their Academic Underachievement: A Literature Review*. Additionally, Debbie Pacheco and Frederica Gomes, whose Masters’ theses focus on Portuguese youth identities, can help us to better understand these complex and often divided identities.

In his national needs assessment report, Nunes identified that Canada’s Portuguese are painfully aware of their youth’s academic underachievement. It stands to reason that Portuguese-Canadian youth are also aware of the low levels of academic achievement they exhibit. According to Gomes, these youth feel this casts a negative stereotype on them, and nearly half of her participants indicated that what they least liked about being Portuguese were the negative stereotypes associated with their culture and ethnicity. These included being seen as aggressive, lazy, manual labourers, and uneducated (Gomes, 2008). Youth of Portuguese ancestry also resent how society appears to undervalue the Portuguese-Canadian community’s achievements and contributions to the country (Gomes, 2008). Nunes (2008) suggests these perceptions inform systemic barriers in schools including lowered teachers’ expectations and streaming of Portuguese-Canadian youth by guidance counselors into vocational and applied courses. Generally, Portuguese-Canadian youth are aware of society’s inferior opinion of their community’s accomplishments and the low expectations placed on them. Stereotype or not however, comparatively Portuguese-Canadian youth demonstrate low levels of educational attainment.

Cultural expectations placed on Portuguese-Canadian youth by their families and community place considerable pressure on the choices these youth make concerning their futures and aspirations. These cultural expectations are informed by traditional values
that include family, hard work, income/money, home ownership, traditional gender roles, and cultural retention through endogamy (Gomes, 2008). Given these values, it is not surprising that Portuguese students in Toronto work the longest part-time hours and therefore dedicate fewer hours to homework/extra-curriculars (Nunes, 2004). This, along with little academic support from parents, likely impacts why they find school difficult (Nunes, 1998). Many of these same students, particularly boys, see work as an “easy way out” because of community access to informal employment networks in the labour market. Moreover, young men see the consequences of dropping out of school mitigated by their families (Nunes, 2008). Youth continue to live at home after dropping out of school and in many cases access jobs via informal networks through the community, particularly in the construction industry. It is not uncommon for a father to express that if his son is not going to be in school then he is coming to work with him.

Another aspect of Portuguese-Canadian youth identity according to Pacheco (2004) is the idea of conflicted identity on class and racial lines. Racial conflict occurs on a systemic level and is dependent on circumstance, “where white Portuguese (Canadians) can move from being “fully white” to a marked and racialized white community in different (institutional) spaces” (Pacheco, 2004, p.16). In particular she identifies that these shifts are visible in relation to property ownership, education and job segregation. Although Nunes asserts that an identity clash between being “Canadian” vs. “Portuguese” is not the cause of high dropout rates, it must be considered how otherness impacts school performance and integration (Nunes, 2008). Considering that students in the TDSB’s 2006 survey were asked to self-select as Portuguese, what is to be made of conflicting notions of identity and how this might impact a Portuguese youth’s self-selection on an
official school survey. To clarify, I am not suggesting the statistics do not reflect a real educational imperative for the Portuguese community in Toronto, however, that these statistics effectively inform opinions and the aforementioned negative stereotypes that stigmatize Portuguese-Canadian youth.

Multiple factors evidently contribute to and influence the low levels of educational attainment for Portuguese-Canadian youth, however, gender appears to be the least explored among these factors. The fact that Portuguese-Canadian males are more likely than their female counterparts to struggle or drop out of school suggests that gender, and more specifically constructions of masculinity in boys, may be a key factor in understanding this phenomenon. Exploring how these young men understand and perceive gender and masculinity, particularly in relation to schooling and education, will reveal insights as to what impact masculinity has on their choices concerning educational attainment. Gender does not operate in isolation, and therefore this study is informed by Collins’ intersectional analysis of race/ethnicity, class, and gender).

It is important to explore the interconnectedness of issues of race, ethnicity and class when discussing gender identity and masculinity. Commonalities in literature surrounding how aspects of masculinity and gender identity are linked to lower levels of educational attainment include a working-class socio-economic location for academic underachieving and resistant male youth and their families. Further intersections can include racialized otherness as well as ethnicized\(^2\) otherness and the racial and ethnic discrimination that these young men experience. In studies by Willis and Connell, the

\(^2\) I use the term “ethnicized” to express the notion that although Portuguese-Canadians enjoy privileges attached to “whiteness” they are discriminated on the basis of their ethnicity, and continue to be read by Canadian society as belonging to a working-class community regardless of their class privilege or socioeconomic status.
participants are predominantly white males from working-class families. Despite being white, these men experience the world very differently from the dominant class. Similarly, according to Pacheco and Gomes, Portuguese youth struggle to reconcile issues of race and ethnicity and experience life in a state of uncertainty and identity struggle. Some identify as white while others non-white, and others identifying as white or non-white depending on their circumstances (Gomes, 2008; Pacheco, 2004).

A statistical analysis from the Portuguese-Canadian National Congress’s national needs assessment of educational achievement among Portuguese Canadians suggests that 48% of Portuguese immigrants have achieved less than a grade 9 education compared to 19% and 13% for other immigrants and Canadian-born individuals respectively (Nunes 1998). Furthermore, only 2% of Portuguese immigrants have a university degree compared to 14% and 11% for other immigrants and Canadian-born individuals respectively. For those of Portuguese ethnicity who are Canadian-born, some estimates suggest that only approximately 4% have achieved any kind of university degree. The data alone do not explain the achievement gap for Portuguese youth, however they do illustrate multi-generational education deficiency. According to the Statistics Canada 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, “parental education was also important in explaining the relatively low university completion rates among the second-generation Portuguese” (TDSB, 2003, p. 4). The report also concludes, that “the different pathways toward achieving university education among the second generation have important implications for their relative socioeconomic status in Canadian society.” (TDSB, 2003, p. 6).

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3 Group Differences in Educational Attainment Among the Children of Immigrants. This study uses the Statistics Canada 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey, which surveyed 42,000 non Aboriginal Canadians 15 years or over, over-sampling non-British/French minority groups and more established, large ethnic communities. Its intention was to provide information on how people’s backgrounds affect their participation in the social, economic, and cultural life in Canada.
Luso-Canadians are not achieving class mobility through education, which is evidenced by their low socio-economic status. This is in contrast to the commonly held belief that the Portuguese in Canada are doing just fine economically, which is likely misinterpreted because of the high levels of home ownership. While Portuguese-Canadians are not disproportionately living in low-income conditions, they do display one of the lowest percentages of individuals earning annual incomes greater than $40,000 (Nunes, 1998). To put this into perspective, Luso-Canadians and Black/Caribbean-Canadians have roughly the same low proportions of annual income earners of greater than $40,000 in their communities. The only group to have lower proportion of higher income earners is Aboriginal Canadians. Many factors contribute to this socio-economic situation for Portuguese-Canadians. Figures from 1990 show that “Portuguese immigrants earned an average individual income that was between $1,150 to $2,700 less than either the Canadian-born population or the total immigrant population (depending on whether age standardization was applied)” (Nunes, 1998). English language skills and levels of education potentially contribute to these lower income levels even when compared to the total immigrant population, which as noted earlier, achieve higher levels of education. Also, in similar comparisons Portuguese immigrants are less likely to be self-employed, and in the case of men, less likely to have full-time, full-year jobs. The final point is of particular interest. The construction industry remains one of the staple industries for Portuguese-Canadian males, whether immigrant or Canadian-born. Although lucrative, this industry is project-based and most vulnerable to seasonal

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4 Direct comparisons of socio-economic indicators such as income and education, between specific immigrant groups and the general population are often affected by differences in the age distributions of these groups. Therefore, in order to compare such indicators between two or more populations, Statistics Canada often adjusts the target populations.
shutdown, economic downturns or financing/economic stalls in funding, impeding the worker’s ability to maintain a steady and secure income.

Portuguese-Canadian women, youth and seniors also earn significantly lower incomes than other immigrant populations. Seniors earn almost $7,000 less (Nunes, 1998). Similarly, low levels of education and English language skills may contribute to low paying jobs for women and seniors in particular. My own observations, however, lead me to speculate that certain industries in which the Portuguese-Canadian community, particularly women are employed may help us to better understand this issue. Just as the men dominate the construction industry, Portuguese-Canadian women dominate the cleaning industry in Toronto. Although potentially lucrative, this industry is unstable and often based on verbal contracts that can be broken without notice. The work is on a week-by-week basis, based on multiple clients who choose from a competitively priced market. This leaves workers with little or no job security. Moreover, if payment is in cash and unclaimed, not only is there no pension or health benefits, but the individual is also not paying into employment insurance (EI) in case of job loss or the Canadian Pension Plan (CPP) to supplement income upon retirement.

In many cases youth are expected to contribute towards covering family expenses. In my four years working at a local bank in a Portuguese area of Toronto, it was commonplace to see clients approach the counter with their children, in one sense for language skills as they did not speak or understand English – letting out a sigh of relief when I addressed them in Portuguese – but also to have their children take money from their account to cover household expenses. Julie Bettie, a researcher in a Mexican-American community in California includes the following quote, which depicts a familiar
family structure: “Oh you know how Mexican families are, a little bit from here, a little bit from there. My dad pays the rent, mom buys the food, my little brother pays the phone bill, and I’m responsible for the gas bill. My uncles fill in whatever else is needed” (Bettie, 2002, p. 416). This is not to suggest that this example is the most common finance structure among Portuguese families in Canada, but it does illustrate a family situation that is particularly vulnerable to job insecurity and uncertainty, which is necessarily the case for a disproportionately high number of Portuguese-Canadians.

Although shocking at first, the earning disparity can be further understood and problematized in the context of how individuals are perceived by the dominant and other minority classes. “The hard-working Portuguese”, a phrase familiar to many Luso-Canadians, (re)produces an ethnicized class stereotype of Portugueseness, connecting certain people to certain jobs (Pacheco, 2004; Noivo, 1997). My experience in Toronto and within the university community includes countless instances where I have experienced the same cultural and ethnic stereotyping. Pacheco’s interviewee, George, insists this image of Portuguese-Canadians as hard-working labourers has become so ingrained in the Canadian national consciousness that it constitutes the mainstream image of Portugueseness and limits the Portuguese community’s full civic and social participation in Canada, especially in relation to education.

This is not to suggest that many Luso-Canadians do not benefit from white privilege; however, these benefits are experienced neither fully, nor equally. Ethnic whiteness is a complex identity that accompanies European immigrant labourers. In their research on

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5 This term differs significantly from George Dei’s reference to Euro-Canadian cultural hegemony. However, those who identify as ethnic whites do appreciate privilege espoused by Euro-Canadian cultural hegemony. See Dei, 1996, p.44.
the effects of culture and race on the economic assimilation of immigrants in Toronto, Jeffrey Reitz and Sherrilyn Sklar (1997) comment that issues of social and class mobility are impacted by ethnic social marginality, which in practice is a form of indirect or “systemic” discrimination on ethnic and racial inclusion. The phrase “the hard-working Portuguese,” while regarded by many as external validation of both Portuguese struggles to overcome discriminatory obstacles, and cultural values of perseverance, sacrifice and hard work, is in fact a negative commentary on the Portuguese-Canadian community (Pacheco, 2004). Pacheco argues that it has become part of the Portuguese individual’s and community’s cultural, racial and ethnic identity and values – despite being an observation and sentiment originating from and projected by the dominant class. In other words, the dominant class has defined Portugueseness in this way, and the Portuguese community in Canada has both appropriated this identity and is constrained by it. Regrettably I have used this expression to describe my community without recognizing that this (re)produces an image of myself and my community as immigrant labourers and continually relates us to particular roles and positions of manual labour in society. Despite the satisfaction and pride this expression espouses in many Portuguese-Canadians, it is an identity informed by class structures, and ascribed to Portuguese-Canadians by the dominant class.

Although some Portuguese-Canadians have fiercely resisted stereotypes such as “the hard-working Portuguese,” including organizers of a youth conference in 1997 entitled “It’s Time To Inherit The Future,” it has not been sufficient to influence the discrimination experienced by many Portuguese-Canadians, including youth (Giles, 2002). Irrespective of the negative and admittedly positive effects of this stereotype, the
pervasive association of “the hard-working Portuguese” and manual labour with Portugueseness indicates that Luso-Canadians have assumed this niche. To paraphrase Fernando Nunes’ remarks during The Portuguese Paradox segment; the achievement gap is more of a class issue than an ethnic issue. An intersectional analysis supports that class differences do in fact contribute to the achievement gap, but it is by no means the sole contributing factor.

Finally, many Portuguese-Canadian youth assert notions of conflicted ethnic identity; at times identifying with Portuguese heritage, and at other times identifying as Canadian and enjoying white privilege (Pacheco, 2004). Gomes (2008) adds to this identity conflict in a slightly different manner by looking at notions of misplaced identity and temporariness, drawing from youth accounts of neither identifying as Canadian in Canada nor Portuguese in Portugal (Gomes, 2008). John Ogbu lists similar struggles among involuntary minorities and lists this as causing resistance towards education and academic underachievement. This will be further discussed in the following section.

**Immigrant/minority youth education**

Given the dearth of literature on Portuguese youth education it is helpful to reflect on literature that generally addresses immigrant and minority youth education. This field has undergone a healthy progression from its early centrality on issues of class and race (Bourdieu, 1976; Matute-Bianchi, 1991; Ogbu, 1991) to an intersectional approach including interlocking and complex frameworks of race/ethnicity, class and gender (Bettie, 2002; McCready, 2010). Despite this trend, intersectional frameworks in research on educational attainment do not necessarily dominate current research (Levin, 2006;
Nunes, 2004). These frameworks increase the complexity of a particular phenomenon and produce a more thorough and nuanced exploration of factors contributing to educational attainment and academic underachievement. For example gender, particularly constructions of masculinity, remain largely absent in the literature on Luso-Canadian youth education, despite evidence that boys continue to achieve at lower rates compared to their female counterparts. Of course, my intention is not to discredit the work of these and other notable scholars. For example, Nunes’ work raises important barriers to educational attainment that I value and consider in my work. Instead my focus is to reflect on these theories and findings through an intersectional lens, because intervention programs based on non-intersectional analysis and theories have not resulted in significant and sustained improvement in the researched communities.

John Ogbu’s (1991) theory of minority youth education does not adopt an intersectional framework as very little attention is given to class, or gender/masculinity in his race/ethnicity analysis. His theory differentiates immigrant (voluntary) and involuntary minorities. The latter adopt a caste-like orientation toward schooling that develops resistance to schooling among youth and equates education with the loss of racial/ethnic identity. The former adopt “pragmatic or instrumental attitudes and strategies that are quite conducive to school success” (Ogbu 1991, p17). I hope to explore these minority distinctions further in my analysis, particularly how Portuguese youth in Toronto resemble or differ from these minority distinctions. For example, do these youth interpret learning certain aspects of the dominant group’s cultural frame of reference as detrimental to their own culture, language and identity, and do these students perceive
that they must choose between academic success and maintaining their minority cultural frame of reference and identity?

Gender is of growing interest to researchers, educators, and policy analysts concerned with youth educational attainment, and yet studies exploring constructions of gender, i.e. masculinity, continue to be scarce. Existing data on the educational attainment of immigrant youth mostly draws on American studies. More recently however, the TDSB has released data concerning educational attainment linked to ethnicity. As well, a longitudinal study of educational histories of immigrant youth in a Canadian suburb by Dinovitzer, Hagan and Parker (2003) asserts, “gender and father’s occupational status independently predict educational attainment” (p. 480). What about boys that determines educational attainment remains to be explored? This study purposefully explores constructions of masculinity to better understand young Luso-Canadian men and to chart new paths to better understand low levels of educational attainment for this population.

Structural barriers to schooling and low teacher expectations and streaming of ethnic students into vocational or applied courses, are commonly cited as contributing factors to low levels of educational attainment and high dropout rates among immigrant/minority youth (Bettie, 2002; Curtis, Livingstone, & Smaller, 1992; Matute-Bianchi, 1991; Nunes, 2004; Ogbu, 1991). Although these are certainly informed by a race/ethnicity framework, and in fact some incorporate a class analysis as well, my hope is to incorporate a gender/masculinity framework to explore academic underachievement and resistance to education as has been done by Connell, Archer, and others for minority youth. My experiences and preliminary research within the Portuguese community suggest that masculinity impacts behaviours in schools and perceptions of educational mobility. This
is not to suggest that these findings and experiences are unique to the Portuguese community, rather that they exist and should not be ignored. In other words, Luso-Canadians are not unlike other minority groups in their understandings of gender and masculinity. However, I question how these understandings impact this community and its youth in ways that perpetuate high dropout rates and low levels of educational attainment. School is increasingly understood, particularly among immigrant/minority groups, as a site of production in classed masculinity (Connell, 1989) as well as classed racialized masculinity (Willis, 1977) and continues to regulate entry into the labour market. Therefore, the perception exists that traditional understandings of gender may in fact protect identity and homogeneity within cultural enclaves.

**Masculinity and gender relations**

Current panic concerning boys’ underachievement in education in Canada has lead to a greater emphasis on research that explores a possible interconnectedness between gender or masculinity and academic underachievement. Existing studies exploring issues of male gender and masculinity within the Portuguese community in Toronto remains largely informed by the opinion of women in the community (Noivo, Gilles, etc.) leaving the voices of young men absent in the exploration of their own identities. Studies in Australia, England and the United States have produced compelling evidence that links aspects of masculinity to lower levels of educational attainment and school resistance (Archer, Pratt, & Phillips, 2001; Connell, 1989, 2005; Hutchings, Archer, 2001; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Martino & Meyenn, 2001; Willis, 1977). These studies reveal how community expectations, peer pressure, and cultural values and priorities, admittedly due
to various factors including systemic barriers in schools, inform the choices young working-class men make regarding educational attainment. I will explore this scholarship to understand the ways in which masculinity has been linked to lower levels of educational attainment for various populations.

One place to begin to understand masculinity is to explore how men behave. Gender is performed and practiced according to a general set of expectations based on one’s sex (Connell, 2005). These general expectations, or as Connell terms “role norms”, are “social facts” that are not static and are necessarily shifting as social norms evolve in our society. The fact that some of my participants defined masculinity differently for themselves as opposed to how they perceived it defined in their community supports this assertion. However, of interest is which role norms shift and which stay constant, and for whom. The answers to these questions may expose the tensions young men in the community struggle with while revealing the ruling relations to which they are subjected.

“Masculinity is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture” (Connell, 2005, p. 71). Instead of defining masculinity as an object determined by an inventory of character types or behaviours, Connell suggests looking at masculinity as a process of interaction and relationships in which men and women live gendered lives. For the four Portuguese men in a pilot study I conducted in 2010 that explored masculinity and sexuality, masculinity was regularly defined in terms of masculine behaviours and gender roles ascribed to men and women, in particular between mother and father within the family structure. These findings are consistent with understandings of masculinity according to women interviewed by Noivo.
(1997) and Giles (2002). However, Connell’s challenge is to look beyond these arrangements in which my participants regularly saw masculinity at work and instead observe the relationships and interactions between men and women, and men and men. In particular, I hope to have participants reflect on different spaces, including the classroom, schoolyard, work site, sports field, office space, neighbourhood café, local bar, and other spaces. Despite research linking constructions of masculinity and educational attainment, there exists no research discussing how these commonly understood gender relations and constructions of masculinity inform the choices of young men in the Portuguese community concerning education.

Given what we know about the Portuguese in Canada, the data generally suggests that Portuguese-Canadians are firmly located as working-class. Studies by Willis (1977), Mac an Ghaill (1994), Connell (1989), and Archer, Pratt & Phillips (2001) on working-class youth support that issues of gender and masculinity inform notions of resistance to education and academic underachievement for these youth. I see this study as a preliminary exploration of similar issues among Portuguese youth to better understand the rates of academic underachievement and young men’s choices to not continue their education.

Finally, I would like to discuss the challenges in discussing perceptions of masculinity for a particular community. As previously mentioned, gender identities are produced, yet remain fluid, evolving and not homogenous. For example, neither working-class masculinity nor Black masculinity is fixed, and although useful in some instances to employ these categories, one must do so cautiously and take into account the aforementioned interconnecting factors constructing complex gender identities and
masculinities. Nevertheless, as Connell asserts role norms as social facts exist. Thus, I am cautious not to employ a deterministic analysis of masculinity and instead I hope to reflect on and interrogate some dimensions of masculinity as described by my participants.
Chapter 3
Dimensions of Masculinity

In this chapter I begin to explore and understand how twelve young men of Portuguese ancestry perceive their male identities in the context of their Portuguese culture and heritage and their Canadian/Toronto location. I do not attempt to construct an overall definition of masculinity for the Portuguese community in Canada. Such an endeavour perpetuates a positivist definition of masculinity that negates the interrelatedness of multiple identities in forming masculinities (Connell, 2005). Instead, chapters 3 and 4 include lengthy quotes and/or transcript excerpts to both illustrate how participants’ multiple identities inform constructions of masculinity and to give full weight and credit to the knowledge each participant contributed to this project. This knowledge will help me to identify and understand potential struggles, strengths and trends around masculinity that inform Portuguese-Canadian men's futures, including low levels of educational attainment and what I refer to as educational de-selection. Understanding masculinity for these participants requires that I talk with them about what part gender and masculinity plays in their lived experiences, including how their male identities interact with and relate to schooling and education.

Masculinity is a complex concept that is informed by a multitude of interrelating

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6 In chapter 2 I briefly discussed a pilot study, which originated from the course AEC1405/1406 on qualitative methodology. Data from that study were drawn from 4 participants and the interview questions are available in Appendix D. Throughout this section I will refer to both studies as a single study, for example, this study, or my study.

7 Despite the prevalence of the term “academic underachievement” in the literature, I try to replace it with educational attainment because I feel underachievement casts a negative stereotype on those it describes without acknowledging the choices young men make concerning their education. I am interested to explore the language of educational de-selection to talk about the relatively high dropout rates for Portuguese-speaking youth.
factors. According to Connell (2005) “there is no masculine entity whose occurrences in all societies we can generalize about.” (p. 43). Masculinity therefore depends on context and one's social location. Brandon, a university student who self-identifies as queer put it this way:

Yeah, so to me masculinity is very contextual just because I've had so many different experiences in different communities. So, whether it be my definition in the Portuguese community, whether it be one that applies to university students, or one in the queer community, I think they all differ.

This is not to suggest that definitions of masculinity do not differ within the Portuguese community. By identifying both the differences and similarities in how young men of Portuguese ancestry perceive masculinity, I will critically explore how these differences and similarities inform educational attainment and de-selection.

Connell (2005) suggests that masculinity should not be considered as a list of traits or characteristics, but understood as a set of interactions and relationships among and between genders. Participants commonly listed physical attributes or personality traits when they talked about and described masculinity, however, these ideas both inform and are informed by how men interact and relate to other men and women, as well as culture and space. In other words, masculinity is not intrinsic to being a man, it is performed by men and produced by society, and informs how men interact with and relate to one another as well as other genders including women, in specific cultures and spaces (Butler, 1990; Connell, 2005). Participants were asked to define masculinity in their own words and talk about how they themselves and other Luso-Canadian men

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8 Some of the language in this study is intentionally specific to men because this study reflects on the experiences of Portuguese-Canadian men. I do, however, want to acknowledge that masculinity is performed not only by men, but, also by some women, and some transgender identified people for whom performing masculinity may improve their lived experiences as men.
behave, sound, act, look, interact with and relate to others in their community. A strength of semi-structured interviews is that participants were encouraged to discuss masculinity, gender-relations, and sexuality as they understood these concepts and in the settings and experiences that made most sense to them. This meant that the categories used as sub-headings in chapter 3 were drawn from and not imposed on participants. Generally they talked about masculinity in relation to family, work, communication, sexuality and gender relations, which, as I analyzed the data, I noted as areas of interrogation and exploration. To be true to the way participants discussed masculinity, and informed by Connell’s frameworks for understanding masculinity, this chapter is divided according to the areas of interrogation and exploration listed above.

The sub-headings used to divide this chapter are not independent of one another because of the complexity of masculinity and how factors informing the construction of masculinity interrelate. Not only did these areas serve as sub-headings to help structure an exploration of masculinity, a few areas were so deeply acknowledged by participants as key factors defining masculinity that I decided to call these *dimensions of masculinity*. Sexuality emerged as a clear dimension of masculinity, whereas work and labour, although talked about by participants as defining masculinity, revealed men's interactions with, and relations to work and labour that defined masculinity as opposed to constituting dimensions of masculinity. The four main dimensions of masculinity included gender relations, power, control and sexuality.

I use the phrase dimensions of masculinity to embody the depth and complexity of the concept of masculinity as well as to refer to measurement and spatiality. As participants discussed masculinity they seemed to be *measuring* their own identities to
the definition of masculinity they were forming. One participant explained, “it's almost as if there's a checklist that has to be completed (laughter) … if you miss one, you better excel in everything else. And it is a lot of pressure” (Bruno). The need to excel in other areas on the list was also understood as a need to overcompensate for what is missing in one’s masculine identity. The spatial element conjured up by the phrase dimensions of masculinity avoids a linear representation of the concept of masculinity. Instead, a multi-dimensional understanding of masculinity is presented. I consider a multi-dimensional view of masculinity important because participants varied in how they understood masculinity to impact their identities based on their lived experiences. Participants who particularly struggled with any number of issues relating to their identities provided both complimentary and contradictory narratives to provide a truly multi-dimensional picture of masculinity. As well, dimension suggests the various factors (measurements) informing an identity, and which of these are of greater importance depending on the context. For example, gay identified participants saw their sexual orientation as a serious deficit to overcome, whereas heterosexuals spoke little of this.

Throughout this chapter I will outline and describe the various ways participants defined and discussed masculinity, in their own words, using the following settings: family, work, communication and sexuality. I will conclude chapter 3 with a summary of the four main dimensions of masculinity. These four dimensions of masculinity; power, 

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9 I have used pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of my participants. You will notice that some names reflect names that are common among Portuguese-Canadians, in other words, names that are traditionally Portuguese, while others do not. One day while tutoring I glanced at the chalkboard and read names that had been left there from the previous class. Although I do not recall the exact names, I do remember thinking that it was important to see “Portuguese” names on the board. It occurred to me that it is important to honour and value our culture by voicing the names that are so common in our community. I have tried to match the cultural roots of my participants’ names in each pseudonym.
control, sexuality and gender relations, do not constitute an exhaustive list. Additional
dimensions of masculinity are possible seeing as how this study is not an exhaustive
exploration of masculinity in the Portuguese-Canadian context.

**Inside the family: husband, father, man as provider**

The family features prominently in much of the literature on Portuguese-
Canadians (Noivo, 1997; Gilles, 2002) and remains a relevant and powerful institution in
the minds of young Portuguese-Canadians. Young Luso-Canadian men regard the family,
traditionally defined as married (opposite-sex) with children, as an institution and a set of
relationships that establish and define masculinity. For some, specifically gay
participants, personal definitions of family differ from how they perceive the Portuguese
community defines family. Ultimately, however, even diverging definitions of family are
tempered by cultural expectations. Bruno, an out gay male, acknowledges the importance
of family for his parents and community, despite seeming to not care about it himself,

So I think because, even that there is only myself and my cousin and
everyone else is a girl in the family, that there's that extra level of
expectation that you have to, you have to do more in life that you have to
have kids and a wife, because at the end of the day who's gonna pass on
the family name if there's only the two of us? Which for some reason is
really important to them; I couldn't care less about it.

Bruno, along with other participants, feels constrained by expectations to be married and
have children. Helder, who lives in a common-law arrangement with his female partner,
agrees:

Getting a spouse I would say yeah, that's a big one. You're supposed to get
married and have kids. So, in that sense you're less of a man...in the sense
that you do need to be married and have kids is a sense of masculinity in
the Portuguese community. Again, that could be the tie into the [Catholic]
religion, but having a spouse and kids is very important for a sense of
masculinity.

Helder claims that besides his mother, who wishes he would make his partnership "more official," he has not felt much pressure to get married. When asked how integrated he is with the Portuguese community, Helder admits not very much, and that could be why he has not felt more pressure from his community around marriage.

Not only does having a family appear to establish masculinity because of its heteronormative spousal arrangement, family also establishes masculinity by characterizing men as the provider. The term breadwinner\textsuperscript{10} came up in nearly every interview. Participants expressed that masculinity is commonly defined in the Portuguese-Canadian community, and for many personally, as being able to provide financially for oneself and one's family. Casimiro, whose family he openly admits was broken up because of alcohol, provides this perspective of the importance the role of provider has on men's self-esteem;

There are assigned roles. And your job is to play those roles otherwise you are not meeting the status quo or whatever, so that's not ok, and you know, you should feel very guilty and bad about it. Like for instance the man should go to work and bring home the money and he's the breadwinner. So, when you have something like I don't know, the recession, you know and you get fired, or not fired but (layoff, I suggested) layoff and you're sitting at home depressed and drinking, you know, just really self pitying yourself because now that role that you were comfortable with all those years that was your, that's just what you did everyday, go to work and bring home the money or whatever and the wife had dinner for you and cleaned the house and took care of the kids. It shoots, it really cuts down your self-esteem because you are now reduced to nothing, or you think you've been reduced to nothing. Yeah, cause now all of a sudden your wife has to juggle taking more hours at work to bring in extra money to make up for your loss of income and then you might have to pitch in taking care of the kids and you've never done that and you don't know how to do it or what to do and it's awkward for you, so. So, I guess the

\textsuperscript{10} For an historical definition of the term “breadwinner” see Wally Seccombe's “Patriarchy stabilized: the construction of the male breadwinner wage in nineteenth-century Britain”, cited in Connell, 2005.
consequence is struggle.

This arrangement sets up two very specific relationships between men and their families, which according to participants are widely understood. First, a man's identity is intimately associated with his work and ability to work, particularly to provide for his family, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Second, a man’s work sets up a relationship of hierarchy and power over women in terms of providing for the family as the breadwinner. Interestingly, in terms of being a provider, this was always discussed in terms of providing financially, and not in terms of the many other ways (emotionally, domestically, culturally, nurturing) men can provide for a family, often considered a woman’s responsibilities.

In so much as a man's masculinity is established by providing for his family, this does not necessarily translate as a father or husband. Traditionally, what a man provides for his family is largely seen in terms of financial resources. Another participant, James, claims that his definition of providing for one's family deviates from tradition and is not just about bringing home a pay cheque. He believes that masculinity is "not necessarily about that. I mean you could be masculine and be a good husband and a good father. That's the same level of masculinity, that's being a man." James’ sentiments, which a few other participants shared, feature aspects of Men’s Liberation discourse of the 1980s (Connell, 2005 and 1996). Briefly, Connell (1996) explains that developments in Men’s Liberation movement in the 1980s and into the 1990s embraced anti-sexism activism in both private and public arenas to champion, among other initiatives, “a gender revolution in certain households where men take an equal share with Kinder and Kuche, if not Kirche, and women take an equal share in decision-making and control of assets.” (Masculinity Politics section, para. 14). Men’s Liberation movement “seeks to exit
current patriarchal structures (and related gender relations), … but it also tries to transform existing forms of masculinity” (Connell, 1996; Masculinity Politics section, para. 14; parentheses mine). According to participants, however, the Portuguese community in Toronto fails to reflect this modernity, thereby continuing to define masculinity according to patriarchal structures and traditional gender relations. It should not be surprising therefore, that participants discussed their struggles related to disrupting traditional gender relations, especially concerning their relationships with their fathers.

Many participants discussed a longing and personal need for a more intimate and emotional father-son relationship. Some have become aware of this because their fathers, as they have aged, have changed or become softer often due to the presence of grandchildren. Others, however, have thought about father-son relationships because they continue to feel estranged or because as one participant revealed, his father is no longer alive. This suggests a consciousness among young Portuguese-Canadian men of the evolving responsibility of fatherhood and the growing importance of emotional relationships for men. Moreover, many participants articulated that an emotional relationship between father and son does not challenge masculinity and that in fact it is equally masculine to support and provide in ways beyond financially for one's family.

Imbedded in every participant's discussion of family was an acknowledgment that gender relations establish and (re)enforce masculinity. For some, the relationship between men and women, specifically between husband and wife, was discussed with indifference and simply as a traditional part of what their experience was growing up as a Portuguese-Canadian male. For others, gender relations proved to be more of a concern. Helder describes what he sees as unconventional gender relations at home;
My mom is very independent. In my household, my mom had such a backlash, and as time went on she really stood up for herself. So she was different from all my other aunts. And I'm not saying they were all miserable, but a lot of them were more subservient and submissive and stuff like that. So I think for sure my view of the Portuguese community is the man is the boss of the house, he wears the pants and he makes all the decisions. But, as time went on and my parents' relationship deteriorated, my mom definitely took the opposite role. She became the boss and she made decisions, and she wasn't afraid to take us on a social outing if my dad didn't want to go. ... What was presented to me was that the role of the male is superior in some cases, that is the perception I got growing up. But, I guess growing up, again maybe my mom was such a strong role model and spending a lot more time with my sister and having that female role model, I never felt that was the right way though. I always felt that women and men are equal.

Although Helder acknowledges that his mother disrupted traditional gender relations he does not see this as a problem. In fact, Helder attributes his mother's efforts with improving his and his sister's home life, despite his parents’ eventual divorce.

Brandon has not only gained awareness of gender relations in his family but also how he himself reproduces understandings of masculinity despite his attempt to embrace a different or alternative masculinity.

Sometimes I'll say something or act a certain way and I'm like why am I doing that. And so yeah, that's what's kinda led me to go back and reflect on those experiences and deconstruct them. But, it's even things like if we're at a dinner party, like the females are always the ones to clean up and I'm always like why is that happening, and like at first I was like ok, that's expected, but then it's like, no but why? I don't think it should be like that. But yeah, it's hard because it's kinda like you've kinda inherited that or inherited that behaviour or that way of thinking and it's the only way you know. And it's not easy to consciously go back and deconstruct the way you think. It's difficult to do that, but I definitely feel that those ideals are perpetuated through my own behaviours.

Jack also struggles to be congruent with a more modern notion of gender relations.

They're still in the old school back in Portugal when it comes to things like guys work and support, and women stay at home. I stand up for my sister in terms of her not having to do the kitchen stuff, but at the same time, I also tell her, I guess I'm brainwashed a little, like, oh it's good to learn this stuff, you know. I don't know if it's just being brainwashed or whatever.
Among the participants in this study, Brandon demonstrates a heightened awareness of issues of gender equity.

My awareness of issues concerning gender equity along with heteronormativity figure prominently in my personal journey to explore not only how my identity is shaped and formed by dominant dimensions of masculinity but how this knowledge informs my choices. To some degree it is expected that gender, especially as understood in the context of the family, appears to significantly inform participants’ reflections on masculinity. Masculinity after all is a category of gender. However, I suggest that gender relations specifically, constitute a dimension of masculinity. How men relate to women, how they position and distance themselves away from the feminine is prominent in participants’ descriptions of masculinity. In the next chapter I will discuss how understanding masculinity through gender relations may inform choices for young Portuguese-Canadian men, particularly relating to education.

**Constructing masculinity through work and labour**

This section explores the highly prevalent notion of work in relation to achieving and asserting masculinity in the minds of young Portuguese-Canadian men. According to Casimiro, a man who loses his job is left at home "depressed and drinking," suggesting that a man's identity is intimately associated with his employment and his ability and desire to work. This relationship appeared to dominate discussions concerning masculinity, or at the very least served as an entry point to consider how masculinity is achieved, performed and maintained. According to participants unemployment or underemployment constitutes a painful experience for Portuguese men for a number of
reasons including but not limited to; loss of wages to sustain self and family, disruption of a man's role as provider, and a threat to a man's power. The type of employment also matters for a variety of reasons, not least of which is income.

Participants unanimously expressed that jobs requiring physical strength and that were situated outdoors, such as construction, were perceived to be more masculine in the Portuguese-Canadian community, and that those who did these jobs had greater claims to masculinity. Work and employment as well as one's dedication to one's job, or work ethic, was used by all participants to describe and define masculinity. Some participants, however, hesitated at first to discuss masculinity in terms of work because they perceived all types of work as being legitimate for a man. I wonder if they resisted to make this association because of some concern that their job or career is not traditionally considered masculine. Even among these participants, however, the overwhelming sense is that young Portuguese-Canadian men still believe that Luso-Canadians see certain work as more masculine while other jobs are feminine. Helder sums this up well;

Yeah again, more of the physical labour jobs, like construction, landscaping, all those kinds of jobs. Outdoors, anything outdoors, even driving, you don't really see women delivery drivers, or I mean you might, but not in the Portuguese community. It just seems like they're more in the cleaning side or secretarial or what have you. Yeah, definitely hands on, any trades; electrician, carpenter. So, very much hands on, physical labour jobs.

A construction worker proved to be the most masculine job in the minds of all my participants. Interestingly, none of my participants worked in the construction industry, although many of their fathers did or had. This may at first appear to be a harmless stereotype of Portuguese men in Canada, but in fact, this firmly shared sense of what constitutes a masculine job is at the heart of some fairly concerning struggles for many young Portuguese-Canadian men, particularly those who have made concerted efforts to
succeed in other careers and occupations. Bruno is one of these men.

Bruno is a 28 year-old gregarious, attractive, and personable young man with olive skin, dark hair and eyes, and an athletic body. Bruno works in the music industry. He is gay and is out to his family about his sexuality, but makes every effort to downplay his sexuality, even from those people who already know; "it's a matter of avoiding the typical gay lifestyle." Bruno’s avoidance, or efforts to downplay his sexual identity is sure to produce tension and conflict in his life, which will be further explored in chapter 4. Perhaps even more so considering Bruno's efforts to downplay his sexuality, he understands the relationship between masculinity and work.

There's just some sort of pride that, again, real men work with their hands. Real men do hard labour. Real men don't go sit in an office from 9 to 5 and talk on the phone. That's not what real men do, that stuff is saved for women.

When asked if he has ever felt his masculinity was judged based on what he does for work, he laughs;

Oh definitely. Growing up, when I was in high school at least, my mom was a cleaner so she cleaned office towers. And during the summer when I was not in school I would help her in the evenings and clean offices, and because I was only 15 years old at the time, my mom thought it was a great way for me to make like a few hundred dollars every couple of weeks. And when my father found out, he just flipped his lid. He was like, 'what are you doing to him? What are you teaching him? This is not what men do. He should be out working with his hands,' he said, 'he should be doing construction.' I was 15 years old, what the hell do you think I'm gonna be doing with construction, that's not gonna happen.

Asked about his current employment, Bruno is dismissive about what he does; "I don't think it's a job according to some people."

Going to university, Bruno admits, was an attempt at making his parents proud of him. Despite his apparent physical strength and father’s insistence, Bruno was less interested in construction and directed more of his attention towards succeeding in
school, which he admits for the most part happened naturally.

At the end of the day it didn't make any difference. I was the first in literally my entire family to go to and complete university. And I thought, if I'm the first, I'm like hello, I'm the first, I gotta get some kudos here. But no, there was never, I don't think my dad was ever proud of me for completing university, especially since I didn't get the typical $100,000 job that you're supposed to get at the end of university, which he thinks I should have right now.

In Bruno's case, as is the case with many young Portuguese-Canadian men who pursue higher education, a job or career that might not otherwise be regarded as masculine is overlooked if the wage or salary is impressive. The wage or salary then becomes the principle means by which masculinity is measured or asserted.

For Bruno, as is the case with many others, his is a lifelong struggle to be good enough for his parents, and he sees his sexuality as a considerable deficit to overcome. "I think in the community it's never completely ok to be gay. But, if you're gonna be gay it's better to be masculine than not. It's more socially acceptable if you are masculine." And so Bruno did well in school, excelled athletically and joined many of his high school's sports teams. Bruno even purchased a home at a young age to impress his father. Home ownership is prized in the Portuguese community and closely tied to work and labour (Nunes, 1998; Reitz and Sklar, 1997). Not only can home ownership be seen as a validation of one's work ethic, but it can also represent external validation, by way of being approved for a mortgage, which proves one's responsibility and is tied to wage/work stability.

When I bought my home, although he wasn't supportive financially, I knew that I just kicked it up a notch with my dad, that he had a bit more respect for me because I became a home owner. And now that I'm selling my place and decided I wanna go back to renting, it's kinda like, I got that peg kicked out from under me now, it's like, down one again with my dad.

Bruno's story is very familiar to me. As a student for many years I regularly grapple with
the fact that it is not yet my time to become a home owner; a persistent desire that transcends logical reasoning and exists for me emotionally. Perhaps I too see home ownership as a way to overcome the deficit of being gay. As a gay man, if I can achieve what other respected men in my community have achieved then I can be seen as an equal. Perhaps even more profoundly, I feel that in some way me being a home owner can change the minds of those in my community regarding what it means to be gay, or I suppose at the very least, my parents. I assure you that I have thought about the absurdity of this reasoning extensively, but, again, it is a persistent desire that is informed more by emotion than logic.

Part of why work and wage appear regularly in how participants describe and define masculinity is because it provides them with a sense of independence from others, which touches on many aspects of their lived experiences. This idea goes beyond being able to purchase a home or provide for one's family, it is an independence from needing anything from anyone. In other words, masculinity is achieved through self-reliance, or not relying on others to obtain or do what one should be able to obtain or do on one's own. Whether, as participants mentioned, it is being a handyman so as to not need to pay others to fix something, or being financially secure and stable enough to purchase what one needs or wants without asking for assistance, masculinity is understood as getting the job done without needing to ask others for help. Allowances are made, and help is permitted, for certain things, such as for larger construction jobs requiring more hands or specific skills, and of course a mortgage, but generally men should be able to get any job done without asking for help.

Describing his experiences working part-time as a student, Vidal talks about this
sense of independence from others;

Well, say you're messing up or something, [supervisors] won't kindly say you're messing up, they'll probably yell at you or something. And if you cry about it, that doesn't help, that just makes it worse. You're expected to be tough and strong. Being able to do like everyone else does.

Vidal goes on to admit that if he needs help with something he asks his friends at work, but that he does not go to his supervisor. According to Vidal, somehow men are expected to figure out how to get the job done. Helder agrees.

I didn't have that handyman gene. Yeah, so that I would say, that sense of like being able to fix your car and you know, not rely on other people. You gotta sharpen the blades on the motor, you do it. You don't get somebody else to do it. You get your hands dirty, ... I always felt like because I had to rely on other people, you know, I can do some things on my car, like change the oil and change the tire, but anything more than that I couldn't do it. So, I always felt like I had to ask my older brother to help me change the spark plugs. But you know that's the way it is, I don't really beat myself up about it.

These quotes highlight the following ideas that I will explore in chapter 4. First, the fact that Vidal would ask a friend he was working with for help and not just any co-worker, and in Helder's case, that he would ask his older brother for help as opposed to a neighbour, suggests that vulnerability or insecurity can only be revealed when a relationship of trust exists. And second, changing the context of this example to school, would either Vidal or Helder ask their teacher for help or would they rely on their friends or more trusted relationships?

At the centre of participants’ association of masculinity with notions of self-reliance and independence, is a struggle for power. Struggles for power highlight how men relate and interact with others to achieve masculinity, and for this reason power is another dimension of masculinity. It is how this relationship of power, or need for independence and self-reliance, is transferred to other areas of participants’ lives that one
begins to explore the impact masculinity has on the lives of young Luso-Canadian men. The following section explores how relationships of trust are at times insufficient, particularly between father and son, to broker certain communication. A necessary exploration is to understand how trust is built and nurtured for men and what part it plays in their lives.

**Communication in men: the (un)heard and (un)felt**

During the course of interviewing participants I was repeatedly reminded that perceptions of masculinity are not only based on what young men are told and observe, but that masculinity is defined in terms of what is absent from their relationships and lived experiences. Communication in its various forms and gendered associations informs young Portuguese-Canadian men's understandings of masculinity. Of the various forms of communication according to participants emotional communication was in fact glaringly absent from their relationships. For some participants, emotional communication was the most uncomfortable form of communication. Nearly all participants desired a father-son relationship with emotional depth, compassion and understanding, and expressed that this absence of emotional communication impacted the way they communicated more generally. This is not to suggest that each of these participants would characterize his relationship with his father as bad. In fact, some participants indicated that they have a good and respectful relationship with their father, but that emotionally they are distant or uncommunicative. Such a relationship sets up a

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11 Unlike emotional communication commonly used to describe communication between infants, I use the term to acknowledge the ways that adults communicate with and about emotions. Unlike body language, emotional communication is at once more specific than general body language and broader in that it often includes spoken language.
dynamic between son and father that prevents young men from talking to their fathers about emotional or deeply personal matters, and that most would not talk to their fathers about personal conflict for fear that they would be interpreted as weak, soft, feminine and/or gay. To illustrate how participants used communication to describe and discuss masculinity, or the absence of masculinity, I will draw on examples that articulate how participants described verbal, physical and emotional communication separately. Throughout and concluding this section I will draw on particular examples to also illustrate how participants observed and experienced communication differently between men and women.

Verbal communication proved to be the most obvious and superficial influence on one's perceived masculinity. Participants agreed that men who express themselves loudly and aggressively are imagined to have a greater sense of masculinity. This association exists in part because an aggressive and loud communication style is regarded by some participants as competitive and tough, and more importantly, some participants linked this communication style with fixed and positional thinking. Not only are a man's firmness and unwavering convictions seen as masculine, but also some participants felt that to be otherwise is regarded as feminine (Gorski, 2010). Although many shared this sentiment, Bruno summarized it best;

I've noticed, and this is just between myself and the friends that I had also, that were also Portuguese heritage and same background, it was okay for a woman to have her own opinion as long as it isn't a strongly held opinion. Whereas if they, if a man had a certain perspective and was firm on it, and wouldn't budge on that whatever the issue was, it would be okay. But if it came to a woman taking that same stance, then there usually tends to be consequences for it, whether it's verbal abuse or physical abuse, whereas that would never transpire the other way around.

Bruno goes on to assert that not only is it acceptable, "it is more expected for a man to
take a hard stance on something than it is for a woman." For a man not to take a hard
stance on something, Bruno admits, he "would be seen as less of a man." Bruno
concludes by affirming that, "regardless of whether you're right or wrong or what the
consequences are, as long as you stick to it, you are portraying that you're more
masculine than someone who's a bit more flimsy or someone who's willing to
compromise." Communication that is fixed and positional, and regularly expressed
aggressively, does not lend itself to accessible and collaborative relationships, not to
mention educational settings where learning requires an open mind and disposition to
new and challenging knowledge.

The words men speak and how they speak them represent merely one of the ways
they communicate. To a lesser extent participants described physical communication in
their discussions of masculinity, however, the impact of this form of communication was
made most evident in their stories. By physical communication I am referring to how
men communicate using their bodies. I do not mean to suggest that physical
communication is necessarily physical violence, although quite often violence is present.
Mario describes this using his father as an example;

My father has changed a lot but when I was younger, we'd go out and he'd
be very quiet, very stern. Do not piss him off in public because you'd get
shit. Always very aggressive, just aggression, a lot of aggression no matter
where, and imposing on others. Not being calm, relaxed, just always right
in someone's face. His dinner table talk or when he gets upset is just
(participant smacks his hand on the table). It doesn't matter where or
when. It's just his way.

What I intend to discuss is the importance some participants placed on the physical male
body and how this at times asserts or establishes masculinity, particularly to conceal or
overcompensate for deficits to one's perceived masculinity such as homosexuality,
stature, or employment status. Whether in the work place, on the field, in the classroom,
school yard or at home, participants discussed how physical communication such as intimidation and aggressiveness is viewed as masculine. Physical intimidation and aggression was common in school for whom some participants referred to as the cool kids;

Portuguese try to be the cool bully type guy. It's just like, just because they're so stubborn, and they think, they grow up to be tough. Portuguese people are known to be tough, in the head and they're strong, right. So, I don't know, they would just pick up on weaker kids and stuff like that, and they would just try to be like ah, the tough guy. That's how I was anyways. I would just pick on kids to make me feel like a man. (Jack)

Intimidating and aggressive relationships to perceived weaker men as described in Jack’s quote are not unique to the Portuguese community, however, many participants suggested that these forms of masculinity may be learned from the community. Intimidation, which was often masked as respect or reverence, was a mode of communication commonly encountered between father and son. And, intimidation often manifested in physical ways. The following characterized communication between Casimiro and his father:

My father's behaviour with me, or tone with me was always sort of you're in trouble, watch it mister. Actually, my father would probably maybe tell you I grew up respecting him but actually I grew up fearing him. For me it was always a question of, ok if I do this, what will happen, am I going to get kicked in the ass with a steel toe boot?

Another participant talked about domestic corporal punishment, which I consider a form of physical communication. “To get hit is a Portuguese thing. You’re Portuguese if you’re catching a beating” (Arturo). Ember and Ember (2005) affirm that many cultures use domestic corporal punishment as a child training technique, however, Arturo specifically identifies how this informs his identity, “we’re brought up to be fighters, we’re brought up to be the guy who knows how to hit better than the other guy because that’s how we were raised at home.” Additionally, he suggests this not only informs
behaviour, but also creates a culture in the household, “a real hard core mentality; beat my kid in shape.” And another participant further confirms this association of “expressions of power” with masculinity when he says, “as a young child I was beaten up by my two brothers and my parents never said anything. My father would say that’s gonna make you a man.” Similar attitudes towards violence are likely to exist in other communities as well, but one must consider to what extent are Portuguese-Canadian youth informed by a “beat my kid into shape” mentality? How might a culture of physical communication and violence inform their interactions with other youth, classmates, parents and authority figures, or in the workplace or in the home?

In another example, Arturo talks about how physical communication amplifies verbal communication in a social setting. Arturo uses the term "hazing" to discuss homophobic "teasing":

Like I said there’s always hazing, but I know straight guys who get hazed more than the gay guys. So, it’s all about being you. That’s why I’m saying you can be a gay guy who’s masculine cause I do know one or two who are buff homies. And even when they’re made fun of they’ll be, ‘yeah, you’ll be the one taking my dick…

Notwithstanding the homophobia and sexism in this quote, it illustrates the importance of physical communication to conceal or overcome deficits to one's perceived masculinity. The homie in the above quote is Arturo's gay friend. His physique and size are what add intimidation and aggression to his words. Although I did not ask Arturo, I wonder if his friend's words would have the same effect had his friend not been, as he described him, a buff homie. Physical communication, commonly expressed as aggression and intimidation is one way to achieve and establish masculinity, but emotional communication is perhaps the greatest threat to one's perceived masculinity.

Thus far I have discussed the existing and dominant forms of communication used
by men according to participants, namely verbal and physical forms of communication. As noted earlier, participants identified emotional communication as the most absent form of communication between father and son, and that this absence had a significant impact on the way participants felt they communicated more generally. For the purposes of this study, emotional communication refers to the ways that adults communicate with and about emotions, particularly difficult and personal emotions that reveal vulnerabilities, weaknesses and uncertainties, as well as empathy. Emotional communication also refers to expressing how emotions and feelings impact our daily lives and our relationships with others and one’s self. Examples to follow will help to illustrate emotional communication. I was not surprised that participants admitted to avoiding emotional communication, and yet the consistency with which emotional communication was disassociated with masculinity in the minds of participants cannot be ignored. Emotion has historically not only been inversely associated with masculinity, it has been used to characterize women as illogical and irrational and in these ways inferior to men (Fischer, 2000). Therefore, instead of discussing how emotion is interpreted as un-masculine in the minds of these participants, I will focus on exploring the existing tensions and conflicts in participant narratives as a result of a lack of emotional communication, as well as how young Portuguese-Canadian men’s choices are informed by the lack of emotional communication in their lives, particularly at home.

Among men, there's no emotional talk. There's not. Until recently, the last 5 years, I've never had emotional talks with my dad, about anything. Never in a million years would I go talk to my dad about anything going on in my life that requires any emotional discussion. In high school my dad never talked to me about feeling this way or that. And I think about it now, I struggled a lot, like I was tense, very tense, because I didn't know what I was thinking or what was right, and you know if I would express something my dad would just lash out and say, 'ah stop
being a baby', you know what I mean?

Mario's account is not unique and illustrates how the lack of emotional communication results in his considerable physical and mental distress. Other participants also expressed that they struggled to remain in control of their emotions. Although not nearly as reflexive, Vidal puts it this way;

You're supposed to be tough and all, you're not supposed to be the wimpy kid, you know, you wanna blend in with all your friends, cause you don't wanna be that weird guy, you know, that's different. Crying and stuff, like, you're supposed to be tough you know. Stuff like that. And it's difficult. I mean sometimes you feel down and stuff, you know, stuff they say to you and stuff like that. It's tough, but you just gotta get over it, because if you don't, it gets worse and your masculinity is questioned.

Being perceived as weird can be interpreted many ways including being seen as non-masculine. In this particular case, Vidal’s masculinity is questioned when he is seen or perceived as emotional or emotionally weak.

The negative effects of repressed physical and mental distress due to the pressures of appearing tough and non-emotional may seem obvious, but accounts such as Casimiro's description of his father's coping strategy (drinking) at a time when he was unemployed and his marriage was on the verge of ending, have made all too real for him that a lack of emotional communication with others can harm one's health.

You're not supposed to be sensitive. You don't talk about your feelings, and you don't share stuff with anybody, (pause) which ironically ends up driving you insane because if you don't have someone to talk to about stuff then it just eats you up inside and then no wonder we have so many alcoholics. Well, I don't know, but I think that's part of the problem.

Casimiro is not the only participant to suggest alcohol abuse is a coping strategy for many men in the Portuguese community (Agic, Mann & Kobus-Matthews, 2011). One might expect that Casimiro could turn to his mother for emotional communication, but again, gendered behaviours are quite often just as enforced and expected by women as
they are by men.

Growing up I never went to my mother and talked about any problems I had, because first of all my mother was too busy being stuck, wrapped in my father's stuff, and then the times I did go to my mother she was not supportive, so eventually I figured ok, well I have to just deal with stuff on my own and that's it. So, I guess that created my isolation, or my choice to be isolated and be on my own and be as independent as possible and not lean on or depend on other people for things because they may not be forthcoming.

Differences between how men and women generally communicate do exist according to participants. Typically, participants found that mothers tended to be more flexible, compassionate and conversational, whereas fathers shared less, were fixed and closed-minded, and tended to use physical and verbal forms of communication to intimidate and control. Recall Casimiro's characterization of his relationship with his father as one of fear. Despite claiming his mother equally failed in the area of emotional communication, she did foster, even if marginally, a more communicative relationship with him. "My mother was more democratic. You got a speech the first time, the second time if you didn't listen then you would get a spank. My father was like bam (to indicate a punch to the head), and you didn't even know what you did." Perhaps Casimiro's scenario does not accurately describe a democratic relationship, but as has already been mentioned women appear less fixed in their opinions than men, which lends itself to greater emotional communication. Bruno claims the following:

I always felt my dad was trying to define me in a certain way that I didn't want to be defined. And I felt like it was very much a control issue with him, and as soon as I felt that presence, I usually rebelled. Whereas my mom was much more lenient with whatever I wanted to do, whether it's my lifestyle, my clothing, my hairstyle, she would let me explore what I wanted to do, whereas my dad was very limiting.

 Appropriately, Bruno's response to his father's attempt to "control or define" him is
expectedly masculine. Bruno responds to his father's fixed definition of him with rebellion and defiance, which is characteristic of a struggle for power and control. Perhaps this response results because a conversation between the two is hardly possible or because it is the communication strategy Bruno has learned and adopted. In any case, Bruno's mother appears to be more flexible, and according to his accounts, she appears more equitable than his father. Finally, Brandon suggests that the father's position in the family may influence why women communicate differently than men.

Speaking back is a big one, at least in my family, and I'm sure across the board as well. And it's not that I'm speaking back, it's just that I'm challenging the discussion, and that's not allowed. So, if I were to challenge my mother, it wouldn't be the same as if I were challenging my father. I could say the exact same thing, but just because one is to my mom, who's not the decision maker, and one is to my father who is the decision maker, the latter is seen as being very aggressive and confrontational. Whereas if it were my mom it would be more of a discussion.

This section has explored communication as a dimension of masculinity. I divided communication into verbal, physical and emotional communication to illustrate and differentiate these forms of communication, as well as to expose how these forms of communication, when combined, further intimidate and isolate men from one another. The examples resembled a struggle, and in some cases, a battle for control, which is why control is a dimension of masculinity. The men in this study voiced personal struggles and tensions concerning a topic that rarely escapes their own minds and hearts. I witnessed their hesitation to discuss these struggles not only through the words they spoke but also in the silences they overcame and emotion they shared. I have no doubt that these taught and nurtured forms of communication injure young Portuguese men and place significant pressures on them to perform masculinity through the words,
behaviours, and emotions they express, and equally if not more so through what they do not express. Perceived emotional vulnerability in how men communicate with others likely poses the greatest risk to one's masculinity because it indicates a loss of control and weakness from within. Moreover, emotional vulnerability or sensitivity continues to be associated with femininity and homosexuality. The following section will explore how participants understood the effect of sexuality on masculinity.

**Sexuality and masculinity: an intimate relationship**

It would be impossible to discuss and understand masculinity without discussing sexuality. The two are intimately related, perhaps so much so, that many people take this for granted. Men who struggle with how heterosexuality is traditionally associated with masculinity often have a more nuanced and detailed understanding of the assumptions of, and expectations placed on them from their communities and society at large. It is not surprising that the gay identified participants in this study, not to discredit heterosexual participants' insights, provided the richest reflections on how one's sexuality and perceived sexuality informs one's masculinity or perceived masculinity. It is entirely for this reason that the voices of gay men appear to outnumber those of other participants in this section.

Participants in this study asserted that in the Portuguese-Canadian community heterosexuality affirms masculinity whereas homosexuality undermines masculinity. Yet, it is important to note that participants agreed that it is possible for a man who is gay, and openly so, to be perceived as masculine. Perhaps this opinion informed why many participants claimed that attitudes towards homosexuality have shifted and will continue
to shift as the Portuguese community in Canada continues to evolve and integrate more fully into the Canadian context. It was also noted that education helps to shift attitudes and opinions about gay men. However, many contradictions concerning this shift emerged throughout the interviews. Moreover, attitudes toward homosexuality and gay men may have become more tolerant and possibly accepting, but this does not necessarily translate as a disruption in how homosexuality is perceived to undermine masculinity. Sexuality certainly encompasses more than simply sexual orientation, such as virility and marital or relationship status. The rootedness of sexuality in participant responses necessitates that it be embedded in previous sections. The following participant interview excerpts explore how young men perceive one’s sexuality to impact one’s masculinity.

Participants shared a sense that men must be sexually active, with women, to assert masculinity. According to Jack, "If you're always getting some, you're perceived as masculine. If you're not then I guess you're not masculine, or it's kinda like you're a wimp." To help ensure other men perceive one as masculine, single men are expected to boast and embellish about their virility and sexual exploits.

Well, growing up I know it was very common for guys to you know be dating or seeing a girl and then they have to brag about the sex or brag about something. Like, so if you have a girl and you're having sex you're a man. If you're not dating a girl and you're not having sex well all of a sudden your sexual orientation or masculinity is in question because why can't you get a girl and why can't you get laid?

This quote by Casimiro not only suggests a clear expectation among men, including young Portuguese-Canadian men, that masculinity and sexuality must be asserted by talking about their sexual lives, but also that sexual orientation and masculinity are complicated and connected. For gay participants like Casimiro asserting masculinity by talking about his sexual life proves challenging in a variety of ways. For gay participants
to pass as straight in highly heteronormative communities requires adopting some if not many aspects of dominant straight culture.

Bruno may be considered fortunate because to the best of his knowledge he passed as convincingly straight.

You just have to act like a straight guy. I think generally you have to put on the act that you're more reserved and not show off your lifestyle, because once that starts coming up then people start to look at you a little funny. But generally if you act like a guy, talk like a guy, do the same jobs as a guy, then generally I think people would be accepting of it. But as soon as you steer away from that norm, that's when you know the community starts to talk, or whatever it is.

Bruno admits the constant act of playing it straight got tiring when he first started coming out to his parents and family. Bruno's first few interview responses to how he defines masculinity illustrate that he has developed a negative association with gayness and femininity in men, which according to Frye (1983), is prolific in gay culture as well as a fear of being perceived as effeminate. "I would consider masculinity someone that's not a flaming queen. If someone has a lisp, clearly you're not masculine. Someone who dresses more like, I guess dresses more like a guy, who doesn't wear anything that's super tight, that sticks to your body." Given the experiences of some participants and my personal experiences of performing heteronormative masculinity in some Portuguese settings, particularly but not exclusively during my closeted years, I am not surprised by Bruno’s response. Although disturbing and upsetting, I appreciate Bruno’s thoughts concerning masculinity, particularly because he suggests his attitudes are common in the Portuguese community in Toronto.

I think my definition is similar to my community's definition of masculinity, just because if you see someone who's a little bit more flamboyant walking down the street, my dad would have no problem calling them out on it, or making a comment. Even though he knows I'm gay, he would still say something, which personally I couldn't care less
about, it's whatever. I know how he is and I accept that, I love that about him.

The fact that Bruno accepts and embraces his father’s attitudes towards “flamboyant” men leaves me wondering if Bruno feels immune to the homophobia he hears from his father because neither he nor others perceive him as effeminate, and how much of Bruno’s own struggles around his sexuality are informed by his father’s homophobia.

Married men are afforded a greater sense of masculinity. All participants responded that heterosexual marriage is a means of achieving masculinity. The absence of which places one's masculinity in question. James is a plain looking man who cleans up well. He arrived to his interview impeccably groomed, in business casual attire and, although I sensed early in our conversation that he was a little disquieted, he remained interested to participate. James describes his parents as integrated people, with a circle of core Portuguese friends augmented by many different people from a variety of cultures. James’ account of his parents' opinions of gay people, which he struggles to articulate with considerable discomfort, is an interesting commentary on marriage and his parents' ideas of what not getting married implies.

I mean even my parents sometimes will make like stupid, ignorant comments. They're not by any means, they're not … they don't hate anybody, right. But, ah … like, they'll make a comment. I'll be like, but who cares if he's gay or she's gay, what difference does it make? Who cares? Right. And I think that that's slowly … they're starting to be like, okay, you know what he's right. But yes, they'll still make the comments like um, about the whole gay thing, not getting married. Like, before I met my wife, I mean I was in a couple of relationships that were long and they both ended sourly. And then I would joke around, I'm like, I'm just going to be single and adopt an Asian kid or something. They were like, yeah, you can go live like a gay guy by yourself with your adopted Asian gay baby (nervous laughter). Right. I would even say that just to get a rise out of them, right. But, ah, they would get mad if I didn't want to get married and if I didn't wanna have kids, right. So, they're kinda relieved I guess that I'm married, they're happy right, it's like ok, now people won't judge and say things.
It is interesting to note that James is an only child. The richness of his quote makes it relevant in so many parts of this work, however, concerning marriage, James’ claim that an unmarried man is considered in the eyes of his parents to be gay, or at the very least calls into question his masculinity, is a powerful indictment for homosexuality and places considerable pressure on young Portuguese-Canadian men to marry a woman.

The gay participants in my study were keenly aware of the risk non-marriage presented to one's masculinity. A strategy for them, not unfamiliar among gay men generally, was to overcompensate in other areas of their lives (Downs, 2006). Each participant's level of comfort with his gay identity and resolve to live with congruence made a difference in the degree to which they overcompensated, but each did overcompensate in one way or another. Bruno shared his struggle with this.

And just having girlfriends and always thought that I'd have to achieve more in life just so my parents would be proud of me, so I'm like once they find out I'm gay, I'm like, that's gonna be it. But, at least if I have a good education, if I have a great job, if I purchase a house really early on in life, then they'll be like oh he might be gay but at least he's still successful in life. The big fear at least in my community, and I know it's not just with myself because I have other gay friends who are Portuguese, is that your parents are going to disown you.

In an attempt to gain his father's respect, you will recall that Bruno graduated from university and purchased a home at a young age. Bruno did this because he wanted to maintain a connection with his community, but for others, a connection with one’s community is not necessarily worth living an act, concealing one’s identity and/or living a closeted existence.

Brandon provided insightful commentary on his experience as a gay man in the Portuguese community. His boyish looks, dark eyes and hair, charming smile and athletic physique, not to mention elite athlete reputation, helped him present and pass as straight
for many years. Towards the end of high school however, he decided the charade concerning his sexuality needed to end. When he decided to come out as gay he also decided that he needed to turn away from his Portuguese community. It started off as a conscious distance. But then it kinda grew into something else. When people would ask me I just wouldn't think of it. If someone were to ask, I would simply respond I'm Canadian. I was like I'm not that interested in associating myself with that anymore. And so it happened for a lot of reasons. I felt like the culture was really aggressive, like I wasn't liking what was going on, or the shifts that were happening, just the attitudes being expressed mainly regarding gender, there's a lot regarding gender. Cause high school was a period where I was kinda figuring out and developing my identity and so it was hard for me to do that while still kinda adhering to all these Portuguese cultural norms, and it's just like ok, I can't do this and do this at the same time. So, in order for my development I kinda had to push that away and be like, ok I'm not going to associate myself with the Portuguese community. Whether Brandon's strategy of distancing himself or Bruno's strategy of concealing himself is more common among gay Portuguese-Canadian men is hard to discern. Both are certainly familiar strategies and journeys for navigating and dealing with the tension and conflict of sexuality for young gay Portuguese-Canadian men. My experience is similar to Brandon’s. I became more and more distant from the Portuguese community, including extended family and friends, as I became more accepting of my sexual orientation, although I recognize that my growing self-acceptance was made easier by associating with others who accepted my sexuality. My immediate family remains crucially important to my happiness, but I continue to disconnect with them regarding issues of gender and sexuality, disagreements which would likely be more frequent if I made less of an effort to conceal parts of who I am from them. Pressures relating to heteronormativity may be more pronounced for gay men, but they are not gay men's pressures. Straight participants in this study, like James, asserted their awareness of the pressures on them to express masculinity according to heteronormative cultural norms.
Moving forward

Participant narratives included many specific examples or factors that defined masculinity for them and their community. Chapter 3 has illustrated how participants defined masculinity in relation to four areas of exploration and interrogation derived from their narratives. The areas of family, work, communication and sexuality provided a useful structure with which to discuss masculinity, but equally, if not more importantly, this structure was derived from the narratives of participants according to how and where they understood masculinity is established. Through my analysis however, it became increasingly evident that four main dimensions of masculinity summarize the data collected in my interviews. The four dimensions of masculinity are power, control, sexuality and gender relations. As I have mentioned, these dimensions of masculinity are not an exclusive list, rather, they represent the four prominent dimensions that emerged in my analysis. These dimensions go beyond specific factors, which illicit linear, one dimensional understandings of masculinity, and instead interrogate how men interact with and relate to other men and women in the context of these dimensions. Chapter 4 will further explore these dimensions of masculinity in relation to participants' lived experiences in education and schooling. The following chapter will be a discussion and interrogation of how participants' choices and thoughts concerning education and schooling were informed by their definitions and understandings of masculinity.
Chapter 4
Analyzing Dimensions of Masculinity

Equipped with a better understanding of how participants describe and understand masculinity I now turn my attention to the task of identifying if and how their perceptions have impacted their choices and attitudes concerning education and schooling. During their interviews I asked participants to describe their educational experiences and what school was like for them. Questions inquired about their favourite and least favourite subjects, teachers, aspects about school, as well as to describe when they may have struggled. Throughout my analysis I will endeavour to connect these answers to the four main dimensions of masculinity, and when appropriate, their informing factors. I will also discuss the conceptual frameworks presented in chapter 2 in relation to participant narratives and my own analysis. My aim is to stimulate questions and reveal associations between masculinity and educational de-selection that enrich the conversation around academic underachievement for Portuguese male youth in Toronto as well as point to areas of future investigation.

Chapter 4 is divided into four themes that explore participant narratives relating to education and schooling. These themes emerged from both the interviews and the stories. Experiences including some that are rather lengthy were selected to allow the reader to experience my conversation with the participant without interruption. These experiences cover themes including how a son’s education threatens his father’s control and power in the family structure; how school can be read by young men as a site of insecurity; how community ideals of masculinity may prevent young men from accessing help with school, and how education and schooling is seen for some as an escape from community
pressures concerning masculinity. It will become clear how dimensions of masculinity, such as sexuality, gender relations, power and control, impact the participants’ attitudes towards their educational and schooling choices.

**Education: a source of tension between father and sons**

I first met Mario when I arrived at his downtown condo for his interview. He is handsome and presented himself in a very professional manner, well dressed in a collared shirt and grey slacks, he may have just finished removing his tie from a long day at work. He was eager to talk, and this being my first interview for this study, I was eager to listen and learn. Mario is the youngest in a family of four boys. He and his brothers all attended university, and all but one were born in Toronto. Mario expressed tremendous respect for his brothers and family. Not surprisingly, he was bothered by what he saw as “insecurity” among his parents, particularly his father, who feels inferior to his educated sons because he lacks the formal education to validate his skills and intelligence.

And I don’t know what it is, maybe, I don’t know if it’s isolated to my dad, but there’s this insecurity with maybe parents, you know, I’m working at a construction site, do I want my kid getting on top of me? Do I want him being not quote unquote smarter than me, being more educated? And there’s definitely that, my dad, even when we talk now, like we’re all professionals and this, and my dad is like, (with a macho inflection in his voice) Ah, I know business, I know business. I can keep up with you guys, blah, blah, blah. And it’s like, dad, we know you’re smart. We’re not trying to bring you down or anything. But, he feels like he has to be you know proving this or trying to put us down, not intentionally, just he’s insecure about it. So maybe there’s also that with other Portuguese parents. Like, they don’t want their kids getting to another stratosphere that they’re not at, or another level, and they kinda poke and nudge and hold them back. I don’t know if that’s the case, but I’ve definitely felt that with my dad. He’s always trying to overcompensate for, you know, making comments like, ah, you know, just because I work here doesn’t mean I’m not smarter. And I’m like, dad, we know you’re smart. We know you had to do what you had to do, but you know, my dad could have easily gone to school and done something else, but he
didn’t have that opportunity, he had to work, and that’s just how it was, and we all recognize it. But, he definitely has a little chip on his shoulder about that, that comes out here and there when we’re having discussions, you know. We’re having cannon discussions or law discussions, and my dad will put his, his thoughts in, but he’ll be so aggressive about it, you know, because he feels insecure or not confident that you know we’re kinda laughing at him behind his back, we’re like, we’re not like, he just has this little chip about it.

Mario’s example describes a sense of competitiveness in his father, whom Mario perceives as threatened by his and his brothers’ education and academic intelligence. His father’s response can be seen as a competition or grasp for power within a working-class culture, or a particular field. Mario’s father understands his position of power to be threatened in the context of a conversation with his sons. Mario affirms that it was not through any deliberate act on his or his brothers’ part that elicited this response from his father. Rather, his father’s own insecurities frequently manifest in anger and aggression, particularly in the context of discussions concerning work. This scenario is not isolated to this instance. As Mario describes, “he’s always trying to overcompensate for,” and although he doesn’t complete the thought, the sense is that his father is overcompensating for a lack of education.

Bourdieu’s concept of field may help us to unpack Mario’s account. Briefly, agents within a field are subject to the field’s forms of authority and regulations (“force field”) as each agent struggles to preserve or overturn the existing distribution of capital in that field (“battlefield”) to place him/her in a position of power (as cited in Wacquant, 1998). The main struggle in Mario’s account appears to centre on tensions of working-class culture and a higher-class culture influenced by education. Chapter 3 confirmed that generally, Portuguese-Canadians as a community are firmly located within a working-class culture. Working-class Portuguese culture is therefore the field in Mario’s account
and those who claim authority define capital in that field. In his response to his sons, Mario’s father asserts his power and his authority in the field by saying, “just because I work [in construction] doesn’t mean I’m not smarter.” Mario’s father engages in a struggle to assert the existing cultural capital in this field against what he perceives as a competing notion of capital seen as education or academic intelligence in his sons. In other words, using Bourdieu’s terms, Mario’s father is at once in a force field to assert his capital as well as a battlefield to preserve that distribution of capital against the criteria of evaluation from neighbouring fields, namely a privileged class culture in which his sons live and operate.

Mario’s father attempts to impose his authority on his sons. He does this, according to Mario, by poking and nudging and holding him back - actions intended to ensure his field’s autonomy or ability to “insulate itself from external influences and uphold its own criteria for evaluation over and against those of neighbouring fields” (Wacquant, 1998, p. 222). This sets up a struggle for Mario who seeks to affirm his father and value his capital while recognizing that his capital is poorly positioned within his father’s working-class field. In other words, we have what Bourdieu termed a battlefield, where at once both Mario and his father seek to assert their own capital. Mario’s struggle is complicated because in this battle he also seeks to validate and respect his father.

The conflict arises from the disparity in levels of education between sons and father. Education may therefore be seen as a threat to cultural preservation or field autonomy as well as a threat to Mario’s father’s masculinity. Willis noted that for working-class folks education or theoretical knowledge is often devalued not only because it is seen as a threat to cultural preservation but also as a contestation of
bourgeois culture as being superior or deconstructing the claim of superiority. Willis (1977) sees this as a “class function of knowledge” (p. 57). Many parents likely weigh similar attitudes towards education against the hopes they have for their children to achieve better futures and their desire that their children remain connected to them and their culture. This is the double-edged sword of social mobility. This may indeed be what Mario refers to when he says, “do I want my kid being smarter than me, being more educated.”

In many ways Mario’s father’s response is entirely normal and predictable. Aggression and insecurity are features of compulsive masculinity; a masculinity that must always be proven and that is always in doubt (Kimmel, 2005). Aggression can take on different forms, including both verbal and physical. Although Mario claims that his father has become “softer” due to particular life struggles, his story suggests that his father engaged in aggressive verbal conversation, not just once, but regularly throughout Mario’s life, or as he said “always trying to overcompensate”. In fact all participants used the word aggressiveness to describe or talk about masculinity. Associating aggression with masculinity, and particularly in moments of insecurity, leads me to wonder do Portuguese students bring aggression into schools? The data is insufficient to say either way, however, one participant admitted to many instances of aggression in school and described one instance in particular, where his own physical aggression led to him being expelled from high school.

**Origins of aggressive responses at school / towards school**
Jack is a truly sweet young man with a delightful and gentle presence. When I met Jack he was very accommodating and understanding despite a few issues with securing a room for his interview. Jack has a smaller but athletic build and charms with his boyish good looks. He has light coloured hair and eyes, and carries himself with a sense of calmness and maturity, but a scar or two on his face suggest some activity incongruent with my first impression. Nevertheless, I did not expect that Jack would have an extensive history of being physically violent in school. Of course, he admits he has changed considerably since his early years in high school due to his brother’s arrest and finding peace in religion. The following is how Jack describes his and his buddies’ high school behaviour in relation to masculinity:

Um, with school, I can say they might mess up a bit because of masculinity, because they’re trying to be cool.

*Yeah, tell me about that.*

They try to be cooler, like show off, and then they’ll be like look at this kid, and they’ll try to fight ‘em or something. A lot of Portuguese are like that, they’re just like, they’re mouthy, so they get in trouble.

*This is what you’ve seen, right?*

I’ve seen that and I’ve been through that.

*You’ve been through that yourself?*

Yeah. And ah, you just try to show off and be cool around your buddies or whatever, that gets you suspended, you get suspended enough times, and you get expelled. And that can affect your college and stuff like that, so in the long run it’s not too great.

*Right. Why do you think they do that? Why did you do that?*

I did that because I guess, maybe I was just a little bit uncomfortable with myself. And ah, but after a while, when I hit like grade 12 and stuff, I started realizing it’s not about being cool. You just gotta like do what you want.
Why were you uncomfortable?

I don’t know, I actually don’t know. I just used to be one of those kids who used to dress like gangster with a hat and stuff. So I guess I was just ah, I don’t, I’m not sure why I was uncomfortable - I just was.

The point Jack makes about feeling uncomfortable should not be overlooked. In terms of forming masculinity, Jack may sense that his feeling uncomfortable represents or shows an insecurity or weakness that triggers an aggressive response such as bullying or physical assault.

The next excerpt illustrates that Jack was put into some pretty mature situations for his age and found a group of older friends. Why did he do this? Did he want to fit in to remove that threat, perhaps not the sense that he was uncomfortable with himself, but at least remove the insecurity and threat by surrounding himself with a tough crowd?

Yeah. That’s when it started, like at first I just had a bad temper, in elementary school, I just had a bad temper, that’s what it was. And then when I hit high school when I first moved to Toronto, that’s when I started being that tough guy. I’m new to Toronto, you know, like I was chilling with my cousin and his little gang, with all these older guys, all these guys were like 16 and 17, I’m like 13 and 14, trying to be cool and stuff, you know.

Right, so you had to prove yourself pretty quick.

Yeah. I started smoking weed, stuff like that. But in high school I was just, I got there and I made a group of friends who were all trouble makers. I got expelled actually in grade 9 for getting in a fight with some kid. … My buddies were telling me he was mouthing off about me, but I had no clue so I just went and knocked him out twice. …Like everybody was around so I just like whatever, give him a nice headbutt.

Did you feel pressure to do that?

Yeah, I guess. I just gave him a nice headbutt and broke his nose. So, I guess I messed him up, and I feel bad about it to this day. And then I went to an alternative school in grade 9, actually at the end of grade 9 so like around grade 10.
Jack admits that it was only when he moved to Toronto that he started to put on the tough
guy act. He makes a distinction between his “bad temper” in elementary school, and a
tough guy mentality. I wonder if in fact Jack simply became more conscious of how this
type of behaviour privileged him in his community setting, for example, with his
Portuguese buddies. Jack claims that,

Portuguese [parents] are so stubborn, and they think, they grow up to be
tough. Portuguese people are known to be tough, like in the head and
they’re strong. So, I don’t know, just from the Portuguese people I hung
out with, like my buddies in high school, all through my high school, they
were just like ah, they would just pick up on weaker kids and stuff like
that, and they would just try to be the tough guy. That’s how I was
anyways.

The following excerpt from the same story suggests that Jack was not conscious of, and
did not understand the association of toughness with Portuguese prior to moving to
Toronto, but that perhaps he was behaving in ways congruent with such a notion of
toughness.

**Did you do well in elementary school for example?**

In elementary I was [a] trouble maker, I used to always get suspended every
week.

**Did you like school?**

I hated school.

**Why?**

Cause I just found there was too much rules and it was just against what I had
always learned and stuff like that.

**Do you mean the material was actually against what you learned, or the way it
was structured?**

Just the way it was structured, just found that everybody’s there. I didn’t like to be
watched the whole time, you know what I mean? Just a teacher like a hawk over
you. It’s like bird’s eye view. And then like my buddy that tried to be the one to
stand out, to shine in class, you know, so I would always say something stupid to the teacher.

So this idea of being bigger than life [that you’ve already mentioned], this tough guy kind of

Yeah, it got me in trouble.

Jack admits it was not until he moved to Toronto that felt the need to be the tough guy, or perhaps put on that tough guy act. Jack’s association with this group of guys was not something he sought, but, rather, this was the most accessible group of guys to him. His cousin was part of “this little gang”. Other than to fit in with a group of guys to avoid being lost in a big city, Jack acted out such physical aggression for another particular purpose, “I would just pick on kids to make me feel like a man.” This association suggests that somewhere and somehow Jack came to perceive physical aggression and toughness as masculine, and this had a very damaging impact on his academic career.

Jack’s story makes me wonder to what extent is this behaviour taught in the Portuguese community? Certainly I do not mean to suggest that Portuguese-Canadians are solely responsible for violence in schools, and not even that Portuguese-Canadians are more violent than other groups in society. What I am asking is how can we interpret the fact that every participant in this study talked about aggression to define or describe masculinity in the Portuguese-Canadian community, and that for many this attitude translated into the classroom or school yard, either as bully and/or bullied?

Mario and Jack’s stories discuss how participants, or the men in their lives, respond to what is essentially a vulnerability and by extension, a threat to one’s power – power being a dimension of masculinity. Both men feel a sense of conflict and tension as a result. Mario admits he is closer with his father now that he has lost that aggressive
edge, whereas previously they were distant and he would not go to his father for anything. Jack feels that there is an expectation that young Portuguese-Canadian men are tough but recently he has realized that toughness is not derived from other but from being comfortable with oneself. Both Mario and Jack have come to better understand how aggression informs their behaviours. Their growth has not been without significant personal consequences.

**Not asking for help: Attitudes of independence and self-reliance at school**

I approached this research with epistemological underpinnings informed by my personal and professional experiences, making it impossible for me to come to this research without various anti-oppression lenses of investigation and interrogation. In spite of these lenses, I actively approached this study with as few predictions as possible of what I might find. This approach allowed for instances of genuine discovery. Nearing the end of this study, with only three remaining participants to be interviewed, I started to notice a kernel of an idea in the narratives of the previous participants that made me want to ask more questions about the notion of help.

Many participants discussed the idea of self-reliance or independence when defining or describing masculinity. If instead I looked at how participants related to and interacted with others based on this need for self-reliance and independence, the relationships and interactions became more about control. Following this pattern, I started to ask the last three participants specifically about help in the context of school, and I realized some very interesting connections between how participants contextualized help outside of school, and within school.
I started to see a connection between help and masculinity after my interview with Bruno. Bruno’s interview yielded rich data, perhaps because Bruno admitted to having thought about his interview in advance and having talked with a friend about what questions I might ask. In other words, Bruno seemed prepared. Bruno lived and attended school in a very Portuguese neighbourhood in Toronto, and I got the sense from Bruno that he did well in school, in many realms including academically. I decided I wanted to ask Bruno how he has dealt with academic struggle.

*You said you liked to write. Was there anything that you struggled with in school?*

In elementary school, no. To be honest I pretty much did extremely well in all my subjects. When it got to high school I started to struggle with Math, but when that was the case I dropped it after grade 10 anyways. Actually no, no I kept going with it, but I copied all my friend’s stuff. I didn't really take the course, and I cheated like crazy in that class. But Math would be the one subject I had the most difficulty with. The ones I excelled the most in would be English and History.

*Ok. So did you ever, in those subjects that you did struggle, in the Math, you say that you managed to make it through by borrowing knowledge from others...*

Oh trust me it was cheating all the way.

*But did you ever think about asking for help*

No, now that I think about it

*Or talking to the teacher about struggling?*

No.

*How come?*

Revelation, I never thought about that. I just never asked for help, I just thought I'd be able to do it on my own. Even when I knew I wasn't able to do it on my own, I still would never approach the teacher for help.

*Can you think of a time when your father asked for help or a man in your community asked for help that you know of?*
I mean usually that help comes when there's some sort of home renovation to be done, but other than that, not that I'm aware of, especially when it comes to things that are, if my father ever needed financial assistance he would never even think about asking anyone in the community or a relative or anything like that. He would just work harder and put in more hours.

Or parenting help?

Yeah, he would never, yeah he would never ask. Hmm (laughter)

Do you think that it's perhaps part of masculinity to...

To try and do it yourself.

Not show one's weaknesses and maybe not ask for help?

Yeah, I would definitely think so. I think you're expected to do it yourself no matter how difficult it is you find a way to do it.

And when it comes to school, and you can't find a way to do it. I mean you did.

I found a way, I cheated.

But you only had to do that for one course. What about when you're one of those students who's struggling in school and maybe needs a little extra attention in a lot of areas but you're not able to ask for help because that's not what men do in the community.

Yeah, I think that's probably what leads to so many Portuguese males, especially males, dropping out of school. Because at least I found with my friends they would never approach the teacher for help. It wasn't just a me thing, it was just a lot of males just never did. They would rather do it on their own, if they can't do it on their own, then find something else to do, because clearly school isn't something that you're going to excel in. So find something that you are going to do well in.

Right. I mean here's a lot of young Portuguese guys that are struggling, what do the teachers think of you as a group?

Dumb kids (laughter).

Bruno’s transcript lists a number of employable and non-employable strategies for dealing with struggle, specifically, his struggle with Math in high school. Bruno responded that he dropped out of Math at the first possible opportunity. Despite Bruno
actually having continued in Math, his immediate thought and response was that he dealt with struggling in Math by dropping out. Why would Bruno think that he had dropped out of Math if in fact he had continued? Is this his default answer? I ask this question because Bruno goes on to say about his friends that, in school, “if they can’t do it on their own, then find something else to do, because clearly school isn’t something that you’re going to excel in.” As discussed in chapter 3, many participants expressed the importance of getting things done on their own, and finding a solution without asking for help. This makes me wonder if Bruno and other participants like him who discussed negative associations with asking for help are getting the support and assistance they need to succeed in school. I also question if other young men in the Portuguese community share Bruno’s immediate thought and response of dropping out of a subject in which they are struggling to succeed.

Despite struggling in Math in previous years, Bruno continued to take Math instead of dropping out. He admits to having succeeded because he cheated using his friend’s work. In a way, Bruno’s solution was to get help - although given our conversation, I am convinced he does not consider cheating to be asking for help. The relationship between Bruno and his friend inevitably revealed Bruno’s vulnerability and insecurity or perceived weakness in this subject. Admitting this could not have been easy for Bruno. I failed to ask Bruno from whose work he cheated. But, given what I discussed in chapter 3 concerning other participants’ ideas of help (Helder and Vidal), it is possible to get help from someone when a relationship of trust exists. This suggests to me that asking for help, revealing such vulnerability and insecurity, or perceived weakness, is terribly undesirable.
Bruno’s attitude and resistance towards help is unmistakably similar among my participants. As Bruno says, “I think you're expected to do it yourself no matter how difficult it is you find a way to do it.” In chapter 3 Vidal expressed the same opinion when discussing masculinity. The reasons for attitudes of resistance towards help can and should be further explored as they likely have serious implications on access to various community and health-care services, as well as academic success and educational de-selection.

Helder was my penultimate participant in this study and his interview also revealed attitudes towards help specifically in the context of school. His experience suggests that even when a seemingly trusting relationship exists, it remains difficult to reveal one’s weakness and vulnerability to others.

You mentioned … the idea of asking for help. Is it common for Portuguese men to ask for help? Is there, is it just, there's no issue about it?

I don't think there is. I mean for me I remember like, you kinda complained sometimes. I remember my sister would always tell me that it's ok to ask for help. Because when I would do the homework, she would have, she was 4 years older than me so she'd taken the courses before and had some of the same teachers, she would say, can I help you with some of this school work? And I would always say, no, no, I gotta do it on my own. So, I felt like having help was kinda bad cause they were doing it for me. But as I got older I realized that they're not doing it for you, they're just giving a helping hand or some guidance or stuff. But I do remember at a younger age, from 8 to 13 or thereabouts I do remember not wanting to ask for help in school work.

Helder resisted help from his own sister, a sister he admitted to being a strong female figure in his life whom he respects. Many factors might have informed his resistance to help from his sister, including gender relations and Helder’s sense of ethics and morality, among others. Nevertheless, if there was a sense of trust between Helder and his sister,
this was evidently not enough to express to her that he needed some help with his schoolwork until he was in high school.

Although Helder claims there is no issue in young men asking for help, he is quite clear that he remembers not wanting to ask for help with his school work. Helder could be concerned with the authenticity of his work, an ethical and moral dilemma, but it could also have something to do with how young men are taught to deal with struggle and some forms of challenge. Helder’s resolve to not ask for help in relation to his schoolwork may also indicate his relation to the field of education. Helder’s thoughts indicate a form of what Bourdieu (as cited in Schubert, 2008) refers to as “symbolic violence” in this case of the field of education, where Helder is made to feel he is inferior if he should need help. These attitudes are not exclusively informed by the field of education, and are a result of cultural attitudes or habitus.

Had Helder not talked about feelings of inadequacy regarding not being a handyman in relation to masculinity, I may not have had a second interpretation of his resistance to help with his schoolwork. In terms of how Helder defines masculinity, being able to do things for yourself and on your own does impact one’s perceived masculinity in the community, and perhaps this is taught at a very young age. Such a young age, in fact, that it impacts how young men connect with school and use, or more accurately refuse the resources and supports that are available to them. A further exploration of this phenomenon, that includes a gender lens, is necessary to ensure that Portuguese-Canadian youth become aware of and accepting of resources and supports to secure their academic success.
Dropping out involves some element of choice: Educational de-selection

Bruno and Helder’s examples are an appropriate segue into discussing the term educational de-selection. Bruno’s reflection that his friends would never approach the teacher for help in school suggests to me that an attitudinal resistance toward help, in school at the very least, is not confined to the participants in this study. There was an understanding among the participants in this study that men do things on their own, with specific exceptions for renovation jobs and generally anything physical that requires skilled or multiple hands. According to both Helder and Bruno, and Bruno’s friends, school work was understood as one of those things young Portuguese-Canadian men are expected to do on their own, which is further complicated because more than one participant expressed there is a sense that some young men are “cut out” for school and some are not. What I find most interesting is that if boys are not able to succeed on their own, their response is to find a new pursuit. In other words, do young Portuguese-Canadian men learn to resolve struggle or approach some challenges by removing the struggle or challenge from their lives, or put another way, removing themselves from the struggle or challenge? I believe there are instances in my data where young men suggest this as a coping strategy. For example, Casimiro shared the following as his understanding of his father’s coping strategy when life got difficult.

I also think that my father was looking for a geographical fix.

Ok. What does that mean?

It's the theory that whatever problems you have, some how you're gonna fix it by moving.

Oh I see, ok. So, a run away kinda thing.
Yes. And actually I didn't mention that, I didn't mention it previously, but when we came to Canada we were moving I think about every 3 or 4 years, we were at a different house.

Referring specifically to education, all participants expressed that if things do not work out in school, you go into construction. To pursue something else because one’s current pursuit has failed is a logical and perhaps universal response, but at what point does the individual determine a failed pursuit. What I am asking is at what point are young men of Portuguese heritage deciding that education is not for them, and how are they being influenced to come to this decision based on community norms, expectations and notions of masculinity?

James presents a story that illustrates the complexity of educational de-selection. He begins by responding to my standard question of which jobs if any do participants think that the Portuguese community in Toronto views as more masculine.

I think so, yeah. I think again the construction jobs, yeah. And I've seen examples of that.

How so?

Well my next-door neighbour, and one of my best friends as a kid growing up, his parents were pretty rough on him. He was the younger child, there was an older son, and I don't know, I think the older one had kind of an easier ride, but the younger one was always forced into doing those things. And, one summer we had a job that was, it was like an office job, and his parents pulled him out of it and put him into roofing or something for the summer.

Ok. So he was resistant to do that kind of work?

Um, I think for him either or was okay. I don't know. But I remember he was, even to this day, he kinda resents his parents a little bit.

Ok. Why do you think they put him doing roofing instead of working in the office?
They always, they never gave him a chance. He always had a little bit of trouble in school and - I mean he turned out okay now, I think he's doing great now, he owns a house, he's married, probably ready to have kids.

*What does he do for work?*

He's an assistant store manager, which is pretty good. You get paid well, and he's a smart guy. I'm encouraging him to get an inspector's license.

*Oh great.*

So, he's a handy guy, he knows about that type of stuff.

*And you were saying in terms of why you think his parents encouraged him to do one type of work over another.*

Because he struggled a little bit in school. I mean some people just learn differently and slower than others. I don't think he was dumb at all, I think he's a very bright person, and I'm sure given the chance he would have excelled at anything.

*And, you said that he resents [his parents] to this day a little bit?*

Ah, yeah. I feel they resent, him and his wife they resent the parents a little bit.

*For not encouraging?*

For being like strict, I don't know how else to put it. They weren't like that with the older brother.

*They were not?*

No, not at all.

*What did he do?*

He's doing the same thing, but, I don't know, he was more athletic, he was smarter, well smarter, he did better in school.

*But he didn't want school, he still went into the construction I imagine?*

Um, yeah, he also worked out a bit in construction, but I think just generally he was always seen as the better looking brother, the more successful brother, the more athletic brother, and I think that's why there's a bit of resentment.

*Yup, that's really insightful too.*
Like they even put him in cadets, like as a kid, and he hated that, and I don't think, it was

This younger guy.

Yes, yes. And the older brother never had to do any of that. They wanted to put him in line.

Does he have any idea why - oh, they wanted to put him in line. Was he a misbehaver?

No, not at all. Not at all.

He was just a little less gregarious than his older brother?

Yeah … He was always, in terms of sports, I mean he was always sort of ambitious. He always wanted to be on the team, he wouldn't make the team. But, in the end, he did pretty well, I think he was in [removed for anonymity] or some sort of [athletic activity], and by his will. And he did pretty good. He's won a few trophies, and competed in a few competitions. So, in the end, like I said, it was only a matter of time, I mean if you work hard enough at something, you're going to do well at it, right. And I don't think his parents gave him that chance.

There are admittedly many unanswered questions in James’ story. However, James does suggest that his best friend was discouraged from continuing in school because he was doing poorly, as compared to his older brother. It is true that we do not know the extent to which he got help or tutoring, but something about this story, particularly the resentment James’ best friend feels towards his parents about not encouraging and supporting him to continue in school, not to mention the parents’ peculiar decision to enroll him in cadets, suggests to me that perhaps asserting masculinity as it has been explored in this paper was the foremost concern for James’ best friend’s parents.

Educational de-selection, a term some might hastily consider to be a synonym for academic underachievement, is a complex and layered process that is informed by factors including masculinity. Participants reflected that parents, relatives, and to varying
degrees community pressures, some of which I have linked to understandings of masculinity, contribute to informing young Portuguese-Canadian men’s choices to continue or discontinue their education. A process of educational de-selection is likely to occur in other cultures as well, however, I am particularly interested in exploring what the determinants of educational de-selection are. When do young men who drop out of high school decide they will do so? Why do they decide at this point? As educators, parents, communities, can we get them past this point? Considering what participants have said, young men who struggle in school are resistant to asking for help. Struggling students believe they must not be smart enough for school and turn their attention to other pursuits. Parents of struggling boys, for a variety of reasons including unfamiliarity with the education system and a lack of ability to help their children themselves, reaffirm their son’s beliefs, and encourage him to make future plans that exclude education.

**Portuguese “Ghettos”: Participant perspectives from inside and outside schools with high numbers of Portuguese youth.**

What is to be said of a school’s culture? The participants in this study expressed many opinions about whether they attended schools with a lot of Portuguese-Canadian youth or whether they attended schools at which they may have been the only student of Portuguese ancestry. In this section I discuss participant narratives regarding their school experiences, which include experiences from schools with either high density of Portuguese-Canadian youth, or as participants referred to them, schools within the “Portuguese Ghetto,” or low density of Portuguese youth. In particular, I will explore what part masculinity plays in this conversation of Portuguese students and school culture. I do not wish to open a debate concerning (under)funding of schools with high
numbers of Portuguese youth. Although I admit this may be a valid question, I neither have the information, nor is the data available from the TDSB or the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) to compare educational attainment for youth of Portuguese ancestry by district or school.

Helder, the oldest participant in this study, is a thin man of average height who wears glasses and has a gentle demeanour. Our conversation lasted the longest of any of my participants, and I believe that was because Helder had a lot to say. Helder graduated university after attending a high school where, “honestly, I think I was the only Portuguese guy in that whole school. There was a lot of Asians, Blacks, but no Portuguese or Italian, I don't know if it was because it wasn't Catholic.” According to Helder, this made him feel “a little bit a fish out of water and just have no one to relate to in terms of everything from language to parents.” Not being able to relate was particularly evident in his classmates’ and their parents’ attitudes towards school. As with other participants who attended high schools with low numbers of Portuguese-Canadian students, Helder felt pressure to go to university from the other students around him.

_The other Portuguese guys around you, before you moved in high school, were they, you were doing pretty okay in school, were they doing pretty well also?_

No, not as well, no. They wanted to get the heck out of there. Yeah, for sure. Like, even throughout, again my non … you know kinda funny as I'm just thinking about it, maybe if I had gone to [the Catholic school with more Portuguese students] maybe I wouldn't have gone to university, it's kinda funny thinking that, because maybe the emphasis … like all my other friends, I remember I had two friends who were both Korean, who'd go a lot to the library in the summer, and two [names] they were both Indian, and heavy emphasis on their parents always telling them about school. So, I don't know, I was surrounded by people who all went to university. It was like, again in grade 9 and 10 you're pretty young still, but when I moved to high school in grade 10 like right away it was just almost like I'm going to university.
And you transferred with all your academic credits, your advanced credits.

So there definitely was, like everyone I went to school with [after grade 10], they all went to university. All of them.

And contrast that with prior to grade 10.

I didn't keep in touch with them as much, so I wouldn't know, but I wouldn't say they all didn't go but definitely there was less. Again I did transfer in grade 10 so I can't say all those people wouldn't have gone

Things can change

Yeah. But definitely the non-Portuguese friends I had, it was just all university, university, university. And Portuguese friends I had, and cousins and whatnot, it was just all I wanna get the heck out of here so I can get a job, and an overwhelming number of them got married at 25 and under. Whereas I remember I had a Korean roommate once who said, he goes, you're going to a wedding, how old are they, and I'm like, 20 22, 23, and he was just against that they were getting married that young. He goes, I've never been to a wedding where anyone's under 25 because they're still in school, and I thought well none of my cousins go to school, so when they're 18, they've been working for 5 years, they've been dating a girl for 5 years, let's go. Ready to go.

Helder’s quote describes the different cultural pressures within the high schools he attended. The latter high school’s culture, which had a low density of Portuguese-Canadian students, exerted pressure on him to attend university. According to Helder, the former high school’s culture had a high density of Portuguese-Canadian students, and exerted little pressure on him to attend university. This indicates that the attitudes and expectations of his fellow students created a culture in high school that significantly impacted Helder’s decision to attend university, perhaps even despite his parents’ or Portuguese community’s expectations. It is critical to understand students’ attitudes, particularly boy’s attitudes, towards education in schools that have high numbers of Portuguese-Canadian students.
Unlike Helder, Bruno did not feel the pressure and expectation from his fellow students to succeed academically. Bruno’s experiences attending a high school with high numbers of Portuguese-Canadian youth, furthers Helder’s hypothesis that he might not have gone to university had he attended a similar high school to Bruno. In fact, students teased Bruno for achieving good grades. He related this to how masculinity is achieved in his community, and that if he had not been so popular and good at sports he would have suffered more as a result of his academic success.

So who was doing the other sports with you?

Um, well I went to an elementary and even in high school there was a large Portuguese community.

Which high school did you go to?

[school name]. Yeah, ghetto. Yeah so a lot of my close friends were also Portuguese so we played the same sports, whether it's track or anything else.

Did they go to university as well? Did they have the same attitudes?

No, not a single one (laughter). Actually that's not true. One of my friends that was in my group, out of everyone that I know that went to my elementary school, only one of the males ended up going to university and graduating. And everyone else, the majority of them dropped out in high school.

They dropped out of high school?

The majority of them. A few of them completed it.

Ok. So you stand out in terms of

In many ways. (laughter)

In many ways, yeah. Did you stand out when you were in school too?

In what way?
Well, I mean you enjoyed school, did you get teased for that, for enjoying school? Was that something you hid in terms of your good marks?

I think I, I did get teased up until high school. A lot of people would call me [to protect anonymity this story must be omitted, but the participant was teased based on his name and his good marks]. Kids are so smart. Oh you're the brain, brainer brainer. I'd be like whatever, but I was popular enough that I could get away with it. Whereas, if I wasn't I think it would have been much more difficult.

You said you were teased up until high school, what happened in high school?

Oh up until high school, yeah. But in university nobody gets teased.

Oh ok, throughout high school as well, is what you mean.

Yeah.

Ok. I thought something changed in high school where you weren't teased.

Oh no, throughout high school. But it was never in a malicious way. It's more of, it's more playful than being mean spirited.

Right. Did that ever threaten your masculinity, doing well in school? Did you ever feel like you had to compensate?

I think doing well in school went against the masculine norms for my community, because generally, as I said before, Portuguese males don't excel with their education. They tend to go up until high school, rarely go into university, at least that's what I've experienced with my friends.

Yeah, I wonder why?

Where that comes from? My guess would be looking at things from my father's perspective, seeing how he was brought up in Portugal by his father, there's never any emphasis on education there either. It was that's cool, you go to school, you learn to read and write, and then you go into some sort of trade, or you work on the farm, or you do something to support the family, because an education there wouldn't support the family. It's not something that pays. I mean it does pay 10 years down the road, but why wait 10 years when you can start supporting your family when you're much younger.
According to Bruno, excelling in school challenged his masculinity, as men in his community did not traditionally go to university. Archer, Pratt, & Phillips (2001) reported similar findings among young working-class men who revealed higher education was a threat to masculine ideals in their communities. Bruno admits the teasing could have been worse, and that he was fortunate because he was popular. Because Bruno was closeted about his sexuality until he told a select few people in his final year, he maintained a relatively privileged status as long as he downplayed his academics. Being athletic, attractive, personable, and desirable to women, helped Bruno to mitigate the threat doing well academically had on his perceived masculinity. In other words, his academic inclination, which has low capital value, is compensated for by his sports abilities which is given high capital value by his peers. Combined, this allows Bruno to continue his academic journey.

Bruno’s school can be seen as a site of cultural (re)production, and considered a field or educational field (Bourdieu, 1976). Bruno’s experiences particularly describe a cultural struggle within his school, namely caused by his school’s culture that is highly influenced by the high numbers of Portuguese-Canadian students. These Portuguese-Canadian students come to the field with a strong system of lasting and meaningful dispositions (dispositional set) through which they perceive, judge and act in the world, also known as habitus (Wacquant, 1998). Bourdieu states that habitus is “a socialized subjectivity or the social embodied” (as cited in Maton, 2008, p. 53). Therefore, although generally stable, habitus is subject to change depending on neighbouring influences and experiences. On the one hand, Bruno attempts to assert his masculinity according to the expectations of his fellow students and friends, who act as gatekeepers of the field. On
the other hand, Bruno is conflicted by his own desire to succeed academically, or disrupt and overturn notions of masculinity. Bourdieu claims that overturning distribution of capital is often instigated by influences from neighbouring fields. We do not know what is influencing Bruno’s struggle, but in Helder’s case, we see that he has placed himself in a field to which he does not quite belong, and that field’s influence on him is strong enough that he claims he might not have gone to university had it not been for the influence of this field.

Both Helder and Bruno embrace a trajectory of social mobility through education, which their peers and family had previously not experienced. Wacquant (1998) suggests that, “persons undergoing great social mobility often possess segmented or conflictive dispositional sets” (p. 221). Bruno’s conflict is evident. His behaviours, which he claims made him popular, in fact, also asserted his masculinity (except for being good at school and excelling academically, which he maintained low key despite the teasing). By attending the high school he did, Helder experienced the effects of a neighbouring field. The distribution of capital in Helder’s field (school culture) was unknown to him, and disrupted what he was raised knowing.

Coming from my high school years in Catholic school and knowing Portuguese people to then having people who you didn't relate to anybody in that aspect, it was ok, but I just felt a little bit different. Looking back on it I felt like I should have gone to the Catholic school. That's what I remember I used to say. I should have gone to [name of school], I should have gone to the Catholic school because I would have fit in more, at least that was my perception at the time.

Both Helder and Bruno likely had similarly constructed habitus, but their relative position in the field in distinct settings had dissimilar effects on them. Helder was the only Portuguese student in his school, and so this field’s influence on Helder was powerful
and for a time created some conflict, which then dissipated allowing Helder to embrace the expectations of those around him. Another Portuguese student in Helder’s school took a different approach. Helder claims, “I was only one of two people who was Portuguese at that public school, so it was just like. And I remember [name] and he ended up saying I don't like this school and he went to the Catholic school after a year or something.” This illustrates the struggle inherent in fields. Helder’s friend resisted the field’s specific determinations to maintain his sense of habitus, whereas Helder’s level of resistance did not entirely suppress the influence this field had on his habitus and dispositional sets.

Vidal, my youngest participant, discussed a fellow student’s academic priorities in a way that described conflictive dispositional sets for both boys. As opposed to acting as an external influence from a neighbouring field, the student’s behaviour and priorities actually acted to enforce Vidal’s own dispositional set. Vidal is a smaller framed young man who keeps his cards fairly close to his chest. What began as a hesitant and hallow interview with Vidal, after 20 minutes, turned into an easy, rich and honest conversation of his and his friends’ experiences in a high school with many students of Portuguese ancestry. Vidal shared the following thoughts about a fellow student, which illustrate how he confirms his dispositional set.

I have a friend, he's expected to be home everyday at like 2:30pm, which is before one of our periods is done right, cause we end at 3:00pm and he doesn't have that last period. So, his parents want him to be home, doing his homework, doing everything during school hours, well, during school, cause they want him to do good in school. Even his sister is going on to university, so they want him to do the same thing.

Right. What does he want?

I mean he's not the kid that would probably go to do a hard job, but I don't know. Not that kind of kid that would do a hard job.
What do you mean by that?

I don't think he's too, like, I don't know.

He's not one of those tough guys?

He is tough, but on the other hand, I don't know, it's hard, like. There's people that would, ok, construction, whatever, you know it's fine, but he wouldn't like that. He also does okay in school, he does pretty good in school and his parents make him continue on, you know, get an education.

(long pause) What do you and your friends think about him?

I think he, we just had a discussion today, he should you know like tell his parents to loosen up a bit. I mean like it's a bit ridiculous, he's obviously not gonna do homework from 3:00pm to whatever time he goes to bed. I mean he needs some space, you know, some relax a bit, be with his friends, enjoy a bit and then go home and do his homework and stuff. I mean that's a bit much. That's the way I see it.

Does he hang out with you guys on weekends?

He does, sometimes.

Consider the priorities for men in the Portuguese community, and does masculinity inform the choices around those priorities. Is my question clear?

I think it does.

How?

Most men will just, a lot of Portuguese men will just, a lot of my friends that I know will just go by school and then just looking forward to go to construction. Then there's those other ones that actually get into school, cause they're pressured by their parents, brothers and sisters that are in university, cause even worse pressure, cause they're expected to do just as good or better.

So, I'm getting the sense from you that parents have a lot to do with a young person's success in school?

Yeah. Like basically my friend, I'm pretty sure that their parents are trying to tell him, make him do whatever the job that they want him to pursue than what he really wants. It's kinda like that. Like they want him to
become an engineer or something, and he wants to do something else, but he's gonna become an engineer anyways.

_Do you know what he wants to become, has he ever talked to you about that?

I have no idea.

_But you get the sense that that's not what he wants to do?

I kinda get the feeling. I mean he doesn't like going home right away, he gets, he's not happy about it. He says that he doesn't like anything of it. Math he says he doesn't like it either. And he's a smart guy, but just, he never says anything good about school. So, I don't know what he likes.

Whether Vidal’s friend actually dislikes school or is simply telling him what he thinks Vidal wants to hear is something I can not confirm, however, we know other participants in this study, including Bruno, who have down played their academic achievements in order to fit in with their friends’ expectations. At some point in their interviews, nearly all participants admitted that academic achievement was not conducive to asserting masculinity. Brandon’s unique circumstances, however, allowed him to embrace his academic abilities without the pressures concerning masculinity that he regularly experienced in his community.

Brandon attended a catholic high school for boys outside of his area mainly because of the academic program, and to a lesser extent because of the athletics program. Although Brandon described the high school as “Euro-centric” it lacked the Portuguese presence he was used to. “Because it was out of our area Portuguese wasn’t the majority anymore so it’s kinda like oh realizing wow there’s a lot of other people around me and that self awareness of ok not everyone is Portuguese anymore.” Brandon discussed his experiences in an enriched program in high school and how this unique environment
allowed him to excel academically without suffering the otherwise expected judging of his masculinity.

Some days I didn't like school at all and just, but it never related to academics, it wasn't because I really don't like school, or I don't like studying, or things like that. It was always the culture of a high school, or what it means to be male in an all male high school, especially one that's euro-centric and Roman Catholic, because people bring their experiences and familial values to school, it's just part of your identity, and so people still think that way. And so that was really challenging in high school, it's like ok, I'm trying to develop myself, and realizing that while like I'm a queer individual and trying to get comfortable with that. But then you're in a setting with like all males and you're expected to act a certain way, behave a certain way, do things a certain way and so that was always challenging.

*Did you ever find that the academics were an escape for your high school experience? Cause you said you never disliked studying and the academic part of it, but there were other parts that were challenging and in fact other parts that you didn't like.*

Well I got lucky with my academics because I was in an enriched program and we were a cohort, so we'd always travel together. So I went through high school, like half my days for high school for 4 years were always with the same people. So 28 of us always together in the same class, and because it was an enriched program, doesn't necessarily really translate but all these people were kinda like a higher level of thinking and so we're a bit more flexible in regards to what they thought, and so my experiences weren't as negative I feel as if I was in just the mainstream classes with everyone else. But because I was in the same class for 4 years for half the day with 27 other people it definitely helped just cause at least for our classes everything was really academic. Because we were all like-minded people, we were all pretty advanced academically compared to everyone else, so that definitely helped. But, I definitely felt the difference like in the afternoon classes when we were kinda mixed in with everyone else, my guard was a little higher up, at least especially in grade 9 and 10, where I was like wow, I don't know everyone else, and just the attitudes of everyone in the class and the behaviours it's like, ok so this is high school. So definitely the guard went up a bit more. But, in regards to academics being an escape for that all, I'd say sport played more of a role in that just because I was really invested in volleyball and I was competing at a pretty high level so I was really dedicated to that. And that kinda kept me going kinda thing.

*How so?*
Just cause it was like, I was never one of those people who went to school and went home. Like it gave me something to do, it gave me something to clear my mind, it gave me other people to talk to, like fellow team members.

Schools are a reflection of the communities in which they reside and the people they serve. Brandon very accurately describes this when he says, “people bring their experiences and familial values to school, it's just part of your identity.” School itself is a site of struggle for many students as they negotiate the influences from external fields with their own habitus and dispositional sets. However, Connell (1989) suggests that “childhood family, the adult workplace or sexual relationships (including marriage)” (p. 301) are likely to be more influential on young men’s formations of masculinity than school. When school consists of a high proportion of Portuguese youth with similarly constructed habituses, it can act to reinforce the influences Connell suggested are more potent in other areas of youth’s lives.

Brandon’s journey of self-discovery and efforts to better understand his queer identity would have been different to say the least had he not been a part of the enriched program cohort he described. Although Brandon did not discuss in this instance the ways that males were expected to act in his high school outside his enriched program cohort, it is evident that these expectations were just as adverse to his queer exploration as those expectations placed on him by his family and Portuguese community. The safe or safer space created in the enriched program allowed Brandon to struggle with his own habitus and overturn some of the assumptions he had come to take for granted concerning masculinity. The half-day format of the enriched program made Brandon’s struggle that much more apparent to him as he was reminded everyday of the multiple influences on
his dispositional set concerning masculinity – eventually leading to his resistance of the culture of masculinity at his school and at home.

Brandon’s high school experiences confirm what I have asserted numerous times throughout this paper, that attitudes and perceptions of masculinity among boys are not necessarily unique to the Portuguese community. However, certain fields enforce specific dispositional sets (habitus) more strongly on those who enter them and actively preserve the existing distribution of capital. Young Portuguese men construct habitus according to the influences of various fields (family, Portuguese community, education, etc.) and form a dispositional set concerning masculinity congruent with these fields with varying degrees of influence from neighbouring (external) fields. A field’s stability is based on autonomy, or it’s ability to remain insulated from the influences of neighbouring fields. Toronto’s Portuguese community, according to many participants including Brandon, is a highly insular community, “it’s a very secluded community and so it’s kinda created to me it creates a Portuguese ghetto in the city. Like it’s great to have that cultural identification but I also feel it’s important to look beyond that and not just seclude yourself into a Portuguese ghetto that does exist in Toronto.” The participants who attended schools with low numbers of Portuguese youth outside Portuguese neighbourhoods all moved on to higher education.

Just as schools have different student populations, educational settings and programs are not all the same. The enriched program Brandon attended evidently provided a setting and site in which he developed positive associations and attitudes toward education. Participating in this program did not threaten his perceived masculinity but instead allowed him to explore his gender and sexual identity. After being expelled
from high school, Jack attended an alternative school, which he admits, “changed his style”. Jack describes his alternative school experience in the following ways:

The classrooms were like I think at max 5 to 6 people.

So what was good about that?

It was just good because you can focus more on you because they separated, because the classrooms are normal sized classrooms, and they'll be like a couple of people over here and a couple of people over there and maybe like one in the middle. So it's like there's not too many people beside you, and you can work on computers, because there's not like a hundred people that want to go on a computer. So you can work on a computer or stuff if you feel more comfortable like that.

Ok. And they changed things up to help you, like to do what they needed to do in order to help you achieve whatever it was you were trying to achieve?

Yeah. They help you a lot. They come help you if you need help they'll help you the whole day. And it ended earlier too. It started at 9 and I think it ended at 1:30. So it was, classes were shorter. And they had these meetings with everyone in the school, I think there was like 20 to 30 kids in the school, and they would just talk about what happens if you drop out of school, and diseases and stuff if you're not safe. It was just good stuff. They brought in like public speakers like big famous boxers, or like, they brought in a couple of times a singer.

People you guys like respect.

Yeah.

Jack admits that his experiences in the alternative school both allowed him the opportunity to focus on school where he previously was unable to, and changed his previous behaviour as a tough kid and bully. I find the correlation, either direct or indirect, between these two changes in Jack to be extremely encouraging for programs to serve some Portuguese-Canadian youth.

Compared to their traditional and generic high school settings, Jack and Brandon both benefited from their unique programs. Approaches to education differ in these
tailored programs that consider students multi-dimensional identities, and the conditions in which the experiences of education take place. Brandon affirms the program was entirely focused on academics, and his classmates were serious thinkers and therefore “a bit more flexible in regards to what they thought”. He claims these attitudes produced an environment where his experiences were less negative than he would have otherwise experienced in the mainstream classes with everyone else.

The institutional settings in which these two youth participated influenced their habitus. Bourdieu claims that, “practices are thus not simply the result of one’s habitus but rather of relations between one’s habitus and one’s current circumstances” (as cited in Maton, 2008, p. 52). As a result, both young men developed positive connections with their schooling experiences.

Another way participants created positive connections with schooling was through their involvement in extra-curricular activities. Many studies affirm that rates of retention and academic success are improved through student involvement in extra curricular activities (Davalos, Chavez, & Guardiola, 1999). Interestingly, most participants engaged in sports-related activities, which they admitted did not threaten their perceived masculinity, and in some cases helped them to remain closeted about being gay. Those participants who did not participate in extra-curricular activities prioritized work and social time with friends after school. Portuguese students in Toronto work the longest part-time hours and therefore dedicate fewer hours to homework or extra-curricular activities (Nunes, 2004). In discussions of masculinity, participants understood both work and freedom to socialize as important to their sense of masculinity. Parental values and priorities may also inform high rates of student employment in the
Portuguese community. I do not mean to suggest that Portuguese parents value work over education for their youth, but I am interested to explore parental attitudes towards non-academic extra-curricular activities. Further exploration of how perceptions of masculinity inform attitudes toward participation in extra-curricular activities is necessary; particularly because all participants who engaged in some sort of extra-curricular activity went on to attend university.

Throughout chapter 4 I examined participants’ educational experiences using their own understandings of masculinity and my conceptual, theoretical frameworks outlined in chapter 2. Using participants’ stories to highlight the struggles they and those around them experienced in high school or relating to education, particularly concerning and relating to masculinity, Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and field explained how these experiences may be linked to cultural understandings based on a system of lasting and meaningful dispositions within the Portuguese community. Participants use habitus to perceive, judge and act in the world. Habitus is reinforced within certain fields and disrupted or overturned from neighbouring (external) fields. The examples in this chapter illustrate this struggle from opposite sides, namely where Portuguese students are influenced from fields in ways that disrupt their habitus and where Portuguese students are influenced from fields in ways that reinforce their habitus. The former was experienced by participants who attended high schools with low numbers of students of Portuguese ancestry. Chapter 5 will look at how this knowledge can inform future initiatives for young Portuguese-Canadian males, particularly students in Toronto, to improve their educational attainment. Furthermore, I will discuss the future of this project.
as well as potential educational policy imperatives to assist in reducing the high levels of high school dropout for Portuguese-speaking youth in Toronto.
Chapter 5
Going forward

This chapter is far from a conclusion. I could not be more convinced, however, that further investigation into the connection between masculinity and educational de-selection for young Portuguese-Canadian men is necessary. Nevertheless, this study has produced significant findings and further questions that will both immediately serve to improve the lives of young men of Portuguese heritage in school, and direct future exploration of how to assist students and improve their lived experiences within schools and their communities. Additionally, this research can prompt policy reform within schools and boards of education to ensure efforts to address and reduce barriers to educational selection for specific communities are informed by data specific to that community. This chapter will expand on these findings and further questions as well as suggest future challenges and directions for investigating Portuguese-Canadian male youth.

As the first exploration of masculinity among young men of Portuguese heritage in Canada, the importance of this study is clear. Participants’ personal understandings of masculinity were frequently in conflict with how they understood constructions of masculinity in their community, which caused significant internal tension for some participants. Power, control, sexuality and gender relations emerged as main dimensions of masculinity that informed the various ways these young men relate to other men and women, as well as how they relate to education and their community.

Nunes (2008) identifies the Portuguese as being among the least researched populations in Canada. Moreover, the persistent rates of low educational attainment
among Portuguese youth in Canada, particularly boys, warrants research within this population to explore barriers and challenges to educational attainment. This study made evident that how participants perceived masculinity for themselves and their community informed their choices and attitudes towards education. Notions of independence and self-reliance, key aspects of masculinity according to participants, strongly informed young men’s resistance to access help in schools and at home when experiencing struggle or challenges they could not overcome. These young men hesitated, and in many cases refused to approach their parents, particularly their fathers, with their struggles and challenges, including in school, for a variety of reasons. Their parents’ low levels of educational attainment meant that they were unable to help them with schoolwork challenges. Many participants claimed that seeking parents’ advice or help with their problems, including emotional struggles, posed a threat to their perceived masculinity.

According to Bourdieu, dispositional sets are learned in particular fields and construct participants’ habitus, later informing ways of behaving and choices that place them in positions of authority in those fields. Whereas, in neighbouring fields such as education, participants struggle to use the same dispositional sets to position themselves similarly because of new distributions of capital. In a practical sense, existing tutoring programs and extra help sessions may not be reaching the necessary students because of similar and resistant dispositions. Programs must be made more attractive and desirable for young men by communicating the necessity and benefits of these programs while somehow dispelling the threat they pose to perceived masculinity. Families as well as communities play a key role in encouraging participation in these programs and activities that will strengthen positive relationships and attitudes to education and schooling.
Policy

Change within schools cannot occur without culturally informed policy aimed specifically at reducing and removing barriers to academic achievement and educational selection. Portuguese-Canadian male students are gripped by an internal and external struggle. Their choices are not simply the result of their dispositional sets or habitus, but instead are informed by relations between one’s habitus and one’s current circumstances (Maton, 2008). Framing students of Portuguese heritage who drop out of high school in terms of academic underachievement does not take into consideration the complex relationships they construct between education and their lived realities, including their often conflicting individual and communal perceptions of masculinity. These young men struggle to negotiate this relationship, among others, and ultimately make choices concerning their educational trajectory informed by factors such as masculinity. A first step to policy reform may be to acknowledge that for a variety of complex reasons, including cultural, some male youth do not access the resources they need to succeed in school. Programs designed to bring resources to male students in a timely fashion may go a long way to ensuring boys feel supported and experience success, ultimately reversing factors informing educational de-selection. To add to this, existing literature (Nunes, 2008) and evidence in this study, as well as anecdotal evidence throughout my research suggests low teachers’ expectations are rampant in schools, which is not surprising given the history of so-called academic underachievement attached to Portuguese students. Policy reform must also address this issue. By further understanding the multi-dimensional and intersecting identities of these young men, educational institutions and
government policies can begin to address barriers to education that are internally (re)produced in schools - a site of the educational field.

**Community challenges**

Along with schools, the Portuguese community in Toronto must mobilize to address educational de-selection. Mobilization in this respect remains paused, despite current and past efforts to improve academic achievement rates in Toronto. Many Portuguese remain convinced that there is no problem with academic achievement among its youth. Indeed Portuguese youth graduate high school and attend institutions of higher education, but at lower rates. Research that seeks to understand the circumstances informing these youth’s educational selection processes will help to both better understand the complex relationship students who attend university and college have with their Portuguese community and cultural retention, and to improve the circumstances for Portuguese-Canadian youth who de-select education. This imperative investigation will support less community fragmentation and increased mobilization concerning youth education within Toronto’s Portuguese community. Consensus within the Portuguese community on the challenges and barriers to educational attainment for youth will ensure necessary steps are taken to position education as the most important investment to secure the community’s prosperity and longevity in Canada.

**Future directions**

I consider this study a catalyst for a larger comparative study on Portuguese male youth in Toronto and elsewhere that I will pursue in my doctoral research. More
immediately, I am interested and determined to explore how my doctoral research can initiate opportunities to share and produce new knowledge among Portuguese male youth in Toronto with positioning these youth at the centre of knowledge discovery. Semi-structured interview studies limit the degree to which participants remain engaged in the research process. Research methodologies, such as Participatory Action Research (PAR), can ensure that participants and their communities remain central to, and engaged in the research process, however, not without limitations. For example, PAR requires a considerable amount of time to engage its cyclical research process, which includes planning, action, observing, evaluating and critical reflection before planning the following cycle. Perhaps my doctoral research can work in partnership with private and public sector initiatives (for example, On Your Mark Tutoring Program and the TDSB) using PAR to address high rates of high school dropout and contributing factors to educational de-selection among Portuguese-speaking youth. In 2011 the TDSB approved the formation of a task force on the success of students of Portuguese heritage. This task force will propose tangible actions on the board’s part to positively impact student success and academic achievement for Portuguese youth in Toronto. As a steering member of this task force, I will bring gender and masculinity lenses to these discussions and debates.

Many participants in this study expressed that they enjoyed talking about masculinity in the context of their Portuguese identity and that they had never engaged in this sort of conversation or reflection before, which suggested to me that few if any opportunities exist where young Portuguese men can engage in these sorts of conversations to experience shared struggles and challenges concerning masculinity and
education. The one-on-one semi-structured interviews employed in this study were an excellent way to begin the process of discussing masculinity and interrogating how issues of masculinity reveal ruling power relations in participants’ lived experiences, but prevented me from capturing these relations in a group setting. My own interest in leadership development inspires me to explore workshop and retreat models used by other ethno-racialized communities as tools to support growth and diversity among the Portuguese community, in particular male youth. Storytelling and Augusto Boal’s Forum Theatre may be powerful tools to collectively engage young men of Portuguese ancestry in discussions that deconstruct understandings of masculinity and choices concerning education and educational de-selection.

Given the current general concern with boys’ academic underachievement this research has tremendous potential to influence future studies in other communities. Moreover, the findings of this study will be presented at various international and national interdisciplinary conferences, dealing with such topics as general diaspora and immigration studies, masculinity and gender studies, and issues relating to Portuguese-Canadians and Portuguese-Americans. Articles informed by this study’s findings will be submitted to a number of journals for publication.

Conclusion

When I first began designing an investigation of how masculinity, as perceived by young Portuguese-Canadian men, informs educational attainment and academic underachievement in the Portuguese community in Toronto, I expected that my investigation would continue beyond this single project. Indeed, it must. The findings
from this research stimulate a number of new questions that need answering. These questions include: When does educational de-selection occur in students who drop out of high school? Why do they decide to de-select education at this point in their educational trajectories? What are the conditions for young men of Portuguese heritage who select education? Are we as schools, communities and parents able to get youth past this point of educational de-selection? It is imperative that we continue to better understand this population, if for no other reason than to gain clarity on why these youth persistently exhibit one of the highest high school dropout rates in Toronto.
References


study of immigrant and involuntary minorities. (pp. 3-33). New York: Garland Publishing.


### Participant Demographic Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAW01</th>
<th>MAW02</th>
<th>MAW03</th>
<th>MAW04</th>
<th>MAW05</th>
<th>MAW06</th>
<th>MAW07</th>
<th>MAW08</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mario</td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Vidal</td>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>Bruno</td>
<td>Helder</td>
<td>Casimiro</td>
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<th>20</th>
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<td>Student</td>
<td>Entertainer</td>
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<td>Designer (self employed)</td>
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<td>Professional / Graduate Degree</td>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>High school (current student)</td>
<td>Undergraduate (current student)</td>
<td>BA Degree University graduate</td>
<td>BA Degree University graduate</td>
<td>College graduate</td>
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<td>Mother’s POB</td>
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<td>Aveiro, Portugal</td>
<td>Canada (Italian heritage)</td>
<td>Viana, Portugal</td>
<td>Sao Miguel, Azores</td>
<td>Sao Miguel, Azores</td>
<td>Sao Miguel, Azores</td>
<td>Terceira, Azores</td>
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<td>Azores</td>
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<td>Primary level education</td>
<td>Grade 7 or 8, I think</td>
<td>Considered primary school</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Father’s LOE (as described by participant)</td>
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<td>Basic schooling, no high school</td>
<td>Dropped out of high school</td>
<td>Grade 12 pretty sure</td>
<td>Primary level education</td>
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<td>Siblings’ LOE</td>
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<td>High school: Older sibling dropped out, Younger sibling currently enrolled.</td>
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<td>College (graduate)</td>
<td>High school (completed)</td>
<td>High school (graduates) w some college certification</td>
<td>High school: Older completed, Younger currently enrolled.</td>
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* both = Canadian and Portuguese citizenship
Appendices
(Appendix C: Interview Questions)

Master’s Thesis Study
Supervisor: Professor Lance McCready
REB Approved

Semi-structured interview guide

Demographic Information:

a. Name:
b. Age:
c. Citizenship(s):
d. Place of birth:
e. Family’s origins in Portugal (Mother(s) and/or Father(s)):
f. Years lived in Toronto:
g. Occupation:
h. Marital status:
i. Level of education:
j. Parent(s)’s level of education:
k. Sibling(s)’s level of education:

Interview Question:

These questions may or may not be asked depending on priorities that emerge and how the dialogue evolves.

1. Why have you chosen to participate in this interview? What (if anything) attracted you to this research study?
2. Is your Portuguese heritage an important part of your identity?
3. Is the term masculinity familiar to you? If so, define masculinity in your own words.
4. How would you describe growing up as a male in the Portuguese community?
5. How do men of Portuguese heritage behave, in other words, how do men make their masculinity seen, heard, felt, noticed a) at home, b) at work, c) outside of the home?
6. How do gender and/or gender relations impact masculinity?
7. Do you think the Portuguese community in Toronto sees certain jobs or work as more masculine? If so, which jobs might these be?
8. Would you say that education is seen as a masculine pursuit, perhaps compared to the answers you just provided?
9. Do issues of masculinity inform the choices men make? What are some of the life priorities common to men of Portuguese heritage in Toronto (your father, uncles,
brothers, cousins, friends, etc.) How about in terms of; a) work, b) education, c) family life.

10. Describe some of your experiences in school, as a student for example.

   If the participant needs prompting, the following could serve as discussion starters:
   a. What did you (dis)like about school?
   b. Did you have a favourite teacher?
   c. Were you involved in any extracurricular activities?

11. Were you engaged as a student? What did you find engaging about school? What could have made school more engaging for you?

12. What kind of messages did you receive at home when it came to schooling? Who did these messages come from?

13. Did going to school ever make you feel more or less like a man? Prompts if necessary: studying, sports, good grades, class discipline, social status among friends

14. Do you think the Portuguese community in Toronto (parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents, and elderly) enforces certain masculinity and gender “norms” on men? If so, tell me how? What are these norms?

15. What happens to men in the Portuguese community in Toronto who do not adhere to gender and sexuality “norms”?

16. What is thought of men in the Portuguese community in Toronto who do not adhere to gender and sexuality “norms”? 
(Appendix B: Interview Questions)

AEC1405/1406
Qualitative Research Methods 1 & 2
Professor Bonnie Burstow
REB Approved

Semi-structured interview guide

Demographic Information:

a. Name:
b. Age:
c. Citizenship(s):
d. Place of birth:
e. Family’s origins in Portugal (Mother(s) and/or Father(s)):
f. Years lived in Toronto:
g. Level of education:
h. Marital status:

Interview Question Guide:

*These questions may or may not be ask depending on priorities which emerge and how the dialogue evolves.*

1. Why have you chosen to participate in this study?
2. I want to better understand what the word masculinity means to you. Can you tell me your definition of masculinity?
3. How does sexuality impact masculinity?
4. How do gender and/or gender-relations impact masculinity?
5. Describe in your own words how men show or express masculinity
   a) at home b) at work c) outside of the home.
6. Do you think the Portuguese community in Toronto sees certain jobs or work as more masculine? If so, which jobs might these be?
7. Do issues of masculinity inform the choices men make? How about in terms of
   a) work b) education c) family life.
8. Do you think the Portuguese community in Toronto (parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents, and elderly) enforces certain gender and sexuality “norms” on men? If so, tell me how?
9. What happens to or is thought of men in the Portuguese community in Toronto who do not adhere to gender and sexuality “norms”?