



## MEMBER SAFETY PROGRAMMING

### HEALTHY MASCULINITIES DISCUSSION GUIDE

#### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Only this discussion guide is needed and is beneficial to read through ahead of the program.

#### TIMEFRAME

- This program should run around 30-40 minutes.

#### PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Explore the concept of masculinity.
- Define hegemony and hegemonic masculinity.
- Discuss how hegemonic masculinity can be limiting and harmful to men.
- Explore the concept of inclusive masculinities.
- Discuss how masculinity shows up within our chapter.

#### FACILITATOR NOTES

This session is designed to provide members an opportunity to discuss and explore the concepts of masculinity, including hegemonic and inclusive masculinities. This session is not meant to depict masculinity in a negative light or suggest that men are inherently bad but will look at how some types of masculinity can be rigid and limiting, thus negatively impacting men.

#### Facilitation tips:

- If you have a large group, try using small groups, pair sharing, collecting responses on notecards, and tools like Poll Everywhere or Zoom polling to encourage participation.
- If doing this session virtually:
  - Try using break out rooms and polls to help keep members engaged and thinking.
  - Use a virtual white board, message board, or Google Doc that members can add their thoughts and questions during the session.
  - When posing a question, give them a little extra time to think about their answer and either come off mute or type it in the chat box.
- Look for other *facilitator tips* throughout the document, as shown in red italics.

#### INTRODUCTION

- *Share:*
  - In this session, we will explore the concept of masculinity and look at some different types of masculinity.

- The intention of this session is to help identify the positive aspects of masculinity and how men can live their own version of masculinity without being constrained by any one specific understanding of what it means to be masculine.
- *Discuss:*
  - When we think of masculinity, what do we think of?
  - What conversations have you had about masculinity before? This can be formal as part of a course or training, or informal conversations with family or friends.
  - How do we learn what masculinity is?
- *Share:*
  - As we have already begun to notice through our conversation, there is not one set definition or understanding of masculinity. While there may be a lot of overlap, there is also a lot of difference of opinion on what qualifies as masculine and what does not.
  - What if, instead of looking at masculinity as one specific thing and trying to decide what is and isn't masculine, we looked at masculinity as something that can exist in a number of different iterations?
  - *Facilitator tip:* Let the participants ponder this concept for a minute or two and see what their thoughts are on the idea of multiple iterations or versions of masculinity.

## HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

- *Share:*
  - Has anyone here heard of the term “hegemonic masculinity”? Or the word hegemony?
    - *Wait to see if anyone offers a response before sharing the follow definitions:*
      - **Hegemony:** refers to the concept of one group having power or dominance over others, usually in a social or cultural perspective.
      - **Hegemonic masculinity:** refers to a framework of masculinity where there are many different types of masculinity in a culture, but there is one specific type that is held in the highest regard and /or receives the most power and influence in the culture.
      - Because dominant masculinity holds more power, men will try to demonstrate that they exhibit this type of masculinity and work to reveal other men as coming up short of that specific type of dominant masculinity.
      - *Share these examples:*
        - Someone outing another guy as gay/bi/queer/trans to show everyone else that they don't fit the mold of the dominant masculinity.
        - Men aren't allowed to cry or show emotions, unless it's anger.
        - Men are expected to be able to do everything on their own. This can lead to men not asking for help or ignoring something they need to do because they can't do it on their own.
- *Discuss:*
  - What are your initial thoughts to this concept of hegemonic masculinity?
  - What do you think the dominant version of masculinity looks like in this country?
    - *Share these answers, if not shared by the group:*

- In the United States of America (USA), this would include social identities like being Caucasian/white, Christian, able bodied, and high socioeconomic status, in addition to character attributes like being strong, commanding, the breadwinner or provider, and stoic or not showing emotion.
    - Because hegemonic masculinity depends on the culture we are looking at, it will vary from country to country, through time, and between the dominant culture and different subcultures.
  - What negative impacts or shortcomings could exist with this concept of hegemonic masculinity?
    - *Wait for participants to respond before sharing these talking points:*
      - In order to maintain their status in the dominant tier of masculinity, this structure encourages things like homophobia and sexism. If men can distance themselves from things that are seen as inherently not masculine or don't fit into the top tier of masculinity, they can protect their status.
      - This can result in things like bullying and violence against others, as well as potentially restraining or limiting the ways men can act or engage if they want to try and maintain their dominant status. This sometimes translates to what many of us know as “toxic masculinity”.
- *Share:*
  - Hegemonic masculinity, while acknowledging that masculinity can come in multiple forms, still relies on one, or a small portion, of those different types of masculinity as being the “right” kind.
  - This then suggests that everyone else’s masculinity is incorrect and limits their access to the power and privilege that is afforded to the dominant type of masculinity in that culture.

## **INCLUSIVE MASCULINITIES**

- *Share:*
  - As we’ve already started to discuss, there are masculinity frameworks that look at the idea of multiple versions of masculinity existing. In some cases, there could be an infinite number of different masculinities, based on each persons’ lived experiences and how they present their own personal version of masculinity.
  - The concept of “inclusive masculinities”, developed by Eric Anderson, builds on the idea of different versions of masculinity being on a more even playing field, instead of a small sliver of masculinity being more dominant to others.
- *Discuss:*
  - What benefits could come from this approach to masculinity compared to the more hierarchical version we see in hegemonic masculinity?
  - *Share these answers if not shared by the group:*
    - In this structure, men are less focused on trying to prove their masculinity or disprove others’ masculinity.
    - It allows men to be less worried about being perceived as gay or feminine and encourages them to be more open to physical affection between male friends and enjoy deeper “bro-mances” and develop stronger relationships.

- There is less pressure for men to perform specific types of behaviors, like over-consuming alcohol, not asking for help with their mental health, or showing their emotions to others.

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- *Share:*
  - We've looked at two different frameworks for masculinity. One that is focused on a hierarchy of masculinity and providing a lot of power and privilege to a very small fraction of men, and another that removes the focus on the hierarchy and provides a wider range of what is considered masculine.
  - Both of these concepts co-exist and are constantly interacting with each other.
    - There is still a certain level of hegemony in the US's version of masculinity today but compared to what it has looked like in our past, it has become more inclusive.
    - We can also see this in the microcosm of fraternity life. Some fraternities or even some Phi Sig local chapters, rely more heavily on recruiting a specific type of men to their chapter, while others have begun to be more inclusive of different types of men they extend an offer for membership.
- *Discuss:*
  - How do these concepts of masculinity interact with or show up in the fraternity experience?
  - Which direction does our chapter lean?
    - More towards the hegemonic ideas of masculinity, focusing on recruiting a specific type of man to maintain a status?
    - Or more towards a sense of inclusive masculinity where we recruit men because they are a good addition to our group, not because we are trying to maintain a specific image?
  - Are there things that we don't do, or allow ourselves to do, because we are worried about being perceived as less manly (either individually or as a chapter)?
    - Does this potentially hurt our chapter, or limit the depth of our brotherhood?
  - How does masculinity affect the sense of belonging in our chapter?
  - *Facilitator tip:* This could be a good opportunity to connect the conversation with the chapter's Annual Membership Survey (AMS) data, especially the chapter's belonging score.

## WRAP UP

- *Share:*
  - As a way to wrap up the session, it is important to think about how we can continue to use the concepts of masculinity to better understand ourselves and our experience in the brotherhood. If you want to explore this concept more, here are a couple of resources:
    - Campus Gender/Sexuality Resource Office, Men's Resource Office (check to see what's available on your campus)
    - The Good Men Project: <https://goodmenproject.com>
    - Movember: <https://us.movember.com/mens-health/general>
  - Be sure and thank participants for engaging in the conversation.