

Going to See a Man about a Horse: An Ethnographic Study of Masculinity and Male
Restroom Etiquette

By

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Introduction

While using the restroom in the campus center on a break from work, I saw graffiti scrawled on the divider next to the urinal advertising a time to show up to the restroom to have sex. I wondered why someone would take the time to write that, especially while at a urinal. And was this a serious proposition? Was I using a restroom that was a site for random sexual encounters between men? It just went against all the rules. No, I thought, this was a men's restroom in a high traffic campus center, and those sorts of activities just didn't happen in a place like this. After all, I thought, a restroom is simply used as a place to relieve oneself, isn't it? After doing the research for this paper, I would find that the rules, supposedly clear in the minds of the "American man," were not as obvious as we might assume, and this lack of clarity was something that was on the minds of men every time they entered a public men's room. A restroom is not just a place where men relieve their bodies of waste, but a space where one's identity as a man is negotiated through the presentation of masculinity and adherence to male restroom etiquette.

Matthew Gutmann states in his ethnography of Mexican men that, "...mindful of Freudian cigars, I wondered if an argument about children's Christmas presents could ever be mainly an argument about children's Christmas presents" (Gutmann 2007:2). As I began to consider restroom etiquette as a topic of study, I wondered if it was possible for the use of a restroom to be solely about location, or if there was more going on in the

minds of men, including myself. Gutmann viewed the argument regarding presents as a stage for a discussion of what it meant to Mexican men to be a good father and, in turn, a good man. Male restroom etiquette similarly may appear on the surface to be a means of efficient restroom use, but when looked at through an anthropological lens, it has more to do with how men perceive their own masculinity and how that coincides with interaction in the public sphere. It is through adherence to restroom etiquette, structured around respect and privacy, which men present and negotiate their masculine identity to other men.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus provides an interesting framework for thinking about men's rooms. It seemed to fit well into this idea of informal structures, as there appeared to be a clear etiquette which was completely unspoken, without any formal creation, and continues to structure behavior, even though no one would notice this structuring unless presented with a breach of etiquette (Bourdieu 1977: 72-95). I continued to think about the actions that other men and I make every time we excuse ourselves and venture into a public restroom and it started to become clear that while habitus explains our unconscious actions within society, there is a great deal regarding male restroom etiquette that is spoken and very much conscious. Men are aware of the rules that they follow in a restroom and choose to follow them based on presumed expectations. When I began interviews, this fact became quite clear as all men agreed on the existence of a structuring etiquette for restroom interaction and would readily point out some of the rules immediately.

Male restroom etiquette could be viewed as part of a hegemonic masculinity, as it appears so entrenched in the minds of men that, in this space as men, they cannot comprehend acting in any other fashion. Hegemony, in this context, refers to ideas that

have become so mundane in the minds of people that they are viewed as common sense and beyond questioning. Jean and John Comaroff point out that degree of muteness provides the gage for determining the effectiveness of hegemony (1992:29). While etiquette would have the appearance of being framed this way, similar to habitus, another conceptualization of what occurs in a restroom is to consider it as ideology; men are conscious of the circumstances they are in, but may choose to ignore them due to the mundane nature of the restroom. Once they leave this space, they need not worry about what has occurred because they will likely never interact with the men they had encountered there.

A men's room is a space where men perform private acts in a public space. Jürgen Habermas describes the public sphere as disregarding status and allowing for equality of thought (1989). This public space is never truly inclusive, as there are restrictions as to access. In many cases, a restroom will be located within a store or restaurant, thereby requiring a user to have the financial means to be an active consumer, or at least to appear as much to gain entry. Few examples of truly public restrooms in America would be those in completely public parks, such as Central Park in New York City. When entering the room, a man finds himself in a relatively open environment, covered in tile, and is faced with relieving himself in close and visible proximity to other, unfamiliar men. The fact that these individuals are strangers adds to a sense of vulnerability, as people typically do not relieve themselves in the presence of those that they are familiar with, even within a private setting. In the home, a bathroom can be used as a place to shield oneself from others, as it is one of the few places one can completely isolate themselves by locking a door (Goffman 1963:39). A male restroom presents the opposite type of space, as a man is exposed and surrounded by unknown and unfamiliar individuals, accentuated by the

openness of urinals, which do not exist for women.

A male restroom also exists as a uniquely men's-only space. With a few remarkable exceptions such as urgent need of a toilet or an assignment to clean a male restroom as part of her employment, women never enter this private, male space. The few other truly men-only areas, such as private clubs or saunas, are typically considered to be places of bonding and fraternizing, but this fraternal character does not extend to the male restroom. In fact, the opposite is true, as men generally avoid communication with other individuals and see the restroom as a place where little to no bonding should occur.

While the men's room is a men-only area, the impact women have on masculinities must be realized. It is necessary to understand that masculinities are not solely manufactured by men, but are created and influenced by the manner women respond, react, and create their own perception of what it is to be masculine (Gutmann 1997). These conceptualizations of masculinity further influence men, as there are expectations of how they will act when excusing themselves to leave for or as they return from a restroom. Additionally, each woman has a notion of how men act within a restroom that may differ from the actuality of the space, which may cause confusion between genders when describing restroom experiences. During interviews with women, many asked to have the rules of etiquette explained to them, as they were unaware of what went on and also asked for an explanation as to the motivation for men to act according to these rules.

Setha Low notes in her study of the plaza that public places provide a space for "performance of personal, social, and cultural dramas" (2000:47). In a restroom, men are performing their masculinity through the way that they interact, or avoid interaction, with other men. They feel a need to adhere to the social and cultural conventions that have

come to form male restroom etiquette, while their primary goal is to relieve themselves of waste. Each man has personal goals to accomplish, albeit primarily biological need, but also must still understand and react to the cultural and social standards that exists within such a space, as it is a public place. This also notes the difference between the purpose of designed space and its cultural meanings, as the original design and presumed use are only one set of frames that exist in a space; actors may alter the existing frames or create their own. Keeping this in mind, one can see the difference between the purely functional use of the restroom, a place for acts of elimination, and the cultural interpretations of the space that influence actors both to perform certain activities and adhere to constructed rules while in a space that are not inherent to the physicality of the space (2000:47-50). Her work displays how a specific place can be observed as a dynamic cultural space and that analysis of this place may provide information on broader ideologies and practices.

Low notes the lack of true public space in America, areas which are democratic and open to all demographics. She compares the Latin American plaza, which has always been a central part of cities to the artificial town centers in suburban towns and the police-patrolled parks of major cities of America. Public spaces in the United States have become transformed through commercialization or privatization. Both of these factors limit the use of such places to those that can afford it (Low 2000:34-35). In this sense, a public restroom is rarely truly public. Homeless persons may be able to use the restrooms inside of train station (Cherkis 2007), but even these locations are patrolled by private security or police who may escort them off the premises. I had observed the university police telling a seemingly homeless man he would need to leave the ground floor restroom of the Marvin Center and a coworker noted that he had seen a similar instance where the homeless man had been washing clothing and himself in the sinks of the

restroom until a university officer made him leave.

Feminist theory has furthered the critique of public and private, implying that gender differences are determined in these terms. Men have historically held the positions of power in the public realm and their social success is based on how they are perceived in the public sphere, while women have been relegated to the private space of the domestic (Martin 2001:16-17). Further, Gal notes that, “redefinitions that create a public inside a private or a private inside a public...can be momentary and ephemeral, dependent on the perspectives of participants” (2002:85). With this in mind, we can understand that different genders may conceptualize the space of the restroom to be drastically different. Women view restrooms as a private area within a public place as is necessary to dispose of their bodily fluids, but because of its private framing, can be used for intimate conversation (Mitchell 94-95). Men on the other hand, appear to conceptualize a restroom as a public space for private acts.

The boundaries of public and private are not clear and defined, but instead the dichotomy is redefined by the actions of participants within the space (Gal 2002:82-83). A restroom, as with most “public places,” may transform to a private space if it is only occupied by a single individual. That person may still consider it as public, as they are accustomed to and treat it as such. They may also realize that there is now a potential for the space to be private and revel in this new conceptualization of place. During my research, I entered a restroom with only one other man in it and noticed that he would appear to tense his body, making sure he was not looking in my direction, as if I had caught him off-guard. The perceived privacy of the public restroom for this man was shattered upon my intrusion, placing him in a position to switch behavior to that of public interaction.

Men negotiate their masculinity in this space, as they find themselves having to engage in a set of performances that prove to other men that they are respectful and courteous, as well as maintaining decorum (see Bauman and Briggs 1990). The male restroom is a space that acts as a front stage for the performance of masculinity. A man must present himself as being good at being a man, which holds a distinction from actually being a *good* man. His actions must show that he is in tune and comfortable with his own masculinity and identity as a man. In this sense, a man may present himself so that other men do not have a question of his manhood, but he may be consumed in self-doubt, whereas a man at ease with himself that fails to perform his masculinity as that of the norm accepted in mainstream culture is subject to having his manhood doubted by his peers. Through analyzing male restroom etiquette, we see men at their most vulnerable; they are exposed both physically and socially as they seek the acceptance and approval of other men. It does not matter if they will see these men everyday or never again, their masculinity still has to be performed within this space as a means of solidifying their access to manhood in the eyes of their fellow men. Through exploring the space of the restroom and how men interact within its walls, we can gain further insight into the American man, the American conception of masculinity, and an ethnographic understanding of a space that is very much overlooked in anthropological literature.

The Male Restroom in the American Context

Many facets of male restroom etiquette appear to be clearly understood in America as common knowledge, not just among men, but the rest of the population as well, as they are a point of reference in advertisements and television programs. In a

recent “Hungry Man” commercial, a group of male construction workers are seen drinking smoothies and when one states he needs to use the restroom, the others go with him, one noting that he does not need to use the restroom, but will accompany the others regardless. They pass by another male worker, eating a Hungry-Man dinner, who looks on quizzically and asks, “What are you ladies doing?” A narrator states, “You are what you eat...” suggesting that, by eating something that is considered to be less masculine (or more feminine), that these men are exhibiting behaviors which are typically associated with women (Swanson: Hungry-Man Dinners 2008).¹ The popular comedy television series *Scrubs* has used bathroom etiquette as a source of humor. In one episode, a male doctor enters the restroom, and seeing another doctor he wished to speak to, goes to the urinal next to him and begins speaking. The second doctor remarks, “Oh, hey! How are you? Can I buy you a beer? This is a men's room for God's sake--there is absolutely no talking in here. Ever” (Spiller 2002).²

Male restroom etiquette is also seen in other facets of American life, as the *Saturdays* line of Hallmark sells a card which has three diagrams of the correct distance to leave when using a urinal. The text on the cover designates which setups are, “Right, Only in Emergency, and Never,” the latter being when a man stands next to another, even though he could have left an empty urinal between the two of them. The interior text tells the recipient to, “Have a manly day,” making the connection between correct restroom etiquette and masculinity abundantly clear (Hallmark Inc. 2008).

These examples display the understanding that men must maintain both spatial and verbal barriers while within a restroom. A man cannot, in adhering to etiquette, take the urinal directly next to another man if other options are available. Men can also not speak to one another while using the restroom; the act of speaking is considered

ridiculous. To do otherwise will open a man to have his masculinity and intentions towards other men brought into questions as he has now broken rules that men in American society hold to be intertwined with manhood.

A machinima film, “Male Restroom Etiquette,” offers a mockumentary of men's room etiquette.³ This award winning video presents a set of hypothetical situations outlining the etiquette of a men's room and the possible outcomes of a breach of these rules, which eventually leads to mass rioting after a series of altercations motivated by the failure to cope with the stress of maintaining decorum within this space (Overman 2006). It is based on a set of user-submitted writings regarding male restroom etiquette from the website, www.everything2.com (Zarathustra Studios 2008a).^{iv} The film has been featured and awarded prizes at numerous film festivals, conventions, and has appeared on mtvU (Zarathustra Studios 2008), thereby reaching a national audience, not including its approximately 4.76 million views on Zarathustra Studios' YouTube channel, which allows for international availability in a highly trafficked virtual space (Zarathustra Studios 2008b). The film outlines the possibility for urinal selection further than that of the aforementioned greeting card, explicitly noting that men must keep distance from each other at all times and never taking the urinal directly next to another man. Flushing a toilet is explained to be necessary, while flushing a urinal is optional until the water is too saturated with urine, at which point men are told they should flush. It goes on to tell men that under no circumstances are they allowed to talk to or look at another man in the restroom, even if it is Jesus Christ, for this could lead to a violent altercation or put one's manhood in question.

The Urinal Game, a Flash based internet game, turns the urinal selection portion of male restroom etiquette into a quiz with “correct” and “incorrect” answers (Clever

Media 2008). The game emphasizes keeping a “buffer zone” between other men and that maintaining this boundary displays respect for other men. The answer to the second-to-last question states, “You should never leave any question as to your manliness,” clarifying the reasoning behind the correct answer, which involves choosing a urinal directly next to a normal sized man as compared to choosing the urinal near a large, muscular man (Clever Media 2008).⁵ While there is no explicit explanation for why one’s masculinity would be called into question, it suggests that, if forced to choose, a man should avoid entering the personal space of a man that is of larger stature, due to causing a question in the minds of other men if he is making a pass at the man or is being purposely disrespectful to a man who’s size affords him privilege in a men-only area. Numerous interviewed men noted that the appearance and stature of other men caused them to react differently in a restroom, as men that seemed stronger or in another way intimidating were avoided more often than men of typical appearance.

The Urinal Game is the subject of an article by sociologist John Paul, who uses the game as a method for introducing students to basic concepts of sociology (Paul 2006). He notes that male behavior outside and inside a restroom is quite different even though the standardizing social norms for male behavior elsewhere are fairly consistent. Furthermore, Paul asks why men act this way and what these social encounters tell us about ourselves and our society (2006:7). These questions are the heart of attempting to understand male restroom etiquette and lead to a number of concerns, situations, and conclusions that may not be as simple to assert as it is to pick a urinal. What is the reasoning that men avoid eye contact and speaking when they would do so in any other public place and women seem to have to qualms about it in their restrooms? If a man does speak in the restroom, how are other men going to react? What happens to the

conception of the restroom space when sex, both heterosexual and homosexual, occurs in a restroom? What is it about the American man that finds it necessary to adhere to a set of rules that cause him to be uncomfortable engaging in an act that is referred to as “relieving oneself” as there appears to be little in relief accompanying a trip to a public restroom?

How do you Study a Restroom?

This paper presents the findings of a study I conducted on male restroom etiquette at The George Washington University (henceforth GWU), specifically in the Cloyd Heck Marvin Center during the Spring 2008 semester and summer sessions. The George Washington University is a private institution located in the northwest quadrant of Washington, DC. The school has approximately 12,000 undergraduates and 14,000 graduate students and employs a significant faculty and staff throughout its facilities. The study involved a sociocultural consideration of restrooms and masculinity, as well as ethnological fieldwork that sought to examine the conceptualization of such space by individuals within the GWU community. Interested GWU students and staff that work in the Marvin Center of various backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, and socioeconomic statuses were interviewed in a semi-structured format. Both men and women were interviewed, to compare understandings of masculinity and restroom etiquette in men's and women's rooms. Initial participants were selected from existing social networks and further participants were found through recommendation. As I am a student at GWU and living in on campus housing, I was able to interview peers, both graduates and undergraduates. I had also worked in the GW Bookstore and still had numerous friends and contacts with staff who were not students in the university. Further, I had a developed

a social network in Washington, DC and the surrounding area from living in the District for two years. The existing social link allowed participants to feel more at ease when answering questions, as some were somewhat private in nature. Approximately thirty individuals were interviewed.⁶

The Cloyd Heck Marvin Center is a central building on the GWU Foggy Bottom campus. Located at 21st St. & H St. NW in Washington, DC, it is situated between the White House and the Potomac River, a relatively short distance from the National Mall, and only a block from the Foggy Bottom/GWU Metro station. The building contains six floors (including the ground floor), the first and ground floors are where my fieldwork was situated. The ground floor contains a Student Travel Agency (STA), The GW Bookstore, a Ticketmaster location, a FedEx/Kinkos, the student radio station, a computer lab, and Colonial Central, which houses personnel from Student Accounts, Financial Aid, and the Registrar. Residing on the first floor is a concierge, the J Street food services, the Marvin Theatre, and the Abrahms Great Hall. The upper levels house numerous offices, auditoriums, program areas, a bowling alley, WOW Wingery, and a variety of other services (The George Washington University 2008a). Floors are connected through adjacent elevators and staircases at opposite ends of the building. Also, attached and accessible to the building is a multi-storied parking garage. This central location for administrative offices, student activities, eateries, entertainment venues, service centers, and commercial enterprises makes the Marvin Center a highly populated building on the GWU campus, as it is a place of frequent consumption, interaction, programing, and exchange.

The ground floor restrooms are located at the top of a small set of stairs which lead down to the bookstore. The restrooms on the first floor are located in between the

elevators and food court and, being in the most high traffic area of the building, are more conspicuous than the ground floor restrooms, as they are placed in the hallway between the two primary features of the level, as well as having signs above the doors. The ground floor restrooms are on the way to the bookstore, but are more difficult to locate since they are off the main path of the level due to the staircase intersecting the floor directly in front of them.

It is important to note that the Marvin Center is not solely used by the GW community, but also by those that work in a close proximity to campus, visitors to the school, and other passersby. Any number of individuals may pass through the first or ground floors, as there are numerous functions, events, and meetings that are held within the building. In fact, the conference center subset of the Marvin Center was designed as a venue for non-University organizations to host events (The George Washington University 2008b).

There are numerous challenges with conducting fieldwork in a place such as a restroom. Considering that most methodology is not suited for such a space, improvised techniques for field research were needed. Most obviously, men were not approached while in the restroom. This would have caused me to breach the very rules that I sought to study and would have more than likely alienated myself, if not have ended in verbal or physical confrontations. As the male restroom is a contested space, full of the conceived need for spatial, physical, and aural barriers, attempting to ask a man for an interview or explaining my study could lead to opinions of me I wished to avoid, such as being perceived as making sexual advances. I needed to be very much aware of the “self” that I was projecting in this space. My own masculinity was as much a part of this study as that of any of my research participants or the men in the restrooms I was observing. If my

masculinity and manhood were to be put into question by my research participants, their reactions to my questions or observations would be affected. Even by looking at another man for more than a moment or being in the facilities for longer than was absolutely necessary for relieving myself would be considered inappropriate by other men.

Therefore, I needed to maintain what I perceived was acceptable behavior and act as any other man going to use the restroom would, being respectful to other men and adhering to etiquette that I sought to observe.

I encountered the dilemma of how to conduct the logistics of the observations on the first day, as it became clear that I would not be able to observe much of anything while sitting in a stall. This was also an awkward position to be in, both for myself and for other users of the restroom. City Paper's Jason Cherkis' article on his day spent in a Union Station restroom describes the physical challenges experienced when attempting to spend an extended period of time within a stall. Within the first thirty minutes, he experienced his legs going numb, as well as almost falling into the toilet in an attempt to stand after he realized that toilets were not designed to be places of extended seating (Cherkis 2007). Toilets in public restrooms are not exceptionally clean, regardless of the work of maintenance workers, as I would always encounter those that were unflushed or covered in human waste. Also, I would appear to the other users as strange for being there, not making the associated noises that go along with being in a stall. While I note that noise is typically kept to a minimum in this space, a man using a stall without the sound of urination would cause others to believe he may be doing something, such as masturbating, which they would consider inappropriate.⁷

Additionally, while a researcher is still able to hear, a stall creates a visual barrier that does not allow for seeing how and where men move, which is of the utmost

importance in a space where there is an absence of conversation but a great deal of communication through physical movement and abstention from facial expressions. The proxemics of the restroom are vital to the understanding the etiquette which exists within the space. Attempting to sit in a stall for an extended period of time was unnerving for me, as I felt a great deal of anxiety knowing that I was doing something so atypical and that presented the possibility for my actions to be misconstrued by other men as masturbating or otherwise engaging in some sort of sexual act. Cherkis noted this psychological stress as well, feeling that the station's security might pull him from the restroom (Cherkis 2007). I decided instead to drink copious amounts of fluid that would require me to use the restrooms constantly over the course of a number of hours, thereby allowing me to observe while participating in the typical restroom behavior as I would be relieving myself and could be heard doing so. While this method also caused me to be slightly uncomfortable, I found it to be the best available means for conducting this research as I now could be participating while observing, and it is important in this space to have your actions be clear in that you are using the facilities for reliving yourself as to maintain your masculine identity and not give the impression of using the restroom for deviant purposes.

Every time I entered a restroom to make observations, I felt a mix of emotions. My hope was that there would be other people in the restroom whose behavior could be observed. However, as a man who has accepted this etiquette for years, I also yearned for privacy; for as long as I can remember I have hoped for public restrooms I use to be unoccupied so I can use the facilities in peace, without worrying about reacting to or acting in a certain manner while in the company of other men. If I was in the restroom by myself I would have the freedom to take my time using the facilities and make any noise

I wished without impunity. Further, men crowded next to other men at urinals, there is a level of nervousness associated with urinating directly next to someone, especially a stranger, and holding your penis in the open. Relieving oneself is supposed to be a relief, as one has removed waste from their body and relaxed their muscles, not a stressful event and now I had additionally burdened myself with actively trying to observe behavior while maintaining what I believe was proper etiquette. Even though I was simply walking into a “public” place, it felt as if I was performing an espionage operation. Regardless of the lack of conversation, this was still a men-only space and my research focused on insecurities, nervousness, and stress that men were experiencing in being manly around other men. Someone that is good at being a man should be none of these things. He should be confident in his masculinity and being around other men, even when exposed. It is this conflict, that a man is stressed, but must act as if he is not, that is the paradox uncovered through this research. Men feel vulnerable in a men’s room and are trying to perform to other men that they are not in order to maintain their masculinity in the eyes of their peers. It does not matter that other men are having this same internal conflict; a man’s priority is to preserve and negotiate his own identity.

Chapter 1

Space, Place, and Identity: Conceptualizing the Men's Room

Restrooms are designed as a functional place for the eliminative acts of urination and defecation and tiled for ease in cleaning such a facility. Paths within a restroom are optimized for direct routes from the toilets to the sinks and then towards the exit. Toilets are typically placed farthest from the entrance for a greater level of privacy, as there are some public restrooms that do not have doors, but simply hallways leading from a doorway or a continually propped open door. Their tiling gives them a wet radiance, reflecting light due to what seems to be perpetual moisture dripping from some location, either the sinks, toilets, attached plumbing, misdirected bodily fluids, or, as one might hope, a recent cleaning by a maintenance worker. Regardless, this seemingly inexplicably wet nature of the restroom is disconcerting to men, but they were at a loss to explain why, other than the possibility of a desire for clean facilities.

All the men interviewed acknowledged that they feel there to be an etiquette that exists in regards to public restroom behavior. There are a large number of rules, which revolve around minimizing noise, respecting the personal space of other men, and avoiding virtually any sort of contact with others. Rarely do men enter the restroom in groups. During my fieldwork, there were only a few instances when men would enter with another man, whereas the majority of men using the facilities entered by themselves. If walking in at the same time as other men, they appear uncomfortable, especially if the other man that is entering at the same moment is unknown to them. If the latter occurs,

men would change their pace so as to not appear as if they were following the other through the door. They keep a distance of around a meter from each other while walking through the restroom attempting not to get closer than that to another man unless they need to walk past each other in a narrow corridor or to get to soap or paper towels. Men will take a brief moment to assess the urinal situation when they enter and then pick one that distances themselves away from any other individuals, usually by at least one urinal, in some cases, by the maximum amount of urinals possible, or even going into a stall instead of being at the urinals when there is another man already there.

Urinals come in numerous styles, sizes, and setups. Types of urinals include, but are not limited to, those that are individual, but run from about five feet high to the floor and, commonly in the United States, those that are about three feet in total height and are positioned at approximately the same height off the ground. While female urinals have been designed and patented, they are uncommon in American restrooms. Of the women that participated in my research, none of them had seen or even heard of a female urinal; urinals are fixtures within a restroom that are very unique to male space. The men that were interviewed all had very definitive standpoints on the types of urinals that they felt were more or less comfortable, as urinals are not all uniform in their design or placement within a restroom. The type of urinal that all men said they felt uncomfortable using was those that are designed as troughs, which have no divisions, but usually exist as a metal box with water trickling into it to wash urine down to a drain at one end. While this style of urinal is more practical in function, as it can accommodate more men in the same space, it is the social concern of privacy that turns men off to it. In addition to multiples styles of urinals, spacing and dividers vary among locations as there are occasionally no metal dividers and in others dividers that may be almost six feet tall. There is typically a

urinal placed lower to the ground at the end of a row, positioned for children. This urinal was also viewed by men to be less desirable, but none of the interviewed men could articulate a clear indication as to why; however, they did know that they hated being “stuck” with this choice, either based on adhering to leaving an empty urinal between themselves and another man or due to it being the only available position to take. Having to use a urinal situated for a child holds a two-fold frustration in that it is not placed at an optimum height for most men to effectively urinate and, more so, that it is relegating them to a space set aside for children, not men, in a place where masculinity is being negotiated. To use something designated for a person of a child’s stature implies that a man is in some way lacking a feature of his manhood and is not entitled to the same equality in facilities as a man with his manhood intact.

Interestingly, when I presented men with a design I had witnessed at a conference, where the urinals were in recesses in the wall, completely separated by floor-to-ceiling walls, some found this to be a strange setup that they were not comfortable with, due to what they felt was making the 'rules' too conspicuous. While they may have been more relaxed in a restroom designed as such in terms of being able to relieve themselves without worrying about being watched, they did not want to appear as if they needed this comfort. This made the rules of etiquette more pronounced and exaggerated. One could liken the experience of going to a restaurant and having the silverware labeled for its proper usage. In the minds of these men, a man should not need a complete physical barrier between him and his neighbor, but should be capable of maintaining such respect for each other and the 'rules' on their own.

During one foray into the field, I was alone in the restroom at the middle of three urinals, with a fourth being offset on the other side of the entrance to the toilet area of the

restroom. When another man entered, he had already turned towards the group of three urinals before noticing me and, instead of turning to the lone urinal, took a stall behind me. He had already committed to moving towards one side of the restroom and to turn away and use the other would have brought attention to his desire to put the maximum distance between me and him. Instead, he chose to use the physical barrier of a stall to avoid any awkward contact with me after this brief moment of confusion on his part.

Some men also will experience performance anxiety or refer to the feeling as “stage fright” when presented with having to urinate at a urinal next to another man. They feel that they simply cannot “go” if another man is near them, or anyone for that matter. This puts them in the additionally awkward position as they want to relieve themselves, but are unable to, and they are now faced with the other men believing that he is deviant as he is not using the facilities, but simply standing next to them and holding his penis, possibly viewing them sexually when all he really wants to do is wait for them to leave so he can relax and urinate.

When entering stalls, distance is maintained by leaving empty stalls in between individuals. In the case of stall selection, men felt that creating a buffer area was not as necessary as it was for urinal use, but was instead a choice based on personal choice. Some men had no qualms of choosing the stall directly next to another man, even if there were open stalls farther away; their only voiced concern was being next to a man who was having a particularly odoriferous or loud bowel movement. This would cause discomfort due to smell and also a feeling of embarrassment to be in close proximity to such an action. One does not wish to hear others expelling waste, as simply spitting is considered by many to be disgusting. Additionally, by hearing another person passing a bowel movement, there is the knowledge that they are in close proximity to someone

else's feces, a substance which is considered filthy in virtually all cultures.

There is a great deal of variety about how men deal with cleanliness and hygiene; it seems to be a very personal decision in restrooms. Some men flush, while others do not. It is common to find that urinals and toilets have been left unflushed by the previous user. Most men would note that a toilet should always be flushed, as one has access to toilet paper to touch the handle or can use their foot. As urine and occasionally fecal matter can be found on or around toilets, a number of men noted that they may leave such toilets unflushed, as they could not find it in themselves to use or attempt to flush them. Urinals, on the other hand, could be left unflushed all together, as there was no way to flush them without using one's hand. All men favored self-flushing urinals in restrooms, as it eliminated any sense of responsibility for flushing a toilet and made the entire experience more sanitary. Not all men wash after using a restroom, while others seem to be very methodical about doing so. A number of men noted their disgust at the thought of a man choosing not to wash his hands unless he could not as a result of some restriction or time concern. They judged these men as being unclean and lead them to worry further regarding the sanitary conditions of the facilities in a restroom, as now door handles may be contaminated with waste from unwashed hands. If a man decides to not flush a toilet, he is knowingly leaving his waste to be dealt with by someone else, possibly a custodian, but more likely another male user. While the concept of the American man would suggest that he should be comfortable "getting dirty," this does not seem to apply to human waste in a restroom, as men found unflushed toilets disgusting and would avoid them, often cursing those who left their mess behind. In fact, the Male Restroom Etiquette video tells men that if they come upon an unflushed toilet, they should simply use the next stall, thereby avoiding any interaction with another man's waste (Overman 2006).

Many felt that there is a difference between the way that they interact with strangers outside the restroom and how they do within one. The situation I presented the participants was that of another man sneezing in the restroom. Based on their location within the restroom, the way they would react would change. All noted that outside the restroom they would not feel uncomfortable with acknowledging the physical copresence and responding with a common expression such as, "Bless you." If they were walking into the restroom or at the sinks, they would feel fairly comfortable acknowledging the sneeze, but if they were at the urinals or in a stall most would not feel obligated or comfortable to say anything. Those that did not feel comfortable with this still noted that there should not be any talking when at the toilets. There is a barrier that exists, typically somewhere betwixt the sinks and stalls of a restroom, where even the simple politeness of saying, "Bless you," is disregarded and an actual conversation is out of the question entirely. This invisible boundary is determined by the actual design of the restroom, as a very small restroom or one that did not section off the toilets may cause men to feel they have crossed the barrier the instant they have entered the restroom. In talking to another man once they have reached this imagined line they are infringing on the rules of etiquette and the privacy of other men. This is a public space where a semblance of privacy is expected in order to provide men with a small comfort in an exposed setting.

These examples of a difference in behavior around other men that they were unacquainted with did not have to do solely with physical proximity; their reactions changed based on sensing a *copresence* with these men, as the space that they share is clearly drawn by the physical and social barriers of the restroom (Goffman 1963:17-20). Men maintain spatial distance, accentuated by dividers between urinals and walls between sinks and toilets, while at the same time avoiding eye contact and maintaining

verbal silence. Within this understanding of copresence, multiple social realities may occur: service workers may be in the restroom to perform sanitation or physical maintenance to the facilities and they do not necessarily fall into the realm of strict etiquette that exists within this space (Goffman 1963:20-21). Men have an idea of the space of a restroom in their minds that draw the boundaries of etiquette. The men's restroom exists as a place with fixtures and form, a physical location within a building, but it is the combination of socialization in an American masculine ideology, notions of public and private, and the formulation of physical copresence with other men within its walls that creates the imagined space and concept of a restroom.

Creation of Barriers in a Restroom

Partitioning between urinals is typically minimal or non-existent, which creates a feeling of vulnerability, as anyone walking in has the possibility of looking at the exposed penis of a man that is relieving himself. In their silence, men are creating aural barriers to compensate for the lack of visual barriers within the restroom. Tannen notes that silence should not be considered a conspicuous sign of powerlessness, but must be understood as affording power to an individual, given the circumstance (2003:218). Maintaining a distant physical proximity when possible allows for an imagined physical and visual boundary, allowing for a degree of comfort. A further, temporal limitation is placed on a man, as he is expected to be expedient and efficient in his actions, not spending any more time than is necessary to urinate or defecate, wash his hands, and leave. The minimum amount of time possible is to be taken by men to complete these actions and then make room for the next man to use the facilities. There is a small allowance given to briefly checking one's personal appearance, but this too is expected to be expedient. A man can

expect that any other individual will be out of the space shortly and this temporal anonymity adds to a level of comfort, as long as men maintain speed and efficiency in their actions, otherwise lines would form. A line creates discomfort as men do not feel comfortable speaking and must instead find someplace to look in the restroom where they will not be looking *at* another man, but still must note when the next toilet, urinal, or sink is available for use.

Men rarely use this space for the sole purpose of grooming or otherwise maintaining their physical appearance, but there are occasions, such as right before a meeting, putting on a tie, or after having spilled something on their clothing when a man would enter the restroom without making use of the toilets. These times are infrequent, and men will still adhere to the rules of etiquette, making their time in the restroom expedient and relatively quiet, as it is still expected for others to hear a man urinating or defecating (although the latter is not something that men *want* to hear). By hearing that a man is relieving himself, other men know that the man in question is not using the restroom for a sexual or what may otherwise be considered a deviant act.

Further, by blocking out perceptions through avoiding visual contact or minimizing noise, men form involvement shields (Goffman 1963:38-39). While these barriers are imagined, they serve to allow men to isolate themselves from the presence of other men and, in a way to make a private act in a public space retain some of its privacy. One could liken this to how individuals will maintain the intimacy of a conversation in a café or restaurant where tables are located close together by disregarding the surrounding parties unless direct contact is made. In contrast, this hypothetical situation allows for a more passive disregard of other individuals, whereas a men's room requires a man to actively maintain involvement shields and respect the barriers and space of other men

constantly. While in a café, one does not need to keep track of the parties surrounding them to maintain their involvement shield, but a man in a restroom needs to know where other men are located so as not to possibly interact with them through moving too close or entering a man's path.

If there are no other men present in a restroom, a man might relax and drop these shields, since there is no one to be removed from. If a man is caught in a state which Erving Goffman refers to as "out of play," then there is a sense of embarrassment for both parties (1963:40). The man intruded upon has been caught in a state of social undress since having been alone there was not a need to adhere to social convention, but they were unexpectedly put back in a state of performance that they were not prepared for. The man that enters finds embarrassment in discovering he has intruded on a private setting. Additionally, the latter man may feel embarrassment or, as Goffman suggests, even anger in finding that another man has disregarded the rules of social conduct associated with that space and was not giving themselves properly to the current social situation (1963:247-248). While this reaction may be more extreme, a sense of embarrassment would still be present in such a circumstance. Through the creation of these barriers and involvement shields, men seek to make their demeanor represent them as a man that is comfortable with his actions. Additionally, he must also appear unconcerned by the fact that he is engaging in a private act near men he is unfamiliar with and, at the same time, respectful of their copresence (see Goffman 1956:477). By maintaining this false lack of concern, he is presenting himself as confident both in himself and how others will perceive him as a man. In reality, he is making every effort to perform his masculinity so that his manhood will be not brought into question by his peers, who are engaging in the same anxiety of presentation.

These expectations of “correct” behavior are never made known, so it would lead one to believe that it is the individuals that place these limits upon themselves, based on what they would expect from other men. With a notion of what masculinity is in their society, individual men assume what expectations are placed on them in a field that does not have its rules explicitly stated. There is no serious guide to restroom etiquette, all those that exist, such as *The Urinal Game* or the online video “Male Restroom Etiquette” are satirizing the interactions between men (Overman 2006, Clever Media 2008). These humorous descriptions of restroom etiquette actually serve a metapragmatic function, describing the pragmatic function of a man’s actions (Silverstein 1976). Michael Silverstein notes that by understanding these metapragmatic functions, we can better understand the language ideology of a culture (1976). Discussion of male restroom etiquette, as it is almost entirely based around humor and satire, shows that the behaviors men feel are commonplace, but should always be adhered to. The “Male Restroom Etiquette” video depiction of mass-rioting as a result of failure to comply with these “simple” rules (Overman 2006) reinforces them in the minds of men, just as telling a child, “Say, ‘please,’” after they have failed to use the article when asking for something would.

Male restroom etiquette is something that is accepted as assumed knowledge among men. This knowledge has no need for articulation as it is part of masculine identity; to know and follow the code of conduct is to exhibit and perform as a man. This unspoken quality to restroom etiquette is important, as one loses public status if they fumble one aspect. One should not have to ask regarding etiquette, as once they are conditioned to act in an appropriate manner, there should be no need for conversation and it is not a point that needs to be discussed or questioned. One is to have learned it at a

young age and not question it, but simply follow these guidelines for behavior as one would at a dinner table when presented with multiple utensils. After being taught how a place setting is arranged and the use of the separate implements, an individual must maintain the appearance of knowledge and not falter for fear of humiliation.

Construction of Space within a Restroom

Through reviewing Victor Turner's explanation of liminality, one can understand a restroom as being a liminal space, existing between the private and public, since individuals engage in acts that are considered to be private, but do so publically. As such, men that enter a restroom are all brought to the same level with status and other factors disappearing as they enter and begin to share a restroom with others. They momentarily become liminal personae. However, unlike the neophytes of Turner examples, they do not have anything necessarily inscribed upon them (1969:96-108). As they leave, they return to their previous state. The restroom is a very real place, but the space causes a momentary pause in that reality and brings men down simply to being men. Numerous men noted that they felt, to a certain degree, class and status were not important in restroom interaction. While homelessness would appear to challenge this concept, the reasons men noted that they judged how a homeless man, based not on his lack of income of housing, but based on the way he used a restroom, such as the use of sinks for washing clothing or one's body. Any man that was engaged in similar activities would be judged in the same manner by the majority of men. Any man using a restroom for its primary function - as a place to relieve the body of waste - was considered to be equal in their eyes. Factors that mattered in the course of respecting another man had more to do primarily with physical size, other factors that they found intimidating, or if a man was

acting in a peculiar manner. Through the devaluing of socio-economic class within this space, a man is judged only in how he acts as a man towards his, now equal, peers.

A common part of male restroom etiquette brought up by those interviewed was that eye contact was to be avoided at virtually all times, unless there was absolutely no way to do so. If two men were to have to walk past each other, or one entered the room, it was considered acceptable if they briefly made eye contact, as to acknowledge each other's presence in the room. It was not considered acceptable to look at another man while he was at the urinal, especially if both parties were at the urinal. This was considered by heterosexual men as being a possible suggestion of solicitation for a sexual encounter, and most definitely outside of the respectable realm of interaction. Men will become uncomfortable if another man watches them while they are at a urinal, sometimes to the point of violence.⁸ Goffman notes that individuals who only glance over another's eyes or do not look directly at them while in close proximity are performing a courtesy with the eyes that he refers to as "civil inattention" (1963:84). While a quick meeting of the eyes may occur, there should be no recognition. Instead, one should look down or away as to present themselves as not being a perceived threat or potentially hostile to others, thereby assuming like treatment and to avoid the potential ramifications of being accused of staring (1963:84-86). Within the confines of the restroom, a man opts for this "avoidance" behavior as a means of mediating his social experience and evading the possibility of other men misconstruing his actions for an attempt to gain access to the conversation preserve or solicitation (see Goffman 1956).

Physical proximity was the other factor that was consistent in the responses of all research participants, as they felt it was necessary to keep a distance from other men that they felt was almost exaggerated by being in a restroom. No one wanted to brush against

another or have anyone make contact with them. As previously mentioned, a typical unit of measure for distance was one fixture, such as a urinal, stall, or sink. Men will leave one of these empty between each other and only take the 'buffer' fixture if there were no other options. This buffering is least strict with stalls, as they are enclosed spaces, but in light of recent news accounts of “foot-tapping” or other forms of solicitations under stall walls, such as the Senator Larry Craig arrest,⁹ men felt that they were likely to choose a stall away from those already used. Men noted that they now felt they had to be very much aware of the stance they took when sitting on a toilet and how they moved their feet so as not to appear as if they were soliciting for sex. Additionally, they were very much aware of how other men were moving within a stall and thoughts of what those movements might be conveying in the unfamiliar code that they had been apparently unaware of until it was brought into the mass media in 2007 (see Bash and Yellin 2007).

Urinal choice is the most observable and known form of buffering within a restroom, as noted in the satirical Male Restroom Etiquette video and The Urinal Game, along with other media (Overman 2006, Clever Media 2008). Much along the same lines as The Urinal Game, men noted that there were occasionally multiple correct choices for which urinal to choose and there were also incorrect choices, which were very easy to distinguish. When presented with choices similar to those in The Urinal Game,^x men were able to give answers immediately with little thought. When asked to explain their selection, they would typically remark that they had chosen based on the maximum distance from other men. Many times, if faced with a situation where the only empty urinal was between two other men, they would choose to use a stall. Other suggestions were to wait for one man to leave (unless there were other men waiting to use the facilities). Men would use the middle urinal in this case, but most expressed displeasure

at the prospect, as it put them next to two other men. Urinals on the ends of a row were generally selected first, as they provided the least chance of being next to another man, and if it did occur, only one other man would be in close proximity.

One of the few places that men noted a difference in restroom etiquette is in a bar restroom. Once men start drinking, they become much less concerned with restroom etiquette 'rules,' most notably in regards to conversations. These conversations are typically relating to something that has or is occurring at the bar, such as regarding the women there, a fight that took place, the music being played, other events, or jokes. Friends may happen to discuss their plans for the night, especially in regards to someone that they are interested in sexually. Most men thought that having a conversation in a bar restroom is not uncommon or that unusual, but noted that they felt alcohol had a large part to play in restructuring restroom etiquette. In a sober state of being, men would still treat the bar restroom as they would any other restroom; it is the state of consciousness that changes how men view and interact within this space.

Men also seemed to be more accepting of sex in restrooms if it was in a bar. While many of the men interviewed stated that they felt having sex in a public restroom would be completely unsanitary, they did mention that they had encountered men and women having sex in a bar restroom. One overheard a group of men, who were in the restroom while a couple was in a closed stall, laugh and remark that they were not at all surprised that there was someone having sex, as that is what takes place in a bar bathroom. Their complete acceptance of the event and nonchalant attitude shows that, in certain locations, public sex is considered to be understandable to some men, albeit uncommon. Again, the fact that the sex was taking place in the men's room of a bar is the important factor, as restrooms in most other contexts would not be considered a place where sex would be

socially allowable.

Edward Casey notes that a place is “more of an event than a thing” (1996:26). As such, a restroom is not a defined thing that is limited, but has openness in the possible interactions and events that can occur. Places are also qualified by the regions that they are located within and that context must be noted when examining a place, as it is part of the interaction that occurs. Two restrooms may have identical physical layouts with identical fixtures, but if one is in a truck stop and the other in a church, then the event that takes place within the space will be markedly different because the spaces become contextualized differently.

Both men and women noted that there is a difference between the decorum of a men’s room and that of a women’s room. Decorum is the informal rules and etiquette that have been described and is integral in a man's performance. For men, the restroom exists as a front region. Goffman describes a front region as the place where a performance is given, or its setting. In a front region, an individual is expected to be performing in a specific manner that is acceptable in the specific social space (1959:107). By entering a restroom, a man now must realize how he is interacting with others, as well as the different levels of decorum that he must engage in. The restroom as a front region for men is interesting, because this is not the case for women. A women's room is a backstage region, noted by Emily Martin to have historically provided a place for subversive behavior, such as solidarity and resistance at work (2001:93-97).¹¹ It is here that women prepare for further performance by fixing their personal appearance, discussing the current state of affairs with each other, and otherwise composing themselves before venturing back out the door into the world (Goffman 1959:113). Performance still occurs, in this backstage, but it is similar to other performances given in

women-only spaces. A male restroom is unique as the performance that takes place there bears little to no resemblance to that in other men-only spaces. The decorum is distinct from that of a male restroom, as women are free to interact with others and vocalize their recognition of the existence of physical copresence in a manner that men would not feel comfortable with. Women noted that there are still some behavioral differences from being within a restroom to that of an outside space. As men lack the ability to use the restroom as a backstage, they are almost constantly performing their masculinity when in public and the front stage nature of a male restroom causes an increase in the need for performance. There is not the same type of specific location that exists for men where they may engage in a more typified men-only performance.

The context of the place was noted by individuals as being a factor in how comfortable they were in a restroom. The importance of the surrounding environment of the restroom is in how unknown the heterogeneity of the possible users would be. A restroom at a library or church was considered to be far more comfortable than one located at a highway rest stop. Some individuals noted that they felt that they needed to be more “on guard” at a highway or gas station restroom because they were uncertain what might happen. They had not had any specific negative encounters at such a place, but were still wary when entering them, as they felt the location the restroom was situated in was inherently unsafe and one man also felt that rest stops were more likely places to be solicited for sex. Several participants also noted that the comedy film *Dumb and Dumber* included a deleted scene where one of the characters is almost raped in a stall which had graffiti soliciting anonymous sex (Farrelly and Farrelly 1994).¹² Men and women both noted that this scene was something they thought of on occasion while using or thinking of highway or gas station restrooms.

Chapter 2

Masculinity, Sexuality, and Public Sex: Maintaining and Negotiating a Masculine Identity

The “American Man” has been limited to an exaggerated archetype, one that depicts a good man as possessing an impossible array of traits that no real man is capable of possessing in entirety (LeDuff 2006:ix-xi). Numerous studies of masculinity cite films such as *First Blood*, starring Sylvester Stallone as Rambo, for portraying a singular masculinity that emphasizes an image of macho which is inherently violent (see Faludi 1999, Gilmore 1990, Gutmann 2007). Michael Kimmel explains that men constantly watch and rank each other and that it is through other men that we are granted access to manhood; without acceptance and performance, one cannot be viewed as possessing masculinity (2005:33-37).

Since we are looking at how men understand their masculinity and how they perform as men, it is necessary to understand studying *men-as-men* (Gutmann 1997, 2007). When studying masculinity and gender it is vital to be aware of the sometimes conflicting realities and identities of individuals. There is not one homogeneous “man,” but a variety of existing masculinities, as this variety in the individualized conceptualization of masculinity by both men and women makes it impossible to explain all the qualities that are definitive of masculinity. One must look to distinguish between

what Gutmann terms transformative and inherited behavior, seeing what it is believed that men do and should do and what men are actually doing. Gutmann also notes the contradictory consciousness that exists in the lives of the men he studied in Mexico, and in all people; there exists the stereotypical and other culturally inherited qualities that society has provided for men, but there are the actual transformative qualities that exist in what men actually do in their decisions as agents. Gutmann gives the example of alcoholic fathers still being able to be good family providers and therefore exemplifying contradictory elements of what comes to mind when one imagines a Mexican man (2007:15-16). This in mind, men using restrooms do not all believe in the same type of masculinity, but they do share commonality in various aspects of their conceptualization of it. Certain aspects of masculinity may prove more important to individuals, while others are subject to additional values that an individual holds.

Further, we must understand male identity not simply as what men say or do, but what they say and do *to be a man* (Gutmann 2007:17). One cannot look at male identity as actions that make them separate from women, leading to an opposition of the two, as this is misleading. Instead, we must understand that men will act in ways to display the degree to which they are men. Michael Hertzfeld notes the performative nature of manhood, specifically that looking good as a man is more necessary than just being a good man. In order to be considered a good man, men need to make visible displays of their masculinity or appear lacking some aspect of their manhood in some way. A man's actual moral character may not be what is most important in asserting his masculinity, but it is his ability to act in a manner which denotes manhood and masculinity that allows for his continual status as a good man in the public sphere to be maintained (Hertzfeld 1985). A man must determine and develop the aspects of masculinity that he feels are most

important in his society and display those in order to feel thought of as being successful in manhood. David Gilmore suggests that we should take the perspective that gender ideologies are social facts which may constrain, but are used for adapting to structures in society. In the case of men, he notes that the ideology of manhood is used to integrate men within society, creating a sense of belonging in the world (1990:224-225). While restroom etiquette is restrictive in the burden of stress it places on men to perform in a specific fashion, it is a means to set boundaries and place themselves, as men, within society. Restroom etiquette standardizes male interaction, allowing those that adhere to it to belong to this fraternal social group.

Fredrik Barth describes the male identity created by Pathan culture, as men must display a culturally valued priority for seeking the company of other men in order to be viewed as virile, but it is through having company with females that he is able to prove his virility with deeds (1981:108). This emphasis on the impression of virility through the company of other men can be noted in American male behavior; men must show a decided choice to take part in male bonding and “manly” activities in order to present an image of virile masculinity, but it is through their relationships with women that their virility is proven and not simply presented. By being in the company of other men, one must uphold his presentation of masculinity and be aware of how it is received by his fellow men. A man seeks to sustain this performance as his public identity as a man is at the mercy of other men. It is through acceptance that he displays manly characteristics that he stays in the realm of masculine, but if he waivers, this identity may be called into question.

In Eisler and Skidmore's work on masculine gender role stress (MGRS),¹³ they find that being perceived as gay or feminine are more related to appearing unmanly than

concerns of being regarded as engaging in homosexual behavior. They show that the above two factors rated more stressful than other items on the list, such as being fired from a job (Eisler and Skidmore 1987). As *The Urinal Game* states, a man does not want his masculinity to ever be questioned (Clever Media 2008) and therefore, respect should be given to other men while using the facilities to avoid a misunderstanding that could lead to losing masculine status in the eyes of other men.

In the opinion of interviewed men, a women's room is inherently more social and relaxed. Women may go to a restroom as a group, or in pairs, whereas men would not do so as an announced action. They may both enter a restroom at the same time if it was before an event or during some type of intermission, but would rarely make it known they were joining another man in venturing to the lavatory. Many forms of media show female characters using the notion of going to the restroom together as a way for the characters to have a conference away from their male counterparts (Harrison 1998). The aforementioned *Hungry-Man* commercial made note of this activity, noting that leaving to go to the restroom as a group, especially if one member did not have a true need to relieve themselves, as being non-masculine, and more so feminine (Swanson: *Hungry-Man dinners* 2008).

Women noted that they too understood that there was a difference between how men and women interacted in restrooms, but many did not seem to know the degree to which the differences extended. They had noticed that men made it a point to enter a restroom separately from each other and would not offer to accompany another man. Women, both in this study and in the sociology classes discussed by Paul, noted that entering public restrooms in groups may be an issue of safety that men neither think of nor would feel concerned about (2006). Men had less to fear about leaving a group and

moving through a crowd or public place alone. Women found it to be acceptable and not uncommon to complement others on their appearance or to converse in a restroom. Many noted that they had gone to a restroom for the sole intention of having a conversation. The thought of purposely avoiding eye contact was strange to many of those that discussed this with me, as they did not make it a point to avoid others anymore so than they would in any other circumstance. Women seemed to be more likely to speak with a stranger in a restroom, as being at a sink afforded a close proximity and shared event where conversation regarding articles of clothing, bags, or appearance could be brought up. It is important to note that there were women that responded as having never made an attempt to speak to other women and maintained a physical distance similar to that which the majority of men had described, including leaving empty stalls between them and others.

This interesting contrast in behavior may be attributed to the difference in socialization that men and women experience. Their actions, either in a restroom or in an exterior space, can be viewed as cross-cultural in some respects, due to this division between the subcultures of the American man and woman (see Tannen 2001). This can be seen explicitly in how men and women viewed women leaving for a restroom in groups; men saw it solely as a social gathering, whereas women had been instilled with a fear of being alone and needed to remain in a group for protection, presumably from men. Further, gay, bisexual, or transgendered men fall into other groupings which have different socializing factors playing on their behavior and conscious ideologies.

Margret Mead points out that the feeling of belonging to one's sex is imbued with notions of adhering to culturally prescribed etiquette for that sex (1967:187). If one encounters a rich point as described by Michael Agar (1994:128-129), this etiquette is

thought of on a much more conscious level than previously. Mead uses the example of strong Western European men feeling “unmanned” by witnessing men squatting to urinate in Eastern Europe (1967:187). Men who I interviewed that had traveled internationally noted that restroom etiquette differs significantly in other countries. In some instances, eye contact would be more common or restrooms were much more open, as they lacked as many physical barriers between toilets. They also noted that there were more unisex bathroom facilities, and that these lacked urinals. One mentioned that he found this to be slightly disconcerting for him as he had become so accustomed to there being a fairly strong division between men’s and women’s rooms that it took him some time to partially adjust to having a perchance meeting with a woman that he knew while in a restroom and having a conversation there.

One must note the importance of what a man must do while urinating; it is almost completely necessary for him to grasp his penis while urinating in order to control where the urine is directed, a fact that many interviewed women were unaware of. Men are also aware of the fact that, while urinating, they are exposing their sexual organ in a fairly open environment. Numerous men noted that they felt more at ease using urinals with dividers as it gave them more of a sense of privacy and they could be less conscious of the fact they were around other men that were similarly exposed. That a penis is used both for elimination and sex is extremely important in how a man feels regarding urinating in public, as both acts are most often associated with being relegated to private places where individuals can be more relaxed. In the United States, sexual acts and choices are allowed within a private setting, but are illegal in public places, leading individuals to deem private places the only *acceptable* place to have sex. Bathrooms have locks inside of homes not as a safety measure, but to insure complete privacy when

relieving oneself. That genitalia are referred to as “private parts” further emphasizes this point, as children are taught at an early age that these are parts of their body that should always be covered, typically by multiple layers of clothing.

Mead notes the dual character of the eliminative tract, in that the use of genitalia for acts of elimination adds to the sense of shame one feels when exposed, since urination and sex are considered to be private acts for most cultures (1967:152-153). Children are taught from an early age not to touch or be near urine or fecal matter. The acts of wetting the bed or oneself is met with ridicule and is considered a sign that one is still a child, unable to control bodily functions as an adult would.

Rafael Ramirez suggests that the distance a man stands from a urinal is related to how comfortable he is with the size of his own penis. Presumably, a man with a larger penis would stand at a greater distance from the urinal, while a man that has a smaller penis would make it a point to stand nearer to the urinal, thereby making it more difficult for another man to possibly see his member and judge him as being less of a man due to its smaller size (Ramirez 1999:56-58). Regardless of intent, looking at another man’s penis could inflict doubt into the mind of the exposed man; he may be concerned of how his masculinity in terms of virility is perceived through the size of his penis, as a larger penis is considered *manlier*. As the penis is referred to as one’s “manhood,” a correlation between physical size and its symbolic representation of social manhood can easily be drawn. None of the men that were interviewed made any comments regarding their thoughts on this nor did any bring this topic up in conversation.¹⁵ I found the lack of discussion of penis size interesting and assume it is due to the notion of privacy surrounding genitalia. Additionally, there exists an anxiety for men to speak about penises, as they may give away some information about their own that would embarrass

them or cause embarrassment to other men that they may not wish to make distressed.

Heterosexuality, Homosexuality, and the Public Restroom

Gilbert Herdt notes that there is a continued equivalence of “homosexual” with “gay/lesbian” self-identities. This misuse of terms results in a belief that all those who participate in homosexual activity are gay or lesbian. This is not the case, as there are numerous instances in other cultures where male homosexual activity does not make a man gay (see Gutmann 2007, Kulick 1998, Ramirez 1999). The travesti of Brazil are born male, but have female gender identity and the men that they have sex with are considered to still be straight (Kulick 1998). Herdt also notes that the men of the Sambia of Papua New Guinea engage in homosexual fellatio as boys. This ritualized homosexuality becomes a center of their life as they reach puberty, but ultimately this leads to a manhood of exclusive heterosexuality (Herdt 1981:3-4). To “come out” and acknowledge homosexuality as part of an individual’s gender identity is what it means to be gay or lesbian (1992:30). While anthropologists, such as Gutmann, Kulick, and Ramirez, note the distinction that exists within homoerotic encounters of the position of power if acts are not reciprocal (Gutmann 2007, Kulik 1998, Ramirez 1999), a number of straight men that were interviewed did not find there to be a difference. One man told me that, regardless of who was giving or who was receiving, he considered any type of sex between men to denote that they were both homosexual. He felt that this was the general belief among the other straight men that he knew and furthermore, that he felt this was how American society at large would view the scenario. This reaction demonstrates that while there are those who see a distinction between engaging in sex with men and homosexuality, there is also a portion of the US population that would not see a

difference.

If a man looked at another man's penis while he was urinating at a urinal, the latter's reaction would most likely be one of shock and anger. Many of the men that were interviewed said that, if presented with such a situation, they would say something in a loud voice, possibly yelling, as they would be quite offended. Many men noted that if the onlooker continued gazing at them after shouting, they would simply leave as quickly as possible, simply bowing out instead of furthering the conflict. One went so far as to say he hoped that he would punch the other man, although he is not sure that he would do so in the moment. By punching the other man, he would have the ability to express the rage he felt that another man would intrude on his privacy and would make him look tough in the face of what he considered a blatant sign of disrespect. Violence would enable him to regain power in this situation, where he had been exposed and vulnerable. However, he notes that he would most likely not hit the other man as it would also be inappropriate and illegal, his want for satisfaction tempered by law.

The worrisome question of, "What are you, gay?" creates a fear in boys and men of being aberrant in their behavior and thereby becoming cultural deviants. Men appear to bring up the subject of homosexuality and include it in their jests more often than women. It is not necessarily a fear that they are gay, but that they are not acting in a way that others perceive that they should be; they are not adhering to the typical model of hegemonic masculinity. Kimmel suggests that masculinity in America is very much imbued with homophobia, as homosexuality is linked to femininity, due to the sexual desire for men being involved, reinforcing the opposition of genders and framing homosexuality as another opposing force to masculinity. By claiming another is exhibiting homosexual tendencies, a man can deny manhood to a fellow man and present

himself as being manlier (2005:33-39). The great secret of masculinity in America, Kimmel claims, is that we are *afraid* of other men (2005:35). Behavior that is aberrant from the normalized heterosexuality or hegemonic masculinity is constantly on the minds of men and they become hyper-sensitized to it when they enter a restroom space. They are now surrounded by other men that are in some state of undress and are in partial visual and complete auditory range of these strangers.

When a straight man enters a restroom by himself or with men that he believes are definitely straight (although some may be “straight looking, straight acting” gay men), his concern with who may approach him in a homoerotic manner is only with the individuals he does not know in the restroom. This concern may change if one of the individuals is known to him as being homosexual or bisexual. Questions begin to arise in the minds of both individuals. A gay man may be very careful in regards to how he acts in a restroom as he does not want to cause any possible issues with a known party that he is trying to observe their nakedness or is in some other way engaging in a non-utilitarian use of the restroom. They are now very conscious of the choices they are making regarding eye contact, personal space, and communication while in the restroom and may seek to distance themselves farther than normal as to make sure there is no confusion in the minds of heterosexual men around them. After news broke of his arrest, Senator Larry Craig stressed his denial of being a homosexual, claiming that his physical actions within the restroom were misconstrued by police and that he was not involved in any “inappropriate conduct” (Bash and Yellin 2007).

A number of heterosexual men noted that they would not have any issue with sharing a public restroom with a friend that they knew to be homosexual and some had lived with gay roommates. One man noted that as long as there were no sexual advances,

why should he care? Similarly, the attitude of other men interviewed was that it was not a concern of using a toilet within visual range of a gay man, but there was a fear of being propositioned for sex or sexually assaulted in some way by a stranger, regardless of sexuality. This is what led to the aforementioned suggestions of yelling or violence as a reaction to a hypothetical situation where they were viewed while using a urinal or stall, it is a matter of a stranger harassing them in a sexual manner and intruding on them relieving themselves.

Not Just In the Bedroom: Sex in Restrooms

Anonymous sex is an aspect of public restrooms that many men and women are unaware of. Laud Humphreys' classic work, *Tearoom Trade*, provides a framework for all research on public sex, as well as raising interesting questions of methodology and ethics regarding research in the places public sex occurs (Humphreys 1970, Nardi 1999). Humphreys documents the culture of the "tearoom," a public restroom which is used for what he describes as "impersonal sex." There are behavioral norms and codes which are maintained by those involved in "cruising" these locations for sex (Humphreys 1970). Since then, numerous papers on public sex have been written (See Califia 1994, Herdt 1992, Leap 1999). Interestingly, public sex in restrooms as a regular practice appears to fall, though not entirely, within the domain of gay men, as there are no in depth accounts of lesbians engaging in such activity noted in the body of literature regarding the subject. This "tearoom trade" is not an aspect of masculinity conceived of by most people in American culture, but lurks in their minds as a deviant circle of individuals that have found each other, not as a substantial body within their own culture.

While on MSNBC *Live with Dan Abrams*, political news pundit Tucker Carlson

recounted an altercation he had in a public restroom at Georgetown Park in Washington, DC. While a high school student, Carlson says he was grabbed by a man. Carlson then returned approximately a half hour later with a friend and seized the man, hitting his head into a stall, and holding him until a security guard came and the police arrested the man. This topic came up as a result of Abrams asking Carlson's opinion on the Larry Craig scandal (Media Matters for America 2007a). Numerous gay and lesbian organizations were outraged by Carlson's account, feeling that it condoned physical violence against gay men if there was a perceived sexual advance (Cafasso 2007, Presgraves 2007). Carlson felt that, while he had no issues with an individual being gay as that was their own business, that public restrooms in parks were full of “creepy guys” and he felt this to be a problem, “totally wrong,” and “outrageous” (Media Matters for America 2007a). Amid the unrest generated by Carlson’s story, MSNBC aired the segment the next day, but excluded the portion where Carlson describes the assault (Media Matters for America 2007b).

The Marvin Center is noted on the travel blog, Gridskipper, which lists the classic locations in the District of Columbia for anonymous “homosex” and provides a direct link to the building's website (Gridskipper 2008). GWU's student center ranks at number seven on the list. In March 2008, the site had listed it as second on the list, surpassing other cruising locations such as Union Station or Regan International Airport. The reason for the change or deletion of some content, which elaborated on the use of the Marvin Center as a cruising locale is unknown (Gridskipper 2008). The site does not explicitly state the criteria that were used for compiling this list, but it appears to be based on notoriety and assumed frequency of use.

In 1999, university police conducted a sting operation in the Marvin Center,

ending with twenty men being barred from the GW campus for soliciting sex in restrooms (Eckbert and Postal 1999, Staff editorial 1999). A campus official noted that there had been a history of complaints from students and staff and actions were taken after a website claiming the center was a prime location for sexual encounters was brought to the attention of administrators. Student reporters Zeb Eckbert and Steve Postal, covering the story, reported that a man associated with the website www.cruisingforsex.com noted that the toilets of the Marvin center had been used for sexual activity for decades (Eckbert and Postal 1999). Editors of the independent student paper on campus, *The GW Hatchet*, felt a need for GW to maintain a zero-tolerance policy on sex in public restrooms and felt that such activity was “unacceptable” and that it was necessary to keep the restrooms “safe from outsiders” (Staff editorial 1999)

While conducting initial research and interviews, the subject of the Marvin Center as a place for anonymous gay sex was brought up by a number of individuals.¹⁴ Two coworkers at the bookstore had told me when I began working there to avoid the ground floor men's room, as they had been accosted in that location. One described a man looking in on him while using a stall and had to yell at the man to cease. Other employees also noted that they had heard of voyeurism or sexual behavior taking place there. Another participant directed me to the aforementioned cruising website. He had heard of it through a friend and found it to be quite humorous, but also disconcerting. Many were no longer comfortable with using the lower level restroom in particular, as it seems that this is the place of the most occurrences of sexual behavior. The men who were not aware of gay sex taking place in restrooms on campus were almost unanimous in no longer planning to use the ground floor restroom. They felt that the potential for such acts made the restroom greatly less desirable, in the sense that they did not want to be approached

for sex, be thought of as attempting to solicit sexual favors from another man, and that the privacy and cleanliness of the restroom had become infringed upon.

None of the women that were interviewed had any notion of this aspect of the Marvin Center restrooms, unless they had heard it from one of the men that had also mentioned it during an interview. They found this fact to be quite surprising and would ask questions regarding occurrences to further understand what exactly had been happening. None mentioned having heard any similar uses of the female restrooms for sexual activities, or at least were not aware that any such activities taking place there. One woman felt that this type of behavior was an issue, as it led to furthering negative stereotypes of the gay community, furthering a misconception that gay men are lustful and sex crazed. It was not the act of having homosexual sex, but that it was public sex that was the issue, as its illegality creates negative views in the minds of many of the gay community, an already heavily stigmatized group of men.

Discussion

Through this research, there was no clear conclusion on how such rules of etiquette are accepted into the minds and lives of men. The question that seemed to go unanswered in this study was, “When do people, specifically men, learn the rules and etiquette of public restrooms?” None of the men who were interviewed could give a precise, or even much of a vague, time when there was a realization of the need for or absence of certain actions in this setting. Some individuals suggested that they felt that this is established during interactions in elementary school when a created concern of acting heterosexual begins, even though there may not be a clear understanding of

sexuality. However, they were not basing this on any events in their memory, but on the fact that they could not recall a time before knowing that there was a set of behaviors that they deemed necessary when using a restroom. It would prove interesting to determine what part of socialization or events during childhood have influence on how a man acts in a public restroom. More specifically, do teachers or parents ever explicitly tell children what etiquette they should follow in a restroom? This could be integral in not only understanding how the concepts of etiquette are influenced and formed, but also to the conceptualization regarding the formation of the fear of not being seen as part of a hegemonic masculinity. As there is not a uniform way of teaching children to use a public restroom, it is not safe to assume that this set of behavior is learned by instruction alone, but must be influenced from elsewhere. Parents do accompany children into a restroom, as they may feel that the space is unsafe for a child to enter alone due to its public nature. One can hear parents teaching children how to use the facilities of a restroom and children can be heard speaking in a manner that a man aware of restroom etiquette would not (Cherkis 2006). Through learning what it is to be a good man, boys learn the importance of respecting the privacy of others and acting comfortable with one's sexuality. Consequently, this may be the reason why boys do not have to have etiquette taught explicitly, as it has now become intrinsic to their sense of being that one should maintain boundaries when in a restroom.

Further, as there is an established difference in the way men and women conceptualize restroom space, the question of how gender conditioning in childhood impacts restroom etiquette should be addressed. As children are socialized, especially during early childhood, culturally determined conditioning begins to relegate actions and attitudes to one sex or the other, creating the basis for gender identity and a rigid gender

dichotomy (Mead 2001:261-263, 276-278). Mead notes, “The coercion to behave like a member of one’s own sex becomes one of the strongest implements with which the society attempts to mould the growing child into accepted forms” (2001:276). Girls are to become women and, as it always appears to be stressed, boys to grow up into *real* men. Any deviance from sexual conformity can lead to a fear within an individual that they may not belong to their own sex at all, as traits assigned to one sex are disallowed in the other (Mead 2001: 276-278). One could note that when presented with the existence of a female urinal, many women were appalled at the concept of ever using one, even though they are completely nonintrusive.

The use of public restrooms are mundane for men as their use is part of daily life, as men use public restrooms at work or school, while traveling, in restaurants, or while shopping; they are every where in the American landscape. Further, boys grow up being taken into restrooms by older men, who teach them how to use such facilities. A possible explanation for how men learn male restroom etiquette is that these children are modeling their behavior from another man who is already indoctrinated in these unspoken rules.

Further studies may seek to examine how restrooms are designed and the criteria and concerns that are addressed by architects when creating such facilities. How important is functionality compared to the concerns over use for sex or a more comfortable environment for men that will use it? Recently, some restrooms have been equipped with larger dividers, such as stalls that have walls extending almost to the floor (Blake 2007). One would suspect that the primary concern in restroom design is efficient functionality, allowing for the maximum amount of persons to use and pass through a restroom in a timely fashion, based on placement of stalls, urinals, sinks, and dryers. Another aspect of a concern of maximum functionality would be the ability to maintain

sanitation effectively and efficiently, such as the installment of self-activating sinks or self-flushing toilets and urinals. Architects may not be aware of possible secondary uses of a restroom while formulating their designs or choosing the fixtures that are to be installed.

In addition to those that design them, how do the individuals that are involved in maintaining restrooms conceptualize the space and its use, since they are typically unseen by restroom users, but are integral parts of the restroom space? These individuals interact with the restroom on a daily basis and are custodians of this space. As they are in the restrooms to clean and not using it themselves, they may not see or feel the same boundaries as an individual that has never done so. Janitors typically close a restroom while cleaning it and are therefore blocked from its users. They are rarely a direct part of a man's restroom experience, but their actions indirectly alter the choices men make in this facility. Men mentioned during interviews that they were more comfortable in a cleaner restroom, as they did not have to be as concerned with their hygiene directly following use. They also would seek out the cleanest stall to use if given the opportunity, complaining if they found waste on or around the toilets.

The subject of bisexuality and transgendered individuals was not addressed in this research as these topics did not arise during field research or the interviews. How these groups manage and negotiate restroom interactions would prove to be an interesting point of continuation on this line of research. While heterosexual men are concerned with maintaining a masculine identity that is part of a recognized gender ideology and homosexuality slowly enters into the realm of accepted orientations, it is these periphery genders and sexualities which must negotiate masculinity in an entirely separate manner. As noted by Don Kulick, there are gaps in the study of men of varying sexualities, as it

becomes difficult for researchers to categorize them into distinct groups, making a study of linguistic or subculture analysis troublesome (2000:272). Bisexuality is not discussed in much depth, only that there are some men that can maintain a masculine and heterosexual identity while being engaged in penetrating other men sexually. This lack of study is a product about the aforementioned emphasis on identity within the field. It may be necessary to reexamine studies on masculinity and sexuality, as cultural definitions vary, and even among a single culture there are numerous definitions of what constitutes homosexuality (Ramirez 1999: 79-105), making it difficult to accurately define and conceptualize bisexuality within America, where a vast multitude of cultures and subcultures exist.

Being a man in America does not mean that one has to be heterosexual, but certain actions that may be considered to be in the domain of unmarked heterosexual actions are expected. By adhering to the rules of etiquette, a man, regardless of sexuality, takes part in what would be considered heterosexual behavior, as this is unmarked, the norm. Tannen notes that many of the choices men have in terms of appearance are unmarked and that they may have no particular style, but adhering to a set of traits which are normalized. She explained that due to their choices in style, women's appearances were marked. Continuing, she addresses how most language in America has an unmarked "male" and marked "female" (1993). I would contend that it is not simply maleness that is unmarked in our language and society, but it is a heterosexual maleness. If one has the appearance of being homosexual, they are markedly considered "gay" and in some way lacking that which makes men manly. The term "metrosexual" is used in popular culture to describe the heterosexual man whose identity as straight is maintained, but appearance is that of what would typically be marked as too fashionable or well-maintained to be

heterosexual. This relates back to the fears of cultural deviancy, as men are not only fearful of traits that have been marked as feminine, but also those that are marked homosexual.

Having a sexual encounter with another man would fall into the realm of marked homosexual behavior, regardless of the personal identity of the men involved, as this is considered to be distinctly non-heterosexual. Media and stereotypes of masculinity have created a dichotomy between heterosexual and homosexual, with actions being relegated to one or the other. Movement is not allowed between the two sides, instead a man is heterosexual until he “comes out” or is caught engaging in a perceived homosexual act. This unwavering line in popular conception must lead to a vast array of confusing identity issues within men, who may see themselves as not falling neatly into either of these gender ideologies, but in a gray area, more akin to that described by Gutmann and Ramirez, that is not accepted in American culture. This is yet another imagined liminal area of masculinity, like that of the restroom, in which men are judged not on their race or class, but how they negotiate their masculinity among others.

Men adhere to male restroom etiquette as a means of performing and maintaining their masculinity while in the presence of others. This is not simply limited to other men, as the act of excusing oneself to go to the restroom and entering it are still a part of the rules of etiquette. The instant a man has made it known that he is going to a public restroom, he feels the need to begin the process of following the unspoken rules that exist within and surrounding that place. The place becomes a space filled with presumptions based on action and a man's male identity is under scrutiny. He must negotiate a space where the slightest action will create assumptions in the minds of others regarding sexuality, intentions, sexual orientation, and how masculine someone is.

Masculinity in America has in turn influenced the way in which a public restroom is shaped and encoded with meaning. For myself and many of the participants in my research, a men's room has an entirely new meaning for us as we cannot help but to think of the dynamics of male interaction within such a space. Many that I have spoken with after finishing my fieldwork and interviews commented that they felt they could no longer walk into a men's room without considering and noticing every action they were making and the actions of the men around them. They were beginning to understand that almost everyone else was thinking similar thoughts and having the same anxieties about where they were standing or looking. They were also now aware of uses for restrooms that they had thought of as almost mythical in the half rumor/half joking way of which anonymous public sex in restrooms had been spoken of. Outside of certain circles or academic writings, many had not heard mention of tearooms or other forms of “hooking up” other than from crude jokes or graffiti in stalls, which many assumed were fabricated.

Through observing the interactions that occur in a public restroom, speaking with both men and women about how they conceptualize this space, the cultural context, and the literature surrounding the phenomena that are present, one can begin to understand the complexity of male restroom etiquette. The pervasive masculine gender ideology in America causes a feeling of necessity for men to prove their masculinity and manhood when in the presence of other, specifically other men in this situation. Men are reflexively conceptualizing their masculinity in terms of how others perceive them and how they perceive their fellow men within the confines of a men's room in ways which would not occur in similar fashion outside of these tiled walls.

Appendix A

This is a simplified description of The Urinal Game:

There are six urinals in a row and a door on the right end of the row. Urinal 1 is farthest from the door and urinal numbering proceeds from left to right.

Problem 1: Urinal 1 is taken. Urinals (2-6) are open.

Correct Answer: Urinal 6, as it is farthest from the other man.

Problem 2: Urinals 3 & 5 are taken. Urinals 1, 2, 4, & 6 are open.

Correct Answer: Urinal 1, as it provides the maximum buffer zone.

Problem 3: Urinals 1, 3, & 5 are taken. Urinal 2, 4, & 6 and are open.

Correct Answer: Urinal 6, as it is closest to the door for a quick exit.

Problem 4: Urinals 3 & 4 are taken. Urinal 1,2,5 & 6 and are open.

Correct Answer: Urinal 1. Even though 6 has the same buffer space, 1 is farthest from the door.

Problem 5: Urinals 2, 5 & 6 are taken. Urinal 1,3 & 4 are open. The man at Urinal 2 is extremely muscular.

Correct Answer: Urinal 4, as it “pairs you with the big guy.”

Problem 6: Urinals 2, 4 & 6 are taken. Urinal 1 & 3 are open.

Correct Answer: You have two choices. One is to leave and come back later. The second is to go directly to the sinks and wash your hands. (Clever Media 2008)

Appendix B

Setup given to interviewed men:

A restroom contains four urinals in a row and three stalls.

Setup 1: All urinals (4) and all stalls (3) are open.

Setup 2: Urinal 1 is taken. Urinals 2, 3 , & 4 and all stalls are open

Setup 3: Urinals 1 & 4 are taken. Urinal 2 & 3 and all stalls are open.

Setup 4: Urinals 1 & 3 are taken. Urinal 2 & 4 and all stalls are open.

Setup 5: Urinals 1 & 4 and all stalls are taken. Urinal 2 & 3 are open.

Setup 6: Urinals 1 & 3 and all stalls are taken. Urinal 2 & 4 are open.

Endnotes

1. A recording of this advertisement can be found on Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubhOxoU7I9M> and is listed under the category of “Comedy.” (link active as of August 8, 2008).
2. Both Scrubs and the Hungry-Man commercial were aired at numerous times throughout the day and on various stations, as Scrubs originally was aired on NBC, then switched to ABC and is also shown on cable networks such as Comedy Central.
3. This film can be found on the Zarathustra Studios website at: <http://z-studios.com/films/mre/> (link active as of August 8, 2008).
4. The specific postings can be found at: http://everything2.com/index.pl?node_id=123901 (link active as of August 8, 2008).
5. See Appendix A for listing of setups.
6. There were ten interviews that were scheduled with participants in the beginning of the study, but, as word of my research spread among my social network, many individuals heard of my study and offered to provide information at various times, thereby allowing me to gather information at a faster rate and much more spontaneously. Between groups of men, women, or mixed groups, the total ranges at about thirty individuals, with some giving multiple accounts at various times. As my thesis was a topic of conversation at social gatherings, numerous individuals expressed interest and offered to allow me to add their accounts herein.

Interviews followed a semi-structured format, with some questions, which I felt were integral to understanding restroom interaction, already prepared prior to the

interview; however, I would follow different avenues of thought and lines of questions depending on the answers and reactions of the participants. In addition to describing their experiences in restrooms, views on restroom etiquette, and how they felt about why such events occur, participants were also encouraged to share accounts of what they considered to be odd or humorous events they had witnessed in a restroom. After the interview, I noted the general attitude and observations regarding how the participant reacted to the questions.

7. Cherkis notes his concern that he suspects that a man standing in the stall next to the one he occupies might be masturbating because he had stopped urinating long before

8. In Christchurch, New Zealand, a man was arrested for having hit another twice in a pub restroom. The victim had apparently looked at the other man while they were at urinals next to each other. Lawyers noted that the altercation was directly dealing with a breach of urinal etiquette (Ananova 2008).

9. Senator Craig was arrested in June 2007 and plead guilty to disorderly conduct after an officer stated he looked into a stall, tapped his foot, and made hand motions under the stall divider which he said were indications of soliciting sex (Bash and Yellin 2007).

10. See Appendix B for setups provided to research participants.

11. Martin discusses women using restrooms in factories during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for dealing with the practical issues of menstruation, as a place to cry, and to read union leaflets during a struggle to organize (2001:93-97).

12. A recording of this scene can be found on Youtube at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8iZD9RpVFo> and is listed under the category of “Comedy.” (link active as of August 8, 2008).

13. The concept of MGRS is based on previous research in psychology by Richard Lazarus, which focuses on cognitive appraisal, where an individual imbues an event with meaning, thereby determining the level of emotional reaction that occurs in that situation (Eisler and Skidmore 1987).

14. I would mention this line of thinking during an interview or discussion, but no one ventured to give much more of a response than a brief nod. Seeing as they did not feel comfortable with the topic of penis size, I would continue on with questions or bring up other topics of urinal etiquette.

15. One interviewed man recalled an encounter in the ground floor restroom. He entered at approximately 5:00pm on a Tuesday or Thursday (he remembered it was a class that met only on these days) and occupied one of the stalls. Directly after he sat down on the toilet, a group of about five men, in their mid-twenties to early thirties and dressed in business attire entered. They then apparently began to engage in an assortment of sexual acts in the middle of the restroom. Being that the men were in between him and the exit, the man who told me this felt he could do nothing but wait in the stall until they had finished, feeling uncomfortable trying to extricate himself through this mass of bodies. At one point, someone else entered the restroom and, upon hearing the door open, the orgy of men made haste to the nearest stalls as to not be seen, but immediately returned to their previous activities once the door shut again. The event took a total of almost thirty minutes, after which all the men exited and my research participant felt he could leave. He found the situation to have been disconcerting, but was generally a humorous story which he told at parties.

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