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“Is My Package Big Enough?”: Emerging Asian-American Men and Masculinity

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Comments

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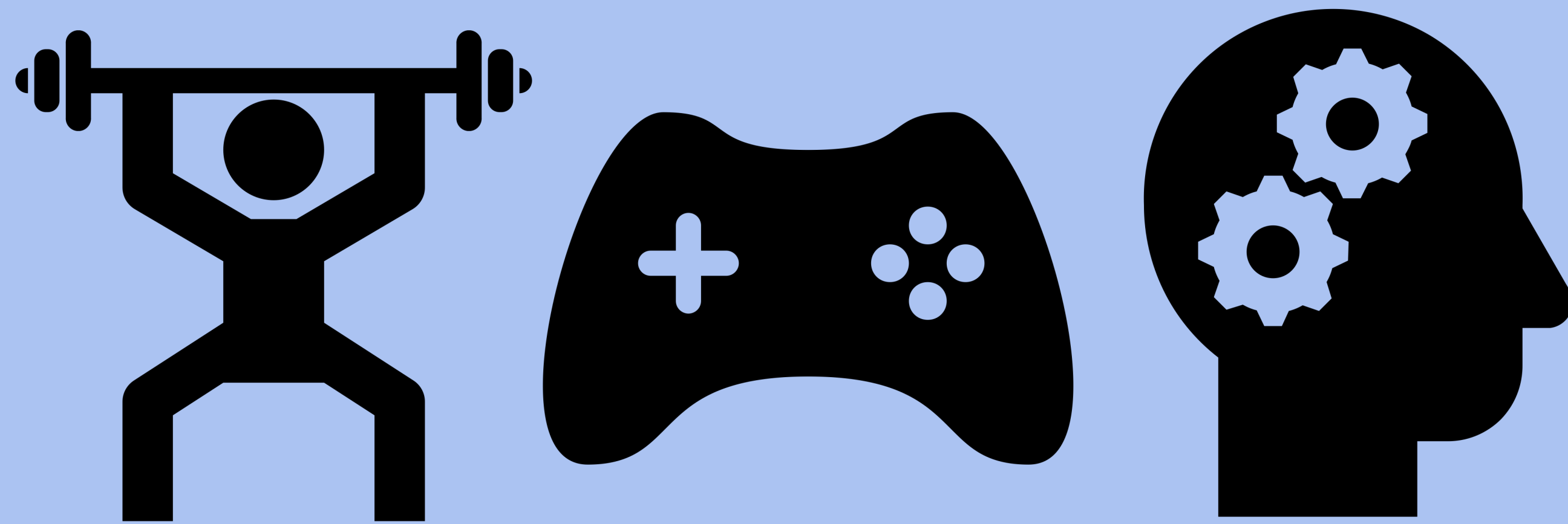


Research Question

How do emerging Asian-American men who are influenced by transnational business masculinity utilize the social and financial resources available to them to embrace or reject this ideal?

Sample and Methods

- Qualitative Interviews
- Sample: 12 Asian-American men
 - 20-24 years old
 - Middle class background: 6
 - Working class background: 6
 - Majors: 5 engineering, 3 business, 1 computer science, 1 exercise science, 1 sociology, 1 computer science & engineering
 - Graduates: 7, Undergraduates: 5



Review of the Literature

- **Patriarchy**: an organization of society constructed by social relationships and ideas that grant men power over women
- **Hegemonic Masculinity**: a viable, enticing, logical, welcoming, available form of masculinity that holds the greatest influence
- **Transnational Business Masculinity (TBM)**: a term coined by Raewyn Connell to describe hegemonic masculinity in contemporary societies. Connell describes this as a “flexible, calculative, egocentric masculinity of the ‘fast capitalist’ entrepreneur”
- **Boomerang Children**: young adults who return to live in their family homes, especially for financial reasons
- **Emerging Adulthood**: a life stage between adolescence and young adulthood, lasting roughly from ages 18 to 25. Five features make emerging adulthood distinctive: identity explorations, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between adolescence and adulthood, and a sense of broad possibilities for the future
- **Intersectionality**: used to describe how various axes of identity such as race, gender, and class overlap and lead to a range of experiences. The influence of hegemonic masculinity may reach all men; however, because different levels of privilege are granted with different axes of identity, the resources that men have available to them lead to an array of experiences of how they shape their masculinities

Findings

W-C EMBRACING TBM

“So the first internship I ever got was actually through a teacher of mine. When I was at a community college, the teacher I was taking a CS course from reached out and was like, Oh, I have a friend that is looking for an intern... It was huge. I was so excited. I'd never done a software engineering internship... I gained so much experience... It opened a lot of other doors for me... There were a lot more interviews, a lot more people that were willing to take my application.

I want to start my own company, because I think starting your own company, it brings a lot of creativity to the industry. And people should always try to look to start businesses or bring ideas, because I think that's a lot of what America is so known for, right? It's being able to create, being able to freely bring those ideas to fruition... And I don't know what that company is yet, but that would be something that I would really want to do... I think with creating your own company, you have that control...” –Herman

W-C REJECTING TBM

“I didn't really do much. I was pretty introverted. I kind of just stayed home and played video games all day. I did join a club. It was literally just a bunch of students that just gathered in one room. They just played video games every Friday... But that didn't last very long... We stopped going all together after the first year.

I really thought I'd be doing big things, but when you get into college people are really smart... And then you kind of feel like you don't know much... I guess my expectations of myself kind of lowered as college progressed. I always thought I'd do big things... owning a company or something, making the big bucks, but that's far gone. Now, I just want a job. Now, I just want to make some money.” –Evan

M-C EMBRACING TBM

“Game development club. I joined it not for the social capacity but for the professional capacity... A hackathon club. Computer science club. AI club... One of the things my dad told me is that it's very important to have professional connections before you graduate so that after you graduate you can always come back and talk to people.

A successful career. I would say the first milestone would definitely be starting a business. I never see being an employee as being successful, even in a big tech company... I think what success looks like is people work for you... Being in the upper class would be considered successful. If you're in the middle class, you don't have financial freedom.” –Steven

M-C REJECTING TBM

“I was part of the camping club, hiking club, and a couple engineering clubs. And then in my last year here, as more priorities started to take effect, I had to narrow down some of my interests...”

I have aspirations to work in sustainability... I would like to make an impact in a positive manner... I've seen companies have these values, some of this generic crap that pertains to everything or everybody, but then you see they're just out there to make money, or they still continue to do harm in the world... I'm sure they pay well and having a job there at those big name companies helps you find jobs elsewhere. So it's a good stepping stone for most people coming out of college...” –Benjamin

Analysis

- Although socio-economic status provides similar class resources to each group, their within-class responses to TBM are varied. For some working class men, opportunities that they encounter propel them toward the TBM ideal. For other working class men, the lack of these opportunities deter them from pursuing this ideal.
- For middle class men, TBM is an pathway, given their class resources. However, their financial security also provides the freedom to choose something different, as their masculinity has already been secured by economic stability.
- With TBM being the most powerful masculinity, a common route for Asian-American men to pursue this ideal is through STEM careers because of stereotypes of Asians in STEM, but also because of stereotypes that keep them from being promoted up corporate ladders.

Future Research

Future research will examine the intersectional experiences of other working- and middle-class racial-ethnic groups. Studying how women experiencing emerging adulthood feel about transnational business masculinity is also a topic for future research that will yield insight into the delayed family-formation patterns found among early 21st century adults.



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