



# An Ethnography of Breastaurant Masculinity: Themes of Objectification, Sexual Conquest, Male Control, and Masculine Toughness in a Sexually Objectifying Restaurant

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## Abstract

The present study is based on a 2-year participant-observer ethnography of a group of men in a “breastaurant” to characterize the unique masculinity features that environment evokes. Currently, whereas some research examines sexually objectifying restaurant environments regarding their impacts upon women in those spaces, no known scholarly attention has been given to men and masculinities in these environments. Through thematic analysis of table dialogue supplemented by brief unstructured interviews, I identify four major and one minor theme of “breastaurant masculinity” as distinctive to that environment. These include sexual objectification, sexual conquest, male control of women, masculine toughness, and (as a minor theme) rationalizations for why men frequent breastaurants. Following recent trends in masculinities research, my study interprets the breastaurant as a type of male preserve that erects a local pastiche hegemony in which these themes gain protected status. It also theorizes that the unique interactive environment of the breastaurant between (mostly) male patrons and attractive female servers who provide heterosexual aesthetic labor to the patrons, primarily in the form of ersatz sexual availability, produces these masculinity features. Given their current rapid expansion and popularity within masculine subcultures, the breastaurant therefore becomes an important site for critical masculinities research. Practice implications are discussed for management and counseling professionals who aim to improve outcomes in social and professional situations for both women and men.

**Keywords** Masculinity · Masculine identity · Objectification · Ethnography · Male only environments

For critical masculinities researchers, the ways in which masculinity arises uniquely within certain spaces and under varying social circumstances is a matter of enduring interest. Particularly, researchers examining the question through social constructivism recognize the power that certain discourses can have in defining masculinity and interpreting it as natural or authentic. Masculinities scholar Matthews (2014, 2015, 2016), for example, by drawing on Sheard and Dunning (1973) and Dunning and Maguire (1996), has paid particular interest to the ways in which these processes have led to the establishment of sporting enclaves as a kind of male preserve. *Male preserves* are gendered spaces which men regard as “crucial elements in the re-articulation, reiteration, and reification of social

power” (Matthews 2016, p. 313). Their establishment and use are seen as a reaction against:

a broader process in which movements toward equality have challenged patterns of gender that ideologically frame certain men as powerful, whereby changes in the institutional organization of politics, education, the workplace, governance, religion, media, and the family have eroded assumptions about the legitimacy of the traditional patriarchal order. (Matthews 2016, p. 314)

As documented by Matthews (2016) and confirmed by his own insider’s ethnographies (2014, 2016), for more than 40 years, sporting enclaves have been recognized as offering avenues for men to create a “pastiche hegemony” (Matthews 2014, p. 99; cf. Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) in which discourses that naturalize male power as masculine face minimal criticism. Within these spaces, it has been thoroughly documented that masculine themes and discourses of sexual conquest and routine manifestations of male dominance and

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supremacy under a broader patriarchal system are common (as cited in Matthews 2014, 2016).

These themes are also common within other male preserves. My paper therefore departs from previous studies of male preserves by leaving aside discussions of all-male sporting environments in favor of the *breastaurant*, which is a label I use for sexually objectifying (casual dining) restaurant environments where scantily-clad, attractive female servers are a defining feature/gimmick. By extending Matthews' (2016) concept into an environment in which (conventionally heterosexually attractive, heterosexualized, performatively flirtatious) women are seen as foils who enable certain performances of masculinity, the ways in which the objectification and commodification of women as "heterosexual aesthetic labor" (Barber 2016a, p. 618) are central to these masculine gender performances become clear.

Although some insightful work has been done to investigate the breastaurant environment, these studies have focused primarily upon the women employed within them. From this perspective, breastaurant environments have been of significant concern for feminist thought due to their foregrounding of women's bodies to appeal to men's desires (Moffitt and Szymanski 2011; Rasmusson 2011; Szymanski and Feltman 2014, 2015; Szymanski and Mikorski 2017; Szymanski et al. 2011). Consequently, no known studies have used methods common to masculinities research to investigate men who frequent breastaurants. This gap leaves open many questions about the masculinities that arise in and, perhaps, characterize the breastaurant environment as a unique type of male preserve. To address this conspicuous lack in the existing literature, following Matthews (2014), I engaged in a two-year in situ participant-observer ethnographic study of one group of men who regularly frequent a popular local breastaurant in Panama City, Florida. Of central interest were ways in which breastaurant environments produce and facilitate certain themes within masculinity and how these interact with and depend upon breastaurants' unique microcultural environment. To this end, the data acquisition methodology paralleled one common in a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2008), although my ethnography ultimately relied upon thematic analysis of participants' recorded conversations produced over the course of the study (Braun and Clarke 2006; Gibbs 2007; Nowell et al. 2017).

Of note, gender-situated as I am, as a man conducting such an investigation within a male preserve—which already privileges men's need to bolster a faltering masculinity at the expense of focusing upon the complex range of social influences, pressures, and options which underlie women's decision to play the role of breastaurant server (Barber 2016a, b; Rasmusson 2011)—considerable care needed to be given to avoiding the uncritical reproduction of this imbalance. Ultimately, the decision to focus on men's thoughts, feelings, and desires within the breastaurant environment is an attempt

to both expand the work of Matthews (2016) and to incorporate and complement the already extensive work of feminist scholars looking at objectification, sexual empowerment, organizational structure, discrimination, and sexual exploitation of women in such environments, particularly including Szymanski et al. (Moffitt and Szymanski 2011; Szymanski and Feltman 2014; Szymanski and Mikorski 2017) and Barber (2016a, b). Results indicate breastaurants represent unique public spaces that generate a socially complex local pastiche hegemony in which themes of sexual objectification, sexual conquest, male/patriarchal dominance, and masculine toughness are foregrounded and interact with performances of (role-specific, feigned) sexual availability by the servers.

## Male Preserves

In his effort to deconstruct men and masculinities in the contemporary late-modern era, by drawing upon Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005, pp. 849–851) exploration of a "geography of masculinities," Michael Atkinson (2011, p. 63) offered the concept of "local pastiche hegemonies" as localized environments in which men are free to produce, develop, and engage with particular masculinity performances. These performances are at least partly a response to some men's perception that existing masculinity themes are faltering, which leads to them being revived in pastiche form (Matthews 2014, 2015, 2016). Under the constraints of late-modern life, traditional themes of masculinity accessible to men—greater physical size, strength, capability, aggression, violence, and physical domination—have eroded as the evolving social milieu has been challenged (Matthews 2016, pp. 313–316). In short, these recent evolutions of masculinity have disrupted and continue to disrupt the viability of and male access to the hegemonic man as a mythic normative symbol of (hegemonic) masculinity to which they might aspire (Anderson 2009; Atkinson 2011; Connell 1995; cf. Cornwall et al. 2016; Matthews 2014). This leaves late-modern men to grapple, often aware and frustrated (Pease 2000), with a loss of apparently "authentic" masculinity. Atkinson (2011, p. 41) explains that, as a result, male power must now be framed in a "chameleon-like way, and to embrace, incorporate, and reorder all identities that are struggling for cultural legitimacy." This pressure, in turn, leads men to seek out, create, and reinforce spaces that become a kind of male preserve (Matthews 2014, p. 104; Matthews 2015; cf. Sheard and Dunning 1973) in which some masculine themes can be reproduced without challenge. Thus, they represent fruitful sites for studying gender and gender roles in general and masculinity in particular.

The concept of local pastiche hegemonies as sites in which men can gain uncontested access to otherwise threatened themes of masculinity has been developed considerably by

Matthews (2014, 2015, 2016) within the context of male sporting enclaves (indeed, he is concerned with “the tyranny of the male preserve” [2015, p. 312]). Matthews (2014) offers a thorough summary of a boxing gym as a male preserve that provides a local pastiche hegemony in which men can produce and perpetuate discourses about male biological identity, particularly discourses associating masculinity with testosterone under a rubric of “hormonal folklore” (2014, p. 102) (i.e., those quasi-scientific myths that grow up around essentialist ideals of natural masculine and feminine bodies and their hormonal causes). Matthews documents, in considerable theoretical and qualitative empirical detail, ways in which men utilize the pastiche hegemony within the boxing gym to promote beliefs about a masculine biological identity and link them to various long-running narratives about masculinity. In total, these form a “biology as ideology” (cf. Lorber 1993, p. 568) that appear scientific, which reinforces them from within as supposed true facts about masculinity. In this way, masculinity themes and discourses are often naturalized or authenticated by the men engaging in and connecting them to their masculine identities.

In the present study, I investigate the ways certain combinations of views about masculinity arise specifically and peculiarly to breastedaurants by considering them as male preserves that maintain pastiche hegemonies within a normative part of broader contemporary culture. Furthermore, although my study’s focus is on expressions of what might be called breastedaurant masculinity (cf. Allison 1994), I will also examine the ways in which the contextually and organizationally scripted performances of the female servers interact with that masculinity and are given meaning by it (cf. Barber 2016a, b). Thus, because my study focuses upon men and masculinities within breastedaurants, it must be remembered that this meaning-making occurs through masculinist themes and does not represent the women’s perceptions and experiences.

## The Breastedaurant as a Sexually Objectifying Environment

To date, there is relatively little scholarly literature that directly studies breastedaurants (outside the legal/discrimination context). A notable exception exists in Rasmusson’s (2011, p. 574) investigation of “why we cringe at Hooters.” Rasmusson’s study offers an embodied, generational postethnographic account of the iconic Hooters Girl, featuring extensive interviews with servers at Hooters who find theirs to be an interpretive community in which the performance of the Hooters Girl ideal is produced and routinely reproduced both for cause and effect (cf. Newton-Francis and Young 2015). Thus, Rasmusson (2011, p. 584) notes:

Going to Hooters, talking to Hooters girls, and leaving them big tips supports, albeit problematically, savvy

young women who understand the many contradictions of their job, their local participation in the global service industry and what research is doing for (and to) young women today.

It is necessarily, then, in the light of Rasmusson’s (2011) observations about the organizational and situational pressures upon women working as servers in breastedaurants (many of which can be understood in terms of the patriarchal and neoliberal commodification of women as sexualized objects who produce heterosexual aesthetic labor for entitled male patrons; Barber 2016a) and their “savvy” application of personal agency that the interactions in my study must be understood.

Comporting with Rasmusson (2011), Szymanski has conducted perhaps the most thorough study of breastedaurants as sexually objectifying environments (SOEs; Moffitt and Szymanski 2011; Szymanski and Feltman 2014, 2015; cf. Szymanski et al. 2011) and sexually objectifying restaurant environments (SOREs; Szymanski and Mikorski 2017). For Szymanski, many restaurants, and all breastedaurants, are spaces directly constructed around sexual objectification in that they place “women’s bodies and sexuality on display” such that “women’s appearance and wardrobe may be regulated in a manner that does not allow them to easily avoid sexual objectification or the male gaze,” which qualifies them as “environments that promote and reinforce sexual objectification” and “tacitly acknowledge and approve the male gaze” (Szymanski and Feltman 2015, pp. 390–391). Sexual objectification in turn leads to a number of issues not just for women—such as insidious trauma (Miles-McLean et al. 2015) and the harms of the objectifying gaze (Gervais et al. 2011)—but it is also connected to masculinity and its roles in relationships. These include lower relationship satisfaction (Ramsey et al. 2017), rape blame reinforced by decreased perception of victim suffering (Loughnan et al. 2013), perpetuation of discourses supporting rape culture, and increased rates of verbal sexual harassment (Davidson et al. 2015). Thus, a specific focus on the construction of pastiche masculinities within the breastedaurant environment has the potential to be valuable for addressing these issues. This is because it may be most accurate, in fact, to say that as restaurants, breastedaurants sell sexual objectification first and food and beer second.

Given male entitlement to women’s bodies as an enduring feature of heteromascularity (Barber 2016a, b), it is little surprise that much of the appeal of breastedaurants among their straight male patrons rests in their capability to provide Barber’s (2016a) heterosexual aesthetic labor, which straight male patrons utilize as identity resources (González and Seidler 2008; Pascoe 2007). That is, following Barber, men in breastedaurants are likely to utilize their interactions with pretty, sexually appealing women (who are thereby providing

heterosexual aesthetic labor) as a means to define themselves as masculine in identity. Indeed, what appeals to many men about breastaaurants is specifically their status as environments in which sexual objectification is not merely tolerated, but rather is routinely encouraged by other men in the space, the establishment, and, ostensibly, by women working as servers. (This last assumption, regarding the servers, must be problematized in terms of the expectations establishments have in pressuring female employees to conform to this role; readers are directed to Barber (2016a, b) for a parallel treatment.) As noted by DeWitt, owner of the Twin Peaks breastaaurant, these are obvious features that appeal to (hetero)masculinity: “Twin Peaks is about you, ‘cause you’re the man!” (Associated Press 2012; cf. The Week 2012).

### The Breastaaurant as a Purveyor of Ersatz Sexual Availability

Ultimately, this complexity arises specifically because breastaaurants sell sexual objectification and heterosexual aesthetic labor as an intrinsic part of the experience and because women serving in breastaaurants are rewarded through sizable tips (Daily Mail 2014; Lutz 2012). In such, breastaaurants represent unique social environments due to enforcing specific performances by the servers, which can be called scripted in the sense that they reflect a gendered performance specific to the context of the role of server in such an establishment. These roles, in turn, ultimately draw much of breastaaurants’ peculiar patronage, and they explicitly construct the dominant masculine themes among them. Because the characters played by the servers in breastaaurants are an—arguably, *the*—indispensable part of the breastaaurant environment, they necessarily play an integral role in producing, perpetuating, and maintaining the unique circumstances defining these environments (cf. Rasmusson 2011). Breastaaurants are thus unique sites in which masculine themes emerge through (largely, and occasionally only at times) pastiche interaction of men with specific gendered performances by women. This, ultimately, is an interaction rooted in gender performativity (Butler 1990; West and Zimmerman 1987) that is, at least in part, scripted as a part of the breastaaurant’s defining gimmick.

This, I posit, results in the construction of a pastiche hegemony within the breastaaurant around the exploitation of ersatz sexual availability on the part of the servers and their scripted performances, which foreground sexual objectification. That is, *ersatz sexual availability*—synthetic performances of sexual availability for purposes other than signaling veridical sexual interest, particularly when this arrangement is understood by both performer and recipient—plays a central role in the specific form of heterosexual aesthetic labor produced for consumption within breastaaurants. Put another way,

heterosexual male clients do not go to breastaaurants merely to ogle servers, nor just to be waited upon by them (cf. Barber 2016a), but rather to interact with them in particularly flirtatious ways. This (largely synthetic) interaction thereby becomes a site through which certain masculinity performances can be reenacted in a pastiche form and is among the primary draws of the breastaaurant.

Ersatz sexual availability, a form of feigning sexual availability in order to produce a desired result, has been thoroughly studied. Much of the scholarly literature on marketing feigned sexual availability (as a heterosexual aesthetic labor resource) focuses upon sexually explicit, conspicuous examples such as exotic dancers, strippers, and performers in pornographic films (e.g., Griffith et al. 2012). Among these, one significant study investigating the relationships between masculinity and masculine themes and spaces that commodify ersatz sexual availability was conducted by Erickson and Tewksbury (2000). They delineated a six-category typology of men who frequent strip clubs (lonely, socially impotent, bold lookers, detached lookers, players, and sugar daddies) and the social commodities and relative power structures they interact within those spaces (see also Joseph and Black’s 2012, exposition on two types of masculinities that solicit prostitutes).

Nevertheless, there is a strong point of departure between strip-club and breastaaurant environments; one that sees breastaaurants roughly as stripping lite even while they remain restaurants that, at least nominally, put food service ahead of entertainment objectives. Thus, where Frank (2003, p. 61) sees frequenting strip clubs as being “related to existing power structures and inequalities” in ways that “are not necessarily experienced as exercises in acquiring or wielding power,” breastaaurants explicitly require patrons to interact with some of those power structures and inequalities.

It should not escape notice, for instance, that within strip clubs the primary targets of male gaze and objectification are called performers or dancers, which categorizes them explicitly as entertainers who enjoy a certain power dynamic over and subjective removal from their audiences (cf. Erickson and Tewksbury 2000). Yet in breastaaurants these entertainers are servers (as a rule: waitresses) who must take patrons’ orders, comply while navigating various sexual boundaries (even) more germane to these contexts than in other restaurants, and, as part of their contract and in order to generate effective income through tips (Lutz 2012; cf. Lynn and McCall 2016), to do so cheerfully, even flirtatiously, in all but the most egregious cases of customer misconduct (cf. Barber 2016a; Barton 2007; Rasmusson 2011; Szymanski and Feltman 2014). In this way, not only are breastaaurants natural sites in which sexual objectification is maintained, they may also be environments that reproduce themes of male dominance over women.

## The Present Study

In summary, existing masculinities research indicates that within certain environments (male preserves), men will often erect local cultural hegemonies in which they can engage in masculinities in pastiche form and identify these with supposed real or authentic masculinity. Breastaurants, as SO(R)Es, potentially cater to this male interest along axes relevant to sexual objectification. Particularly, the breastaurant uniquely encourages performances of ersatz sexual availability among its female waitstaff, and this interactive dynamic plays an apparently intrinsic role to the development of breastaurant masculinity. As a form of (local, pastiche) masculinity within a unique male preserve, breastaurant masculinity has not yet been researched empirically or subsequently theorized. My study seeks to close that conspicuous gap in the research with a 2-year ethnographic consideration of a group of men who routinely visit a popular local breastaurant in Panama City, Florida.

## Method

### Overview

The empirical methodology for my study is ultimately ethnographic because data were collected in situ by personally attending a sexually objectifying restaurant in northern Florida approximately weekly over a roughly 2-year span (July 2015–September 2017) in the company of other men with whom I had personal relationships. The context of these visits was as an after-class bonding endeavor among a social core of members of a Brazilian jiu jitsu (BJJ) school in which I had become a member. (This elicits certain overlaps with Matthews' 2014, investigation of boxing gyms as generative of local pastiche hegemonies.) This core group of BJJ participants maintained a social ritual of going out for “meat, heat, and beer” after Thursday evening classes, and more than 90% of our visits to the breastaurant occurred in 90–120-min increments beginning at roughly 20:00 on (most) Thursday evenings, although we occasionally met in smaller groups for lunch on other days of the week.

I was invited to join these outings after 5 months. Despite my reservations about breastaurants in general, I accepted, both for the social opportunity and, eventually, as a chance to engage in the present study, which occurred to me as potentially interesting soon after joining the outings. As with Matthews (2014), certainly my (declared) status as an athletic cisgendered heterosexual man who is well-established in the local area played a key role in my invitation to join this group and, usefully, likely enabled other heterosexual male masculinities to emerge naturally in my presence, despite the group's awareness that I was conducting my study. As such,

throughout the study, I endeavored to interact with my companions and servers authentically as a participant, rather than as a deliberate researcher, to obtain data as true to the circumstances as possible. This approach limited my data collection primarily to on-site observations of a social milieu that I sought not to perturb, although these data were supplemented occasionally with brief unstructured interviews of participants and servers.

At first, my participation in this weekly visit was merely social. However, after approximately 2 months (beginning October 8, 2015), I began to formulate hypotheses about the breastaurant as a unique type of male preserve. Upon recognizing this research potential, I decided to approach my companions with a proposal for a study that would parallel methods used in a constructivist grounded theory approach. Ultimately, masculinity in the breastaurant became the focus of my study, but, because no comprehensive theory was sought to explain this masculinity, I chose a data analysis methodology that diverged from the grounded theory approach and instead relied upon thematic analysis of the discussions held in the breastaurant to produce descriptive results interwoven with some theoretical suggestions (cf. Braun and Clarke 2006; Nowell et al. 2017).

More specifically, once my companions agreed to be studied in this context and the restaurant management approved, I began compiling detailed digital field notes (including initial coding by colored text highlighting and memoing by adding commentary in a word processor) after leaving the restaurant. I documented these interactions and paid particular attention to themes typical, if not defining, of the breastaurant environment and the ways both men in my group and serving staff thematically construct and perform masculinity within that space (cf. West and Zimmerman 1987). I then developed these themes through memoing and routinely reconsidering the raw data and my field notes (cf. Charmaz 2008), occasionally supplementing with direct brief unstructured interviews to clarify points around them. Of note, although my field notes were composed after-the-fact because I participated socially with the group and often found myself getting swept up in the masculinity themes that emerged within it, their fidelity to the mood, tone, and timbre of breastaurant masculinity is likely to be high.

### Participants

Regarding the core group, although it was nearly always the same size (6–7), it did not always consist of the same individuals (a total of 15 different men and seven servers consented to participate, to whom pseudonyms have been applied)—some eventually stopped coming (either to class or to the outings, or both) due to lack of time, loss of interest, or falling out with the gym. All men in the group self-identify as heterosexual and, because I in a sense had my research participants chosen for

me, all are White, which excluded the possibility in this study of investigating diverse racial dynamics. Most of the men are working class in local factory or delivery jobs, although two are self-employed and four are support-level professionals. Their levels of education varied from no postsecondary education ( $n = 4$ ), some college ( $n = 5$ ), bachelor's degree ( $n = 4$ ), and master's degree ( $n = 2$ ). All fall onto a socioeconomic spectrum best described as ranging from upper-lower class to lower-middle class, although this was discerned from getting to know the men and without asking their income or wealth statuses (see Barber 2016a, for a treatment of high-status upper-middle class and upper class men in a related environment). Ages of the men ranged from 19 to 62 years-old (excluding myself, age 71), and marital status included married/in committed relationship ( $n = 6$ ), divorced ( $n = 4$ ), and single ( $n = 5$ ).

## Procedure

Data were collected by means of an approach that paralleled constructivist grounded theory to investigate a social process, as indicated by Charmaz (2006, 2008), although the study itself did not proceed by grounded theory because it seeks only to characterize breastaurant masculinity rather than to address with a comprehensive theory why breastaurant masculinity occurs as it does. Specifically, my study began in earnest after I amassed nearly 3 months of in situ observations and interactions with the group I came to study and, as such, it began after I noticed certain themes common within the conversations the group had in the breastaurant. In particular, I noticed these themes differed in certain ways from those typical in the gym where we trained together. This gave me certain initial themes (sexual objectification and male control of women) that seemed prevalent and identified with masculinity in breastaurant environments, which inspired my study. These themes therefore served as a starting place for analyzing the data I was collecting and reflexively informed subsequent data collection and analysis, as described in the following, linking the methodology to inquiry into the research questions in my study.

Data were collected primarily from conversations at our table during outings, although they were occasionally supplemented by brief unstructured interviews. All members of the groups comprising the outings were made aware of the research I was conducting and consented to their role in it. I provided information by email, and we had a short meeting at the school in addition to informing new additions to our group before observing them. I met with the female servers (and two managers) with whom we routinely interacted to provide information and also left them with a summary of my intentions. Management did not permit me to walk around the restaurant as a researcher, so all observations were confined to my table and occasional brief follow-up questions

with group members or servers. With the consent of all group members, servers, and restaurant management, conversations at the table were recorded at each outing, and relevant portions (quotations, remarks, or exchanges between participants pertinent to masculinity) were transcribed verbatim into my field notes and annotated after each outing, alongside notes about observed behaviors. Portions of my recordings were deemed relevant for transcription when they met the following criteria: they were (a) clear enough for verbatim transcription, (b) recognizably relevant to the masculinity of one or more participants speaking, or (b) directly relevant to identified themes already being coded in the data. Quotations were selected for transcription and incorporation into this report for being typical of the themes in question, with some preference being given to those obtained while interacting with or commenting directly upon the servers because these are most likely to have been evoked by the breastaurant's unique environment. The total body of data therefore includes slightly fewer than 10,000 min of recorded conversation at the breastaurant (and interviews) and over 600 pages of field notes (including partial transcriptions, initial coding, and memoing), which span the 99 group visits made to the breastaurant during the observational phase.

Because my study became a re-emerging theme of discussion throughout the observational period and the small digital recording device was conspicuously placed near the center of the table, there was no need for me to periodically remind the group that they were being observed—and recorded—for my study. In that sense, it was at times certain that the masculinities being performed were in some cases muted or exaggerated in response to an awareness of being recorded as a part of my study (for instance, speaking directly to the recording device or myself about the study, often in conjunction with exaggerated comments, or normally gregarious people being abnormally shy until becoming accustomed to the presence of the recorder). This, then, is where my closeness to the participants became useful because it was relatively easy to tell when they were being more themselves and when they were intentionally performing a false masculinity for presumably humorous effect. Nevertheless, no claims will be made here to know the true identities/masculinities of the men under observation. This point is also applicable to the female servers who were regarded as participants as well and about whom I carefully avoid drawing conclusions.

Further, all such participants were instructed that if they wished to opt out or be in any other way excluded from the study (which did not occur)—or to have any of their remarks taken as strictly off-record (which occurred twice)—that request would be honored. Finally, my status as a participant in the group, which I attempted to keep as contextually natural as possible, and customer of the establishment therefore limited my engagement with the breastaurant's waitstaff, managers,

and other customers. As such the present account is restricted to a small group of men and not to be taken as necessarily representative of all patrons or the whole restaurant/franchise/genre of eatery.

As an ethnographer for my study, I therefore enjoyed and yet was limited by my closeness to its participants. Similarly to Matthews (2014, 105–106), my closeness and camaraderie with these men provided access and insights that they may not have displayed in a more formal, detached study, and in coming to know the participants of my study intimately, other relevant features of their masculinity may have become emphasized, deemphasized, or even blurred by subjectivity. As Matthews (2014, pp. 105–106) explains, drawing upon Woodward (2008, p. 547), Mansfield (2007, p. 124), and Maguire and Young (2002, p. 16), intrinsic subjectivity is unavoidable in effective ethnography because it demands an “interrogation of situatedness” (Woodward 2008, p. 547). Due to the inductive nature of the research and my full participation in it, it was particularly important that critical detachment play an integral role in the integrity of the data, which I achieved by engaging the data at varying levels of distance from its acquisition. As did Matthews (2014, p. 106), however, I found the act of compiling field notes—in my case, alone, after the fact, and more than once per group outing—as a useful means for maintaining a degree of critical detachment and thus a proportion of etic objectivity.

### Data Analytic Strategy

I analyzed data by thematic analysis of the recorded conversations (Braun and Clarke 2006; Nowell et al. 2017), which were selectively (due to their volume) transcribed and situated against relevant field notes according to their apparent relevance to breastaurant masculinity, as guided by the themes I developed over the course of my study. This process involved six nonlinear steps, as outlined first by Braun and Clarke (2006) and later Nowell et al. (2017), for performing rigorous thematic analysis: familiarization with the data (by listening and note-taking), generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally writing the report.

Data were coded accordingly with tags for themes and subthemes as they were transcribed and again later, and they subsequently were transferred to a spreadsheet and critically analyzed for fitness with those themes. Coding followed methodological recommendations in Gibbs (2007) and Saldaña (2016) (cf. Chatfield 2018). Particularly, data were selectively (concept-driven) coded for themes I had already identified and wished to develop, and data-driven (open) coding was utilized to identify new themes in the data until I felt all significant themes identifiable in the data had been found.

To achieve this, I listened to each recording in full at least three times throughout the study and data analysis phase. First, I listened to them as soon as possible (usually immediately) following each outing, and I used them to create detailed field notes that documented other aspects of the scenes in which the conversations played out. This decision reflected my desire to maintain maximum fidelity to the scenes as they had occurred as well as to record my first impressions about those scenes as soon as possible. Portions that were extracted into transcript upon this listening were also either at this point tentatively (selectively) coded according to those themes and subthemes already identified or recorded when they were directly pertinent to the masculinities of the participants (or, in fact, when they were overtly sexualized in any capacity, given that sexual objectification was the first theme I clearly identified before data collection began in earnest). Then, after a period of no less than 2 weeks but no more than one month following an outing, during which time the field notes were further analyzed and memoed, I listened to the recording for that visit in full again, and my field notes for that visit were developed and coded further. Finally, I listened to each recording a third time after all relevant themes became clear (in June 2017) from ongoing analysis of the data, and on this third listen, detail and nuance were added to the relevant field notes and thematic coding.

In the meantime, between episodes of listening to a recorded outing, I analyzed my field notes in an ongoing fashion through which themes were coded by this blended open coding and selective coding approach. As themes took shape, I sought to develop them by consulting the extant literature, especially on sexual objectification in SO(R)Es, to add depth, nuance, and clarity of sub-theming. I recorded this in my field notes in the form of memoing and further thematic coding. Of note, at times during this process, I would listen again to certain recordings to pursue insights into themes as they became more clearly relevant (this was done particularly intensively, for example, concerning the male gaze subtheme of the sexual objectification theme when I realized its importance by consulting Szymanski and Feltman 2015). I revisited all coding upon subsequent analyses of the relevant recordings and field notes as the study proceeded. Because the coding was intrinsic to the transcription process as well as informing it, post-coding transformation to themes was an intrinsic part of the data-handling and analysis process as it occurred (cf. Charmaz 2008; Gibbs 2007; Nowell et al. 2017; Saldaña 2016). Throughout this process, I grouped subthemes into major and minor themes, which I then analyzed for relevance to the breastaurant environment by comparing against extant literature in other SO(R)Es to identify which might be intrinsic to breastaurant masculinity (e.g., sexual conquest) versus masculinity in general (e.g., enjoyment of sports/competition).

## Results

Within the breastaaurant environment, various themes appeared frequently, repeatedly, and consistently in the conversation data, most of these occurring at nearly every breastaaurant outing. Four significantly overlapping and inter-related major themes—sexual objectification, sexual conquest, male dominance and control over women, and masculine toughness—were regular features of breastaaurant discussions. In addition, one minor theme of research interest, which is how breastaaurant patronage itself is rationalized by men within it, was of sufficient prominence to merit attention. Simultaneously, following Matthews (2014), a running thread of how these masculinity themes were being naturalized or authenticated as “masculine” by the men in the group was a central matter of interest. Indeed, all of these themes were routinely tied to perceptions of presumed authentic masculinity by group members. These arose in a number of subthemes, as documented in the Table 1.

As a benefit of knowing and training with these men in an alternative environment (the BJJ gym), it was apparent these themes, although not unique to discussions in the breastaaurant, were both more prominent while in the breastaaurant and apparently evoked by being there, thus lending credence to the suggestion that the breastaaurant environment evokes a unique masculinity in pastiche form and that the interactive dynamics within the breastaaurant are integral to establishing these gendered performances (cf. Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; West and Zimmerman 1987). As a crucial note, these themes overlap and interact so significantly that even with careful coding, they are not fully separable, despite the orderly presentation in Table 1 and the section immediately following.

### Why Breastaaurants? Rationalization—a Minor Theme

For many of the men in our group, the opportunity to “check out” and flirt with the servers was the expressed purpose of choosing a breastaaurant over other venues. (Note how this theme immediately interacts with the sexual objectification theme.) “It’s got to be [the breastaaurant] because of the babes” (Matt, Field notes, December 3, 2015) was a characteristic reply to suggesting the group change to a venue with better food and drink, for instance. Indeed, Carl frequently commented, following a heavy sigh, with “God, I love this place,” after seeing or interacting with servers he found particularly attractive. Likewise, directly indicating a preference for the breastaaurant as a male preserve that also acts as a purveyor of ersatz sexual availability as a heterosexual aesthetic labor resource was: “Where else can you hang out, just guys being guys after a hard workout, and flirt with hot girls who have to bring you food and beer all night?” (Paul, Field notes, August 4, 2016). (Here, note the overlaps with Male Control over Women, particularly the female servility

subtheme.) Though many variations on this theme arose, emblematic among comments on why the group chose a breastaaurant was the comment, “I don’t come here for these crappy wings and cheap beer; I come here for the girls. I mean, look at them—look at that [a server’s buttocks], just look at it and tell me the chicken is a better reason to come here” (Pete, Field notes, December 3, 2015). The group heartily agreed: “this place exists for the breasts and buns, and I’m not talking about the chicken or the sandwiches” (Jim, Field Notes, May 25, 2017). Of central importance, this (minor) theme reveals that men in breastaaurants realize they are enacting a breastaaurant-specific masculine performance while in that environment and rationalize this (uncomfortable) fact by attempting to connect it to an alleged natural and authentic masculine identity.

### Sexual Objectification

Immediately, and consistent with Szymanski’s suite of papers on SO(R)Es, especially Szymanski and Feltman (2015) and Barber (2016a), my observations noted men regularly subjecting servers to the male gaze, making no secret of staring at women’s breasts and buttocks as well as making sexualized, even rapacious, comments about them behind their backs. As may be expected, sexually objectifying themes within breastaaurants are ubiquitous and thus lie largely beneath specific mention; however, those that involve dynamic interplay with or encouragement by the servers bear relevance. For example:

Scott: [clearly looking at server’s chest while she takes Carl’s order, then looking up obviously after being caught doing so by the server] You know, Valentina, I couldn’t help noticing just how nice your... eyes are tonight.

Valentina: Oh, you guys; [pushing up her breasts a little with her arms] you know how much I love it when you notice my... eyes.

Scott: They’re just so... big and bright... you know? Beautiful!

Valentina: [smiling] Well, thank you! This is why yours is always my favorite table. (Field notes, May 26, 2016)

Interactions such as this one, which were common in my data (Scott often referred to Valentina’s “nice eyes” while looking at her large breasts, for instance), involve a performative dynamic interplay of masculine and feminine in the sense of male objectifier and female sexual object (cf. Butler 1990), which often carried a layer of being ersatz (or in pastiche form) because both customer and server knowingly recognized the interaction to be job-contextual and synthetic. “We just play around, you know. Have fun. It works with cool guys, and they tip us more, but we don’t really do it with the

**Table 1** Themes, subthemes, descriptions, prototypical quotes, and frequencies

Subtheme	Description	Participant quotes	Frequency
<b>Major theme: sexual objectification</b>			
Male gaze	Viewing women from a heterosexual masculine perspective that perceives women as sexual objects	<p>“Would you look at the ass on her?!”</p> <p>“Dude, dude, check her out. Mmm! She is fine!”</p> <p>“I literally couldn’t stop staring at her titties the whole time she talked to us. I don’t even know what I ordered.”</p>	Ubiquitous: All men
Reduction to body	Treating an objectified woman as a collection of (usually) sexualized body parts, including body shaming	<p>“She’s the best pair of tits in here.”</p> <p>“Ugh, she needs to drop a few pounds to wear that top, or move them up to her titties.”</p>	Frequent: Most men
Flirtation/Solicitation (NB: significantly overlaps with “sexual conquest” theme below.)	Speaking to/with female servers in a way that displays sexual interest, ranging from a lighthearted manner through direct invitation for dating or sexual activity	<p>“Wow, Valentina, nice outfit! Did you wear this cute little number just for me?”</p> <p>“I was just telling the guys that I’d probably go out with you if you’d go out with me.”</p> <p>“I’ll just let you know, you can brush that ass up against me any time you like, among other things.”</p>	Frequent: Majority of men
<b>Major theme: sexual conquest</b>			
Dominance/aggression	Speaking about women in a sexual way while signaling dominance or sexually aggressive themes	<p>“I’d fuck her so hard.”</p> <p>“I bet she’d take it in the ass, just to prove she’d be submissive to me.”</p> <p>“I’d order her around... the bedroom.”</p>	Common: Majority of men
Possession/Ownership	Speaking about preferred women as though they are the property of a man	<p>“I’m just telling you guys, she’s mine. Don’t forget it.”</p> <p>“What’s that Micki doing talking to my girl again?”</p>	Common: A few men
Violence	Indications of wishing to commit acts of violence against other men (especially in jealousy) or explicitly rapacious comments about women	<p>“Oh my God, did he just touch her arm. It’s not his to touch. It’s mine!”</p> <p>“If he looks at her like that one more time, I’ll beat his fucking ass. I swear I will.”</p> <p>“She turns me on so much, I don’t think I could stop myself, and I know she couldn’t stop me.”</p>	Rare/contextual: A few men
<b>Major theme: male dominance and control over women</b>			
Commanding	Telling women what to do; deriving enjoyment from telling women what to do	<p>“Hey Kellye, I love how every time I give you my order, you take it.”</p> <p>“Bring us another round of beers, and make it quick!”</p>	Frequent: A few men
Expected servility	Speech indicating an expectation or preference for female servility (to men)	<p>“My favorite part about coming to this place is how the girls have to serve you.”</p> <p>“Now, now, good servers do what they’re told, Helen.”</p>	Common: A few men
<b>Major theme: masculine toughness</b>			
Strength	Characterizing a man (including self) as being strong or powerful while linking this to masculinity	<p>“He’s not man enough for these hot wings. He’s such a Micki.”</p> <p>“You know, I could pick you up if you wanted to sit on my lap.”</p>	Ubiquitous: All men
Competition	Indicating a willingness or desire to outdo potential rivals (e.g., for women’s attention)	<p>“Jim beats me in wing-eating competitions every time, but I can drink more beer than he can.”</p> <p>“I tapped you out eight times in class tonight, Pete, so I’m flirting with your favorite girl tonight.”</p>	Frequent: Most men
Peacocking	Showing off as a means of gaining attention (specifically, of a woman)	<p>“If I can eat the hottest wings, will you give me a kiss? I promise it’ll be spicy!”</p>	Common: A few men
<b>Minor theme: rationalization</b>			
Why a breastaaurant?		<p>“This is a great place to just be guys.”</p> <p>“The food isn’t bad, but it’s not why we come here.”</p>	Frequent: All men

Table 1 (continued)

Subtheme	Description	Participant quotes	Frequency
Running thread across themes: naturalization or authentication as masculine	Attempts to explain why a breastaaurant is preferred over other potential socialization environments, particularly those relevant to its status as a breastaaurant		
Naturalization	Comments that connect any of the above themes to being a “natural” part of masculinity	“It’s normal for men to love staring at girls’ tits.” “I feel really manly after training hard and then flirting with these little hotties. Gets my testosterone flowing!”	Nearly Ubiquitous: All men
Authentication	Comments that connect any of the above themes to being part of what it “really” means to be masculine	“This is what being a man is all about. Training hard, laughing, chicken wings, beer, and all the tits and ass you can look at.”	Frequent: Most men

creeps,” Valentina told me when I asked her about this dynamic (Field notes, June 2, 2016).

Relevantly, such interactions were routinely connected to masculine prowess by socializing forces of the (usually) all-male group. In the present case, even if all in ersatz/pastiche form (“It’s just bullshitting with the server, man,” Scott said about it when asked directly [Field notes, May 26, 2016]), Scott readily connected his masculinity to his ability to objectify Valentina. She, in turn, employed flirtatious approval and praise to amplify the dynamic in order to keep up positive, sexually charged banter with her customers (cf. Almog and Kaplan 2017). Subsequently, the group confirmed Scott’s masculinity (Matt: “You stud, Scott. Damn you! So smooth, every time!”) after Valentina’s departure from the table, during which time Scott, Matt, and several of the other men in our group conspicuously stared at Valentina’s barely covered buttocks as she walked away (and she, in turn, apparently knew this to be happening and exaggerated the sway in her hips, yet again to amplify the effect). Carl: “Ahhh... God, I love this place.” Of note, not only were such performances coded as intrinsically masculine, they were often rationalized as being naturally masculine: “It’s *natural* for men to want to see sexy young women in short shorts and showing their cleavage. It’s just part of being a man to like hot young girls showing off their bodies” (Carl, Field notes, August 18, 2016, emphasis added). Notice how this theme is therefore intrinsically connected to the theme of masculine toughness.

Men in my group were also routinely directly flirtatious with the servers, who openly flirted back while maintaining clear professionalizing boundaries that simultaneously jokingly deflected (rather than confronting) the male heterosexual entitlement on display (cf. Barber 2016a; Rasmusson 2011). For instance,

Carl: I’ve got hot sauce all over my fingers, but I have to pee. Would you mind coming along and holding it for me?

Kellye: Now, you know this isn’t that kind of place...

Carl: But this stuff is really hot.

Kellye: Well, I guess you’ll have to hold it yourself and feel the burn! (Field notes, March 10, 2016)

Thus, insofar as breastaaurants are clearly SO(R)Es, male patrons objectify the servers, who are in turn contractually clad and otherwise encouraged to amplify this objectification through uniform, personal presentation and open flirtation as a form of ersatz sexual availability (Lutz 2012). This willingness on the part of customers to flirt and even openly solicit servers illustrates profound connections between the sexual objectification theme and the sexual conquest theme in the following, so much so that any boundaries between them are blurry.

## Sexual Conquest

Instances of natural male objectification of female sex objects such as these are indicative of a more profound connection of masculinity to virility, particularly to view as naturally masculine a capacity to effect sexual conquests (Potts 2000). For instance, after a flirtatious exchange with a server, the conversation at the table proceeded thusly:

Matt: The things I'd do to her [Valentina] if I can get the chance—

Pete: I think she likes you, man. You should go for it.

Eric: Yeah, man up!

Matt: Should I? I don't want to blow it!

Scott: That's because you want her to blow [perform oral sex upon] you!

Matt: That's right, I do. And not just that. I'd absolutely wreck her tight little body. She'd walk funny for days when I get done with her.

Scott: [quietly] Heads up, bro; she's coming.

[Valentina returns with food.]

Matt: Oh! You're back! I was just talking about you and hoping you'd come back to see me soon.

Valentina: You know I always come back to see you, babe. You're one of my favorites.

[Flirtatious banter continues for a few moments, then Valentina leaves.]

Scott: She's into you, dude. You've gotta go for it.

Eric: Seriously, dude. It's obvious. Just man up.

Matt: You're so right. She wants the D [short for dick/penis]. She's so hot! I've got to have her!

Jim: Think she has a boyfriend, though?

Matt: Don't worry. If she has a boyfriend, I'll steal his girlfriend. That's not a problem. (Field notes, June 9, 2016)

As this dialogue demonstrates, for some men the dynamic interplay between server and customer in breasaurants easily leads from objectification to themes and fantasies of sexual conquest. Among all themes in my study, therefore, these two factors are the most deeply and fluidly linked. This even includes the alarmingly problematic insinuation of sexual violence inherent in "I'd absolutely wreck her tight little body," which was reinforced and considered masculine among male peers around the table. In fact, this theme often took shape in expressing themes of male possession of "his" female conquest, as Matt also displayed in a revealing way with regard to Valentina in the week prior.

Scott: Dude, check it out. Valentina is over there with that total Chad [pejorative slang term for a stereotypical male archetype] doing her thing.

Eric: Yeah, she's all up on that dude, and he's not a Chad; he's a total Micki [pejorative uncommon slang term for an effeminate man, as an abbreviation of Native American musician Micki Free]. But just look at how she's leaning on the table and pressing her tits up at him. She's absolutely working him.

Matt: Yeah, she is. She knows what to do; that's why I love her. But he won't have her. He's not her type. She likes alphas, not Mickis.

Scott: I don't know... she's looking pretty sweet on him.

Matt: It's an act. Look at her face and compare that to how she looks at and smiles at us. She's totally faking it for him. Hopefully he falls for it and tips the shit out of her.

Eric: Probably right, but still. Look at her go.

[Group conspicuously watches Valentina flirting at the other table.]

Scott: So, what do you think, dude?

Matt: It's a total act. But you know, a fundamental part of being a man means seeing at least one person you want to kill and at least one person you want to fuck every day of your life, and right now I see them both at the same time. [Group laughter]

Eric: That's too true! Too true! I totally hear you, man! That's exactly what being a man is about! (Field notes, June 2, 2016)

It is important to analyze this scene carefully. In it, Matt had already contextually established a theme of male possessiveness over Valentina that he deemed to be reasonably consistent with his budding potential relationship with her. Valentina, meanwhile, in the performance of her job duties—the very duties that helped attract Matt to her in the first place—displayed what was (almost certainly ersatz, as she confirmed shortly thereafter) sexual availability to a man at another table. Although this display of sexual availability was clearly read by both Matt and the other men at the table to be feigned as part of the duties of her job (Scott was plainly teasing Matt in this scene), it triggered Matt to express a desire for violence against the other man. Furthermore, he connected his urges both to sexual conquest (of Valentina) and to violence (toward the other customer) with his masculinity. Another member of the group then validated this expression and its connection to presumably authentic masculinity. When challenged (by George) about this point, in fact, Eric held his ground ("It definitely is [part of masculinity], yeah") and most of the rest of the group agreed in varying degrees (Carl: "It's a bit extreme, but it gets close to the point"; Randy: "It used to be for me, but the older I get the less I care about either [having sex with women or killing other men].") (cf. Eck 2014). Reinforcing that this theme may be evoked by the breasaurant environment, Pete reported relating the "fuck-and-kill" discussion with another (heterosexual male) member of the BJJ

gym who was not a part of the breasaurant-attending group, and in that context both Pete and the other man agreed it was largely untrue and “cavemanish” (Field notes, June 9, 2016). This indicates that the breasaurant social environment was somehow integral to producing, legitimating, and treating as authentic this alarming expression of masculinity.

### Male Dominance and Control over Women

Although it is nearly impossible to determine the precise factors within the patron-server dynamic that mediate a direct engagement with themes of objectification and sexual conquest, it is possible that the intrinsic (again, in ersatz form and as a scripted performance) power dynamic between patron and server plays a role. Particularly, intrinsic to the server-customer (quasi)-social dynamic is the giving and taking of orders—and although the customer-server relationship is in many ways veridically inverted from its scripted appearance and female servers navigate the complex boundaries of their jobs with their agency largely intact—this job-required dynamic of power always flows from customer to server. “Yeah, you have to take their [food and drink] orders and pretty much do whatever [customers] say on that, but, no, we don’t have to put up with anyone’s crap and usually don’t ... And management supports us on that every time” (Valentina, Field notes, February 16, 2017). That is, because it is scripted by the social impositions of the restaurant environment, compliance with service-relevant orders is not optional, which creates a dynamic in which men in the breasaurant environment are fully aware that, from their perspectives, attractive women must compliantly take their orders within these spaces.

This theme bore significant relevance in my data. As one man in our group noted: “I love this place. I get to come in here, see hot chicks, give them my orders, and then they have to smile and flirt with me—if they want a good tip, anyway—and do exactly what I say, which always ends up with them bringing me a sandwich [an allusion to a slang metaphorical proxy for male dominance in a sexual relationship].” (Paul, Field notes, July 20, 2017)

The ensuing dialogue led to several members of the group agreeing that the ability to “tell hot young girls what to do and have them do it for you with a smile” (Randy, Field notes, July 20, 2017) is integral to the breasaurant experience. (Carl, for his part, openly challenged this view by calling the discussion “fucked up,” which most of the men at the table agreed with, although this led to them continuing to joke about both the allure of this aspect of male dominance and how disturbing it is that they enjoy it.) That is, central to the nature of the breasaurant is casting attractive female servers into a scripted

performance of servant to (mostly male) patrons, and in that role, they are contractually expected to take men’s orders while displaying ersatz sexual availability as a specific form of heterosexual aesthetic labor. This dynamic is not just routine but paradigmatic of the breasaurant and its business model.

### Masculine Toughness

Among common themes of lesser importance were those connecting alleged real masculinity to sports, real and symbolic violence, motorcycles (especially on “Bike Night”), and allowable strength versus acceptable weakness. Among these, however, only the last is clearly identifiable within the breasaurant environment (cf. Dunning and Maguire 1996; Matthews 2014, 2016)—particularly the one we frequented, which is known for serving very spicy hot chicken wings as its signature dish. In this context, it comes up frequently in connection with the previous major themes and in the context of being able to handle hot sauce “like a man,” both orally and (later) intestinally/anally, which at times (e.g., September 15, 2016, and May 22, 2017) led to heartfelt discussions about when it is and is not appropriate for a man to cry. Expressions of being able to “handle the heat” but “hating the twice-burn” (“twice-burn” refers to the effect undigested capsaicin, the active oil in hot peppers, can have in irritating the anus during defecation after ingesting food containing too much of it) are, in fact, so common that they occurred at our table in nearly every visit to the breasaurant in the course of the 2-year span of my study.

This repeated topic tangentially raises important questions about how (hetero)masculinity is often measured orally and anally, particularly with regard to themes related to strength and weakness (cf. Anderson 2009; Pascoe 2007; Smith 2018), although these discussions lie outside the scope of the present paper. Also, far from being incidental, this topic comports with a vein of critical literature examining how food is used to produce, construct, maintain, and exploit an authentically masculine identity (Buerkle 2009; Deutsche 2005; Julier and Lindenfeld 2005; Lapiņa and Leer 2016; Rogers 2008) in line with heteronormative hegemonic norms (cf. Connell 1995). Citing Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), Conitois (2018, p. 770) recently explained this problematic connection: “Culturally coded as a masculine food, chicken wings (spicy or not) are situated within ‘bro’ media and spaces ... Being the type of dude who loves hot sauce is part of performing conventional masculinity, however, through actions like disregarding risk and facing danger fearlessly.” For example,

Eric: Carl’s a real man, though. Look at that. He just put down twenty of those [hottest] wings, no problem.

Matt: Yeah, but his mustache isn’t white anymore, it’s red! [Group laughter]

Eric: Nevertheless, I only had two, and it feels like I kissed Satan's asshole!

Jim: You'll feel like he kissed yours tomorrow morning.  
[Group laughter]

Eric: Too true, too true! I'm pretty manly, I guess, but I'm not [hottest]-wings manly.

Scott: Not many of us are... (Field notes, November 10, 2016)

Not only do masculine themes about toughness arise within the breastaaurant environment, so too do themes of competitiveness (e.g., hot-wing-eating and beer-drinking contests), and these themes are then projected onto the servers as a means of male peacocking. "I was just wondering, Kellye; would you be more or less likely to go out with me if I ordered the [hottest] wings instead of the [second hottest] ones? What about if I eat more of them than Pete can?" (Paul, Field notes, April 20, 2017). In this way, (hot-sauce-centric) attention to male toughness and competitiveness in the breastaaurant can interact with the servers in ways that amplify the three other major themes that dominate within the general breastaaurant pastiche hegemony.

## Discussion

I aimed to approach the breastaaurant environment in a way that documents and characterizes patterns of masculinity I recognized as largely typical within the breastaaurant, although atypical to the participants outside that context. I sought to address the interrelated questions of what features of the breastaaurant environment lead men to enact certain masculine performances in pastiche, how men then interpret these performances as relevant to some presumably authentic masculinity, and what this tells us about a breastaaurant masculinity that arises in dynamic interplay in some men within breastaaurants. As such, it identifies that men in breastaaurants often have discussions that, under thematic analysis, can be summarized by major themes of sexual objectification, sexual conquest, control over women, and masculine toughness, in addition to persistent meta-level themes of how the emerging breastaaurant masculinity can be rationalized as a part of being authentically masculine. In addition, it appears that the breastaaurant environment itself is directly involved in the generation of this breastaaurant masculinity. This echoes one way Barber (2016a) highlights that the auspices of the job in a SO(R)E force women to comply with becoming masculine-identity resources and to tacitly accept, reproduce, and reinforce heteromale domination with limited capacity to push back against it, even despite the expressly high levels of agency in this regard afforded to breastaaurant servers (per Rasmusson 2011).

Although many thematically consistent remarks repeatedly arose among the men I observed in this single breastaaurant environment, those centered upon viewing masculinity in terms of sexual objectification, sexual conquest, male control over women, and masculine toughness dominated sufficiently so as to define them. (Of note, insights from Eck's 2014, analysis of two-phase masculinity generally applied—older, married men in the group tended to be more moderated in their masculine performances than were younger, single men.) These themes are evocative of a locally protected masculinity that, although prevalent in central ways in our everyday practices in all environments, thrive uniquely within the local pastiche hegemony set up by the breastaaurant. Because these themes are certainly not central in Matthews' (2014) analysis of the boxing gym or other analyses of sporting enclaves as local pastiche hegemonies (Maguire and Young 2002; Matthews 2015, 2016; Messner 1992), it is likely that they dominate within breastaaurants for reasons reaching beyond these environments' status as a male preserve. More surprisingly, they also probably have little to do directly with the breastaaurant's status as a SO(R)E (Moffitt and Szymanski 2011; Rasmusson 2011; Szymanski and Feltman 2015; Szymanski and Mikorski 2017; Szymanski et al. 2011), as is indicated by the typologies and motivations of male strip-club patrons (Egan and Frank 2005; Erickson and Tewksbury 2000; Frank 2003). Instead, the breastaaurant apparently maintains a unique local pastiche hegemony that supports this particular masculinity primarily due to the enforced and scripted interactive relationships that are encouraged between the servers and the (mostly male) patrons.

Although my study does not seek to explain the varying motivations breastaaurant servers hold for filling the role of feigning sexual interest (and does not have the data necessary to attempt it), a few points bear noting to remind ourselves of Rasmusson's (2011) observation about the contradictions of the work. Most importantly, as Rasmusson tells us and as breastaaurant servers tend to be well aware, these job-relevant, socially imposed, scripted performances on the parts of the servers are themselves reinforced by the economic and cultural architecture of breastaaurants and the cultures that support them. Ultimately, this problematic milieu enables an avenue by which women can trade aspects of their sexuality for rewards both material, such as money through employment and generous tips (cf. Brewster 2003), and immaterial, such as male approval, a share of the patriarchal dividend, and dating or sexual opportunities (cf. Erickson and Tewksbury 2000, on "sugar daddy" patrons, in particular) (Griffith et al. 2012; Rasmusson 2011). In short, breastaaurants and the culture that supports them remain in need of further study and critique, both for reasons central to feminism and, as my study hopes to elucidate, for their impact upon worrisome and increasingly vestigial masculinities.

## Limitations and Future Research Directions

A serious limitation of this ethnography is that I was only able to elicit data from one relatively small but (mostly) stable group of racially homogeneous men in one breastaaurant franchise in one location. Future research into breastaaurant masculinities, therefore, would benefit from investigating more men in more breastaaurants in more geographic locations. This research might also benefit from focused semi-structured interviews with breastaaurant patrons, management, hostesses, and servers to obtain more information about their perspectives on breastaaurant masculinity and its unique interactions with the breastaaurant environment. In keeping with Barber (2016a, b), a more thorough racial and class analysis of men who frequent breastaaurants and for whom breastaaurant masculinities are viewed as natural may also be useful, as would be ethnographic insights from gay men and lesbians.

Further limiting my study is that it is a participant-observer ethnographic study conducted by a single researcher. Despite efforts to minimize bias, including drawing my data collecting and summarizing methodologies from an approach that is standard in grounded theory (Charmaz 2008), utilizing critical detachment in the composition of field notes (Matthews 2014), and engaging in thematic analysis that examined and re-examined data in light of themes as they became apparent (Braun and Clarke 2006; Nowell et al. 2017), bias in such a setting is unavoidable. Although it provided certain insider-perspective benefits, closeness to my participants inevitably also colored my data analysis in ways that are potentially biasing. This necessarily suggests that future studies of this kind would benefit from the involvement of more researchers to improve the trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis.

The specific findings in my study raise questions of why some men seek to identify themes of sexual objectification, sexual conquest, male control of women, and masculine toughness as naturally masculine. These are presently both under-theorized and suffer a lack of empirical investigation. They could therefore be explored both within and beyond the breastaaurant environment. This may reveal potential for remediation of problematic themes in masculinity, and those aspects of what I have here termed “breastaaurant masculinity” that are unique to the breastaaurant environment could be better identified. As a result, the specific dynamics within the breastaaurant that produce its pastiche masculinity and drive to identify it as presumably naturally masculine could be clarified.

## Practice Implications

Insights into breastaaurant masculinity have a number of useful practice implications, particularly for men, professionals who work in settings to improve social and professional outcomes

for men, and professionals who work with or counsel women who work in SO(R)Es. Particularly, the identification of breastaaurant masculinity with a tendency to view sexual objectification, sexual conquest, male control of women, and masculine toughness as authentically and naturally masculine can be useful in each of these settings. For instance, men and professionals who work with men and masculinities in social and professional contexts, such as managers and counselors, can use these findings to raise important questions about what circumstances lead men to engage in these masculine performances in pastiche and to identify them as authentically masculine. Men (or those interrogating themes in their masculine performances) for example, might be curious to know what within their mythology of authentic masculinity leads them to an impulse to tell beautiful young women what to do and to enjoy seeing it carried out. This could be further enriched by drawing upon Erickson and Tewksbury’s (2000) six-point typology of male strip-club patrons.

Particularly, as substantial evidence indicates, connecting themes of sexual objectification (and, by extension, conquest) to perceived authentic masculinity can reduce relationship satisfaction (Ramsey et al. 2017), reinforce rape blame (Loughnan et al. 2013), perpetuate rape culture, and increase rates of verbal sexual harassment (Davidson et al. 2015). Understanding the thematic elements of breastaaurant masculinity can therefore have practice implications for counselors working with men, women, or couples for whom these issues are pertinent. For instance, counselors could interrogate men (or their partners) about whether they frequent breastaaurants and contextualize these issues in terms of breastaaurant masculinity as a possible avenue toward remediation. Furthermore, professionals, including management in breastaaurants and in therapeutic contexts, can make use of these findings for crafting strategies to aid servers in breastaaurants and other SO(R)Es to better navigate the well-documented challenges and problematics associated with those spaces for women (cf. Moffitt and Szymanski 2011; Rasmusson 2011; Szymanski and Feltman 2015; Szymanski and Mikorski 2017; Szymanski et al. 2011).

## Conclusions

In concurrence with Matthews (2014, pp. 115–116; 2015) and although my participants are unlikely to be representative of all men who frequent SO(R)Es and breastaaurants, my observations are consistent with those that “certainly resonate with experiences in other ‘male preserves.’” Where I differ is in departing from the environment of the sporting enclave as a male preserve. Instead, my study focuses upon the complex setting of a paradigmatically sexually objectifying (restaurant) environment and uses it not to spotlight the impacts these particular contexts have upon the women objectified in them, but rather on the gender performances enacted by the men

who frequent them (Butler 1990; West and Zimmerman 1987). In being so constructed, the breasted restaurant becomes a complex site where the studies of feminism, feminist psychology, masculinity, food, organizational management, and sexual roles collide and one in which men simultaneously produce and react to an environment that encourages sexual objectification and male dominance through scripted performances of ersatz sexual availability as a peculiar form of heterosexual aesthetic labor.

In conclusion, although breasted restaurants continue to flourish (Szymanski and Mikorski 2017), there is considerable need to examine them as local pastiche hegemonies that produce and reinforce sexual and routine forms of male domination over women. Breasted restaurants form a unique male preserve in which many masculine themes gain protected status. Thus, their appeal lies largely within their capacity to provide an environment in which these themes not only go uncontested but also are actively encouraged through organizational commodification of ersatz (hetero)sexual availability as a neoliberal marketing strategy (cf. Barber 2016a, b; cf. Cornwall et al. 2016). Although many forms of masculine expression shared in common with other male-oriented spaces arise within the breasted restaurant, themes that connect masculinity to sexual objectification, sexual conquest, masculine toughness, and the routine domination of women are especially prominent and paradigmatically significant. Identifying these masculine performances with the breasted restaurant not only identifies a common and important pastiche masculinity performance, but also provides an avenue by which outcomes, especially for women, can be improved by understanding it as such.

## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of Interest** The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

**Ethical Approval** All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institution and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments, including standard IRB approval which was obtained for this study.

**Human and Animal Rights** This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by the author.

**Informed Consent** Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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