

Introduction to the Second Edition

Introducing *Masculinities*

It is now ten years since the first edition of *Masculinities* was published. In the meantime a great deal of research, public debate and policy-making has occurred. In the new edition, while keeping the original text unchanged, I also describe the new work and discuss the meaning of this field of knowledge as a whole. In this Introduction I sketch the origins of the book, and discuss in greater detail the research that has been done since it appeared. In the Afterword I trace recent debates about the politics of masculinities, and discuss the implications of masculinity research for understanding current world issues.

Masculinities tries to do five things within a single conceptual framework:

- trace the history of the modern Western investigation of masculinity (Chapter 1);
- present a theory of masculinities, embedded in a social theory of gender (Chapters 2–3);
- describe the lives of four groups of men caught up in processes of change (Chapters 4–7);
- synthesize the history of Western masculinities and their political expressions (Chapters 8–9);
- propose strategies for the politics of gender equality (Chapter 10).

The book had multiple origins, and rests, like all social science, on the contributions of many people besides the author. A debate about men and gender had taken off in the wake of the Women's Liberation movement; there was even a small Men's Liberation movement in the 1970s that attempted to reform the 'male sex role'. This gave rise to interesting political discussions about men, power and change. But it did not immediately produce much research about what men and boys actually do, and it suffered from deep conceptual confusions about gender.

In the late 1970s I was one of a research group making a study of inequalities in education. This involved an empirical study of social relations in secondary schools, in the course of which we identified multiple patterns of masculinity and femininity among teenagers (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett 1982). In the early 1980s I was involved in a conceptual project with two men who were both gay activists and theoreticians, which produced an outline for 'a new sociology of masculinity' (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985). I was soon also involved in a program of research on social dimensions of AIDS, mainly in the context of gay men's lives. This led to some hard thinking about theories of sexuality as well as the shape of connections among men (Connell and Dowsett 1992, Kippax, Connell, Dowsett and Crawford 1993).

In the mid-1980s I was concerned about the lack of empirical knowledge about masculinities, and so launched a study of the gender practices and consciousness of men in circumstances of change, using life-history interviews. I conducted this with the assistance of Norm Radican and Pip Martin, and in due course it became the basis of Chapters 4–7 of *Masculinities*.

In a broader sense, the book grew out of theoretical work on gender as a social structure. I had been trying for years to formulate an integrated social-scientific account of gender relations, and eventually got this together in *Gender and Power* (1987). This analysis showed there were bound to be multiple masculinities, and more or less demanded that I should fill in the blanks about them. In turn, this theoretical work on gender grew out of my encounter with feminism – especially in the life and work of my wife and partner Pam Benton. She made it clear that issues about gender were never just contemplative, but always had to do with social action.

So the threads came together. But I was reluctant to weave them into a book, because there was already a genre of 'books about

men' that had become hugely popular. This was a mixture of pop psychology, amateur history and ill-tempered mythmaking, and I hated it. Backward-looking, self-centred stereotypes of masculinity were the last things we needed. I didn't want to reinforce the imaginary identity of 'men' that was created by the very existence of this genre of books.

Eventually I became persuaded that a book documenting and explaining the diversity of gender patterns among men was worthwhile. We might drive out some of the bad coin with good. It wasn't easy to write. I dated the preface June 1994, which was two months after Pam began her long battle with cancer. Since I started work on the book, our family had moved house internationally three times, I had taught in three universities in two countries, and our daughter Kylie had been in four different schools. For all the turbulence of its writing, however, there is a consistent approach running through all the sections, and that is perhaps what has given the book its impact.

In 1995, *Masculinities* was published simultaneously in Australia, Britain and the United States. It was widely reviewed, and has certainly had a role in creating an intellectual agenda and consolidating a field of study. A distinguished German reviewer generously called it 'the fundamental study on masculinity as a formative factor of modern social inequality, and also one of the most important books in the social sciences in recent years'. In 2003 the book was voted, by members of the Australian Sociological Association, one of the ten most influential books in Australian sociology. I am very pleased that the book has also circulated in other language communities. There have been translations into Swedish (1996), Italian (1996), German (1999 and 2000), Spanish (2003) and Chinese (2003), with Japanese forthcoming.

One of the things I hoped to do in *Masculinities* was to show that studies of masculinities and men's gender practices formed a comprehensible field of knowledge (though not an autonomous science). I tried to show its history, its context, its conceptual dilemmas, and some of its practical consequences. This field has, of course, continued to develop. I have made some further contributions, including the papers on globalization, embodiment, education, health and change collected in my book *The Men and the Boys* (2000). Through the work of a growing number of researchers, the field of knowledge has developed in highly interesting ways, and I will now turn to this story.

Growth of the Field of Study

International diversity

The argument in *Masculinities* drew extensively on the empirical research that had built up in the 1980s and early 1990s, most of which described the construction of masculinities in specific settings. This included studies of workplaces and schools (e.g. Cockburn 1983, Heward 1988), studies of sexualities and athletic careers (e.g. Messner and Sabo 1990, Connell 1992a), and historical accounts of changing ideas of masculinity (Phillips 1987). These studies produced a much more detailed, specific and differentiated view of men in gender relations, and so allowed a decisive move beyond the abstract 'sex role' framework that had been dominant earlier.

This ethnographic moment appeared first in research from the English-speaking world, mainly in Australia, the United States and Britain. In central and northern Europe, feminist and gay research had also taken an early interest in the gender practices of men. In this region, however, a different approach was taken, with more emphasis on survey research, and on the way men are positioned in relation to the gender equity policies of the state (Metz-Göckel and Müller 1985, Bengtsson and Frykman 1988, Holter 1989). There were, nevertheless, common themes. Both groups of researchers were concerned with the way change among men was linked to contemporary feminism, and both had an interest in using masculinity research to understand and combat violence.

At the time *Masculinities* was published, research on men and masculinities was already diversifying internationally. In the years since, this trend has accelerated. A measure of the global growth of the field is the appearance, within the last few years, not just of individual monographs but of *collections* of research in many regions and countries. As well as a continuing output of volumes mainly concerned with the United States and Britain (among the best are Kimmel and Messner 2001, Whitehead and Barrett 2001), these include

- Japan (Roberson and Suzuki 2003)
- Australia (Tomsen and Donaldson 2003)
- New Zealand (Worth et al. 2002, Law et al. 1999)

- Southern Africa (Morrell 2001b)
- Latin America (Olavarriá and Moletto 2002, Gutmann 2001)
- Scandinavia (Fronesis 2001, Kvinder Kon & Forskning 1999)
- the Middle East (Ghoussoub and Sinclair-Webb 2000)
- France (Welzer-Lang 2000)
- Germany (Bosse and King 2000, Widersprüche 1998)
- rural regions of developed countries (Campbell and Bell 2000)
- the post-colonial world (Ouzgane and Coleman 1998)
- Brazil (Ariha et al. 1998).

This work has tremendously diversified the ethnographic documentation of social constructions of masculinity. It has also brought into view new questions about global difference, integration and inequality, which I will discuss shortly. In 2000 the first large-scale multi-national research project on men and masculinity was launched, the 'CROME' project in Europe (Hearn et al. 2002a, 2002b), which has set a very important precedent for the future.

Applied research

Another important direction of change is the growth of applied research, policy work and professional practice. The new knowledge about constructions of masculinity is being put to work across a broad spectrum of issues. The major areas of recent applications are:

- *Education.* This work considers the making of masculinity in schools, identity formation in youth, issues of school discipline, harassment, etc.; and the learning problems of boys (Lingard and Douglas 1999, Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli 2003).
- *Health.* The making of gender is relevant to the health and safety of men and boys, and men's role in reproductive and sexual health issues (Schofield et al. 2000, Hurrelmann and Kolip 2002).
- *Violence.* Knowledge about masculinity is relevant to the prevention of masculine violence, in contexts ranging from domestic and sexual assault to institutional violence and war (Breines et al. 2000, Kaufman 2001, Wöfl 2001).

- *Fathering.* This work considers men's relationship to children, especially as fathers; difficulties in traditional masculinities, and the development of new models of fathering and family relations (Olavarria 2001, McKeown et al. 1999, Kindler 2002).
- *Counselling.* Understanding the construction of masculinity is important for effective counselling and psychotherapy of men, both individual and group, in ways that pay attention to gender relations and gender specificity (Kupers 1993, Brandes and Bullinger 1996).

Intellectual applications

In some fields of knowledge, an understanding of the construction of masculinity has (sometimes suddenly) been seen as relevant to the understanding of another problem or theory. A good example is international diplomacy and power relations. This is documented in Zalewski and Parpart's (1998) book *The 'Man' Question in International Relations*. It had been taken for granted, in international relations practice and research, that all the leading players – diplomats, ministers, generals, corporate executives, etc. – were men. This has now come into focus as an issue. The reasons why the players in international power politics are mostly men, and the consequences that fact might have for diplomacy, war and peace, are now actively debated.

Another example is the recognition that there is a dimension of masculinity in the culture of imperialism (Gittings 1996) and in the construction of nationalism and national identities (Nagel 1998). It is specifically male heroism that is celebrated in the US national anthem 'The Star-Spangled Banner', in Australia's 'Anzac Day' ceremonies, in the Arc de Triomphe – and this tells us something important about the process of nation-building, and the kind of society being built.

Debates and Difficulties

Knowledge about masculinities has developed very rapidly over the past two decades and the accomplishments of researchers in the field are considerable, with new methods, new topics of investigation and new groups being studied. At the same time prob-

lems have emerged, and both practical and conceptual debates have sharpened.

The focus on men and masculinity

Not all applications of masculinity research are trouble-free. In particular, there have been sharp debates about a men-and-masculinity focus in two fields: domestic and sexual violence, and economic development in poor countries.

In both cases there is concern that a focus on men will result in resources being diverted from women – from particularly disadvantaged women, at that. White (2000), in a thoughtful critique of the masculinity literature, describes these hazards in relation to ‘gender and development’ policy in poor countries. Men and their practices are part of the problem of gender inequalities in aid, education and empowerment, and should be part of the solution. But there is a risk that letting men in on what is, at present, the only development agenda controlled by women, will open the door to backlash.

Problems of method

The descriptive research methods that flourished in the wave of masculinities research *c.* 1985–95 are being used in many new studies. These methods are still productive, as shown by recent monographs on youth (Olavarría 2001) and violence (e.g. Hearn 1998), as well as the collections of research listed above.

But these methods are yielding fewer new insights than before. We are getting an ever-growing library of descriptive studies, which provide important understandings of specific settings and problems. But we do not seem to be getting a corresponding growth of general ideas about men and masculinities.

Recent research has documented different forms of masculinity, but has not succeeded in showing how they are distributed across populations. For instance ethnographic studies (e.g. Poynting et al. 1998) strongly suggest that ethnic differences in masculinity construction are important in social conflict, in a context such as multi-cultural Western Sydney. But such studies are not in a position to measure difference. We need information

about how different masculinities are distributed between social groups, such as ethnic communities, regions or social classes.

Cross-sectional surveys might provide this information. Such studies have been done in several countries, the most impressive series coming from Germany (Zulehner and Volz 1998). However with one exception, a Norwegian study (Holter and Aarseth 1993), these are essentially surveys of gender *attitudes*. They have not yet been integrated with the concept of masculinities as *configurations of practice*, as explained in this book. A novel kind of quantitative study seems to be required, based on a model of gender practices.

Understanding hegemony

The concept of 'hegemonic masculinity', introduced to the field in the 1980s and formalized in this book, has provided guidance for a large body of research. But it has now come under challenge from several directions (Petersen 1998, Demetriou 2001, Jefferson 2002). It is timely to reconsider the concept, since changes have been made to the theory of gender that framed it (Connell 2002), and much richer empirical material on men and masculinities is now available.

But whether to discard the concept of hegemonic masculinity, reconstruct it, or reaffirm it, is still sharply debated. In my view we still require a way of theorizing gendered power relations among men, and understanding the effectiveness of masculinities in the legitimation of the gender order. This is necessary if theories of masculinity are to connect with wider theories of gender and are to have any grip on practical issues such as the prevention of violence. Therefore I think the concept of hegemonic masculinity, as developed in this book, is still essential.

Discursive approaches

An influential approach has recently emerged that treats masculinity as a discursive construction. This is influenced by Foucauldian post-structuralism, postmodernism and discursive psychology (Petersen 1998, Wetherell and Edley 1999). Discursive studies suggest that men are not permanently committed to a par-

ticular pattern of masculinity. Rather, they make situationally specific choices from a cultural repertoire of masculine behaviour (Wetherell and Edley 1999).

In one of the best studies in this vein, Collier (1998) questions the recent 'masculinity turn' in criminology based on social-constructionist accounts of masculinity. He argues that a binary division between sex and gender, as well as other binaries (man/woman, hetero/homosexual, for instance) pervade research on masculinities, and need to be disrupted.

Discursive research on masculinity is already producing interesting empirical studies, such as the psychological work brought together in a recent issue of *Feminism and Psychology* (2001). Another example is the subtle cultural analysis undertaken by Buchbinder (1998), with its interesting account of the *absences* in representations of the masculine.

Yet discursive approaches have significant limits. They give no grip on issues about economic inequality and the state, which as Segal (1997) argues are crucial to change in masculinities. The idea of tactical choice from a repertoire is difficult to reconcile with studies of the development of gender identities through the life cycle, influenced by psychoanalysis (e.g. Chodorow 1994).

A theoretical impasse has thus developed, which is directly relevant to practical problems. This can be seen in the striking divergence between developmental/psychoanalytic approaches to men's crime (e.g. Hayslett-McCall & Bernard 2002) and the discursive approaches. It can also be seen in the difficulty of linking either of these theories of masculinity to issues about poverty, state power and global conflict, whose role in contemporary violence is incontestable in the era of al-Qaeda and the US invasion of Iraq.

New directions?

As Pease (2000) argues, masculinity research must be integrated with more general analyses of social change. Pease emphasizes theories of postmodernity. I would also emphasize analyses of commodification, neo-liberalism and market society.

Conceptualizations of masculinity must be confronted with *all* the relevant evidence. In *Masculinities* I tried to bring together the evidence from the whole field of study, and however difficult this now is, it is still important to try. Quantitative research on gender