

Trinity (Open University Press, 1999) and (co-authored) *Globalization and Sport: Playing the World* (Sage, 2001).

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Australian masculinities

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It is now a familiar observation that notions of Australian identity have been almost entirely constructed around images of men—the convict shaking his shackled fist; the heroic explorer facing inland; the bushman plodding down a dusty track; the digger scrambling up the slopes at Gallipoli; Bradman and McCabe facing the bodyline attack; Midget Farrelly swooping down the wave-face; front bars, shearing sheds, the Glenrowan Hotel. There are not many women in this world, as Miriam Dixon long ago observed in *The Real Matilda* (1976). But there are very definite ideas about masculinity, and ideas about relations between men and women, real or imaginary.

It is not surprising, then, that when the combined impact of feminism and gay liberation stirred debate about Australian men and masculinity, it was to these well-established images of the Aussie bloke that most debaters turned. A small literature of commentary and criticism developed in the 1970s and 1980s, in Australia as in other parts of the English-speaking world (e.g. Lewis 1983, Conway 1985). The burden of much of this discussion was the obsolescence of traditional "blokkiness" in a world of mass communications, changing attitudes, and the changed situation of women. In this period the staging of traditional Australian masculinity in films, from *Wake in Fright* (1971) to *Gallipoli* (1981), and in novels like *The*

Glass Canoe (Ireland 1976), had an ironic or "pracketing" quality, very different from previous presentations such as Mann's novel of the diggers on the Western Front, *Flesh in Armour* (1944).

Until recently, however, this cultural critique functioned in a vacuum, and had little discernible effect on social practice—despite the clear intention of contributors like Lewis, whose *Real Men Like Violence* (1983) was directed to a significant social issue urgently needing remedy. Two contrasting developments have changed this. One is the rise of detailed social research on the making of masculinities, the kind of research represented by this book, which has both deepened and complicated our understanding of men in gender relations. Australian scholars were early contributors to the growth of this field (e.g. Carrigan et al. 1985), and have produced a growing range of studies, from social psychology (Russell 1983), school ethnography (Walker 1988) and life-history research (Connell 1995), to industrial sociology (Donaldson 1991), cultural studies (Bilber et al. 1999) and ideological critique (McMahon 1999).

The second development is in the sphere of politics and media: the emergence of public debates about men and boys, in which the main rhetoric no longer concerns the obsolescence of masculinities but a supposed crisis of men and boys and their need of reaffirmation and support. Australia is by no means alone in these developments. In recent years, questions about men and gender have aroused media interest, academic debate, and political controversy in most parts of the developed world. In the United States two "men's movements" have gained large, if temporary, followings—one new-age therapeutic, the other right-wing evangelical (Messner 1997). In Australia we have had explicit debates on men's violence and on boys' education, while subtexts about masculinity are not difficult to find in controversies about motor racing, gun control, the environment, and "political correctness". The would-be populist prime minister John Howard even attempted to inject masculinity politics into the Australian constitution, writing "mateship" into his—soundly defeated—draft preamble.

Concern with these issues is now worldwide. 1998 saw both the appointment of a Scandinavian co-ordinator for men's studies, and a conference in Santiago, Chile, on masculinities in Latin America and the Caribbean, which drew researchers and activists from as far apart as Brazil and Nicaragua (Valdés and Olavarria 1998). There is a newly founded "men's centre" in Japan which publishes a series of papers and books exploring new patterns of marriage and family life, and new forms of Japanese masculinity. Debate on masculinities and the role of men has followed the democratic transition in South Africa (Morrell 1998). In 1997 UNESCO sponsored a conference on the implications of male roles and masculinities for the creation of a culture of peace which drew participants from all over Europe and some other parts of the world (Breines et al. 2000).

Questions about masculinity have also spread into a wider range of fields. Health services and health researchers are noticing the relevance of men's gender to issues such as road accidents, industrial injury, diet, cardiovascular disease, and of course sexually transmitted diseases (Schofield et al. 2000). Educators are discussing not just the presence of issues about boys, but the practicalities of programs and curriculum changes to deal with these issues (Gilbert and Gilbert 1998). Criminologists have begun to explore the social-structural and cultural reasons for the massive predominance of boys and men over girls and women in crime statistics (Messerschmidt 1997).

We should not exaggerate the impact of this work. Research on masculinity remains, academically, a fairly small enterprise and the impact on policy is still slight. The naive essentialism of pop psychologists such as Gray (*Men are from Mars...*) and Biddulph (*Manhood*) has much wider circulation, and probably more current influence. At the same time we should not miss the significance of what has been done. A substantial body of new research is emerging, potentially important empirical conclusions can be drawn, and some lively theoretical arguments are starting. To say we have a "field of study" immediately poses the question:

what kind of field? What are the intellectual parameters here? Can we speak of a science of masculinity, and if so, what sort of science?

In *Masculinities* (Connell 1995, chapter 1), I looked back at the recent history of Western thought on the issue of men and gender, and suggested that there had been three main attempts to develop a scientific approach to the issue. The first was inspired, indeed launched, by Freud. Psychoanalytic studies showed how adult personality, including sexual orientations and the sense of identity, was constructed through conflict-ridden processes of development in childhood and adolescence, in which the gender dynamics of families were central. Case studies showed men's character structures to be internally divided—even contradictory, and showed everyday conduct as the product of psychological compromises, which were often unstable.

Some researchers—most famously the Frankfurt School and their collaborators in the “authoritarian personality” research—grafted a social analysis to this psychoanalytic base. This work began to trace alternative paths of masculine development and to debate their political significance as underpinnings of democracy and fascism (Holter 1996). In due course feminist psychoanalysis picked up this form of argument, though focusing on patriarchy rather than class as social structure; recent feminist psychoanalysis has also been emphasising the diversity and internal complexity of masculinities considered as structures of emotion (Chodorow 1994).

Psychoanalysis, however, was received ambivalently by the social sciences. Around the mid-century a different framework became more influential. The concept of “social role”, formulated in anthropology in the 1930s, now became immensely popular as a “lingua franca for the social sciences”. A social-psychological version was applied to gender, producing the idea of “sex roles”—coherent sets of social expectations or norms for the behaviour of men and women, which were transmitted to youth in a process of “socialisation”. A great volume of worthless “paper-and-

pencil” research was produced around this idea, but it also led in the 1950s and 1960s to a few subtle and interesting studies of changing gender expectations for men, and difficulties faced by men and boys in conforming to their role.

In the 1970s the “sex role” concept was radicalised by feminism, the notion of gender-as-conformity becoming an object of critique rather than celebration. Feminist work on women’s “sex role” soon led to a discussion, both among feminist women and pro-feminist men, of men’s “sex role” and the way it constrained men. This idea underpinned a burst of writing, and even a small social movement, on the theme of “men’s liberation”. But it led to little new research beyond the existing conventions of “masculinity/femininity” scales. A vague concept of “the male role” or “men’s role” persists in much recent talk and writing, but it signifies little more than “stereotypes” or “norms”.

In the last fifteen years a third approach has matured, whose main academic base is in sociology but with important contributions also from anthropology, history and media studies. Key intellectual underpinnings are the developing feminist analysis of gender as a structure of social relations, especially a structure of power relations; sociological concerns with subcultures and issues of marginalisation and resistance; and post-structuralist analyses of the discursive construction of identities, and the interplay of gender with race, sexuality, class and nationality.

With ethnographic and life-history methods as key research techniques, and with the popular “men’s movement” building up interest, the result has been an outpouring of studies of the social construction of masculinity in various times and places: a traditional community in Papua New Guinea, a school in inter-war England, an Australian gay community, a body-building gym in California, a gold mine in South Africa, official debates in colonial India, and so on. I call this the “ethnographic moment” in studies of masculinity, to register the emphasis on the particular and local, and to mark the dramatic break of this research from

the abstractions of role theory and the sweeping universal claims of pop psychology.

Certain conclusions have been emerging from these studies, however, which have more than local significance. The studies reported in this book confirm many points from international research (surveyed in Connell 2000), while pushing ahead on others. It is clear from the new research as a whole that there is no one pattern of masculinity that is found everywhere. We need to speak of "masculinities", not masculinity. Different cultures, and different periods of history, construct gender differently. We could expect, in a society as diverse as Australia's, that there are multiple definitions and dynamics of masculinity. The chapter by Poynting, Noble and Tabar shows one important dimension of this: the interplay between ethnicity and the construction of masculinity. It is now abundantly clear that the Australian identity was not just constructed around the image of a man, but around the image of a white man, and that race relations and racialised identities are of great importance in the enactment of masculinities. We can never again speak of "Australian masculinity"; there are multiple masculinities on the continent.

Multiplicity is not just a matter of difference between ethnic communities; it is equally important that diversity exists within a given setting. Within the one school, or workplace, or neighbourhood, there will be different ways of enacting manhood, different ways of learning to be a man, different conceptions of the self and different ways of using a male body.

Different masculinities do not sit side by side like dishes on a smorgasbord. There are definite social relations between them. Especially there are relations of hierarchy, for some masculinities are dominant while others are marginalised or discredited. In contemporary Australian society the most emotionally powerful line of demarcation—though by no means the only one—is between heterosexual and homosexual masculinities.

There is generally a "hegemonic" form of masculinity, the most honoured or desired. This is likely to be what earlier

commentators identified as "the male role". It is connected with prominent institutions and cultural forms, such as business and sport, and is extensively presented and promoted in mass media. Nevertheless the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity is not automatic. This pattern of social conduct has to be learned, and in the learning there are many opportunities for tensions and alternatives to appear. Wedgwood's chapter in this book gives a remarkable picture of this process, as it occurs in and around the practice of amateur football in a high school.

Hegemonic masculinity is the most visible, but need not be the most common, form of masculinity, let alone the most comfortable. Indeed many men and boys live in a state of some tension with, or distance from, hegemonic masculinity. Others (such as sporting heroes) are taken as exemplars of hegemonic masculinity and are required to live up to it strenuously. The media treatment of Ian Roberts discussed in Dowsett's chapter depends on both points: the subordination of gay men (as men, in relation to straight men), and the exemplary status of footballers.

The patterns of conduct which our society defines as "masculine" may be enacted in the lives of individuals, but they also have an existence beyond the individual. Masculinities are defined collectively in culture, and are sustained in institutions. Rowe and McKay's chapter documents this collective process in the strategic case of competitive sport. They show, among other things, the amount of symbolic work that goes into crafting and presenting an acceptable public masculinity—and the possibilities of disruption.

Agostino's chapter shows another dimension of the collective process in gender—the embedding of definitions of masculinity in the organisational culture of the military. The "fight from the feminine" she observes is familiar in other masculinised institutions. Not so familiar is her point about the role of women in sustaining the masculinity of the organisational culture.

Men's bodies do not determine the patterns of masculinity, but they are also not blank slates. Masculine conduct with

a female body is felt to be anomalous or transgressive, like feminine conduct with a male body. Gender is the way bodies are drawn into history; bodies are arenas for the making of gender patterns. This was a point underplayed by "male role" discussions, and is underplayed even in some of the more recent international research. It is notable, then, that every chapter in this volume raises body issues, from the pleasuring of bodies in sexual relations, through body contact in childhood, to the strenuous use of bodies in sport, and the use and destruction of bodies in violence. We see repeatedly how men's bodies are addressed, trained, given definitions, given outlets and pleasures, by the gender order of society.

Masculinities are neither programmed in our genes, nor fixed by social structure. They come into existence as people act. They are actively produced, using the resources and strategies available in a given social setting. Walker's chapter gives a striking example of the collective construction of masculinities in informal peer groups. Friendship groups focused on cars not only draw lines to fend off women's intrusion into masculine social space, but draw in a whole technology as part of the definition of masculinity. In statistical fact, women (collectively) are safer drivers than men; but it is part of the symbolic construction of men's technical mastery that they must be the good drivers and women incompetent.

One of the key reasons why masculinities are not fixed is that they are not homogeneous, simple states of being. Psychoanalytic research on men has long been aware of contradictory desires and conduct (though the emphasis on this point has fluctuated at different times in the history of psychoanalysis).

There is every reason to think men's gender identities and practices are likely to be internally divided. Tomson's chapter points to an important example—the ambivalences found in anti-gay violence, which help to make such violence a systemic feature of Australian life, not just a matter of individual pathology. Poynting, Noble and Tabar trace another: the contradiction between the claim to authority,

and the experience of subordination, under the pressure of racism. Masculinities are often in tension—and it seems likely that such tensions are important sources of change.

There is abundant evidence that masculinities are able to change. Masculinities are created and enacted in specific historical circumstances. As those circumstances change, the gender practices can be contested and reconstructed. Dowsett shows one important reason for this: the inherent instability of categories such as "heterosexual" and "homosexual" and of the social order built on them—an instability which is far more than a question of fuzzy boundaries.

Yet the gender order does not blow away at a breath. Donaldson's chapter shows a major reason why—the persistence of power and wealth, and the active defence of privilege. The tragic cases discussed by Cumneen and Stubbs show a dynamic which starts from a sense of male entitlement—the defensive ideology of male supremacy, which produces a traffic in "Asian" women marketed for their imagined submissiveness, and turns towards violence when the reality of a relationship kicks in. Almost as disturbing as the imagery of this trade is the acceptance by the legal system of victim-blaming arguments in mitigation of homicidal attacks on Filipino women by their Australian husbands.

The conclusions of the recent social research represent a major advance over earlier understandings of masculinity, and I consider that no account of men and gender can be credible that does not come to terms with both the new empirical evidence, and the theoretical ideas that have accompanied them. This is not to say that recent work on masculinity is beyond criticism. There are, indeed, acknowledged difficulties in what Hearn (1998), in an important conceptual review, calls "men's theorising of men", and there is both internal debate and criticism from other standpoints.

One important problem concerns the relation between "men" and "masculinity". For some practical purposes, studying men in gender relations is so close to studying social constructions of masculinity that the differences

don't matter. But in other cases the differences do matter. Unless we are to subside into an essentialist equation of masculinity with men, we must acknowledge that sometimes masculine conduct or masculine identity goes together with a female body, as shown in detail by Halberstam (1998). It is actually very common for a (biological) man to have at least elements of "feminine" identity, desire, and patterns of conduct—as we would expect, if only from the fact that the upbringing of young children is, in our society's division of labour, overwhelmingly done by women.

Research on masculinities has been criticised for a focus on fixed identities, or for a presumption of stability in masculinity. This criticism has mainly come from poststructuralists, who emphasise rather than identities are constructed in discourse, and that there is only a contingent relation between a person and a location in a discursive system. I do not find this criticism a very compelling one. Pop psychology generally presumes fixed identities, but research on the social construction of masculinities does not. Indeed it has placed a good deal of emphasis on the uncertainties, difficulties and contradictions of the process by which masculinities are made.

Whether the outcomes are stable or unstable, mostly fluid or mostly fixed, is surely an empirical question, not one to be settled in advance by theory. One can point to cases, both in research and in practice, where patterns of masculinity are actually quite tough and resistant to change. Anti-violence work is a case in point; Cunneen and Stubbs' chapter documents one dimension of a large and very intractable problem of domestic violence by husbands justified by male-supremacist ideologies. On the other hand, one can point to other situations where masculinities are indeed unstable or in tension—and the forms of violence discussed by Tomson seem a case in point. Investigating the circumstances where gender patterns are less or more open to change seems an important task for research. It is the point of the theoretical discussion of "crisis tendencies" mentioned in Dowsett's chapter.

A more convincing criticism has been directed at the

concept of "hegemonic masculinity", at least in some of its uses. Critics have pointed out a tendency to reify this term, so that it becomes effectively a fixed character type, something like the once-famous "Type A personality". Given this tendency, all the nasty things men do—rape, assault, environmental degradation, dog-eat-dog business practices, etc.—can be loaded into the bag of "hegemonic masculinity". And the more extreme this image becomes, the less it has to be owned by the majority of men.

To put it more formally, there is a tendency in many discussions towards a psychologisation of problems arising from gender relations, and a drift away from concern with institutions, power relations, and social inequalities. It may be helpful to recall that the term "hegemony" was introduced into discussions of masculinity to deal with relational issues—most importantly, the connections between the differences and hierarchies among men, and the relations between men and women (e.g. Connell 1983).

Hegemony is not just a local issue. There is now a clear need to move beyond the "ethnographic" level of most recent masculinity research—productive as it has certainly been—to think about gender relations on the larger scale, on the level of world society. Feminist researchers have been discussing the position of women globally for a considerable time (Bulbeck 1998). If we can recognise the global dimension of gender relations, we must think about how men are positioned globally.

We need to consider how particular masculinities were produced by globalising forces, throughout the history of imperialism and neo-colonialism; and we need to study the constitution of masculinities and the gender politics of men under contemporary globalisation. The pattern of "Australian masculinities" does not make much sense until it is seen as part of the history of settler colonialism, dependent industrialisation, and contemporary globalisation.

This gives a larger significance to issues already raised about class, race and ethnicity, and other structures of power. Poynting, Noble and Tabar rightly argue that ethnicity is not an add-on; that the practices of ethnicity are present all

the time in constructions of masculinity. This applies to the masculinities of the dominant ethnic group as much as to the masculinities of minorities—though there are different problems in understanding “whiteness” or “Anglo-ness” or “Aussie-ness”, only now emerging as an important topic in ethnic studies. Donaldson’s exploration of the making of masculinities in settings of great wealth should not be seen as a study of an exotic minority, but as a key move in understanding social dynamics as a whole. The Australian ruling class is part of an international capitalist order. The careers of individual entrepreneurs such as Rupert Murdoch make this clear, but the connection is routinely present in the functioning of Australia’s dependent economy and in the ascendancy of neo-conservative politics.

Global inequalities are, of course, crucial for the racialised violence discussed by Cunneen and Stubbs. Their chapter is notable for exploring a new social space where the politics of gender is played out—the internet, now an arena for the marketing of sexual fantasies which can turn all too real. But this is not the only case. The global dimension keeps cropping up in the studies in this volume—from the effects of international labour migration in creating the ethnic communities of Australian cities, to the world circulation of class and sexual identities. For instance the “car culture” that is the context for Walker’s young men is precisely founded on a global industry, constituted in the circuits of global technology and communications. These men’s stories would be inconceivable as purely local stories, however intimately their motorised masculinity is felt in the body.

Understanding bodies and body issues is another difficult but essential task. Not that there is a lack of information or debate here. Body issues (sport, violence, health, sexuality) were important to women’s liberation and men’s liberation debates in the early 1970s. When my colleagues and I examined the Australian research on men’s health (Connell et al. 1999), we were impressed by the sheer volume of information that is available—though also impressed by how much it needed re-thinking in the light of masculinity research.

As Rowe and McKay put it, the masculine body is not just an object, it is a body “charged with emotion”. Thinking through the body-reflexive practices of sexuality, as Dowsett has done; of violence, as Tomson has done; and of sport, as Wedgwood has done—together with a range of other issues, such as boys’ physical growth and development—are key theoretical tasks now. Given the continuing popularity of conservative biological-reductionist beliefs about gender—speculative as they are—continuing exploration of the social process of embodiment is crucial.

It is crucial, because without an understanding of embodiment, issues about men’s bodies become a major obstacle to understanding, or even recognising, change in masculinities. Research has established comprehensively that masculinities are mutable, that change is possible. Historians have gone a considerable distance in mapping the fact of change, at least in representations and discourses of masculinity.

But we have not got very far beyond the sex-role reformers of the 1970s in the practical capacity to achieve change, or in the techniques with which we attempt it. Reforming masculinities is still, mostly, a matter of contesting stereotypes in public, undertaking group work to re-evaluate relationships and conduct, or undertaking individual therapy. For that reason, I think the recent opening of public debates about men, boys and masculinities—however reactionary many of the ideas that are circulated in them—is a progressive development.

We are now challenged to develop agendas of change in arenas from health policy to family violence to primary education. To do this well is not easy, but the research presented in this book is what will make it possible. Developing models of change which bring together (as this research does) collective processes with individual experience, using the full range of our understanding of gender processes in society, will be an important contribution—not just to gender studies, which is already enriched by this work, but also to the solution of pressing social problems.