

men, thereby illustrating the potential for change or a rejection of change within men.

Men are always more than simply men. We cannot attach any clear meaning to an individual simply by identifying them as a man. We must go beyond that and into the realms of the social web from which, individuals come to be and represent 'themselves'. So dimensions of class, ethnicity, age, race, nationhood, religion, sexuality, health, are some of the key effects, which individually and together, conspire to produce the individual that is 'man'. Each of these areas has investment in and is given meaning through specific practices which in turn serve to reinforce their cultural significance and meaning. So the health, sexuality or religion of individual men manifests itself through the practices of those men. In this we can see the direct, if not seamless, connection between the individual and the collective. This connection is given added poignancy once we recognise the fragility of masculinity. For it can be argued that it is only through the practices of men that masculinity is made real.

This connection between men's practices and the collective that is 'men' offers us a glimpse of the circularity that continues to sustain gender. Men's practices emerge from the conditions of possibility that are offered to them through powerful ideological or discursive regimes (e.g. sexuality, ethnicity, class, work) and which are central to their life course and experience. In taking up these gendered practices individual men practise masculinity while simultaneously contributing to the identification of a collective that is men. There seems little chance of breaking this circularity, not least because arguably the key driver behind this process is the desire to be (a man). So all men's practices are, at base, related to some form of gender signification, or masculine identification, process. To be sure, there may well be the more instrumental pursuit of power, control, dominance or material accumulation, also driving these practices. However, to posit all men's practices as a drive for dominance is to slip back

into a biological determinism which assumes all men have an inner urge to dominate women and other men. Self-evidently this is not the case, so we have to look beyond the pursuit of power to the pursuit of identity to understand how men's practices are sustained, while recognising that male power may well be reinforced through exactly these same practices. For to be sure, all men must have an identity, not least because such identities are not offered them through biology but through engagement with the social (see McNay 2000).

Recognising men's practices in this way takes us towards a recognition that men can change. There is nothing inevitable about men and their maleness which requires men to always behave and respond in a certain way. So men's practices should be seen as indicative of their possibilities, not indicative of their limits. This makes the critical study of men and masculinity all the more significant, not least because the sheer contingency of men and masculinity requires us to constantly examine and interrogate their actions and behaviours. In other words, there is no final answer to men, and indeed no finite, closed definition of them. As with their practices, all is open to possibility.

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See also: gender order; identity; masculinity/masculinities; masculinity politics; men

STEPHEN M. WHITEHEAD

MEN'S RELATIONS WITH MEN

Men's relations with men structure the practices, processes and cultures of a wide variety of social contexts. Homosocial bonds have a profound influence on men's friendships with

other men and their social and sexual relations with women. Various institutional contexts, from schools and workplaces to militaries and governments, are dominated by males and shaped by the relations between them. Male–male relations define important kinship and familial connections. Finally, sexual relations between men have been documented across the world and throughout history, although their meanings and their associations with sexual identities and communities are diverse.

Scholarship on men and gender has emphasised that masculinity is highly homosocial – that men's lives are highly organised by relations between men. Homosociality refers to social bonds between persons of the same sex, and more broadly to same–sex–focused social relations. Men's performances of gender often represent homosocial enactments, undertaken in front of and in search of approval from other men (Kimmel 1994). Dynamics of bonding and solidarity, as well as hierarchies of power and status, characterise male–male relations in many social contexts. Men's homosocial bonds are central to the organisation and maintenance of women's subordination. However, male homosociality does not necessarily involve the subordination of women or of particular groups of men.

Homosociality plays a central role in boys' and men's performances of gender. Proper masculine status often is granted by other males. In front of male audiences, men demonstrate their gendered status by accumulating key markers of manhood: interpersonal power, dominance, physical and sexual prowess (Kimmel 1994). While other males can grant masculine status, they can also take it away. Male collectivities, especially informal male peer groups among boys and young men, police and reward or punish males' performances of gender.

Gender inequalities disadvantaging women are sustained in part by male homosocial relations. Early feminist work emphasised that patriarchy, the social system of male domination, was built on relations between men 'which, though hierarchical, establish or create

interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women' (Hartmann 1981: 14). Men's dominance of political and economic hierarchies is sustained in part through informal male bonds or 'boys' clubs'. Men may maintain women's exclusion from or subordination in workplaces and institutions through male-focused work networks, bonding, and investment in and pursuit of other men's attention, company and approval (Flood and Pease 2006). Processes of male bonding in workplaces also construct men's privilege by emphasising men's difference from and superiority to women.

Male homosociality is implicated too in some of the bluntest expressions of sexism and gender inequality, in men's violence against women. Participation in homosocial male peer groups can intensify men's tolerance for violence against women, and male peer support is a critical factor in men's perpetration of physical and sexual violence (Reitzel-Jaffe and Wolfe 2001). The cultures and collective rituals of male bonding among closely knit male fraternities and male athletes on college campuses foster leniency towards or even perpetration of sexual assault against women. Rape is more likely in fraternities showing greater gender segregation, less non-sexual male–female interaction, and local cultures of sexism, sexual boasting and sexual harassment. Rape may be both a means to and an expression of male bonding.

Similar dynamics are evident in violence against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons in public spaces, typically carried out by groups of young men and expressing homosocial and heterosexist bonds (Herek 1992). Male bonding is also associated with the solidarity between men expressed in and maintained through military combat. Mateship fosters the dehumanising of the enemy as Other and enables individuals to endure war and maintain the killing process. The sense of loyalty and commitment to one's fellow soldiers sustains military conflict (Page 2002).

Male homosocial bonds and desire have been widely documented in literary and cultural

contexts. Sedgwick (1985) argues that an erotic triangle between two men and one woman, based on homosocial relays of desire between rival heterosexual males, is found throughout British literature. Other scholarship has examined bonds between men in such diverse texts as ancient Greek poetry, Western films and science fiction. Homosocial relations were central to the fraternal organisations that proliferated in nineteenth-century Europe and the sworn brotherhoods of imperial China, based on secrecy, authority and male–male or brotherly solidarity (Nye 2000).

Homosocial bonding can support or oppose homosexual sex. Anthropological research notes examples where homosociality and homosexuality overlap, in which sexual practices between older and younger men or boys establish masculinity. Homoerotic homosociality has characterised some cultural and institutional contexts, for example in Nazi Germany, in which intense and eroticised male bonding was intertwined with misogyny (Nye 2000).

Male–male sexual relations have been documented in a wide variety of historical and cultural contexts. Such sexual involvements do not necessarily involve discrete homosexual or gay identities. The relationships between sexual identity and sexual practice are complex and contradictory, as the category ‘men who have sex with men’ (MSM) in AIDS education recognises. The term ‘MSM’ itself risks masking diversities and fluidities. As Dowsett *et al.* (2003) note in a review of male–male sexual relations in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Thailand, men who have sex with men may not fit into any socially or self-defined group of MSM. While some male–male sexual practices express ‘traditional’ sexual relations and categories, others result from modernisation and urbanisation, and while some male–male sexual networks are dense and stable, others are scattered and intermittent.

In male-dominated and highly homosocial contexts such as military institutions, male–male relations may also structure men’s sexual

and social relations with women. Flood (2006) reports that some young heterosexual Australian men give top priority to their male–male friendships and find platonic friendships with women dangerously feminising. For them heterosexual activity confers masculine status and is an important medium for male bonding.

There have been historical shifts in the dominant bonds of male–male friendships. Nye (2000) describes a democratisation of friendship, from an orientation towards vertical ties and the advancement of personal or family interest to an orientation towards horizontal ties. In some historical moments male friendship has been contained through associations with homosexuality and effeminacy, while in others it has been affirmed through associations with virility and manhood. Intimate male friendships, secret male societies and brotherly bonds have posed various challenges to established social orders, by undermining the patriarchal authority of fathers or rulers or destabilising the traditional solidarities and processes of kinship. Nevertheless, most male bonds have been premised on men’s domination and the rejection of femininity (Nye 2000).

Male–male relations define the kinship and familial connections between fathers and sons, brothers, uncles, nephews, grandfathers and others. Other than scholarship on fathers and sons, there has been relatively little research on the gendered character of kin and family relations among men. Nye (2000) describes historical examinations of fraternal bonds in Europe and late imperial China and the ways in which brothers’ competition or closeness was shaped by wider social and political forces. Contemporary qualitative research in New Zealand and the USA documents diverse relationships among uncles and nephews and finds evidence that (some) uncles act as mentors, family historians and intergenerational buffers in conflicts between parents and children, while nephews provide uncles with companionship and support (Milardo 2005).

While male homosociability is implicated in various patriarchal practices, it may also be neutral or desirable. Men may bond as friends, comrades, family members or lovers in ways that do not subordinate women or other men. Indeed, intimate friendships between men are valuable correctives to men's emotional stoicism and reliance on women's emotional labour.

It is a robust finding in Western scholarship that men's same-sex friendships are less intimate than women's (Bank and Hansford 2000). Bank and Hansford reject the idea that intimacy and support have different meanings for men and women, noting that these do not vary by gender. They also reject the idea that intimacy is less crucial to men's enjoyment of their friendships than to women's. For both men and women, greater enjoyment is associated with greater self-disclosure and expressive behaviours. Instead, intimacy in male-male friendships is constrained by masculine emotional restraint (emotional repression, stoicism and insensitivity) and homophobia. While overt expressions of affection were common in young men's close friendships in nineteenth-century America, they are largely prohibited by contemporary American social norms (Morman and Floyd 1998). There are strong cultural proscriptions against the expression of verbal and non-verbal male-male affection, although these are relaxed when men are related (as there is less danger of being seen as homosexual), the situation is emotionally charged, or it is in public.

Men's groups and men's movements have attempted to break down men's emotional isolation, foster male intimacies and support, and build communities of men. Such efforts may involve personal sharing, critical consciousness-raising or rituals of male bonding and initiation.

Male-male relations in many cultures have been seen as central in inducting or initiating boys into manhood. The most visible contemporary incarnation of this in Western countries is the emphasis on the importance of 'male role models', and especially fathers,

in aiding boys' transition into proper adult male status. Children in general, and boys in particular, are seen to require the presence of a biological father to ensure their healthy development. However, empirical examinations of parental influence find that fathers' masculinity and other individual characteristics are far less important formatively than the warmth and closeness of fathers' relationships with their sons. In other words, it is the characteristics of fathers as parents rather than their characteristics as men that influence child development. Nor is there evidence that boys raised only by women (including by lesbian mothers) are any more likely than other boys to become homosexual, adopt an unconventional gender identity or orientation, or experience other kinds of behavioural and social maladjustment and dysfunction (Flood 2003). Indeed, why do unconventional gender or sexual orientations necessarily count as adverse outcomes? At the same time, men's involvement with children is desirable because it expands the practical, emotional and social resources available for parenting and because of the distinctive, but not unique, contribution to parenting made by male parents.

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See also: friendship; mateship

MICHAEL FLOOD

MEN'S RELATIONS WITH WOMEN

'Ways in which to be a man are shaped through relationships with other men' (Bredesen 2004). This sentiment characterises to a large extent the key interests of many researchers on men and masculinities (for a critical reflection, see Hearn 2004; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Does it make sense to make men's relations with women (MRWW) a topic at all? This question indicates that MRWW, far from being an easy topic, are rather comprehensive: they include men's relation to feminism as politics and as research; to women as partners, mothers, sisters, daughters, friends, colleagues, competitors and adversaries; but also as a gender category.

This entry has four foci. First, the analytical levels of MRWW. Then, the various fields and topics that have been covered by research, an issue which can itself be further subdivided into two: men's *accounts* concerning their relations with women; and their *practices* in relations with women. Fourth and finally, some

areas of tension and public discourse are discussed, and a utopian horizon of possible relations with women is outlined.

Analytical levels

As gender is relational, 'men' can only be conceptualised as 'men' in relation to 'women'. While this is widely accepted in masculinities scholarship, the ways of doing theory are diverse. In addition, MRWW may be understood as a task for empirical description and analysis. Again, a variety of perspectives can be considered.

MRWW may be articulated on a 'macro'-level, at the level of society. Gender relations appear as a structure that is characterised by the positioning of gender groups in society, for instance in the economic realm, according to a line of gendered segmentation. 'Patriarchy', 'gender system' and 'gender-hierarchical division of labour' are concepts that underline the structural aspects of MRWW. Relations of exploitation and appropriation, domination and oppression, represent important features of MRWW; continuous gendered inequality, for instance gendered wage-gaps, may provide an important empirical clue regarding the structural relevance of gender. Debates about what principle is predominant – capitalism or patriarchy – have been central in the 1970s and 1980s and important attempts have been made to transfer the concept of patriarchy into an analytically useful concept for present societies. Nowadays, structural perspectives in the West have mainly abandoned or transformed the concept of patriarchy (Walby 1997), whereas international organisations like WHO still use it, with good reasons, as a concept to name problematical and stable structural relations of MRWW, such as violence, sexual exploitation and gender-linked oppression (WHO 2002).

At the 'meso'-level, organisations and institutions are under consideration. Institutions (such as those of the law, social politics, family and schooling), and organisations in the market and non-market sectors of society, frame

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