

MICHAEL MOLLER

a roadmap to  
**men and  
masculinities**

MICHAEL S KIMMEL, JEFF HEARN AND  
RW CONNELL (EDS)

*Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*

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In introducing this edited collection of writing about men and masculinities, the editors note that the academic interest in men and masculinities has expanded rapidly in recent years. This may be attributed, at least in part, to 'a growing public interest in men's and boys' identities, conduct, and problems, ranging from men's violence to boys' difficulties in schools'. (1) The massive growth in research and writing about masculinities, however, presents its own pragmatic problem. For the sheer quantity of material on masculinities, 'developed across the social sciences, the humanities, the biological sciences, and (to some extent) in other fields', (1) makes the exercise of mapping the development of the field, and its current state in terms of both content and context, a very time-consuming one. The strength of this collection, then, is that it gathers together an impressive range of contemporary sociological thought about men and masculinity. As a 'handbook' it guides the reader through the vast amount of material published on masculinities and men. The book clearly maps the historical development of the field, the key ideas that constitute it, and how particular questions and problems to do with men and masculinity have been identified in different contexts.

The first section of this book reviews the way in which three broad intellectual disciplines—social theory, feminism, and gay and queer studies—have contributed to the emergence of contemporary masculinity studies. The chapters by Øystein Gullvåg Holter, Judith Kegan Gardiner and Tim Edwards usefully historicise the issues, concerns and modes of argumentation scholars have developed within the field.

Importantly, each of the contributors recognise that no discipline ‘owns’ masculinity studies, and that the theorisation of masculinity/ies is an ongoing task. (Though for me, this isn’t yet sufficient to claim that the collection is ‘interdisciplinary’ in any sense other than representing what distinct, if diverse, academic disciplines know about masculinity.) Holter, for example, argues for the need to continually refine the tools with which patriarchy is analysed. He concludes that simplistic equations such as “men = patriarchy” or “masculinity = power” (31) fail to elucidate the problems of gender inequality, especially insofar as these pertain to, and are felt by, men. Put simply, research within masculinity studies ‘must show the profit for men as well as women’ (31) for changing how masculinity is articulated at both the individual and structural levels.

In a similar fashion, Gardiner’s chapter on the way feminist theory has brought masculinities and men into critical focus challenges us to keep rethinking masculinity/ies. Gardiner charts several strands in the development of masculinity as an object of feminist study, arguing that the various traditions within feminist thought each have a contribution to make in terms of researching masculinity. For example, contemporary liberal feminism is positioned as usefully contributing to debates about ‘what fosters boys’ and girls’ best learning’, while poststructural feminism ‘looks particularly fruitful for psychological studies in masculinity and queer theory’. (38, 46) While the call for theoretical and methodological ‘horses for courses’ may be seen to make an important point about the need to adapt conceptual tools

to the particular problem at hand, herein lies a problem with the way interdisciplinarity is conceived. For in describing the contributions made, and to be made, by various modes of feminist theorisation, Gardiner runs the risk of reinscribing theoretical and disciplinary orthodoxies. Shortly after claiming poststructural feminism for the study of the psychology of masculinity and queer theory, for example, Gardiner limits what queer theory is capable of achieving, noting that it ‘pay[s] little attention to some of the central concerns of other kinds of feminist theorizing: to parenting, for example, or citizenship, or the gendered politics of work’. (47)

In a review of queer theory’s contribution to thinking through the performance of gay masculinities, Edwards echoes Gardiner’s reservations about queer theory when he claims that Butler’s concept of performativity, which throughout the book is used as the exemplary form of feminist cultural studies, lacks materiality. Claiming that ‘the thrust of her analysis was that gender primarily exists at the level of discourse’, Edwards implicitly favours a return to a broadly sociological apprehension of ‘power as an institutionally coercive, politically sanctioned, and socially practiced series of mechanisms of oppression’. (61–2) Indeed, throughout the book ‘discourse’ is frequently described in ways that suggest it lacks reality, that it is not material enough, that it is only representational. But as Butler, among others, has argued, we cannot counterpose materiality with discourse in this way, for materiality is always subject to conceptualisation. Nevertheless, the chapters in this overtly theoretical section of

the book remind those engaged in cultural studies of the need to articulate how and why discourses, representations and concepts matter.

After mapping the theoretical legacy of masculinity studies, the book then moves 'from the larger global and institutional articulations of masculinities to the more intimate and personal expressions'. The editors justify structuring the collection in this way by explaining that, 'as sociologists, we believe that these institutional arenas and processes form the framework in which masculinities are experienced and expressed'. (7) The second section of the book, then, examines some global and regional patterns of masculinity and men's lives. Thus, while attesting to the contribution made by studies of local and localised masculinities, RW Connell's chapter on the connection between globalisation and masculinity insists that scholars now need to 'show the significance of a broader historical context for local constructions of masculinity'. (71) While his understanding of the relation between global and local is problematic in the way it positions globalisation as that which always dictates to the local (can local versions of masculinity *never* exert pressure on globalised masculinities to do things differently?), Connell's point about the need to articulate the local to the global is well made.

Robert Morrell and Sandra Swart's contribution sets out what such a local/global articulation might look like in their analysis of postcolonial work on gender, especially masculinity. They identify three main ways in which postcolonialism has shaped the study of race and masculinity. First, postcolonial theory and

politics has fostered the extensive analysis of black men. Second, postcolonialism has uncovered indigenous knowledges, a strategy which again runs the risk of essentialism, but that can usefully foreground the partiality of white, middle-class, western concepts of masculinity. And third, postcolonialism has given rise to gender and development perspectives that seek to grapple with the work performed by men. In this way 'development initiatives' are able to 'focus on men's self-image, their involvement in parenting and caring, reproductive health issues, and reducing violence'. (100)

Separate chapters on masculinities in Latin America, East Asia and Europe round out this section on global and regional patterns of (male) masculinities. Matthew Gutmann and Mara Viveros Vigoya outline the main empirical focuses of research into Latin America masculinities. In doing so, they critique western appropriations (and simplifications) of the term 'machismo', cautioning readers against homogenising the meanings of masculinity, a caution that also points to the conceptual limits of identifying regional patterns of masculinity. Futoshi Taga's chapter on East Asian masculinities—Chinese, Japanese and Korean—also charts the similarities and differences in the expression of masculinities within those cultures. For example, with regard to Japanese masculinities, Taga notes that militaristic tropes suffuse the representation of men's economic activity: 'Although the military has not represented a Japanese masculine ideal since the defeat in World War II, the military image has survived in the masculine field of the economic war'. (132) The collaborative chapter on men and

masculinities in 'Europe' also locates masculinity and men's practices in their specific economic, historical and political contexts. Europeanisation, as the authors make clear, is lived, felt and thought in profoundly different ways in the European Union's member states. Masculinities, then, are expressed as 'glocal' articulations of national, politico-economic and familial power.

The third section on the 'structures, institutions and processes' by, and within which, masculinities are performed is the book's largest section. Consisting of chapters on class, sexuality, crime, education, families, fatherhood, the popular media and work cultures, this section threads together analyses of the way men's lives are both enabled and confined by a range of Althusserian-type ideological state apparatuses (ISAs). I emphasise *men's* lives here because it is in this section that the distinction between masculinity and men is most obviously, and repeatedly, elided. (The title of the book itself suggests something of an inevitable, even necessary, connection between 'masculinity' and 'men'.) To some degree this reflects a concern with the coercive power of ISAs to interpellate males and females as men and women respectively. However, and as Judith Halberstam has argued, to continually and exclusively report on the way *men* perform masculinity, runs the risk of reinscribing masculinity as based on sexual, that is genital, difference.<sup>1</sup>

For example, Ken Plummer's chapter on male sexualities is framed by his observation that 'overall, sex is seen to have a much more *driven* quality for men ... Thus, men are much more likely than women to become *sexual con-*

*sumers*'. (179) While he then goes on to critique this understanding of 'hegemonic male sexuality' by elaborating on the diversity of men's sexual practices and their meanings, Plummer has already attributed masculinity as something belonging exclusively to male bodies. Or, more accurately, in recognising differences within men's sexual practices, masculinity is imagined as diverse, *but as limited to males*. In an otherwise engaging account of the numerous ways in which male sexualities are being challenged by a 'progressive postmodernization of sex', (189) I was left wondering why scholars persist in seeing men's sexuality—and the sense of masculinity that both motivates and is effected by it—as so, well, male.

Notwithstanding this reservation about reinscribing 'masculinity' as always and only meaning 'men', the chapters in this section serve as important reminders of the numerous ways in which masculinities are addressed by, and articulated to and within, social regimes of knowledge and power. In this vein, David Morgan highlights the 'relatively tight association between class and masculinity ... [in] ... modern or capitalist societies' and points to the relative lack of critical material on the classed aspects of masculinity outside the UK and the USA. (172) James Messerschmidt critically reviews two major recent contributions in criminology: Tony Jefferson's psychosocial theory of masculinity and crime, and a more 'material' apprehension of the (criminal) body as 'structured action'. Jon Swain reports on 'how school processes and the meanings and practices found within the school setting contribute to, and help form, young boys' masculinities',

while Michele Adams and Scott Coltrane chart how families have traditionally organised gender, noting that the 'abstract dominant ideal of masculinity ... can result in men's contradictory experiences of entitlement and alienation, privilege and pain'. (213, 244) William Marsiglio and Joseph Pleck review the recent research literature on fathering; and Jim McKay, Janine Mikosza and Brett Hutchins's chapter provides an overview of research on the representation of masculinities in men's bodies in the popular media, concluding that while men's bodies are increasingly shown in the popular media, and shown in diverse ways, we are still some distance from some sort of equality in the representation of men's and women's bodies. Rounding out this section of the book, David Collinson and Jeff Hearn attest to the 'significance of organizations as sites for the reproduction of men's power and masculinities'. (289)

Michael Messner's chapter on sporting masculinities opens the fourth section of the book. Subtitled 'Bodies, Selves, Discourses', this part of the collection deals with the more 'personal', embodied articulations of masculinity: sport, health, violence, and anatomical 'sex'. Messner highlights the ways in which sport works to differentiate masculinity from femininity, and male from female. As he shows, sport is increasingly apprehended as a complex cultural form that informs how men—athletes and non-athletes—practise masculinity. Thus Messner rejects the 'ghettoization of sport studies', and encourages cultural studies to integrate 'the study of sport within broader cultural studies approaches to the mass media and consumption', a call which I would echo. (320) Simi-

larly, Don Sabo's chapter provides an overview of how various discourses on masculinity, alongside and intersecting with discourses on race and sexuality, for example, differentiate 'men's health' as an object of study.

Walter DeKeseredy and Martin Schwartz review recent research investigating the link between men, masculinity and various forms of violence. Of particular interest here is their recognition of male peer-groups as frequently engendering anxiety, embarrassment and fear. They persuasively argue that many violent practices need to be understood within this affective social context. Thomas Gerschick's chapter on masculine body normativity unfortunately seems to struggle to move beyond the biological/social constructionist debate, and winds up outlining a list of ways men embody masculinity. In fairness, though, it's a pretty tough ask: how is one to do justice to the diversity of masculine embodiments? Richard Ekins and Dave King's task of elaborating how the link between 'male/s' and 'masculinity' has been broken by 'the coming of age of transgenderism' isn't much easier. (388) They succinctly describe how, in Bornstein's phrase, 'gender outlaws' have been understood within discourses ranging from medicine to masculinity studies. And they sound a welcome caution about the range of practices, discourses and bodies which masculinity studies sees as within its purview: 'there is more to Men and Masculinities Studies than men and masculinities'. (391)

The final section of the book, 'Politics', is concerned with the way masculinities are both constructed and challenged through political action of various kinds. Joane Nagel considers

the formulation of masculinity through the lens of the nation, paying particular attention to the masculine state's militarization and the different ways in which men and women experience citizenship. Michael Kimmel discusses the effects of globalization on masculinities, highlighting how anti-globalization rhetoric—particularly concerns about national economic identity, migration and an imagined national culture—can feed expressions of white, masculine supremacy. The chapters by Paul Higate and John Hopton on masculinity and militarism, and Shahin Gerami on Islamist and Muslim masculinities provide further resources for critically analysing the present-day practices of terrorism and counter-terrorism.

The collection ends with an excellent and encouraging piece by Michael Flood on men's critical engagement with patriarchal privilege. Flood cites an ethical regard for what is just, and a more pragmatic concern for the 'burdens' of masculinity as reasons why men, as well as women, ought to radically challenge the practices and politics of masculinity. (459) As an example of such change, he refers to various attempts, by men, to stop men's violence against women, including the international White Ribbon Campaign. While Flood's description of the ethical investment men have in such anti-violence campaigns is necessarily truncated, his examples raise important questions about power, practice, masculinity and change. Precisely how are calls for masculinity to change ethical? What kinds of resources or support do men (and women) need to challenge and change masculinities? How do men invest something of themselves in challenging their,

and others', masculinity? How might masculinity pose a limit to that investment?

The individual contributions that make up the *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* showcase how masculinity and men's studies has emerged as a field. While the chapters within this collection are largely framed by the theoretical and methodological tools of sociology, cultural studies perspectives are found throughout, albeit often with a degree of scepticism about their worth. Nonetheless, this book is a valuable resource, covering topics as varied as the diversity of men's sexual expression in western cultures to white, masculinist xenophobia in Scandinavia.

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MICHAEL MOLLER teaches in the Department of Gender Studies at the University of Sydney. His current research focuses on sports scandals as sites of cultural anxiety about masculinity, embodiment and ethics.

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1. Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1998.