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HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY
Rethinking the Concept

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The concept of hegemonic masculinity has influenced gender studies across many academic fields but has also attracted serious criticism. The authors trace the origin of the concept in a convergence of ideas in the early 1980s and map the ways it was applied when research on men and masculinities expanded. Evaluating the principal criticisms, the authors defend the underlying concept of masculinity, which in most research use is neither reified nor essentialist. However, the criticism of trait models of gender and rigid typologies is sound. The treatment of the subject in research on hegemonic masculinity can be improved with the aid of recent psychological models, although limits to discursive flexibility must be recognized. The concept of hegemonic masculinity does not equate to a model of social reproduction; we need to recognize social struggles in which subordinated masculinities influence dominant forms. Finally, the authors review what has been confirmed from early formulations (the idea of multiple masculinities, the concept of hegemony, and the emphasis on change) and what needs to be discarded (one-dimensional treatment of hierarchy and trait conceptions of gender). The authors suggest reformulation of the concept in four areas: a more complex model of gender hierarchy, emphasizing the agency of women; explicit recognition of the geography of masculinities, emphasizing the interplay among local, regional, and global levels; a more specific treatment of embodiment in contexts of privilege and power; and a stronger emphasis on the dynamics of hegemonic masculinity, recognizing internal contradictions and the possibilities of movement toward gender democracy.

Keywords: *masculinity; hegemony; gender; social power; agency; embodiment; globalization*

The concept of hegemonic masculinity, formulated two decades ago, has considerably influenced recent thinking about men, gender, and social hierarchy. It has provided a link between the growing research field of men's studies (also known as

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masculinity studies and critical studies of men), popular anxieties about men and boys, feminist accounts of patriarchy, and sociological models of gender. It has found uses in applied fields ranging from education and antiviolence work to health and counseling.

Database searches reveal more than 200 papers that use the exact term "hegemonic masculinity" in their titles or abstracts. Papers that use a variant, or refer to "hegemonic masculinity" in the text, run to many hundreds. Continuing interest is shown by conferences. In early May 2005, a conference, "Hegemonic Masculinities and International Politics," was held at the University of Manchester, England; in 2004, an interdisciplinary conference in Stuttgart was devoted to the topic "Hegemoniale Männlichkeiten" (Dinges, Ründal, and Bauer 2004).

The concept has also attracted serious criticism from several directions: sociological, psychological, poststructuralist, and materialist (e.g., Demetriou 2001; Wetherell and Edley 1999). Outside the academic world, it has been attacked as—to quote a recent Internet backlash posting—"an invention of New Age psychologists" determined to prove that men are too macho.

This is a contested concept. Yet the issues it names are very much at stake in contemporary struggles about power and political leadership, public and private violence, and changes in families and sexuality. A comprehensive reexamination of the concept of hegemonic masculinity seems worthwhile. If the concept proves still useful, it must be reformulated in contemporary terms. We attempt both tasks in this article.

ORIGIN, FORMULATION, AND APPLICATION

Origin

The concept of hegemonic masculinity was first proposed in reports from a field study of social inequality in Australian high schools (Kessler et al. 1982); in a related conceptual discussion of the making of masculinities and the experience of men's bodies (Connell 1983); and in a debate over the role of men in Australian labor politics (Connell 1982). The high school project provided empirical evidence of multiple hierarchies—in gender as well as in class terms—interwoven with active projects of gender construction (Connell et al. 1982).

These beginnings were systematized in an article, "Towards a New Sociology of Masculinity" (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985), which extensively critiqued the "male sex role" literature and proposed a model of multiple masculinities and power relations. In turn, this model was integrated into a systematic sociological theory of gender. The resulting six pages in *Gender and Power* (Connell 1987) on

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"hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity" became the most cited source for the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

The concept articulated by the research groups in Australia represented a synthesis of ideas and evidence from apparently disparate sources. But the convergence of ideas was not accidental. Closely related issues were being addressed by researchers and activists in other countries too; the time was, in a sense, ripe for a synthesis of this kind.

The most basic sources were feminist theories of patriarchy and the related debates over the role of men in transforming patriarchy (Goode 1982; Snodgrass 1977). Some men in the New Left had tried to organize in support of feminism, and the attempt had drawn attention to class differences in the expression of masculinity (Tolson 1977). Moreover, women of color—such as Maxine Baca Zinn (1982), Angela Davis (1983), and bell hooks (1984)—criticized the race bias that occurs when power is solely conceptualized in terms of sex difference, thus laying the groundwork for questioning any universalizing claims about the category of men.

The Gramscian term "hegemony" was current at the time in attempts to understand the stabilization of class relations (Connell 1977). In the context of dual systems theory (Eisenstein 1979), the idea was easily transferred to the parallel problem about gender relations. This risked a significant misunderstanding. Gramsci's writing focuses on the dynamics of structural change involving the mobilization and demobilization of whole classes. Without a very clear focus on this issue of historical change, the idea of hegemony would be reduced to a simple model of cultural control. And in a great deal of the debate about gender, large-scale historical change is not in focus. Here is one of the sources of later difficulties with the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

Even before the women's liberation movement, a literature in social psychology and sociology about the "male sex role" had recognized the social nature of masculinity and the possibilities of change in men's conduct (Hacker 1957). During the 1970s, there was an explosion of writing about "the male role," sharply criticizing role norms as the source of oppressive behavior by men (Brannon 1976). Critical role theory provided the main conceptual basis for the early antisexist men's movement. The weaknesses of sex role theory were, however, increasingly recognized (Kimmel 1987; Pleck 1981). They included the blurring of behavior and norm, the homogenizing effect of the role concept, and its difficulties in accounting for power.

Power and difference were, on the other hand, core concepts in the gay liberation movement, which developed a sophisticated analysis of the oppression of men as well as oppression by men (Altman 1972). Some theorists saw gay liberation as bound up with an assault on gender stereotypes (Mieli 1980). The idea of a hierarchy of masculinities grew directly out of homosexual men's experience with violence and prejudice from straight men. The concept of homophobia originated in the 1970s and was already being attributed to the conventional male role (Morin and Garfinkle 1978). Theorists developed increasingly sophisticated accounts of

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gay men's ambivalent relationships to patriarchy and conventional masculinity (Broker 1976; Plummer 1981).

An equally important source was empirical social research. A growing body of field studies was documenting local gender hierarchies and local cultures of masculinity in schools (Willis 1977), in male-dominated workplaces (Cockburn 1983), and in village communities (Herdt 1981; Hunt 1980). These studies added the ethnographic realism that the sex-role literature lacked, confirmed the plurality of masculinities and the complexities of gender construction for men, and gave evidence of the active struggle for dominance that is implicit in the Gramscian concept of hegemony.

Finally, the concept was influenced by psychoanalysis. Freud himself produced the first analytic biographies of men and, in the "Wolf Man" case history, showed how adult personality was a system under tension, with countercurrents repressed but not obliterated (Freud [1917] 1955). The psychoanalyst Stoller (1968) popularized the concept of "gender identity" and mapped its variations in boys' development, most famously those leading to transsexualism. Others influenced by psychoanalysis picked up the themes of men's power, the range of possibilities in gender development, and the tension and contradiction within conventional masculinities (Friedman and Lerner 1986; Zaretsky 1975).

Formulation

What emerged from this matrix in the mid-1980s was an analogue, in gender terms, of power structure research in political sociology—focusing the spotlight on a dominant group. Hegemonic masculinity was understood as the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue.

Hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men.

Men who received the benefits of patriarchy without enacting a strong version of masculine dominance could be regarded as showing a complicit masculinity. It was in relation to this group, and to compliance among heterosexual women, that the concept of hegemony was most powerful. Hegemony did not mean violence, although it could be supported by force; it meant ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion.

These concepts were abstract rather than descriptive, defined in terms of the logic of a patriarchal gender system. They assumed that gender relations were historical, so gender hierarchies were subject to change. Hegemonic masculinities therefore came into existence in specific circumstances and were open to historical

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change. More precisely, there could be a struggle for hegemony, and older forms of masculinity might be displaced by new ones. This was the element of optimism in an otherwise rather bleak theory. It was perhaps possible that a more humane, less oppressive, means of being a man might become hegemonic, as part of a process leading toward an abolition of gender hierarchies.

Application

The concept of hegemonic masculinity, formulated in these terms, found prompt use. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, research on men and masculinity was being consolidated as an academic field, supported by a string of conferences, the publication of textbooks (e.g., Brod 1987) and several journals, and a rapidly expanding research agenda across the social sciences and humanities.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity was used in education studies to understand the dynamics of classroom life, including patterns of resistance and bullying among boys. It was used to explore relations to the curriculum and the difficulties in gender-neutral pedagogy (Martino 1995). It was used to understand teacher strategies and teacher identities among such groups as physical education instructors (Skelton 1993).

The concept also had influence in criminology. All data reflect that men and boys perpetrate more of the conventional crimes—and the more serious of these crimes—than do women and girls. Moreover, men hold a virtual monopoly on the commission of syndicated and white-collar forms of crime. The concept of hegemonic masculinity helped in theorizing the relationship among masculinities and among a variety of crimes (Messerschmidt 1993) and was also used in studies on specific crimes by boys and men, such as rape in Switzerland, murder in Australia, football "hooliganism" and white-collar crime in England, and assaultive violence in the United States (Newburn and Stanko 1994).

The concept was also employed in studying media representations of men, for instance, the interplay of sports and war imagery (Jansen and Sabo 1994). Because the concept of hegemony helped to make sense of both the diversity and the selectiveness of images in mass media, media researchers began mapping the relations between representations of different masculinities (Hanke 1992). Commercial sports are a focus of media representations of masculinity, and the developing field of sports sociology also found significant use for the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Messner 1992). It was deployed in understanding the popularity of body-contact confrontational sports—which function as an endlessly renewed symbol of masculinity—and in understanding the violence and homophobia frequently found in sporting milieus (Messner and Sabo 1990).

The social determinants of men's health had been raised earlier, but the sex role concept was too diffuse to be very useful. The concepts of multiple masculinities and hegemonic masculinity were increasingly used to understand men's health practices, such as "playing hurt" and risk-taking sexual behavior (Sabo and Gordon

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1995). The concepts of hegemonic and subordinated masculinities helped in understanding not only men's exposure to risk but also men's difficulties in responding to disability and injury (Gerschick and Miller 1994).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity also proved significant in organization studies, as the gendered character of bureaucracies and workplaces was increasingly recognized. Ethnographic and interview studies traced the institutionalization of hegemonic masculinities in specific organizations (Cheng 1996; Cockburn 1991) and their role in organizational decision making (Messerschmidt 1995). A particular focus of this research was the military, where specific patterns of hegemonic masculinity had been entrenched but were becoming increasingly problematic (Barrett 1996).

Discussions of professional practice concerned with men and boys also found the concept helpful. Such practices include psychotherapy with men (Kupers 1993), violence-prevention programs for youth (Denborough 1996), and emotional education programs for boys (Salisbury and Jackson 1996).

These are the primary fields where the concept of hegemonic masculinity was applied in the decade following its formulation. But there was also a wider range of application, for instance, in discussions of art (Belton 1995), in academic disciplines such as geography (Berg 1994) and law (Thornton 1989), and in general discussions of men's gender politics and relation to feminism (Segal 1990). We may reasonably conclude that the analysis of multiple masculinities and the concept of hegemonic masculinity served as a framework for much of the developing research effort on men and masculinity, replacing sex-role theory and categorical models of patriarchy.

Eventually, the growing research effort tended to expand the concept itself. The picture was fleshed out in four main ways: by documenting the consequences and costs of hegemony, by uncovering mechanisms of hegemony, by showing greater diversity in masculinities, and by tracing changes in hegemonic masculinities.

Regarding costs and consequences, research in criminology showed how particular patterns of aggression were linked with hegemonic masculinity, not as a mechanical effect for which hegemonic masculinity was a cause, but through the pursuit of hegemony (Bufkin 1999; Messerschmidt 1997). Moreover, the pioneering research of Messner (1992) showed that the enactment of hegemonic masculinity in professional sports, while reproducing steep hierarchies, also comes at considerable cost to the victors in terms of emotional and physical damage.

Research has been fruitful in revealing mechanisms of hegemony. Some are highly visible, such as the "pageantry" of masculinity in television sports broadcasts (Sabo and Jansen 1992) as well as the social mechanisms Roberts (1993) calls "censure" directed at subordinated groups—ranging from informal name calling by children to the criminalization of homosexual conduct. Yet other mechanisms of hegemony operate by invisibility, removing a dominant form of masculinity from the possibility of censure (Brown 1999). Consalvo (2003), examining media reporting of the Columbine High School massacre, notes how the issue of

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masculinity was withdrawn from scrutiny, leaving the media with no way of representing the shooters except as "monsters."

International research has strongly confirmed the initial insight that gender orders construct multiple masculinities. Valdés and Olavarría (1998) show that even in a culturally homogeneous country such as Chile, there is no unitary masculinity, since patterns vary by class and generation. In another famously homogeneous country, Japan, Ishii-Kuntz (2003) traces the "emergence of diverse masculinities" in recent social history, with changes in child care practices a key development. Diversity of masculinities is also found in particular institutions, such as the military (Higate 2003).

Gutmann (1996), in the most beautifully observed modern ethnography of masculinity, studied a case where there is a well-defined public masculine identity—Mexican "machismo." Gutmann shows how the imagery of machismo developed historically and was interwoven with the development of Mexican nationalism, masking enormous complexity in the actual lives of Mexican men. Gutmann teases out four patterns of masculinity in the working-class urban settlement he studies, insisting that even these four are crosscut by other social divisions and are constantly renegotiated in everyday life.

Finally, a considerable body of research shows that masculinities are not simply different but also subject to change. Challenges to hegemony are common, and so are adjustments in the face of these challenges. Morrell (1998) assembles the evidence about gender transformations in southern Africa associated with the end of Apartheid, a system of segregated and competing patriarchies. Ferguson (2001) traces the decline of long-standing ideals of masculinity in Ireland—the celibate priest and the hardworking family man—and their replacement by more modernized and market-oriented models. Dasgupta (2000) traces tensions in the Japanese "salaryman" model of masculinity, especially after the "bubble economy" of the 1980s: A cultural figure of the "salaryman escaping" has appeared. Taga (2003) documents diverse responses to change among young middle-class men in Japan, including new options for domestic partnership with women. Meuser (2003) traces generational change in Germany, partly driven by men's responses to changes among women. Many (although not all) young men, now expecting women to reject patriarchal social relations, are crafting a "pragmatic egalitarianism" of their own. Morris and Evans (2001), studying images of rural masculinity and femininity in Britain, finds a slower pace of change but an increasing subtlety and fragmentation in the representation of hegemonic masculinity.

From the mid-1980s to the early 2000s, the concept of hegemonic masculinity thus passed from a conceptual model with a fairly narrow empirical base to a widely used framework for research and debate about men and masculinities. The concept was applied in diverse cultural contexts and to a considerable range of practical issues. It is not surprising, then, that the concept has attracted criticism, and to this we now turn.

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CRITIQUES

Five principal criticisms have been advanced since debate about the concept began in the early 1990s. In this section, we evaluate each criticism in turn, hoping to discover what is worth retaining from the original conception of hegemonic masculinity and what now needs reformulating.

The Underlying Concept of Masculinity

That the underlying concept of masculinity is flawed has been argued from two different points of view, realist and poststructuralist. To Collinson and Hearn (1994) and Hearn (1996, 2004), the concept of masculinity is blurred, is uncertain in its meaning, and tends to deemphasize issues of power and domination. It is ultimately unnecessary to the task of understanding and contesting the power of men. The concept of multiple masculinities tends to produce a static typology.

To Petersen (1998, 2003), Collier (1998), and MacInnes (1998), the concept of masculinity is flawed because it essentializes the character of men or imposes a false unity on a fluid and contradictory reality. Some versions of this argument criticize masculinity research because it has not adopted a specific poststructuralist tool kit—which would, for instance, emphasize the discursive construction of identities (Whitehead 2002). The concept of masculinity is criticized for being framed within a heteronormative conception of gender that essentializes male-female difference and ignores difference and exclusion within the gender categories. The concept of masculinity is said to rest logically on a dichotomization of sex (biological) versus gender (cultural) and thus marginalizes or naturalizes the body.

No responsible mind can deny that in the huge literature concerned with masculinity, there is a great deal of conceptual confusion as well as a great deal of essentializing. This certainly is common in accounts of masculinity in pop psychology, in the mythopoetic men's movement, and in journalistic interpretations of biological sex-difference research. It is another matter, however, to claim that the concept of masculinity must be confused or essentialist or even that researchers' use of the concept typically is.

We would argue that social science and humanities research on masculinities has flourished during the past 20 years precisely because the underlying concept employed is not reified or essentialist. The notion that the concept of masculinity essentializes or homogenizes is quite difficult to reconcile with the tremendous multiplicity of social constructions that ethnographers and historians have documented with the aid of this concept (Connell 2003). Even further removed from essentialism is the fact that researchers have explored masculinities enacted by people with female bodies (Halberstam 1998; Messerschmidt 2004). Masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting.

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The idea that a recognition of multiple masculinities necessarily turns into a static typology is likewise not borne out by the development of research. A paradigmatic example is Gutmann's (1996) Mexican ethnography, already mentioned. Gutmann is able to tease out different categories of masculinity—for example, the macho and the *mandilón*—while recognizing, and showing in detail, that these are not monadic identities but always are relational and constantly are crosscut by other divisions and projects. Warren's (1997) observations in a British elementary school provide another example. Different constructions of masculinity are found, which generate effects in classroom life, even though many boys do not fit exactly into the major categories; indeed, the boys demonstrate complex relations of attachment and rejection to those categories.

Although the idea that the concept of gender embeds heteronormativity is now a familiar criticism (Hawkesworth 1997), it is a contested criticism (Scott 1997). While it correctly identifies a problem in categorical models of gender, it is not a valid criticism of relational models of gender (e.g., Connell 2002; Walby 1997) nor of historical approaches where the construction of gender categories is the object of inquiry. In the development of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, divisions among men—especially the exclusion and subordination of homosexual men—were quite central issues (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985). The policing of heterosexuality has been a major theme in discussions of hegemonic masculinity since then.

The idea that the concept of masculinity marginalizes or naturalizes the body (because it is supposed to rest on a sex-gender dichotomy) is perhaps the most startling of the claims in this critique. Startling, because the interplay between bodies and social processes has been one of the central themes of masculinity research from its beginning. One of the first and most influential research programs in the new paradigm was Messner's (1992) account of the masculinity of professional athletes, in which the use of "bodies as weapons" and the long-term damage to men's bodies were examined. The construction of masculinity in a context of disability (Gerschick and Miller 1994), the laboring bodies of working-class men (Donaldson 1991), men's health and illness (Sabo and Gordon 1995), and boys' interpersonal violence (Messerschmidt 2000) are among the themes in research showing how bodies are affected by social processes. Theoretical discussion has explored the relevance of the "new sociology of the body" to the construction of masculinity (e.g., Connell 1995, chap. 2).

Critiques of the concept of masculinity make better sense when they point to a tendency, in research as well as in popular literature, to dichotomize the experiences of men and women. As Brod (1994) accurately observes, there is a tendency in the men's studies field to presume "separate spheres," to proceed as if women were not a relevant part of the analysis, and therefore to analyze masculinities by looking only at men and relations among men. As Brod also argues, this is not inevitable. The cure lies in taking a consistently relational approach to gender—not in abandoning the concepts of gender or masculinity.

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Ambiguity and Overlap

Early criticisms of the concept raised the question of who actually represents hegemonic masculinity. It is familiar that many men who hold great social power do not embody an ideal masculinity. On the other hand, Donaldson (1993) remarks that there did not seem to be much masculine substance to those men identified by researchers as hegemonic models. He discusses the case of the Australian "iron man" surf-sports champion described by Connell (1990), a popular exemplar of hegemonic masculinity. But the young man's regional hegemonic status actually prevents him doing the things his local peer group defines as masculine—going wild, showing off, driving drunk, getting into fights, and defending his own prestige.

Martin (1998) criticizes the concept for leading to inconsistent applications, sometimes referring to a fixed type of masculinity and on other occasions referring to whatever type is dominant at a particular time and place. Similarly, Wetherell and Edley (1999) contend that the concept fails to specify what conformity to hegemonic masculinity actually looks like in practice. And Whitehead (1998, 58; 2002, 93) suggests there is confusion over who actually is a hegemonically masculine man—"Is it John Wayne or Leonardo DiCaprio; Mike Tyson or Pele? Or maybe, at different times, all of them?"—and also about who can enact hegemonic practices.

We think the critics have correctly pointed to ambiguities in usage. It is desirable to eliminate any usage of hegemonic masculinity as a fixed, transhistorical model. This usage violates the historicity of gender and ignores the massive evidence of change in social definitions of masculinity.

But in other respects, ambiguity in gender processes may be important to recognize as a mechanism of hegemony. Consider how an idealized definition of masculinity is constituted in social process. At a society-wide level (which we will call "regional" in the framework below), there is a circulation of models of admired masculine conduct, which may be exalted by churches, narrated by mass media, or celebrated by the state. Such models refer to, but also in various ways distort, the everyday realities of social practice. A classic example is the Soviet regime's celebration of the *Stakhanovite* industrial worker, named for the coal miner Aleksandr Stakhanov who in 1935 hewed a world record 102 tons of coal in a single day, triggering a scramble to beat the record. Part of the distortion here was that the famous "shock workers" achieved their numbers with a great deal of unacknowledged help from coworkers.

Thus, hegemonic masculinities can be constructed that do not correspond closely to the lives of any actual men. Yet these models do, in various ways, express widespread ideals, fantasies, and desires. They provide models of relations with women and solutions to problems of gender relations. Furthermore, they articulate loosely with the practical constitution of masculinities as ways of living in everyday local circumstances. To the extent they do this, they contribute to hegemony in the society-wide gender order as a whole. It is not surprising that men who function

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as exemplars at the regional level, such as the "iron man" discussed by Donaldson (1993), exhibit contradictions.

At the local level, hegemonic patterns of masculinity are embedded in specific social environments, such as formal organizations. There are, for instance, well-defined patterns of managerial masculinity in the British corporations studied by Roper (1994) and Wajcman (1999). Socially legitimated hegemonic models of masculinity are also in play in families. For instance, men's gender strategies shape negotiations around housework and the "second shift" in the U.S. families studied by Hochschild (1989). Hegemonic patterns of masculinity are both engaged with and contested as children grow up. Gender is made in schools and neighborhoods through peer group structure, control of school space, dating patterns, homophobic speech, and harassment (Mac an Ghaill 1994; Thorne 1993). In none of these cases would we expect hegemonic masculinity to stand out as a sharply defined pattern separate from all others. A degree of overlap or blurring between hegemonic and complicit masculinities is extremely likely if hegemony is effective.

The overlap between masculinities can also be seen in terms of the social agents constructing masculinities. Cavender (1999) shows how hegemonic masculine models were constructed differently in feature films in the 1940s compared with the 1980s. This is not just a matter of the characters written into the scripts. Practice at the local level—that is, the actual face-to-face interaction of shooting the film as an actor—ultimately constructs hegemonic masculine fantasy models (in this case, "detectives") at the society-wide or regional level. (We will explore this question of the relations between levels in the Reformulation section of the article.)

The Problem of Reification

That the concept of hegemonic masculinity reduces, in practice, to a reification of power or toxicity has also been argued from different points of view. Holter (1997, 2003), in the most conceptually sophisticated of all critiques, argues that the concept constructs masculine power from the direct experience of women rather than from the structural basis of women's subordination. Holter believes that we must distinguish between "patriarchy," the long-term structure of the subordination of women, and "gender," a specific system of exchange that arose in the context of modern capitalism. It is a mistake to treat a hierarchy of masculinities constructed within gender relations as logically continuous with the patriarchal subordination of women. Holter (1997) tellingly points to Norwegian survey evidence showing that the gender identities of men do not map directly onto such equality-related practices as attitudes toward violence.

Holter (1997, 2003) certainly is correct that it is a mistake to deduce relations among masculinities from the direct exercise of personal power by men over women. At the least, we also must factor in the institutionalization of gender inequalities, the role of cultural constructions, and the interplay of gender dynamics with race, class, and region.

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It is, indeed, research on these issues that shows the concept of hegemonic masculinity is not trapped in reification. Among the fruitful studies of institutional masculinities are those that reveal quite subtle variations, for instance, between the different branches of a single military force, the U.S. Navy (Barrett 1996). There are studies of locally specific hegemonic masculinities constructed in spaces such as a New Zealand country pub, which show the interweaving of masculinity with rural identity (Campbell 2000). Other research, especially studies of school classrooms (Martino 1995; Warren 1997), shows the fine-grained production and negotiation of masculinities (and femininities) as configurations of practice.

Collier (1998) criticizes the concept of hegemonic masculinity through its typical use in accounting for violence and crime. In the "masculinity turn" in criminology, Collier suggests, hegemonic masculinity came to be associated solely with negative characteristics that depict men as unemotional, independent, nonnurturing, aggressive, and dispassionate—which are seen as the causes of criminal behavior. Martin (1998, 473) similarly observes a drift toward a view of hegemonic masculinity not just as a type but as a negative type, for instance, in "saying that defending gun ownership is a defense of hegemonic masculinity."

This criticism has force. It draws on McMahon's (1993) accurate analysis of the psychologism in many discussions of men and masculinity. Men's behavior is reified in a concept of masculinity that then, in a circular argument, becomes the explanation (and the excuse) for the behavior. This can be seen in many discussions of men's health and problems of boys' education—indeed, any of the contemporary troubles assembled under the banner of a "crisis in masculinity." In pop psychology, the invention of new character types is endemic (the alpha male, the sensitive new-age guy, the hairy man, the new lad, the "rat boy," etc.). In this environment, hegemonic masculinity can become a scientific-sounding synonym for a type of rigid, domineering, sexist, "macho" man (in the Anglo usage, e.g., Mosher and Tomkins 1988).

Because the concept of hegemonic masculinity is based on practice that permits men's collective dominance over women to continue, it is not surprising that in some contexts, hegemonic masculinity actually does refer to men's engaging in toxic practices—including physical violence—that stabilize gender dominance in a particular setting. However, violence and other noxious practices are not always the defining characteristics, since hegemony has numerous configurations. Indeed, as Wetherell and Edley (1999) ironically observe, one of the most effective ways of "being a man" in certain local contexts may be to demonstrate one's distance from a regional hegemonic masculinity.

Collier (1998) sees as a crucial defect in the concept of hegemonic masculinity that it excludes "positive" behavior on the part of men—that is, behavior that might serve the interests or desires of women. This hardly is a problem once we get beyond a rigid trait theory of personality. Most accounts of hegemonic masculinity do include such "positive" actions as bringing home a wage, sustaining a sexual relationship, and being a father. Indeed it is difficult to see how the concept of hegemony would be relevant if the only characteristics of the dominant group were

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violence, aggression, and self-centeredness. Such characteristics may mean domination but hardly would constitute hegemony—an idea that embeds certain notions of consent and participation by the subaltern groups.

Collier (1998, 21) is right in remarking that what actually is being discussed in many accounts of hegemonic masculinity and crime (and, we may add, health and education) is "a range of popular ideologies of what constitute ideal or actual characteristics of 'being a man.' " What Collier misses, however, is that sophisticated research consistently goes on to explore the relationship of those ideologies to the daily lives of boys and men—including the mismatches, the tensions, and the resistances.

It is men's and boys' practical relationships to collective images or models of masculinity, rather than simple reflections of them, that is central to understanding gendered consequences in violence, health, and education. This has been evident since Messerschmidt's (1993) formulation of the idea that different crimes are used by different men in the construction of masculinities. Collier finds this idea unacceptable, either tautological and universalizing, or too multitudinous in what it explains. But there is nothing surprising about the idea of diverse practices' being generated from common cultural templates; there is nothing conceptually universalizing in the idea of hegemonic masculinity. Coordination and regulation occur in the live social practices of collectivities, institutions, and whole societies. The concept of hegemonic masculinity is not intended as a catchall nor as a prime cause; it is a means of grasping a certain dynamic within the social process.

The Masculine Subject

Several authors have argued that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is based on an unsatisfactory theory of the subject. Wetherell and Edley (1999) develop this critique from the standpoint of discursive psychology, arguing that hegemonic masculinity cannot be understood as the settled character structure of any group of men. We must question "how men conform to an ideal and turn themselves into complicit or resistant types, without anyone ever managing to exactly embody that ideal" (p. 337).

Wetherell and Edley (1999) suggest we should understand hegemonic norms as defining a subject position in discourse that is taken up strategically by men in particular circumstances. Hegemonic masculinity has multiple meanings—a point that some authors have offered as a criticism but that Wetherell and Edley take as a positive point of departure. Men can dodge among multiple meanings according to their interactional needs. Men can adopt hegemonic masculinity when it is desirable; but the same men can distance themselves strategically from hegemonic masculinity at other moments. Consequently, "masculinity" represents not a certain type of man but, rather, a way that men position themselves through discursive practices.

Whitehead (2002, 93) argues that the concept of hegemonic masculinity can "see" only structure, making the subject invisible: "The individual is lost within, or,

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in Althusserian terms, subjected to, an ideological apparatus and an innate drive for power." To Whitehead, the concept fails to specify how and why some heterosexual men legitimate, reproduce, and generate their dominance and do so as a social minority vis-à-vis women and other men. Consequently, use of the concept results "in obfuscation, in the conflation of fluid masculinities with overarching structure and, ultimately, in 'abstract structural dynamics' " (Whitehead 2002, 93-94). For Whitehead, it is preferable to concentrate on discourse as the means by which men come to know themselves, to practice "identity work," and to exercise gender power and resistance.

A related criticism derives from psychoanalysis. According to this view, the model of hegemonic masculinity presumes a unitary subject; but depth psychology reveals a multilayered or divided subject (Collier 1998; Jefferson 1994). Jefferson (2002) criticizes the "over-socialized view of the male subject" in studies of masculinity, which has resulted in a lack of attention to how men actually relate psychologically to hegemonic masculinity. Given multiple masculinities, Jefferson argues that researchers should ask "how actual men, with their unique biographies and particular psychic formations, relate to these various masculinities" (p. 73). Jefferson suggests that boys and men choose those discursive positions that help them ward off anxiety and avoid feelings of powerlessness.

The argument from discursive psychology is well taken and is well integrated with a fruitful research approach. A good example is Lea and Auburn's (2001) study of the story told by a convicted rapist in a sex-offender program, which shows how the narrating offender moves between conflicting ideologies of sexual interaction in a way that reduces his responsibility for the rape. Another example is Archer's (2001) exploration of the identity talk of young Muslim men in Britain, showing how they use a specific model of hegemonic masculinity ("powerful, patriarchal") to position themselves in relation to Afro-Caribbean men, white men, and Muslim women. From this work, we can learn not only how masculinities are constructed in discourse but also how they are used in discourse. Specifically, we learn how a locally hegemonic version of masculinity can be used to promote self-respect in the face of discredit, for instance, from racist denigration.

Discursive perspectives emphasize the symbolic dimension, whereas the concept of hegemonic masculinity was formulated within a multidimensional understanding of gender. Although any specification of hegemonic masculinity typically involves the formulation of cultural ideals, it should not be regarded only as a cultural norm. Gender relations also are constituted through nondiscursive practices, including wage labor, violence, sexuality, domestic labor, and child care as well as through unreflective routinized actions.

Recognizing the nondiscursive and unreflective dimensions of gender gives us some sense of the limits to discursive flexibility. That there are such limits is a point powerfully made in Rubin's (2003) study of female-to-male transsexual men. One is not free to adopt any gender position in interaction simply as a discursive or

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reflexive move. The possibilities are constrained massively by embodiment, by institutional histories, by economic forces, and by personal and family relationships. The costs of making certain discursive choices can be extremely high—as shown by the rate of suicide among people involved in transsexual moves.

Constraint also may arise from within the person. Rubin's (2003) respondents act as they do, and face the costs, because of an unshakeable conviction of being men—despite starting out with female bodies and being brought up as girls. They are convinced of being unitary subjects, although they live a contradiction that seems to exemplify Jefferson's (1994, 2002) argument for the divided subject. We agree with Jefferson that psychoanalytic practice and theory are important resources for understanding the complex subject of gender practice. However, Jefferson's particular psychoanalytic approach is not without problems (Messerschmidt 2005), and it is important to recognize the diversity and wealth of the psychoanalytic tradition. Approaches such as Sartre's existential psychoanalysis are helpful for understanding masculinities as projects and a masculine identity as always being a provisional accomplishment within a life course. Adlerian psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the emotional consequences of gendered power relations in childhood, gave rise to the idea of the "masculine protest," which still resonates with contemporary discussions of marginalized youth.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity originally was formulated with a strong awareness of psychoanalytic arguments about the layered and contradictory character of personality, the everyday contestation in social life, and the mixture of strategies necessary in any attempt to sustain hegemony (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985; Connell 1987). It is somewhat ironic that the concept is criticized for oversimplifying the subject, but it is, of course, true that the concept often has been employed in simplified forms.

Does the concept necessarily erase the subject? We flatly disagree with Whitehead's (2002) claim that the concept of hegemonic masculinity reduces to structural determinism. Masculinity is defined as a configuration of practice organized in relation to the structure of gender relations. Human social practice creates gender relations in history. The concept of hegemonic masculinity embeds a historically dynamic view of gender in which it is impossible to erase the subject. This is why life-history studies have become a characteristic genre of work on hegemonic masculinity.

The concept homogenizes the subject only if it is reduced to a single dimension of gender relations (usually the symbolic) and if it is treated as the specification of a norm. As soon as one recognizes the multidimensionality of gender relations (Connell 2002) and the occurrence of crisis tendencies within gender relations (Connell 1995), it is impossible to regard the subject constituted within those relations as unitary. There are, of course, different ways of representing the incoherence of the subject. The conceptual language of poststructuralism is only one way of doing that; psychoanalysis and the model of agency within contradictory social structures provide others.

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The Pattern of Gender Relations

In social theories of gender, there has often been a tendency toward functionalism—that is, seeing gender relations as a self-contained, self-reproducing system and explaining every element in terms of its function in reproducing the whole. Hawkesworth (1997) detects this tendency in most modern theories of gender, and Bourdieu's (2001) late intervention to explain masculine domination has given a new lease on life to functionalism in gender analysis.

The dominance of men and the subordination of women constitute a historical process, not a self-reproducing system. "Masculine domination" is open to challenge and requires considerable effort to maintain. Although this point was made in early statements on the hegemonic masculinity concept, it is not just a theoretical idea. There is detailed work that shows the tactics of maintenance through the exclusion of women, ranging from Bird's (1996) work on homosociality to the organizational research by Collinson, Knights, and Collinson (1990), Cockburn (1991), and Martin (2001).

There exists considerable evidence that hegemonic masculinity is not a self-reproducing form, whether through habitus or any other mechanism. To sustain a given pattern of hegemony requires the policing of men as well as the exclusion or discrediting of women. Evidence of such mechanisms ranges from the discrediting of "soft" options in the "hard" world of international relations, security threats, and war (Hooper 2001), to homophobic assaults and murders (Tomsen 2002), all the way to the teasing of boys in school for "sissiness" (Kimmel and Mahler 2003; Messerschmidt 2000).

In Demetriou's (2001) careful critique of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, the historicity of gender is acknowledged. Demetriou, however, suggests that another kind of simplification has occurred. He identifies two forms of hegemony, internal and external. "External hegemony" refers to the institutionalization of men's dominance over women; "internal hegemony" refers to the social ascendancy of one group of men over all other men. Demetriou argues that the relationship between the two forms is unclear in the original formulation of the concept and unspecified in current usages. Moreover, internal hegemony typically has been understood in an "elitist" way. That is, subordinate and marginalized masculinities are seen as having no impact on the construction of hegemonic masculinity. Nonhegemonic masculinities exist in tension with, but never penetrate or impact, the hegemonic masculinity. There is, then, a dualistic representation of masculinities.

Such a conceptualization, Demetriou (2001) argues, misses the "dialectical pragmatism" of internal hegemony, by which hegemonic masculinity appropriates from other masculinities whatever appears to be pragmatically useful for continued domination. The result of this dialectic is not a unitary pattern of hegemonic masculinity but a "historic bloc" involving a weaving together of multiple patterns, whose hybridity is the best possible strategy for external hegemony. A constant process of negotiation, translation, and reconfiguration occurs.

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This conceptualization leads to a different view of historical change in masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity does not simply adapt to changing historical conditions. Rather, the hegemonic masculine bloc is a hybridization whose appropriation of diverse elements makes it "capable of reconfiguring itself and adapting to the specificities of new historical conjunctures" (Demetriou 2001, 355). As an example of this process, Demetriou (2001) discusses the increasing cultural visibility of gay masculinity in Western societies. This has made it possible for certain heterosexual men to appropriate "bits and pieces" of gay men's styles and practices and construct a new hybrid configuration of gender practice. Such an appropriation blurs gender difference but does not undermine patriarchy.

Demetriou's (2001) conceptualization of dialectical pragmatism in "internal hegemony" is useful, and he makes a convincing case that certain representations of masculinity, and some heterosexual men's everyday gender practices, have appropriated aspects of gay masculinities. Clearly, specific masculine practices may be appropriated into other masculinities, creating a hybrid (such as the hip-hop style and language adopted by some working-class white teenage boys and the unique composite style of gay "clones"). Yet we are not convinced that the hybridization Demetriou (2001) describes is hegemonic, at least beyond a local sense. Although gay masculinity and sexuality are increasingly visible in Western societies—witness the fascination with the gay male characters in the television programs *Six Feet Under*, *Will and Grace*, and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*—there is little reason to think that hybridization has become hegemonic at the regional or global level.

The concept of a hegemonic bloc brings into focus the issue of multiple hegemonic masculinities. Jefferson (2002, 71) and others have criticized the tendency to speak of just one pattern—"hegemonic masculinity is always used in the singular." There is a paradox here. Because every ethnography discovers a distinctive gender culture, every life-history study uncovers unique trajectories of men's lives, and every structural analysis defines new intersections of race, class, gender, and generation, it is logically possible to define "a thousand and one" variations of masculinity (Meuser and Behnke 1998). This surely is also true of claimants to hegemony. The point is strongly supported by Messner's (1997) mapping of masculinity politics in the United States, which revealed a range of movements with contrasting agendas. Yet when examined closely, most of these movements present a claim to be *the* way for men to think and live. Whatever the empirical diversity of masculinities, the contestation for hegemony implies that gender hierarchy does not have multiple niches at the top. We will return to this issue, which is important for understanding gender politics.

REVIEW AND REFORMULATION

We now draw these threads together to suggest how the concept of hegemonic masculinity should be reshaped. We will indicate those features of the original

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concept that have held up well in the light of research and criticism, those features that should be discarded, and (in greater detail) those areas where the concept is in need of contemporary reformulation.

What Should Be Retained

The fundamental feature of the concept remains the combination of the plurality of masculinities and the hierarchy of masculinities. This basic idea has stood up well in 20 years of research experience. Multiple patterns of masculinity have been identified in many studies, in a variety of countries, and in different institutional and cultural settings. It is also a widespread research finding that certain masculinities are more socially central, or more associated with authority and social power, than others. The concept of hegemonic masculinity presumes the subordination of nonhegemonic masculinities, and this is a process that has now been documented in many settings, internationally.

Also well supported is the idea that the hierarchy of masculinities is a pattern of hegemony, not a pattern of simple domination based on force. Cultural consent, discursive centrality, institutionalization, and the marginalization or delegitimation of alternatives are widely documented features of socially dominant masculinities. Also well supported is the original idea that hegemonic masculinity need not be the commonest pattern in the everyday lives of boys and men. Rather, hegemony works in part through the production of exemplars of masculinity (e.g., professional sports stars), symbols that have authority despite the fact that most men and boys do not fully live up to them.

The original formulations laid some emphasis on the possibility of change in gender relations, on the idea that a dominant pattern of masculinity was open to challenge—from women's resistance to patriarchy, and from men as bearers of alternative masculinities. Research has very fully confirmed the idea of the historical construction and reconstruction of hegemonic masculinities. Both at a local and a broad societal level, the situations in which masculinities were formed change over time. These changes call forth new strategies in gender relations (e.g., companionate marriage) and result in redefinitions of socially admired masculinity (e.g., the domestic partner rather than the Victorian patriarch).

What Should Be Rejected

Two features of early formulations about hegemonic masculinity have not stood up to criticism and should be discarded. The first is a too-simple model of the social relations surrounding hegemonic masculinities. The formulation in *Gender and Power* attempted to locate all masculinities (and all femininities) in terms of a single pattern of power, the "global dominance" of men over women (Connell 1987, 183). While this was useful at the time in preventing the idea of multiple masculinities from collapsing into an array of competing lifestyles, it is now clearly

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inadequate to our understanding of relations among groups of men and forms of masculinity and of women's relations with dominant masculinities. For instance, dominance in gender relations involves an interplay of costs and benefits, challenges to hegemonic masculinity arise from the "protest masculinities" of marginalized ethnic groups, and bourgeois women may appropriate aspects of hegemonic masculinity in constructing corporate or professional careers. Clearly, better ways of understanding gender hierarchy are required.

Despite the critique of trait psychology in *Gender and Power*, and the appeal to psychoanalytic ideas about unconscious motivation, early statements about hegemonic masculinity, when they attempted to characterize the actual content of different configurations of masculinity, often fell back on trait terminology—or at best failed to offer an alternative to it. The notion of masculinity as an assemblage of traits opened the path to that treatment of hegemonic masculinity as a fixed character type that has given so much trouble and is rightly criticized in recent psychological writing. Not only the essentialist concept of masculinity but also, more generally, the trait approach to gender need to be thoroughly transcended.

What Should Be Reformulated

In light of the research and critiques discussed above, we argue that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is in need of reformulation in four main areas: the nature of gender hierarchy, the geography of masculine configurations, the process of social embodiment, and the dynamics of masculinities. In the following subsections, we offer a line of thought, and some research suggestions, about each of these issues.

Gender Hierarchy

Compared with original formulations of the concept, contemporary research has shown the complexity of the relationships among different constructions of masculinity. The recent research in discursive psychology indicates how different constructions of masculinity at the local level may serve as tactical alternatives. Structured relations among masculinities exist in all local settings, motivation toward a specific hegemonic version varies by local context, and such local versions inevitably differ somewhat from each other. Demetriou's (2001) notion of dialectical pragmatism captures the reciprocal influence of masculinities on each other; hegemonic masculine patterns may change by incorporating elements from the others.

Analyses of relations among masculinities now more clearly recognize the agency of subordinated and marginalized groups—often conditioned by their specific location (as discussed below). "Protest masculinity" (Poynting, Noble, and Tabar 2003) can be understood in this sense: a pattern of masculinity constructed in local working-class settings, sometimes among ethnically marginalized men,

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which embodies the claim to power typical of regional hegemonic masculinities in Western countries, but which lacks the economic resources and institutional authority that underpins the regional and global patterns.

Research has also documented the durability or survivability of nonhegemonic patterns of masculinity, which may represent well-crafted responses to race/ethnic marginalization, physical disability, class inequality, or stigmatized sexuality. Hegemony may be accomplished by the incorporation of such masculinities into a functioning gender order rather than by active oppression in the form of discredit or violence. In practice, both incorporation and oppression can occur together. This is, for instance, the contemporary position of gay masculinities in Western urban centers, where gay communities have a spectrum of experience ranging from homophobic violence and cultural denigration to toleration and even cultural celebration and political representation. Similar processes of incorporation and oppression may occur among girls and women who construct masculinities (Messerschmidt 2004).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity was originally formulated in tandem with a concept of hegemonic femininity—soon renamed "emphasized femininity" to acknowledge the asymmetrical position of masculinities and femininities in a patriarchal gender order. In the development of research on men and masculinities, this relationship has dropped out of focus. This is regrettable for more than one reason. Gender is always relational, and patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity.

Perhaps more important, focusing only on the activities of men occludes the practices of women in the construction of gender among men. As is well shown by life-history research, women are central in many of the processes constructing masculinities—as mothers; as schoolmates; as girlfriends, sexual partners, and wives; as workers in the gender division of labor; and so forth. The concept of emphasized femininity focused on compliance to patriarchy, and this is still highly relevant in contemporary mass culture. Yet gender hierarchies are also affected by new configurations of women's identity and practice, especially among younger women—which are increasingly acknowledged by younger men. We consider that research on hegemonic masculinity now needs to give much closer attention to the practices of women and to the historical interplay of femininities and masculinities.

We suggest, therefore, that our understanding of hegemonic masculinity needs to incorporate a more holistic understanding of gender hierarchy, recognizing the agency of subordinated groups as much as the power of dominant groups and the mutual conditioning of gender dynamics and other social dynamics. We think this will tend, over time, to reduce the isolation of men's studies and will emphasize the relevance of gender dynamics to the problems—ranging from effects of globalization to issues of violence and peacemaking—being explored in other fields of social science.

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The Geography of Masculinities

Change in locally specific constructions of hegemonic masculinity has been a theme of research for the past two decades. But with growing attention to globalization, the significance of transnational arenas for the construction of masculinity has also been argued. Hooper (1998, 2000) describes the deployment of hegemonic and other masculinities in the arenas of international relations, and Connell (1998) proposed a model of "transnational business masculinity" among corporate executives that was connected with neoliberal agendas of globalization.

Whether, or how far, such processes override more local and regional gender dynamics is still being debated. Pease and Pringle (2001), in a recent international collection, argue for a continued focus on understanding masculinities regionally and comparatively. At the least, we must understand that regional and local constructions of hegemonic masculinity are shaped by the articulation of these gender systems with global processes. In this vein, Kimmel (2005) has recently examined how the effects of a global hegemonic masculinity are embedded in the emergence of regional (white supremacists in the United States and Sweden) and global (al Qaeda from the Middle East) "protest" masculinities.

We consider these issues are now unavoidable for studies of masculinity and suggest the following simple framework. Empirically existing hegemonic masculinities can be analyzed at three levels:

1. Local: constructed in the arenas of face-to-face interaction of families, organizations, and immediate communities, as typically found in ethnographic and life-history research;
2. Regional: constructed at the level of the culture or the nation-state, as typically found in discursive, political, and demographic research; and
3. Global: constructed in transnational arenas such as world politics and transnational business and media, as studied in the emerging research on masculinities and globalization.

Not only do links between these levels exist; they can be important in gender politics. Global institutions pressure regional and local gender orders; while regional gender orders provide cultural materials adopted or reworked in global arenas and provide models of masculinity that may be important in local gender dynamics.

Let us consider specifically the relation between regional and local masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity at the regional level is symbolically represented through the interplay of specific local masculine practices that have regional significance, such as those constructed by feature film actors, professional athletes, and politicians. The exact content of these practices varies over time and across societies. Yet regional hegemonic masculinity shapes a society-wide sense of masculine reality and, therefore, operates in the cultural domain as on-hand material to be actualized, altered, or challenged through practice in a range of different local

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circumstances. A regional hegemonic masculinity, then, provides a cultural framework that may be materialized in daily practices and interactions.

As an illustration of this interplay between regional and local hegemonic masculinities, consider the example of sport. In Western societies, practice at the local level—such as engaging in professional sporting events—constructs hegemonic masculine models (e.g., "star athletes") at the regional level, which in turn affect other local settings. Research on secondary schooling provides a paradigmatic example, indicating that successful participation in sport often is a salient hegemonic masculine practice in this particular local setting (Messner 2002). For example, Light and Kirk (2000) examine an elite Australian high school, finding that a clear structure of masculinities existed at this school in which a specific hegemonic form was shaped through the embodied practice of rugby football—a code that is, of course, not confined to this school—centering on domination, aggression, ruthless competitiveness, and giving all for the school. (Compare the similar findings of Burgess, Edwards, and Skinner 2003.) Thus, regionally significant exemplary masculine models influence—although they do not wholly determine—the construction of gender relations and hegemonic masculinities at the local level.

It is tempting to assume a simple hierarchy of power or authority, running from global to regional to local, but this could be misleading. In discussions of globalization, the determining power of the "global" is often overestimated, while the resistance and capacity of what we are calling the "regional" goes unrecognized (Mittelman 2004). The limited research that has so far been done on masculinities in global arenas (e.g., Connell and Wood 2005; Hooper 2001) does not suggest a powerful formation with the capacity to overwhelm regional or local masculinities. Yet the evidence on global dynamics in gender is growing, and it is clear that processes such as economic restructuring, long-distance migration, and the turbulence of "development" agendas have the power to reshape local patterns of masculinity and femininity (Connell 2005; Morrell and Swart 2005). There is every reason to think that interactions involving global masculinities will become of more importance in gender politics, and this is a key arena for future research on hegemony.

Adopting an analytical framework that distinguishes local, regional, and global masculinities (and the same point applies to femininities) allows us to recognize the importance of place without falling into a monadic world of totally independent cultures or discourses. It also casts some light on the problem of multiple hegemonic masculinities, raised above. Although local models of hegemonic masculinity may differ from each other, they generally overlap. The interplay with society-wide gender dynamics is part of the explanation. Furthermore, hegemonic masculinities are, as we have just argued, to a significant degree constituted in men's interaction with women; therefore, the commonalities in women's gender practices also produce convergence. Accordingly, local constructions of hegemonic masculinity have a certain "family resemblance," to use Wittgenstein's term, rather than logical identity. In this sense, local plurality is compatible with singularity of hegemonic masculinity at the regional or society-wide level. The "family resemblance" among

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local variants is likely to be represented by one symbolic model at the regional level, not by multiple models.

Social Embodiment

That hegemonic masculinity is related to particular ways of representing and using men's bodies has been recognized from the earliest formulations of the concept. Yet the pattern of embodiment involved in hegemony has not been convincingly theorized.

The importance of masculine embodiment for identity and behavior emerges in many contexts. In youth, skilled bodily activity becomes a prime indicator of masculinity, as we have already seen with sport. This is a key way that heterosexuality and masculinity become linked in Western culture, with prestige conferred on boys with heterosexual partners and sexual learning imagined as exploration and conquest. Body practices such as eating meat and taking risks on the road also become linked with masculine identities. This logically results in health promotion strategies that work by degendering—contesting hegemonic masculinity, or moving men in a more androgynous direction. But the difficulties of degendering strategies also are partly based in embodiment, for instance, in the commitment to risk-taking practices as means of establishing masculine reputation in a peer group context.

The common social scientific reading of bodies as objects of a process of social construction is now widely considered to be inadequate. Bodies are involved more actively, more intimately, and more intricately in social processes than theory has usually allowed. Bodies participate in social action by delineating courses of social conduct—the body is a participant in generating social practice. It is important not only that masculinities be understood as embodied but also that the interweaving of embodiment and social context be addressed.

The need for a more sophisticated treatment of embodiment in hegemonic masculinity is made particularly clear by the issue of transgender practices, which are difficult to understand within a simple model of social construction. This issue has been reframed by the rise of queer theory, which has treated gender crossing as a subversion of the gender order or at least as a demonstration of its vulnerability. Sharp debates over transsexualism have arisen, with some psychiatrists' questioning the very possibility of gender change. It is therefore not easy to be confident about the implications of transgender practice for hegemony. With Rubin (2003) and Namaste (2000), we consider that the masculinities constructed in female-to-male transsexuals' life courses are not inherently counterhegemonic. "Self-made men" can pursue gender equality or oppose it, just like nontranssexual men. What the transsexual experience highlights is modernity's treatment of the body as the "medium through which selves interact with each other" (Rubin 2003, 180).

To understand embodiment and hegemony, we need to understand that bodies are both objects of social practice and agents in social practice (Connell 2002). There are circuits of social practice linking bodily processes and social structures—

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many such circuits, which add up to the historical process in which society is embodied. These circuits of social embodiment may be very direct and simple, or they may be long and complex, passing through institutions, economic relations, cultural symbols, and so forth—without ceasing to involve material bodies. This can readily be illustrated by thinking about the gender patterns in health, illness, and medical treatment.

Among dominant groups of men, the circuits of social embodiment constantly involve the institutions on which their privileges rest. This is dramatically shown in a pioneering study by Donaldson and Poynting (2004) of the daily lives of ruling-class men. This study shows, for instance, how their characteristic sports, leisure, and eating practices deploy their wealth and establish relations of distance and dominance over other men's bodies. A rich field of research opens up here, especially when we consider how expensive technologies—computer systems, global air travel, secure communications—amplify the physical powers of elite men's bodies.

The Dynamics of Masculinities

Although long acknowledged, the internal complexity of masculinities has only gradually come into focus as a research issue. As indicated by our earlier discussion of the subject in gender practice, we must now explicitly recognize the layering, the potential internal contradiction, within all practices that construct masculinities. Such practices cannot be read simply as expressing a unitary masculinity. They may, for instance, represent compromise formations between contradictory desires or emotions, or the results of uncertain calculations about the costs and benefits of different gender strategies.

Life-history research has pointed to another dynamic of masculinities, the structure of a project. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are constructed, unfold, and change through time. A small literature on masculinity and aging, and a larger one on childhood and youth, emphasize this issue. The careful analysis of life histories may detect contradictory commitments and institutional transitions that reflect different hegemonic masculinities and also hold seeds of change.

Hegemonic masculinities are likely to involve specific patterns of internal division and emotional conflict, precisely because of their association with gendered power. Relationships with fathers are one likely focus of tension, given the gender division of labor in child care, the "long hours culture" in professions and management, and the preoccupation of rich fathers with managing their wealth. Ambivalence toward projects of change on the part of women are likely to be another, leading to oscillating acceptance and rejection of gender equality by the same men. Any strategy for the maintenance of power is likely to involve a dehumanizing of other groups and a corresponding withering of empathy and emotional relatedness within the self (Schwalbe 1992). Without treating privileged men as objects of pity, we should recognize that hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily translate into a satisfying experience of life.

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Change over time, while certainly shaped by contradictions within masculinities, may also be intentional. Children as well as adults have a capacity to deconstruct gender binaries and criticize hegemonic masculinity, and this capacity is the basis of many educational interventions and change programs. At the same time, bearers of hegemonic masculinity are not necessarily "cultural dopes"; they may actively attempt to modernize gender relations and to reshape masculinities as part of the deal. A good example is the "new public management" in public-sector organizations, which rejects old-style bureaucracy and believes in "flatter" organizations, equal opportunity, and family-friendly employment policies. Yet even the modernization of masculinities may not solve problems. This too, as Meuser (2001) argues, generates contradictions that may lead to further change.

Gender relations are always arenas of tension. A given pattern of hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic to the extent that it provides a solution to these tensions, tending to stabilize patriarchal power or reconstitute it in new conditions. A pattern of practice (i.e., a version of masculinity) that provided such a solution in past conditions but not in new conditions is open to challenge—is in fact certain to be challenged.

Such contestation occurs continuously, through the efforts of the women's movement (at the local, regional, and global levels), among generations in immigrant communities, between models of managerial masculinity, among rivals for political authority, among claimants for attention in the entertainment industry, and so on. The contestation is real, and gender theory does not predict which will prevail—the process is historically open. Accordingly, hegemony may fail. The concept of hegemonic masculinity does not rely on a theory of social reproduction.

Put another way, the conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity should explicitly acknowledge the possibility of democratizing gender relations, of abolishing power differentials, not just of reproducing hierarchy. A transitional move in this direction requires an attempt to establish as hegemonic among men ("internal hegemony" in Demetriou's [2001] sense) a version of masculinity open to equality with women. In this sense, it is possible to define a hegemonic masculinity that is thoroughly "positive" (in Collier's [1998] sense). Recent history has shown the difficulty of doing this in practice. A positive hegemony remains, nevertheless, a key strategy for contemporary efforts at reform.

CONCLUSION

Concepts in the social sciences arise in response to specific intellectual and practical problems, and they are formulated in specific languages and intellectual styles. But they also have a capacity to travel and may acquire new meanings as they do. This has certainly happened with the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which has been taken up in fields ranging from education and psychotherapy to violence prevention and international relations. Some of the ambiguities that annoy critics

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stem from the varied uses that the concept has found and the ways it has been inflected in response to new contexts.

This is perhaps a general problem about conceptualization in the social sciences and humanities. As a theoretical formulation finds application in other settings and by other hands, the concept must mutate—and it may mutate in different directions in different environments. A specific concept may thus transform into a general way of talking, a style of analysis, or a characteristic figure in argument. There is nothing wrong with this process in itself—it is a common way that knowledge in the social sciences and humanities develops. But it means that new usages must also be open to critique and may lack some of the substance or justification of the original.

Thus, while we welcome most of the applications and modifications of the hegemonic masculinity concept as contributions to the understanding of gender dynamics, we reject those usages that imply a fixed character type, or an assemblage of toxic traits. These usages are not trivial—they are trying to name significant issues about gender, such as the persistence of violence or the consequences of domination. But they do so in a way that conflicts with the analysis of hegemony in gender relations and is therefore incompatible with (not just a variation on) both the initial statements and the main developments of this concept.

A renovated analysis of hegemonic masculinities, of the kind suggested above, has a growing relevance in the present moment of gender politics. In the rich countries of the global metropole, the shift from neoliberalism (the radical market agenda formulated in the 1970s) to neoconservatism (adding populist appeals to religion, ethnocentrism, and security) has made gender reaction an important political and cultural issue. In the developing countries, the processes of globalization have opened regional and local gender orders to new pressures for transformation and have also opened the way to new coalitions among groups of powerful men. In the global arenas of transnational corporations, media, and security systems, new patterns of hegemony are being forged. The making and contestation of hegemony in historically changing gender orders is a process of enormous importance for which we continue to need conceptual tools.

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