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Decolonising studies on men, boys and masculinities, 'North' and 'South': A dialogue between Kopano Ratele and Jeff Hearn

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Abstract

Studies on men, boys, and masculinities, critical and feminist or otherwise, have been dominated by the global North, and especially Anglophone, West-centric, scholarship. In this dialogical chapter, we build on our own earlier collaborative work to examine the contribution of, challenges to, and blocks to furthering decolonising studies on men, boys, and masculinities – both within the 'global North' and 'global South', and from 'global North' and 'global South' positionalities and perspectives. A vibrant, Southern/non-global North and non-Anglophone range of scholarship on men, boys, and masculinities now exists. Alongside, in conversation with, and often against, the West-centricity of the studies on masculinities, boys, and men, there is an emerging set of studies, literatures, and guidances on decolonial approaches to men, boys, and masculinities with which we seek to engage in our dialogue. We consider the implications of these bodies of scholarly work. We end with an epigraph of some relevant literature.

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Introduction

Studying men, boys, and masculinities, critical and feminist or otherwise, raises a contradiction, perhaps even a paradox. We should say contradictions, in the plural, because there are several, overlapping. How to do those studies in a focused, explicit, and critical way, and yet, at the same time, do so within the context of wider studies, especially feminist-gender studies, and postcolonial-decolonial studies? How to speak of men as a provisional singularity while recognising some very important differences in power and location, considering the global and local histories of slavery, colonialism, capitalism, and occupation? In this, there is a danger of the specific, albeit critical, focus on men, boys, and masculinities becoming an end in itself, creating a separate 'field' of studies, rather than a sub-field of wider studies, and even

re-centring men and boys. In the worst cases, this can mean the resurrection of 'men's studies' (just consider the possible meanings of 'white studies'), in its non-feminist guises, and the narrowing of the project to a reformist renewal of the 'improvement' of (certain) men in the light of other challenges – in effect, contributing to a new, perhaps more subtle, hegemony. At the same time, there is another danger, of occluding from critical studies of men and masculinities (CSMM) something like critical studies of race and other markers of difference, for example, disability.

We could ask, then, at what point does the critical object, the object of critique, become an impediment to itself? To put this another way, naming men and boys and masculinities critically is fine, but only half the story (if that); simultaneously, men, boys, and masculinities need to be deconstructed, re-made, and re-placed, as part of larger experiential, analytical, theoretical, and political projects. These tensions are highly relevant to our focus here: decolonising studies on men, boys, and masculinities, not only in the 'South', but within the 'North' as well; that is, taking critical studies on men and masculinities as an object of decolonial thought. While studies on men, boys, and masculinities, critical and feminist or otherwise, have been dominated by the global North, and especially Anglophone, West-centric scholarship, simply *adding and stirring in* the global South may not challenge the contradiction or paradox noted. To move forward on that means also challenging the *relations* of and within studies on men, boys and masculinities, and thinking through those wider studies of what we might call feminist-gender postcolonial-decolonial studies.[1] Meanwhile, as widely discussed and debated, the very categories of 'North' and 'South' need to be treated provisionally, with caution and critique, and indeed that includes critiquing and deconstructing the global North.[2]

In this chapter, we build on our own earlier collaborative and dialogical work (e.g., Hearn et al., 2015; Hearn & Ratele, 2023; Shefer et al., 2018) to examine the *contribution of and challenges and blocks to* furthering decolonising/decolonial studies on men, boys, and masculinities – both within the 'global North' and 'global South', and from 'global North' and 'global South' positionalities and perspectives. Thus, we seek to do more than one thing at

[1] There is a growing body of literature on what we refer to here as feminist-gender postcolonial-decolonial studies, e.g., Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018; Lugones, 2007, 2010; Mendez, 2015; Nkenkana, 2015; Shefer & Bozalek, 2022; Tamale, 2020; Tlostanova et al., 2019; Vergès, 2021.

[2] We are referring here to both the extensive debates and dialogues between the postcolonial and the decolonial (see, e.g., Bhambra, 2014 for a concise review), and also to the limitations of the very terms, 'global North' and 'global South,' as binarising, homogenising, and simplifying geopolitical locations and theoretical positions. The 'global North' also exists within the 'global South,' and *vice versa*, and many locations and positions are in-between, as in so-called semi-peripheries.

once: to address in practical terms some immediate challenges in decolonising these studies on men, boys, and masculinities, and to problematise these studies, and their possible or potential separateness from wider critical and decolonial debates.

These tasks, it seems to us, are now all the more urgent. There is a vibrant Southern or non-global North and non-Anglophone range of scholarship focused on men, boys, and masculinities, some of which we indicate in the epigraph.[3] For example, three books, from three different 'Southern' contexts, all aimed at (understanding) changing men and masculinities, were published around the same time over three decades ago: *Changing men in southern Africa* (Morrell, 2001); *Changing men and masculinities in Latin America* (Gutmann, 2003); and *Asian masculinities: The meaning and practice of manhood in China and Japan* (Louie & Low, 2003). Numerous other collections, monographs, journal articles, and book chapters have since followed.

Alongside, in conversation with, and often against the West-centricity of studies on masculinities, boys, and men, there is an emerging set of studies, literatures, and guidances on decolonial approaches to men, boys, and masculinities that we also engage in our dialogue. We consider the implications of decolonial work for CSMM.

We should mention that there are many scholars and activists working to decolonise CSMM and masculinity itself, and the work of the anthropologist Sakhumzi Mfecane is a good example of this kind of work that seeks to decolonise masculinity theory. It is also worth observing that West-centricity as a world-making project extends beyond bodily-location in a Western nation. In other words, you can see like a Westerner even if you live in the South. You can be(have) (like a) European, or be European-like, even if you live in Asia.

Finally, non-global North, critical/decolonising/decolonial studies are from all parts of the world. They also include studies in the global South "within" the global North, since there are established powers, hierarchies, communities, and xenophobias within Europe and North America, just as there are within Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America. So, what are some of the key issues for attention in these studies?

[3] We bring together and suggest a number of focused publications in the last section of this chapter.

Let's start with the question: how did you become interested in these questions in relation to men and masculinities? And how do your own personal experience and politics feed into these questions?

Jeff: Well, it's a long story, but briefly – I'm originally from London, and spent my childhood near Greenwich, near the Meridian, and was conscious from quite a young age of geography, place, Empire and imperial history, an interest manifested in maps, atlases, and stamps. Through my schooling, I also became very familiar with the pervasive embeddedness of class, and then, at university, of class, gender and racialisation. This was the sixties, of various social movements, including feminism, anti-racism, and anti-apartheid. I did my Finals in May, '68. At university, I studied quite a lot on Southern Africa, and what was called, I think, 'The Social and Political Geography of the former Commonwealth Territories,' mainly on history, politics, and urban geography. This was much about postcolonialism, decolonisation, Pan-Africanism, and nation-building. It's easily forgotten that Kwame Nkrumah published *Towards colonial freedom* in 1962. The relation of postcolonialism to other focuses of politics, from class to feminism to environmental politics, was very much on the agenda in the 1960s, and earlier.

As an important aside, it's even less known or acknowledged that, "In about 1900, Sylvester Williams, a lawyer of African descent named [the] coming together of Africans, 'Pan-Africanism', but as a movement it began around 1776. It was, however, the 5th Pan-African congress held in Manchester, United Kingdom in 1945 that advanced Pan-Africanism and applied it to the decolonisation of the African continent politically" (Ogba & Okpanachi, 2014, citing Pheko, 1999, p. 1).

Recognising location and spatiality took on another dimension when living and working long-term in Bradford, a city with one of the highest proportions of South Asian, especially Pakistani, people in the UK. There, one couldn't ignore racialisation and racism, ethnicity and religion. From there, in the late 1990s, I moved to Finland, a country with a totally different geopolitical history, and soon became involved in various Nordic and EU multi-country projects and activism. This also meant many contacts in Central and Eastern Europe, again bringing the need to rethink Anglocentrism and Western (European and Northern) centrism. Methodological nationalism was untenable. My first visit to South Africa was in 1997, and that made concrete 'being in another place', leading onto many close collaborations. Later, much has come from work in Sweden, from the GEXcel centre of excellence, from Turkish scholars, from RINGS (https://ringsgender.org/), and more. Overall, a key task is not only critique of

Anglo and Northern methodological nationalisms, and their silences, absences and indeed ignorances, but working on the implications of that for deconstructing various Centre(s): men, metropoles, the global North, whitenesses, and so on.

Kopano: I like how you said that: my visit made concrete being in another place. I think there is something about movement, being in different places and open to what is around, that is important here, that we can talk about at another time. Of course, one is aware that, in the world as it is, finance has more rights than people to move across borders, and some people have much more 'visa power' than others.

I was trained in psychology. For several reasons, from the inception of my career as a researcher, I found the problems men create and the problems men experience, as one Jeff Hearn put it, compelling (see Hearn, 2007; Hearn & Pringle & members of Critical Research on Men in Europe, 2006). I wanted to understand men and boys' lives here, in this place, at that point, as well as historically. I wanted to understand more about how domination and humiliation work and why; about power and oppression; about complicity and resistance; about exploitation and violence.

I ought to mention that, from high school, I took part in resistance politics. At university, I started reading African literature and I have never stopped. I was paying attention to the political and economic history of my country and other African countries. And, while I knew of the names prior to university, at the beginning of my academic career, I found myself reading, and reading many times over, Biko, the failed medical student and South African black consciousness thinker, and Fanon, the Martinique-born, French-educated, psychiatrist who joined the Algerian revolution (see Biko, 1978; Fanon, 1952/2008; 1959/1965; 1961/1963; 1964/1967). As an aside, I currently teach a graduate class on Fanon as an anticolonial/decolonial psychological thinker.

Given all that, a problem confronted me at the beginning of my academic career. It took me a very long time to resolve, and I don't think I have completely resolved it. In a nutshell, I found what, at first blush, might appear to be a natural home for me, the sub-area called psychology of men and masculinities, to be theoretically impoverished. And you don't find much Fanon – and certainly little Biko – in the psychology of men and masculinities. The American

Psychological Association, the biggest association of psychologists in the world, and most influential disseminator of psychological knowledge, has a division called the Society for the Psychology of Men and Masculinities, which you would think would be a welcoming home for someone like me, being trained in psychology. However, besides its American-centricity, which is a serious problem, I find the sub-discipline to be socio-politically barren. It did not help me in thinking about things like white racist power. It does not help me in thinking about decolonisation. But things may be changing, and there is some work on Black lives which may be worth having a look at. Anyhow, I have not had much interaction with it, for better or worse.

The Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA), possibly the largest organised structure for psychologists in my country, but comparatively smaller than the APA, does not have a dedicated division for those interested in boys, men, and masculinity. It does, however, have one on sexualities and gender. I tried to establish a division, but that did not take off. I have participated in some of the symposia, conference panels and meetings of the PsySSA division on sexualities and gender, because of the shared interests. All of that is to say, there is no ready-made home for psychological studies of boys, men, and masculinities in South Africa, or other African countries, for that matter.

Where I found a place was in critical studies on men and masculinities. These are more social, or rather sociological, in orientation. However, they are welcoming of work from a wide span of disciplines, diverse theoretical orientations, and different regions of the world. While there are criticisms, naturally, the work one finds in critical men and masculinity studies has been very generative to think with and against. The key individuals in this area, those in editorships, on editorial boards, and with influence, have made this area of work welcoming. One can observe increasing participation of people from different places in the global South in CSMM, because of the space created in some of the journals associated within the field. I have in mind here a journal like *NORMA*. So, this 'place,' this 'field', is very good for more distributed, world-centred studies on boys, men, and masculinities. It may well be, then, that the lingering desire to develop a decolonial or critical *psychology* of men and masculinities finds a home within the broad umbrella of critical studies on men and masculinities.

Let us continue with how we assess the current state of CSMM

Jeff: It's a question that preoccupies me quite a lot, and something I've talked about and written on specifically a few times (e.g., see Hearn, 2019, Hearn & Howson, 2020; Hearn et al., 2023). There is a lot of critical, feminist, feminist-informed, and feminist*ic* work going on, but it's not usual that the work is inspired by decolonial perspectives. There are now many critical works, collections, and journals, as well as encyclopaedias and handbooks (see Gottzén et al., 2020; Kimmel et al., 2005). CSMM has gradually broadened in scope, from mainly local studies to questions relating to whole societies and across societies. These include engagements with questions of global capitalism, technology, information and communication technologies (ICTs), militarism, mainstream politics, racism, migration, ecological, and environmental issues (see Mellström & Pease, 2023; Pulé & Hultman, 2021), and indeed decoloniality.

Kopano: How do I make sense of the current state of CSMM from the perspective of the global South, or better yet, of decoloniality? That is how I prefer to formulate the question. I have a bunch of things to say about this. However, I will keep it as brief as I can in the hope that we will come back to it.

The answer is that there is more, much, much more, that could be happening in global CSMM but is not. This area of work is one which you would expect to do better because it defines itself as critical, which stands in contrast to some that are supposedly non-critical, which is to say mainstream, which take boys, men, or masculinity as given, as a static variable. We are not doing as well as we could, though. If not a decolonial and remade studies on boys, men, and masculinities as such, what I would like to see is world-centred critical studies on boys, men, and masculinities, a framing that a number of authors have used in the past few decades, including you and me, Jeff (e.g., Connell, 2014a; Gottzén, 2014; Hearn, 2017; Mfecane, 2020; Ratele, 2015).

I could say a lot more about this idea of world-centred thought, but I just want to say one thing for now. World-centred critical masculinity studies would critically privilege place, or the world as it is actually lived and experienced, but also, crucially, the world as it could be. Place-based thinking takes seriously *place* as a critical site of making decolonising theory,[4] not mining the South for data or imposing theory from the North to Southern places. Place-based

[4] Also, see the abundant work on situated knowledges and standpoint theory, e.g., Collins, 1997; Harding, 2004; Haraway, 1988; Hekman, 1997; Nygren, 1999; Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis, 2002.

thinking, shot through with decolonial thought, rather than nationalist fervour, when it is reflexive, decolonial thought, can enable an internationalist perspective on masculinities.

We have touched on this. How, then, do you understand decoloniality? Perhaps we should now deal more directly with the issue of how postcolonialism and decoloniality differ

Kopano: I wish to talk about the term decoloniality, alongside several other, closely related terms. I have three in mind: colonisation, decolonisation, and coloniality.

When we think about colonisation, we tend to think of physical or political colonisation. One country, the colonising country, forcefully occupies another country. Examples of colonising countries include Belgium, Britain, China, France, Germany, Morocco, the Netherlands, Portugal, Italy, Spain. Countries that have been colonised include all of the Caribbean, all of Latin America, all of North America, nearly all of Africa, much of Asia, and Australia and New Zealand. Colonisation, which often turns into an enduring colonial situation, means that the occupier steals the land and labour of the colonised people for his benefit. It is usually a man, is it not? Other wild species, bodies of water, even air, are not spared the coloniser's rapacity.

An extractive economy is built to support the lifestyle of the coloniser, whether that is a settler coloniser or one who remains in the mother country. The colonised are exploited, forced to labour for the coloniser. In addition, the colonised are forced to adopt the coloniser's way of doing things – and that is important – including the languages of the coloniser, except in those cases when the indigenous ways of life do not challenge the colonial accumulation and way of life.

Turning to decolonisation, this is the process of undoing colonisation and overcoming the colonial situation. Political decolonisation is the struggle and processes of regaining political sovereignty. Decolonisation has, however, been used in ways other than the political. So, we talk of cultural decolonisation, the decolonisation of education, of knowledge, of the arts, subjective decolonisation.

Next is coloniality, which refers to the persistence of colonial forms of power, living and relating after the end of formal colonisation. Coloniality, being the enduring effects of the violent process that resulted in the current EuroAmerican-centred global political-economic order, is pervasive.

I can now come to decoloniality. Simply put, decoloniality is the project of undoing coloniality. Coloniality is different from colonisation, because it is what remains when the coloniser has left or handed political power to the formerly colonised. Therefore, decolonial projects are different from the project to decolonise – if, that is, decolonisation is taken to mean political decolonisation. Decolonial projects aim to rethink everything, from our interiors to the EuroAmerican-centred, global, colonial-modern, economic order.

We can point to a few differences between postcolonial and decolonial thought. Postcolonialism can be said to have begun with the work of Edward Said. Other notable thinkers are Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. Postcolonial thinking tended to put a focus on the Middle East and India. Most of the thinkers were in literary studies.

Coloniality as a concept emerges out of the Americas. Some of the names associated with decolonial ideas are Aníbal Quijano, Walter Mignolo, Sylvia Wynter, Maria Lugones, and Nelson Maldonado-Torres.[5] Increasingly, there are other notable figures outside of that part of the world, such as Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni,[6] who have been important contributors to decolonial theory.

Jeff: I don't see the task here as being to produce a fixed definition of decoloniality. I see it as a long-term process of opening up to a variety of imperatives away from colonialism, and imperialism – in their many forms. In the 1960s, studying the social and political geography of colonies and former colonies – one could not avoid thinking and reacting to the historical task and process of stopping and removing colonialism – hence, decolonisation and decoloniality. This had many aspects, depending much on the geopolitics of the colonial condition(s), from the Belgian, British, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish, and the various reactions, and more-than-reactions, thereto.

By citing colonialism and imperialism, and thus decoloniality, I do not think only of the empires of the European powers. I also think of the empires of the USA, Russia, and China, as well as numerous smaller and more geographically restricted imperial projects, including within Europe, within the global South, and, in some cases, pre-existing the major European colonialisms just mentioned, as, for example, within Africa and Asia.

[5] See Lugones, 2007; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2000; Wynter, 2003.
[6] See Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013.

How does postcolonialism differ from decoloniality? As you said, some people place the roots of postcolonial theory as coming more from the humanities, and indeed poststructuralism, and from the Middle East and South Asia, and decolonial theory as coming more from the social sciences and activism from Latin America (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Mignolo et al., 2024). However, I wouldn't want to make these distinctions stronger than necessary. The different strands intermingle and, from my observation, at least, seem equally important in African settings. I don't think the differences should be overstated, even though there are always attempts to gatekeep in academic-political movements – as I've done myself – even as those movements shift.

And then there are the many more distinctively African voices of postcolonialism/anti-colonialism/decolonisation/decoloniality, such as those from Paulin J. Hountondji (1997), Amina Mama (1995), Achille Mbembe (2019), Oyèrónké Oyewùmí (1997), and Sylvia Tamale (2000). Many African authors seem to me to take inspiration both from what can be called the postcolonial and the decolonial, as well as developing their own nuanced and complex postcolonial-decolonial critique and praxis, and recognising and building on the historical-geographical-social specificities of not simply 'Africa' and 'African', but also within and across the vastness of Africa. This includes different histories of Indigeneity, gender, and the pre-colonial, different colonial histories and resultant associations with the colonial academic-political powers, and ongoing and variable contemporary politics and academic politics. These conditions also have implications for men and masculinities, and CSMM, as in the extent and form of neocolonialisms, for example, the formation of new local-glocal power bases for some men, and stark variations in the extent to which decolonisation leads onto decoloniality and the decolonising of men and men's practices.

Perhaps a more useful difference of stress is between those writings and actions that are geared to critique of the colonial and colonialist corpus, as against those that are based more in traditions other than the colonial corpus, such as Indigenous, subaltern, and subjected knowledges and experiences. Also, variations exist between those texts that work primarily or initially on textual analysis, and those that prioritise political activism, even while both variants generally seek to bring analysis and politics together. Having said that, postcolonial deconstruction is still a material-discursive politics and practice, and decolonial activism is still a material-discursive engagement with speech and text, in the widest senses of the words.

To go back to the question to which you signalled earlier, how are we to assess the current state of CSMM *in relation to* engagement with decoloniality? What are the main contributions of, challenges to, and blocks against decolonial approaches to CSMM?

Jeff: I can start. Perhaps it's good, first, to mention the 1998 special issue of *Jouvert* on postcolonial masculinities (Ouzgane & Coleman, 1998). In 2005, Robert Morrell and Sandra Swart outlined three strands or approaches to postcolonialism, along with their implications for men and masculinities: the first they labelled specifically postcolonial theory, then indigenous knowledge, and, finally, gender and development. Since then, there has been significant growth of CSMM founded or embedded in, or informed by, postcolonial and decolonial, and/or based in, or written by, scholars from the global South (see Epigraph).

In different ways, these studies raise questions on how much one can apply global Northern approaches to men and masculinities elsewhere. One of the more trenchant critiques of postcolonialism by some decolonial thinkers is that some of the former worked in Western academia and used Western and global North thinkers for their theories, even in and via their critique, arguably reproducing some of the problem. This is partly a matter of authorship, of location of authors, their perspectives, standpoints, interests, post- and decolonial locations, and, in turn, worldview. It is also about what regions and forms of men and masculinities are in critical focus, whether localities, countries, translocations, or framed more by specific colonialism.

These studies suggest many possibilities. One obvious set concern the analysis of colonial and colonialist men and masculinities, in the past, present, and future. Another concern colonised men and masculinities in formerly or currently colonised locations and countries. While some men, especially, but not only, in superordinate categories in certain geographical or biographical contexts, may be simply dispensable, they may also be in contradictory power relations to women, further genders, children, and intersectional gender relations. Then, there are relatively newly emerging men and masculinities in terms of middle-class and upper-class Black and Brown men, who may at times have more in common with men and masculinities elsewhere. A further very important focus is on men and masculinities across borders, boundaries, and translocations, whether as migrants, refugees, students, temporary workers, and so on.

Another way of approaching these issues is to address the relative and contradictory power, poverty and vulnerability of many men in the global South. Discourses of vulnerability and

precarity need to be placed into context of transnational patriarchal and gender power relations. Very different responses to vulnerability and precarity can be identified, recognised and acted upon, including: denial of vulnerability, as with masculine risk-taking and machinic and non-relational masculinities; bemoaning vulnerability as perceived loss of patriarchal power, often leading to compensatory reassertions of power; and seeing vulnerability as a route to subversion of patriarchal power. These possibilities are especially important in relation to young, poor men, men of different sexualities, men in positions of structural vulnerability and precarity in the global South, and how they may compromise their own lives (e.g., Clowes, 2013; Shefer et al., 2015; van Niekerk et al., 2015; Shefer & Hearn, 2022; Zweig, 2021). On the other hand, those conditions of vulnerability may provide a route to responsible, pro-feminist agency for men (Ratele, 2020).

Kopano: At this point, critical studies on men and masculinities have had relatively little engagement with decolonial thought. There is some work, of course. It seems to be growing. But it is still sparse. There may be two or three reasons for this.

First, it may simply be that the decolonial option is still relatively new for many researchers. Hopefully, there will be a shift as time passes, and the important insights from decolonial thinking will permeate critical masculinity studies.

Second, decolonial thought is, among other things, a call to look, think and be in the world differently. It calls for us to change the questions we ask, and how we have predominantly gone about doing studies on boys, men, and masculinities. And, perhaps most important, it calls for different explanations and theories of men's lives, and their relations to other men, children, women, other people, and others lives.

Finally, related to the previous reason, there could be some reluctance to take on this new radical thought and reassess the core tenets of critical masculinity studies in light of new ways of thinking. Embracing the decolonial option would mean reconsidering not just masculinity itself, but how we think of power, hegemony, war, violence, history, gender, domination, subordination, development, globalisation, interpersonal relations, technology, psychical structures, wellbeing, and a whole lot of other topics that we examine in masculinity studies. Decolonial thought urges us to rethink some of the core ideas of masculinity studies. To put it

another way, when they are combative, decolonial studies of masculinities dismantle uncritical thinking on men and masculinity; at the same time, they also refute the foundational ideas of critical studies of men and masculinities.

Why is location important to you? And, if you may, tell us how location relates to different understandings of the "global," or "glocal," the "transnational" and transnational patriarchies

Kopano: Let me start. I will leave the relation of location to the transnational and transnational patriarchies to you, Jeff, as you have written a bit on this.

I once published a paper with the words 'location, location, location' as part of the title (Ratele, 2015). That paper was influenced by an observation regarding the curious manner in which too many people, predominantly, but not only, those located in the West, treat their own situatedness, their embeddedness in their nations, even their particularity, as embodied. It was really weird to witness how people treat, for instance, their location of enunciation. I encountered this when I participated in international conferences, but it is also evident in published work.

One way this curious behaviour is expressed is where a person speaks, in the context where there are people coming from different parts of the world, as if they are from, shall we say, 'the standard nation,' or a place that does not have to be named, even from no nation at all. Or as if their "voice" is not part of them. Or as if they are *not* speaking from a body, in a specifiable location, in a specific part of the world, a place with particular culture and history.

By voice, I should be understood to mean not only the spoken voice. I also mean writing. One also finds this practice way too often.

I still encounter these *voices from nowhere* today. The difference is that I am now more aware of them, of what they are trying to achieve, whether the speaker is aware of the practice or not. I am aware of its intention and effect. And this can explain what are some of the sources and aims of playing fast and loose with location.

It may also be the case that things are slowly changing. Maybe. I don't know. Or perhaps I tend to avoid conferences and spaces where the behaviour is barefaced. Regardless, it is still common.

So, the paper I mentioned on location, which was published in the journal, *NORMA*, arose from a certain irritation. I wanted masculinity researchers to pay more attention to the difference place makes in research, writing, and speaking about boys and men, whether one is writing from the "centres", "peripheries" or "semi-peripheries" of the globe, or centres, peripheries, or semi-peripheries within countries.

The point is that location is about power, of course. It is about resources, it is about access. And masculinity itself is a discursive or symbolic location, or a place that signals relative power or powerlessness in gender.

Jeff: Location, and also positionality, are vitally important, in several ways. Starting with 'the big picture' (Connell, 1993), location is partly about geopolitical location. This is not a strictly determinate matter, but it affects what appears important, what can and cannot be said: the interconnecting of politics and knowledge, not as a fixed relation, but as a set of probabilities and powers. Positionality is also about social, political and discursive positions. Location matters in terms of intersectional gender location within and around that geopolitical location, in terms of the intersections of class, gender, racialisation, and much more. Then, there is location in discourse, or the material-discursive (Hearn, 2014). But, in considering such locationalities, there are two major particularisms for present purposes.

First, we are focusing our discussion here primarily on men and masculinities, even with the caveats already noted. So, these locationalities are both about men and masculinities, as 'knowledge objects' of critical scrutiny, and about men and masculinities as producers of knowledge, that is, both those who identify as/'are' men, and discourses of masculinities as producers of knowledge, as enacted by people regardless of gender. Now, this is obviously not a new issue, but it is one that has sometimes been confused or glossed over, when everything to do with studying men and masculinities is mixed into one pot. The complication now is that these two aspects – the subject and the object, and their relationalities, ambiguities and transitions – themselves need to be understood in terms of vastly different locationalities.

The second point to emphasise is that locationality is not just tied to one place – geographical or social – but can often entail more than one place, and also be hybrid across or between places, as with the experience of migration. Men and masculinities can thus, in very different (post/de)colonialised ways, be transnational – hence, what can be called transnational and translocational positionality. I think that the notion of the transnational, and thus transnational

men and transnational masculinities, has more potential than just talking of the global, and global men and masculinities. Transnational men and masculinities allude to the very different meanings of the transnational – as between nations, as across nations, and as transforming, transgressing, and beyond nations, and as forming new configurations, such as online/offline material-discursive formations of men and masculinities – as I've written about elsewhere (e.g., Hearn, 2015; Hearn & Blagojević, 2013), and says more than just the global, or even the glocal.

Transnational men and masculinities can also index and open up the postcolonial and the decolonial, in terms of the very different versions of the transnational – from murderous, militaristic imperialists to vulnerable migrants and refugees, and much more in-between. The postcolonial and the decolonial, and postcolonial and decolonial men and masculinities, are almost always in part transnational. And, of course, the transnational relations are often patriarchal, just as patriarchies are increasingly transnational.

So, because postcolonial relations are also frequently patriarchal, decolonial projects need to also be depatriarchal! To use just one example, Quijano's (2000; Mignolo et al., 2024) key concepts of coloniality, coloniality of power, and colonial matrix of power, can hardly be discussed without an engagement with critical work on different men and masculinities.

Let's be a bit more specific, what implications are there for *teaching*?

Kopano: I do not teach a course on masculinity. I used to teach two courses, back when I was working at the University of the Western Cape. But I have not designed or taught a course on boys, or men, or masculinity for years. I suppose, under teaching, we can include standing in front of a group and engaging, in person or online, in some form of structured knowledge transmission. We can also include some forms of supervision work one does with advanced students. I do quite a bit of both.

I am much more conscious now of three questions when I teach, in the broad sense, or supervise. All of them are directly or indirectly related to the issue of location.

The first question is, 'what you are doing this for?' The 'you' is me. But it is also whomever I am engaging with, be it students, activists, or young researchers.

The second question is, 'who is being addressed, who is the work meant to help, support, persuade, or change?' This question, which is about targets or audience, is as important as the first question, which is about objectives, politics, stakes.

The third question is, 'what is the context from which and into which we are speaking?' That is, are we speaking and listening from the same or different economic, political, or cultural locations?

Jeff: There are clearly implications in terms of content, curricula, set or recommended readings, context, and pedagogics. I started teaching on CSMM in the early 1980s, but I'm not doing so now, apart from occasional one-off sessions. From early on, it was important to connect with issues around both 'end of empire' (e.g., Tolson, 1977) and ethnicity, racism, Black men and masculinities (e.g., Staples, 1981), much of the latter from the US. I think the questions of space and place – geographical, geopolitical, socio-cultural – have become more central in teaching, in terms of both where one is teaching, and the content of teaching, as part of the decolonial impulse. Teaching at the University of Bradford, where I did for many years, in a city with large Muslim and South Asian populations, is different to teaching in the Nordic region or in South Africa. I particularly recall teaching on a doctoral course in Latvia in 2001, mainly with students from Central and Eastern Europe, and getting them to engage with Connell's (1998) historical framework of globalising masculinities. Their application of this frame to their own localities in the Soviet and post-Soviet eras was truly inspiring.

The question of decoloniality is also vital in doctoral and other thesis supervision – and, indeed, doctoral examination. Doctoral and similar researchers need to know about decoloniality, even if their 'topic' might not appear immediately or explicitly linked. To take just two examples: doing a doctorate in international business or military history should mean also knowing about decoloniality, as well as CSMM, of course. For example, when teaching in Finland, in the social theory course for doctoral researchers in management, business, and allied subjects, I got them to read and discuss a long a section of *The Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon, 1961/1963).

What kind of *research* do you do or should do? What kind of research is needed?

Jeff: There are so many issues – so here are just a few.

First, what is counted as a man, who is counted as a man – in different historical, cultural, and current contexts (see Ratele, 2020; Greig, 2024).

Then, there are geosocial transnational decolonial studies of men and masculinities, such as the relations of global South and global North, centres, metropoles, semi-peripheries and peripheries, including with their own centres.

And, perhaps most urgently, the relation of men, masculinities, decoloniality, the environmental, and the planetary.

Kopano: Yes. So many issues. So little time. But if I have to pick a handful, I would say, research that takes place and time, I should say place-time, much more seriously. Masculinity and gender are always shaped by place and time. I would like to see more work that is informed by this simple, yet consequential, idea.

Allow me to go back to something I said earlier, when we started talking about location. Something else I wanted to speak about, another way linked to location that has made itself even more visible and palpable, is with regard to seeing. Looking. Paying attention to what we pay attention to. And this, looking, seeing, attending, has, is, shaping the kind of research and writing I am doing, and the research and writing I feel is needed.

I have always been interested in photography, ever since I could afford a decent camera. But I have become very interested in the act of looking, in observing where I and other people look. In seeing. In what we pay attention to, what we notice and do not notice. And so on. The camera has helped me focus on these questions in a way I may not have if I didn't have a camera. Over the past several years, I have gotten absorbed by street photography. As I said, although I have been interested in images for much of my adult life, I am now actively, compulsively, learning about what I see, because I want to capture the moment. I try to carry a camera almost every place I go. What carrying around the camera, and walking streets to make photographs, have taught me is where my eyes go, what is it I look at, how I see, what I pay attention to, what I am very interested in. All of this is to say an awareness of being situated, of where my eyes are directed, or what's happening around me, the light, and weather, activity, and what people are doing, all of that enables one to understand how we see when you are on the right or the left, at the bottom versus when you are at the top, in front or at the back. And so on.

One of the consequences of this new habit, of almost always carrying the camera and making images, is that it has helped me appreciate perspective and the positions we take in research and writing, not just in images. And this idea of where we look from, of perspective, informs the entire research process, from the assumptions we bring to the research, to the questions we formulate, through the choice of method and theories, right to the conclusions we make and where we publish. The message is, pay attention to what you pay attention to.

Another consequence is that looking through the camera has helped me in what I have called place-based thinking as method. Once again, I should say place- and time-based thought as method. I am excited about this. For example, I am asking more and more, how does place, or space (greenery, streets, density, activity, buildings, etc.) shape what men and boys do and what they become? Is place not also a subject, interacting with human subjects? I think so. I think place or space is not inert. It affects us. It influences us.

What I have said will be obvious to a certain group of people: geographers. So, in addition to learning from how photographers see, I realise that we have to learn from critical, anti-racist, and feminist, geography, for instance. It is incredible how blind I have been to place; not place as discourse, but as a real, material thing.

How do these affect *writing* and how you write?

Jeff: Perhaps it's good to consider, first, whether to write; I was recently asked to address masculinity in Eastern Europe, but declined, as there are many far better-informed people.

Then, if one does write, consider how not to write – that is, by assuming that one's place is the only place, or by naturalising or reifying the nation and nationalism. Instead, I think going away from methodological nationalism is a good start.

Using and developing a variety of different writing genres, traditions, onto-epistemologies and methodologies, and working across them and across disciplines, can also help. And being creative, for example, in collaborative writing, dialogical writing, autoethnography, collective memory work, and so on – but at the same time, doing so within a structural, planetary context and awareness.

Kopano: I think I touched on this when I spoke about what kind of research I do and feel is needed. Maybe I can say one more thing now. The question of who and what I am writing for has become so important. Also, attending to the questions of who and what I write for informs *how* I write. I have already said this, but I wanted to underline it.

What *key principles* are needed to guide (or not) future work on men, boys, and masculinities?

Jeff: Here are a first few suggestions. I would begin with: Be careful with the established 'canon.' There is a distinct tendency to cite men scholars in writing on men and masculinities; there is a stronger tendency to cite global North scholars. The fact that something is popular, is well-cited, or well-known, doesn't necessarily add to its truth-value.

A second principle is to bring the critical analysis of men and masculinities and decolonial theory and practice into debate – for CSMM to take the insights of decoloniality seriously and thoroughly, and for decolonial theory and practice to include insights from CSMM.

Third, I also think questioning the concept of 'masculinities' is very much needed. The concepts of masculinity and masculinities have had extraordinary success – with their reinvention from narrow psychological dispositions and micro-sociological role theory. The danger in repeating the term, masculinities, without interrogation, is that it can easily solidify the coloniality of gender (Lugones, 2007).

Fourth, deconstruct men. This brings one more directly to the decolonial challenge – that is both epistemological and ontological. What is meant, denoted, and connoted by 'Man,' 'man' and 'men' is both highly variable and highly affected by colonialism, and thus postcolonialism and decoloniality. There is not a single Man, that is, meaning of Man; the hegemony of men is strong (Hearn, 2004). The widespread recognition, from histories, empirical studies, and direct political experiences, that the gender category of men tends to be relatively more associated with aggression and various forms of violence, does not mean that men cannot be colonised, post-colonised, decolonialised, non-violent, queer, trans, old, infant, violated, both strong and weak, and so on. This is very important. The implication is that the category of men needs to be opened up, deconstructed, taken apart, and what I have elsewhere talked about in terms of abolition, that is abolition as a category of gender power. Why is a monolithic category of men necessary at all? What is being defended here, and by whom?

A fifth issue is not to see decoloniality as only about the colonised or the global South, or even how colonisation exists within the global North – but rather to turn decolonial back to the deconstruction of the colonising regions, the colonisers, the centres, and the global North – to take apart their power, privilege, unmarkedness, as in making the Ones to Others (Hearn, 1996).

Kopano: I agree with all the five issues you have mentioned, of course.

Let me add one more. We need future work on men, boys, and masculinities to be world-centred. As I have said, I do not only mean engaging with the world as is, but also as it could be. We need to be world-centred with a decolonial imagination. I have not said a great deal about the arts and creative disciplines, in which the imagination figures prominently. And to think of the decolonial future, of a world beyond coloniality, the arts and creative work can be of considerable help to us.

Should we aim to develop decolonial CSMM – or something rather different?

Jeff: I think we should develop, engage with, and critique and auto-critique different versions of decolonial CSMM – along with linking ever more closely to studies, teaching, learning, and politics on men, masculinities, gender relations, and the planetary. The relations of the planetary, the decolonial, and intersectional gender powers are for urgent prioritising. This involves greater attention to the emergence of new hierarchies and inequalities, and the politics and ethics of doing feminist decolonial CSMM.

Kopano: Yes. Without a doubt. We should invite and support the development of decolonial CSMM.

If we understand the world as shaped by coloniality, and we understand the effects of coloniality, how can we not?

Decolonial CSMM is an invitation to rethink CSMM, which implies rethinking boys, men and masculinity.

Epigraph

In this end section, we mention a number of focused writings on men and masculinities that are influenced by postcolonial and/or decolonial thinking:

Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994; Breckenridge, 1998; Morrell, 1998; Ouzgane & Coleman, 1998; Cleaver, 2002; Pease & Pringle, 2002; Gutmann, 2003, 2023; Vigoya et al., 2003; Mwangi, 2004; Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005; Chopra, 2007; Coleman & Bassi, 2011; Cornwall et al., 2011, 2015; Ruspini et al., 2011; van der Gaag, 2014; Hokuwhitu, 2015; Innes & Anderson, 2015; El Feki et al., 2017; Mfecane, 2018; Farahani & Thapar-Björkert, 2020; Langa, 2020; Ratele, 2020, 2021; Walters & Valenzuela, 2020; Matlon, 2022; Philip, 2022; Chowdhury, 2023; Nayak, 2023; Vigoya, 2023; Chitando et al., 2024; Schmidt, 2024. A very useful summary of sources of relevant literature is in Connell (2014b, p. 554), listing Southern theory, alternative traditions in social science, postcolonial sociology, indigenous knowledge, the psychology of liberation, decolonial thought, the decolonisation of methodology, and the global sociology of knowledge.

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