

THEORISING MEN AND MASCULINITY. SPECIFIC PROBLEMS
AND DIVERSE APPROACHES

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This symposium is concerned with men's response to the feminist challenge. Yet, why have a symposium on men at all at a congress on women? It is an obvious question and one that needs answering. As is often the case, there is a short answer, and a longer one - in fact I sometimes feel that questions like that demand a life-long answer. The short answer is that following the invitation of the organisers, I was very happy to organise this session and would like to thank them and you for the privilege of being part of this conference. The longer answer is the subject of this paper, in different ways of the whole of the symposium, and indeed of many debates in academic, political, and social life. I add social here to indicate that arguments about the response, or attempted lack of response, of men to the feminist challenge take place not only in academic and publicly visible political arenas, but also in the full range of interpersonal contexts - in the street, the home, the staircase, the kitchen, the bed, and elsewhere - those places that are often considered private and beyond both politics and academia, and yet remain intensely political.

Before outlining the symposium, one further general introductory comment needs to be made - that is on my own position, or more broadly the self-recognised standpoint from which I am writing and in which I locate myself. This is, briefly, the standpoint of men's anti-patriarchal praxis, according to which I wish to ally myself like-minded/acting pro-feminist men to change against all features of patriarchy: what might be called patriarchalisms and patriarchalities (institutions, actions, and so on). This therefore involves reaching out to (all) other men, so including those who are or may be hostile to this project. Being a member of the gender class of men, this therefore involves ambiguities and, more grandly, contradictions, as the patriarchalism of the class of men and of

other men is also part of me, negatively as a source of oppression in me, and more positively as a source of separation and sadness from other men. This standpoint only becomes possible in the context of first feminism and second gay liberation: the standpoint of men's anti-patriarchal praxis is a product of developing structures of groups, networks, organisations created by men as a positive response to feminism and, in a different way to gay liberation¹.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SYMPOSIUM

This symposium is international, interdisciplinary, and concerned with relationships of theory and practice. It brings together scholars from the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It also draws together a number of disciplines, including sociology, history, politics, philosophy, and linguistics; and interdisciplinary interfaces: Kimmel (history/sociology); sociology/literature (Morgan); politics/environmental studies (van Velden); philosophy/politics (Brod); linguistics/counselling (Lütjen). The contributors are currently engaged in theoretical and empirical research into men and masculinity; in teaching on these topics; as well as other practical and organisational work on men's studies and with men. The focus on the relationship of theory and practice thus stems from both an academic concern with that relation, and practical involvement in men's ventures against sexism both in and outside academia.

Feminism is both a force for social and political change, and a force for understanding such change. Accordingly, men's responses to the feminist challenge include responses to both those social and political changes, and to those new forms of understanding. The papers are concerned in different ways with both practical and theoretical responses by men to feminism. Practical responses from men range from those that are more private, personal, implicit,

reactive, and less conscious, to those that are more public, political, explicit, proactive, and more conscious. The latter include the organisation of men's consciousness-raising groups, and men against sexism activities.

Theoretical responses may also be more or less explicit. They may comprise relatively minor adjustments to current concepts and topics, or the more complete development of the academic sub-discipline of men's studies. There are, for example, now about one hundred courses of men's studies in the United States alone (Bliss, 1986).

All of these papers thus both examine the responses of other men to feminism, and are in themselves responses to feminism, on the part of the contributors. The differences lie in the types of men's practice that are under consideration. The next paper (Kimmel) provides a necessary historical perspective by placing the contemporary 'crisis' of masculinity in the context of previous historical 'crises': in Restoration England, 1688-1714 and turn of the century United States 1880-1914. This is followed by a paper (Morgan) that through a social and literary analysis focuses on a more specific element of masculinity, namely violence. While changes are occurring in the significance of violence within masculinity they are often only implicit and with little consciousness. In contrast, the subsequent paper (van Velden) analyses theory and practice by men that is self-consciously anti-patriarchal, drawing on recent material from the Netherlands.

The next two papers attempt to examine the interrelationship of dominant violent masculinities and anti-patriarchal masculinities. The first of these (Brod) considers such changing forms of masculinity, within a broad political and philosophical frame of reference, including a critique of men's movements in the United

States. The second (Lütjen) also links different types of practice, namely those of violent or potentially violent men and those by themselves or other men counselling against violence. A detailed linguistic analysis of violence in speech amongst men involved in 'men against men's violence' groups in Germany and the United States is presented. This returns the symposium to some of the crucial issues around violence and masculinity raised in the paper by Morgan. As noted, in all these papers, particular attention is directed towards the relationship of theory and practice, as in the relationship of women's studies and feminism.

This introductory paper outlines and seeks progress on a particular theoretical problem: the theorising of men and masculinity. This is an issue that has hardly been noticed as a problem within most malestream (O'Brien, 1981) or mainstream social science.

Problematic men, problematic masculinity: social contexts, conscious practices, and academic studies.

This first section of the paper is concerned with some key inter-relationships. First, I shall consider a number of ways in which men are changing and are not changing. I briefly examine some of the major social trends that have affected the social conditions within which men and masculinity exist and change. A first analytical problem is that these social trends and social conditions are some of the very trends and conditions that have contributed to and affected the rise of modern feminism. However, that latter issue is not the concern of this paper, partly because politically I do not see it as an area for major study by men, and partly because practically its development is subject to other factors such as women's autonomous organising to which men do not

have access (cf. Bouchier, 1983). There is a further analytical problem which needs to be noted: that feminism and indeed men's responses to feminism are not separate from 'broader' social trends and social conditions; they are indeed partly constitutive of them. Thus to talk of international or employment or other societal relations is to refer to social phenomena that are intensely and perhaps even inherently gendered.

The social conditions that affect, interrelate with, and are constituted by feminism, in turn affect, interrelate with, and are constituted by what has come to be called the 'crisis of masculinity'. The social conditions within which men and masculinity exist and change thus in practice include general political and economic conditions, and feminist interventions in politics and economics. These interrelations can thus be simplified in the following way:-

Social Conditions
(The Social Formation)

Feminism

'Crisis of Masculinity'

The 'crisis of masculinity' is used here as a shorthand for that combination of material and ideological conditions and actions, in which masculinity appears to become more problematic than was previously the case. These relations exist in general social contexts (for example, where there is no particular consciousness of feminism or men's 'reaction' or 'crisis'), in specific conscious, social practices (of feminism and men's 'reaction' or 'crisis'), and in academic and educational work and study.

(a) Social contexts and the 'crisis of masculinity'

The crisis of masculinity is not new. To assume it is to

presume a spurious form of 'homeostasis', the 'natural' and successive complement of a 'Golden Age-ism' (Brown and Adams, 1979). Masculinity, even when hegemonic, is no more static than other social relations beset as they are by struggle and contradictions. Michael Kimmel demonstrates the historical conditions of several crises of masculinity in both Britain and the United States. The current phase of crisis of masculinity in North America, Europe and elsewhere can be analysed at a number of levels of generality, including international relations, employment relations and domestic relations².

At the global level, there have been immense changes in the 'world order' which, although usually described in the genderless language of international relations, certainly have implications for the production of men and masculinity throughout the world. Andrew Tolson (1977, 113), writing in the British context, argues for the importance of the world war experience and the subsequent post-imperialism in producing a 'crisis of masculinity'.

The first indications of a masculine emotional crisis became apparent through the experience of war. The suffering of the First World War - as new destructive machinery confronted the anachronistic strategy of trench warfare - is now part of our cultural heritage. But there was also an experience of the Second World War, less apparent in sheer human sacrifice, more as a matter of temperament, which has had a 'hidden' historical significance. During the war a feeling of disbelief began to undermine the unquestioning will to fight. This war was the last moment of 'high' British imperialism... . Possibly the involvement of women in the province of men penetrated the soldier's vain-glory. But certainly, for many sections of the middle class, the Second World War shattered the prestige of an imperialist masculinity.

Men, particularly certain sections of the middle classes, have, he suggests, lost their role as confident bearers of culture throughout the Empire. Shepherd Bliss (1985, 3) in the American context presents a rather similar account of more recent events:

It is crucial .. that we think about our international

moment; a key characteristic of our international moment as U.S. men is that the United States lost the war in Viet Nam - the first war that we lost. Then we were humiliated in Iran, and finally ... the United States went into tiny Grenada That's where we went to try to resurrect that soldier image, which is one of the places men have historically gone to find their masculinity.

International, military and imperialist relations are of relevance to the construction of men and masculinity in a number of ways: in providing particular forms of activity and labour, in providing models of masculinity, in the expenditure of vast and increasing sums on arms, in killing, seeking to kill, harming, threatening. They are effectively the most drastic and damaging forms of men's public violence; the threat and possibility of conscription and other military involvements leaves a deep oppression on men, even with the abolition of statutory service in Britain and elsewhere.

Changing patterns of international power are reproduced in changing patterns of employment and unemployment. Indeed in the case of Britain at least the decline in military and imperialist power is one major reason for relative economic decline. Writing in the North American context, Clyde Franklin (1984, p.206) considers that: 'In the early 1980s thousands of men have suddenly found themselves incapable of fulfilling the requirements of the male sex-role because of society's economic crisis'.³ On the other hand, while increases in 'unemployment' may mean that men spend more time at home, this does not necessarily mean a commensurate change in men's behaviour. Loss of job may mean loss of status, increasing frustration, domestic difficulties, and even a reassertion of a certain sort of 'masculinity' through violence. Additionally, although unemployment means less income, being poor is hardly new to millions of men, especially working-class and ethnic minority men. What is perhaps new is the changing relation of people, especially some young people, to the state, as the prime

provider of income support for dependants.

The changing structure of the employment and unemployment market, in size, gender division and technological structure is paralleled by changes in family and household structure. For example, between 1970 and 1980, the proportion of 'non-family' households increased from 18.8 to 26.1 per cent in the United States (Turner, 1984, 151). Similarly, the internal workings of families are themselves subject to transformation, in terms of the declining authority of the father, men's loss of interest in the role of 'breadwinner' (for others) (Ehrenreich, 1983) and so on. In contrast, such tendencies may not necessarily undermine associations of masculinity and money and its control.

The family, the experience of women, and indeed the power of men have all been further transformed by changes in patterns of fertility, and the form, availability and use of contraception, both outside and within marriage. The development, or the possibility, of (near-)universal contraception is a major 'world historical event', shifting the relations of reproduction, promoting both the entry of women into the public sphere and the growth of modern feminism (O'Brien, 1981). Men are thereby and equivalently changed, perhaps even shocked, by the loss of (potential) power. Meanwhile other changes in family structure follow from population ageing, in Western societies at least. More men survive into 'old age'; more marriages include substantial non-fertile years; and more men need more caring, often in practice provided by women. Again the impact of these changes is likely to be mixed, with more visibility of older men and their images, and yet the perpetuation of pre-existing patterns, for example, between wives and husbands.

As with employment patterns, men may experience, through familial changes, a release from ties and/or a sense of anomie.

Changes in family structure and process have occurred in association with an increased sensitivity and valuation of men as persons and as bodies. Men may be more aware of the 'hazards of being male' (Franklin, 1984, 206; Ehrenreich, 1983; Goldberg, 1976)⁴ may admit feelings, cry, at 'family crises' of birth, divorce, death, and seek to define themselves as being more than familial or formal work roles. Such changes are not necessarily caused directly by changes in the family; they represent the more visible expression of uncertainties surrounding how men have and conduct private lives.

These causes and explanations of the problematising of men and masculinity - international, employment, domestic - have all been the focus of attention for feminist analysis. Indeed the separation of causes into such distinct types or levels is itself open to critique. Such apparent divisions, if viewed too rigidly, merely reproduce an ideology founded on separation, between class and gender, even between economy and ideology, so dominant in this society. Furthermore, feminist theory and practice have themselves both been a major force for social change, including the critique of men and masculinity. Feminist theory and practice is thus both a critical commentary on men and a redefinition of women without necessary reference to men.

In addition there are a number of more specific reasons for men to change and seek novel ways of relating to each other. Firstly, there is the increasing involvement of men in forms of emotional labour, and caring work, often within state agencies, such as nurses, nursery workers, social workers, teachers, air cabin staff, and so on. These forms of people work may cause individual men to change and seek personal changes, even though collectively such changes in the division of labour may be a way of men taking over areas of work and expertise formerly dominated by women (Hearn, 1982). Secondly, many men who are in these kind of jobs, as well

as other office, state, clerical employment, have in their own lifetime experienced a major loss, namely of working class solidarity. The experience of masculinity in the 1980s in the West is often one that lacks the tough intimacy of traditional male working class cultures that provided the taken-for-granted culture of their fathers. In place of this men may attempt to create their own new forms of community - in sports clubs, pub drinking, friendship networks and indeed in men's groups. Sadness for the loss of working class male solidarity may be a major force for seeking men's company, often subconscious, among men who for reasons of their own educational and geographical mobility, or changing patterns of employment, division of labour and unemployment, no longer have access to that particular source of mutual support and mutual competition.

On the other hand, although there are various social pressures for and facilitations of change in men, there is an increasing research evidence that these changes are much circumscribed and sometimes even reactionary, in reinforcing pre-existing patriarchal patterns rather than undermining them. These counter claims stem from the following evidence:

- (i) that the scale of change is relatively small. For example, in considering cross cultural studies of the decrease in women's domestic labour time since the 1960s, only a small increase (of say 5 to 10 per cent) in men's domestic labour time has been noted as a possible explanation as against the relatively much greater impacts of the increase in women's paid employment, the diffusion of domestic technology, and the increase in women's 'leisure' outside the home (Gershuny, 1987). Such time budget research fits well with research on fathers and fathering within a more qualitative tradition. Indeed 'recent research on Australian couples who actually have and reversed the sexual division of labor ... suggests the reversal is at best unstable, and often reflects no change in basic assumptions at all' (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985, citing Russell, 1983). Similar conclusions are discussed in the recently published Reassessing Fatherhood (Lewis and O'Brien, 1987), in which the evidence for the existence of the so-called 'new father' is found in reality to be

limited.

- (ii) that substantial changes in men's role, say in the family, occur mainly at crisis periods either of a short term and temporary nature, such as around childbirth (Bell, McKee and Priestley, 1983) or in more extended crises such as the care of handicapped children (Pahl and Quine, 1985). However, even in the latter case major gendered rearrangements of childcare are by no means guaranteed.
- (iii) that the creation of opportunities for the gendered rearrangement of powers, labours and roles are in reality places for the reinforcement of pre-existing gendered patterns. This is to be seen most obviously in the reaffirmation of domestic gender roles in families following male unemployment, with or without female paid employment. Men's unemployment has disproportionately negative effects on wives, girlfriends and other women (Hunt, 1980; McKee and Bell, 1985, 1986; Morris, 1985; Beuret and Makings, 1986). Similarly Jennifer Mason's research into 50- to 70- year old married couples suggests that renegotiation of roles following retirement takes place within well-defined, male-dominated limits, typically reproducing pre-retirement patterns in slightly altered form (Mason).
- (iv) that there are also specifically hostile anti-feminist responses from some men at both interpersonal and institutional levels.

This generalised 'crisis of masculinity' in turn affects, interrelates with, and is to an extent constituted by men's more specific responses to feminism in the form of a variety of individual and collective practices, and indeed further by the academic study of men and masculinity. This may be simply illustrated as follows:

Social Conditions

Feminism

'Crisis of Masculinity'

a. General social context

b. Men's conscious practical
responses to feminism

c. Men's academic study
of men and masculinit

In each case, in each relationship, each element provides a social context to the next, as well as a response to it.

(b) Men's conscious practical responses to feminism outside academia

So what are some of the major forms of social practices that men have developed as a positive response to the feminist challenge? As this question is answered in different ways by the three papers in Part 2 of the symposium, I will keep my comments here to a minimum.

While men cannot be feminists and cannot not be oppressors, we can do different things, different social practices, more or less conscious, and more or less as a specific response to feminist theory and practice, feminist praxes. Possible types of men's practice, both collective and individual, include:

- (i) explicit oppression whereby men explicitly accept and profit from that oppression, publicly and/or privately;
- (ii) liberal oppression, whereby men make themselves (superficially at least) more acceptable to women, yet still maintain that oppression;
- (iii) conspicuous liberalism, whereby men involve themselves in what is seen as women's arenas, work, campaigns, yet maintain a modified oppression by taking leadership;
- (iv) inconspicuous liberalism, whereby men involve themselves as above, yet attempt to reduce that modified oppression by not taking leadership;
- (v) change against patriarchy, whereby men try to change themselves, inconspicuously by private activities, and/or conspicuously by public activities.

Possibilities for men's practice against patriarchy exist in the private world; the public world; and across the public-private divide, as self-conscious anti-sexist practice.

The 'private' and the domestic, the form of arrangements and relationships for living with and relating to others, is in many ways the most difficult area of practice for men to face and change. One important block is that the home and the personal are seen as 'private' in the first place - the private sphere is itself private, beyond influence. Opening up 'private' issues, making them more 'public', is, however, complicated by the implications that may follow for other people, who may or may not seek involvement in

'personal politics'. Above all the private contains multifarious experiences, talk, conversations, use of language, touch, chores, childcare, housework and so on, that are usually considered 'trivial'. Changing these so they are no longer seen as such is an important possibility for men's practice, and in itself political.

In contrast, men's practice in the public world is both facilitated and constrained by the fact that this is the arena of conventional 'politics'. Despite its historical domination by men, the public realm presents possibilities for political change against patriarchy. Possible arenas of the public realm include paid work; the street; men's 'private' clubs and associations; and reproductive politics. Within trade union, political party and similar political organisations, men can challenge multiple issues of sexism, ranging from men's domination of executive positions to the persistence of alienating structures and methods of working, through the creation of men's groups within them, banning their own candidature for office, and so on.

Anti-sexist practice across or beyond the public-private divide takes many forms: support for women's campaigns, gay and bisexual groups and campaigns, men's groups (consciousness-raising, therapy, task-based), creche groups, publications and writing, video work, educational work with boys, young men, men, anti-violence projects, campaigns against pornography and rape⁵. Within these and other initiatives there are, however, definite dangers and tensions. In the United States the tendency to use men's groups as a way of avoiding confronting power over women has seen explicit expression in the Coalition of Free Men group, seeking 'men's rights', asserting 'male liberation', with a consequent split from pro-feminist anti-sexist groups and organisations, such as the National Organisation for Changing Men. In Britain, differences of emphasis

have certainly existed between 'more political', more socialist men, and men who are more concerned with therapy and personal change. Such tensions are also often present within individual consciousness-raising or other men's groups, and even within individual men. It is not surprising that there might be tensions between the individual and the collective, in the context of the long established practice of men's 'solidarity' with each other at paid work, at school, in sport and so on. This 'solidarity' is often at the expense of other similar 'teams' of men, with whom there is competition, and who in the ultimate military case may be killed. Such oppressions both by and of men remain, and are difficult to dispel from practice. Accordingly, simply labelling practice 'anti-sexist' is not necessarily significant; what is important is the growth of non-oppressive, loving practice by men between the public and the private worlds. This is just as possible between neighbours, friends, lovers, relatives, shoppers, workmates, pickets, and men on the street, as it is in more formally organised men's groups.

(c) Men's academic response to the feminist challenge

The development of feminism as theory and practice brings responses, positive, negative and disinterested, from men. Similarly academic responses, that is the responses of academic men or men in academia, are various. As elsewhere in this paper I am not much concerned with overtly hostile responses nor indeed with those which respond with silence or ignorance. Even so it is necessary to state that the lack of knowledge of long-standing and experienced male academics about feminist scholarship in their own field is often remarkable, to the point of institutionalisation. Thus 'established' male scholars in philosophy can afford to literally know nothing of major feminist philosophers, 'senior' political scientists can say they have never heard of the politics of

reproduction or of gyn/ecology, and 'senior' economists need to know much of trade and traffic in goods, but not in women, that presumably considered to be 'uneconomic'.

The response of academic men in many ways correspond to those of men generally to feminism - hostility, ignorance, liberal acceptance, curiosity, ambivalence, and occasional enthusiasm. There are, however, certain complications in academic contexts, and these include:

- (i) the institutional location of academia in universities and similar institutions which are themselves male-dominated.
- (ii) the historical significance of academia and universities as places for the exclusion of women, until relatively recently.
- (iii) the contribution of academia to the construction of the public domain, as signified in the notion of 'public-action' (of results, theories, ideas).
- (iv) the historical interrelation of academia, and the other historical professions of the law, church, and medicine, which together have formed such a powerful grouping in the formulation and domination of ideas: the malestream.
- (v) the development of explanations of unequal gender power that themselves compound men's oppression of women.
- (vi) the established exclusion of the private, personal, and experienced realities of people from academic study.

Theorising 'men', and 'masculinity'

The development of the academic study of men and masculinity is part of a more general problematisation of men and masculinity, that includes feminist critiques of men and men's practical responses to feminism. These problematisations, at personal, political, and theoretical levels, in turn produce the 'topic', the problematic, of men and masculinity. Paradoxically, it is only in the possible disruption of a social phenomenon that it becomes apparent. Thus as men and masculinity have become more problematic, we/they have come to be seen more as 'topics' for

study and observation.

There are clearly many possible ways of theorising men and masculinity - at least as many as there are theoretical approaches within the social sciences. Men may, for example, be seen as 'essentially' biological substances, as receivers of sex or gender role socialisation, as bearers of social role, as psychologically 'masculine' essences, as productive labourers. Not only are possible differences of substantive emphasis there are also possible differences of methodological assumptions. Indeed it is not difficult to see how a metataxonomy of possible theorisations of men and masculinity, as of many other objects, could be constructed with substantive variation and methodological variation as the two major dimensions. This is, however, not part of my present task, not least because such a 'meta-' approach suffers from problems of ontological privilege accorded to the assumed 'equivalences' of the dimensions of such matrices (Clegg, 1982). They exhibit a not necessarily intended Kantianism and dualism.

Problematizations of men and masculinity occur for all the academic disciplines, and for all the theoretical traditions. The ignoring and ignorance of 'men' in these ways has perhaps been most profound in the abstract universals of philosophy, the documentary public worlds of political science, and the market forces of economics. The neglect has been less pronounced within psychology, social psychology, and anthropology. Psychological studies have traditionally attended to the individual, the interpersonal, the intrapersonal, even if this often means 'private behaviour in public'. They in turn have given massive legitimacy to the specific notions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity', often cast within sets of universals and continua.

Anthropology has despite and perhaps because of its imperialist heritage been more explicitly concerned with the social construction of men and masculinity, usually of other societies, societies that are seen by the observer as 'other', often of black people. The relativist and comparative strength of anthropology provides immense resources for the retrieval and reinterpretation of ethnographic material on men and masculinity. In comparison sociological inquiry has typically been constrained by an emphasis on 'industrial society', with 'economic class', 'division of labour', 'status', and so on, as the 'normal' building blocks of analysis. As David Morgan (1981) and Clive Pearson (1984), amongst others, have pointed out assumptions about the nature of men and masculinity have usually remained implicit in sociology. History and literature provide endless stories about men and masculinity, and huge creative opportunities for teaching and learning if only those 'topics' were more focused (August, 1982; Bowen, 1985).

The social construction of the 'man', 'men', and 'masculinity', both in particular cases, and moreover as categories has equally important implications for theory and social theory in their various forms, as epistemology, ontology, methodology, sociology of science, science. All are themselves social constructions predominantly both by men and of men, the product of gender relations as particular types of mental labour.

Men's (Anti-Sexist) Studies

Several possible avenues present themselves for men social scientists in the light of these issues, from pretending to be 'male feminists', becoming 'expert' on women's studies, promoting 'gender studies' as some 'overarching' discipline for both women

and men to 'fit into', to developing the study of men and masculinity. Of particular interest is the increasing development of the specific study of men and masculinity in further and higher education. There are special issues on men in academic journals, and bibliographic sourcebooks on men and masculinity. In Britain there is a gradual development of day courses, study groups, and taught units within formal educational programmes⁶. Thus the situation is not the hypothetical one of should men's studies exist, for they do; but how they should exist.

Having said that, it is necessary to view such developments with caution. For example, the specific study of men may well attract (men) researchers with no particular commitment to critique, or worse with some form of anti-feminism. On the other hand, the growth of this area of study is to be welcomed as the specific critique of men is seen as a priority for men in opposing sexism in the social sciences. My own concern is that men opposed to sexism and interested in studying 'gender' should focus primarily on the critique of men and masculinity, not the study of women; and similarly men studying men and masculinity should do so with an anti-sexist commitment, that is both critical and loving.

As a result of working on these issues, especially with friends and colleagues in the Men and Masculinity Research Group at Bradford, the following broad ground rules are suggested in the study of men and masculinity.

1. Men must not seek to appropriate feminism or feminist theory. We must respect the autonomy of feminism/women's studies, while not seeking to establish as a matter of principle a converse autonomy of what might be conveniently called 'men's studies'.
2. Men's studies must be open to all, women and men. While men are likely to constitute the majority of participants in men's studies, women are to be welcomed too. The forms, procedures, findings and theories of men's studies must be open to women's scrutiny, criticism and guidance. Men need to listen to, learn from, but not sit back and depend

3. The major task of men's studies is the development of a critique of men's practice partly in the light of feminism, not the development of a critique of feminism. This means that while men's studies are inconceivable without feminism and while they are bound to utilise, and must recognise feminist work, the basic concern is not to engage feminism on its own terms but to see what implications feminism has both for men's position in the world and the practice of the existing malestream disciplines. The critical target is men, and men's discourse, not women or feminism. For these reasons, the very term 'men's studies' may itself be open to objection as expressing an unwarranted symmetry between men's and women's studies. It may be preferable to use an alternative term, such as 'the critique of men', that makes this distinction explicit.
4. Men's studies, or whatever preferred term is used, must span traditional disciplinary divides; it cannot avoid being interdisciplinary. Psychology, economics, political science and the rest are all relevant to an understanding of men and masculinity. Similarly it is unlikely that a single methodology will be able to encapsulate all that has to be said.
5. Men doing research, learning, teaching, study, theorising and academic discourse about men and masculinity need to subject our own practice to scrutiny. The relationship of researcher to researched, learner to learned, teacher to taught are problematic and need repracticising (not just rethinking) in ways that do not reproduce the patriarchy of disinterested positivism. They need to be subject to consciousness-raising, even become forms of consciousness-raising. This is not meant as a root to the unfolding of Spirit, but in recognition that gendered subjectivity is part of material relations. Collective self-reflective theorising of how gendered subjectivities exist within those material relations, of the male-dominated public domains, called academia, appears a necessary part of reproducing an anti-patriarchal 'social science'.

The study of men and masculinity, if conducted from an anti-sexist or anti-patriarchal standpoint, is thus not some distanced academic operation that is just done. It is a series of activities that are beset with complications, including:

- (i) How to work within and yet contrary to academia.
- (ii) How to deal adequately with and in contradiction with mainstream ideology that is as malestream itself part of the object of enquiry.
- (iii) How to produce an account of men and masculinity that is historical, social, and cultural.
- (iv) How to produce an account of men and masculinity that is dialectical; as dialectical as are accounts of women and femininity.
- (v) How to recognise the fact of men's material existence as

material bodies.

- (vi) How to conceptualise the relationship of 'men' and 'masculinity'.
- (vii) How to facilitate the analysis both the gender class of men and the variety of men.
- (viii) How to relate theory and practice, and deal with other possible contradictions.
- (ix) How to adequately recognise and use experience.
- (x) How to do social science, to improve the quality of our activity, to bring love to our work.
- (xi) How to transcend the public and private dimensions of our own worlds.

In other words, for men to re-theorise men and masculinity necessitates attention to the practices, actions, experiences, of the theorist: it is not possible to do theory as has been done, in abstraction, so many times in the past by men.

Selective Examples of Theorising

Two current approaches to the theorising of men and masculinity that in different ways attempt to deal with some of the difficulties and problems of theorising men and masculinity are those by:

- (a) R.W. Connell and the Macquarie University sociologists of masculinity.
- (b) The Achilles Heel grouping.
- (a) R.W. Connell and the Macquarie University sociologists of masculinity

The contribution of this group of Australian sociologists to the study of men and masculinity over the last decade or so has been impressive indeed. It has resulted in both theoretical (Which Way is Up? Connell, 1983) and empirical texts (e.g. Kessler et al, 1982), as well as a number of relevant papers on gender and masculinity. Perhaps the major insight of this work is the

consistent focus on the social construction of masculinity through practice within historical structures. Their analysis has developed alongside a critical evaluation of other relevant literature on masculinity in the 70s, summarised in the following categories (Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985)⁷:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 'Men's liberation: | <u>Unbecoming Men</u> (Men's Consciousness Raising Group, 1971), <u>The Liberated Man</u> (Farrell, 1974), <u>Men and Masculinity</u> (Pleck and Sawyer, 1974), <u>Men's Liberation</u> (Nichols, 1975), <u>Sex: Male, Gender: Masculine</u> (Petras, 1975), <u>The Forty-nine Percent Majority</u> (David and Brannon, 1976). |
| Offended or satirical: | <u>The Prisoner of Sex</u> (Mailer, 1971), <u>The Difference Between a Man and a Woman</u> (Lang, 1971), <u>The Manipulated Man</u> (Vilar, 1972), <u>Free the Male Man!</u> (Mead, 1972), <u>The Inevitability of Patriarchy</u> (S. Goldberg, 1973). |
| Liberal commentary: | <u>Male Chauvinism</u> (Korda, 1973), <u>The Male Machine</u> (Fasteau, 1974), <u>A Book About Men</u> (Goodman and Walby, 1975). |
| Growth movement: | <u>The Male Dilemma</u> (Steinmann and Fox, 1974), <u>The Hazards of Being Male</u> (H. Goldberg, 1976), <u>Sex and the Liberated Man</u> (Ellis, 1976), <u>Male Sexuality</u> (Zilbergeld, 1978). |
| Feminist women: | <u>Below the Belt</u> (Bishop and McNeill, 1977), <u>About Men</u> (Chesler, 1978). |
| Radical men: | <u>For Men Against Sexism</u> (Snodgrass, 1977), <u>The Limits of Masculinity</u> (Tolson, 1977), <u>White Hero, Black Beast</u> (Hoch, 1979). |
| The academy: | <u>A Book of Men</u> (Firestone, 1975), <u>Dilemmas of Masculinity</u> (Komarovsky, 1976), <u>A Man's Place</u> (Dubbert, 1979), <u>Be a Man!</u> (Stearns, 1979), <u>The Male Sex Role</u> (Grady, Brannon and Pleck, 1979), <u>The American Man</u> (Pleck and Pleck, 1980). |

In considering this literature, Tim Carrigan et al are scathing on culturalist, sex-role theories of masculinity, and generally on the 'Books-About-Men' genre. They argue that the latter is '... about modernizing hegemonic masculinity ... finding ways in which the dominant group - the white, educated, heterosexual, affluent males ... - can adapt to new circumstances without breaking down the social-structural arrangements that actually give them their power' (p.577). In its place, Carrigan et al suggest a more complex and multi-layered analysis. A notion of patriarchy is retained that is historical or more precisely characterised by historicity, so that the form of patriarchy is variable and dynamic (Connell, 1983, 59-62). Power structures are acknowledged, but these are 'contestable, displaceable, decomposable'. In particular four further elements are stressed in developing a sociology of masculinity: the notion of hegemonic masculinity and the interrelation and differential powers of different masculinities; the contribution of gay history and gay liberation as a clear example of historical variation in masculinity, as a problematisation of heterosexuality, and a threat to dualist gender categories; the significance of psychoanalysis as an account of both the internal structure of masculinity, and resistance of men to change (Connell, 1984); the perpetuation of all the above and more through practice, necessarily political, albeit in structures (also see Connell, 1985). This group of theorists are also content to recognise contradictions in masculinity; indeed their own work stands in the contradiction between sociology and a theory of practice. Despite some determined attempts to criticise the 'men's movement', men against sexism and anti-patriarchal writing⁸, through their sociological hats (Carrigan et al, 1985), Bob Connell (1982, 61) has himself admitted that while the decline or end of patriarchy necessitates a loss of power

for men, it also '... does promise a kind of liberation for men too'.

(b) The Achilles Heel grouping

The development of men's groups and men against sexism activities in England, and particularly in London, in the early 1970s provided the backcloth to the development of the Achilles Heel men's anti-sexist publishing collective in 1977-78. The exact route to its formation is difficult to chart but included various interrelations of left/socialist politics, feminism, gay politics, and therapy, and in particular experience in Big Flame, the International Marxist Group, libertarian Marxism, the East London Men's Centre in the mid-70s, and from 1974-77 Red Therapy - a mixed gender group which attempted to explore radical therapy in relation to left and feminist politics. That last group subsequently split on gender lines, with some of the women joining the Women's Therapy Centre in London and some of the men starting the Achilles Heel magazine (Rowan, 1987). Seven issues of the magazine were produced between 1978 and 1983 (including special issues on work, sexuality, and violence), together with four booklets - two of poetry, and two on birth, childcare and fatherhood; an eighth issue of the magazine has just been published in April this year. Members or ex-members of the collective, for inevitably they have changed in membership, have also produced the edited collection, The Sexuality of Men (Metcalf and Humphries, 1985), the book, The Horned God (Rowan, 1987), the three-part television series 'About Men' and linked booklet (Eardley, Humphries and Morrisson, 1983), other articles and chapters in books, as well as several films on men and gender issues (e.g. 'True Romance Etc' from the Newsreel Collective). My own relationship to all this is as a contributor of one of the booklets, to the 'Sexuality' collection, and to Issue

What is interesting about this particular grouping is that it straddles politics, academia, therapy, and indeed the arts. In studying men and masculinity, the task is explicitly to change them or rather us.

In order to answer the question of what ways the grouping have contributed to a theorising of men and masculinity, I will draw selectively from the journal itself and two of the texts subsequently produced by members and ex-members of the collective in the period since 1983. This selectivity is necessary as although there are several well developed collective and individual statements on men and masculinity it would be inaccurate to suggest there is a single agreed position. First, the collectives past and present have been explicitly pro-feminist, pro-gay liberation, and anti-sexist. Analysis is conducted within that context. Secondly, capitalism and patriarchy are both recognised as powerful societal forms, without any presumed primacy of either: men have power in both in different ways. Thirdly, there is a central, and in some ways taken-for-granted, focus on men's own experience(s) as major and valid means to the development of analysis/politics/theory. This is so in two particular ways: by the use of knowledge gained (or consciousness raised?) in men's groups, and by bringing '... privatised knowledge and experience of years of struggle against traditional "personal" relations and sacrosanct life patterns' (Metcalf, 1978, 8) into the public domain. Accordingly the attempt was made '... to locate ourselves as men and as individuals within (an historical process), and to make our generalisations ... from a clear sense of who we are and where we come from' (Achilles Heel collective, 1978, 6).

These kinds of principles make inevitably for a rather contradictory analysis and practice, in which there is no clear

line between politics and theory, and theory is produced for politics and for ourselves. It also means that the whole of analysis is claimed and owned as being seen through the eyes of the analyst: thus men are analysed through the eyes of men, albeit with the aid of feminist literature and theory, and with a political commitment to the support of feminism.

Some of these themes have been developed in more details in the collection, The Sexuality of Men, except here much more explicit use is made of psychoanalytic theory, including that of Chodorow, Eichenbaum and Orbach, and cultural theory, including that of Barthes, Foucault and Kristeva. Men's sexuality, both gay and heterosexual, is thus seen as only understandable as part of the ideological construction of masculinity. According to such analysis, while men's power and gender identity are in different ways both entrenched, the actual visible form that masculinity and sexuality take are highly culturally specific, often reflecting upon themselves in their elaboration. While men's power may be enduring, the actual form of masculinity is a relative surface appearance. There is a repeated reference to the compensatory interplay of power and externalised/alienated powerlessness. For example, in discussing the appeal of pornography to men, Andy Moe (1985, 67-8) writes:

'The tensions inherent in the phallic regime (of pornography) externalize a man's desire and reduce him to a silent shadow, a presence manifesting attributes of control and authority. This alienation from sexual desire is a problem taken up by texts of soft pornography, in which the narratives of sex clearly distinguish between a physically active role for the man and a correspondingly passive role for the woman. However, as these narratives unfold it is clear that the man has a curiously passive role, without apparent motivation or desire beyond expressing the limited crudities which symbolize the social and physical force of his sexual dominance ...'.

This emphasis on the contradictory nature of masculinity and men's experience has recently been taken further by Vic Seidler (1987), by beginning from the historical apparent conflation of reason and masculinity, and the associated antagonisms of reason/masculinity and desire/madness/sexuality/the body. He continues to challenge this dualism (cf. Hearn and Parkin, 1987), particularly as it relates to men and masculinity, and concludes that '(L)earning to reinstate and value a language of the body is bound to be stumbling and uncertain, since it challenges ... cherished rationalist notions. ... As we learn to place reason and desire in a different relation to each other, we might discover a language of male sexuality which is less instrumental and brings us into closer relation with ourselves and our partners' (Seidler, 1987, 108).

A Materialist Theory of Men and Masculinity

There is much within both the above positions that is, to my mind, commendable. Both attempt to take on board, feminist critiques (in a way that even some specifically gay scholarship fails to do), and both begin to answer some of the problems and issues earlier identified for the study of men and masculinity. There are, however, clearly many questions that need more attention. These include the relation of concept of patriarchy and the understanding of the gender class of men, the significance of men's bodies and materiality, and the relation of 'men' and 'masculinity'. In addressing these and other questions I have found the tradition of dialectical materialism immensely useful not as some abstracted theory, but in the manner of dialectics, as a lived experience whereby theory and practice are one aspect and instance of that dialectical materialism. Thus I see experience and dialectical materialism not as contradictory, but as completely compatible, and perhaps even one and the same. So far this position seems to me to be consistent with the principles

of marxism, founded as it is in 'practical, human-sensuous activity'. There are many implications of this for the analysis of men and masculinity, although Marx did little to relate his own dialectical materialism to the theorising of 'men' and 'masculinity'. To pursue this theme involves both attention to the experience of being a man and the experience of masculinity, and the development of dialectical materialist theory around the ways in which 'men' are distinguishable from 'women'. Thus while Marx built his theorising of labour and production from the notion of praxis, through the notion of alienation, he failed to consider in any great detail the implications of 'practical, human-sensuous activity' for the analysis of either:

- (i) reproduction rather than production;
- (ii) that which is not usually considered labour;
- (iii) sex and gender.

Marx and Engels (1970, 51) do admittedly write of the '... the division of labour, which was originally nothing but the division of labour in the sexual act ...', while in Capital there is the notorious statement that '... the capitalist may safely leave (the) fulfillment (of the maintenance and reproduction of the working class) to the labourer's instincts of self-preservation and of propagation' (Marx, 1977, 537). It has been left to others, notably Mary O'Brien (1981), to provide a dialectical materialist analysis of reproduction, and specifically biological reproduction. As she points out the structure of biological reproduction is based in an historically variable and dialectical process between the genders of women and men. Her account of the material sources of gender domination in patriarchy provides a strong framework for the theorising of men and masculinity. Accordingly, men exist in historically specific structured relations of (biological) reproduction, such as in the epoch of paternity, just as much as people do in historically specific structured relations of

production, such as capitalist ones. Men are intrinsically part of the (re)production of the relations of reproduction, while men are literally (re)produced by them. By implication, what we call 'men' are in fact different types of men (within the gender class of all men) who are in different relationships to biological reproduction, for example, as fathers or non-fathers. Similarly, 'masculinity' may be seen on the surface appearances of those differential relations; it is a shorthand that which is done by men, the ways in which those differential relations are reproduced, performed, mediated, and indeed opposed and challenged through the agency of particular individual men.

This is, however, only part of the story, for in addition to the praxis of (biological) reproduction, (biological) reproductive praxis, analysed so expertly by O'Brien, there are several other realms of 'practical, human-sensuous activity' that are major determinants constituents of 'men' and 'masculinity'. These include the activities and significantly the labour-powers, of sexuality, of generative nurture beyond the immediate physical dependence of the child, and indeed violence. Just as biological reproduction has been historically structured and organised through definite institutions, notably of paternity and fatherhood, so sexuality has been predominantly structured through 'hierarchic heterosexuality', and generative nurture and violence increasingly through the development of the professions and the state in the public domain. Each of these realms comprises structured relations between women and men, which in turn (re)produce men, and which provide the historical contexts for the development of different relationships - particular 'types' of men - gay men, heterosexual men, bisexual men; paid carers, unpaid carers, avoiders of care; institutionally violent (e.g. soldiers); domestically violent men; non-violent men; and so on. As before, 'masculinities' become

the surface appearances of men's differential relations to these structured relations of sexuality, generative nurture, and violence. Such masculinities are enacted through men's agency, which may reinforce, reproduce, or change structured relations.

It is in these ways that men's oppression of women and children (and indeed animals) is both maintained and contextualised in structured relations and enacted in agencies. 'Men' thus refers to both the products of those structured relations and the individual bodies that do convey those agencies. 'Masculinity' refers to the visible appearances that are evidence, indications, signs, accounts, justifications of being a man, or of that a person is a 'man'.

Some Reflexive Remarks

The materialist approach to theorising men and masculinity is for me a developing one, and one that offers great scope for analysing the commonalities (gender class) and diversities (types) of men and masculinity. If you ask a man what it is like to be a man, as I have many times in research contexts, men's groups and ordinary conversation, it is often references to work, paid work, or lack of it, that comes first. But beyond (or below, or behind?) that comes references to men's different relationships to (the relations of) sexuality, procreation, nurture and violence, even if it is the distance of the relationship that is at issue. These are the ways we know we are 'men' and 'not women', even though paid work/wage-based masculinities may provide the visible currency of men (e.g. Willis, 1977). While this may appear to throw up contradictions and confusions in the interpretation of men and masculinity, it may be noted that '(p)roductive relations, including capitalist ones, are ... also forms and matters of sexuality,

latter structures do not deny economic class relations; it is just that class does not define men qua men. These structures are also ways of locating men in relation to women, each other, individually, including myself.

Materialist theorising is important in another, and perhaps somewhat surprising way, namely that men's material location is not just an externalised context but it is also an internal(ised) reality. In this way the contributions of psychoanalysis to the understanding of men and masculinity, as noted by Connell, Seidler and others above, is immense. Although the visible and coercive external power of men is huge indeed, that power is paralleled by men's internal (delusions of) power, which has to be unearthed to be changed (Rowan, 1987). Both forms of power make up men and masculinity, and the experiences thereof.

Being a man is at root an experience, a dialectical and material one. It is this, the confusions, uncertainties and contradictions that surround men's experience, the associated possibilities and inevitabilities for change, the basing of experience in materialities, rather than abstract principles of speculation, equality, justice, less still fraternity (!) that make men's opposition to patriarchy a real possibility in both theory and practice. In practice, men's theorising against patriarchy arises from and in the context of personal and political 'work' against patriarchy, typically based outside academia. The problems faced by men in theorising/changing against patriarchy in academia are paralleled by those faced by men outside. Theory, theorising, is after all a practical (human-sensuous) activity, which for men is usually for and occasionally against patriarchy. For men to theorise in academia against patriarchy involves reformulating both theorising and academia itself in anti-patriarchal ways. Not only is the

but so too is the manner of men's theorising as a positive response to feminism. I remain hopeful.

1. According to Maureen Cain and Janet Finch (198 , 113) '... the concept of standpoint is intended to grasp a unity between a structure and its bearers'.
2. Fuller information on the issues raised in this section and other parts of this paper is given in The Gender of Oppression (Hearn, 1987).
3. As economic crises are probably endemic to capitalism, many men are presumably likely to experience such threats to 'sex-role' over a lifetime.
4. Some of the 'male hazards' literature has to be treated with caution. Men's own oppression, for example, in paid work, unhealth, and so on, has to be understood in relation to men's oppression of women, not as an excuse for further male privilege.
5. The most useful sources of information in Britain on such ventures are Men's Anti-sexist Newsletter and Achilles Heel.
6. Special issues of journals include:
Impact of Science on Society (21, 1, 1971); Black Scholar (2, 10, 1971); Journal of Social Issues (34, 1, 1978); The Counseling Psychologist (7, 1, 1978); The Family Co-ordinator (28, 3, 1979); New Dance (14, spring, 1980); Women's Studies International Forum (7, 1, 1984); Therapy Now (summer 1985); Ten-8 (17, 1985); American Behavioral Scientist (29, 5, 1986); Journal of the National Association of Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors (spring 1986); and University of Dayton Review (1986-7).

Bibliographies on men and masculinity include those by Grady, Brannon and Pleck (1979); Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1979); August (1985); Ford and Hearn (1987). Networks of and newsletters for men's studies scholars exist in the Netherlands (Nieuwsbrief Mannenstudies), the United States (Men's Studies Newsletter/Review) and Britain (Linkman).

7. The texts below are not included in the bibliography of this paper.
8. For example, the For Men Against Sexism collection (Snodgrass, 1977) is criticised for '... bend(ing) over backwards, and backwards again', to the criticisms of feminism. If we replace men by 'white' and feminists by 'black people', this would clearly read as racist.

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