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Masculinity studies

Contemporary approaches and alternative perspectives

Stefan Horlacher

Editor's introduction

Leonie Schmidt

Male, white, middle class, heterosexual, able-bodied. These five features turn a human being into *the* norm for everyone else. All other identities are defined as 'Other' to this normative blueprint: the more a subject differs from the established norm, the more marginalized she or he is likely to be. The white, heterosexual, able-bodied, middle-class man has been looked upon as an acclaimed or despised symbol of cultural and social hegemony for centuries.

Yet, this 'ideal' masculinity against which everyone else is measured is "invisible," as the US American sociologist Michael S. Kimmel suggested (1993). It seems strange to call the male gender *invisible*, since this term is usually reserved for those people whose identities are notably absent from the cultural center. Masculinity, however, is a peculiarly elusive concept in the sense that white, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual manhood appears to be lacking any formative definition that reaches beyond the five general identity features. As the 'unmarked' norm, masculinity has only been defined by exclusions and by what it is not: not feminine. When attempting to conceptualize this invisible norm, it also becomes apparent that attitudes about what 'makes a man' – just like attitudes about what 'makes a woman' – are subject to historical and cultural change. This complicates the question of what manhood means at a given historical moment and in a specific place.

Identifying masculinity as *invisible* also helps account for the masculine identities that have been overlooked. The multiple qualities of male experience differ strongly from the hegemonic image to which masculinity has been reduced. The experiences of gay, black, or disabled men, for example, were not understood in terms of masculinity until the early 1990s. Stefan Horlacher's chapter takes off at this historical juncture, mapping out what has been achieved in masculinity studies since such previously invisible aspects of masculinity have been explored. The author assesses current research trends, while, at the same time, questioning the direction masculinity studies has taken and pointing to the areas in which the field may have to catch up conceptually with female masculinity or queer studies.

Author's introduction

Stefan Horlacher

After many decades in which femininity, 'female experience,' and the social-political situation of women have formed the rightful foci of research, the male psyche and self have, at least since the 1980s, begun to receive attention in the US and UK academy. However, in most European countries masculinity studies are still the exception, and in comparison to the importance of gender studies they represent a minority interest in the field of gender research worldwide. Due to the relative lack of communication and exchange among the various disciplines dealing with masculinity, no consensus has been reached about the role that biological determinism, anthropological, evolutionary, and socio-historical factors, and representations as well as images of masculinity circulating in the cultural imaginary actually play in the construction of masculinity. Thus masculinity is still a highly problematic and controversial field of study that is located at the intersection of the humanities and the arts, the social sciences and natural science.

This chapter begins by critically taking stock of the images of masculinity presented in the media in the early twenty-first century; it then offers a short survey of current approaches to and concepts in masculinity studies, ranging from a survey of US American perspectives and Raewyn Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity to recent European approaches and theories. This is followed by a discussion of topics that are still unresolved by masculinity studies, such as the notion and importance of the body, female masculinities, and the question of whether there is something 'queer' about or within masculinity as such. In the conclusion, the chapter presents complementary, and up until now neglected, perspectives on masculinity and argues for rethinking masculinity with the help of concepts taken from intersectional, trans-, and interdisciplinary theories, the new field of comparative masculinity studies, and transgender and intersex studies.

Masculinity studies as well as gender, transgender, queer, and intersex studies interest me because they ultimately revolve around more complex understandings of identity and subjectivity. Because of their inherent power to blur and question binaries, masculinity and sexuality studies are intimately linked to questions of epistemology ("What can we know?") and insurgent forms of knowledge ("What are we allowed to know?"), as well as to the distribution of power and the marginalization of minorities within societies.

Introduction

After many decades in which femininity, 'female experience,'¹ and the socio-political situation of women have formed the rightful foci of research, the male psyche and self, at least since the 1980s, have begun to receive attention in the US and UK academy. Only much later, in the past 15 to 20 years, has masculinity begun to be addressed in German academic discourse. However, the image of masculinity that has emerged presents an alarming picture. Frequently mentioned in

connection with violence, masculinity is constantly said to be a problem – for instance, in German discussions of education. The latest statistics of the Federal Government of Germany and the WHO show men to be at a significantly higher risk of alcoholism, exhibiting personality disorders, and committing suicide (WHO 2011a, 2011b). With regard to life expectancy, chronic disorders, and the need for long-term care, men have been shown to be at a serious disadvantage (Bardehle 2010: 17–27; Badinter 1993: 49–50; Emig and Rowland 2010: 7–8).² In this context, it is also important to question the cultural construction of male bodies as violating more vulnerable (*verletzungs*offen) ones while simultaneously dismissing counter-evidence that does not cohere with this simple binary (Lenz 2007).

As Rainer Emig and Anthony Rowland argue, though in a slightly ironic tone,

the media urgently remind us that men are three times more likely to be murdered, more frequently die of heart attack, AIDS, and cancer, are more often homeless, are forced to go to war, become criminals and terrorists in much larger numbers, are expected to perform sexually, but also to repress emotions, suffer circumcision, [and] have their pain trivialized.

(Emig and Rowland 2010: 7–8; see also Yúdice 1995: 270)

Given that this is the case, one might have the impression that what was once the stronger sex is now the weaker one, and that this sex is characterized “by numerous physical and psychical weaknesses” (Badinter 1993: 49, my translation).³

Some experts have identified an important reason for these conditions in what they call the inherent frailty of masculinity, meaning the lack of a stable foundation for the formation of male identity. Even though, from a biological perspective, survival for males seems to be more difficult than for females, it would be wrong to jump to the conclusion that the lower life expectancy of men, which in industrial societies is up to six years, is simply a biological given. On the contrary, in addition to the violence for which male adolescents are notorious, the role models, concepts, and stereotypes of masculinity, which are propagated by popular and traditional literary and cinematic discourses, strongly suggest that masculinity as a concept is in transition, if not inherently unstable. These discourses also suggest that masculinity is not innate but is acquired through struggle, painful initiations, rites of passage, or long and often humiliating apprenticeships. The risks that have to be taken during this transitional period appear inestimably high, and the higher the risks, the greater the manhood they appear to confer. Very often, however, the inner strength necessary to succeed in the competitive race toward manhood, including material success, is not pre-existent but rather has to be gained during a period of figurative indoctrination (Gilmore 1990; Habegger 1982). Thus, being a man is, and has most probably always been, a serious matter that has to be learned if not fought for. Further, it always implies the risk of failure and of not being man enough (Badinter 1993: 15).

As far as literary critics and anthropologists such as Vera Nünning, Alfred Habegger, and David Gilmore are concerned, the problem of constructing a masculine identity is less a matter of biology than an “intersection of literary and

cultural history” (Nünning 2002: 301). From this perspective, supposedly gender-specific behavior, such as inexplicable eruptions of (not only) late adolescent male violence, largely results from a dysfunctional sociocultural complex residing somewhere on a spectrum extending from diminished socialization to excessive inculcation, and should thus not be regarded as the sporadic manifestation of male predisposition. The fact that masculinity is less a biological given than culturally acquired explains why its status has become increasingly contingent and inherently ambiguous. It also explains why literary, cinematic, and more recent narrative constructions of masculinity (e.g., via gaming and/or social media), albeit all of them necessarily fictional and/or performative constructs, have a normative function, directly influencing the character traits and modes of behavior that specific cultures identify as masculine.

If at least some of the problems arising from the construction of male gender identity have been addressed, the question remains as to what extent the burgeoning field of masculinity studies has been able to come up with solutions. While masculinity studies are well established and perhaps most advanced in the United States, in most European countries they are still the exception, and in comparison to the importance of gender studies they represent a minority interest in the field of gender research.⁴ Moreover, due to the relative lack of communication and exchange between the various disciplines dealing with masculinity, scientific research is far from having reached a consensus about the role that biological determinism, anthropological and/or evolutionary remainders, socio-historical factors, images circulating in the cultural imaginary, and representations of masculinity all actually play in the construction of masculinity. Thus masculinity is still a highly problematic and controversial field of study located at the intersection of the humanities and the arts, the social sciences and the natural sciences. It is a field of study where the most pressing questions can only be answered through approaches that are historical, comparative, intersectional, trans- and interdisciplinary, and which incorporate findings from LGBTI studies and reject reductive and limiting definitions of masculinity.⁵

In the following section, I would like to give a short survey of current approaches to masculinity and concepts in masculinity studies. This will be followed by a discussion of unresolved topics such as the notion of the body, female masculinities, and the question of whether there is something ‘queer’ about or within masculinity. In the final section, I suggest three additional perspectives for masculinity studies. I argue in favor of trans- and interdisciplinary approaches, comparative masculinity studies, and the taking into consideration of transgender and intersex studies. It should be clear that these alternative perspectives function only as examples of what could be a first step toward helping fill the numerous lacunae in the field of masculinity studies.

Charting the field of masculinity studies: a short survey

In an account that stresses the political dimension of masculinity studies,⁶ Kenneth Clatterbaugh’s still relevant survey from 1997 differentiates between

(1) the pro-feminist perspective, which works toward the “abandonment of a masculinity that is oppressive to women” as well as harmful to men, and aims “to lessen violence against women and homophobia among men” (Clatterbaugh 1997: 197); (2) the men’s rights perspective, the goal of which is “to create an awareness of the hazards of being male and to build a substantial movement among men that recognizes the costs and discriminations of being masculine” (Clatterbaugh 1997: 198); (3) the mythopoetic perspective, which argues in favor of a return to unconscious, archetypal patterns of masculinity through male initiation rites; and (4) the socialist perspective, which holds that “masculinity is shaped and created primarily by the relations of production, which include the relations of power and the divisions of labor [...] that the costs of masculinity are alienations produced by these relations” and that “there can be no significant alteration of masculinity until the class structure, with its relations of power, is itself altered” (1997: 117). Clatterbaugh further distinguishes between (5) the morally and/or socio-biologically conservative perspective; (6) the gay male perspective, which struggles against the feminization of gays as well as the (in)adequacy and moral (il)legitimacy of the dominant hegemonic – and usually homophobic – concepts of masculinity; (7) the African American perspective, which focuses on the link between ethnicity and masculinity, and argues “that antiblack racism is a formative feature of hegemonic masculinities” (1997: 13–14); and (8) the Evangelical Christian Men’s Movement (Promise Keepers): based on a literal reading of the Bible, it teaches that “men should be fathers and providers as well as the heads of their families.” Here, society “is taken to be in moral crisis in part because men have abdicated their responsibilities and in part because women, influenced by feminism, have taken on the man’s role” (Clatterbaugh 1997: 14).

If these perspectives are not so much academic approaches as situated and interested forms of knowledge, this does not apply to Raewyn Connell’s sociologically inspired concept of hegemonic masculinity; a set of ideas which, over the past 20 years, has become one of the most influential concepts in masculinity studies. Connell defines masculinity as “the pattern or configuration of social practices linked to the position of men in the gender order, and socially distinguished from practices linked to the position of women” (2015: 40). She further argues that “[m]asculinity [...] is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture” (Connell 1996 [1995]: 71). Thus, masculinity is “substantially a social construction” that “refers to male bodies (sometimes symbolically and indirectly), but is not determined by male biology” (Connell 2015: 40), just as men’s “bodies do not determine the patterns of masculinity, but [...] are still of great importance in masculinity” (Connell 1998: 5). While emphasizing that the body “is inescapable in the construction of masculinity,” Connell also stresses that “what is inescapable is not fixed” (1996: 56) and that “[m]asculinities and femininities are best understood as gender projects, dynamic arrangements of social practice through time, in which we make ourselves and are made as particular kinds of human beings” (2015: 42; see also Connell 1998: 5, 9).

Thus, instead of resorting to biological essentialism, Connell favors an understanding of masculinity as part of an ongoing gender project that is constantly shaped and (re)negotiated by “the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives” (1996: 71), by power structures, relations of production, emotional bonds, and their related symbolic systems.

As far as the practices that shape the dominant patterns of masculinity and the relations among masculinities are concerned, Connell distinguishes between hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization. Hegemony plays a particularly important role as a “historically mobile relation” (1996: 77) which controls the relationships not only between men and women but also among individual groups of men. Hegemonic masculinity, then, is the “form of masculinity that is culturally dominant in a given setting” and “can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (1996: 77). Moreover, it is important to note that hegemonic signifies:

[A] position of cultural authority and leadership, not total dominance; other forms of masculinity persist alongside. The hegemonic form need not be the most common form of masculinity. A hegemonic masculinity is, however, likely to be highly visible. Hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic not just in relation to other masculinities, but in relation to the gender order as a whole. It is an expression of the privilege men collectively have over women. The hierarchy of masculinities is an expression of the unequal shares in that privilege held by different groups of men.

(Connell 2015: 44)

Connell has subsequently identified the late twentieth-century phenomenon of transnational business masculinity as hegemonic in the current world gender order. This specific form of hegemonic masculinity is “associated with those who control its dominant institutions: the business executives who operate in global markets, and the political executives who interact (and in many contexts, merge) with them” (1998: 16). Transnational business masculinity is “marked by increasing egocentrism, very conditional loyalties (even to the corporation), and a declining sense of responsibility for others (except for purposes of image making).” Furthermore, it is “characterized by a limited technical rationality [...] which is increasingly separate from science” and “differs from traditional bourgeois masculinity by its increasingly libertarian sexuality, with a growing tendency to commodify relations with women.” Finally, transnational business masculinity “does not require bodily force, since the patriarchal dividend on which it rests is accumulated by impersonal, institutional means” (Connell 1998: 16). Nevertheless, this kind of masculinity is shaped not only by “the immense augmentation of bodily powers by technology (air transport, computers, tele-communication)” but also by the way in which “bodily pleasures escape the social controls of local gender orders, as their business operations tend to escape the control of the national state” (Connell 2000: 63).

Connell's approach is part of what has been variously called "New Men's Studies," "Masculinity Studies," or "Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities" (see Brod 2011; Hearn 2011a), and although the differences between these newer approaches should not be downplayed, they are all to a greater or lesser degree influenced by deconstruction and deconstructive feminism, discourse analysis, sociology, gay and queer studies, (post-Freudian) psychoanalysis, and intersectionality.⁷ Moreover, and in contrast to the perspectives outlined by Clatterbaugh, they include a meta-level of discourse upon which they reflect and, if necessary, counterbalance their own situatedness. As Jeff Hearn summarizes, "the broad, critical approach to men and masculinities developed in recent years" has mainly been characterized by the following:

- a *specific*, rather than an implicit or incidental, *focus* on the topic of men and masculinities;
- taking account of feminist, gay, and other critical gender scholarship;
- recognizing men and masculinities as *explicitly gendered* rather than non-gendered;
- understanding men and masculinities as *socially constructed, produced, and reproduced* rather than as somehow just 'naturally' one way or another;
- seeing men and masculinities as *variable and changing* across time (history) and space (culture), within societies, and through life courses and biographies;
- emphasizing men's relations, albeit differentially, to *gendered power*;
- spanning the material and the discursive in analysis;
- interrogating the *intersecting of the gender with other social divisions* in the construction of men and masculinities.

(Hearn 2011a: 197, emphasis in original)

Casting a fleeting glance at masculinity studies in Germany, I would argue that beside Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinities, approaches influenced by Judith Butler and other Anglo-American and French theorists, such as Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and, to a lesser degree, Elisabeth Badinter, have had a lasting impact. Moreover, queer studies, sociohistorically oriented research, and the question as to the existence of a gender-specific narratology have also gained considerable influence. However, it is especially at the intersection of history and literature that interesting new insights have emerged, leading to a multitude of studies that focus on demythologizing the history of everyday life on a micro-structural level. These studies have produced what Clifford Geertz calls "thick descriptions" of "simple" narratives that question the validity of dominant *master narratives of masculinity* (Erhart 2005; Horlacher 2010, 2015).

A recent shift in focus in most of the disciplines dealing with masculinity and gender understands narrative modes and structures (i.e., stories and genres) to be the most important components of the historical and present construction of masculinities.⁸ 'Narration' is about to become a key concept for the study of masculinity not only within American, British, and German literary and cultural studies but also in history, sociology, and psychoanalysis. What is crucial, however, and

what has not yet been closely examined, are the following questions: which underlying structural substrates form the basis of the various narrative surfaces, i.e., representations and appearances of masculinity? How does the proliferation of micro-narratives relate to formerly dominant master narratives? And, in addition, how has the popular 'crisis of masculinity' narrative, which is controversial in itself, shaped the self-conceptualization of the masculine while also dominating the history of masculinity studies?

Bringing this short survey of concepts and approaches in the field of masculinity studies to a close, and summarizing the development of the discipline on a slightly more abstract level, it is safe to say that masculinity studies has passed through two distinct stages. In the first stage, masculinity was taken to be a singular, monolithic phenomenon such that until the early 1990s, research on masculinities continued to use the term in the singular rather than in the plural. For example, literary studies' examinations of masculinity in the works of single authors typically focused on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Major interventions in the humanities in the emergent field of masculinity studies tended to focus on either Great Britain or the United States. In other cases, scholarship on masculinity proceeded at an even higher level of generality and considered British and US American masculinities as more or less identical, drawing upon evidence from both sides of the Atlantic without differentiating between national contexts in any significant or sustained fashion.

In the second, more recent (and indeed current) stage of masculinity studies, the concept of masculinity has undergone a process of differentiation and is now largely understood as a plurality. Most of the US American and European studies published in recent years have abolished the concept of homogeneous masculinity and stress, instead, heterogeneity and difference, focusing on how specific, typically 'subaltern' forms of masculinity have been obscured by and thus wreak havoc on previous scholarly assumptions that masculinity is monolithic. It has become increasingly clear that while one can to some extent characterize a certain type of White masculinity as dominant in certain nations and perhaps even on a global scale, the earlier, more or less exclusive focus on a singular and universal, normative White masculinity erased the broad range of socially and culturally marginalized masculinities found in a wide variety of specific ethnicities and/or national locations. This includes the analysis of literary representations and cultural specificities of Jewish, Black, Asian, Latino, as well as other ethnically diverse and culturally specific masculinities, and research on how masculinities are differentiated in terms of oppositions such as youth and age, rural and urban, heterosexual and homosexual, and work and leisure.

Problematizing the field of masculinity studies: the question of the body, female masculinities, and 'something queer within masculinity'

As has been shown, very often masculinity studies conceive of masculinity as a historically differentiated as well as an intrinsically variable bundle or cluster of

cultural norms.⁹ For many critics, this entails the question of the importance of the biological body for the definition or understanding of masculinity. But how are we to think of the body, and what do we know about it? Has the body “remained a conceptual blind spot in both Western philosophical thought and contemporary feminist theory” as Elizabeth Grosz argues (1994: 3)?¹⁰ And has the “materiality of language in contemporary thought” really “taken the place of the materiality of the body” (Prosser 1998: 13)? Even if these questions cannot be fully answered here, it should at least be possible to outline their fundamental importance for masculinity studies.

How do we then conceive of the body? As a Lacanian system of differences, as I have claimed elsewhere (Horlacher 2010: 221–32)? As a biopolitical¹¹ or merely biological entity, and as a new playground for cosmetic surgery such as rhinoplasty, lipectomy, and gynecomastia (Atkinson 2006, 2008)? As *être brut* or *raw being* in the sense of Merleau-Ponty (van den Berg 2011)? As “one (already constituted) object of knowledge among others,” or as “the contingent ground of all our knowledge, and of all our knowing” (Stryker 2006: 12; see also Fuss 1997: 254)? Moreover, if both masculinity and femininity are conceived of as mere positions within a historically, culturally, and socially changeable continuum, then the question arises as to whether the binary oppositions between masculinity and femininity as well as between sex and gender have not become untenable. Furthermore, should not sex/gender be considered as a series of performative acts that “produce the effect of an internal core or substance” – and thus of a gendered identity – through corporeal signs and a multitude of discursive strategies (Butler 2008: 185)?

According to Judith Butler, the fabricated gendered body is delineated by “a variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated” (Butler 2008: 189), thereby rendering the category of “sex” highly problematic insofar as its importance for the construction of identity is concerned. Given that “the only way we can ever access the supposed hard truth of the material body is through the same ‘constructed’ categories from which we also seem, persistently, to want to distinguish that body,” it is highly questionable whether we can ever clearly distinguish bodily materiality from the categories through which we apprehend, comprehend, and finally, also construct it (Floyd 2011: 33–34). From this, it follows that gender becomes “the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established” (Butler 2008: 10), that “‘maleness’ or ‘manhood’ in its biological configuration [...] can be understood as elements of gender as constructed through the medium of language” (Reeser 2015: 30–31), and that masculinity can be identified as a “*corporeal style*” (Butler 2008: 190, emphasis in original).

Following the line of argument which Jack Halberstam advances in *Female Masculinity*, masculinity has to be understood as *separate* from the male body; thus female masculinity would be particularly well suited for an analysis of how masculinity is constructed as masculinity. Halberstam argues that while there is a “concurrence that femaleness does not automatically produce femininity and maleness does not produce masculinity” (Halberstam in Jagose 1999: n.p.), the

material effects of disassociating sex and gender have not yet been fully understood. While the – stereotypical – affinity of femininity with artifice, theatricality, and performativity is largely accepted, leading to understandings of femininity as fluid or mobile, masculinity seems to have “an altogether different relation to performance, the real and the natural and it appears to be far more difficult to pry masculinity and maleness apart than femininity and femaleness” (Halberstam in Jagose 1999: n.p.). Most probably, this stems from the fact that while the relationship between femininity and performativity is accepted or even taken for granted, masculinity often tends to deny its performative quality, presenting itself as non- or anti-performative, or masquerading as nature.

Therefore, we should not only keep “a degree of indifference to the whiteness of the male and the masculinity of the white male and the project of naming his power,” but also regard male masculinity as a “counterexample to the kinds of masculinity that seem most informative about gender relations and most generative of social change” (Halberstam 1998: 3). Paradoxically, masculinity “becomes legible as masculinity where and when it leaves the white male middle-class body” (Halberstam 1998: 2). This implies that “masculinity is most complicated and transgressive when it is not tied [...] to the straight, white male body” (Adams 2000: 468), and that female masculinity has the potential to “create the most powerful and transgressive versions of masculinity” (Adams 2000: 475), while “much of what we take for granted about white male masculinity” is in reality characterized by the “dual mechanism of a lack of care for the self and a callous disregard for the care of others” (Halberstam 1998: 274).

Although Halberstam’s approach is important and opens up new perspectives for masculinity studies, this should not mask the fact that there is also a serious deficit regarding heterosexual female masculinities, and that “a complete study of masculinity” needs not only to consider the role of women but also of intersex, “disabled, gay male, and transgender subjects” (Reeser 2015: 32).¹² Since a discussion of the emerging field of disability studies is not possible for reasons of space, and since I focus on the relevance of transgender and intersex studies for masculinity studies in the last part of this chapter, some points concerning gay male masculinities should be taken note of at this point. These include the claim that gay male masculinities should be considered in their plurality, because the connection that had been made between male homosexuality and effeminacy has been challenged “by considering a range of gender presentations among gay men, including the rejection of effeminacy in favor of gay hegemonic masculinity and racial homosexualities,” and by the notion that “[g]ay male masculinity might also be taken as an oscillation between hegemonic and non-hegemonic positions, as dependent on situation, with the closet, passing, and ‘straight acting’ as key elements of such a consideration” (Reeser 2015: 32).

While Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argued in favor of not separating masculinity and homosexuality, “hypothesiz[ing] the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual” (Sedgwick 1985: 1), “her focus on interpretive complexity in the representation of gender relations” also set “the stage to consider movement-centered approaches to masculinity, including the queerness

within heterosexual masculinity” (Reeser 2015: 30).¹³ This queerness becomes evident when we consider Butler’s article “Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification.” Here, Butler suggests that “[g]ender itself might be understood in part as the ‘acting out’ of unresolved grief” (Butler 1997: 146) and that “heterosexuality naturalizes itself by insisting on the radical otherness of homosexuality” (Butler 1997: 139).¹⁴ From this perspective,

[h]eterosexual identity is purchased through a melancholic incorporation of the love that it disavows: the man who insists on the coherence of his heterosexuality will claim that he never loved another man and thus never lost another man. And that love, that attachment, becomes subject to a double disavowal: a never-having-loved, and a never-having-lost. This “never-never” thus founds the heterosexual subject, as it were; this is an identity based on the refusal to avow an attachment and, hence, the refusal to grieve.
 (Butler 1997: 139–40)

Thus male heterosexuality is based on the double disavowal contained in the phrase “I never loved him and I never lost him.” Gender may be understood as a kind of melancholy, and “the more hyperbolic and defensive a masculine identification” appears to be, the fiercer is its underlying “ungrieved homosexual cathexis” (Butler 1997: 139). Admitting this as being part of the very foundation of masculinity would imply the deconstruction of traditionally heteronormative and phallic concepts of masculinity, which, in turn, would be revealed as hardly more than psychic defense mechanisms. Masculinity would be understood as inherently polyvalent and flexible; simultaneously, the main function of the stereotypically phallic attributes linked to masculinity would be revealed to cover up, i.e., to repress or disavow the fundamental lack for which the phallus ultimately stands. If patriarchal power and non-symmetrical gender/power relations are largely upheld by the imaginary identification of the penis with the phallus (i.e., the illusion that having a penis means having the phallus), this fantasy may be understood as a kind of reaction-formation driven by fear. Through the negation of traditional attributes of masculinity, the questioning of the normative heterosexual divide, the acknowledgment of the inherent lack at the very core of masculinity, and the acceptance of the excluded and castrated Other that has always been a part of the self, traditional phallogocentric power structures could be abolished; accordingly, new and more open and tolerant forms of existence would become possible on an individual as well as a communal level.

Alternative perspectives I: transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches

The recent history of masculinity studies – that is, the movement away from emphasizing a singular masculinity toward emphasizing a plurality of masculinities – may be seen as a history of the increasing differentiation of the field’s object of analysis. This has led to what Harry Brod calls “a propitious moment

in which to undertake a theoretically oriented look back at [...] the construction of the construction of masculinities” (Brod 2011: 19). Brod argues

that the time is now right for a retrospective consideration of the field of masculinity studies because its initial intellectual trajectory has indeed reached some sort of completion, and it therefore now stands on the brink of a critical turning point.

(Brod 2011: 24)

As evidence of this, he notes the publication within a very short period of time of several encyclopedias which offer comprehensive surveys of the field as well as the launching of journals such as the *International Journal of Men's Health* (since 2002), *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice about Men as Fathers* (since 2003), *Thymos: Journal of Boyhood Studies* (since 2007), or *Culture, Society and Masculinities* (since 2009). He concludes that what the appearance of these encyclopedias and journals signifies is that

some critical mass has been achieved, allowing for the kind of overview self-reflection that is possible only when at least the initial trajectory of a field's development has reached some sort of intellectual maturity that allows for the conceptualization and realization of such encyclopedic compendia.

(Brod 2011: 24)

Although this emphasis on differentiation has clearly moved the field beyond the limitations of the earlier, broader, more generalizing modes of analysis, it has also produced its own set of limitations. If one takes a closer look at these encyclopedic compendia, it becomes evident that there are serious lacunae, such as a neglect of non-Anglo-American contexts, approaches, and results, and a disproportionately large focus on the US branch of masculinity studies. Moreover, most of these books lack an inter- and transdisciplinary dimension, since they do not feature disciplines such as pedagogy, psychology, biology, medicine, medical history, and linguistics. Many of these encyclopedic compendia explicitly privilege “breadth over depth” and espouse the value of a collection of “samples from the widest range of areas” (Kimmel and Aronson 2004b: xiv), rather than detailed analyses. Bret E. Carroll describes his historical encyclopedia *American Masculinities* as “not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to convey a sense of the scope of the field” (2003: 1–2); similarly, the editors of the *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* favor a “broad approach to men and masculinities” (Connell, Hearn, and Kimmel 2005: 3).

This means that in all of these publications there is a clear limit to the systematicity with and the depth in which scientific findings are presented.¹⁵ Yet if one intends to understand the construction of masculinity in its full complexity, fragility, and mutability as well as in its interdependency and interplay with various sociocultural, biological, and historical factors, a more sophisticated and comprehensive inter- and transdisciplinary approach is needed; such an approach

would not simply take into account current branches of (primarily, but not only, North American) masculinity studies. Rather, it would also acknowledge other disciplines such as the social sciences, the natural sciences, the humanities, and the sources of knowledge inherent to the arts. One example of this approach is a recent interdisciplinary handbook on masculinity¹⁶ which differs from previous efforts in the field. This handbook:

- Takes most of the different disciplines from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences into account.
- Pays close attention to the specific sources of knowledge offered by literature, theater, photography, music, sculpture, painting, dance, and film, by considering them as indispensable epistemological media and as important objects of research, given that in-depth analyses of the intricate interplay between fictional (i.e., literary, cinematic, theatrical, etc.) and non-fictional constructions of masculinity can help shed new light on the close connection between identity construction, sexuality, language, and the arts. In this way, the anticipatory function (Horlacher 2004) and *savoir littéraire* (Barthes; see Horlacher 2006) not only of literary texts but also of films, paintings, photographs, and other forms of art can be brought to the fore, making it possible to trace both the historical changes that constructions of masculinity have undergone and the complex interactions between *Lebenswelt* and the arts.
- Is not limited to knowledge produced in the English-speaking countries, but also takes Latin American, Spanish, Italian, French, German, Russian, East European, and other research and arts into account.
- Offers a hierarchy-free, trans- and interdisciplinary perspective, as has been outlined, for example, in the work of Jürgen Mittelstraß. This entails an attempt not to level out or erase the methods and insights of the various disciplines involved but to render it possible for them to focus on masculinity as a joint object of research and to produce a non-linear, complex, and hybrid lateral mode of thinking.

(Feichtinger, Mitterbauer, and Scherke 2004: 13, emphasis in original)

Therefore, the handbook includes contributions that are characterized by their transdisciplinary research foci as well as by their meta-reflexive and self-critical perspectives. Further, the decidedly interdisciplinary approach of the handbook brings the different disciplines and arts together, creating a dialogue among them.

Alternative perspectives II: comparative masculinity studies

Although Ronald Jackson II and Murali Balaji argue that “masculinity studies ha[ve] generally been ghettoized by a Eurocentric paradigm of whiteness and its Others, the latter most closely associated with the representations and assumed practices of black masculinity” (Jackson and Balaji 2011: 21), there is a growing body of work on non-Western masculinities as well as on the question of how

“masculinity is constructed in cultures around the globe” (Reeser 2015: 37).¹⁷ But if the tendency to move away from emphasizing a singular masculinity to emphasizing plural masculinities may be seen as part of the development of the differentiation of the field’s object of analysis, and if masculinity can no longer be treated as a singular phenomenon, this does not mean that masculinities have nothing in common.¹⁸ Across the wide plurality of differentiated masculinities, there are important common denominators that need to be accounted for. These include masculinity’s status as an identity that takes a specific narrative or textual form and represents – or, better, constitutes – a particular subject position, a psychic or mental structure, and a structure of experience and possibility (*Ermöglichungsstruktur*) that is culturally conditioned, socially located, distinctly embodied, but nonetheless cannot be essentialized.

However, even in the US, a sustained dialectical sense of simultaneous difference and commonality that crosses the multiple, proliferating masculinities upon which this kind of work focuses remains absent. Thus it seems necessary to emphasize the fact that branches of masculinity studies which automatically prioritize difference and ignore commonality, as has been the norm for well over a decade, are as one-sided as the earlier set of assumptions about the monolithic quality of masculinity that this more recent set of assumptions has largely displaced.

Raewyn Connell and James W. Messerschmidt (2005) have both called for a more sustained geographical consideration of masculinities, that is, for an analysis that accounts for the ways in which masculinities are simultaneously defined in local, national, and global terms. Accordingly, masculinities should be studied on a number of different analytical levels, ranging from the narrowly location oriented and culturally specific to the most global. What is needed is research that builds on recent work in masculinity studies and simultaneously moves beyond it toward a larger, comparative analysis. To give but one example, this might include the question of how the literary and cultural production of masculinities is mediated by national paradigms, i.e., how masculine and national identities mutually inform one another. Further, this type of analysis needs to attend to the question of how (alternative) constructions of masculinity influence the construction of national identity, and how new forms of national and masculine identities reconstruct imagined national pasts. By understanding larger contexts in which the emergence of more plural, culturally differentiated, and ultimately transnational masculinities take place, and by highlighting the mediating factor of national difference within this broader horizon, it should be possible to overcome the deficits of traditional masculinity studies and emphasize difference and commonality simultaneously. This emphasis is particularly important when masculinity is viewed as having a largely discursive, textual, or narrative relational quality and as consisting of a complex and dynamic subject position that has a specific relation to patriarchal power structures and to the symbolic order.

Therefore, what is needed is a larger analytical framework within which it is possible to understand the wider contexts of masculinities’ commonalities as well as cultural varieties. It is thus necessary to take the emphasis on similarities

or (generic) correspondences in early masculinity studies seriously while also accounting for multicultural and hybrid masculinities, precisely in order to move beyond the relentlessly particularizing focus of so much recent research. Culturally differentiated masculinities should not be understood as simply incommensurate but rather as operating in relation to each other so that difference and commonality may be conceived of as conjoined and a method developed to account for both. Last but not least, masculinities are usually studied in one of two potentially incompatible ways, i.e., as exemplifying abstract systems such as patriarchy or kinship, or as concrete, corporeal phenomena. The very term *masculinity* has hitherto been examined in such a broad range of contexts that it can sometimes appear as a pure abstraction or configuration or relation that is practically devoid of concrete, defining content. Therefore, it is necessary to explore masculinity as an idea or a concept that operates across, or at least in relation to, a distance that may or may not be bridgeable between the systemic and the corporeal, and the abstract and the concrete.

Moreover, questions arise as to how masculinities become apparent; how they manifest or take shape; and how the relations between abstract and corporeal, metaphorical and metonymical manifestations, forms, incarnations, and “adumbrations/*Abschattungen*” (Husserl) of masculinity should best be thought of. Finally, we have to ask what exactly it is that manifests itself in different forms of masculinity; what do these forms stand for and symbolize; and how can we identify this multiplicity of forms as belonging to (the concept of) masculinity?

Alternative perspectives III: transgender and intersex studies

If Reeser argues that “some work takes for granted that the unstable signifier masculinity has no natural referent,” then one “may also assume that masculinity is constituted through complicated forms of representation” (2015: 34). With reference to Homi K. Bhabha as well as to Jacques Derrida’s notions of *différance*, masculinity could be conceived of “as an unending, ultimately un-definable phenomenon, composed not so much of social constructs per se but of an unending series of questions” (Reeser 2015: 34).¹⁹ Thus masculinity may perhaps best be understood as an unstable, mobile, and fragmented phenomenon, rather than as a fixed object of inquiry. A compromise position between stable and mobile approaches becomes thinkable if one considers “that the experience of masculinity (and of gender in a larger sense) is predicated on a movement between stability or essentialism on the one hand, and free play on the other” (Reeser 2015: 35). As a consequence of this, what is needed is research that seeks to question and deconstruct this opposition between stability/essentialism and fluidity/free play. This entails destabilizing dichotomies and leads to the final perspective that will be discussed here, namely the question of the possible role of transgender and to a lesser degree intersex research in the future of masculinity studies. What I offer here is only a short survey, i.e., first reflections on problems, paradoxes, and new perspectives.

Recent work in transgender and intersex studies appears to have complicated the relation of masculinity to gender division itself.²⁰ This is also true of the categories and concepts used in masculinity studies as well as of the knowledge produced. If Kevin Floyd argues that transgender and intersex studies pose formidable challenges to masculinity studies and that these challenges should be understood as biopolitical, it may be worthwhile keeping in mind that the phenomena of transgender and intersex²¹ demonstrate through the sheer fact of their existence that a cultural system which postulates the existence of two, and only two, sexes/genders has reached its limits. Thus any system that uncritically presupposes an identity between a felt or experienced gender identity and a non-contradictory notion of biological sex has to be questioned.²² This leads to the problem of the recurrence or reappearance of what may be called "body essentialism," on the one hand, and "mind essentialism," on the other, with the added twist that some theories, almost paradoxically, locate the primacy of the mental structure in biology.²³

While Alice D. Dreger and April M. Herndon argue that "even hard-core constructivism amounts to an essentialism itself – in this case, actually a biological essentialism that presumes everyone is born with a blank slate for a brain where gender is concerned" (Dreger and Herndon 2009: 216), Anne Fausto-Sterling points out that "on close inspection, absolute dimorphism disintegrates even at the level of basic biology. Chromosomes, hormones, the internal sex structures, the gonads and the external genitalia all vary more than most people realize" (Fausto-Sterling 2000: 20). From this it follows that on the level of abstraction, both body and mind essentialism are not only potentially self-contradictory but also run the risk of reductionism. These forms of essentialism probably reveal more about the reliance of the human mind on binary structures and relations in understanding and making sense of a multifaceted and polymorphous reality than about this reality itself. As a matter of fact, very often the real-life experience of intersex and transgender persons can neither be explained by "a hard-line social constructivist nor a hard-line biological essentialist theory of gender" (Dreger and Herndon 2009: 215–16). However, if our concepts and categories fail because they cannot adequately grasp, describe, or much less explain the multiplicity of the reality we are trying to understand, then we have to question these very concepts and categories, as well as the knowledge they have produced thus far.

If it has become clear that masculinity is neither innate nor necessarily linked to a male body (however biology may choose to define this body), if women can transition and pass as men, and if "'masculinity' does not correspond in any direct or natural way to a given signified," it follows that we should also ask whether transgender automatically implies a change from one discrete gender (or, according to which definition is used, sex) to another and whether it should not be understood "as a transition toward movement itself," so that "the trans body might destabilize stable definitions of masculinity by inventing new gendered configurations" (Reeser 2015: 33). This would not be without consequences for the notion of hegemonic masculinity discussed above, since to

“transition to becoming a man might (re)affirm the desirability of hegemonic masculinity or, on the other hand, might permit it to be destabilized from within” (Reeser 2015: 33). Similarly,

[t]rans or drag king performance may also question assumptions of male biology as the basis of masculinity. Female-to-male transgender subjects may or may not challenge masculine hegemony, and if they believe that testosterone creates maleness, may envision sex in a non-Butlerian way as biological.

(Reeser 2015: 33)

Jay Prosser – a scholar who tends to assert the materiality of the transsexual body – makes the following argument:

If, for queer theory, transition is to be explored in terms of its deconstructive effects on the body and identity (transition as a symptom of the constructedness of the sex/gender system and a figure for the impossibility of this system’s achievement of identity), I read transsexual narratives to consider how transition may be the very route to identity and bodily integrity. In transsexual accounts transition does not shift the subject away from the embodiment of sexual difference but more fully into it.

(Prosser 1998: 6)²⁴

Further, Prosser asks whether there are not also “transgendered trajectories, in particular *transsexual* trajectories,” in the sense of “transsexuals who seek very pointedly to be nonperformative, to be constative, quite simply to *be*” (Prosser 1998: 32, emphasis in original). Thus, while Halberstam embraces “the ambiguous figure of the masculine woman,” Prosser, by contrast, warns that “queer theory’s reverence for gender ambiguity threatens to reduce the transsexual to a trope” (Adams 2000: 477). Prosser’s assertion of transsexuals’ right not to challenge and to even embrace conventional gender identities conflicts with a tendency in contemporary theory to conceive of the transgender or transsexual person as one who passes as *not* reifying a stabilized notion of masculinity. Rather, this individual is often seen as revealing that masculinity is a complicated phenomenon on a very physical level:

Transsexuality can thus be taken as embodying gender movement itself, as a form of gender presentation in which masculinity is never stable, in which the movement of gender, or of sex, is one definitional element of transsexuality. This way of considering gender means that the goal of transsexuality is not to cross over into masculinity, but to remain in a constant state of crossing or to conceive of gender as a perpetual movement from and to. In this way, then, transsexuality can embody a whole approach to gender in which transsexual representations potentially signify the reconfiguration of the gender system as a whole.

(Reeser 2010: 142)

Taking sides on the issue of whether transsexual subjects move toward or away from an embodiment of sexual difference would be the subject of another article. Moreover, as the above quotes demonstrate, critics often fail to sufficiently differentiate between transsexual and transgender, two concepts and terms that are neither identical nor synonymous; they differ greatly not least in the importance they place on the body and they seem to be involved in a “shift and change in meaning and application in relation to each other rather than in relation to a hegemonic medical discourse” (Halberstam in Jagose 1999: n.p.). However, if we turn our focus back to the subject of this chapter, namely masculinity studies, it is important to note that although a large number of human beings do not fit into the culturally produced, traditional heteronormative system of being either male or female, Western culture, even in the twenty-first century, still vigorously defends this system of enforced binaries.²⁵

If intersex and especially transgender are less medically indicated facts, resulting from a supposedly pre-existent ‘natural’ material reality, than they are the products of culturally constructed, value-laden perceptions, or, better, projections that are always inherently political, then the same holds true for the concepts of masculinity and femininity as well as for the underlying male/female binary,²⁶ which Floyd identifies as the “result of the very medical technologies designed to enforce it” (2011: 40). Intersex and transgender studies may thus be seen as forms of critical knowledge that are constantly engaged in epistemological and biopolitical battles; as such they represent “insurgent knowledges” that “challenge official” ones (Stryker 2006: 12–13). On the basis of this argument, the necessity of adopting a “biopolitical understanding of masculinity specifically and of gender dimorphism generally” (Floyd 2011: 40) becomes evident, as does the necessity of questioning the border, space, or difference separating masculinity from femininity.

Many tendencies in transgender studies have led to “the development of a transsexual counterdiscourse, a discourse that embraces trans itself as an identity that refuses to reinscribe the male/female dualism through autobiographical narratives of successful transition” (Floyd 2011: 43; see also Reeser 2010: 142). Such a discourse invites the question of what it means to speak as a transsexual (or transgender) subject.²⁷ Perhaps it is precisely “[b]ecause the transition is so frequently *not* into the comfortably knowable space of maleness or femaleness, but into a gendered space that remains inconceivable” that “the challenge transgender and intersex studies present to masculinity studies is a challenge to what the available terms of this area of study allow us to conceive, and to what they hinder us from conceiving” (Floyd 2011: 46).

Possible future(s) of masculinity studies

Masculinity is still a highly problematic and controversial field of study, located at the intersections of the humanities and the arts, the social sciences and the natural sciences; the same applies to femininity, transgender, intersex, and other gender identity categories as well. If we wish to understand the construction of

masculinity (or any other gender identity) in its full complexity, mutability, and fragility as well as in its interplay and interdependency with sociocultural, biological, and other factors, trans- and interdisciplinary approaches are absolutely necessary, as is intersectionality; however, these approaches should not erase the specific methods and insights of the various disciplines that are involved in the study of masculinity. This calls for self-critical approaches that take the specific relations to and among all of the disciplines involved into consideration when they analyze masculinity in its various manifestations.

On a less abstract level, it is important to incorporate findings from LGBTI studies in order to overcome reductive and limiting definitions of masculinity and to open up new spaces of thought. As an insurgent form of knowledge, LGBTI studies question not only traditional concepts and binaries but also our very modes of thinking: they pose epistemological and biopolitical questions that may lead to a reconceptualization not only of masculinity studies but also of gender studies more generally.

A certainly no less important source of knowledge, where the unthinkable becomes thinkable, is the arts. Here, it is necessary to take the specific knowledge of the arts into account: first, by considering them as indispensable epistemological media as well as important objects of research; second, by focusing on the complex interactions between *Lebenswelt* and the arts; and, third, by paying close attention to the important role the arts play in acquiring a knowledge of the lifeworld; that is, a knowledge *about* and *for* living *different* lives (Ette 2010) that renders *Überleben* (survival) possible (Ette 2004).

In the long run, it is paramount for the development of masculinity studies not simply to rest on the extraordinary work that has been done in the US and other Anglophone countries but also to acknowledge research on masculinity that has been produced in Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa, and other parts of the world. A major problem in this regard is that, very often, findings which are published in languages other than English are ignored by large parts of the scientific community. Further, communication among different disciplines that deal with masculinity is often difficult, and masculinity studies itself is characterized by a certain interdisciplinary fragmentation that has led to numerous thematic, historical, and national differences; thus potential connections have only been made selectively and in isolation, and not seen in their interdependency. Moreover, given the differentiation of the field's object of analysis and the emergence of ever more differentiated masculinities, it has become necessary to ask what commonalities highly varied masculinities have, and how these masculinities become apparent, manifest, or take shape.²⁸

It is essential to develop new criteria and frameworks for comparative analyses with special attention to narrative structures, including the revival, transformation, and embodiment of cultural scripts, images, and narratives that diverse national and transnational masculinities have in common. Accordingly, many of the disciplines that deal with masculinity and gender have now shifted their attention to narrative constructions of masculinities. This shift is central for further developments in masculinity studies, including the endeavor to overcome

the increasing fragmentation and partitioning of the field as well as the assumption of the incommensurability of the masculinities that have been outlined above.

From this perspective, masculinity – or, to be more precise, important aspects of masculinity – may be conceptualized as a narrative that takes on different forms, such as the controversial ‘crisis’ narrative,²⁹ the narrative of fatherhood (as ‘producer,’ provider, super-dad, etc.), and the narrative concerning gender-specific differences in risk behavior, to give but three examples. Yet masculinity studies will also need to ask how these narratives fulfill various (sometimes ideological) functions at different times and in different cultural contexts. It is important to inquire how these narratives shape individual, collective, and national concepts of masculinity, and to interrogate what forms they assume in various media. Practitioners will also need to ask whether – analogously to Freud’s concept of screen memory – these narratives are not being used to divert attention away from potentially more significant social problems such as the transformation of the material conditions of work and the destruction of fixed frames of reference and a foreseeable or plannable future. In short, there remains much to be done.

Acknowledgment

Some parts of this chapter are based on Horlacher (2011).

Notes

- 1 That is, if these phenomena are thinkable without falling into essentialism (Fuss 1997; Dreger and Herndon 2009).
- 2 That being said, these statistics must be taken with a pinch of salt. The problems arise here with the underlying, supposedly clear definitions of masculinity and femininity, which are frequently and hastily reduced to apparent biological or solely genetically determined factors. Thus – to give just two examples – it is incorrect to attribute men’s shorter average life expectancy (of approximately five years) in industrial societies solely to biology, considering the difference of only one year in monastic environments (Dinges 2010: 5); and similarly, the statistical ‘fact’ that, according to figures from the WHO, the mental health of women is more fragile than that of men conceals the finding that men presenting with the same symptoms are less commonly diagnosed as depressed than women (Bardehle 2013: 18ff.).
- 3 “Seit man die Schwierigkeiten mit der männlichen Identität ins Licht gerückt hat, vertritt niemand mehr die Ansicht, die Männer seien das starke Geschlecht. Im Gegenteil, man definiert sie als das schwache Geschlecht, behaftet mit zahlreichen physischen und psychischen Anfälligkeiten.” Parts of the following introductory paragraphs are based on Horlacher (2011).
- 4 For surveys, see Horlacher 2010; Erhart 2005; Krammer 2007; Emig and Rowland 2010.
- 5 Approaches to masculinity should also allow for the possibility of thinking “about masculinity as always unstable and ultimately indefinable.” This suggests:

that masculinity cannot be considered alone or on its own terms, but rather has to be taken as in relation to other types of subjectivity. This means that it is not

possible to consider masculinity without taking into account the oppositions that are employed to attempt to define it. As a result [...] any study of masculinity has constantly to take femininity, homosexuality, and other common forms of alterity into account in order to articulate definitions of masculinity fully.

(Reeser 2010: 40)

6 See also Horlacher 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2016.

7 For a discussion of masculinity studies and intersectionality, see Hearn (2011b: 89–104).

8 Narrative is here not restricted to literary and cultural artifacts but spans the range from the construction of individual (gender) identity, via biographical, material, and embodied social processes, to collective national identities and images (see Horlacher 2016).

9 See also Hearn:

My own approach argues for interdisciplinary Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities that are historical, cultural, relational, materialist, deconstructive, anti-essentialist studies on men. The notion of men is not to be essentialized and reified, or derived from a fixed, inner core or trait.

(Hearn 2011a: 196–97)

10 See also Horlacher (2016) and Prosser:

A glance at any number of new titles shows bodies are everywhere in contemporary cultural theory; yet the paradox of theory's expatiation upon bodies is that it works not to fill in that blind spot so much as to enlarge it.

(Prosser 1998: 12)

11 Throughout this chapter I use the term biopolitical in a Foucauldian sense. For Foucault, biopower and biopolitics denote the practice of social and political power on the individual and its body, i.e., life. They function as a kind of control apparatus exerted over a population in its totality, including the rate of reproduction, etc. Thus, biopower includes "the notion of a social body as the object of government. It is the notion of population: biopolitics is concerned with population as a political and scientific problem, as a biological issue of the exercise of power" ("Biopolitics" n.d.: n.p.). On a less abstract level, Foucault argues in "The Mesh of Power" that "sex is situated very precisely at the point of articulation between the individual disciplines of the body and the regulations of population. Sex is that through which one can assure the surveillance of individuals." As Foucault maintains, since the eighteenth century, sex has "become an instrument of 'disciplinarization'" and "one of the essential elements of [...] anatomo-politics." Moreover,

it is sex that assures the reproduction of populations, it is with sex, with a politics of sex that we are able to change the relation between birthrate and mortality. [...]. Sex is the lever between anatomo-politics and bio-politics; it is at the juncture of disciplines and regulations, and it is in this function that it became, at the end of the 19th century, a political component of the utmost importance for making society into a machine of production.

(Foucault 2012: n.p.)

12 See also Hearn (2011b) who argues that age/ing, disabilities, older men, and embodiment fall under the category of neglected intersectionalities in studies of masculinity. Other neglected categories include virtuality, virtual men, transnationality, and transnational men.

13 If one of the presuppositions of queer theory is that male homophobia is attempting to expel the abject queer from within, then there is necessarily something queer about or within masculinity in the first place. Or, alternately, excessive

forms of masculinity may point to an instability of masculinity that contains something queer.

(Reeser 2015: 30)

- 14 If the assumption of femininity and the assumption of masculinity proceed through the accomplishment of an always tenuous heterosexuality, we might understand the force of this accomplishment as the mandating of the abandonment of homosexual attachments or, perhaps more trenchantly, the *preemption* of the possibility of homosexual attachment, a certain foreclosure of possibility that produces a domain of homosexuality understood as unlivable passion and ungrievable loss. This heterosexuality is produced not only by implementing the prohibition on incest but, prior to that, by enforcing the prohibition on homosexuality.

(Butler 1997: 135, emphasis in original)

- 15 Only the *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* (Kimmel, Hearn, and Connell 2005) features larger thematic sections in which the institutional links between masculinity and other fields of discourses are documented. Yet the book largely focuses on the social sciences and almost completely ignores the natural sciences and law.

- 16 Originally, the handbook was intended to be introduced here as a project for the coming years and not as a complete book. After the publication of this chapter was delayed, however, and the handbook project was completed, this section had to be rewritten to refer to the publication instead of to the project (see Horlacher, Jansen, and Schwanebeck 2016).

- 17 Christine Beasley rethinks hegemonic masculinity for consideration of a global context, one aspect of her argument being that the term should focus “on its meaning as a political mechanism involving the bonding together of different masculinities in a hierarchical order.” [...] One might consider what happens to an Asian form of hegemonic masculinity when it encounters an African form, for example. Beasley also calls for thinking about “plural hegemonic masculinities” in a global context with “the language of ‘supra’ and ‘sub’ hegemonic” [...] that allow for a range of masculinities to be placed in global dialogue.

(Reeser 2015: 37; see also Beasley 2008: 99–100)

- 18 For a more detailed analysis see Horlacher (2013: 1–15), on which the following paragraphs are based.

- 19 “My own masculinity is strangely separating from me, turning into my shadow, the place of my filiation and my fading. My attempt to conceptualize its conditionality becomes a compulsion to question it” (Bhabha 1995: 58).

- 20 With reference to Jason Cromwell (2006), it may be argued that transmen queer masculinity by “revamping cultural discourses to construct a transidentity that can be conveyed” to or understood by others. Moreover,

[T]he notion of a masculinity continuum (often thought of as masculinity opposed to femininity, or homosocial opposed to homoerotic) can be reconsidered in light of transgender. The sometimes very fluid borderline between butch and female-to-male transgender permits considerations of the fluidity of masculinity itself, and of the value attached to sex and masculinity in butch and trans subjects.

(Reeser 2015: 33–34)

- 21 For the concept of intersex see Fausto-Sterling (2000); Butler (2006); Hughes (2002); Dreger and Herndon (2009); Dreger (1999); for a discussion of transgender see McKenna and Kessler (2006); see also Halberstam’s conversation with Jagose (1999):

Transgender is for the most part a vernacular term developed within gender communities to account for the cross-identification experiences of people who may not accept the protocols and strictures of transsexuality. Such people understand

cross-identification as a crucial part of their gendered self but they may pick and choose among the options of body modification, social presentation and legal recognition available to them. So, you may find that a transgender male is a female-born subject who has had no sex-reassignment surgery, takes testosterone (with or without medical supervision) and lives as a man mostly but is recognized by his community as a transgendered man in particular. In this context, the term 'transgender' refuses the stability that the term 'transsexual' may offer to some folks and embraces more hybrid possibilities for embodiment and identification. At the same time, I think the term 'transsexual' is undergoing reconstruction by publicly identifiable transsexuals like Kate Bornstein. In other words, transsexual is not simply the conservative medical term to transgender's transgressive vernacular.

(Jagose 1999: n.p.)

- 22 See Horlacher (2016), on which this and the following paragraphs are loosely based.
- 23 See Garcia-Falgueras and Swaab 2010; Zhou *et al.* 1995. Whittle has called the findings of Zhou *et al.* (1995) "very limited evidence of biological differentiation that is so problematic that it cannot yet be said to have any proof value" (Whittle 2006: xiii) (see also Dreger and Herndon 2009: 211–13).
- 24 See also Whittle (2006: xiii), who argues: "many non-trans theorists have used trans identities to support constructivist arguments. But increasingly, trans people are questioning whether the deeply held self-understandings they have can be entirely due to nurture and environment."
- 25 [T]he intersexed movement has sought to ask why society maintains the ideal of gender dimorphism when a significant percentage of children are chromosomally various, and a continuum exists between male and female that suggests the arbitrariness and falsity of gender dimorphism as a prerequisite of human development. There are humans, in other words, who live and breathe in the interstices of this binary relation, showing that it is not exhaustive; it is not necessary.
(Butler 2006: 187)
- 26 See Horlacher (2016).
- 27 Is it "to speak from a position outside the structure of normative gender itself, to bring such a position to articulacy, to produce such a subjectivity in the face of efforts to elide it"? (Floyd 2011: 43; see also Stone 2006: 230).
- 28 This approach should not be mistaken for essentialism but argues that there are important common denominators of masculinity such as masculinity's status as an identity that takes a specific narrative or textual form, as a particular subject position, a psychic or mental structure, etc. (see above).
- 29 Although the dominant discourse of 'crisis' seems to link and probably unify different concepts of masculinity, it seems that the inflationary use of the 'crisis model' has often rendered it useless, and that, in an almost perfidious turn, it reinforces the idea of a formerly 'strong' and 'normal' masculinity, thus often strengthening traditional hegemonic structures. However, crisis is not only a flawed critical concept in itself but may even be considered to be a narrative that has dominated masculinity studies since its inception.

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