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Rethinking Hegemonic Masculinity in a Globalizing World

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Our understanding of power relations in domestic and global settings is crucially informed by analyses of the gendered character of contemporary societies and global politics. *Hegemonic masculinity* is a crucial concept in such analyses. However, this concept has also been the subject of debate. The concept is currently used to stand in for a singular monolithic masculinity, a global hegemonic form on a world scale and is understood to refer to transnational business masculinity to an elite group of socially dominant men. This conceptualization is reconsidered and an alternative approach presented. Rethinking the term hegemonic masculinity is necessary to produce a more nuanced understanding of privileged legitimating conceptions of manhood, and of relations between different masculinities in the global/national nexus. Such a rethinking provides a means to rethink how gendered global politics, how (gendered) globalization may be conceived.

Keywords: *gender; global; hegemonic; hegemonic masculinity; postcolonial; relational*

Masculinity studies writers can be credited with bringing to attention not just how gender is part and parcel of social life and social organization, but in addition how masculinity in particular is implicated in all aspects of sociality. As Michael Kimmel (1997) points out, masculinity is almost invariably invisible in shaping social relations, its ever-present specificity and significance shrouded in its constitution as the universal, the axiomatic, the neutral. Masculinity, he notes, assumes the banality of the unstated norm—not requiring comment, let alone explanation. Its invisibility bespeaks its privilege (Kimmel 1997; Gardiner 2005). According to McKay, Mikosza, and Hutchins (2005), "One of the principal ingredients of men's power and privilege" then becomes men's indiscernible status *as men*:

Author's Note: Themes developed in this article took preliminary form in a coauthored conference article by Chris Beasley and Juanita Elias, "Situating Masculinities in Global Politics," Refereed Conference Proceedings, Oceanic Conference on International Studies, July 5–7, 2006, University of Melbourne, Australia. The conference article contained two distinct sections, drawing on the somewhat different areas of expertise of the coauthors. To give due acknowledgement, I have specifically designated those points contributed by my coauthor, Juanita Elias, rather than simply noting joint authorship.

> [t]he very processes that confer privilege to one group and not to another are often invisible to those upon whom that privilege is conferred . . . men have come to think of themselves as genderless, in part because they can afford the luxury of ignoring the centrality of gender . . . And the invisibility of gender to those privileged by it reproduces the inequalities that are circumscribed by gender (Kimmel 1993, 2003).

Thus, rendering gender and masculinity visible offers a challenge to existing power relations and their continuing reiteration.

In similar fashion, masculinity studies writers—such as Kimmel and R. W. Connell among others—have drawn attention to how globalization and global politics are not gender free and are largely privileged forms of masculinity in an emerging world gender order. While "most theories of globalization have little or nothing to say about gender" (Connell [1995] 2005, xxi), masculinity studies writers make visible the gendered character, for example, of the rhetorically gender-neutral neoliberal market agenda in global politics, diplomacy, institutions, and economics (Connell [1995] 2005, 254–5). However, as Connell points out, existing analyses of masculinities in many regions and countries cannot be simply added together to produce a "global understanding of masculinities." In an evermore globalized world, local analyses are no longer sufficient. Rather, a grasp of large-scale social processes and global relationships is necessary to understand "masculinities on a world scale" (Connell [1995] 2005, xx-xxi).

Masculinity studies writings on global matters are as yet in their infancy (Connell et al. 2005, 9). Despite the critical importance of this work, according to Connell ([1995] 2005, xxiv) "there are still only a handful of studies of masculinity formation in transnational arenas." Similarly, in the "Introduction" to the *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, Kimmel (2005b) states that research in this field on a world scale is very uneven and "still mainly a First World enterprise." All the same, precisely because the investigation of gender and masculinities in global politics is indeed of great significance, I suggest that perhaps this is the moment to pause and look sympathetically but somewhat more closely at the theoretical and terminological tools developed by masculinity studies writers. I am encouraged in this endeavor by Connell's own view that it is timely to reassess these tools. In particular I suggest that by focusing on the term hegemonic masculinity—which is almost ubiquitously used in analyses of masculinity about local and global arenas—I can offer some useful directions for situating the as yet relatively undeveloped analysis of gender and masculinities in a globalizing world.

In concert with William Connolly ([1974] 1983), I consider that analysis of conceptual tools is a means to clarifying the political implications of different perspectives. Connolly goes so far as to say in *The Terms of Political Discourse* that, "[c]onceptual disputes . . . are surface manifestations of basic theoretical differences that reach to the core."[1] I do not presume that my discussion of the term hegemonic masculinity reveals incommensurable divisions between perspectives, but Connolly's point does signal that examination of this conceptual term is no mere abstract exercise. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) put it,

> [t]he concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people.

In other words, this article presumes a role for theory in political praxis and regards concepts as political interventions (Beasley and Bacchi forthcoming). In keeping with this view, close examination of the term hegemonic masculinity provides a contribution to both theoretical and political dialogue.

Existing Problems in the Term *Hegemonic Masculinity*

Jeff Hearn (2004) has drawn attention to Connell's early development and ongoing use of the term *hegemonic masculinity* (first proposed in Connell [1979] 1983—a term which is now virtually omnipresent in masculinity studies literature; Connell [1979] 1983; Beasley 2005), as well as being very widely employed in feminist, sexuality, and international studies writings. Because this terminology has unparalleled usage and occupies a uniquely privileged positioning in the study of men and masculinities within local gender orders, it is clearly a crucial term for situating masculinities per se. In addition, it is viewed by Connell and the vast majority of masculinity studies writers as framing analysis of masculinities in a global context.

The term *hegemonic masculinity* is most importantly a means to recognizing that "all masculinities are not created equal" (Kimmel 1997) and invokes a framing that draws attention to the diversity within masculinities, to multiple masculinities. Masculinity in this reading is not all of a piece, nor simply about power externalized. It is not only about men's power in relation to women. Rather, masculinity is demassified as masculinities, and these are not equal. Hegemonic masculinity holds an authoritative positioning over other masculinities and will "dominate other types in any particular historical and social context" (van Kriekan, Smith, and Holborn 2000, 413) However, at this point, as a number of writers within masculinity studies have indicated, the term becomes more slippery. Michael Flood (2002) has noted, for example, that Connell's own use of the term slides between several meanings. In short, I suggest that these may be summarized as a slippage between its meaning as a *political mechanism* tied to the word *hegemony*—referring to cultural/moral leadership to ensure popular or mass consent to particular forms of rule—to its meaning as a descriptive word referring to *dominant* (most powerful and/or most widespread) versions of manhood,[2] and finally to its meaning as an empirical reference specifically to *actual groups of men*.[3]

This slippage produces certain problems. First, as Flood (2002) notes, it is politically deterministic and defeatist to assume that the most dominant (in the sense either of most powerful or most widespread) ideals/forms of masculinity are necessarily the same as those that work to guarantee men's authority over women. Dominant forms of masculinity, for example, may not always, at all times, legitimate

men's power, and those that do legitimate it may not always be socially celebrated or common. Connell himself has acknowledged this slide in his writings between the meaning of hegemonic masculinity as legitimating strategy and as merely dominant.[4] Relatedly, he cautions that hegemonic masculinity may in fact describe the position of a minority of men or may only loosely correspond to the lives of actual men (Connell 2000, 30; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 838, 846; Beasley 2006, 229; Martin 1998, 473), and has recently reemphasized that he does intend the term to be defined by its political strategic function in legitimating patriarchy. Nevertheless, the problem of a slide toward a usage that refers to socially dominant types of men reoccurs in his work (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). In his most recent clarification of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, published in December 2005, Connell—in concert with his coauthor Messerschmidt—uses the term "socially dominant masculinities" as an equivalent, and later refers to economically "privileged" men as "bearers" of hegemonic masculinity. The inclination toward the merely dominant is evidently deeply implicated in the term, since Connell and Messerschmidt state that "certain masculinities are more socially central, *or more associated with authority and social power* than others" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 846, emphasis added). The slide also reappears in his work on the global context, as I will discuss shortly.

This raises a second issue. The understanding of hegemonic as simply socially dominant opens up a further slippage in which hegemonic is often understood even more fixedly as *actual* particular groups of men. As Flood (2002) points out, actual men may or may not conform to cultural ideals concerning masculinity, even when these are associated with power or are pervasive.

Such a focus on actually existing groups of men generates a third related problem concerning the association of hegemonic masculinity with *types* of men in the sense of actual men exhibiting a list of specific *characteristics*. The social malleability of hegemonic practice is lost in equating gendered power with assumed fixed personality types, as Connell is well aware. Yet this is a common inclination in many masculinity studies writings (Cheng 1999; Plummer 2005; Kimmel 2005a, 2005b; Hofstede 1984). As Kenneth Clatterbaugh (1998) argues, such models prohibit asking which traits might be crucial to masculinity (and hence to hegemonic masculinity) and which are incidental.

Use of the term to refer to dominant actual men and their characteristics is certainly understandable pedagogically and in the context of political activism, in that it gives gendered power a human face, a visceral reality, and makes the term more accessible and less abstract. Moreover, the cascading slide from hegemonic masculinity as the mechanism of patriarchal legitimation toward socially dominant (powerful and/or widespread) types of men, toward actual men, and finally toward a cluster list of generalized personality traits, is not a question merely of sloppy usage, theoretical confusion, or theoretical underdevelopment. In all fairness, it must be said that these are *not* entirely discrete definitional entities.

All the same, the slide to dominant types of men/actual men—even if understandable and related to an attempt to give embodied materiality to the political mechanism of a legitimating cultural ideal—has problematic consequences. For example, to put Connell's conception of hegemonic masculinity as political mechanism to work, it is important to be able to disentangle hegemonic from merely dominant types/dominant actual men and their associated personality traits. It is important to be able to perceive that a senior manager in the major accounting firm KPMG Australia (KPMG 2006) and his mates may represent a dominant masculinity in that he wields a widely accepted institutional power and may even perhaps have particular personality traits associated with that dominance, but may not necessarily be the politically legitimating cultural ideal invoked by the term hegemonic masculinity. Accountants—even those with considerable authority—are scarcely deemed the mobilizing model of manliness to which all men should aspire. They may exercise power, but are not able to legitimate it. As Connell himself notes, many men who hold significant social power do not embody hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 838).

By the same token, but in reverse, while actual working-class men may not wield institutional power, muscular working-class manhood *is* commonly employed as a highly significant mobilizing cultural ideal intended to invoke cross-class recognition and solidarity regarding what counts as a man. Witness, for example, a current advertising campaign for Holden cars in Australia. Holden, as the only originally Australian-owned car manufacturer, has an iconic association with Australian national identity. Holden's advertising is precisely pitched at and reliant on evoking a widely shared sense of quintessential Australianism, and specifically Australian manhood.

The current Holden Rodeo car advertising campaign begins with a presumably married couple sitting up in bed. The wife turns to her husband and asks, "What's your *ultimate* fantasy?" We are then shown him secretly fantasizing about vigorously driving a big muscular (and expensive) four-wheel-drive utility—a workingman's vehicle, "a ute with grunt" in Australian parlance—over rough country.[5] A buxom long-haired blonde (not his wife) in a flannelette shirt and tiny shorts appears by his side. The sexy blonde, specifically demarcated by her clothing as a workingman's sort of woman, is also recognizable to Australian audiences as a former "handyperson" host on a TV program called *Changing Rooms*, and is particularly known for her capabilities with power tools.[7] She is then depicted leaning over the stationary car and polishing its chassis. The final caption reads, "it's what every bloke wants." While public debate about this campaign has focused on the question of its treatment of women (Stolz 2006; Connolly 2006; Kizilos 2006), there has been no comment on its far more explicit engagement with a notion of the *ultimate* "every-bloke." Evidently, stereotypes of femininity are demeaning to women, but stereotypic masculinity could not possibly demean men. The advertisement was received as if it were a bit embarrassing because it was amusingly revealing, amusingly "true." It seemed that Australians widely accepted that, yes, every man does *really* deep down want a big

macho car and a fantasy handmaiden. This idealized working-class-inflected blokehood is at a considerable distance from actual men, yet it can only work as a generalizable representation of proper, honored manliness—that is, as a form of hegemonic masculinity (a point to which I shall return).[7] Working-class blokes may not actually wield power, but they can provide the means to legitimate it.

Both the example of the actual KPMG accountant and the ideal of the working-class "every-bloke" indicate that it is a matter of some importance to be able to distinguish hegemonic from merely dominant men, from actual men or from their specific personality traits.

Problems As the Term Goes Global

The problems that seem to haunt the term hegemonic masculinity in local Western settings are not surprisingly magnified on the larger stage of the global. Connell, Hearn, and Kimmel (2005) assert in concert that "the most obviously important" issue in the future of the field researching masculinity in the setting of globalization "is the relation of masculinities to those emerging dominant powers in the global capitalist economy, the transnational corporations" (Connell, Hearn, and Kimmel 2005). Connell's particular contribution to this field, which appears largely accepted by masculinity studies writers (Kimmel 2005b) is that globalization in creating a world gender order involves the rearticulation of national hegemonic masculinities into the global arena. Specifically, he refers here to "transnational business masculinity," which he describes as definitively taking the leading role as the emergent gendered world order, an order associated with the dominant institutions of the world economy and the globalization of the neoliberal market agenda. In this account transnational business masculinity is asserted to have "achieved a position of hegemony," to occupy the position of

> . . . a hegemonic masculinity on a world scale—that is to say, a dominant form of masculinity that embodies, organizes, and legitimates men's domination in the world gender order as a whole. (Connell 2000, 46)

As is the case with the account of local Western hegemonic forms, the political legitimating meaning of hegemonic masculinity in the global arena quickly slides in Connell's analysis toward its meaning as the "dominant" masculinity and how an actual group of businessmen "embodies" this dominant positioning, including how this group exhibits particular personality traits. Connell asserts that "world politics is now more and more organized around the needs of the transnational capital," placing "strategic power in the hands of particular groups of men—managers and entrepreneurs"—who self-consciously manage their bodies and emotions as well as money, and are increasingly detached from older loyalties to nation, business organization, family, and marital partners.[8] These men are, in his account, dispositionally

highly atomistic—that is, competitive and largely distanced from social or personal commitments. They embody a neoliberal version of an emphasized traditional masculinity, without any requirement to direct bodily strength (Connell [1995] 2005).

Connell's account of the hegemonic status of "transnational business masculinity" reveals further issues in the term. It is in the first instance not clear why Connell is so adamant that business masculinity occupies world hegemonic status, and why he regards other potential contenders—he draws attention to military and political masculinities—as of less significance in this legitimating and mobilizing role. There seems at minimum here a limited engagement with the burgeoning and highly fractious literature on globalization.[9] For instance, Connell does not engage with those writers who question the very notion of economic globalization (see Hirst and Thompson 1999). Nor does he contend with those writers who might dispute this focus and by contrast propose multiple, uneven, and contradictory globalizations. Mann (2001) provides an example of the latter view, suggesting that unprecedented hegemony is more characteristic of contemporary military power than economic relations.

Whatever the force of different perspectives on globalization, the point is that it is no simple matter to claim that transnational business masculinity, a masculinity organized in relation to economics, is *the* hegemonic form on a world scale, legitimating men's dominance in the global gender order as a whole. Given this, why does Connell make the claim? Connell, in his global and macro historical moments, is inclined to presume that masculinity (a gender category) is to be understood by its constitution through class relations (Connell [1995] 2005; 2000). Though Kate Hughes's (2001) summary of Connell's perspective is not intended to make this point, it supports this interpretation. She says Connell

> . . . provides an interesting analysis of the ways in which globalization has exported a version of patriarchy…to cultures whose economies have come to be vulnerable to such [transnational executives] and to such corporations.

While gender in this approach certainly gives particular characteristics to globalizing capitalism, it seems to be carried along by and within host class relations—a comparatively passive and responsive substructure. Gender, here, tends to be subsumed within class, as it was in traditional Marxian analyses, and in the same vein, class becomes shorthand for relations between men, while women's contributions to the shaping of global history seem to disappear.[10] Such a perspective seems curiously at odds with Connell's overriding conception of gender as a shaping force in local and global social relations. It also sits uneasily alongside Connell's assertion that hegemonic masculinity is a relational concept and his recognition—following Brod—that looking only at men and proceeding without including women in the analysis of gender relations is highly problematic (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Brod 1994). This is precisely a point on which feminist analyses of global politics have proved more robust (Beasley and Elias 2006).

Connell's framework—with its tension between gender as riding on the coattails of class and gender as actively socially constituting—is frequently replicated in masculinity studies writings, even in the work of those who are far less wedded to an economic focus in research on the politics of masculinity on a world scale (e.g., Kimmel 2005b). Yet the crucial feature of the term hegemonic masculinity is precisely that it enables the Gramscian conception of power as more multifaceted than mere coercion, including economic coercion, and that it is not supposedly to be equated with economic or military dominance. Connell's term has the great advantage that encourages a creative and subtle understanding of power as constitutive, as always associated with the mobilization of consent and complicit embodied identities. However, Connell, along with many other masculinity studies writers, tends to fall back into more limited, even economistic, readings of hegemony when dealing with the global.

I am not suggesting that the leading contender for the position of hegemonic masculinity on a world scale is not transnational business masculinity, nor am I necessarily disputing that the other contenders are military and political. The point here is simply to stress that the term does not actually enable these judgments at present and Connell's approach is insufficiently tied to demonstrating how transnational business masculinities have achieved a hegemonic role specifically *in relation to the gender order*, rather than merely as an auxiliary handmaiden to the "current stage of capitalism" (Connell 2005a, 73) and as a dimension of globalizing western institutions.

Indeed, broadly speaking, it is not clear how one would assess whether any particular version of masculinity has an over-arching legitimating function. There is very little information in Connell's work on the crucial matter of how the *legitimation* of gendered power occurs and, thus, how to assess which masculinity is the hegemonic one. It is not self-evident overall how to judge which masculinity (or masculinities) might be deemed hegemonic over all others.

What to Do?

This discussion of the term hegemonic masculinity suggests that situating masculinities in global politics is no simple matter, and that use of the term may require further analysis. In particular, I am arguing on one hand for a narrower clarification of meaning[11] and, on the other, under this narrowed rubric, for a taxonomical expansion of particular instances. What is the aim of this rethinking of the term? Why might it be worth undertaking?

I have already noted the slippage in Connell's work and in that of other masculinity studies writers in the concept of hegemonic masculinity from its political function—as a political mechanism producing solidarity between different masculinities in a hierarchical order—toward an emphasis on socially dominant men at the moment and their particular characteristics. I also pointed out that this slide has several problematic implications, including raising concerns about political defeatism, claiming the monolithic, global *hegemonic* status of a specific group of actual businessmen, and

relatedly offering an account of the gendered character of globalization—largely without reference to women—as a primarily economic, uniform, and indeed top-down phenomenon. In rethinking the concept of hegemonic masculinity, I intend first to focus the term hegemonic masculinity on its *political* function—to *narrow* the characterization of the term—and, second, to undertake a taxonomic *expansion* of its forms, to resist this slippage in its meaning and thus avoid the associated problematic implications of this slippage.

It is, after all, politically important not to simply equate dominant masculinities as a matter of course with hegemonic masculinity—that is, with the legitimation of men's authority over women—since it is hopefully imaginable that dominant (widespread or prevalent) masculinities might not be constituted by gender hierarchy. Moreover, it is politically useful in terms of policy development, including educational policy development, and political strategies to recognize that challenging hegemonic legitimation with regard to gender may not coincide with challenging a specific group of actual men who hold significant institutional power. It may also not coincide with attending only to men. Yet Connell's account of global hegemonic masculinity in practice assumes that challenging hegemonic masculinity does coincide with concentrating on dominant, economically powerful businessmen and their particular characteristics. What if, however, these socially dominant men do not occupy the pinnacle hegemonic position in the global hierarchy of masculinities, legitimating and bonding together men in the world gender order as a whole, as Connell asserts? And, what if gendered globalization is less singular, less one-way, more complex and nuanced than Connell's account proposes? In my view, our understanding of gender and masculinity in this globalizing world shapes the political directions we might undertake to advance gender equality. For this reason, to the degree that the concept of hegemonic masculinity may be both insufficiently focused and overly monolithic, I would suggest that a rethinking of the concept is not merely of abstract theoretical interest, but a crucial element in assessing contemporary social trends and our responses to them.

Narrowing the Meaning of the Term

I will now turn to my first argument. I have asserted that a more focused conceptualization of "hegemonic masculinity" is required. In short, I am arguing for the term to be conceived more narrowly. With regard to this clarified meaning, I suggest, in particular, a more focused characterization of hegemonic masculinity as concerned with a *political ideal* or model, as an enabling mode of representation, which mobilizes institutions and practices. Contra Connell's approach and in keeping with that of Mike Donaldson (1993), the concept of hegemonic masculinity is likely to retain what I have described as its centrally important concern with political legitimation and promoting solidarity between men by explicitly differentiating it from the study of masculinities associated with actual socially dominant men.[12] Characterizing

hegemonic masculinity in relation to a narrowed meaning as a political ideal prevents a slide toward depictions of men with institutional power and instead concentrates the term on its legitimating function, which may or may not refer to men with actual power. Such a clarification enables us to acknowledge the hegemonic significance, for example, of working-class-inflected models (along the lines I noted earlier) in sites such as Australia. Indeed, it seems to me that attention to such models is critical to analysis of Australian masculine identities and gender relations.

This suggested rethinking of the concept of hegemonic masculinity—toward a focus on a mobilizing political ideal—may, however, not be acceptable to Connell (2000; 2002) or other masculinity studies writers such as Jeff Hearn (1996), Kenneth Clatterbaugh (1998), and Hearn and Collinson (1994), who tend to display antagonism to any focus on the symbolic, representation, or discourses. They adopt a form of macrosociological social constructionism, which involves dividing off "discursive" from "material" processes, structures, interests, and practices. The division between discursive and material is depicted rather along the lines of the materialist base/superstructure metaphor—a metaphor that assumes the ultimate critical status of activities deemed material and particularly the economic infrastructure.

In this context, it is worth pointing out that Connell appears to oscillate on this question. On one hand, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), when discussing who represents hegemonic masculinity, argue that "an *ideal* masculinity" is frequently not associated with "men who hold great social power." Hegemonic masculinity is at this point equated with an ideal. Similarly, they employ words like *models*, *ideals*, *fantasies and desires*, *collective images*, *common cultural templates*, and *exemplary*. Yet on the other hand, they insist (2005, 842, emphasis added) that while hegemonic masculinity

> involves the formulation of cultural ideals, it should not be regarded *only* as a cultural norm. Gender relations also are constituted through *non-discursive practices*, including wage labour, violence, sexuality, domestic labour, and childcare.

This seems initially to be an inclusive approach, a "not only but also" framework, in which hegemonic masculinity is identified with a discursive cultural norm but additionally with "non-discursive" elements. However, what is important here is an ongoing inclination in Connell's approach to maintain a distinction between discursive and non-discursive—described in terms of an opposition between nonmaterial and material—alongside a prioritization of the latter.

This separation between discursive and material and prioritization of the latter is evident in his rather dismissive view of postmodern perspectives, of "discursive approaches" as about culture, representations, and personal voluntary tactical choices—as against material practices, interests, and inequality, which are lined up with employment, violence, and child care. Not surprisingly Connell (2005a) argues in the "Introduction to the Second Edition" of *Masculinities,* just as he did in earlier work (2000, 2002), that "discursive approaches have significant limits. They give no

grip on issues about economic inequality and the state" (Connell [1995] 2005, xix). No wonder, given the materialist base/superstructure presumptions evident in his depiction of "discursive approaches," that Connell understands hegemonic masculinity in "the world gender order as a whole" as transnational *business* masculinity and globalization itself in primarily economic terms. No wonder, when dealing with macro and global, his analysis tends to subsume gender within class, with class primarily depicted as relations between men.

Connell's presumption that discursive approaches are at odds with "material" concerns may lead him to dispute my suggestion that we should rethink hegemonic masculinity as a political ideal, as a discourse. However, it is worth considering whether such a rethinking also enables us to rethink Connell's assumptions regarding what counts. Precisely because he is committed to the separate and determining authority of what he deems "material," he tends to slide away from the political legitimating meaning of hegemonic masculinity toward equating hegemony with "dominant" masculinity, since this masculinity is associated with "material" authority and institutional social power (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 846). In short, Connell's investment in "the material" may well go some way to explaining the problematic slippage in his use of the term *hegemonic masculinity*. By extension, questioning Connell's conception of what counts may not only enable us to reconsider his terminology, but, in addition, his analysis of globalization and conclusions regarding the global masculine hegemony. If his base/superstructure account of the separation between discursive and material and the priority accorded the latter is questionable, then not only may hegemonic masculinity be understood differently but there is no reason to presume that the global gender order is *necessarily* and monolithically legitimated by elite transnational businessmen in a top-down fashion. This is no trivial matter.

Debating Connell's antagonism to "discursive approaches," and his associated commitment to "the material," might also lead us down another tack. His use of hegemonic masculinity—along with that of other masculinity studies writers—has become unnecessarily, and perhaps inadvertently, positioned in the first wave of globalization scholarship and at a distance from recent developments in understanding globalization and international political economy. First wave globalization scholarship assumes that globalization is simply a fact out there, an unproblematic given, and is straightforwardly an economic phenomenon, demanding an emphasis on the multinational firm. Similar assumptions arise in Connell's focus on transnationals and transnational businessmen. By contrast, as Juanita Elias has noted, the turn within international political economy, for example, is toward approaches that stress the discursive production of globalization in the everyday practice of international politics. The important point here is that, in this literature, discourses are viewed as having both ideational and practical material effects. The discursive turn considers the notion of globalization as a self-evidently economic imperative and the multinational firm as globalization's primary agent, not as unproblematic facts, but as framed in relation to neoliberal discourses (Block 1990). In this kind of approach it becomes important to unravel how discourses

of globalization constitute gender relations. In this context, feminist and other critical globalization scholars expose certain potential shortcomings of the masculinities writings on globalization by suggesting how these writings may take for granted and indeed reiterate assumptions about globalization and the role of transnationals that precisely require debate. The existing distance between critical globalization and masculinity approaches seems to me unhelpful.

Reconsidering hegemonic masculinity as a discursive political ideal involves taking up conceptions of the discursive that are not estranged from the material world, nor discrete from it, without assuming that this amounts to a strategy of dematerialization or a refusal of persistent even enduring systemic patterns in social relations. This kind of rethinking of the term usefully opens up a dialogue between masculinity studies and critical globalization scholars, in that the influence of transnational business masculinity may be viewed as operating at a discursive level—as a powerful ideal that has played an important role in shaping material processes associated with globalization.[13]

Expanding the Taxonomy of the Term

Having outlined the case for a narrowed clarification of the meaning of the term, I will now attend to my second argument regarding the advantages of its taxonomical expansion. The first argument regarding a narrowed clarification of meaning to focus the concept of hegemonic masculinity on its meaning as a political mechanism can work against problematic slippages in its usage and can enable a useful questioning of Connell's assumptions regarding the critical status of the economic and his account of globalization. Nevertheless, de-massification and greater specification of plural hegemonic masculinities under the rubric of this newly narrowed meaning enables a more nuanced analysis of gender order and gender identity in the contemporary globalizing world. Current approaches in masculinity studies have multiplied the term "masculinity" but have tended to retain the notion of "hegemonic masculinity" as a singular monolith, which is insufficiently specified even to do justice the existing range of masculinity studies writings. Hegemonic masculinity, I would argue, also needs to be de-massified.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, 840, 845) in their recent clarification of the term acknowledge that hegemonic masculinity is not singular in the sense that it may take different forms in different geographical/cultural locations, its effects on particular men are variable, and there will be contesting "claimants" to the status of hegemon. They also acknowledge that global does not necessarily "overwhelm regional or local" (2005, 850). However, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, 845) reassert the singular character of hegemonic masculinity, as precisely about that which is deemed *the* pinnacle of a pyramid of masculinities. By contrast, I consider that the term *hegemonic* does not require an indivisible monotype, and indeed an insistence on such a monolithic conception may partially explain the inclination in masculinity studies writings to drift into equating hegemonic masculinity with mere social dominance rather than focusing on the issue of political mobilization.

Further elaboration of this key term within masculinity theory is likely is to be helpful in analyzing contemporary gender relations and a range of politically significant masculinities. Therefore, following Judith Halberstam's "taxonomical impulse" (Jagose 1999),[14] I propose that more terms may be required, enabling recognition of what I would call "*supra*-hegemonic" and "*sub*-hegemonic" masculinities.[15] As an illustrative instance here, I would suggest that my earlier discussion of the "every-bloke" of the Holden Rodeo advertising campaign presents a local *sub*-hegemonic masculinity—a powerful Australian legitimating ideal—which is nevertheless similar to other working-class inflected manifestations in many other countries,[16] invoking as it does masculine solidarity and complicity even though it lacks institutional power. Importantly, this is a legitimating ideal shaped against *and* in concert with more global forms.

This instance reveals why taxonomical expansion matters, why it is important to talk not only about hegemonic masculinities but additionally about hierarchical relations between them. Connell describes the "globalization of gender" in ways that indicate an interaction between globalized hegemonic masculinities and localized masculinities in a globalizing world. Nevertheless, there is also an inclination in his work to understand globalization (conceived as substantively gendered) in terms of a singular, monolithic hegemonic masculinity acting on a world scale. Transnational business masculinity is presented as the hegemonic form for the world as a whole. This account is useful in highlighting that masculinities are not all the same, but does not discuss the relationship between different hegemonic masculinities. Moreover, in simply assuming that there is always only one form "at the top," Connell asserts that what he thinks is the case at a local level—a single hegemon—is also what happens in the global setting. Yet it may be argued, as my example of the working-class every-bloke suggests, that the political legitimating function of hegemonic masculinity is unlikely to be left to one idealized model alone. Hegemonic masculinity, even at the local level, may be seen as hierarchical and plural. It seems even more likely that there is not one single hegemon on the global scale.

To conceive, as Connell does, that hegemonic masculinity is monolithic on a world scale, restricts analysis of globalization to a framework that presents globalization as a one-way uniform process and focuses on how the global hegemon touches down at the local level. However, as Randall Germain (2000) has pointed out, there are significant problems attached to conceiving globalization as a uniform and all-encompassing process. What is lost in Connell's emphasis on the singular hegemonic authority of transnational business masculinity is a more nuanced account of how local cultures may also contribute to the formation of globalizing gender, let alone enabling an account of the role of the state and of the impact of differentially powerful cultures and states in the global context.[17]

By contrast, a de-massification of hegemonic masculinity, a taxonomical expansion of it to include *supra* and *sub* hegemonic forms, permits discussion of hegemonic masculinities in vertical as well as horizontal terms. The taxonomical

expansion envisaged allows for a more nuanced analysis that can attend to both the unevenness of globalization in different settings and more detailed awareness of interactions between global and local/cultural/state imperatives. Such a de-massification aims to move away from conceptualizations of globalization and hegemonic masculinity that are exceptionally top-down toward an analysis of the contested and shifting nature of gender identity at the global as well as the local level, to highlight the ways in which different hegemonic masculinities are negotiated, and even resisted. To give space in our analyses to this resistant creativity is surely to refuse the ongoing inevitability of gender hierarchy.

Taxonomical expansion has a further advantage. In giving space to the plural and uneven character of gendered globalization it can work against the limits of existing scholarship rather than accepting them. Bob Pease has, for instance, noted that "theorizing about masculinity in Australia has tended to be derivative of overseas literature," even though Connell's internationally influential work involves theoretical generalizations drawn from Australian men and Australian gender relations. Pease (2001) points out that Australian masculinities have a specific history that may be insufficiently recognized in more global generalizing about Western masculinities.[18] I would add that limited analyses of specific cultures and states not only reiterates aspects of globalization itself, but may produce inadequate assessments of gendered globalization in terms of its multiple contexts. The location of Australian masculinities in a settler colony in between the metropolitan First World and the Third World of occupied colonies produces particular responses to gendered globalization which are likely to be different from those even in other English-speaking countries (Johnston and Lawson 2000; Kiernan 2000). This broadly postcolonial analysis is encouraged by expanding the terms associated with hegemonic masculinity, enabling a more rigorous and culturally specific evaluation of globalization as an uneven process entailing complex forms of accommodation and resistance. This might also open the door to an account of globalization that entails more detailed reference to women and femininities.

Conclusion

Masculinity studies writers, and Connell in particular, have made crucial contributions to gender analysis at a local, national level, and at the global level their work alerts us to the ways in which supposedly gender-neutral global processes are linked to the politics of masculinity. Nevertheless, like Connell, I believe, it is timely to reconsider the concept hegemonic masculinity.

In rethinking the term I aim first to narrow its characterization to focus on its meaning as a political mechanism involving the bonding together of different masculinities in a hierarchical order, and to differentiate this meaning from a usage dealing with the authority of socially dominant men. Such a distinction also enables a rethinking of assumptions that give rise to overly economistic interpretations of

globalization. Second, I propose to expand the instances under the narrowed rubric of understanding hegemonic masculinity as a political mechanism—as a discursive ideal mobilizing legitimation. In particular, while retaining usage of the overall term hegemonic masculinity when appropriate, I wish to attend to plural hegemonic masculinities within this by employing the language of "supra" and "sub" hegemonic. De-massification of the term hegemonic masculinity is called for to avoid insufficiently nuanced and uniform top-down analyses of gendered globalization.

I do not assume that Connell or other masculinity studies writers will not be amenable to further rethinking of the term. Connell, for example, has, after all, developed concepts that encourage intellectual flexibility and discussion and has indeed actively promoted exchanges on the topic of hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, in my view the term continues to have much to offer. However, I would also suggest that it is not enough to say, as Connell ([1995] 2005, xviii) does, that it needs work but is "still essential." Rather, the use of the term in the global arena shows up certain earlier limits of the term all the more clearly. These limits have research and political implications. Rethinking the concept, hegemonic masculinity, is therefore an important aspect of better understanding and working toward transforming gender in the contemporary global context.

Notes

1. My thanks to Carol Bacchi for this point.

2. Hearn (1998) notes this distinction between powerful and widespread in his analysis of notions of dominant or preeminent masculinity.

3. For a more detailed account of how this slippage occurs, see first section—on hegemonic masculinity by Chris Beasley (Beasley and Elias 2006).

4. In 2006 R. W. Connell took up a transgender positioning as Raewyn Connell. However, the works I discuss in this article were written prior to this gender identity transition, when Connell wrote as Bob Connell.

5. The utility is a peculiarly Australian vehicle, broadly similar to the American pickup truck. However, it has a single body, with two seat front compartments and open tray with sides at the back.

6. The former TV host in question is Suzie Wilks. When questioned about the advertisement, she asserted that complaints about it showed a lack of a sense of humor and that she was a role model for women.

7. In similar fashion Benwell (2003) has noted in relation to "new lad" magazines that mobilizing models of desirable masculinity can involve drawing on notions of working-class manhood, notions intended to justify "sexism, exclusive male friendship and homophobia" as fundamental to "real" as against wussy metrosexual manliness.

8. Interestingly, here Connell makes plain, by employing Altman's (2001) analysis, that hegemonic masculinity in the global gender order is not necessarily marked by homophobia, nor does this global form necessarily have the same sexual relation to women. Given that homophobia and heterosexuality marked by gender hierarchy are taken as central to his earlier (local/national/western) account of hegemonic masculinity (as is also the case for most masculinity studies writers—for example, Plummer 2005), it is odd that this presumably highly important shift does not produce a discussion which might involve some reconsideration of the term integrating earlier and more recent global accounts. At the very least the global analysis suggests that Connell (and others) might need to rethink earlier assumptions about the fit between gender and sexuality as axes of social structuring. At most, the shift suggests a rethinking of

hegemonic masculinity as supposedly precisely about upholding gender hierarchy (Altman 2001; Connell and Wood 2005; Plummer 2005).

9. Even Connell's own critique of globalization literature as the view from the metropole, a projection from "the center," involving erasure of the nonmetropolitan world seems only somewhat integrated into his analysis of hegemonic masculinity, which for the most part appears schematic and from the vantage point of considering the spread of that which he associates with the hegemonic. North Atlantic, white, class-privileged, heterosexual men remain center stage in the analysis. The nonmetropolitan and those cast as peripheral tend to remain in the shadows (Connell 2005b; Beasley 2005, 215; Newton 1998).

10. The analysis of Connell's linkage between gender and class is developed further in Beasley (2005).

11. For a discussion of the issues at stake in clarifying meaning of terms, see Beasley (2001, 2006).

12. The study of socially dominant men may perhaps be conceptualized following Donaldson's (1993) terminology of "the masculinity of the hegemonic," but once again I am uncertain about the use of the word *hegemonic*. "The masculinity of the dominant" seems to me a more accurate way to describe what Donaldson wants to highlight.

13. Points regarding critical globalization scholarship within the article were developed by Juanita Elias, in Beasley and Elias (2006).

14. This taxonomical impulse is developed in relation to queer theorizing and "female masculinity" in Halberstam's work (1998)

15. The distinction between supra- and sub-hegemonic masculinities requires further clarification and empirical research. As I have indicated in relation to Connell's work, more analysis is required regarding how legitimation occurs, and thus why one masculinity may be more critical to it and more overarching in mobilizing solidarity across a wide range of masculinities. With regard to clarifying the meaning of these terms as against other commonly used languages such as *hyper*- and *hypo*-masculinity, it is worth noting that the latter terms refer not so much to political legitimation as to the degree of particular characteristics that at any one time may be associated with normative manliness. Thus it is possible for an individual or group to exhibit what is deemed hyper-masculinity but not to be constituted as an ideal, not to mobilize legitimation. For example, biker-gang members in Australia epitomize a hyper-masculinity but do not widely mobilize political legitimation and hence do not invoke sub-, let alone supra-, hegemonic status.

16. A recent television advertisement in the United States for a Hummer (tinyurl.com/mea23), invoked a similar form of beefy working-class masculinity to that which I have outlined in relation to the Holden Rodeo advertisement in Australia (*Guardian* 2006). My thanks to Juanita Elias for this reference. For a related analysis of the Land Rover "Himba" advertisement screened in South Africa, see Van Eeden (2006).

17. This analysis draws on the work of Juanita Elias, in Beasley and Elias (2006).

18. See also Connell ([1995] 2005) for further discussion of the ways in which Connell's depiction of a monolithic global hegemonic masculinity may not capture sufficiently the particular relationships between metropolitan center and local periphery that characterize sites such as Australia.

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