TOWARD A NEW SOCIOLOGY OF MASCULINITY

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The upheaval in sexual politics of the last twenty years has mainly been discussed as a change in the social position of women. Yet change in one term of a relationship signals change in the other. From very early in the history of Women's Liberation it was clear that its politics had radical implications for men. A small "Men's Liberation" movement developed in the 1970s among heterosexual men. Gay men became politicized as the new feminism was developing, and Gay Liberation politics have continued to call in question the conventional understanding of what it is to be a man. Academic sex-role research, though mainly about women in the family, was easily extended to the "male role." From several different directions in the 1970s, critiques and analyses of masculinity appeared. Quite strong claims about the emergence of a new area of study, and a new departure in sexual politics, were made. The purpose of this article is to bring together these attempts, evaluate them, and propose an alternative.

We think it important to start with the "prehistory" of this debate – early attempts at a sociology of gender, the emergence of the "sex role" framework, and research on masculinity *before* the advent of Women's Liberation. In this dusty literature are the main sources of the framework that has governed most recent writing on masculinity. It includes an agenda about modernization, a characteristic blindness about power, and a theoretical incoherence built into the "sex role" paradigm. There are also, in some nearly forgotten writing, pointers to a much more powerful and interesting analysis.

Approaching the recent literature, we were concerned with three things: its empirical discoveries, its political assumptions and implications, and its theoretical framework. Its empirical content turns out to be slight. Though most social science is indeed about men, good-quality research that brings *masculinity* into focus is rare. Ironically, most recent studies are not up to the standard set by several researchers in the 1950s. There is however a notable

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exception, a new body of work on the history of homosexual masculinity, which has general implications for our understanding of the historical construction of gender categories.

The political meaning of writing about masculinity turns mainly on its treatment of power. Our touchstone is the essential feminist insight that the overall relationship between men and women is one involving domination or oppression. This is a fact about the social world that must have profound consequences for the character of men. It is a fact that is steadily evaded, and sometimes flatly denied, in much of the literature about masculinity written by men – an evasion wittily documented by Ehrenreich in *The Hearts of Men*.[1]

There are, however, some accounts of masculinity that have faced the issue of social power, and it is here that we find the bases of an adequate theory of masculinity. But they too face a characteristic danger in trying to hold to feminist insights about men. For a powerful current in feminism, focusing on sexual exploitation and violence, sees masculinity as more or less unrelieved villainy and all men as agents of the patriarchy in more or less the same degree. Accepting such a view leads to a highly schematic view of gender relations, and leads men in particular into a paralyzing politics of guilt. This has gripped the "left wing" of men's sexual politics since the mid 1970s.

It is necessary to face the facts of sexual power without evasion but also without simplification. A central argument of this article is that the theoretical bases for doing so are now available, and a strong radical analysis of masculinity has become possible. Three steps open this possibility up. First, the question of sexual power has to be taken more seriously and pursued *inside* the sex categories. In particular the relations between heterosexual and homosexual men have to be studied to understand the constitution of masculinity as a political order, and the question of what forms of masculinity are socially dominant or hegemonic has to be explored. The writings of Gay Liberation theorists already provide important insights about this problem. Second, the analysis of masculinity needs to be related as well to other currents in feminism. Particularly important are those which have focused on the sexual division of labor, the sexual politics of workplaces, and the interplay of gender relations with class dynamics. Third, the analysis needs to use those developments in social theory in the last decade or so that offer ways past the dichotomies of structure versus individual, society versus the person, that have plagued the analysis of gender as much as the analysis of class. These developments imply a focus on the historical production of social categories, on power as the ability to control the production of people

(in both the biological and psychological senses), and on large-scale structures as both the objects and effects of collective practice. In the final section of this article we sketch a sociology of masculinity that draws on these sources.

We hope for a realist sociology of masculinity, built on actual social practices rather than discussion of rhetoric and attitudes. And we hope for a realistic politics of masculinity, neither fatuously optimistic nor defeatist. We see such an enterprise as part of a radical approach to the theory of gender relations in general, made possible by convergences among feminism, gay liberation, contemporary socialism, psychoanalysis, and the history and sociology of practice. The theme of masculinity only makes sense in terms of that larger project. At the same time it is, we think, an important part of it.

Origins

The Early Sociology of Gender and the "Sex Role" Framework

"The problem of women" was a question taken up by science generally in the second half of the nineteenth century, at first in a mainly biological framework. This was not simply part of the widening scope of scientific inquiry. It was clearly also a response to the enormous changes that had overtaken women's lives with the growth of industrial capitalism. And, towards the end of the century, it was a response to the direct challenge of the women's emancipation movement.

The relationship of the emerging social sciences to this nineteenth- and early twentieth-century discourse on women was profound. In a useful sociology of knowledge investigation of the growth of the discourse, Viola Klein observed that

> There is a peculiar affinity between the fate of women and the origins of social science, and it is no mere co-incidence that the emancipation of women should be started at the same time as the birth of sociology.[2]

The political stakes were particularly evident in psychological research. The area usually referred to today as "sex difference research" has been a major component in the development of social science work on gender. In the view of one prominent observer of the field, this work was originally

> motivated by the desire to demonstrate that females are inherently inferior to males... But from 1900 on, the findings of the psychologists gave strong support to the arguments of the feminists.[3]

Rosalind Rosenberg has documented the pioneering, and subsequently forgotten, research by American women into sex differences in the first two decades of this century. She established the importance of the work of Helen Thompson, Leta Hollingworth, Jessie Taft, Elsie Clews Parsons, and others across a range of disciplines into questions of intelligence, the socialization of women and American sexual mores. There were serious obstacles in the way of the academic careers of these women, but Rosenberg revealed the influence they had on such later social theorists as W. I. Thomas, Robert Lowie, John Dewey, and Margaret Mead.[4]

Establishing the social basis of sex differences was one thing (though biological claims and assumptions recur in this work right up to the present). Developing a sociological account of femininity was quite another. The "marginal man" perspective, for example, was used by Park and other sociologists at the University of Chicago from the late 1920s to refer to the ways in which groups such as Jewish and black people experienced the conflict of living in two cultures. As Rosenberg observed, this was quite comparable to how Taft had conceived the position of women a decade before. Yet it was not until the 1950s that the "marginal man" or "minority" perspective was applied to women, by Helen Hacker.[5] By then, however, the development of an adequate sociology of femininity was inhibited by the ascendancy of functionalism; for this meant that the radical implications of the early research into femininity were pretty well lost.

By the mid-century functionalist sex-role theory dominated the western sociological discourse on women. The key figure in this development was Talcott Parsons, who in the early 1950s wrote the classic formulation of American sex role theory, giving it an intellectual breadth and rigor it had never had before. The notion of "role" as a basic structural concept of the social sciences had crystallized in the 1930s, and it was immediately applied to questions of gender. Two of Parsons's own papers of the early 1940s talked "freely of sex roles." In the course of his argument he offered an interesting account of several options that had recently emerged within the female role. There was, however, little sense of a power relation between men and women; and the argument embedded the issue of sex and gender firmly in the context of the family.[6]

For the rest of the 1940s Parsons was mainly occupied with the system-building for which he is now famous. When he returned to the theme of sex it was with questions of structure behind him, and questions of how people were fitted into structures – what he called "socialization" – uppermost in his mind. The main tool he used on this problem was psychoanalysis, and his

work thus is the first important encounter of Freudian thought on sexuality with the American sociology of gender – even if it was the rather bland version of psychoanalysis being naturalized in the United States at the time.

In the two chapters of the collaborative volume *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process* (1953) that represent the culmination of this development, Parsons achieved a notable synthesis. He brought together a structural account of kinship, the socialization problem in sociology, psychoanalytic accounts of personality formation, the internal interaction patterns of the household, and the sexual division of labor into a coherent argument. The theme of the differentiation and learning of sex roles provided the solvent that blended all these ingredients. It follows that in most of Parsons's argument "sex roles" themselves were a taken-for-granted fact. What was at issue was the processes and structures that called them into play.

At a key point, however, Parsons did make sex role differentiation the problem, asking how it was to be explained. He rejected the biological-difference argument as utterly incapable of explaining the social pattern of sex roles. Rather, he derived it from a general sociological principle, the imperative of structural differentiation. Its particular form here was explained by the famous distinction between "instrumental" and "expressive" leadership. Parsons treated sex roles as the instrumental/expressive differentiation that operated within the conjugal family. And he treated the conjugal family both as a small group, and as the specific agency of the larger society entrusted with the function of socializing the young. Thus he deduced the gender patterning of roles, and their reproduction across generations, from the structural requirements of any social order whatever.

To this tour de force of reasoning Parsons added a sophisticated account of role acquisition, in the sense of how the role gets *internalized.* This is where psychoanalysis, with its account of the production of masculinity and femininity through different patternings of the oedipal crisis, came into play. In effect, sex role becomes part of the very constitution of the person, through the emotional dynamics of development in the nuclear family.

Thus Parsons analyzed the acquisition of sex roles as a matter of the production, from one generation to the next, of what we might call *gender personalities.* For example:

> relative to the total culture as a whole, the masculine personality tends more to the predominance of instrumental interests, needs and functions, presumably in whatever social system both sexes are involved, while the feminine personality tends more to the primacy of expressive interests, needs and functions. We would expect, by and large, that other things

being equal, men would assume more technical, executive and 'judicial' roles, women more supportive, integrative and 'tension-managing' roles.[7]

This notion provided Parsons then, as it provides role theorists still, with a powerful solution to the problem of how to link person and society. But its ability to do so was based on a drastic simplification. As phrases like "the masculine personality" show, the whole argument is based on a normative standard case. Parsons was not in the least concerned about how many men (or women) are actually like that. Even the options within a sex role that he had cheerfully recognized in the earlier papers had vanished. All that was left in the theory was the normative case on the one hand, and on the other, deviance. Homosexuality, he wrote only a couple of pages after the passage just quoted, is universally prohibited so as to reinforce the differentiation of sex roles.

Apart from being historically false (homosexuality was and is institutionalized in some societies), such a theory fails to register tension and power processes *within* gender relations. Parsons recognizes many forms of "role strain," but basically as a result of problems in the articulation of the different sub-systems of society. For instance, in his account the relation between the family and the economy is the source of much of the change in sex roles. The underlying structural notion in his analysis of gender is always differentiation, not relation. Hence his automatic assumption is that the connection between the two sex roles is one of complementarity, not power.

This version of the role framework fitted comfortably with the intense social conservatism of the American intelligentsia in the 1950s, and with the lack of any direct political challenge from women. For functionalist sociology "the problem of women" was no longer how to explain their social subordination. It was how to understand the dysfunctions and strains involved in women's roles, primarily in relation to the middle-class family. Given the normative emphasis on the family, the sociological focus was strongly on "social problems": the conflicts faced by working wives, "maternal deprivation," divorce rates and juvenile delinquency, and intergenerational family conflict. The sense of conflict is strong in the work of Mirra Komarovsky who, after Parsons, made the most impressive application of the functionalist framework to sex roles in the 1940s. She developed a general argument about modernization producing a clash between a feminine "homemaker" ideal and a "career girl" ideal. The implications remained vague, but there was much more sense of complexity within sex roles than in Parsons's grand theorizing.[8]

Through the 1950s and 1960s the focus of sex role research remained on women in the family. And the field of sex role research remained a distinctly minor one within the overall concerns of sociology. This changed dramatically with the impact of second-wave feminism. There was a spectacular growth in the volume of work produced under the general rubric of "sex role research" and this field also claimed a much greater proportion of sociological research interest (See Figs. 1 and 2).

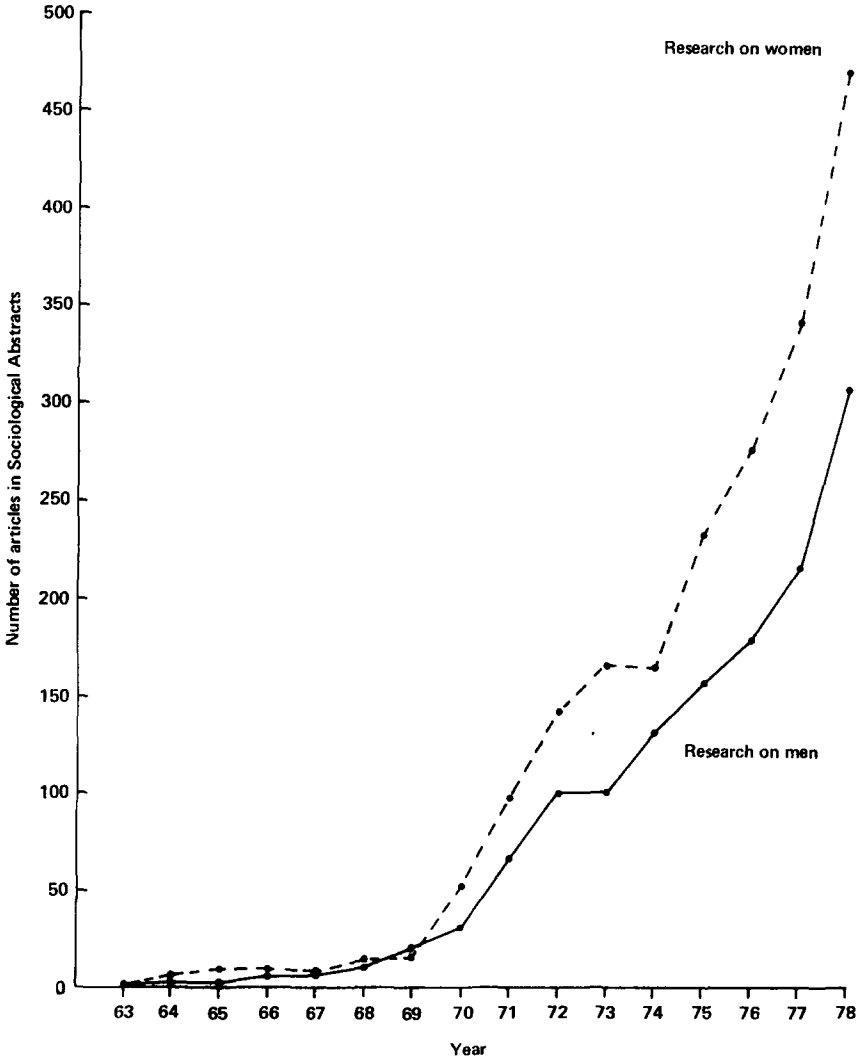

Fig. 1. The growth of sex-role research

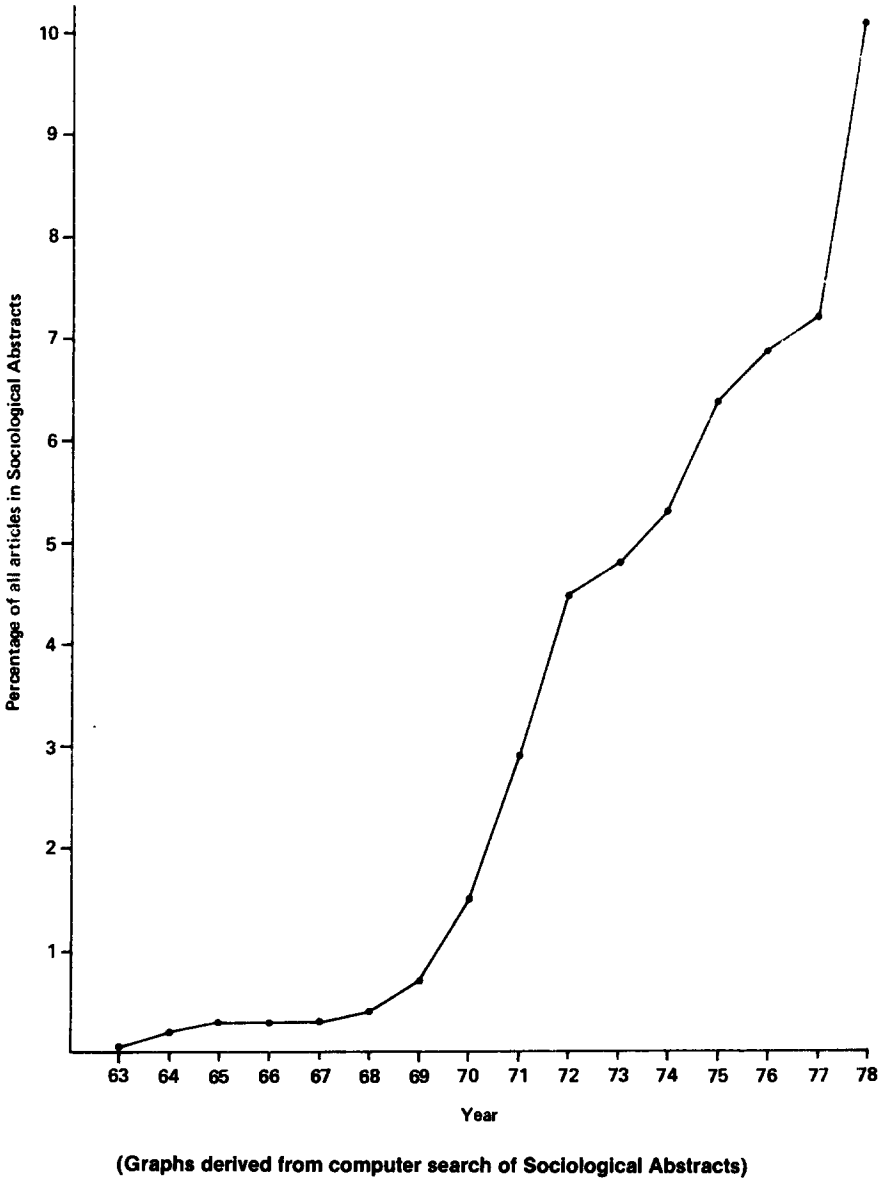

Fig. 2. How sex-role research claimed a growing share of research interests.

It was not only a matter of establishment social science registering the issues raised by the new feminism. Academic feminists themselves began a process of rejuvenating the discourse. On the one hand there was a huge increase in the volume of research on women, feeding into the growth of Women's Studies courses. On the other, attention was directed to the way an analysis

of the subordination of women had been "contained" by the social-scientific discourse itself. For although sex role theory was nominally about both sexes, the conventional pattern had been an almost exclusive concentration on women's roles, ignoring their relation to men's roles and to larger societal structures. Thus one immediate reform called for was a greater attention to men's roles. Research and writing on men's roles did in fact rise markedly from the late 1960s, producing about half the volume of the work on women's.

The institutional power that role theory enjoyed in sociology, especially in the United States – where as recently as the mid-seventies Komarovsky could describe it simply as "the generally accepted arsenal of sociological conceptual tools"[9] – ensured that feminist questions would be posed in that framework, at least at the start. Could this framework encompass feminist propositions? Especially could it incorporate the notion of *oppression*, or as it was more often called in this literature, the power differential between men and women?

Some feminist sociologists argued that this was perfectly possible; that role theory had been misapplied, misunderstood, or had not been extended to its full potential.[10] Yet by the late 1970s, other feminist sociologists were arguing that the sex role framework should be abandoned. Not only had the notion of "role" been shown to be incoherent. The framework continued to mask questions of power and material inequality; or worse, implied that women and men were "separate but equal."[11]

These criticisms underlined a more general problem: the discourse lacked a stable theoretical object. "Sex role" research could, and did, wobble from psychological argument with biological assumptions, through accounts of interpersonal transactions, to explanations of a macro-sociological character, without ever having to resolve its boundaries. The elusive character of a discourse where issues as important as that of oppression could appear, disappear, and re-appear in different pieces of writing without anything logically compelling authors to stick with and solve them, no doubt lies behind much of the frustration expressed in these criticisms. As we shall see, this underlying incoherence was to have a devastating influence on the sociological literature about men.

The "Male Role" Literature before Women's Liberation

A sociology of masculinity, of a kind, had appeared before the "sex role" paradigm. Specific groups of boys and men had become the object of

research when their behavior was perceived as a "social problem." Two notable instances are juvenile delinquency and educational underachievement - topics whose significance in the history of sociology can hardly be exaggerated. Studies such as Thrasher's *The Gang* (1927) and Whyte's *Street Corner Society* (1943) talked extensively about masculinity without directly proclaiming sex roles as their object.[12]

Through the 1950s and 1960s the most popular explanation of such social problems was "father absence," especially from poor or black families. The idea of "father absence" had a broader significance, since the historical tendency of capitalism has been to separate home from work place. Most fathers earning wages or salaries are therefore absent from their families much of the time. This imbalance was the focus of one of the first sociological discussions of the *conflicts* involved in the construction of masculinity.

Ruth Hartley, in a paper published in 1959, related the absence of fathers and the overwhelming presence of mothers to a widespread anxiety among American boys, which was centered in the whole area of sex-connected role behaviors,

> an anxiety which frequently expresses itself in overstraining to be masculine, in virtual panic at being caught doing anything traditionally defined as feminine, and in hostility toward anything even hinting at 'feminity,' including females themselves.[13]

Hartley's interviews produced a picture of boys who had distant relationships with their fathers, who had been taught to eschew everything feminine from a very early age while having to live in an environment dominated by women, and who consequently constructed an oversimplified and overemphasized understanding of masculinity within their peer groups. For Hartley, the basic problem was not "father absence" as such, so much as a pattern of masculine socialization rigidly upheld by adults in a society where feminine roles were changing rapidly and the emancipation of women was well advanced.

Other sociologists, including David Riesman, proposed that in the modern male role, expressive functions had been added to the traditional instrumental ones.[14] The idea was clearly formulated by Helen Hacker in a notable paper called "The New Burdens of Masculinity," published in 1957:

> As a man, men are now expected to demonstrate the manipulative skill in interpersonal relations formerly reserved for women under the headings of intuition, charm, tact, coquetry, womanly wiles, et cetera. They are asked to bring patience, understanding, gentleness to their human dealings. Yet with regard to women they must still be sturdy oaks.[15]

This argument has become virtually a cliché in more recent writing. Hacker's paper is striking in its emphasis on conflict within masculinity. She pointed out that though the husband was necessarily often absent from his family, he was "increasingly reproached for his delinquencies as father." To compound the problem, men were also under pressure to evoke a full sexual response on the part of women. The result was the growing social visibility of impotence.

Male homosexuality was also becoming increasingly visible, and this was further evidence that "all is not well with men." It is notable that Hacker did not conceive of homosexuality in terms of the current medical model but in relation to the strong differentiation between masculine and feminine social roles.

> The 'flight from masculinity' evident in male homosexuality may be in part a reflection of role conflicts. If it is true that heterosexual functioning is an important component of the masculine role in its social as well as sexual aspects, then homosexuality may be viewed as one index of the burdens of masculinity.[16]

Though Hacker probably viewed (more equal) heterosexual relations as the natural order of things, her remark in fact prefigured the perspective reached within the gay liberation movement twelve years later. Almost all subsequent sociological writing, however, has ignored Hacker's brief comments, as well as the gay movement's arguments, and has continued to take the heterosexual definition of masculinity for granted.

The consideration of male homosexuality suggested the need to establish empirically "a typology of men, perhaps according to family constellation or social class position, in terms of their interpretation of the demands of masculinity and their felt capacity to fulfill them."[17] In short, masculinity varies as it is constructed in different situations.

Hacker never lost sight of the fact that masculinity exists as a power relation. Her appreciation of the effects of power led her to describe the possible range of masculine types as more restricted than that of feminine types. It also led to the suggestion (reminiscent of Chodorow's later work) "that masculinity is more important to men than femininity is to women."[18]

There is something motherly in Hacker's approach to men. Her feminism, if advanced at the time, certainly seems tame twenty-five years later. But the striking fact is that most research on masculinity in the meantime has not improved on her analysis. Indeed much of it has been a good deal more primitive. For instance, *The Male in Crisis* (1970), by the Austrian author Karl Bednarik, suggests that alienation at work, bureaucracy in politics and

war, and the commercialization of sexuality, all undermine masculinity. Bednarik made some acute observations on the way the commercialization of sexuality connects it with aggressiveness. And his stress on the contradiction between the hegemonic male image and the real conditions of men's lives is notable. But he never questioned that the traditional image *is* the primordial, true nature of man.[19] Nor did the American Patricia Sexton in her widely-quoted book *The Feminized Male* (1969).

> What does it mean to be masculine? It means, obviously, holding male values and following male behaviour norms.. Male norms stress values such as courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, mastery, technological skill, group solidarity, adventure, and a considerable amount of toughness in mind and body.[20]

In her account, however, the main force pushing American boys away from true masculinity was women. Schoolteachers and mothers, through their control of child-rearing and rewarding of conformity and academic success, were making them into sissies. It is not surprising to find that Sexton romanticized working-class boys and their "boy culture," and was hostile to the "visibly feminized" soft men of the new left and counter-culture ("a new lumpen leisure-class of assorted hippies, homosexuals, artistic poseurs, and 'malevolent blacks'").[21]

But there was something more here: an appreciation of power that had a distinctly feminist flavor. The reason women were engaged in feminizing boys, Sexton argued, was that women have been excluded from all *other* positions of authority. She documented not only the hazards of being male, citing statistics on the higher death and illness rates among men that were soon to become another cliché of the literature. She also recited at length the facts of men's power. Basically the reform she wanted was a change in the sexual divison of labor, and in this regard her argument was in line with the feminism of ten years later. But she had no sense that the "male values" and "male norms" she admired are as much effects of the structure of power as the women's behavior she condemned.

Lionel Tiger's *Men in Groups,* published in the same year in Britain, was also a paradigmatic treatment of masculinity. It extensively documented men's control of war, politics, production, and sport, and argued that all this reflected a genetic pattern built into human beings at the time when the human ancestral stock took up cooperative hunting. Greater political participation by women, of the kind argued for by Sexton, would be going against the biological grain.

The notion that there is a simple continuity between biology and the social

has been very powerful as ideology. So has another important feature of Tiger's argument, the way *relations* are interpreted as *differences*. The greater social power of men, and the sexual division of labor, are interpreted as "sexual dimorphism" in behavior. With this, the whole question of social structure is spirited away. Tiger's scientific-sounding argument turns out to be pseudo-evolutionary speculation, overlaying a more sinister political message. Its drift becomes obvious in the book's closing fantasy about masculinity and its concern with "hard and heavy phenomena," with warmongering being part of "the masculine aesthetic," and arguments about what social arrangements are and are not "biologically healthy."[22]

It will be obvious from these cases that there was a reasonably complex and sometimes sophisticated discussion about masculinity going on before the main impact of feminism. It is also clear that this discussion was intellectually disorganized, even erratic.

What coherence it had was provided by role concepts; and in one case this framework did give rise to a notable piece of research. Komarovsky's *Blue Collar Marriage* is one of the best pieces of empirical research on any topic produced by American sociology in its heyday.[23] Based on long interviews conducted in the late 1950s, the study yielded a vivid account of the interactions that actually constitute the politics of everyday life. From a bitter sketch of the sexual frustration of one heavily-subordinated wife, to reflections on husbands' violence, to an illuminating (if over-moralistic) account of the emotional importance of mothers-in-law, Komarovsky traced the construction of relationships under pressure. She delivered some shrewd knocks to the bland assumptions made by conventional theorists, Parsons among them, about how "the American family" worked.

Out of this came a picture of masculinity that was both more subtle, and harsher, than anything else written in its period. Though she did not use this terminology, she painted a picture of masculinity as something constructed in a very complex and often tense process of negotiation, mostly with women, that stretched right through adult life. The outcomes are never guaranteed; and there is a lot of variation in the patterns Komarovsky found. Nevertheless there was a general sense of unease. The working men she found in her American steel town were on the whole an unhappy lot, with little real communication with their wives, and constricted views of the world outside. There was a lot of prejudice and aimless anger around. Ten years later these themes were to be made a centerpiece of the "men's movement" account of masculinity in general.

Unlike most role research, Komarovsky did have a lot to say about power. She was sensitive to the role of family violence, and to the economic resources of husband and wife. Like the slightly earlier Australian research by Fallding, much less known though similar in style, and Bott's *Family and Social Network,*[24] she was able to show a difference between more patriarchal and more egalitarian patterns of marriage. Nevertheless this variation was limited. Komarovsky acutely observed that in the case where the husband's power had been so far eroded that the wife was dominant in the marriage, it still was not acceptable for the wife to deny her husband's supremacy in public, among friends, neighbors or relations. But here the analysis stopped. To push further, required the concepts that were still to be provided by second-wave feminism.

The Male Sex Role and Men's Liberation

The "Male Role" Literature in the 1970s

The first effect of the new feminism on the study of men's roles was a dramatic increase in its volume (Fig. 1). Grady, Brannon and Pleck, in an annotated bibliography on "the male sex role" published in 1979, listed over 250 items; and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the same year listed about 1300 items in a "Men's Studies Bibliography," the catalogue of their collection. The vast majority of items in both bibliographies are from the 1970s and of United States origin.[25]

There was also a distinct change in mood. The advent of women's liberation and feminist critiques of patriarchy gave a focus to the literature on masculinity that it had never had before. There was now a degree of coherence to the discussion as a whole, a common set of issues, and for many of the authors, a distinct new genre of writing.

Much of this work could hardly be described as feminist. One of the most prominent themes in the "male role" literature of the 1970s concerned the restrictions, disadvantages, and general penalties attached to being a man. "Do men need women's liberation?" was a common question or point of reference, and the response was resoundingly "Yes" – for the benefit of men. This was sometimes so that men too could become complete, authentic human beings. The title of one early paper, "The Inexpressive Male: A Tragedy of American Society," captured the tone. But there were also more specific hazards in being male, not least being men's high rates of death and illness relative to women's. Problems for men given attention ranged from the threatening nature of their sex role for men as they age, and the role strain

experienced by athletes and non-athletes, to the maladaptive effects of men's sexual socialization.[26]

Most of this literature remained within a rather narrow range of ideas. There was general acceptance of the picture of mainstream masculinity that had already been drawn by authors like Patricia Sexton. This was commonly called "the male role," "the masculine value system," "traditional masculinity," or words to that effect. The great difference was that in most of the new literature this was seen as bad rather than good, or at best inappropriate and insupportable. The crux of the change was that such masculinity was no longer thought to express the true nature of men.

The new literature viewed traditional masculinity as bad for two main reasons. First, it leads men to do nasty things, like compete with each other, oppress women, destroy the environment, and ruin the third world, notably by bombing Vietnam. (That masculinity among the Vietnamese might have had a different significance did not occur to anyone; the ethnocentrism of this literature was almost total.) Second, men are themselves uncomfortable with it. There is "role strain," a "male dilemma," a "crisis of masculinity," men can't live up to their images. This was evidently a deeply felt point. The autobiographical sketches that peppered the 1970s books-about-men regularly remarked how the author had been taught the conventional male role, found it hard to inhabit, and eventually discovered the trouble was not in him but in the role.

Where then does masculinity come from? There were two starkly different views. The minority of authors who continued to reject feminism clung to the idea that masculinity is a product of genetic programming, derived from far back in our evolutionary history. Society might attempt to modify this, but did better just expressing it. The much more common view was that masculinity is the artificial product of conditioning, with biological differences of only minimal importance. Vilar put this most memorably:

> There is virtually no difference between an unmade-up, bald, naked woman and an unmade-up, bald, naked man – apart from the reproductive organs Any other differences between them are artificially produced.[27]

Accounts of how this artificial production of masculinity occurs usually relied on a simplified social-learning theory. Parents' injunctions, school curricula, peer example, TV sports programs, and car and cigarette advertising, were all laid out side by side as influences. They were usually assumed to be all pointing the same way. "Conditioning," "modelling," "influence," were the terms typically used to describe the acquisition of the male role. Psychoanalytic accounts of gender were quite strikingly ignored.

Much of the literature did recognize the point argued by Hacker, that there is variation within masculinity and femininity, not just between them. This was usually understood as people ranging on some kind of scale from hard to soft. Steinmann and Fox offered a classic version in 1974. They asked the reader to think of men as lined up on a football field with the Marlboro Man at one end, Caspar Milquetoast at the other; and to think of women as lined up on-stage in a femininity contest, with the hard-nosed career woman at one end, and the meek housewife at the other....[28] There is a technical basis for this understanding of variation, in the dimensional logic that underlies the construction of masculinity and femininity tests, which as Pleck notes, have a long history in American psychology.[29] A refinement of this notion became very popular in the 1970s, with variation in masculinity and femininity explained by postulating combinations of the two kinds of characteristics within the one individual, "androgyny." The degrees of androgyny were also measured by a scale, devised by Bem.[30]

Another, rather more subtle, distinction was also often made. When authors complained about the restrictiveness of the male role and said, for instance, "some of us are searching for new ways to work that will more fully express ourselves rather than our learned desire for masculinity"[31] they were clearly assuming that there is an inner "self" separate from, and sometimes opposed to, the motives or behaviors that form the package of "masculinity." Where this "self" might come from, and how it came to be in tension with that other part of the personality, remained unexplored. The social-learning approach that dominated the discussion of the acquisition of masculinity gave no grip on this issue at all. So conflict within masculinity, though recognized, remained untheorized in social terms.

As all of this suggests, there was a definite tendency in the masculinity literature to psychologize the feminist critique of men's oppression of women, and men's competition with each other. It typically located the source of the trouble in the heads of men, in their character structure, not in a structure of relationships. The feminist critique of the family was generally ignored. There was a very general re-interpretation of feminism to mean women breaking out of their roles, rather than women contesting men's power. The notion of the prevailing relationship between the sexes was therefore often one of "segregation," not oppression. A very clear example of this is in Jack Nichols's widely-read book *Men's Liberation,* where he was careful to distance himself from feminism, though approving it. The personal/political site described by many feminists as "patriarchy" became "sex role stereotyping," and the cure, freer thinking.[32]

The central theoretical proposition of the 1970s masculinity literature, even if it sometimes remained implicit, was that men are oppressed in a fashion comparable to women. But the oppressor was not taken to be women (except in the view of the right wing of the men's movement, and in satirical pieces like Vilar's *The Manipulated Man*). Rather, it was taken to be the *male role*. The real self is squashed, strained, or suppressed by the demands of this role. Along one track, this turned back against the first proposition of feminism, the fact of women's subordination. Herb Goldberg's book *The Hazards of Being Male* was subtitled *Surviving the Myth of Male Privilege*, and he meant it, arguing that men are not privileged over women. The Berkeley Men's Center had arrived there as early as 1973: "All liberation movements are equally important; there is no hierarchy of oppression." Not many authors went as far as that, but most went some distance along the track.[33]

There was, however, a more positive side to the masculinity literature. It not only argued men are oppressed; it argued they need not be. A good deal of it was in fact devoted to the theme of changes in male character, and to rationalizing the idea of a modernized masculinity. In this, the notion of "androgyny" came into its own, as a translation to the level of the individual of the earlier idea that the modern male role comprised expressive as well as instrumental elements. The "healthy" modern man does not possess exclusively gender-consonant traits, but a mixture of masculine and feminine. It all rather sounds, as Mary Daly remarked, like "John Travolta and Farrah Fawcett-Majors scotch-taped together." But its popularity indicated that the concept of androgyny met a widely-felt need for an image of change in sexual character. As another writer observed, "the initial response clearly indicated that the concept expressed the zeitgeist in sex-role research."[34]

Perhaps the most striking feature of this writing was the appearance, alongside the "Woman Book Industry,"[35] of a small industry of books about men, the male role, and masculinity. By our present count, the years 1971 to 1980 saw no less than 38 English-language non-fiction books published that were wholly or mainly on this subject (excluding medical works, general texts on sexuality and sex roles, books on fathering and the family, and books on specific topics such as men aging, which would doubtless treble the count). While some were aimed at the "general reader" and others at the college textbook market, there was a lot of overlap and mutual quotation. Many of the authors were self-conscious about doing something new, and all were very much aware of the new context created by the advent of women's liberation. Though there had been books about masculinity before the 1970s, there had not been a *genre* debating the nature of masculinity and its social expression. There is such a genre now.

Its scope and general character can be seen from the titles. With some pushing and shoving they can be sorted (at least the 29 we have found and read) into the following categories, according to their style or principal impulse:

Men's liberation:[36]	*Unbecoming Men* (Men's Consciousness Raising Group, 1971), *The Liberated Man* (Farrell, 1974), *Men and Masculinity* (Pleck and Sawyer, 1974), *Men's Liberation* (Nichols, 1975), *Sex: Male, Gender: Masculine* (Petras, 1975), *The Forty-nine Percent Majority* (David and Brannon, 1976).
Offended or satirical:[37]	*The Prisoner of Sex* (Mailer, 1971), *The Difference Between a Man and a Woman* (Lang, 1971), *The Manipulated Man* (Vilar, 1972), *Free the Male Man!* (Mead, 1972), *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* (S. Goldberg, 1973).
Liberal commentary:[38]	*Male Chauvinism* (Korda, 1973), *The Male Machine* (Fasteau, 1974), *A Book About Men* (Goodman and Walby, 1975).
Growth movement:[39]	*The Male Dilemma* (Steinmann and Fox, 1974), *The Hazards of Being Male* (H. Goldberg, 1976), *Sex and the Liberated Man* (Ellis, 1976), *Male Sexuality* (Zilbergeld, 1978).
Feminist women:[40]	*Below the Belt* (Bishop and McNeill, 1977), *About Men* (Chesler, 1978).
Radical men:[41]	*For Men Against Sexism* (Snodgrass, 1977), *The Limits of Masculinity* (Tolson, 1977), *White Hero, Black Beast* (Hoch, 1979).
The academy:[42]	*A Book of Men* (Firestone, 1975), *Dilemmas of Masculinity* (Komarovsky, 1976), *A Man's Place* (Dubbert, 1979), *Be a Man!* (Stearns, 1979), *The Male Sex Role* (Grady, Brannon and Pleck, 1979), *The American Man* (Pleck and Pleck, 1980).

The genre had four principal themes. The first, which we have already encountered, is the evils of traditional masculinity and men's discomfort in it. In a number of key texts this became the theoretical proposition that men are oppressed too, by their roles. This implied the second theme: men too need liberating. The redefinition of "liberation" from meaning a struggle against the powerful to breaking free from conventions was very general (though not

quite universal), and was a move with large political implications. It enabled men to approve of feminism as a worthy parallel endeavor, rather than an assault on *them*. It was part of the general drift by which New Left became Counter-Culture, more concerned with personal lifestyle than with questions of social exploitation; personal "liberation" meaning an expansion of the pleasures of already privileged groups. A rationalization of this drift was provided by the growth-movement psychology that was becoming extremely popular with the American middle classes at the time. As one of its proponents suggested: "The humanistic growth movement and the feminist movement have both helped to create a climate that is conducive to altering rigid and harmful patterns of behaviour."[43] Men could draw dividends on both.

To do so, of course, they needed techniques of change. The ways in which masculinity has been formed, and ways it might be reformed, were the third main theme of the genre. As we have seen, there is a debate about biological versus social determination that goes back to the first days of the sex difference literature, and this debate was faithfully reproduced in the Books About Men. Opinion leaned heavily to the social side, even Norman Mailer's: "humans-with-phalluses, hardly men at birth, must work to become men."[44]

And it is social convention that was addressed by the techniques of change out of the male role that these books generally, though vaguely, recommended. Among them were being more expressive and more vulnerable, forming support groups and consciousness-raising groups, low-key group therapy, change of occupation, role-sharing with one's wife, and meditation.

Though some of these notions seem a bit like trying to dig up the Pyramids with an ice-cream spoon, at least they show the genre addressing the question of change in masculinity; and this was its fourth main theme. There was a very general sense that some sea-change had come over the world of sexuality and gender in the age of women's liberation, and like it or not, we have to grapple with it. Masculinity does move, sex roles have a history, and we are at one of its turning-points. On the one hand this sent a number of authors back down the years to try to write the history of masculinity. (The results were abysmal as historiography; Stearns was the only one that had basic competence in historical research technique, and even his argument was thin.) On the other hand it fed a sense of excitement and purpose about the current situation and its prospects. Most of these books were tracts, and most of them were optimistic.

The intellectual content of the Books-About-Men genre is slender. With a couple of exceptions it never gets beyond a rather simplified version of role

theory; and even with that, such elementary points of role theory as the distinction between expectation and behavior are rarely consistently maintained. And the research base of the genre is so slight as to be embarrassing, given the repeated claims about establishing "a new area of study." The *only* substantial research contribution in the 29 books listed above is Komarovsky's, and even she is not at her best. A few others, like Tolson and Stearns, are decent compilations; Korda's *Male Chauvinism* and Goodman and Walby's *A Book About Men* are crisp and perceptive pieces of journalistic writing. The rest, to put it kindly, do not make a great contribution to the growth of knowledge.

Though most of these books were ephemeral, the 1970s did see some more substantial attempts to develop the sex-role perspective. Perhaps the most interesting is the work of Joseph Pleck. Pleck has built an academic career as a social psychologist primarily concerned with the male sex role; he is also one of the most prominent "men's movement" publicists. He is editor or co-editor of several books of readings, bibliographies, and special issues of journals about masculinity; has written a couple of dozen articles and papers about masculinity since he completed a Ph.D. in the area in 1973; and has recently published a monograph.

Pleck's work has three main components: theoretical writing about how to understand sex roles, a program of empirical research, and practical arguments about gender politics and associated social issues. His theoretical concerns were announced in a 1975 article published in the first volume of the new journal *Sex Roles*.[45] He wished to understand masculinity not as something permanently fixed by childhood experiences, but as a role that changes over the lifespan of the individual; and as a role that is itself not stable, but undergoes significant cultural changes.

Pleck's most substantial treatment of these themes is in his 1981 monograph *The Myth of Masculinity*. The title is curiously un-apt; the main argument is not about masculinity, let alone myths, but is a critique of one version of sex role theory and an attempt to replace it with another. (The basic terms of role theory – roles, norms, sanctions, conformity and deviance, role strain – are taken for granted.)

It is clear enough what he wants to reject: biological determinism, depth psychology, simple masculinity/femininity scaling, and the notion of "identity" as a key to the psychology of gender. Broadly, he wishes to replace this with a more thoroughgoing role perspective, emphasizing the importance of social expectations, the way both conformity to them and violation of them

may be "psychologically dysfunctional," and the strains arising from the fact that they change in history. Here, as elsewhere,[46] the essentialist understanding of the self common in much of the male role literature is clear.

The inconclusiveness of all this is partly a result of muddled argument. Pleck tries to grasp historical change, for instance, by contrasting "the modern male role" with "the traditional male role"; in the "traditional" basket are included not only the working class and American ethnics but also "primitive societies," making a theoretical category that should have quite a few anthropologists (Margaret Mead not least) turning in their graves. But more generally, the indeterminacy lies in the basic concepts of role theory itself; the more rigorously Pleck applies them, the more their underlying inadequacy appears.

We will pass over Pleck's empirical research: it is neither better nor worse than the generality of paper-and-pencil role studies.[47] It is when he puts on his "men's movement" cap that Pleck is at his most interesting. In an important paper called "Men's power with women, other men, and society: A men's movement analysis," he proposes a connection between the subordination of women and the hierarchy of power among men. This hierarchy is maintained in terms of wealth, physical strength, age, and heterosexuality, and the competition among men to assert themselves in these terms produces a considerable amount of conflict.

> Thus, men's patriarchal competition with each other makes use of women as symbols of success, as mediators, as refuges and as an underclass. In each of these roles, women are dominated by men in ways that derive directly from men's struggle with each other.[48]

Further, Pleck connects men's power to the sexual divison of labor. Discussing the apparent contradiction of men exercising power in their family but enduring jobs where they are relatively powerless and that the great majority find meaningless, he argues that

> They experience their jobs and themselves as worthwhile only through priding themselves on the hard work and personal sacrifice they are making to be breadwinners for their families. Accepting these hardships reaffirms their role as family providers and therefore as true men.[49]

Though criticisms could be made of both these formulations, the connections are important and the implications large. Here Pleck was beginning to move beyond "role" notions altogether. But it was not sustained. Two later papers on the sexual divison of labor lost all sense of power in gender relations, talking instead of sex-segregation "norms." In the second of these, Pleck had become quietly optimistic that men with working wives are now

increasing their share of domestic work. A survey (based on men's self-reporting) found that these men did half an hour more of domestic work per day than other men. Pleck concludes that the "Changing Role Perspective" is more accurate than the "Exploitation Perspective" as an approach to the question of men's domestic work. Comment seems unnecessary.[50]

Pleck's political stance and, to a significant degree, his theoretical orientation, seem to vary with his readership. The article just noted was published in *The Family Coordinator,* and here Pleck spoke to public-policy makers and social workers as a practical liberal commentator, who was confident that "men can and will change if appropriate educational and social policies are implemented."[51] This is quite different from what he had to say as a "men's movement" publicist; and different again from his approach as a hard-nosed professional social psychologist. The fundamental intellectual incoherence of the general approach to masculinity is strikingly illustrated in his work.

One thing Pleck does hold onto firmly, as most of the Books About Men do, is the idea that we are currently going through a major transformation in the male sex role. There is surprisingly little research that directly investigates whether that is true. The question does come into focus in the later research of Komarovsky. In an interview study of sixty-two male students in an elite American university, which might be expected to register such cultural changes early, Komarovsky indeed found the majority reporting no intellectual insecurity or strain with their "dates." She concluded that "the normative expectation of male intellectual superiority appears to be giving way on the campus to the ideal of intellectual companionship between equals."[52] This finding might have been taken as evidence of a movement towards androgyny, or at least acceptance of feminism. But more detailed probing modified this picture considerably. Only 7 percent were willing to modify their own roles significantly to facilitate their future wives' careers. Among the remainder Komarovsky found a variety of contradictory values and sentiments, but concluded that there remained a

> deeply rooted norm that the husband should be the superior achiever in the occupational world and the wife, the primary child rearer... Even equality of achievement of husband and wife is interpreted as a defeat for the man. The prospect of occupational rivalry with one's wife seems intolerable to contemplate.[53]

Though many supported a woman's right to a career, the issue was not a source of any particular tension or strain; the "career or marriage" problem was assumed to be solved by the wife withdrawing from and returning to work. The idea of a major transformation of the male sex role, in this milieu at least, seems premature.

Russell's more recent research on Australian couples who actually have reversed the sexual division of labor, likewise suggests the reversal is at best unstable, and often reflects no change in basic assumptions at all.[43] A recent American survey of a range of empirical findings concluded that most "large-scale, objective measures of men's roles show little change over the past decade, but men do feel now and then that their position is in question."[55] This is not all the available evidence, of course. But there are enough findings of this kind to set alongside feminist perceptions of reactions *against* feminism by men, and raise serious doubts that the changes that are undoubtedly occurring can be understood as the changing definition of a male role.

"Men's Liberation" and Its Opponents

Most of the Books About Men are less contributions to a new science than responses to a practical exigency, and this both gave a distinctive character to the sex role literature of the 1970s, and provoked the beginnings of a move beyond it. The exigency was the impact of second-wave feminism on the heterosexual men in the white, affluent, tertiary-educated intelligentsia of the United States and other advanced capitalist countries. In the Books About Men, author after author spoke of having been forced to confront the question of masculinity by his wife or girlfriend, who had become a feminist and joined a consciousness-raising group. The Author's Wife is a strong collective presence in this genre; and though it was mainly written by men, the political practice of women's groups was its major practical basis. The genre was emotionally structured around heterosexual men's reactions to feminism.

One of these reactions was the development that came to be called the "men's liberation movement" or just the "men's movement." Women's liberation, as a visible political movement, took off in the United States in 1968, rapidly followed by the other advanced capitalist countries.[56] One of its first creations was a network of consciousness-raising (CR) groups; in the very early days, some of these were mixed. By 1970 there were some all-men CR groups in the United States. We do not know how many, but they certainly existed in both New York and Berkeley. If the one that published the booklet *Unbecoming Men* the following year is any guide, they were drawn from university-educated new left activists. The connection with the radical wing of the anti-war movement is confirmed from other sources; positively in the case of Jack Sawyer, the author of what was regarded as the first article on "male liberation," published in 1970 in the new-left magazine *Liberation*; negatively by Warren Farrell, soon to emerge as the most active organizer of men's groups, who records in *The Liberated Man* his discomfort with the political

radicalism of his early customers. He saw radicalism as irrelevant to men's liberation, and wanted to get beyond it.

And that indeed happened. In the next four or five years the connection with the left faded as a network of men's CR groups expanded across the United States. The flavor was increasingly counter-cultural rather than radical, and sometimes not even that – rather, therapeutic or concerned with self-improvement. Several "men's centers" were established to parallel women's ones, and there was a spate of publishing, both in the ordinary press and in newly created newsletters. Men's liberation had arrived, men's oppression was a recognized problem.

The impression of a spontaneous upsurge that is cultivated in the Books About Men is misleading. Much of this was consciously organized, using the mass media and the main organization of American liberal feminism, the National Organization of Women. Farrell was involved in setting up a N.O.W. "task force" on "the masculine mystique" (*sic*), and travelled around the country organizing men's groups using N.O.W. local branches as the basis. By 1974 things were big enough to hold a national conference, where in Farrell's somewhat hyperbolic words

> hundreds of facilitators were trained to return to their local communities to form a nationwide network of men's and joint consciousness-raising groups and to carry out national demonstrations and "actions"...[57]

A national organization, called the "Men's Awareness Network" was set up. And this activity began to be reproduced overseas. Men's CR groups appeared in Britain, followed by national conferences and newsletters; in the late 1970s there was a "men's centre" in London and a good-quality magazine called *Achilles' Heel.*

In the mid 1970s, however, differences were emerging in the United States that deepened in the second half of the decade. The connection with the left had not been entirely lost, as it continued to be a major source of recruits for men's groups. Radical men, organizing under the name of "Men Against Sexism," were sharply critical of the complacency and egocentricity of much of the "men's movement," its failure to confront patriarchy, its blindness to race and class. In 1977 Jon Snodgrass brought out *For Men Against Sexism,* a comprehensive attack on the politics of "men's liberation" from the left. In Britain many of the same themes were picked up by Andrew Tolson, whose book *The Limits of Masculinity* was published in the same year.

But it was a hardening in the opposite direction that attracted much more

public attention. The notion of women's and men's parallel struggles in some cases concealed a latent *anti*-feminism. The notion of "men's liberation," in the context of American liberal individualism, rapidly led to the notion of "men's rights"; and "men's rights," logically, can only be defined against women. David and Brannon's *Forty-Nine Percent Majority*, a vintage men's liberation piece published in 1976 and presumably compiled a year or two earlier, already included a long article on legal aspects of "discrimination against men," for instance in divorce and legal procedure. By 1976–1977 there was some organized support in the United States for men fighting custody cases, with "fathers' rights" groups forming. By the end of the decade another national organization, calling itself "Free Men," was in existence campaigning on such issues, and opposing feminist positions on abortion as well.[58]

The growth of the "men's movement" sounds impressive, as its main chroniclers, Farrell and the Plecks, tell it. But what was its real scale? It is difficult to be certain at this distance, but we have the impression that the notion of a *movement* is much too strong for what happened in North America and Britain, if this activity is compared with movements like gay liberation and women's liberation.[59] An intermittent, thinly-spread collection of support groups, therapeutic activities, and ephemeral pressure-group campaigns might be nearer the real picture; and it is hard to think of any significant political effect it has had in any country over ten years.[60] What it has done, very successfully, is produce publicists.

The critique of "men's liberation" made in the Snodgrass anthology *For Men Against Sexism* is the most systematic American attempt to move outside the genre's political conventions, and, implicitly, the sex-role analysis of masculinity. It is explicitly an attempt to respond to feminism without falling into the men-are-equally-oppressed trap. It insists on the importance of the concept of patriarchy; and tries to relate men's oppression of women to the oppression of workers, blacks, and – almost uniquely among Books About Men – gay men. It tries to reckon with the ambivalences of counter-sexist attitudes among men, and face, rather than evade, the political difficulties. It is in many ways an impressive book, especially as critique. But its own positive positions are much less convincing.

The most striking thing about *For Men Against Sexism* is the massive guilt that runs through its major pieces. Authors bewail their own past sexism; the editors flirt with "effeminism" (a New York confection of 1973 in which men declare themselves cooks and bottlewashers for feminism and humbly follow the nearest woman's lead in everything). The book insists that men must

accept radical feminism as the basis for their CR groups, and have them started and supervised by women; and even this is immediately followed by a paper on "dangers with men's CR groups." The guilt is compounded by the influence of the "growth movement," strong even in this book; its simple-minded voluntarism makes the writers and readers of the book the direct and deliberate authors of women's oppression. The theme is neatly summarized in the title of a chapter by Schein, "All men are misogynists." One gets the impression that being subject to constant criticism by feminists is the emotional center of this book, and that the response is to bend over backwards, and backwards again. A relationship with feminism is indeed crucial to any counter-sexist politics among heterosexual men; but doing a series of back somersaults is not a strong posture from which to confront the patriarchal power structure.

In most ways Tolson's *Limits of Masculinity* is the best thing yet written on the whole subject. It is, for one thing, a real attempt at a *sociology* of masculinity, concerned with the organization of power on a large scale. Tolson goes through the research literature of family, community, and workplace studies, mining it for evidence about the situation and activities of men; and in consequence is able to make the first serious attempt to explore class differences in the construction and expression of masculinity. The book's central theme, unlike most writing on masculinity, is the social relations of the work place, and Tolson presents very interesting material on what he calls the "culture of work" and the ways masculinity is both constructed and undermined by the dynamics of the capitalist labor process. More, he offers an account of the psychodynamics of masculinity, focusing on both father-son and peer relations as sources of the emotional reactions that sustain masculinity.

Not all of this is successful. Though the description of workplaces, and especially working-class daily life, is vivid, the underlying sociology is rather structuralist. Tolson's account of the oedipal crisis is confused. His notion of masculinity is still mainly based on a trait notion of personality, and the consequence of that is a good deal of stereotyping. But he goes a long way to showing what can be done when the interaction of capitalism and patriarchy, rather than a search for the real self, is taken as the starting point for an understanding of masculinity.

The context of Tolson's thought is the British left of the early 1970s, and the experience of a men's CR group of which he was a founding member. He brings them together at the end of the book in what remains the most sophisticated assessment of "men's liberation" and counter-sexist politics

among heterosexual men. And the overall conclusion is quite pessimistic. Small-group techniques certainly open up areas of personal life; but since ultimately masculinity is the product of large-scale social structures, they do not generate any leverage on the real problems. Further, Tolson argues, masculinity simply is not a position from which one can engage in a politics of sexual liberation. The *dominant* group in a power structure cannot do that. The best that heterosexual men can do in the long run is try and loosen up the socialist movement to the kind of initiatives women's and gay groups are pushing.

Tolson at least lends support to gay liberation; but it is notable that in formulating this conclusion, he treats "gay" and "masculine," "gays" and "men," as quite separate concepts. In this, he is very much in the tradition of the Books About Men. Works in the genre range between generally ignoring homosexuals and homosexuality, and totally ignoring them. Snodgrass in *For Men Against Sexism* names "gay oppression" and gives it a short section, but separates it from the general discussion of patriarchy, anti-sexist practice, and men's liberation. Though Snodgrass's treatment is markedly better than the rest, he too has marginalized the issue.

In this evasion is a final confirmation of the political meaning of the "men's movement" and the Books-About-Men genre. It is not, fundamentally, about uprooting sexism or transforming patriarchy, or even understanding masculinity in its various forms. When it comes to the crunch, what it is about is *modernizing* hegemonic masculinity. It is concerned with finding ways in which the dominant group – the white, educated, heterosexual, affluent males we know and love so well – can adapt to new circumstances without breaking down the social-structural arrangements that actually give them their power.

Yet the weakness and incoherence of the literature of this modernizing process, which we have documented in the last two sections, strongly implies that it is not working very well. There are possibilities for better practices, as well as worse. An internal dialectic has produced the critique set out by Snodgrass and Tolson. The logic of this critique is to abandon "men's movement" politics; but that leaves a void, both conceptually and practically. For however spurious the answers that have been given, the *questions* posed in the sex role literature of the early 1970s were real enough. Sexual politics continues to implicate men, all of them; and if people don't have good new ideas, they will make do with bad old ones. What positive alternative can be offered? We will later suggest that the most important new resources for constructing an adequate account of masculinity are to be

found in the arguments of the movement so studiously ignored by the Books About Men, gay liberation.

Towards Redefinition

Sex Roles Revisited

We have shown the massive influence of "sex role" notions in both formal social science and the informal literature associated with the "men's movement" of the 1970s. We have offered reasons to be dissatisfied with particular formulations, and now turn to the general critique of the "sex role" framework.

Broadly, the "role" framework has been used to analyze what the difference is between the social positions of women and men, to explain how they are shaped for those positions, and to describe the changes and conflicts that have occurred in and about those positions. At the simplest level, it is clear that the sex role framework accepts that sexual differentiation is a social phenomenon: sex roles are learnt, acquired, or "internalized." But the precise meaning of the sociality proposed by the framework is not nearly as simple as its proponents assume.

The very idea of a "role" implies a recognizable and accepted standard, and sex role theorists posit just such a norm to explain sexual differentiation. Society is organized around a pervasive differentiation between men's and women's roles, and these roles are internalized by all individuals. There is an obvious commonsense appeal to this approach. But the first objection to be made is that it does not actually describe the concrete reality of people's lives. Not all men are "responsible" fathers, nor "successful" in their occupations, and so on. Most men's lives reveal some departure from what the "male sex role" is supposed to prescribe.

The problem here is that the sex role literature does not consistently distinguish between the expectations that are made of people and what they in fact do. The framework often sees variations from the presumed norms of male behavior in terms of "deviance," as a "failure" in socialization. This is particularly evident in the functionalist version of sex role theory, where "deviance" becomes an unexplained, residual, and essentially non-social category.

When variation and conflict in the male role are recognized to be more typical, there are two possible explanations for sex role theorists. Some see

this conflict as a result of the blurring of men's and women's roles, so that men find they are expected to add expressive elements to their traditional instrumental roles. It is not obvious why men, perhaps allowing for some initial confusion, could not internalize this new male role just as they did the original one. The answer for authors such as Bednarik and Sexton was that these changes in men's lives are going against the grain.[61] Hegemonic masculinity *is* the true nature of men, and social harmony arises from promoting this idea, not impeding it. "Masculinity" in these terms is a non-social essence – usually presumed to arise from the biological make-up or genetic programing of men.

In the alternative explanation of role conflict, the focus is more narrowly on the individual. There is variation in masculinity, arising from individual experiences, that produces a range of personalities – ranging in one conception along a dimension from "hard" to "soft," in another from higher to lower levels of androgyny. Conflict arises when society demands that men try to live up to an impossible standard at the hard or gynaephobic ends of the scales; this is "dysfunctional." The "male role" is unduly restrictive because hegemonic masculinity does *not* reflect the true nature of men. The assumption is of an essential self whose needs would be better met by a more relaxed existence nearer the soft or androgynous poles. In this argument, masculinity is fundamentally the social pressure that, internalized, prevents personal growth.

The role framework, then, depending on which way one pushes it, can lead to entirely opposite conclusions about the nature of masculinity. One is reminded of the wax nose mentioned by Marc Bloch, which can be bent either to the right or to the left.[62] Role theory in general and sex role theory in particular lacks a stable theoretical object; there is no way that these different lines of argument about masculinity can be forced to meet. As argued in detail elsewhere, this is a consequence of the logical structure of the role framework itself; it is internally incoherent.[63]

As social theory, the sex role framework is fundamentally static. This is not to say that it cannot recognize social change. Quite the contrary: change has been a leading theme in the discussion of men's sex roles by authors such as Pleck and Brannon.[64] The problem is that they cannot grasp it as history, as the interplay of praxis and structure. Change is always something that *happens to* sex roles, that impinges on them – whether from the direction of the society at large (as in discussions of how technological and economic change demands a shift to a "modern" male sex role), or from the direction of the asocial "real self" inside the person, demanding more room to breathe.

Sex role theory cannot grasp change as a dialectic arising within gender relations themselves.

This is quite simply inherent in the procedure by which any account of "sex roles" is constructed: generalizing about sexual norms, and then applying this frozen description to men's and women's lives. This is true even of the best role research. Komarovsky in *Blue Collar Marriage* gives a wonderful account of the tangled process of constructing a marriage, the sexual dilemmas, the struggles with in-laws over money and independence, and so on; and then theorizes this as "learning conjugal roles", as if the scripts were just sitting there waiting to be read. Because the framework hypostasizes sex roles, it ultimately takes them for granted; and so remains trapped within the ideological context of what it is attempting to analyze.

The result of using the role framework is an abstract view of the *differences* between the sexes and their situations, not a concrete one of the *relations* between them. As Franzway and Lowe observe in their critique of the use of sex role theory in feminism, the role literature focuses on attitudes and misses the realities that the attitudes are about.[65] The political effect is to highlight the attitudes and pressures that create an artificially rigid *distinction* between men and women and to play down the *power* that men exercise over women. (As some critics have observed, we do not speak of "race roles" or "class roles" because the exercise of power in these areas of social relations is more immediately evident to sociologists.) Where sex role analysis does recognize power it is typically in a very restricted context. Once again Komarovsky, because her field research is very good, provides a clear example. She recognizes power as a balance within marriage; her analysis of this is subtle and sophisticated. And she reports that in the cases where the wife had achieved dominance within the marriage, it was still not acceptable for this to be shown in public. But she cannot theorize this, though it is a very important point. The notion of the overall social subordination of women, institutionalized in the marital division of labor, but consistent with a fluctuating and occasionally reversed power situation in particular relationships, is not a conception that can be formulated in the language of role theory.

The consequence of the evasion and blurring of issues of power is, we feel, a persistent and serious misjudgment of the position of heterosexual men in the sexual politics of the advanced capitalist countries. The interpretation of oppression as over-rigid role requirements has been important in bolstering the idea, widely argued in the "men's movement" literature of the 1970s, that men in general stand to *gain* from women's liberation. This notion is naive at best, and at worst dishonest. The liberation of women must mean a *loss* of

power for most men; and given the structuring of personality by power, also a great deal of personal pain. The sex role literature fairly systematically evades the facts of men's *resistance* to change in the distribution of power, in the sexual division of labor, and in masculinity itself, a point about which we shall have more to say in a moment.

The role framework, then, is neither a conceptually stable nor a practically and empirically adequate basis for the analysis of masculinity. Let us be blunt about it. The "male sex role" does not exist. It is impossible to isolate a "role" that constructs masculinity (or another that constructs femininity). Because there is no area of social life that is not the arena of sexual differentiation and gender relations, the notion of a sex role necessarily simplifies and abstracts to an impossible degree.

What should be put in its place? Partly that question is unanswerable; the only thing that can occupy the conceptual and political place of sex role theory is sex role theory itself. It has a particular intellectual pedigree. It is connected with a definite politics (liberal feminism and its "men's movement" offshoot), to which it supplies answers that seem to satisfy. And it is, of course, now institutionalized in academia and plays a very material part in many academic careers. Nothing else will do just that.

But we may still ask for alternatives in another sense. We have argued that the questions that were posed in the language of role theory and in the rhetoric of the "men's movement" are real and important questions. If so, they should arise in other approaches to gender relations and sexual politics, though they may take a different shape there.

Resistance and Psychoanalysis

How are we to understand the deep-seated resistance to change in masculinity that has become steadily more evident since the mid-1970s? As we have noted, the sex role literature mainly analyzes the acquisition of masculinity by means of a simple social-learning, conformity-to-norms, model. This gives no grip on the general question of resistance, let alone such specifics as the violence experienced by gay men and many women at the hands of heterosexual men. (Both of these are notable absences in one of the rare discussions of men's resistance, by Goode, which remains staunchly optimistic that men will finally accept the equality of women despite being unable to find very much evidence of such a tendency at present.)[66] But since Parsons's work thirty years ago, role literature has had available a more complex and powerful tool for work on this issue, psychoanalysis.

It is instructive to see what has become of this. Parsons himself made a very selective reading of Freud, taking the theory of the oedipus complex as the psychological side of role-differentiation in the family, and leaving out much of the emotional complexity Freud had documented within masculinity.[67] Later sex role theorists have taken even less. On the whole they have simply ignored psychoanalytic work on gender. The influence of the "growth movement" on the masculinity literature of the 1970s is part of this story: there is no room for the unconscious, let alone intractable unconscious conflict, within its woolly-minded voluntarism. Another part is the blinkering effect of the research conventions in role research: if you can't measure it, then it can't exist. Some sex role theorists, such as Pleck, are however quite explicit about the expulsion of depth psychology from the domain of their argument.[68]

There has been rather more receptiveness to psychoanalysis in accounts of masculinity given by writers on the political left, though not very much clarity. Tolson has a rather confused reference to the oedipal relationship between father and son. Hoch presents a sub-Reichian argument about the links between capitalism, sexual repression, and the production of masculinity that is so scrambled it is difficult to take seriously. Psychoanalytic ideas appear and disappear more or less randomly in the French men's movement treatise *Holy Virility* by Reynaud.[69]

Zaretsky provides a more substantial account in a paper called "Male Supremacy and the Unconscious." To our knowledge, he is the only author to consider what Mitchell's interpretation of Freud might mean for the psychology of masculinity. While his treatment of "male supremacy" is fairly cursory, Zaretsky usefully marshals Freud's explicit arguments about the unconscious workings of masculinity. The three main ones concern men's disparagement of women as castrates, the structured tension in masculinity between love and desire, and the high level of resistance among men to expressing passive attitudes towards other men. Quite how this picture fits into a broader conception of masculinity as a continuous process with variable expressions Zaretsky does not ask; but he does provide a clear case for the relevance of psychoanalysis for making psychological sense of masculinity.[70]

The more imaginative use of Freudian concepts has been by feminist women, among whom psychoanalysis came into widespread use in the 1970s as a tool for the analysis of femininity. Chesler suggests one line of thought on masculinity, though only in very general terms: a connection between fear of the father, male-to-male violence, and the subordination of women as a way

of absorbing that violence.[71] Stockard and Johnson argue for a different emphasis. In a brief survey of psychoanalytic work they distinguish a "gynocentric" approach, which takes the construction of masculinity to be problematic, from a "phallocentric" approach (illustrated by Mitchell and Rubin), which stresses instead the problematic nature of femininity. Stockard and Johnson emphasize a connection between the exclusive care of children by women, and men's subsequent difficulty in establishing a masculine identity after their initial "feminine" identification – an argument in some ways reminiscent of Sexton's. But they argue that there is a general reaction from this. Men's urge to domination is thus a result of their assertion of a tenuous identity in the face of a continuing fear of the power of the mother, and their envy of women's reproductive capacity.[72]

The most detailed feminist argument moves away from the high but cloudy territory of men's lust for power to the concrete reality of nappie-changing. Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* is an ambitious synthesis of psychoanalysis and sociology that attempts to explain why men do not mother, as well as why women do. The argument involves her in developing a general theory of the production of masculinity, drawing mainly on the "object relations" school of psychoanalysis. Given primary parenting by women, the rupture of the little boy's primary identification with his mother (in contrast to the continuity of the girl's) is central to the emotional dynamics of adult masculinity. It produces a personality with reduced capacity for relationships, stronger ego-boundaries, and less motive to find completeness in constructing new relationships with the young. The family sexual division of labor in childcare thus reproduces itself from one generation to another by the formation of gender personalities.[73]

On this point, as on others, the similarity to Parsons's argument is quite striking. The difference is mainly in the evaluations. Chodorow infers from the analysis that a changed sexual division of labor in childcare is crucial to any strategy for major change in masculinity or femininity. Much the same criticisms can be made of her argument as of Parsons's, the concentration on a normative standard case in particular. It is therefore appropriate to turn to what is emphatically not a normative standard case, and look at the analysis of masculinity offered by homosexual men.

Gay Liberation and the Understanding of Masculinity

The masculinity literature before women's liberation was frankly hostile to homosexuality, or at best very wary of the issue. What is post-women's-liberation is also post-gay-liberation. Gay activists were the first contemporary

group of men to address the problem of hegemonic masculinity outside of a clinical context. They were the first group of men to apply the political techniques of women's liberation, and to align with feminists on issues of sexual politics – in fact to argue for the importance of sexual politics.

As we noted earlier, none of the 1970s Books About Men made a serious attempt to get to grips with gay liberation arguments, or to reckon with the fact that mainstream masculinity is heterosexual masculinity. Nor did the "men's movement" publicists ever write about the fact that beside them was another group of men active in sexual politics; or discuss their methods, concerns, or problems. The reason is obvious enough. Homosexuality is a theoretical embarrassment to sociobiologists and social learning theorists alike, and a practical embarrassment to the "men's movement." How they got away with it is another matter. It required them to avert their gaze not only from gay liberation, but also from contemporary developments in women's liberation (Jill Johnston's *Lesbian Nation* came out in 1973, for instance), and from basic concepts in the analysis of sexuality (notably the theory of bisexuality).[74]

The gay movement has been centrally concerned with masculinity as part of its critique of the political structure of sexuality. In this, it should be noted, the contemporary movement represents a distinct break with previous forms of homosexual activism. It has gone well beyond earlier campaigns for the social rights of homosexual people and the accompanying efforts to foster tolerance in the heterosexual population towards a "sexual minority." Instead, gay liberationists attacked the social practices and psychological assumptions surrounding gender relations, for a prominent theme in their arguments is an attempt to explain the sources of homosexual oppression in these terms. The British gay liberation newspaper *Come Together* declared in 1970:

> We recognize that the oppression that gay people suffer is an integral part of the social structure of our society. Women and gay people are both victims of the cultural and ideological phenomenon known as sexism. This is manifested in our culture as male supremacy and heterosexual chauvinism.[75]

Activists argued that homosexual people were severely penalized by a social system that enforced the subservience of women to men, and which propagated an ideology of the "natural" differences between the sexes. The denial and fear of homosexuality were an integral part of this ideology because homosexuals were seen to contradict the accepted characteristics of men and women, and the complementarity of the sexes that is institutionalized within the family and many other areas of social life.[76]

Not surprisingly then, the gay movement has been particularly critical of psychiatric definitions of homosexuality as a pathology, and of the concern with "curing" homosexuals, a phenomenon of twentieth-century medicine marked by both theoretical incoherence and practical failure. Activists readily observed the ways in which notions such as "gender inversion" were a transparent rationalization of the prevailing relationship between men and women. For the whole medical model of homosexuality rested upon a belief in the biological (or occasionally socially-functional) determination of heterosexual masculinity and femininity. The gay-liberation tactic in this and many other areas was one of a defiant reversal of the dominant sexual ideology. In affirming a homosexual identity, many gay liberationists embraced the charge of effeminacy and declared that the real problem lay in the rigid social definitions of masculinity. It was society, not themselves, that needed to be cured.[77]

For some, this led to experiments with what was known as "radical drag." An American activist declared "There is more to be learned from wearing a dress for a day than there is from wearing a suit for life."[78] The point was not to imitate a glamorous image of stereotypical femininity (*à la* Danny La Rue or Les Girls), but to combine feminine images with masculine ones, such as a dress with a beard. The aim was described as gender confusion, and it was advocated as a means both for personal liberation from the prescriptions of hegemonic masculinity, and for subverting the accepted gender categories by demonstrating their social basis, as indicated by its technical name, a "gender fuck." Radical drag was hardly an effective strategy for social change, but it contained far more political insight than did the notion of androgyny that was beginning to be popularized by sex role theorists at about the same time.

To understand gay liberation's political responses, we should observe how the gender dichotomy acts to define homosexual men not only as "outside" of patriarchal sexual relations, but "within" them as well. In the first case, as we have just noted, homosexual men are penalized for failing to meet the criteria of masculinity, and are told that they are weak, effeminate, maladjusted, and so on. But they have often been defined "within" patriarchal sexual relations by being divided into "active" and "passive" types. Gay activists argued very strenuously that when homosexual men consequently organized a relationship in terms of husband and wife "roles," they were expressing self-hatred in a futile attempt to win heterosexual tolerance. More centrally, activists attacked sexual "role playing" or concepts of oneself as "butch" or "femme." The objection was not simply that this was sexist and bizarrely conformist; there was an agonizing personal trap for homosexual men in such a conception.

If a man identified as "femme," could he ever be satisfied to love a "butch" partner who returned his love? Would not a "real" man love only women (the homosexual "tragedy" explored by Proust and to an extent also by Genet)? The gay liberation response was to urge homosexual men to love each other and to direct considerable criticism and satire at the masculine posturing of straight men. In these terms, the assertion of a strong gay identity that incorporates a confidence that homosexual men are perfectly capable of giving each other sexual pleasure is an attack on the power of heterosexual men.

The gay movement, then, did not speak only to homosexual people. A common sentiment, especially in the early days of the movement, was that "every straight man is a target for gay liberation." Activists often drew on Freud's conviction of universal bisexuality and claimed that heterosexual men suffered from their repressed homosexual desire; to reject it they had constantly to prove their manliness, which resulted in their oppression of women.

There are serious theoretical problems in these early gay liberation arguments, but their significance remains. Consider this contrast. Quentin Crisp has described his conviction during the inter-war years that to have sexual relations with a man he desired would destroy the relationship; that man would have revealed a fatal flaw in his masculinity.[79] Forty years later, gay liberationists had sexual relations, on occasions, with heterosexual men in which the latter hoped to liberate their repressed homosexuality, and to prove they were politically on-side. This is a minor, though striking, aspect of a larger process in which gay liberationists have contested the power in gender relations; a process in which resistance among homosexual men has been generated and in which identities have changed.

The most general significance of the gay liberation arguments (and no doubt a central reason for the "men's movement" ignoring them) was that they challenged the assumptions by which heterosexuality is taken for granted as the natural order of things. It is, for example, a fundamental element of modern hegemonic masculinity that one sex (women) exists as potential sexual object, while the other sex (men) is negated as a sexual object. It is women, therefore, who provide heterosexual men with sexual validation, whereas men exist as rivals in both sexual and other spheres of life. The gay liberation perspective emphasized that the institutionalization of heterosexuality, as in the family, was achieved only by considerable effort, and at considerable cost not only to homosexual people but also to women and children. It is, then, precisely within heterosexuality as it is presently or-

ganized that a central dimension of the power that men exercise over women is to be found.

The gay movement's theoretical work, by comparison with the "sex role" literature and "men's movement" writings, had a much clearer understanding of the reality of men's power over women, and it had direct implications for any consideration of the hierarchy of power among men. Pleck was one of the few writers outside gay liberation to observe that the homosexual/heterosexual dichotomy acts as a central symbol in *all* rankings of masculinity. Any kind of powerlessness, or refusal to compete, among men readily becomes involved with the imagery of homosexuality.[80]

What emerges from this line of argument is the very important concept of *hegemonic masculinity*, not as "the male role," but as a particular variety of masculinity to which others – among them young and effeminate as well as homosexual men – are subordinated. It is particular groups of men, not men in general, who are oppressed within patriarchal sexual relations, and whose situations are related in different ways to the overall logic of the subordination of women to men. A consideration of homosexuality thus provides the beginnings of a dynamic conception of masculinity as a structure of social relations.

Gay liberation arguments further strengthen a dynamic approach to masculinity by providing some important insights into the historical character of gender relations. Homosexuality is a historically specific phenomenon, and the fact that it is socially organized becomes clear once we distinguish between homosexual *behavior* and a homosexual *identity*. While some kind of homosexual behavior may be universal, this does not automatically entail the existence of self-identified or publicly labelled "homosexuals." In fact, the latter are unusual enough to require a historical explanation. Jeffrey Weeks and others have argued that in Western Europe, male homosexuality did not gain its characteristically modern meaning and social organization until the late nineteenth century.[81] That period witnessed the advent of new medical categorizations, homosexuality being defined as a pathology by the German psychiatrist Westphal in 1870. There were also new legal prescriptions, so that all male homosexual behavior was subject to legal sanctions in Britain by the end of the century (one of the first victims of these laws being Oscar Wilde). Such medical and legal discourses underlined a new conception of the homosexual as a specific type of person in contrast to the older one of homosexuality as merely a potential in the lustful nature of all men – or indeed a potential for disorder in the cosmos.[82] Correspondingly, men with same-sex preferences had more reason than previously to think of

themselves as separate and distinct; and the homosexual subculture of the time in cities such as London gained its recognizably modern form.

These developments have yet to be fully explained. But they do highlight an important change in gender relations. It is clear that the early medical categorizations of homosexuality typically relied upon the idea of gender inversion; and what is known of the early homosexual subcultures (say in the "Molly houses" of London from the late seventeenth century[83]) suggests that they were characterized by a high degree of effeminacy and what is now known as "transvestism." Thus the emergence of both the medical discourses on homosexuality and the corresponding self-conception of homosexuals in the nineteenth century need to be related to particular societal conceptions of masculinity, and the process of its social re-organization. Just as "the housewife," "the prostitute," and "the child" are historically specific "types" that should be understood in the context of gender relations of the time, so too "the homosexual" represents the modern definition of a new "type" of adult male. It was a man who was classified as an invert, and who, frequently at least, understood himself to possess a "woman's soul in a man's body."

The subsequent career of the category of homosexuality, and of the identities of homosexual men, similarly point to broader changes in masculinity. For the idea of inversion has now been theoretically discredited, and male homosexuals typically identify themselves as men (however problematic they may find the general social elaboration of masculinity). The changes that have taken place in the definition of the gender of homosexual men, in their own identities, and in the level of their oppression need to be understood in the light of changes in the general power relationship between men and women. The "social space" that homosexuals presently occupy, and that the gay movement has struggled to expand, reflects a contestation of the subordination of women to men. For it is now possible to depart publicly from the prescriptions of hegemonic masculinity without being defined, and accepting oneself, as "really" a woman. Homosexual relationships are now much less marked, to borrow Rubin's terms, by the rules of the gender division and obligatory heterosexuality.[84] The distinctions between the "invert"/"pervert," the "active"/"passive," and the "masculine"/feminine"homosexual man, all of which acted to give a *heterosexual* meaning to an anomalous relationship, have lost their former saliency. So long as a very rigid distinction is maintained between the social categories of "man" and "woman," there is relatively little space in which homosexual men can exist; the very idea of a *homosexual man* may be inconceivable if "man" is a strictly heterosexual category. Thus it can scarcely be an accident that the first wave of feminism in nineteenth-century Europe was accompanied by some sub-

stantial efforts to achieve the emancipation of homosexuals; just as over the past fifteen years there has been an indispensible link between the gay and women's movements.

The emerging history of male homosexuality, then, offers the most valuable starting-point we have for constructing a historical perspective on masculinity at large. The technical superiority of the work of gay historians over the histories of masculinity and the "male role" to be found in works like Hoch, Dubbert, Stearns, and Pleck and Pleck, is so marked as to be embarrassing. Conceptually, gay history moves decisively away from the conception underlying those works, that the history of masculinity is the story of the modulation, through time, of the expressions of a more or less fixed entity.[85]

The history of homosexuality obliges us to think of masculinity not as a single object with its own history, but as being constantly constructed within the history of an evolving social structure, a structure of sexual power relations. It obliges us to see this construction as a social struggle going on in a complex ideological and political field, in which there is a continuing process of mobilization, marginalization, contestation, resistance, and subordination. It forces us to recognize the importance of violence, not as an expression of subjective values or of a type of masculinity, but as a constitutive practice that helps to make all kinds of masculinity – and to recognize that much of this violence comes from the state, so the historical construction of masculinity and femininity is also struggle for the control and direction of state power. Finally it is an important corrective to the tendency, in left-wing thought especially, to subordinate the history of gender to the history of capitalism. The making of modern homosexuality is plainly connected to the development of industrial capitalism, but equally clearly has its own dynamic.

Outline of a Social Analysis of Masculinity

Men in the Framework of Gender Relations

The starting point for any understanding of masculinity that is not simply biologistic or subjective must be men's involvement in the social relations that constitute the gender order. In a classic article Rubin has defined the domain of the argument as "the sex/gender system," a patterning of social relations connected with reproduction and gender division that is found in all societies, though in varying shapes.[86] This system is historical, in the fullest sense; its elements and relationships are constructed in history and are all subject to historical change.[87] It is also internally differentiated, as Mitchell

argued more than a decade ago.[88] Two aspects of its organization have been the foci of research in the past decade: the division of labor and the structure of power. (The latter is what Millett originally called "sexual politics,"[89] and is the more precise referent of the concept "patriarchy.") To these we must add the structure of cathexis, the social organization of sexuality and attraction – which as the history of homosexuality demonstrates is fully as social as the structures of work and power.

The central fact about this structure in the contemporary capitalist world (like most other social orders, though not all) is the subordination of women. This fact is massively documented, and has enormous ramifications – physical, mental, interpersonal, cultural – whose effects on the lives of women have been the major concerns of feminism. One of the central facts about masculinity, then, is that men in general are advantaged through the subordination of women.

To say "men in general" is already to point to an important complication in power relations. The global subordination of women is consistent with many particular situations in which women hold power over men, or are at least equal. Close-up research on families shows a good many households where wives hold authority in practice.[90] The fact of mothers' authority over young sons has been noted in most discussions of the psychodynamics of masculinity. The intersections of gender relations with class and race relations yield many other situations where rich white heterosexual women, for instance, are employers of working-class men, patrons of homosexual men, or politically dominant over black men.

To cite such examples and claim that women are therefore not subordinated in general would be crass. The point is, rather, that contradictions between local situations and the global relationships are endemic. They are likely to be a fruitful source of turmoil and change in the structure as a whole.

The overall relation between men and women, further, is not a confrontation between homogeneous, undifferentiated blocs. Our argument has perhaps established this sufficiently by now; even some role theorists, notably Hacker,[91] recognized a range of masculinities. We would suggest, in fact, that the fissuring of the categories of "men" and "women" is one of the central facts about patriarchal power and the way it works. In the case of men, the crucial division is between hegemonic masculinity and various subordinated masculinities.

Even this, however, is too simple a phrasing, as it suggests a masculinity

differentiated only by power relations. If the general remarks about the gender system made above are correct, it follows that masculinities are constructed not just by power relations but by their interplay with a division of labor and with patterns of emotional attachment. For example, as Bray has clearly shown, the character of men's homosexuality, and of its regulation by the state, is very different in the mercantile city from what it was in the pre-capitalist countryside.[92]

The differentiation of masculinities is psychological – it bears on the kind of people that men are and become – but it is not only psychological. In an equally important sense it is institutional, an aspect of collective practice. In a notable recent study of British printing workers, Cynthia Cockburn has shown how a definition of compositors' work as hypermasculine has been sustained despite enormous changes in technology.[93] The key was a highly organized practice that drove women out of the trade, marginalized related labor processes in which they remained, and sustained a strongly-marked masculine "culture" in the workplace. What was going on here, as many details of her study show, was the collective definition of a hegemonic masculinity that not only manned the barricades against women but at the same time marginalized or subordinated other men in the industry (e.g. young men, unskilled workers, and those unable or unwilling to join the rituals). Though the details vary, there is every reason to think such processes are very general. Accordingly we see social definitions of masculinity as being embedded in the dynamics of institutions – the working of the state, of corporations, of unions, of families – quite as much as in the personality of individuals.

Forms of Masculinity and Their Interrelationships

In some historical circumstances, a subordinated masculinity can be produced collectively as a well-defined social group and a stable social identity, with some well-recognized traits at the personal level. A now familiar case in point is the "making of the modern homosexual" (to use Plummer's phrase[94]) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One aspect of the collective process here was a change in forms of policing that criminalized homosexuality as such, creating a criminal sexual "type." And one aspect of the psychological process was the creation of "camp" personal style, both internalizing and sardonically transforming the new medical and clinical definition of the homosexual as a type of person.

In other circumstances, a subordinated masculinity may be a transient identity. The printing apprentices in Cockburn's study provide one example

of this. Another is provided by the New Guinea culture studied by Herdt, where younger men gain their masculinity through ritualized homosexuality under the guardianship of older men.[95] In other cases again, the collective and individual processes do not correspond. There may be stable enough personalities and configurations of motive produced, which for various reasons do not receive a clear social definition. A historic case of this is the vague social identity of English homosexuality before the advent of "Molly" at the end of the seventeenth century. Closer to home, another example would seem to be the various forms of effeminate heterosexual masculinity being produced today. There are attempts to give such masculinities an identity: for instance by commercial exploitation of hippie styles of dress; and by conservative transvestite organizations such as the Beaumont Society (UK) or the Seahorse Club (Australia). But for the most part there is no very clear social definition of heterosexual effeminacy. It is popularly assimilated to a gay identity when it is noticed at all – an equation its publicists furiously but unavailingly protest.

The ability to impose a particular definition on other kinds of masculinity is part of what we mean by "hegemony." Hegemonic masculinity is far more complex than the accounts of essences in the masculinity books would suggest. It is not a "syndrome" of the kind produced when sexologists like Money reify human behavior into a "condition,"[96] or when clinicians reify homosexuality into a pathology. It is, rather, a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance.

An immediate consequence of this is that the culturally exalted form of masculinity, the hegemonic model so to speak, may only correspond to the actual characters of a small number of men. On this point at least the "men's liberation" literature had a sound insight. There is a distance, and a tension, between collective ideal and actual lives. Most men do not really act like the screen image of John Wayne or Humphrey Bogart; and when they try to, it is likely to be thought comic (as in the Woody Allen movie *Play It Again, Sam*) or horrific (as in shoot-outs and "sieges"). Yet very large numbers of men are complicit in sustaining the hegemonic model. There are various reasons: gratification through fantasy, compensation through displaced aggression (e.g. poofter-bashing by police and working-class youths), etc. But the overwhelmingly important reason is that most men benefit from the subordination of women, and hegemonic masculinity is centrally connected with the institutionalization of men's dominance over women. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic so far as it embodies a successful strategy in relation to women.

This strategy is necessarily modified in different class situations, a point that can be documented in the research already mentioned on relationships inside families. A contemporary ruling-class family is organized around the corporate or professional career of the husband. In a typical case the well-groomed wife is subordinated not by being under the husband's thumb – he isn't in the house most of the time – but by her task of making sure his home life runs on wheels to support his self-confidence, his career advancement, and their collective income. In working-class homes, to start with, there is no "career"; the self-esteem of men is eroded rather than inflated in the workplace. For a husband to be dominant in the home is likely to require an assertion of authority without a technical basis; hence a reliance on traditional ideology (religion or ethnic culture) or on force. The working man who gets drunk and belts his wife when she doesn't hold her tongue, and belts his son to make a man of him, is by no means a figure of fiction.[97]

To think of this as "working-class authoritarianism" and see the ruling-class family as more liberal would be to mistake the nature of power. Both are forms of patriarchy, and the husbands in both cases are enacting a hegemonic masculinity. But the situations in which they do so are very different, their responses are not exactly the same, and their impact on wives and children is likely to vary a good deal.

The most important feature of this masculinity, alongside its connection with dominance, is that it is heterosexual. Though most literature on the family and masculinity takes this entirely for granted, it should not be. Psychoanalytic evidence goes far to show that conventional adult heterosexuality is constructed, in the individual life, as one among a number of possible paths through the emotional forest of childhood and adolescence. It is now clear that this is also true at the collective level, that the pattern of exclusive adult heterosexuality is a historically-constructed one. Its dominance is by no means universal. For this to become the hegemonic form of masculine sexuality required a historic redefinition of sexuality itself, in which undifferentiated "lust" was turned into specific types of "perversion" – the process that is documented, from the under side, by the historians of homosexuality already mentioned. A passion for beautiful boys was compatible with hegemonic masculinity in renaissance Europe, emphatically not so at the end of the nineteenth century. In this historical shift, men's sexual desire was to be focused more closely on women – a fact with complex consequences for them – while groups of men who were visibly not following the hegemonic pattern were more specifically labelled and attacked. So powerful was this shift that even men of the ruling classes found wealth and reputation no protection. It is interesting to contrast the experiences of the Chevalier d'Eon, who man-

aged an active career in diplomacy while dressed as a woman (in a later era he would have been labelled a "transvestite"), with that of Oscar Wilde a hundred years later.

"Hegemony," then, always refers to a historical situation, a set of circumstances in which power is won and held. The construction of hegemony is not a matter of pushing and pulling between ready-formed groupings, but is partly a matter of the *formation* of those groupings. To understand the different kinds of masculinity demands, above all, an examination of the practices in which hegemony is constituted and contested – in short, the political techniques of the patriarchal social order.

This is a large enterprise, and we can only note a few points about it here. First, hegemony means persuasion, and one of its important sites is likely to be the commercial mass media. An examination of advertising, for instance, shows a number of ways in which images of masculinity are constructed and put to work: amplifying the sense of virility, creating anxiety and giving reassurance about being a father, playing games with stereotypes (men washing dishes), and so on.[98] Studying versions of masculinity in Australian mass media, Glen Lewis points to an important qualification to the usual conception of media influence.[99] Commercial television in fact gives a lot of airplay to "soft" men, in particular slots such as hosts of daytime quiz shows. What comes across is by no means unrelieved machismo; the inference is that television companies think their audiences would not like that.

Second, hegemony closely involves the division of labor, the social definition of tasks as either "men's work" or "women's work," and the definition of some kinds of work as more masculine than others. Here is an important source of tension between the gender order and the class order, as heavy manual labor is generally felt to be more masculine than white-collar and professional work (though perhaps not management).[100] Third, the negotiation and enforcement of hegemony involves the state. The criminalization of male homosexuality as such was a key move in the construction of the modern form of hegemonic masculinity. Attempts to reassert it after the struggles of the last twenty years, for instance by fundamentalist right-wing groups in the United States, are very much addressed to the state – attempting to get homosexual people dismissed as public school teachers, for instance, or erode court protection for civil liberties. Much more subtly, the existence of a skein of welfare rules, tax concessions, and so on which advantage people living in conventional conjugal households and disadvantage others,[101] creates economic incentives to conform to the hegemonic pattern.

Psychodynamics

To argue that masculinity and femininity are produced historically is entirely at odds with the view that sees them as settled by biology, and thus as being pre-social categories. It is also at odds with the now most common view of gender, which sees it as a social elaboration, amplification, or perhaps exaggeration of the biological fact of sex – where biology says "what" and society says "how." Certainly, the biological facts of maleness and femaleness are central to the matter; human reproduction is a major part of what defines the "sex/gender system." But all kinds of questions can be raised about the nature of the *relation* between biology and the social. The facts of anatomical and physiological variation should caution us against assuming that biology presents society with clear-cut categories of people. More generally, it should not be assumed that the relation is one of *continuity*.

We would suggest that the evidence about masculinity, and gender relations at large, makes more sense if we recognize that the social practice of gender arises – to borrow some terminology from Sartre – in *contradiction* to the biological statute.[102] It is precisely the property of human sociality that it transcends biological determination. To transcend is not to ignore: the bodily dimension remains a presence within the social practice. Not as a "base," but as an *object of practice*. Masculinity invests the body. Reproduction is a question of strategies. Social relations continuously take account of the body and biological process and interact with them. "Interact" should be given its full weight. For our knowledge of the biological dimension of sexual difference is itself predicated on the social categories, as the startling research of Kessler and McKenna makes clear.[103]

In the field of this interaction, sexuality and desire are constituted, being both bodily pain and pleasure, and social injunction and prohibition. Where Freud saw the history of this interaction only as a strengthening prohibition by an undifferentiated "society," and Marcuse as the by-product of class exploitation,[104] we must now see the construction of the unconscious as the field of play of a number of historically developing power relations and gender practices. Their interactions constitute masculinities and femininities as particular patterns of cathexis.

Freud's work with his male patients produced the first systematic evidence of one key feature of this patterning. The repressions and attachments are not necessarily homogeneous. The psychoanalytic exploration of masculinity means diving through layers of emotion that may be flagrantly contradictory. For instance in the "Wolf Man" case history,[105] the classic of the genre,

Freud found a promiscuous heterosexuality, a homosexual and passive attachment to the father, and an identification with women, all psychologically present though subject to different levels of repression. Without case-study evidence, many recent authors have speculated about the degree of repression that goes into the construction of dominant forms of masculinity: the sublimated homosexuality in the cult of sport, repressed identification with the mother, and so on. Homosexual masculinity as a pattern of cathexis is no less complex, as we see for instance in Genet. If texts like *Our Lady of the Flowers* are, as Sartre claims, masturbatory fantasies,[106] they are an extraordinary guide to a range and pattern of cathexes – from the hard young criminal to Divine herself – that show, among other things, Genet's homosexuality is far from a mere "inversion" of heterosexual object-choice.

In this perspective the unconscious emerges as a field of politics. Not just in the sense that a conscious political practice can address it, or that practices that do address it must have a politics, as argued (against Freud) by the Red Collective in Britain.[107] More generally, the organization of desire is the domain of relations of power. When writers of the Books About Men ejaculate about "the wisdom of the penis" (H. Goldberg, who thinks the masculine ideal is a rock-hard erection), or when they dilate on its existential significance ("a firm erection on a delicate fellow was the adventurous juncture of ego and courage" – Mailer), they have grasped an important point, though they have not quite got to the root of it. What is at issue here is power over women. This is seen by authors such as Lippert, in an excellent paper exploring the connections of the male-supremacist sexuality of American automobile workers with the conditions of factory work. Bednarik's suggestion about the origins of popular sadism in the commercialization of sex and the degradation of working life is a more complex case of how the lines of force might work.[108]

The psychodynamics of masculinity, then, are not to be seen as a separate issue from the social relations that invest and construct masculinity. An effective analysis will work at both levels; and an effective political practice must attempt to do so too.

Transformations

An "effective political practice" implies something that can be worked on and transformed. The question of transformation, its possibilities, sources, and strategies, should be central to the analysis of masculinity.

It has had a very ambiguous status in the literature so far. The "male role"

literature has spoken a lot about changes in the role, but has had no very clear account of how they come about. Indeed this literature generally implies, without arguing the point very explicitly, that once a man has been socialized to his role that is more or less the end of it. On the other side, the gay movement, in its contest with psychiatrists who wished to "cure" homosexuality, has had its own reasons for claiming that homosexual masculinity, once formed, is settled.

The strength of sexual desire as a motive is one reason why a pattern of cathexis may remain stable for most of a lifetime. Such stability can be found even in the most implausible patterns of cathexis, as the literature of sexual fetishism has abundantly shown, ever since Krafft-Ebing introduced his middle-European hair, handkerchief, corset and shoe enthusiasts back in the 1880s.[109] Yet the strength of desire can also be a mighty engine of change, when caught up in contradiction. And as the last two sections have suggested, contradiction is in fact endemic in the processes that construct masculinity.

The psychodynamics of change in masculinity is a question that so far has attracted little attention. There is one exception: the highly publicized, indeed sensationalized, case of male-to-female "transsexuals." Even this case has not brought the question quite into focus, because the transsexuals are mostly saying they are really women and their bodies should be adjusted to match, while their opponents say their bodies show they are really men and their psyches should be adjusted to match. Both look on masculinity and femininity as pure essences, though of different kinds. Roberta Perkins's fascinating study shows the true situation is much more complex and fraught.[110] The conviction of being really a woman may grow, rather than being present from the start. It may not be complete; ambiguity and uncertainty are common. Those who push on must negotiate their way out of the social position of being a man and into that of being a woman, a process liable to corrode family relationships, lose jobs, and attract police attention. (The social supports of conventional masculine identities are very much in evidence.) Sexual ambiguity is exciting to many people, and one way of surviving – if one's physique allows it – is to become a transsexual prostitute or show girl. But this tends to create a new gender category – one becomes known as "a transsexual" – rather than making a smooth transition into femininity. There is, in short, a complex interplay between motive and social circumstance; masculinity cannot be abandoned all at once, nor without pain.

Although very few are involved in a process as dramatic and traumatic as

that, a good many men feel themselves to be involved in some kind of change having to do with gender, with sexual identity, with what it is to be a man. The "androgyny" literature of the late 1970s spoke to this in one way, the literature about the importance of fathering in another.[111] We have already seen some reasons to doubt that the changes discussed were as decisive as the "men's movement" proclaimed. But it seems clear enough that there have been recent changes in the constitution of masculinity in advanced capitalist countries, of at least two kinds: a deepening of tensions around relationships with women, and the crisis of a form of heterosexual masculinity that is increasingly felt to be obsolete.

The psychodynamics of these processes remain obscure; we still lack the close-up research that would illuminate them. What is happening on the larger scale is somewhat clearer. Masculinities are constituted, we argued above, within a structure of gender relations that has a historical dynamic as a whole. This is not to say it is a neatly-defined and closely-integrated system – the false assumption made by Parsons, Chodorow, and a good many others.[112] This would take for granted what is currently being fought for. The dominion of men over women, and the supremacy of particular groups of men over others, is sought by constantly re-constituting gender relations as a system within which that dominance is generated. Hegemonic masculinity might be seen as what would function automatically if the strategy were entirely successful. But it never does function automatically. The project is contradictory, the conditions for its realization are constantly changing, and, most importantly, there is resistance from the groups being subordinated. The violence in gender relations is not part of the essence of masculinity (as Fasteau, Nichols, and Reynaud, as well as many radical feminists, present it)[113] so much as a measure of the bitterness of this struggle.

The emergence of Women's Liberation at the end of the 1960s was, as feminists are now inclined to see it, the heightening of a resistance that is much older and has taken many other forms in the past. It did nevertheless represent two new and important things. First, the transformation of resistance into a liberation project addressed to the whole gender order. Second, a breakdown of masculine authority; if not in the society as a whole, at least in a substantial group, the younger professional intelligentsia of western cities. Though it has not widened its base as fast as activists expected, the new feminism has also not gone under to the reaction that gained momentum in the late 1970s. Like Gay Liberation it is here to stay; and at least in limited milieux the two movements have achieved some changes in power relations that are unlikely to be reversed.

This dynamic of sexual politics has met up with a change in class relations that also has implications for masculinity. In a very interesting paper, Winter and Robert suggest that some of the familiar economic and cultural changes in contemporary capitalism – the growth of large bureaucratized corporations, the integration of business and government, the shift to technocratic modes of decision making and control – have implications for the character of "male dominance."[114] We think they over-generalize, but at least they have pointed to an important conflict within and about hegemonic masculinity. Forms of masculinity well adapted to face-to-face class conflict and the management of personal capital are not so well suited to the politics of organizations, to professionalism, to the management of strategic compromises and consensus.

One dimension of the recent politics of capitalism, then, is a struggle about the modernization of hegemonic masculinity. This has by no means gone all one way. The recent ascendancy of the hard-liners in the American ruling class has involved the systematic reassertion of old-fashioned models of masculinity (not to mention femininity – *vide* Nancy Reagan).

The politics of "men's liberation" and the search for androgyny have to be understood in this field of forces. They are, explicitly, a response to the new feminism – accepting feminism in a watered-down version, hoping that men could gain something from its advent. This required an evasion of the issue of power, and the limits were clearly marked by the refusal of any engagement with gay liberation. Yet there was an urgency about what the "men's movement" publicists were saying in the early 1970s, which drew its force partly from the drive for the modernization of hegemonic masculinity already going on in other forms.[115] The goal (to simplify a little) was to produce forms of masculinity able to adapt to new conditions, but sufficiently similar to the old ones to maintain the family, heterosexuality, capitalist work relations, and American national power (most of which are taken for granted in the Books About Men). The shift in the later 1970s that produced "Free Men" campaigning for fathers' rights, and the ponderings of conservative ideologues like Stearns on how to revive intelligent paternalism, is clearly connected with the antimodernist movement in the American ruling class. This offered strategies for repairing men's authority in the face of the damage done by feminism, much as the Reagan foreign policy proposed to restore American hegemony internationally, and monetarism proposed a drastic disciplining of the working class. The political appeal of the whole package – mainly to men, given the "gender gap" – is notable.

The triumph of these ideas is not inevitable. They are strategies, responding

to dilemmas of practice, and they have their problems too. Other responses, other strategies, are also possible; among them much more radical ones. The ferment that was started by the new left, and that produced the counter-culture, the new feminism, gay liberation, and many attempts at communal households and collective childcare, has also produced a good deal of quiet experimentation with masculinity and attempts to work out in practice un-oppressive forms of heterosexuality. This is confined at present to a limited milieu, and has not had anything like the shape or public impact of the politics of liberation among gay men.

The moment of opportunity, as it appeared in the early 1970s, is past. There is no easy path to a major reconstruction of masculinity. Yet the initiative in sexual politics is not entirely in the hands of reaction, and the underlying tensions that produced the initiatives of ten years ago have not vanished. There are potentials for a more liberating politics, here and now. Not in the form of grand schemes of change, but at least in the form of coalitions among feminists, gay men, and progressive heterosexual men that have real chances of making gains on specific issues.

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