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TRAFFICKING IN MEN: The Anthropology of Masculinity

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ABSTRACT

Anthropology has always involved men talking to men about men, yet until fairly recently very few within the discipline had truly examined men as men. This chapter explores how anthropologists understand, utilize, and debate the category of masculinity by reviewing recent examinations of men as engendered and engendering subjects. Beginning with descriptions of four distinct ways in which masculinity is defined and treated in anthropology, special attention is paid to the relations of difference, inequality, and women to the anthropological study of masculinities, including the awkward avoidance of feminist theory on the part of many anthropologists who study manhood. Specific topics discussed include the diverse cultural economies of masculinity, the notion of cultural regions in relation to images of manhood, male friendship, machismo, masculine embodiment, violence, power, and sexual faultlines.

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Anthropology has always involved men talking to men about men. Until recently, however, very few within the discipline of the “study of man” had truly examined men as men. Although in the past two decades the study of gender comprises the most important new body of theoretical and empirical work in the discipline of anthropology overall, gender studies are still often equated with women’s studies.

It is the new examinations of men as engendered and engendering subjects that comprise the anthropology of masculinity today. There are at least four
distinct ways that anthropologists define and use the concept of masculinity and the related notions of male identity, manhood, manliness, and men’s roles. Marking the fluidity of these concepts, and frequently the regrettable lack of theoretical rigor in approaching this issue, most anthropologists writing on this subject employ more than one of these concepts.

The first concept of masculinity holds that it is, by definition, anything that men think and do. The second is that masculinity is anything men think and do to be men. The third is that some men are inherently or by ascription considered “more manly” than other men. The final manner of approaching masculinity emphasizes the general and central importance of male-female relations, so that masculinity is considered anything that women are not.

In the anthropological literature on masculinity to date, much attention has been paid to how men in different cultural contexts perform their own and others’ manhood. Herzfeld (1985, pp. 16, 47) wrote of the importance to men in a village on Crete of distinguishing between “being a good man” and “being good at being a man,” because here it is the “performative excellence” of manliness that counts for more than merely being born male.

In his ethnographic study of “a masculine subculture” among the Sambia in New Guinea, Herdt (1994b, p. 1) seeks to present “how men view themselves as male persons, their ritual traditions, their females, and the cosmos....” The path to understanding Sambia masculinity, Herdt argued, therefore lies in paying close attention to Sambia male idioms, that is, what these men say about themselves as men. Further, in exploring male initiations among the Sambia, Herdt (1994b, p. 322) accentuates what he calls “an intense, phallic masculinity” such that the issue is not one of males striving for masculinity versus femininity but rather for a particular kind of masculinity that is, by its nature, only available to men to achieve. (See also Gregor’s (1985) premise that among the Mehinaku of Brazil, as elsewhere, “male identity is anatomically based.”) Nonetheless, Herdt (1994b, p. 17) wrote that while not “the public dogma” of men, for the Sambia “maleness itself emerges from femaleness.”

In the first major study of manhood in anthropology, Brandes (1980) described how male identities develop in relation to women. In an examination of folklore and men in rural Andalusia, Brandes argued that even if women are not physically present with men while working or drinking, and even if they are not reflected in men’s conscious thoughts, women’s “presence” is a significant factor in men’s own subjective understanding of what it means to be men. Discussing changing gender identities in working-class Mexico City, Gutmann (1996) also argued that most men during most of their lives view male identities in comparison with female identities.

Insufficient attention has actually been paid to men-as-men in anthropology (Godelier 1986, Ortner & Whitehead 1981), and much of what anthropologists
have written about masculinity must be inferred from research on women and by extrapolation from studies on other topics.

In addition to different conceptual frameworks, two distinct topical approaches are evident in the anthropological study of masculinity. Some studies mainly treat men-only events like male initiation and sex between men, men-only organizations like men’s cults, and men-only locations like men’s houses and bars. Other studies include descriptions and analyses of women as integral to the broader study of manhood and masculinity. Exemplary of the first type is the widely read survey by Gilmore (1990). This study, functionalist in orientation, insists on ubiquitous if not necessarily universal male imagery in the world and on an underlying archetypal and “deep structure” of masculinity cross-culturally and transhistorically. The other approach has been to document the ambiguous and fluid nature of masculinity within particular spatial and temporal contexts, providing implicit evidence for Yanagisako & Collier’s (1987) argument that there exists no unitary “man’s point of view.”

After tracing certain historical precedents for the contemporary study of masculinity, the review examines broader topics that anthropologists have recently related to men and manhood, such as national character; divisions of labor; family, kinship, and friendship ties; the body; and contests over power. In the absence of systematic theorization of masculinity, most studies of men-as-men in anthropology focus on only one or two of these topics, while by default they have created myriad and contradictory categories and definitions of men.

THE HISTORICAL MALE IN ANTHROPOLOGY

“An Arapesh boy grows his wife,” wrote Mead (1963, p. 90). In like manner, anthropologists have historically grown their native men: Ethnographers’ claims to discovering exotic (or ubiquitous) masculinity in the far reaches of the globe have always rested on the central contributions of anthropologists themselves in the creation of categories of maleness and its opposites in diverse cultural milieus. From Malinowski’s (1929) interest in sexual drives (those of natives and anthropologists alike), male authority (and how it may reside in men other than the father), and the oedipal complex, to Evans-Pritchard (1974)—for whom, as Ardener (1989) famously wrote, women and cattle were both omnipresent and important, and equally mute—anthropologists have played a not insignificant role in the development and popularization of “native” definitions and distinctions regarding masculinity, femininity, homosexuality, and more. To what extent the views expressed have represented those of men, women, or anthropologists—or a combination of all these—is, in retrospect, far from clear.
As disciplinary anthropology was just taking shape, wider intellectual circles in Europe and the United States were experiencing what Mosse (1996, p. 78) calls the fin-de-siècle challenges to modern masculinity and men as the “unmarked” category: “‘unmanly’ men and ‘unwomanly’ women... were becoming ever more visible. They and the movement for women’s rights threatened that gender division so crucial to the construction of modern masculinity.” With all this sexual questioning, once again the call of the South Seas sirens proved too much for the impressionable Europeans. If men in Tahiti, for instance, were seen by some anthropologists as somehow freer in expressing their masculine sexuality, it was also believed that this was due in large measure to the rather childlike quality of men in these “primitive” settings.

Margaret Mead’s work in the Pacific provided startling information that countered popular Western notions about adolescence and sexuality, and it threatened shibboleths there about masculinity and femininity as inherent qualities. Writing about the ambiguous and contradictory character of gender Mead (1963, p. 259) wrote: “We found the Arapesh—both men and women—displaying a personality that, out of our historically limited preoccupations, we would call maternal in its parental aspects, and feminine in its sexual aspects.” In her elucidation of “the dilemma of the individual whose congenial drives are not provided for in the institutions of his culture,” Ruth Benedict (1934, p. 262), too, chose to emphasize a diversity of masculinities and showed that homosexuality has historically been considered abnormal in only some societies.

Later anthropologists, including those associated in one way or another with the culture and personality school in World War II and in the 1950s, continued probing comparative similarities and differences concerning men’s participation in child rearing, male personality structures, the masculine will to war, male rites of passage and socialization, penile symbolism, and more. Increasingly bifurcated models of man-woman dualisms were linked, in turn, to more “feminine” and more “masculine” national character traits (see Herman 1995). Regarding the unexamined premises of universal male domination and universal sex-role differences, no theories were as influential in the social sciences in the postwar period as those of Parsons & Bales (1955), who posited women as expressive (emotional) and men as instrumental (pragmatic, rational, and cognitive). Biology, ultimately, determined what men and women did differently in families. Generally “human nature” has been a code for the overarching importance of particular musculature and reproductive capacities, which in turn are believed by some to result inevitably in socioeconomic patterns relating to hunting and hearth (see also Friedl 1984).

Lévi-Strauss attempted to clarify certain central issues, yet it is noteworthy that in Elementary Structures of Kinship (1969a)—a classic that proved highly influential among the first generation of feminist anthropologists to embark on
the full-fledged study of gender—he barely mentions categories such as men, masculinity, women, and femininity. Instead, men are as often as not referred to through euphemism; for instance, men are called “the givers of wives.” As with early feminist anthropological studies in the 1970s, the earliest approaches to studying masculinity tended to depict an overly dichotomized world in which men were men and women were women, and women contributed as little to “making” men as men did to “making” women. Unlike these initial feminist studies of women in anthropology, however, which often sought to address, in part, women’s previous “invisibility” in the canon, men have never been invisible in ethnography or theories of “mankind.”

THE CULTURAL ECONOMIES OF Masculinity

In the past fifteen years, several ethnographies and edited volumes concerned with masculinity have appeared in English and other languages (on the latter, see Castelain-Meunier 1988, Fachel Leal 1992, Welzer-Lang & Pichevin 1992). Certain of these studies have been written by prominent anthropologists. The theoretical approaches and conclusions of these studies differ considerably, but the best have been good at asking specific questions about particular locales and historical situations, and most have avoided an ill-conceived “me-tooism” in reaction to feminist anthropology. Those who have attempted generalizations for entire “cultures” of supposedly homogeneous populations have tended to reinvent many of the same stale tags with which “men” (e.g. the men of urban Latin America, southern Spain, or the highlands of New Guinea) have often been stamped as representatives of one or another social-science paradigm.

Cultural Regions and Boundary Questions

Questions of virility and definitions of manliness have often been played out in the cultural confrontations between colonizer and colonized. As Stoler (1991, p. 56) concluded, “The demasculinization of colonized men and the hypermasculinity of European males represent principal assertions of white supremacy” (see also Fanon 1967). In part because of anthropology’s own internal dynamics, and in part because of the exigencies of post–World War II empire rearrangements, the study of masculinity in anthropology has frequently been linked to cultural area studies. About “the ideals of manliness” in the circum-Mediterranean, for example, Gilmore (1990, p. 48) posited “three moral imperatives: first, impregnating one’s wife; second, provisioning dependents; third, protecting the family.” The argument is that these particular qualities and aims are in some significant fashion more marked in this culture area than elsewhere in the world. Anthropologists who are inclined to equate “the na-
tion” exclusively with the men in these societies have, not surprisingly, also tended to minimize women’s contributions to both masculinity and national traits. [See also Mernissi (1987) and Knauss (1987) on engendered ideals associated with Islam in the Middle East.]

In contrast, other scholars like Strathern find that in examining male-female relations some arguments about area peculiarities have been taken too far. Strathern (1988, p. 64) wrote, “Far too axiomatically, I believe, has the sex-role model held sway in anthropological analyses of [New Guinea] Highlands initiation and male-female antagonism” (see also Bowden 1984). Herdt & Stoller (1990, pp. 352–53) concluded that “[f]or the study of erotics and gender identity, cross-cultural data are still too impoverished and decontextualized to truly compare masculinity and femininity, sexual excitement, and fantasy constructs of people from different cultures.” [For recent efforts in this direction, see Parker et al (1992) and Parker & Gagnon (1995).] In criticism of a free-standing “Mediterranean culture,” Herzfeld (1987, p. 76) wrote that “Ethnographers may have unwittingly contributed to the creation of a stereotype and created a self-fulfilling prophecy, an argument that may be extended to critique a cultural regionalism of masculinity.

Manhood and womanhood are culturally variable, and sexual practices and beliefs are contextual, yet cultural context does not generally equate to national culture traits. Further, most anthropologists writing about masculinity in the past two decades have found reason to discuss the transformations afoot in different cultural junctures: Herdt (1993, p. xxxii) wrote of “the egalitarian mode [that] was likely to be a cultural import of modernization” in New Guinea, while Keesing (1982, p. 16) noted potential “regional” reactions to Westernization like a possible “perpetuation or renewal of male cultism.” Brandes (1980, p. 11) noted that in Andalusia “social norms among people under the ages of twenty or twenty-five years seem to be departing abruptly from those held by their parents,” and Herzfeld (1985) described modern “transformations” on Crete. On the whole, Gayle Rubin’s (1975) emphasis on momentous transitions and changes in gender and sex relations is correct, as is her temporary reprieve from premature extermination for “the offending sex.”

Throughout these ethnographic studies of men, the influence, often indirect, of certain key theoretical currents is evident, beginning with works by Marx and Freud (see Laqueur 1990) and continuing more recently with references to Foucault (1980a,b), Merleau-Ponty (1962), and Bourdieu (1990a,b; 1997).

**Gender Divisions of Labor**

Another element in the cultural economy of masculinity that merits attention concerns the marked differences in what men and women do in their daily
chores and activities. Most ethnographers, following Durkheim’s (1933) example, have sought to document these divisions of labor and on this basis make generalizations for cultural inequalities more broadly. Delaney (1991, p. 251), for example, wrote of engendered physical separation in a village in Turkey: “Besides sexual activity and eating, the only other activity in which men and women spend any extended time together is working in the bahçe (garden),” an indication of theologically ordained power inequalities between men and women in this area. Godelier (1986, p. 29) concluded that among the Baruya in New Guinea, gender divisions of labor presuppose rather than give rise to male dominance, as women are excluded from ownership of the land, important tools, weapons, and sacred objects among other things. A paper by Richard Lee (1968) showed that through the 1950s, at least, women’s labor in gathering nuts and berries provided a far greater share of calories for the !Kung San in southern Africa than the hunting activities of the men, thereby furnishing evidence that women’s contributions within this foraging society were greater not simply with respect to child rearing but in terms of adult sustenance as well. One salutary development in some recent gender studies is the attempt to describe and analyze divisions of labor not as formal and static ideal types but in their actually occurring and contradictory cultural and historical manifestations.

FAMILY

Kinship and Marriage

“Lévi-Strauss’s account of the founding significance of the exchange of women,” admonished Weeks (1985, p. 159), “already presupposes that it is men who, as naturally promiscuous, are in a position to exchange their women.” Although certain anthropologists have presented supporting evidence unblemished by contradiction or nuance to support Lévi-Strauss’s foundational theory regarding the male exchange of women, others have found reason to question such a uniform description of marriage. Exploring gender relations in nineteenth-century Malay society, Peletz (1996, p. 88) showed that “in practice, though not necessarily in local (official) ideology, men were being exchanged by women and not by other men.” Conceptual attention is drawn by Peletz (1996, p. 97) in particular to Lévi-Strauss’s “preoccupation with forms of exchange and his relative neglect of the contents and strategies of exchange.”

In his work on matrifocality in Guyana, Raymond Smith (1956) reconceptualized the power dynamics within households, of heredity, and quite simply of “men’s place” in the lives of many families. [For more recent treatment of
these issues, see Brana Schute (1979).] Lomnitz & Pérez-Lizaur (1987) found that among the elites of Mexico City, “centralizing women” and the preeminence of the “grandfamily” reveal a great deal about the limits of male power, not only in the families themselves but more generally in the companies these families own and manage. With regard to kin terms, Carol Stack’s (1974) study of African-American women in southern Illinois was among the first to challenge easy understandings of the identifiers “mother” and “father.” Stack found that men’s roles as fathers primarily depended not on their relations with the children but rather on the men’s ongoing relations with the children’s mothers.

**Parenting—Fathering**

Beginning with John and Beatrice Whiting’s studies of child rearing in the 1950s, the meanings of fatherhood and the practices of fathers have been examined in detail cross-culturally. By documenting father absence, circumcision rites, male initiation rites, children’s sleeping arrangements, status-envy, and what has been too loosely termed hypermasculinity and supermasculinity, the Whittings and their students, colleagues, and critics have written on the biological parameters within which cultural diversity may flourish in human societies (see, for example, Broude 1990, Cath et al 1989, Hollos & Leis 1989, Parker & Parker 1992, West & Konner 1976, Whiting 1963, Whiting & Whiting 1975, Whiting et al 1958).

Evidence of the variety of fathering experiences is plentiful in anthropology. Writing about rural Ireland in the 1970s, Schepers-Hughes (1979, p. 148) explained that far from being naturally inept at parenting, “men are socialized into feeling extremely inadequate and clumsy around babies.” In her later work in a shantytown in northeast Brazil, Schepers-Hughes (1992, pp. 323–25) wrote that “fathers” are the men who provide babies with powdered milk, popularly referred to as “father’s milk,” and that through this gift the symbolic legitimacy of a child is established. Taggart’s (1992) work in the Sierra Nahua region of Mexico shows that, until recently, most children slept with their father and not their mother from time of weaning until puberty. In his quantitative survey of paternal infant care among the Aka Pygmy, Hewlett (1991, p. 168) reported that “Aka fathers spend 47 percent of their day holding or within an arm’s reach of their infants, and while holding the infant, [the] father is more likely than [the] mother to hug and kiss the infant.” [See also Read (1952) for an early paper on the affairs of Gahuku-Gama men and Battaglia (1985) on Sabarl paternal nurturance in New Guinea.]

Gutmann (1996) draws on Lewis (1963) and others in tracing the historical pattern in rural Mexico, whereby men play a more significant role in rearing
sons than is possible among urban proletarians. Nonetheless, he concluded that for numerous men and women in squatter communities in Mexico, active, consistent, and long-term parenting is a crucial element in what it means to be a man and what men do.

Highlighting issues of class and history, and the contradictions of fathering in New York City, Bourgois (1995, p. 316) quoted a young Puerto Rican man:

I went out with this lady on 104th Street for three years; she got five kids; none of them are mine; and I used to look out for them, bro. On school days, I used to buy them their first day of school clothes, and all that shit. You shoulda seen me, how I was stealing car radios, like a madman. Breaking into cars—getting three, four, five radios in one night—just to buy them new sneakers.

**Male Friendship**

The subject of male spaces, men’s segregation, and what Sedgwick (1985) calls homosociality has received ethnographic recognition but little systematic analysis. In men’s secret houses in various societies (Poole 1982; Tuzin 1982, 1997), in male-only enclaves such as coffee houses or places to consume alcohol with others (Brandes 1987, Cowan 1990, Duneier 1992, Herzfeld 1985, Jardim 1992, Lewgoy 1992, Limón 1994, Marshall 1979), in the dependent relations of cuatismo and “commensal solidarity” (see Lomnitz 1977 and Papataxiarchis 1991, respectively) and unemployment among working-class youth (see Willis 1979), and in men’s sports (see Alter 1992, Wacquant 1995a,b), men’s exclusivity has been documented far better than it has been understood. Applying the work of Bourdieu on the body (e.g. 1990a), Wacquant’s (1997) studies of “(heterosexual) libido sexualis” and “(homoerotic) libido pugilistica” among African-American boxers in Chicago are notable for theorizing about masculinity (and what makes some men more “manly”) and male bodies as well as for ethnographic detail.

A central theme in discussing men’s friendship is “male bonding,” a term invented by the anthropologist Lionel Tiger (1984, p. 208) with the explanation that “men ‘need’ some haunts and/or occasions which exclude females.” Despite the fact that the phrase “male bonding” has entered into common parlance in the United States as a shorthand description of male camaraderie (and is often used in a snickering manner), Tiger coined the term in an attempt to link supposedly inherent drives on the part of men (as opposed to women) to show solidarity for one another. “Male bonding,” Tiger (1984, p. 135) wrote, is a trait developed over millennia, “a process with biological roots connected...to the establishment of alliances necessary for group defence and hunting.”
Connell (1995, p. 46) historicizes Tiger’s male bonding theory: “Since religion’s capacity to justify gender ideology collapsed, biology has been called in to fill the gap.” Thus, with their male genes, men are said to inherit tendencies to aggression, family life, competitiveness, political power, hierarchy, promiscuity, and the like. The influence of so “naturalized” an analysis extends far beyond the halls of anthropology and the academy to justify and promote the exclusion of women from key male domains. In the New Men’s Movement in the United States (for an ethnography of this movement, see Schwalbe 1996; for its philosophy, see Bly 1990), masculinity as biological given, authenticated through genitalia and pop anthropology, is raised to the level of mystical bonding.

THE BODY

Somatic Faultlines

The erotic component to male bonding and rivalry is clearly demonstrated in many new studies on same-sex sex. Weston’s (1993) paper on lesbian and gay studies in anthropology is the best review to date of how the discipline has approached this subject; here I highlight only a few additional points. Many studies in the anthropology of masculinity have as a central component the reporting and analysis of some kind of sexual relations, attractions, and fantasies between males (Almaguer 1991; Carrier 1995; Cohen 1995a,b; Herdt 1982, 1987, 1994b; Lancaster 1992, 1997a,b, 1998; Parker 1991; Roscoe 1991; Wilson 1995). Of great importance theoretically, the term “homosexuality” is increasingly out of favor, seen as too culturally narrow in meaning and implication (see Elliston 1995). As Herdt (1994a, pp. xiii–xiv) stated, “It is no longer useful to think of the Sambia as engaging in ‘homosexuality,’ because of the confusing meanings of this concept and their intellectual bias in the Western history of sexuality.”

Major anthropological studies of men who have sexual relations with other men began with Esther Newton’s (1972) study of drag queens and Joseph Carrier’s 1972 dissertation on “urban Mexican male homosexual encounters” (see Carrier 1995), although other work on same-sex sex only began appearing regularly in the discipline a decade later. Also of ongoing importance is Chodorow’s (1994) point that heterosexuality just as much as homosexuality is an understudied and problematic phenomenon, especially if sexuality is viewed as more than genital and reproductive bodily contact. (See also Greenberg 1988, Katz 1990, Rubin 1993.)

Many earlier studies in anthropology dealt with male bodies and sexuality (e.g. Malinowski 1929, 1955), and more recent works treated the topic if not necessarily the nomenclature of masculinity (e.g. Spiro 1982), yet only begin-
ning in the 1970s, with the political influence of feminism, gay and lesbian studies, and the theoretical challenge of Foucault and others like Jeffrey Weeks, did anthropologists began to systematically explore the relation between material bodies and cultural relations.

Writing about sexual culture in Brazil, Parker (1991, p. 92) remarked: “It is clear that in the modern period sexuality, focused on reproduction, has become something to be managed not merely by the Catholic church or by the state, but by individuals themselves.” Also reflecting on the tension between bodies and social technologies, Cohen (1995b) extends the anthropological discussion of sexual desire and bodies in the other direction in his treatment of political pornography in the North India city of Banaras. Writing about differential social suffering among men and women polio victims in China, Kohrman (1997) noted that “[f]or men, the most difficult aspects seem to be immobility,” whereas for women, “their pain appears to center around bodily imperfection.” One area of anthropological inquiry involving men that seems particularly scanty concerns prostitution; although there are a few ethnographic materials on male prostitutes, better ones are needed concerning men’s relations with female prostitutes.

Somatic faultlines are crossed in many instances, for example, in men’s ritual insinuation of themselves into the actual physical labors of reproduction through the couvade, usually analyzed as an affirmation of social paternity, an acknowledgment of the husband’s role in giving birth, as revealing men’s feminine qualities, and as reflecting men’s desire to imitate women’s reproductive abilities, i.e. “womb-envy” (see Moore 1988, p. 29; see also Paige & Paige 1981). It is interesting to compare the couvade with Ginsburg’s (1990, p. 64) observations of the pro-life movement in North Dakota, where “abortion is fused with the imagery of destructive, decadent, and usually male sexuality.” Such an understanding is in turn related to the relationship between sexuality and male domination: According to Godelier (1986) male sexuality among the Baruya is used to maintain the mechanisms of male domination, the production of “great men,” and the ideology that justifies the social order overall (see also Godelier & Strathern 1991).

**Sexual Faultlines: “Third Genders,” Two-Spirit People, and Hijras**

The origins of the expression “third gender,” popularly employed today in cultural and gay and lesbian studies, may be traced in part to research on gender and sexual practices that cannot be easily categorized as heterosexual or homosexual. Yet all thirdness is not alike, and this formulation itself can be reified into an essentialist dogma. In his ethnohistorical account of a nineteenth-century Zuni “man-woman,” Roscoe (1991, p. 2) wrote that We’wha was “a
man who combined the work and social roles of men and women, an artist and a priest who dressed, at least in part, in women’s clothes.” Although such Native American “cross-dressing”—until recently called berdache by anthropologists—was practiced less beginning in the twentieth century, men in many tribes continued to show a preference for women’s work and/or to be sexually attracted to other men. Introducing a volume meant to replace the term “berdache” with “two-spirit people,” Jacobs (Jacobs et al 1997) argued that “[t]he term ‘berdache’ [sic] as used by anthropologists is outdated, anachronistic and does not reflect contemporary Native American conversations about gender diversity and sexualities.” (For earlier work on berdache, see also Whitehead 1981 and Williams 1988.)

Writing about hijras in north India who may undergo castration or penectomy or be congenitally “neither man nor woman,” Cohen (1995a) explained why “third genders” are themselves unreliable categories (see also Nanda 1990). Similarly, Robertson (1992, p. 422) wrote of androgyny in the Japanese theater, “Despite the workings of [a] normalizing principle, it remains the case that in Japan…neither femininity nor masculinity has been deemed the exclusive province of either female or male bodies.” (On transvestism in Samoa, see Mageo 1992; on transvestism in Sardinia, see Counihan 1985.)

**Objects of Bodily Lust**

According to the men in rural Greece, Herzfeld (1985, p. 66) reported, women are “passive, indecisive, and unable to control either their sexuality or their tempers” (see also Herzfeld 1991). Brandes (1980, p. 77) says of Andalusia, again according to the men, that women may not be similarly considered passive, but they are known broadly “as seductresses, possessed of insatiable, lustful appetites.” Brandes (1980, p. 80) also noted that men commonly feel threatened by their attraction to women “that centers primarily on the female buttocks,” and through transference, many men may feel anxious about their own potential anal penetration. Dundes (1978) also offered a psychoanalytic framework for analyzing men’s homoerotic preoccupations with backsides.

If generally ethnographers have concluded that few men actually equate their manhood with their genitalia, nonetheless many studies indicate that they are a favorite point of reference. Among the hijras, wrote Nanda (1990, p. 24), “emasculation is the major source of the ritual power,” akin perhaps to what Gayle Rubin (1994, p. 79), in a critique of the degradation of psychoanalytic approaches, calls “phallus ex machina.” Even more ink has been spilled in anthropology to comparatively scrutinize the symbolic role of semen. Among the Sambia, Herdt (1994b, p. 181) reported that “[f]ear of semen depletion is essential to the male viewpoint.” As Herdt also famously chronicled (1994b, p. 181),
Not with men, kinship, and body among the Bimin-Kuskusmin in Papua New Guinea. Brandes (1980, p. 83) noted that in Moteros, Spain, just as mother’s milk is considered to exist in limited supply, so too is semen: With each ejaculation, men get closer to their graves. Women wishing to kill their husbands have sex with them more often. (On the ramifications of semen loss for athletes, see Gregor 1985, p. 145; Monsiváis 1981, p. 113; Wacquant 1995a, p. 509.) The sacred powers of semen are also invoked among Meratus Dayaks in Indonesia with a spell to stop bullets: “You are semen. White divinity. A clotted drop. Closed with a key. Fluid iron. Fluid semen” (cited in Tsing 1993, p. 77).

POWER

Not surprisingly, a central concern in the early studies of Lewis Henry Morgan documenting cross-cultural variation was the shifting relationship between kinship and power. Typical was his comment that, “In the patriarchal family of the Roman type, paternal authority passed beyond the bounds of reason into an excess of domination” (Morgan 1985, pp. 466–67). Despite other disagreements, in most anthropological writings on masculinity to date, one common theme concerns inequality, and whether, how, and why gender inequality may characterize relations between women and men and between different men in diverse historical and cultural situations. To describe elements of male jockeying for power, and as part of seeking out the “deep structure of masculinity,” David Gilmore (1990, p. 106) advanced the notion that in many if not most cultures, men, at least, share the belief that men are artificially made while women are naturally born. Thus, men must prove themselves to each other in ways that women do not (see also Dwyer 1978; Herdt 1987, p. 6; Mead 1975, p. 103). Such cross-cultural and transhistorical images regarding men are echoed in recent work by Bourdieu (1990b) on masculinity, e.g. in his statement that regardless of time or space, “among all forms of essentialism [sexism] is undoubtedly the most difficult to uproot” (p. 103), and when he (1997) declared that “the sexual act is thus represented as an act of domination, an act of possession, a ‘taking’ of woman by man,” as if sexual positions were the same for all people at all moments.

Alpha and Mythic Males

There is ethnographic evidence for such generalizations. In rural Turkey, not only is the truly creative God symbolized as masculine, but human men are
themselves said to be the ones who give life while women merely give birth (Delaney 1991). Among the nineteenth-century Tswana, through the exchange of cattle “men produced and reproduced the social substance of the collectivity—in contrast to the physical reproduction, by women, of its individual components” (Comaroff 1985, p. 60). The problem lies not with analysis of particular cultural situations, but rather with the summary that “men worldwide share the same notions” (Gilmore 1990, p. 109) about manly (active, creative) men, when such notions are based overwhelmingly on what male informants have told male ethnographers about themselves and about women.

Those writers who hold, with Lévi-Strauss (1969a, p. 496), to the foregone conclusion that the “emergence of symbolic thought must have required that women, like words, should be things that were exchanged,” do not often find culturally significant differences among men and between different kinds of masculinities. In contrast to those paradigms predicated on rather homogenous images of masculinity and all-powerful men are the concepts of hegemonic and subordinate (or marginal) masculinities advanced by Connell (1987, 1995). Connell seeks to comprehensively map power inequalities, while also accounting for diverse relations between women and men and particularly the creative agency of women (see Stephen 1997) as well as men in transforming gender relations.

An important contribution of anthropological studies of masculinity has been to explore the subjective perceptions of men about being men, including the relation of being men to claiming, seeking, and exercising various forms of power over other men and over women. In this way, these studies have served to complement earlier work on the “myth of male domination” (cf Leacock 1981, Rogers 1975), and questions such as women’s informal power and performative aspects of “being manly.” One difficult task for the study of masculinity has been to document the variety of forms and guises of engendered power relations (à la Foucault) without losing sight of fundamental inequalities between men and women in many contexts that often may be harder to discern at a familial, small-scale level. Recognizing variety, and even complicity, does not mean forfeiting the ability to distinguish greater and lesser powers nor require subscribing to a hydraulic theory of power whereby the gain of one is necessarily the loss of the other, though it decidedly does require a clear historical framework (see di Leonardo 1979 and Sacks 1982).

Nationalism, War, and Domestic Violence

Important and innovative recent work on masculinity and violence pertains to the questions of nationalism, war, and domestic violence. War obviously exists before and outside nationalist contexts, and readers interested in men and
war in tribal and other nonstate societies may contemplate Chagnon (1968) for a classic sociobiological ethnography of masculinity and warfare as well as Fried et al (1967) more generally on the anthropology of war. As to nationalism, its links to manhood in a variety of cultural contexts could not be clearer. For instance, Mosse (1996) documented the associated histories of European nationalism and masculinity, Oliven (1996) discussed Brazilian gauchos and national identity, Guy (1992) examined the historical relationship between male sexuality, family, and nationalism in Argentina.

In rural Crete, Herzfeld (1985, p. 25) described *poniria* (low cunning) as “at once an emblematic attribute of manhood and, because quintessentially *Greek*, a source of aggressive pride” and characteristic of a certain type of manhood, analogous to womanhood in opposition to official-male forms of wisdom and intelligence. Greenberg (1989) made similar points for a village in southern Mexico. Analyzing a popular depiction of postcolonial Parsi boys in India as spineless and impotent, Lurhmann (1996, pp. 132, 133) reasoned that this sexualized discourse about male inadequacies represents a displacement of anxiety because “among the Parsis the idea of impotence is associated not only with Parsi men, but with the end of empire.” In very different ways, others have made connections between masculinity, violence, and formal power. In New Guinea, men influenced by the colonial message that poverty there was due primarily to male violence responded, according to Brison (1995, p. 172), either with new ambivalence about power or they tried to capitalize on their “roughness,” which in both cases served to enhance the Europeans’ power and prestige. For a sharp-edged ethnographic investigation of masculinity and military leaders in the United States, see Cohn (1987). On aspects of masculinity within state terror, see Nordstrom & Martin (1992).

Whether wife beating is witnessed among newlyweds (Herdt 1994b) or during a woman’s first pregnancy (Gutmann 1996), whether male violence is said to prevail among particular classes historically more than others or among men who are losing their authoritarian power over women (Bourgois 1995), in anthropological writings on men, the sources of violence, if not its consequences, are often overdetermined and undertheorized except by proponents of the importance of biological-hormonal factors in human behavior, such as Konner (1982, p. 111), who wrote that the “strongest case for [biologically governed] gender difference is made in the realm of aggressive behavior.” Corresponding theories drawing on political-economic, racial, gender, and cultural factors are woefully inadequate in the anthropological literature on men and violence.

Nor have male anthropologists been sufficiently active in researching some of the most difficult and important issues related to engendered violence like rape and wife beating. For a unique collection on wife beating, see Counts et al (1992). Although Gregor (1985) and others have discussed the threat of rape in
tribal societies, with the exception of Bourgois’s (1995) and Sanday’s (1990) work on rape in the contemporary United States, few serious attempts to document and contextualize this form of male injury against women in modern societies have been made by anthropologists. [Malinowski’s (1929) report on yausa—the “orgiastic assaults” by Trobriand women as they gang-rape a man—remains unusual in the ethnographic annals.]

WOMEN AND MASCULINITY

To reverse decades of male anthropologists rather exclusively interviewing and describing male informants, feminist anthropologists placed greater emphasis beginning in the 1970s on women and so-called “women’s worlds.” In good measure this was a question of “discovering” the women so notoriously absent (or “disappeared”) in earlier ethnographies. Only in the 1980s did men systematically begin exploring men as engendered and engendering persons. Yet ironically, most ethnographic studies of manhood have made insufficient use of feminist contributions to our knowledge of gender and sexuality and have failed to engage sufficiently in the important debates within this discourse. In part, this illustrates what Lutz (1995) calls the “masculinization of theory,” here through the evasion of what is considered theoretically unworthy. [See, for example, Gilmore’s (1990, pp. 23, 166) censure of “doctrinaire Marxists” and “radical feminists.”]

How to incorporate the opinions and experiences of women with respect to men and masculinity is an important concern. Some anthropologists have argued that, as men, they are severely limited in their ability to work with women. (For the differing views on this subject, see Brandes 1987; Gilmore 1990, 1991; Gregory 1984; Herdt & Stoller 1990; Keesing 1982; Streicker 1995). Gutmann (1997) argued that ethnographic investigations of men and masculinity must include research on women’s ideas about and experiences with men. More than a simple statistical assertion that increasing one’s sample size will sometimes increase one’s understanding of a subject, and more than providing a supplement to ethnographic work with men on masculinity through adding women’s voices and distinct experiences to those of men, the issue is even more that masculinities develop and transform and have little meaning except in relation to women and female identities and practices in all their similar diversity and complexity.

Some anthropologists have written of men’s castration anxieties (e.g. Murphy & Murphy 1985) and mother-son intimacies (cf Gregor 1985, Spiro 1982). Writing within a Lacanian framework, Allison (1994, p. 150) said of Tokyo sex clubs, “whatever men say they need, think they’re doing, and justify as necessary ‘for work’…is effected symbolically and ritualistically through
women and the sexuality they represent.” Bloch (1986, pp. 103–4) discussed the central ambiguity of Merina male circumcision rituals as involving the identification of women with both wildness and ancestral descent. It might be argued that since Lévi-Strauss [e.g. *The Raw and the Cooked* (1969b)], all this has been obvious in anthropology: Working within this framework Sherry Ortner (1974) constructed her nature/culture model that explicitly defined men in relation to women. Yet this model is premised on the notion that although women may “control” male children, among adults it is uniformly men who culturally command women.

Thus on one level the issue of women’s influence on men and masculinity has been extensively if still far from adequately discussed in the literature of mother-son bonding, Oedipal conflict, and mother-son estrangement. A further step that must be made is to link these seemingly more psychological concerns and studies to political questions of power and inequality. We need to pay attention not only to mothers’ authority over male children but also to the influence of women on male adults. Stern’s (1995) study of the late colonial era in Mexico is exemplary in its analysis of women’s agency and aspirations in promoting “shifts in major social conventions of gender” and patriarchy within the context of a new political economy of growth and industrialization.

The recurrent theme in much anthropological writing on masculinity is that, “according to the natives,” men are made and women are born. The thorough critique of this view in MacCormack & Strathern (1980) has been very influential in feminist anthropology, but unfortunately too little considered by anthropologists for whom women are largely irrelevant to constructions of masculinity. It seems worth asking, however, whether bias might not enter into some ethnographers’ accounts. This is a methodological issue, and even more a conceptual one, because although it is a mistake to assume too much similarity from one cultural context to another, conclusions regarding the impossibility of a male ethnographer compiling any useful information about women, much less from women about men, seem to merit further attention. Whether women and men absent themselves from the others’ presence during rituals, for example, women and men do regularly interact in other times, and they profoundly affect each others’ lives and identities. We must not confuse formal roles and definitions with daily life.

Important strides have been made in studying women in a variety of cultural contexts. Corresponding studies of masculinities still lag far behind. This does not mean that ethnographies of men should be viewed, understood, or utilized primarily as a complement to women’s studies. Rather, they must be developed and nurtured as integral to understanding the ambiguous relationship between multigendered differences and similarities, equalities and inequalities.
As with the study of ethnicity: one can never study one gender without studying others.

RECENT POINTS OF CONVERGENCE

Male Initiation Rites

In discussing manly rites of passage in New Guinea, Keesing (1982) finds parallels between that area and Amazonia: (a) the emphasis placed on created versus natural growth of boys into men, and (b) what men can produce—in ways that women cannot—is men. What initiation does, Keesing (1982, p. 35) wrote, is to “dramatize the change of status through symbolic rebirth—while at the same time operating directly and drastically, at a psychological level, on the bonds to women and their world, which the novices must leave behind.” Debate continues about whether initiation rites represent more symbolic ruptures with mothers, and women in general, or are more tied to puberty and physiological stages of maturation; both male bodily mutilation and male seclusion from women are prominent in many recorded rites of initiation. (See also Herdt 1982, Newman & Boyd 1982, Whiting et al 1958.)

Once again, from New Guinea to Amazonia to Madagascar, women seem central to both initiation events and to various analyses explaining their significance. Comaroff (1985, p. 114) wrote of Tswana precolonial initiation rites as projecting man as “skilled human being” and woman as “incompletely socialized.” Godelier (1986, p. 47) reported that among the Baruya, “it takes ten years…to separate a boy from his mother,” while “it takes a little less than a fortnight to turn an adolescent into a girl ready for marriage and childrearing.” Of the circumcision ceremonies among the Merina of Madagascar, Bloch (1986, p. 60) said that “the negative representation of femininity is particularly prominent.” Yet elsewhere Bloch (1987, pp. 324–25) wrote of “the systematically contradictory nature of representations of women” among the Merina (emphasis in original). An understanding of contradiction and indeterminacy as important is often lacking in depictions of the semblance and sense of male initiation rites, though some like Dundes (1976) have written effectively about the ambivalent gender of male initiates.

Machismo

Men in Mexico, Latin America, and indeed all Spanish-speaking countries have often been characterized as uniformly macho by anthropologists, other scholars, and journalists. Despite the fact that the terms macho, in its modern sense, and machismo have short word histories, many writers from all over the world have seemed intent on discovering a ubiquitous, virulent, and “typically

The central claim of Brusco (1995), for example, is that evangelist Protestantism in Colombia has liberated women because it has "domesticated" men: Evangelist husbands and fathers eschew "public" machismo—drunkenness, violence, and adultery—and return to their family responsibilities. Ramírez (1993, p. 13) noted that the expression "machismo" is not used in the working-class areas he studied in Puerto Rico, yet it is commonly employed in academic and feminist circles on the island. Lancaster (1992, p. 237) reported that particular and unequal male-male sexual relations are what ultimately "grounds" the system of machismo in general in Nicaragua. Women may be ever-present in men's lives, but they do not factor into the masculinity equation for basic bodily reasons.

CONCLUSION

In any discussion of masculinity, there are potential problems, especially if the topic is reduced to possession of male genitalia or still worse if it is regarded as "for men only." In many ways arbitrary and artificial, the present review is intended to counter such typologizing. This essay has not, I trust, been read in any sense as representing "men's turn" at the scholarly tables of gender inquiry. Rather, my purpose has been to describe studies of men-as-men in the field within the context of a multigendered puzzle.

Anthropologists of various subjects will recognize the taken-for-granted nature of men and manhood in much work to date. A quick perusal of the indices to most ethnographies shows that "women" exist as a category while "men" are far more rarely listed. Masculinity is either ignored or considered so much the norm that a separate inventory is unnecessary. Then, too, "gender" often means women and not men.

"[I]n the most delicate subjects the ethnographer is bound to a large extent to depend on hearsay," Malinowski (1929, p. 283) declared, and with rare exception the situation has hardly changed since his time. How are we to understand "effeminate" Arapesh men who father their children as if they were mothers? Why do hijras in India seek permanent termination in their quest for "emasculature"? How and why do flirty cross-dressing men in Nicaragua (see Lancaster 1997b) exhibit "femininity"? These are questions that constitute the
bodily materiality and practices of men who define themselves and are defined by others in part simply as people who are not women.

Between the performative modes in which manhood is emphasized on Crete—a readiness with words, singing, dancing, and sheep rustling (see Herzfeld 1985, p. 124)—and the attempt to invent modern hurdles for achieving manhood status (see Gilmore 1990, p. 221) lies a variety of qualities and characterizations anthropologists have labeled masculine and manly. Contrary to the assertion that men are made while women are born (albeit “in the natives’ point of view”) is the understanding that men are often the defenders of “nature” and “the natural order of things,” while women are the ones instigating change in gender relations and much else. This is part of what Peletz (1996, p. 294) calls “the historic restructuring of male roles,” as the contradictions, inequalities, and ambiguities of gender relations, ideologies, and practices in all their myriad facets and manifestations themselves prove central to the process of engendered social transformations.

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