Debating Modern Masculinities
Other Palgrave Pivot titles

Thomas Birtchnell and William Hoyle: 3D Printing for Development in the Global South: The 3D4D Challenge

David Fitzgerald and David Ryan: Obama, US Foreign Policy and the Dilemmas of Intervention

Lars Elleström: Media Transformation: The Transfer of Media Characteristics Among Media

Claudio Povolo: The Novelist and the Archivist: Fiction and History in Alessandro Manzoni’s The Betrothed

Gerbrand Tholen: The Changing Nature of the Graduate Labour Market: Media, Policy and Political Discourses in the UK

Aaron Stoller: Knowing and Learning as Creative Action: A Reexamination of the Epistemological Foundations of Education

Carl Packman: Payday Lending: Global Growth of the High-Cost Credit Market

Lisa Lau and Om Prakash Dwivedi: Re-Orientalism and Indian Writing in English

Chapman Rackaway: Communicating Politics Online

G. Douglas Atkins: T.S. Eliot’s Christmas Poems: An Essay in Writing-as-Reading and Other “Impossible Unions”

Marsha Berry and Mark Schleser: Mobile Media Making in an Age of Smartphones

Isabel Harbaugh: Smallholders and the Non-Farm Transition in Latin America

Daniel A. Wagner (editor): Learning and Education in Developing Countries: Research and Policy for the Post-2015 UN Development Goals

Murat Ustaoğlu and Ahmet İncekara: Islamic Finance Alternatives for Emerging Economies: Empirical Evidence from Turkey

Laurent Bibard: Sexuality and Globalization: An Introduction to a Phenomenology of Sexualities

Thorsten Botz-Bornstein and Noreen Abdullah-Khan: The Veil in Kuwait: Gender, Fashion, Identity

Vasilis Kostakis and Michel Bauwens: Network Society and Future Scenarios for a Collaborative Economy

Tom Watson (editor): Eastern European Perspectives on the Development of Public Relations: Other Voices

Erik Paul: Australia as US Client State: The Geopolitics of De-Democratization and Insecurity

Floyd Weatherspoon: African-American Males and the U.S. Justice System of Marginalization: A National Tragedy

Mark Axelrod: No Symbols Where None Intended: Literary Essays from Laclos to Beckett

Paul M. W. Hackett: Facet Theory and the Mapping Sentence: Evolving Philosophy, Use and Application

Irwin Wall: France Votes: The Election of François Hollande

David J. Staley: Brain, Mind and Internet: A Deep History and Future

Georgiy Voloshin: The European Union’s Normative Power in Central Asia: Promoting Values and Defending Interests

Shane McCorristine: William Corder and the Red Barn Murder: Journeys of the Criminal Body

Catherine Blair: Securing Pension Provision: The Challenge of Reforming the Age of Entitlement

Zarlasht M. Razeq: UNDP’s Engagement with the Private Sector, 1994–2011
Debating Modern Masculinities: Change, Continuity, Crisis?

Edited by

Steven Roberts
Senior Lecturer on Social Policy and Sociology,
University of Kent, UK
Contents

Acknowledgements vii
Notes on Contributors viii

1 Introduction: Masculinities in Crisis?
Opening the Debate 1
Steven Roberts

2 The Limits of Masculinity: Boys, Taste and Cultural Consumption 17
Victoria Cann

3 Degrees of Masculinity: Working and Middle-Class Undergraduate Students’ Constructions of Masculine Identities 35
Nicola Ingram and Richard Waller

4 ‘We’re Different from Everyone Else’: Contradictory Working-Class Masculinities in Contemporary Britain 52
Michael R.M. Ward

5 Oppression, Acceptance or Civil Indifference? Middle-Aged Gay Men’s Accounts of ‘Heterospaces’ 70
Paul Simpson

6 Brothers of Metal! Heavy Metal Masculinities, Moshpit Practices and Homosociality 88
Gabby Riches
Contents

7  Straight Guys Do Wear Make-Up: Contemporary Masculinities and Investment in Appearance  106
   Brendan Gough, Matthew Hall and Sarah Seymour-Smith

8  Theorising Masculinities in Contemporary Britain  125
   Eric Anderson and Mark McCormack
Acknowledgements

Editing a collection of this type, one which actively encourages debate and dialogue among authors during the process of production, is not always an easy task. However, it has been a challenge made all the more manageable thanks to the flexibility, sensitivity and collegiate spirit demonstrated by the contributors, despite them often approaching the subject matter from divergent viewpoints. In addition, many of the contributions to this edited volume owe a great deal to the presenters and participants who attended the very stimulating one-day seminar, ‘Young Masculinities: Challenges, Changes and Transitions’ (hosted by the BSA Youth Study Group in November 2012). The ideas for this book were in no small part developed at that particular event, something for which the editor and authors alike share immeasurable gratitude. Collectively, we all thank those who took part in the various pieces of research that serve here as the primary basis of discussion in each chapter, and hope that we have done them justice in conveying their voices and their perspectives.

On a more personal note, thanks to my daughter, Olivia, for being patient and forgiving, even when I took the liberty of making the final edits during our holiday!
Notes on Contributors

*Eric Anderson* is Professor of Masculinity, Sexuality and Sport at the University of Winchester. He is Chief Science officer at AshleyMadison.com, has published 12 books, 50 academic articles and is regularly featured in international television, print and digital media. His most recent book, *21st Century Jocks*, is published with Palgrave Macmillan. His other books on masculinities are *Inclusive Masculinity* (2009), *In the Game: Gay Athletes and the Cult of Masculinity* (2005), and *The Monogamy Gap: Men, Love and the Reality of Cheating* (2012).

*Victoria Cann* is Lecturer in Humanities at the University of East Anglia. Her work is broadly concerned with the (re)production of identity, and youth and gender identities more specifically. In her recently completed doctoral thesis ‘Appropriate Articulations of Taste: The (Re)Production of Gender in Contemporary Youth Taste Cultures’, she explored the role that taste cultures play in the (re)production of gender during youth. Victoria is keen to engage young people with academia and undertakes a range of outreach projects alongside her research and teaching.

*Brendan Gough* is Professor of Social Psychology at Leeds Metropolitan University. He is a critical social psychologist and qualitative researcher interested in men and masculinities. He has previously worked at Sheffield Hallam University, the University of Leeds and Nottingham Trent University. He has published papers on gender identities and relations, and his research has been funded by a variety of bodies, including the ESRC, NHS and the BPS. He is co-founder and co-editor
of *Qualitative Research in Psychology*; he edits the Critical Psychology section of *Social & Personality Psychology Compass*, and is associate editor for *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*. He has co-authored/edited three books in the areas of critical social psychology, reflexivity in qualitative research and men’s health.

**Matth Hall** is a social psychologist and qualitative researcher based at Nottingham Trent University. He has published papers on men, masculinities and men’s health. In particular he is interested in understanding how men negotiate masculinities in non-typical gender practices and environments. He is also interested in the construction of new, mediated and cyberspace identities; gender and sexuality discourses in the media; embodiment and body image; conversation and social interaction. He has authored book chapters on masculinities in online settings and is currently authoring a book about metrosexual masculinities.

**Nicola Ingram** is Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Bath, and author of *Successful Working-Class Boys: Teenage Identities and Education* (forthcoming Palgrave Macmillan). Her research is focused on classed and gendered inequalities. Currently she is co-investigator on a British Academy funded project on academy schools and a Leverhulme funded project on gendered and classed graduate transitions. Nicola is co-convenor of the BSA Bourdieu Study Group and the BSA Education Study Group.

**Mark McCormack** is Senior Lecturer at Durham University, and Co-Director of its Centre for Sex, Gender and Sexualities. His research explores the influence of decreasing homophobia on gender and sexual identities, and he has published in a number of journals including *British Journal of Sociology, Sex Roles* and *Sociology*. He is the author of *The Declining Significance of Homophobia: How Teenage Boys Are Redefining Masculinity and Heterosexuality* and has a forthcoming co-authored book on bisexual men’s lives.

**Gabby Riches** is a PhD student in the Research Institute for Sport, Physical Activity and Leisure at Leeds Metropolitan University, UK. Her doctoral research explores the role and significance moshpit practices play in the lives of female heavy metal fans in Leeds’ extreme metal music scene. She completed her undergraduate and Master’s of Arts at University of Alberta, Canada. Her research interests include the socio-spatial constructions of underground music spaces, subcultural
gender performativities, non-representational theory, marginal leisures and embodiment. Her research around gender and heavy metal music has been published in the *Journal for Cultural Research, Musicultures* and *International Association for the Studies of Popular Music*.

**Steven Roberts** is Senior Lecturer in Social Policy and Sociology at the University of Kent. He co-convenes the British Sociological Association Youth Study Group, is Vice Chair of the European Sociological Association Youth and Generation Research Network, and sits on the editorial boards of *Journal of Youth Studies* and Sociological Research Online.

**Sarah Seymour-Smith** is a discursive psychologist whose research mainly focuses on men's health and the study of masculinities across a variety of topics including male sex offenders. Sarah is a senior lecturer at Nottingham Trent University but worked as a research fellow at the Open University prior to that. Sarah is on the editorial board of *Qualitative Research in Psychology* and is a visiting member of the Discourse and Rhetoric Group at the University of Loughborough.

**Paul Simpson** is Lecturer at the University of Manchester who specialises in gender, sexuality and ageing and qualitative research methods with an emphasis on participant observation. He has published in *Sociological Research Online, Sexualities, The British Journal of Sociology, Families, Relationships and Societies* and *Critical Studies in Fashion & Beauty*. He is due to publish a monograph with Palgrave Macmillan on middle-aged gay men and ageing. He is currently working on masculinities in the workplace, is principal investigator on an interdisciplinary study of older people and sexual/intimate citizenship and is a founder member of the OPuS Research Group (Older People's understandings of Sexuality).

**Richard Waller** is Associate Professor of the Sociology of Education at the University of the West of England, Bristol, and he has taught widely in further and higher education since 1994. His research interests focus upon social class, education, gender, identity and student experiences, and he is especially fond of using qualitative research methods. He has published nearly 20 journal articles and book chapters, and is currently working on two co-authored books including a forthcoming Sociology of Education textbook. He is on the editorial board of three journals including the *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, and was until recently a co-convenor of the British Sociological Association's Education Study Group.
Michael R.M. Ward is Research Assistant at the Faculty of Health and Social Care at the Open University. He is currently working on an ESRC project titled ‘Beyond Male Role Models’ which is exploring gender identities and practices in work with young men. His doctoral research was an ethnographic study that centred on the lives of a group of young working-class men (aged 16–18) in a community in the South Wales Valleys and will be published by Palgrave Macmillan later this year. His other work has examined the transport needs of older people in rural Lincolnshire. Alongside colleagues at the University of Lincoln, he wrote a report seeking to develop community transport in the county. He has taught Sociology at both further and higher education institutions to students of all ages and is a tutor at the Lifelong Learning Centre at Cardiff University and an Associate lecturer at the Open University.
Introduction: Masculinities in Crisis? Opening the Debate

Steven Roberts

Abstract: This chapter outlines the concerns as set out by Diane Abbot’s speech in 2013 in which she suggested that contemporary young British men are facing a crisis of masculinity. Situating this view of masculinity as part of historical trend towards crisis tendency, the chapter sets the tone for the collection by offering an opening response to Abbott’s claims. Recent developments in the theorising of men’s lives are brought to attention – especially Anderson’s theory of inclusive masculinity – to help interrogate this crisis talk, at the same time setting up a critical debate among authors on the best way to theorise multiple, fluid and complex expressions of masculinity.

Keywords: crisis; Diane Abbott; inclusive masculinity; Masculinities

Introduction

Following the emergence of critical masculinities studies in the late 1970s, academic research started to focus on men as gendered beings. The pioneering research of Raewyn Connell (1987; 2000) was central to such developments, with her theory of hegemonic masculinity being widely recognised as having an unparalleled influence on studies of men’s lives (Beasley 2012). Adopted by scholars across disciplinary boundaries, Connell’s conceptual framework provided researchers with a way to examine and document the negative components of masculinity, the existence of a plurality of masculinities (as opposed to a static, unitary form) and, importantly, the ways that men are hierarchically stratified within society, with the summit being occupied by those men who are ‘economically successful, racially superior, and visibly heterosexual’ (McDowell 2003: 11). In sharp contrast to previous studies of masculinity influenced by the field of functionalist sociology and sex role theory, Connell’s major departure was to locate a theory of power as a central focus to ensure a more thorough account and explanation for the intricacies of gender relations and the nature of intramasculine domination. Yet, despite the academic attention over a long period of time (e.g. Kimmel 1987, 2008; Hearn 1987, 2010; Messner 1994) given to the operation of power and the differences amongst men (as well as between men and women), public debates about whether masculinity is in crisis have often taken centre stage, especially in the popular press and in political debates. Such ‘crisis-talk’, and especially one particular recent rendition, serves as the key stimulus for this book.

In May 2013, as part of a lecture series for the Demos think tank, the Labour shadow public health minister Diane Abbott gave a speech entitled ‘Britain’s crisis of masculinity’. Abbott raised concerns about how rapid economic and social change has affected male identity and she suggested that this ‘crisis’ had created a number of largely unspoken problems.

Abbott’s sentiments, which were given wide print and broadcast media coverage, were met with a mixed reception. Critics from both the left and the right of the political divide were largely unified in criticising the comparisons she made with masculinity from a bygone era, an alleged ‘golden age’ when men, like her own father, ‘prided themselves on being providers – for their spouses, families and themselves’. Beyond
this comparison, though, Abbott contended that the contemporary crisis includes some more widely accepted ‘inescapable truths’. These include:

- Fewer men than ever are able to connect the fabric of their lives to traditional archetypes of masculinity;
- More people today are employed behind tills than in mining coal or working in other heavy industries;
- The decline of heavy industry and manufacturing jobs has meant many men feel uncomfortable about the kinds of jobs on offer to them – particularly service jobs.

Abbott also contended that there exists a lack of respect among men for women’s autonomy and a normalisation of homophobia.

This public discussion of the behaviours of boys and men points to a presumed need for policy intervention to act as a corrective to the apparent crisis in masculinity, which presents (young) men as both at risk and also a risk to others. In a way this follows developments where men have emerged from being the implicit and assumed recipients (and makers) of social policy, to being named explicitly as the concern of social policy (see for example Hearn’s 2010 account of men’s health, among other policy realms).

The claims made in Abbott’s speech, and the wider public concerns around boys, men and masculinity, then, are taken in this book as a first point of debate. Adopting a range of quantitative and qualitative methods, each chapter draws on empirical data exploring issues and performances of masculinities from a range of settings in order to critically interrogate the current public discourse that proposes that there is a crisis of masculinity.

Each chapter engages with and ultimately rejects the central thesis that pertains to masculinity in crisis. In building arguments to reject this position, the challenge for the authors is to spell out their view of how modern masculinities operate, how they are expressed and performed, and what consequences follow as a corollary. This, then, is the second point of debate with which this book concerns itself, and it is very much a debate about theorising modern masculinities. However, it is not the mission of this book to present a wide-ranging overview of the different ways in which masculinity/ies can be conceived, theorised or studied – plenty of good introductory (sometimes elaborate) texts exist to meet such a need (e.g. Reeser 2010; Kimmel et al. 2005; Whitehead 2002). Instead, taking a narrower focus, the collection is primarily concerned