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Abstract This article evaluates the usefulness of the concept of hegemony in theorizing men. The discussion is located within the framework of 'Critical Studies on Men' (CSM), in which the centrality of power issues is recognized, rather than that of 'Men's Studies', where it is frequently not. Recent uses, as in 'hegemonic masculinity' in the analysis of masculinities, are subjected to a qualified critique. Instead a shift is proposed from masculinity to men, to focus on 'the hegemony of men'. This formulation seeks to address the double complexity that men are both a *social category formed by the gender system* and *collective and individual agents, often dominant collective and individual agents, of social practices*. This is explored mainly in relation to substantive studies on men, and briefly the institutional development of CSM. The concluding discussion examines how these arguments connect with debates in feminist theory and social theory.

keywords *gender, hegemony, ideology, masculinities, men, power*

Studying men is in itself neither new nor necessarily radical. It all depends on how this is done. Men have been studying men for a long time, and calling it 'History', 'Sociology', or whatever. These, usually unnamed, 'men's studies', in the simple sense of studies by men, may or may not be explicitly about men. They include what Mary O'Brien (1981) mockingly called malestream accounts, in which men are not explicitly present or men are represented but in ways that do not problematize 'men'. There are now several literatures that theorize and represent men in other ways: feminist, gay, queer, pro-feminist, and other critiques outside the malestream, such as some postcolonial writing. These may be directed to men as a social category, men as a gender class, specific groups of men, or collections of individuals who are men.

There has also developed a set of studies on men, often too conveniently labelled 'Men's Studies'. To study men within the frame of 'Men's Studies' is very limited (see, for example, Hearn, 1989, 1997). Men's Studies, as conceived in some versions, is not in women's interests. To speak of 'Men's Studies' is at the best ambiguous: is it studies on men or studies by

men? It implies a false parallel with Women's Studies. At worst, it is anti-feminist. The idea of Men's Studies may be favoured by some men who have no interest whatsoever in promoting feminist theory and practice. Thus, I oppose developing the field within the framework of Men's Studies, while being aware of the term's variable connotations in different parts of the world.[1]

In this article I first outline the field of studies of men within the framework of 'Critical Studies on Men' (CSM), in which the centrality of power issues is recognized. My central concern is the concept of hegemony, and its major uses in recent theorizing on men. These uses, as in 'hegemonic masculinity' in the analysis of masculinities, are subjected to a qualified critique; instead I argue for its applicability to the analysis of the social category of men, as in the hegemony of men. This is explored mainly in relation to substantive studies on men, and briefly the institutional development of CSM. The article is concluded by discussing connections of these lines of argument with debates in feminist theory and social theory.

Critical Studies on Men

Critical Studies on Men arise from a number of critiques – primarily from feminism, but also from gay and queer scholarship, and from men's responses, particularly men's pro-feminist responses, to feminism and debates on gender relations. CSM thus refers to that range of studies that critically address men in the context of gendered power relations. It is clear that the most influential among these critiques is feminist theory and practice, and the feminist naming of men as men (Hanmer, 1990). Other challenges have named men as gendered in different ways. Gay scholarship, by virtue of the reference to same-gender sexuality, necessarily names people in terms of gender. Gay, and indeed some queer, writing and scholarship focuses on men in quite different ways from feminist writing and scholarship (for example, Beemyn and Eliason, 1996). There are good reasons why feminist and gay critiques may not necessarily coincide (Edwards, 1994). Increasingly queer scholarship is becoming a major force in the broad field of studies on genders and sexualities, including men and men's sexualities. While gay writing may or may not problematize men's power or even the category of 'men' itself, this is not the case with much queer writing which certainly does problematize the category of men, along with other gender and sexual binaries.

In recent years Critical Studies on Men by both women and men have become something of a 'success story', with book series, journals, networks, conferences, research projects, even encyclopaedic reference works. However, the focus on men brings possible dangers in re-excluding women. One way to reduce these risks is to consistently examine the specific ways in which men exist as and in gendered power relations, with women, children, young people and each other. While it would be mistaken to assume there are issues of power in every social situation (Holmwood, 1999), consistently interrogating power may assist in avoiding the problems of many previous analyses of men (Hearn, 1998b; Hanmer and Hearn, 1999).

The reference to 'Critical' in CSM centrally concerns questions of power, gendered power. While power functions, flows and re-forms in multiple ways, it is difficult to avoid the fact that in most societies, and certainly those of western, 'advanced' capitalism, men are structurally and interpersonally dominant in most spheres of life. This may be called patriarchy or historically differentiated patriarchies (Walby, 1986, 1990; Hearn, 1987, 1992). This approach does not downplay differences among and between men in terms of age, class, ethnicity and other differences, including their relations with women. Rather it emphasizes the complex interplay of unities and differences between men within patriarchies (Hearn and Collinson, 1993).

I take this position to try to be more accurate, dare I say it, more scientific.[2] Much social science is pre-scientific and many specific contributions still do not notice that men are gendered beings, socially constructed and reproduced, not just agendered, asexual, 'neutral' adults, citizens or people, as in most standard economics or political science textbooks. Many women and a relatively few men have noticed that men can, first, be gendered, and, second, studied in a different, more critical way.

To sum up so far: the use of the term and the framework of CSM seeks to make clear that these studies of men are: *critical*; *on men*; *explicitly gendered*; and *by men and women, separately or collaboratively*. The development of CSM has many implications, including: (a) the clarification of different political positions and discursive practices adopted (Hearn, 1998b); (b) the development of appropriate research methods and methodologies (Hearn and Morgan, 1990; Morgan, 1992; Pease, 1996, 2000a, 2000b; Hearn, 1998c); (c) the interpretation of results of empirical research (Collinson and Hearn, 1994; Hearn, 1998c); and (d) the transformation of academic disciplines (Hearn, 1997, 1998a).

The problem of power, the problem of men's power

The 'criticalness' within CSM comes particularly from concern with power, that is, gendered, usually predominantly men's, power.[3] This is not to say that all men are (all) powerful or men are all powerful; that is not so; this is especially clear from a global perspective on men. Rather it is that power is a very significant, pervasive aspect of men's social relations, actions and experiences, and that these matters have continued to be neglected in mainstream social science. Moreover, recent engagements with 'hegemony' within CSM need to be located within broad debates on power, gendered power and men's relations to such power.

What is at issue here is the persistent presence of accumulations of power and powerful resources by certain men, the doing of power and dominance in many men's practices, and the pervasive association of the social category of men with power. Men's power and dominance can be structural and interpersonal, public and/or private, accepted and taken-for-granted and/or recognized and resisted, obvious or subtle. It also includes violations and violences of all the various kinds.

In my own work I have focused on a number of different aspects of men, and this has entailed engaging centrally with questions of power. This has

applied in both general theoretical and historical analyses of men in patriarchies (Hearn, 1987, 1992), and more specific examinations of the associations of men and power, as in management (for example, Collinson and Hearn, 1996) or men's violence to women (for example, Hearn, 1998c). At the same time, much of men's power remains taken-for-granted.

In addition to the direct and threatened force of, for example, violent husbands or military men, there is the place of consent in theorizing men's power within patriarchies. It is in this space that the concept of hegemony can be usefully employed. Hegemony involves both the consent of some men, and, in a very different way, the consent of some women to maintain patriarchal relations of power. At least some powerful men are dominant in the construction of women's consent and the reproduction of men's consent. Before examining the notion of hegemony in more detail, I briefly consider how power is to be understood, analysed and theorized.

There are many frameworks for analysing power (for example, Clegg, 1989). Power has often been construed, rather simply, as a capacity, the ability to dominate or influence others through reward or punishment (Dahl, 1957; Lukes, 1974; Weber, 1978; Wrong, 1979). A second dimension of power that has been recognized sees some people's interests as never reaching formal levels of decision-making or agenda-setting (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962).[4] A third dimension of power, stressed by Lukes (1974), views people's 'real interests' as distorted by ideological conditioning. Third dimensional or 'radical' views move from subjective interests to interests in a broader, more hypothetical way. For the radical, '. . . wants may themselves be a product of a system which works against their interests, and in such cases, relates to what they would want and prefer, were they able to make the choice' (p. 34).

This third dimension directs one to the structural level, including the operation of hegemony. While Lukes's third dimensional approach provides a model of structural analysis, there are many other aspects and approaches to structural analysis. These include: recognition of collective actors; normality and persistence of social conflict and resistance; intersections of material and ideological powers; and interplay of the technical and the social relations of production.[5] Lukes's views on structure are also intimately bound up with the recognition of agency, even though that is set within contexts preventing individuals from 'knowing' their own best interests. Highlighting interests is both strength and weakness in his perspective, on one hand, extending 'non-decision-making' to a more fundamental level; on the other, relying on the analyst's hypothesizing stance.[6] Again there are echoes of theorizing on hegemony.

In recent years major critiques of both non-substantive and structural(ist) approaches to power have been developed within poststructuralism, feminism, postcolonialism and radical multiculturalism. Poststructuralist conceptions of power generally see individuals as constituted by their discursive environments so that 'objective' interests do not exist 'waiting to be defined'.[7] Despite the micro and local focus of some of its adherents, poststructuralism is not necessarily antagonistic to the recognition of the persistence of global domination (for example, Foucault, 1980).

Feminist, postcolonialist and radical multiculturalist work on power/resistance has brought gender, sexuality and violation, and their intersections with other social divisions, centre stage (Hennessy and Ingraham, 1997; Willett, 1998; Zack et al., 1998). Engagements between feminism and Foucault (for example, Diamond and Quinby, 1988; Sawicki, 1991; McNay, 1992; Ramazanoglu, 1993; Macleod and Durrheim, 2002) have been especially important in exploring the relation of non-gendered and gendered conceptions of power. The intersections of poststructuralism, feminism and postcolonialism continue to produce key insights on power, as in the relation of substance and context, so adding complexity to discussions of hegemony.

While debates on power have led in many different directions, there are surprising points of contact between third dimensional views on power, and some poststructuralist, feminist and postcolonial approaches. Together they suggest some common ground on the importance of taken-for-granted micro-power processes and the elusiveness of individual and collective self-interest. Comparisons can be made between Marxian notions of false consciousness, the historical change in political communities of identity and story-telling spelt out by politically orientated social constructivists and symbolic interactionists (Plummer, 1995), poststructuralist analysis of discursive power relations, and indeed the Gramscian concept of hegemony.

Hegemony

In this section I focus specifically on the concept of hegemony, before considering its relevance in CSM. The notion of hegemony provides a way of talking about overarching ideologies at the level of everyday, taken-for-granted ideas and practice performed 'with consent', 'without coercion'. The term, hegemony, has been used rather widely in recent years in debates on men, mainly as in 'hegemonic masculinity' (Carrigan et al., 1985), and to a more limited extent elsewhere, for example, 'male hegemony' (Cockburn, 1991) or 'hegemonic heterosexual masculinity' (Frank, 1987).

The concept of hegemony has been developed largely within the context of Marxian analysis. Nicholas Abercrombie and Bryan Turner (1978) pointed out that Marx presented two rather different theories of ideology. In the first, set out in the 'Preface' (Marx, 1859/1975), 'social being determines consciousness', so that the particular social experience of particular social classes determines the ideas of the members of the class. Thus, ideas follow immediate material relations, in terms of both general economic and social structural locations, and the conduct of everyday economic and social life. Furthermore, this approach lays the basis for the articulation of several class-based systems of ideas, even a relatively pluralist analysis. In the second, also set out in the 'Preface' but more famously in *The German Ideology*, 'the economic structure, the real foundation' determines 'a legal and political superstructure', such that the ideas of 'the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas' (Marx and Engels, 1845/1970). This notion of ideology, like the first, embodies both material and intellectual force. It is,

however, more deterministic, more concerned with the social formation rather than activities of particular classes and class fractions.

The Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1971), took this latter mode of thought one step further, in rejecting economic determinism and a less dogmatic form of communism. After helping to establish the Italian Communist party in 1921, he was imprisoned (1926–37) when Mussolini outlawed the party. Gramsci saw politics and economics, in his own historical frame of Italian Marxism and communism of the 1920s, set within wars of position and manoeuvre. In his formulation of hegemony the cultural and intellectual realm was even more important than for Marx and Engels, with more political impact than merely being an effect of the economic structure.

Above all, Gramsci's theory of hegemony explains how a dominant (economic) class controls society, pressing its definition of the situation. He saw that this involved the active consent of dominated groups (even though that is backed by force, especially the force of the state). He also pointed to the webs of collective political actors in the construction of hegemony – the state, the law, capitalists, intellectuals, and so on. As such, he propounded what might be thought of as a cultural economism, or perhaps more accurately an economic culturalism. The notion of hegemony thus follows largely from Marx's second theory of ideology (Abercrombie and Turner, 1978), but importantly it also draws on the first in its concern with everyday (cultural) practice.

Mike Donaldson (1993: 645) has described the concept as:

> . . . about the winning and holding of power and the formation (and destruction) of social groups in that process. It is about the ways in which the ruling class establishes and maintains its domination. The ability to impose a definition of the situation, to set the terms in which events are understood and issues discussed, to formulate ideals and define morality is an essential part of the process. Hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organization of social institutions in ways that appear 'natural', 'ordinary', 'normal'. The state, through punishment for non-conformity, is crucially involved in this negotiation and enforcement.

Robert Bocock (1986: 63) has neatly summed up this process, saying that hegemony occurs 'when the intellectual, moral and philosophical leadership provided by the class or alliance of class fractions which is ruling successfully achieves its objective of providing the fundamental outlook of the whole society'. I will return to this definition but at this stage it is worth noting that the idea of society having a 'fundamental outlook' is now much more problematic than when Gramsci was writing, within his own particular political context.[8]

There has been extensive debate at the intersection of Marxism and poststructuralism on the possibilities of reworking hegemony, in accordance with the flux and flow of contingent political meanings. In some senses, the postructuralist project, at least in the Foucaultian version, has represented an engagement between the material and the discursive. Among the key proponents here are Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985, 1987) in

their critique of essentialism within Marxism, and thus movement to a more discursively constructed understanding of hegemony. This has inevitably brought further counter claims that they have 'gone too far' down the linguistic road (Geras, 1987; Clegg, 1989; Butler et al., 2000). On the other hand, Judith Butler has specifically contrasted the 'view that casts the operation of power in the political field exclusively in terms of discrete blocs which vie with one another for control of policy questions' with a concept of hegemony that 'emphasizes the ways in which power operates to form our everyday understanding of social relations, and to orchestrate the ways in which we consent to (and reproduce) those tacit and covert relations of power' (Butler, 2000: 13–14). I return to this in the concluding discussion.

How does the concept of hegemony raise interesting and important questions in CSM? First, it directs attention to the form and nature of domination reproduced: of whom and by whom. It also addresses what is happening beyond mere force, and to the taken-for-granted, the commonsense, the cultural. It is also about both (political) content and (political) process. These questions are important in both the analysis of men in the social world, and the analysis of studies on men. I now consider the first of these areas in some detail, before briefly discussing the second.

Hegemony and men in the social world

A very basic question in the social analysis of men in the social world is whether gender domination, and its taken-for-grantedness, is understood as primarily related to the economic system, the ruling economic class(es), and the formation of the nation-state or whether one seeks to relate hegemony to the gender system (patriarchy). In the former, *economic system* approach there is a need for a reformulation to take account of contemporary transformations in the nation, and the creation of an international and transnational economic ruling class, largely of men and with some women, even if it is usually described in gender-neutral terms (see Sklair, 2001). However, in recent years it is the latter, *gender system* approach that has been pursued, especially through the concept of hegemonic masculinity, as a central part of the more general analysis of masculinities, in the plural. I first examine this particular latter approach before suggesting an alternative, formulated around the hegemony of men.

Hegemonic masculinity

The main way in which hegemony has been brought into debates in CSM in recent years has been primarily in terms of the notion of hegemonic masculinity, within the relatively autonomous system of gender relations. Hegemonic masculinity has been proposed as a form of masculinity or configuration of gender practice which is in contrast to other less dominant or subordinated forms of masculinity – complicit, subordinated, marginalized (Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell, 1995). Indeed the concept of hegemonic masculinity has become a well-used and rather widely accepted

part of the general conceptual apparatus for studying men in the 1990s. This in itself is very significant and speaks to both the insight of its instigators and the need for a concept of this kind to facilitate talk and writing about men and power.

The first substantial discussion of the idea of 'hegemonic masculinity' was in the paper 'Men's Bodies', written by R.W. Connell in 1979 and published in *Which Way Is Up?* in 1983. Its background was debates on patriarchy. The paper was published alongside two others on theories of patriarchy and empirical research on boys and girls in schools. In a further paper on the theory of social reproduction, he critiqued the functionalist take-over of the term 'hegemony' (Connell, 1983: 156). From this first use, the hegemony at issue in relation to masculinities was the hegemony involved in the patriarchal system of gender relations. In a personal communication Connell (1 March 2000) has reported that 'I was trying to direct attention onto the patterns of conduct and emotion involved in men's activity in a patriarchal system, including some of the complexities, division and contradictions – as I was also at the time trying to get a theoretical handle on the process of historical change in patriarchy.'

The 'Men's Bodies' paper is very interesting in a number of respects. It considers what might be called the social construction of the body in both boys' and adult men's practices. In discussing 'the physical sense of maleness', Connell marks out the social importance of sport as 'the central experience of the school years for many boys' (1983: 18), emphasizing the practices and experiences of taking and occupying space, holding the body tense, and skill, as well as size, power, force, strength, physical development and sexuality. He notes that while the main concern is with hegemonic masculinity, there are other significant involvements of the body in other (non-hegemonic) patterns of sexuality. In addressing the body of adult men, he highlights the differential importance of physicality within three realms: work, sexuality, fatherhood. The last part of the paper shifts emphasis to the psychological and social dynamics of masculinity. This integrates psychodynamic thinking into the analysis of the patriarchal relations that account for hegemonic masculinity. Above all, Connell stresses that 'the embedding of masculinity in the body is very much a social process, full of tensions and contradiction; that even physical masculinity is historical, rather than a biological fact. . . . constantly in process, constantly being constituted in actions and relations, constantly implicated in historical change' (p. 30).

The notion of hegemonic masculinity was further developed in the early 1980s, in the light of gay activism and the review of literature of the gay (men's) movement. The connection with gay liberation theory developed when Tim Carrigan and John Lee, both gay activists job-sharing as research assistants, came to work as research assistants with Connell on a social theory research project on the theory of gender. This led to a reformulation of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, articulating analyses of oppression produced from both feminism and gay liberation. This reformulation was published in *Theory and Society* by Carrigan, Connell and Lee in 1985 (p. 586). Accordingly they wrote:

> What emerges from this line of argument [on the heterosexual-homosexual ranking of masculinity] 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. (emphasis in original)

They continue, following Gramsci, that hegemony '. . . always refers to an 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 of ready-formed groupings but is partly a matter of the formation of these groupings.' Thus '[t]o understand the different kinds of masculinity demands . . . an examination of the practices in which hegemony is constituted and contested – in short, the political techniques of the patriarchal social order' (p. 594). This involves the examination of the gendered processes of commercial mass media, advertising, persuasion, fantasy and differential representations of masculinity; the gendered division of labour and the social definition of tasks and work; and the activities of the state and the law, such as the criminalization of homosexuality. These processes have some parallel with the more general social processes of cathexis, production/work/labour relations, and power, that make up the gender order and gender regimes (Connell, 1987, 1995).

In the book *Masculinities*, Connell (1995) discusses and applies the notion of hegemonic masculinity in more depth. He reaffirms the link with Gramsci's analysis of economic class relations through the operation of cultural dynamics, and also notes that hegemonic masculinity is always open to challenge and possible change. Hegemonic masculinity is now defined slightly differently as follows as:

> . . . the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (p. 77)

Connell emphasizes that hegemonic masculinity embodies a 'currently accepted' answer or strategy. Thus, though rather stable, it is contested and subject to struggle and change. Interestingly, he also notes that the most powerful bearers of the cultural ideal of hegemonic masculinity are not necessarily the most powerful individuals. Indeed the individual holders of power may be very different from those who represent hegemonic masculinity as a cultural ideal. Even so there is some correspondence between the cultural ideal and institutional power, as in state, business and corporate power. There is also a more complex discussion of the interplay of hegemonic, subordinated, complicit and marginalized forms of masculinity, as, for example, when some black men may accept certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity but may be marginalized in relation to the authorization of hegemonic masculinity.

In identifying forms of domination by men, both of women and of other men, the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been particularly successful. This reformulation of masculinity is not, however, without problems. While Connell (1993, 1995) has emphasized the cultural specificity of masculinities, and even of the concept itself, it has been pointed out that there has been a widespread application of the term in many and various ways, and this can be a conceptual and empirical weakness (see McMahon, 1993; Hearn, 1996b; Clatterbaugh, 1998). Connell has also described hegemonic masculinity as a 'configuration of gender practice' rather than a type of masculinity, yet the use of the term has sometimes been as if it is a type.

Mike Donaldson (1993) has pointed out that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is unclear, may carry contradictions (for example, in the practices and representations of sporting heroes), and fails to demonstrate the autonomy of the gender system. He notes that it is difficult to identify hegemonic masculinity because there is little that is counter-hegemonic. For example, does men's greater involvement in fathering or parenting indicate an intensification or not of hegemonic masculinity? For him, in the foregrounding of (hegemonic) masculinity, economic class remains neglected and crucially important, politically and analytically.

There are also persistent question marks around what is actually to count as hegemonic masculinity. Is it a cultural ideal, cultural images, even fantasy? Is it summed up in the stuff of heroes? Is it toughness, aggressiveness, violence? Or is it corporate respectability? Is it simply heterosexist homophobia? Is it the rather general persistence of patriarchal gender arrangements?

Above all, there are three unresolved problems. First, are we talking about cultural representations, everyday practices or institutional structures? Second, how exactly do the various dominant and dominating ways that men are – tough/aggressive/violent; respectable/corporate; controlling of resources; controlling of images; and so on – connect with each other? Third, why is it necessary to hang on to the concept of masculinity rather than, say, men's practices (Connell, 1985, 1987; Hearn, 1996b), when the former concept has been subject to such critique (Eichler, 1980; Carrigan et al., 1985), and is in use in such very different and sometimes confusing ways (see McMahon, 1993; Hearn, 1996b; Clatterbaugh, 1998)?[9]

A further point follows from detailed empirical study of 'hegemonic masculinity' and brings its own further complications, as, for example, in the practical ways that men talk about themselves. Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley (1999) have identified three much more specific 'imaginary positions and psycho-discursive practices' in the negotiating of hegemonic masculinity and their identification with the masculine. These are: heroic positions, 'ordinary' positions, and rebellious positions. The first in fact conforms much more closely to Connell's notion of complicit masculinity. As they say '. . . it could be read as an attempt to actually *instantiate* hegemonic masculinity since, here, men align themselves strongly with conventional ideals' (p. 340, emphasis in original). The second attempts a distancing from certain conventional or ideal notions of the masculine;

instead the 'ordinariness of the self; the self as normal, moderate or average' (p. 343) is emphasized. The third position is characterized in terms of their unconventionality, with the imaginary position involving the flouting of social expectations (p. 347). What is interesting with all these self-positionings, especially the last two, is the presence of ambiguity and subtlety, even contradiction, in the self-construction of masculinity and the masculine, hegemonic or not. Indeed one of the subtleties of the hegemonic may be its very elusiveness and the difficulty of reducing it to a set of fixed positions and practices.

These points are echoed in a discussion of the concept by Stephen Whitehead (1999): '. . . the concept of hegemonic masculinity goes little way towards revealing the complex patterns of inculcation and resistance which constitute everyday social interaction. . . . it is unable to explain the variant meanings attached to the concept of masculinity at this particular moment in the social history of Euro/American/Australasian countries' (p. 58) (also see Whitehead, 2002). While this may be a somewhat harsh verdict, it does point to possible specific empirical limitations, as well as the need to subject concepts to scrutiny in their changing historical context and thus move debate onwards.

The hegemony of men

However, having identified some of the complications with hegemonic masculinity, I do not conclude that the notion of hegemony is not useful in critically analysing men. Rather, I argue that the concept has generally been employed in too restricted a way; the focus on masculinity is too narrow. Instead, it is time to go back from *masculinity* to *men*, to examine the hegemony of men and about men. The hegemony of men seeks to address the double complexity that men are both a *social category formed by the gender system* and *dominant collective and individual agents of social practices*.

In this view, there is a greater need to look critically at the ordinary, taken-for-granted accepted dominant constructions, powers and authorities of men – in relation to women, children and other men, both men who are subordinate and those who are superordinate. This involves addressing the formation of the social category of men, and its taken-for-grantedness, as well as men's taken-for-granted domination and control through consent. The deconstruction of the dominant (Hearn, 1996a) and the obvious, the social category of men, remains urgent. What indeed would society look like without this category, not through gendercide but through gender transformation?

This perspective on hegemony may take us down a slightly different route to consider not so much the 'matter of pushing and pulling of ready-formed groupings but . . . the formation of these groupings [of men]' (Carrigan et al., 1985: 594) in the first place. Focusing on not just the various forms of *masculinity* (or configurations of gender practice, dominant or otherwise), but rather on that which is taken-for-granted about the categorizations and constructions of *men* (in both senses) is more closely compatible with Gramsci's original concept of hegemony. The task then

becomes one of interrogating how hegemony operates through the web of collective political actors – the state, the law, capitalists, intellectuals, and so on; how 'the intellectual, moral and philosophical leadership provided by the class [of men] or alliance of class fractions [of certain men] which is ruling successfully achieves its objective of providing the fundamental outlook of the whole society' (Bocock, 1986: 63); and how hegemony involves the active consent of dominated groups (even though that consent is backed by force).

Thus the agenda for the investigation of the hegemony of men in the social world concerns the examination of that which sets the agenda for different ways of being men in relation to women, children and other men, rather than the identification of particular forms of masculinity or hegemonic masculinity. Interestingly, this view of hegemony of men would also likely lead us to ask what are the various dominant ways that there are for governmentally categorizing men – by the state, the law, medical sciences, social sciences, religion, business, and so on – and how these intersect with, complement and contradict each other. These webs of collective political actors are not static; especially important is the way in which various definitions and constructions of the agenda on men are themselves changing. This includes change through globalizing forces, tending to undermine the 'fundamental outlook of a given society'. Contemporary hegemony may involve the absence of a single fundamental outlook on and about men. I return to this point in the concluding discussion.

There would seem to be at least seven major aspects to this agenda and thus associated implications for feminist theory. First, there are the *social processes by which there is a hegemonic acceptance of the category of men*. This would include the unproblematic taken-for-granted categorization of people as 'men' through biological and often medical examination (principally the privileging of the presence or absence of a penis at or shortly after birth); the conduct of state, population and statistical classifications; the practices of organized religion and education; and the mass of other organizational and institutional ways in which particular men are placed within the social category of men. These range from the gender-specific use of toilets to gender-specific practices in entering and within the military. A closely related issue is the relational distinction between 'boys' and 'men'. Religious, educational, military and work institutions represent relevant sites for such hegemonic definitions.

Second, there is the *system of distinctions and categorizations between different forms of men and men's practices* to women, children and other men (and what are now often called masculinities). This comes closest to the current use of the term 'masculinities', though as noted the term has been used in a wide variety of ways in recent years. However, I would suggest a greater attention to the social construction of the *systems* of differentiations of men and men's practices rather than the social construction of particular 'forms' of men, as masculinities.

Third, the question can then be asked *which men and which men's practices – in the media, the state, religion, and so on – are most powerful in setting those agendas of those systems of differentiations*. It is these general

ideas and practices that are hegemonic, rather than a particular form of hegemonic masculinity that is hegemonic.

Fourth, we can consider the identification of *the most widespread, repeated forms of men's practices*. In this identification those which are called 'complicit' are likely to take a much more central place in the construction of men and the various ways of being men in relation to women, children and other men. If anything, it is the complicit that is most hegemonic.

Fifth, we may consider *the description and analysis of men's various and variable everyday, 'natural(ized)', 'ordinary', 'normal' and most taken-for-granted practices* to women, children and other men and their contradictory, even paradoxical, meanings – rather than the depiction of the most culturally valued ideal or the most exaggerated or over-conforming forms of men's practices.

Sixth, there is the question of *how women may differentially support certain practices of men*, and subordinate other practices of men or ways of being men.[10] This brings us to the place of women's 'consent' with the hegemony of men.

Seventh, there are various interrelations between these six elements above. Perhaps of most interest is *the relationship between 'men's' formation within a hegemonic gender order, that also forms 'women', other genders and boys, and men's activity in different ways in forming and re-forming hegemonic differentiations among men*.

This overall approach involves placing biology and biological difference firmly in a cultural frame. Contemporary 'western' systems of construction of men and men's practices are cultural systems, just as much as those which embody third sexes and third genders, and other seemingly more complex patterns still (for example, Herdt, 1994; Lorber, 1994). Hegemony is not so much, or at least not only, a matter of the social contestation and reproduction of particular forms of *hegemonic masculinities* as the contestation and reproduction of the *hegemony of men* in a particular society or combination of globalizing societies (Hearn, 1996a), both as a social category and in men's practices. This may indeed offer possibilities of a rapprochement between transgender and queer studies, on the one hand, and materialist, embodied and gender class studies, on the other.[11]

As Mark Surman (1994) puts it: 'Hegemony is taking one way of seeing things, and convincing people that this way of seeing things is natural, that it is "just the way things are".' This sense of 'naturalness', including 'naturalness' about men and the way men are, may itself be becoming increasingly subject to globalizing social forces and processes (Connell, 1998).

Having said that, there are a number of areas of difficulty in working on this kind of revision of hegemony in relation to men. The parallels and the differences with class-based versions need to be noted. Men are, or more precisely can be understood as, both a ruling class and not a ruling class. 'Men' are both *formed in* men's hegemony (or a hegemonic gender order), and *form* that hegemony. 'Men' are formed in a hegemonic gender order that also forms 'women', but men are also active in different ways in forming and re-forming hegemonic differentiations among men.

Hegemony and Critical Studies on Men

Before moving on to the concluding discussion, it may be useful to briefly consider the implications of this approach for studying men. The use of the concept of hegemony in substantive studies on men also has implications for the institutional development of CSM. Part of this analytical agenda concerns the concepts in use, and in that sense, the preceding substantive discussion is relevant to developing counter-hegemonic practices in CSM. Placing CSM themselves clearly in relation to hegemony thus raises the question of how to further critique so as not to reproduce the hegemony of men. CSM need to be counter-hegemonic, to oppose rather than reproduce hegemony – in terms of the intellectual, moral and philosophical spaces occupied in universities, research, the media, equality debates, politics, government, and so on. This challenges the automatic assumption that CSM can be transformative and emancipatory for women and for men.

We can ask a number of questions on the state and future development of CSM: how are men to be studied critically in ways that resist hegemony and hegemonic definitions and forces? In what ways do CSM challenge or fail to challenge hegemony? Where is feminism and pro-feminism in CSM? What kinds of feminism are referenced and used in these studies? What kinds are not? Are these studies transformative? What is the relation of theory, practice and politics? What are the intellectual, moral and philosophical spaces these studies occupy (Messner, 1997)?

CSM, like critical studies more generally, need to be strongly aware of the social bases of knowledge, including the impact of national, regional and cultural contexts (Hearn, 2002). This suggests a heavily power-laden self-reflexivity, both individually and collectively. The endogenous reflexivity (May, 1998) of men in the social world needs to be linked to the referential reflexivity of the analysts of men. While any sense of 'full awareness' is misplaced in this context, questioning the social bases of knowledge is part of the critical project, both in general and with specific respect to men. This suggests an empirical and political responsiveness to the social changes to and by men in the world. In some cases, this involves learning about the empirically knowable world by seeking to change the world. More specifically, yet fraught with difficulty, there is the challenge of how to speak where there have been silences, whether these are global silences, local silences or the silences of micro-politics.

Concluding discussion

This paper is exploratory; it invites further development and reflection on the current state of CSM and the conceptualizations in use. Much of the work of CSM in recent years has been concerned with doing substantive studies, developing conceptualizations and theories, and establishing the field. The current stage of development suggests a revisiting of concepts and theories, with perhaps less need to justify the study of men, as was earlier a key preoccupation.

The approach here seeks to return to the concept of hegemony that has

been so useful in the 1980s and 1990s as a way of further opening up the critical study of men. But it does so in a rather different way from the current dominant focus within CSM on the particularities of hegemonic masculinity. That approach, though clearly very valuable, is not sufficiently far-reaching in assessing, deconstructing and dismantling the hegemony of men. While the concept of hegemonic masculinity has been and remains of great importance in CSM, the hegemony of men in relation to women, children and other men needs to be addressed more directly. This is in terms of both the hegemony of the social category of men and the hegemony of men's practices.

In doing CSM, we may consider just exactly how critical they are. It is always worth asking where are these researches and studies leading? Are they providing a way of showing and deconstructing the complexities of men's power, of undermining men's authority, of ending violence, and so on – or are they offering an easy means for men to intervene in gender politics and gender research, with little responsibility, little need for change, and even more space for exercising power and authority? How do they subvert patriarchy and how do they obscure or even reinforce patriarchy? Do they benefit women? And if so, which women?

This re-evaluation of the concept of hegemony connects with a range of general questions in social theory, feminist theory, and contemporary theorizing of power and resistance. Insights around power and resistance in feminist, poststructuralist, postcolonialist and other critical theoretical politics urgently need to be directed to the examination of men's gendered power relations to women, children and other men. This includes men's construction of force and consent, and men's own consent to that force and consent. Accordingly, we may consider the different notions of power within Marxist theories of ideology, third dimensions of power, hegemony and discourse, and their applicability to the gendered power of men and different men.

In many ways the concept of hegemony appears to fit most easily with that theory of ideology which sees the dominant ideas as the ideas of the ruling class, rather than that which begins the understanding of ideas from the necessarily differentiated social practices of different classes, as developed through feminist and various other forms of standpoint theory. But if that is the case, can a comparison be made between bourgeoisie and proletariat, on one hand, and men and women within the context of gender system hegemony, on the other? Is this kind of hegemonic ideology to be seen as gendered cultural power? And if so, whose ideology is hegemonic over whom and for whom? The seven-point outline of the hegemony of men seeks to answer that, in that men are both a social category formed by the gender system and dominant collective and individual agents of social practices.

On the other hand, and more specifically, this discussion of the hegemony of men also very much addresses the cultural formation of men and gender, and particular categorizations and class fractions of men, and so fits with contemporary debates on the interrelations of the material and the discursive. The notion of hegemony necessarily enters into the realm

of the cultural, which appears to be almost by definition less definable and less determined than the economic.

Contemporary social theory and feminist theory are centrally concerned with how to talk about and act on both the material and the discursive together. Contemporary materialist analysis seeks to extend its concerns to and connect with embodiment and the multiplicity of oppressions and discourses; at the same time, contemporary discourse analysis seeks to link to multiple forms of the material. This is seen, in different ways, in much contemporary social theory and feminist theory, in: materialist feminism, the politics of recognition, materialist theories of discourse, analyses of multiple oppressions, critical multiculturalism, (critiques of) globalization and globalization theory, postcolonialist theory, feminist postmodernism, debates on ageism and disability, theorizing the body, and materialist/discursive analyses.[12]

A broadly Gramscian notion of hegemony, if extensively and historically reformulated to deconstruct the privileging of economic class, can be seen as prefiguring many of these debates on the relation of the material and the discursive, by drawing analytical and political attention to the cultural realm and cultural politics within and in relation to the economic, specifically class, politics. In a long-term retrospective view, such engagements within Gramscian theory/praxis might now be seen as part of the general 'cultural' or 'linguistic turn', and part of the theoretical convergence in the usages of discourse and ideology (see Purvis and Hunt, 1993).

Rather similarly, the concept of hegemony may assist in transcending other binaries; it draws attention to the repetitive assertion and constitution of men as a social category formed by the gender system and dominant collective and individual agents of social practices, as well as the relations between these analytical elements. The concept thus addresses an ambiguity and a dialectical relation: the hegemony of the category of men 'as a whole' (and in relation to women, other genders, and in different ways, boys); and hegemony within and among men, whether in terms of ways of being men or men's practices.[13]

In raising the question of the gender(ed) or patriarchal hegemony of men, in addition to the Gramscian 'classed version', any rigid, monocultural notion of hegemony is now, rather paradoxically, to be treated with great caution, indeed probably dismissed. The notion that there is a 'fundamental outlook of the whole society' (Bocock, 1986: 63) that is successfully provided in accordance with the objective of class or alliance of class fractions which is ruling, gendered or not, does seem very problematic indeed.[14] Instead contemporary hegemony, somewhat paradoxically, would seem to rely on more complex notions of political pluralism, 'mixed' (capitalist) economy, diversity, 'third ways', and non-radical forms of multiculturalism.

A significant aspect of this increasing complexity is the contemporary challenge, albeit probably more limited than often supposed (Alasuutari, 2000), to the nation-state. Historically, many formulations of hegemony have been based on domination within a particular society or nation. Indeed the nation has often been represented in the modern political era as one of the most powerful forms of hegemony. This is, however, now

increasingly problematic with both greater awareness of global linkages and the assertion of new forms of nationalism in that context. Indeed, global and regional transformations, such as Europeanization, as through the European Union, may be part of the changing hegemony of men (Hearn et al., 2002; Novikova et al., 2004).

Another contemporary complication is that there appear to be social changes in the constructions and interrelations of social divisions. It seems increasingly difficult to discuss gender or any other social division in isolation from others. Though this may have always been so historically, it does not seem to have been noticed so much until recently. Societal changes such as towards virtualities and information societies may contribute to the increasing elaboration of intersectionalities between social divisions. The very formation of 'people' as persons, bodies, individuals may be in the process of profound historical change. Rather than people being formed primarily as fixed embodied *members* of given collectivities, defined by single social divisions, people may increasingly appear to exist and be formed in social relations, spaces and practices *between* multiple power differentials. Persons and bodies no longer appear so easily as equivalents (Hearn, 2004: 207). At the same time, these intersectionalities, however, may be treated with caution, as these may also be part of contemporary hegemonic ways of obscuring gender, men and men's powers.

There is also a difficulty of operationalization. If hegemony is such an embedded and pervasive social process, how do (diversely gendered) 'we' study 'it', especially as we are part of it? Key substantive elements in hegemony include the reliance on forces other than force, and the configuration of fractions rather than a single dominating power. More specifically, what is the relation of men's domination with and through force and men's domination without force? Men's domination with force can be formally organized (for example, with corporate violence, military violence) or individualized and interpersonal (for example, with men's violence to known women and children in the home). Men's domination without force can also be formally organized (for example, men's supposedly 'peaceful' domination of managerial positions) or individualized and interpersonal (for example, with men's social status as fathers, husbands). The configurations and interrelations of these various forms of organized or interpersonal domination, with or without force, are a key empirical task.

Finally, the concrete historical subject of any rigid notion of hegemony has to be deconstructed. Questions such as: 'Is there a concrete subject (as in a [neo-]Gramscian concept of hegemony) or is there not (as in [neo-]Foucaultian discursive analyses)?' can no longer be answered by a simple 'yes' or 'no'. The contrast between universalism and contingency is not so easily drawn. The usefulness of a concept of hegemony is not strictly dependent on Gramscian economic class-based cultural economics or economic culturalism, but on how the concept can reformed or re-formed in theoretical practice.[15] The place of both force and consent of men in patriarchies needs a concept such as hegemony that can assist engagement with both material and discursive gender power relations.

These differentiations of forms of men's power, with and without force, suggest multiply differentiated patriarchies that are stable and changing, fixed and flexible. Charting the particular and changing forms of these rigidities and movements of and around the taken-for-granted social category of men is an urgent task in this globalizing world: the hegemony of the category of men 'as a whole' (and in relation to women, other genders, and in different ways, boys); and hegemony within and among men, whether in terms of ways of being men or men's practices. In such ways CSM may begin to face the possibility of the abolition of 'men' as a significant social category of power.

Notes

A first version of this paper was presented at the 'Hegemoni och Mansforskning' Nordic Conference, Karlstad University, Sweden, March 1999. I am very grateful to participants there for their remarks, Marie Nordberg for her insightful comments on a subsequent draft, and the members of 'Power, Resistance and Social Relations', the summer 1999 course seminar at Åbo Akademi University for subsequent discussions on the conceptualization of power and resistance. Further versions of parts of this paper were presented at the Gender Institute, London School of Economics in November 1999, the Department of Gender Studies, University of Gothenburg in May 2001, and the Feminism and Social Theory Network Seminar, Helsinki in July 2001. I am grateful to Marina Calloni, Eva Gothlin, Ulla Holm, Ingrid Holmquist, Diane Perrons and other participants at these seminars for their critical and constructive comments, and to anonymous *Feminist Theory* reviewers for further helpful suggestions. I am indebted to Bob Connell for his personal communication and comments on an earlier draft.

1. This debate has become governmentally institutionalized within the Nordic region in the shape of the appointment of a 'Men's Studies Coordinator' at NIKK, the Nordic Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Research. A previous incumbent sometimes used the title of 'Nordic Coordinator for Critical Studies on Men'. More recently, the English language title appears to have reverted to 'Nordic Coordinator for Men's Studies'. Both titles are included on different pages on the NIKK website http://www.nikk.uio.no/index_e.html as well as 'Nordic Coordinator for Studies on Men'. In March 2000 the European Union Fifth Framework funded for three years a Thematic Network on 'The Social Problem and Societal Problematisation of Men and Masculinities', with institutional members in ten countries (www.cromenet.org).
2. One man participant in the Nordic meeting at Karlstad when the first version of this paper was presented suggested that I take this position 'to please feminists'.
3. More generally, critique alerts us to a number of elements: 'a critical relation to the topic, encompassing a self-reflexivity of the author, an awareness of the social location of both the author and the topic, and the consideration of the social bases of knowledge; a commitment to the political emancipation of both women and men; and, where appropriate, empirical inquiry not just assertion and speculation' (Hearn, 1998b: 801).

4. In both of these perspectives on power, but especially the first, there is often an assumption of the possession of power. In the latter tradition, the question of possession of power is more problematized as power processes or political processes. A number of writers have contrasted having (capacities) and doing power (exercising). In the book *Power*, Wrong (1979) identifies *dispositional* (having) and *episodic* (exercising) forms of power. In *Frameworks of Power*, Clegg (1989) identifies *dispositional* (based on capacities) and *episodic* (agency), as well as *facilitative* forms of power.
5. All these elements are important in Marxism, neo-Marxism and Critical Theory. In these, one can hypothesize that resistance and even conflict are indications of differences of interest and thus democratic or proto-democratic impulses; and that without resistance and perhaps even conflict, there will always be dominance and submission.
6. It is clearly extremely difficult to specify unarticulated interests with any degree of certainty or precision. This problem may be eased when talking of life and death, as in Crenson's (1971) research on (people's lack of political activism against) air pollution, which is after all likely to kill them.
7. This is clear in many of Foucault's works; also see Barbalet (1987); for a recent example of the application of such thinking to studying men, see Pease (2000a).
8. Stewart Clegg (1989) has highlighted a number of further elements to be taken into account in the construction and thus analysis of hegemony:
    i. Taking systematic account of popular interests and demands.
    ii. Making compromises on secondary issues to maintain and support alliances in an inherently unstable political system (whilst maintaining essential interests).
    iii. Organizational support for national goals which serve the fundamental long-term interest of the dominant group.
    iv. Providing moral, intellectual and political leadership in order to reproduce and form a collective will or national popular outlook.
9. More recently, Connell has continued the discussion of masculinity, masculinities and hegemonic masculinities. In *The Men and the Boys* (2000) he acknowledges some of the difficulties with the term masculinity, and goes on to suggest that 'the difficulty in formulating acceptable definitions of masculinity is one sign of the crisis tendencies in gender relations which have in a number of ways destabilized the situation of men' (p. 17) (also see Connell, 2002).
10. I am grateful to Marie Nordberg for raising this sixth point. This is also taken up in Bourdieu (2001).
11. At this point, one might consider reformulating gender system hegemony in terms of 'masculine domination' (Bourdieu, 2001). Though that analysis may be relevant here, it brings ambiguities around the linguistic/symbolic and embodied/social meaning of 'the masculine', and may have sociological difficulties coping with the social complexities of men and men's relations to power and hegemony in different societies. This is in addition to its non-engagement with feminist theory, recent CSM and its own gendered positioning.
12. There is clearly a huge and rather rapidly growing relevant literature

here, much of it engaging with the intersection of critical theory and poststructuralism. In addition to Hennessy and Ingraham, 1997; Willett, 1998; Zack et al., 1998; see, for example, Benhabib and Cornell, 1987; Fraser, 1989, 1998; Hearn, 1992, 1998c; Cockburn and Ormrod, 1993; Hearn and Parkin, 1993; Landry and McLean, 1993; Fairclough, 1995; Hennessy, 1995; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Harding, 1998; Fawcett, 2000; Hanssen, 2000.

13. This general, often non-gendered, theme of the interrelations of social categorizations and social actions, regulation and control is prominent in social theory, at least from Mauss and Durkheim.
14. This more contextual version of hegemony fits more closely with the long-running rethinking of hegemony and politics by Laclau and Mouffe, in which the contingency of social elements, antagonisms and structures has been increasingly stressed. A useful brief survey of the shifts in their thinking over twenty-five years is provided by Howarth (2000: ch. 6). This compares their work: in the 1970s the contingency of competing hegemonic projects in relation to the 'fundamental social classes'; in the 1980s the contingency of all ideological elements and social agents along with 'hegemonic formations'; and in the 1990s the contingency of the subjects of hegemonic projects and social structures, with the latter '. . . understood as "undecidable" entities which always presuppose a discursive exterior that both constitutes and threatens its existence' (p. 111).
15. These issues have been explored in a fascinating exchange between Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek on a long-running theme in Critical Theory, the possibilities for bringing together debates on the subject and subjectivity, with those on the politics of hegemony and universality (Butler et al., 2000).

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