

contribution of which appears to be the tabulation of human health and illness conditions by sex.

Conclusion

Constituencies of men worldwide face enormous health challenges. Addressing and redressing them requires more than simplistic formulations that are conceptually incoherent and politically divisive, especially in relation to women. Effective political action demands the formulation and implementation of public health policy that is informed by thinking and evidence that represents men's poor health, and the processes responsible for it, in terms of a critically reasoned and dynamic approach to gender.

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HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

Developed in the 1980s (Carrigan *et al.* 1985) to provide a relational and socially constructed conception of men and masculinities, the term 'hegemonic masculinity' describes the hierarchical interaction between multiple masculinities and explains how some men make it appear normal and necessary that they dominate most women and other men (Connell 1987).

Hegemonic masculinity describes: (1) a position in the system of gender relations; (2) the system itself; and (3) the current ideology that serves to reproduce masculine domination. Connell demonstrates the essentialistic, ahistorical and normative liabilities in previous men's studies scholarship. In the concept of hegemonic masculinity Connell joins the constructivist view of 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman 1987) with insights drawn from feminist scholars who described the ways in which gender relations shape social structures (Hartsock 1983).

Connell seeks to explain: (1) how some men succeed in making it appear normal, natural and necessary for them to enjoy power over other men and most women; (2) why it is that so many men and women participate willingly in their own oppression; and (3) how resistance to hegemonic masculinity can promote gender justice.

Connell posits four types of masculinities, more as positions in relation to one another than as personality types: hegemonic, complicit, subordinated and marginalised. The hegemonic position is the currently accepted male ideal within a particular culture at a

particular time. As such, the hegemonic male is an ideal-type (Weber 1946). Connell notes that this image changes over time and place as well as being subject to contestation within a particular culture.

Most men fall within the second category, complicit. These men accept and participate in the system of hegemonic masculinity so as to (1) enjoy the material, physical and symbolic benefits of the subordination of women, (2) through fantasy experience the sense of hegemony and learn to take pleasure in it, and (3) avoid subordination.

The relations among the four positions are hierarchical. A man in the subordinated position suffers that fate despite appearing to possess the physical attributes necessary to aspire to hegemony. Men run the risk of subordination when they do not practise gender consistent with the hegemonic system and ideology. Marginalised men are those who cannot even aspire to hegemony, most often men of colour and men with disabilities.

The second manner in which Connell uses 'hegemonic masculinity' is to describe the current system of gender relations: current 'configurations of practice' organise social relations and structures to the overall benefit of men in relation to women and of some men in relation to other men. Connell stresses that these configurations of practice take place across four dimensions: power, the division of labour, cathexis or emotional relations and the symbolic. Connell's argument is that hegemonic masculinity as a system becomes built into social institutions so as to make it appear normal and natural for men's superordinate position to be maintained.

The third usage of hegemonic masculinity, as an ideology, provides the justification through which patriarchy is legitimated and maintained. As an ideology hegemonic masculinity structures the manner in which all people experience and thereby know their world, although those experiences vary as both men and women are differentially situated by race, class and sexuality. This ideology, referred to as hegemonic complicity,

can be measured across four dimensions: ideal-type masculinity, hierarchical ranking of self and others, subordination of women and the subordination of woman-like behaviour (Levy 2005). The first dimension, ideal-type masculinity, is the belief that there is a single type of masculinity that is appropriate. Different men or groups of men and women can posit a different ideal-type, contesting the definition of that type, but the underlying belief in a single ideal-type typifies this dimension.

Hierarchical ranking of oneself and others is perhaps the least studied component of hegemonic masculinity as an ideology. Previous scholars (Lewis 1978) spoke of competition as a restrictive component of masculinity or as a barrier to meaningful interaction. This conceptualisation fails to capture the ever-present intra-psychic dimension of active hierarchic assessment. Hierarchical ranking is a process in which men compare themselves and others actively and incessantly to their general or contextual ideal-type.

Subordination of women and anyone or any trait perceived to be woman-like includes overt and covert sexism as well as homophobia. Although some would argue that both overt sexism and homophobia have been in decline, the lingering or residual effects, often in the form of beliefs about men, women and sexuality, are quite active.

The three dimensions of hegemonic masculinity as a position, a system and an ideology can be theoretically separated while their interaction and interconnections are still recognised. Those who criticise the concept of hegemonic masculinity for confusion, reification or elitism (Demetriou 2001; Lorber 1998; Martin 1998; Whitehead 1999) need to recognise its multiple usages.

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See also: masculinity/masculinities; sex role theory

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HEROES

A hero is a figure to look up to and admire. Heroes are brave and often have superhuman powers. The hero embodies traits typically associated with masculinity, such as physical strength, intelligence and fortitude. Heroes appear in some of our earliest written works, including *Gilgamesh*, *Beowulf* and the Greco/Roman tales of Perseus and Hercules. Traditionally, and in Aristotle's eyes, the tragic hero has a flaw so that, while inspirational, he also has a quality that can bring him low and make him more like us. We see this characteristic in Achilles (invulnerable except for his heel) and Samson (strong until his hair is cut). In modern times, the tragic weakness can be seen in Superman's kryptonite, Spider-Man's neuroses and Edward Norton's alter ego Brad Pitt in *Fight Club*.

Joseph Campbell (1949) originally described the hero's journey as consisting of four stages: separation, initiation, return and recognition. Campbell found similarities between the heroes of literature and the

figures of great religions. Moses, for instance, is separated from his family and initiated by his realisation of his own Judaism and the Pharaoh's evil. Ultimately, he returns to Judaism and is recognised as a prophet. In a similar manner, Superman is separated from his world when his father sends him to Earth in a rocket. He is initiated by the Kents, a typical American couple, to accept his role as protector of humanity. His return manifests itself in his assumption of the Superman identity. Recognition comes in the form of approbation from a grateful public. Campbell asserted that the story of the hero is a universal and played out in all forms of media, including popular fiction and film.

In the United States, the availability of cheap newsprint led to the dawn of pop culture in the late nineteenth century and celebrated contemporary figures like William F. (Buffalo Bill) Cody and Davy Crockett. The heroes' quite impressive accomplishments were obscured by the fiction created around them. It is doubtful, for example, that Davy Crockett 'kilt him a bar when he was only three' but interesting to note how this story resembles the legend of Hercules strangling two serpents in his crib.

If the cowboy was America's version of the knight in shining armour, the detectives of the hard-boiled school were the knights of the city. The two most famous detectives were Philip Marlowe and Sam Spade, created by Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, respectively. They were hardly role models, living lonely lives full of drink, cigarettes, murder and cheap women, but they were motivated by a strict, if non-traditional, moral code. Sam Spade was motivated to find his partner's killer. Philip Marlowe would turn in his best friend if it was the right thing to do. These characters, often referred to as anti-heroes because they practised what they individually considered 'justice' rather than necessarily following the law, grew out of the malaise that stemmed from America's post World War I collective realisation that war was not a great adventure but rather a terrible,