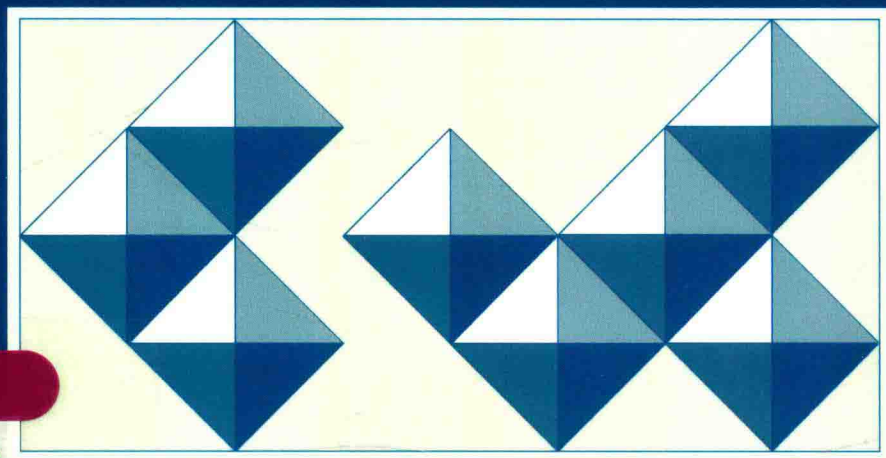


# CHANGING MEN

New Directions in  
Research on Men  
and Masculinity

Edited by  
Michael S. Kimmel



书馆

A SAGE FOCUS EDITION

# **CHANGING MEN**

## **New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity**

**Edited by**

**Michael S. Kimmel**



**SAGE PUBLICATIONS**

*The International Professional Publishers*

**Newbury Park London New Delhi**

to  
*Edwin H. Kimmel and Martin Bauml Duberman*  
*with gratitude and love*

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## Acknowledgments

This volume assembles innovative and exciting research on men and masculinity. As such, it contributes to the demarcation of a new field called *men's studies*, as well as to the examination of masculinity within traditional academic disciplines. Such work, of course, does not take place in a vacuum, but assumes the pioneering work on gender already accomplished by women's studies. Inspired by these insights, scholars have begun to examine men's lives and experiences, not simply as normative assumptions, but as gendered and socially and historically variable.

My own work in editing this volume has benefited greatly from colleagues and friends who have provided intellectual support, academic guidance, and searching criticism. If "the personal is political," as a motto of the women's movement would have it, then surely it is also professional, and it would be virtually impossible to disentangle what types of contributions each of these colleagues and friends made to the whole. I am grateful to Angela Aidala; Claire August; Jeff Beane; Bob, Joann, and Liz Brannon; Carol Briggs; Barbara and Herb Diamond; Kate Ellis; John Gagnon; Judith Gerson; Cathy Greenblat; Wray Herbert; Sandi Kimmel; Martin Levine; Iona Mara-Drita; Dorothy Sloboda; Catharine Stimpson; and Cooper Thompson.

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I have received some financial support for the final preparation of the manuscript from a Faculty Research Grant at Rutgers University, and my own research was supported in part by a Summer Faculty Fellowship at Rutgers University.

Finally, the two men to whom this collection is dedicated have been among the most important influences on my own development—personal, political, and intellectual—as a man. It seems fitting that this volume be for them.

—*Michael S. Kimmel*  
New York City

## *Rethinking "Masculinity"*

### *New Directions in Research*

MICHAEL S. KIMMEL

Men are changing—not, perhaps, with the bang of transformation, but also not simply with a whispered hint of a slight nudge in a new direction. New role models for men have not replaced older ones, but have grown alongside them, creating a dynamic tension between ambitious breadwinner and compassionate father, between macho seducer and loving companion, between Rambo and Phil Donahue. Men today are doing far more housework and spending more time with their children, yet the proportion of domestic time is still skewed heavily toward women (see Pleck, 1986). Men are today exploring new options in their work environments, and paying more attention to their physical and emotional health, yet continue to evidence far higher rates of stress-related diseases and deaths. Men are today developing a wider repertoire of emotions, seeking to express their feelings more deeply and with a wider range of women and men, and yet violence against women (rape, sexual assault, battery) and homophobia both seem to be increasing. Surely, then, we live in an era of transition in the definition of masculinity—what it means to be a real man—not, as some might fantasize, in which one mode comes to replace another mode, but in which two parallel traditions emerge, and from the tension of opposition between them a new synthesis might, perhaps, be born.

If men are changing at all, however, it is not because they have stumbled upon the limits of traditional masculinity all by themselves. For at least two decades, the women's movement (and also, since 1969, the gay liberation movement) has suggested that the traditional enactments of masculinity were in desperate need of overhaul. For some

men, these critiques have prompted a terrified retreat to traditional constructions; to others it has inspired a serious reevaluation of traditional worldviews, and offers of support for the social, political, and economic struggles of women and gays.

As men have been changing, so too has the study of men and masculinity. Social scientific research on gender has mushroomed in the past two decades, in part a response to the dramatic gains made by the women's movement and also the gay movement. Feminist scholarship has placed gender in the center of discourse on social organization, has retrieved significant women from historical obscurity, and, following the new social history, has assembled a portrait of the daily life of working women in other areas. So dramatic has been this work on gender by feminist scholars that today few universities have no courses on women's studies, few scholarly presses have no women's studies series, and few social scientists deny the centrality of gender as an independent variable in social organization.

And now comes "men's studies." Though it has not had (nor will it have) the impact of women's studies, men's studies has already become a visible presence among teachers and scholars. Newspaper and magazine articles have heralded its arrival (Petzke, 1986; Saholz, 1986; Yoshihashi, 1984) and a growing number of courses are being offered at universities and colleges across the nation (see Femiano, 1984). Several academic journals have devoted special issues to studies of men and masculinity (*Family Coordinator*, 1979; *Journal of Social Issues*, 1978; and *American Behavioral Scientist*, 1986) and several scholarly monographs (Komorovsky, 1976; Pleck, 1981, 1986), popular books (Ehrenreich, 1983; Fasteau, 1975; Gerzon, 1982; Tolson, 1977), and anthologies (Brannon & David, 1976; Brod, 1987; Gary, 1981; Lewis, 1982; Pleck & Pleck, 1980; Pleck & Sawyer, 1974) have demarcated the field. Although it is still young, men's studies already has introductory-level college textbooks (Doyle, 1983; Franklin, 1984) and a published annotated bibliography with over 1,000 entries (August, 1985). This anthology is a contribution to this new field.

Men's studies responds to the shifting social and intellectual contexts in the study of gender and attempts to treat masculinity not as the normative referent against which standards are assessed but as a problematic gender construct. Inspired by the academic breakthroughs of women's studies, men's studies addresses similar questions to the study of men and masculinity. As women's studies has radically revised the traditional academic canon, men's studies seeks to use that revision as the basis for its exploration of men and masculinity. Men's studies seeks neither to replace nor to supplant women's studies; quite the contrary. Men's studies seeks to buttress, to augment women's studies,

to complete the radically redrawn portrait of gender that women's studies has begun (see also Brod, 1987; and his chapter in this volume).

Such is the rationale for courses about men and masculinity. Often, when asked about men's studies, scholars have responded initially with suspicion. "Aren't all courses that don't have the word 'women' in the title about men? Why do we need a separate course about men?" was the way one colleague put it to me. And this is surely true: Men have been the normative gender, and those courses not specifically about some other group have always been de facto about men. Yet these courses have also been about men within the context of specific public functions: We study men as scientists, as authors, as presidents or other government officials, as soldiers or kings. But rarely, if ever, do we study men as men; rarely do we make masculinity the object of inquiry as we examine men's lives. If men have been traditionally the benchmark gender (and women the "other"), then studies of men and masculinity have never made masculinity itself the object of inquiry. Men's studies takes masculinity as its problematic, and seeks to explore men's experiences as men not in some social roles. While our experience is structured by its social structural location—social roles define individual enactments of them—it is also equally true that gender structures the dimensions of those roles. Other factors such as race, class, ethnicity, and age will mediate the generalizability of our explorations, but masculinity as problematic opens up entirely new areas for social scientific study.

Such study is increasingly interdisciplinary, drawing on research from social and behavioral sciences as well as the humanities and even the natural and biological sciences. While most of the essays in this collection are written by social and behavioral scientists, there are also works by researchers in departments of history, urology, philosophy, urban affairs, and communications. They employ methods from quantitative survey analysis to in-depth interviews and hermeneutic interpretation; other research in men's studies is employing methodologies from the humanities such as deconstruction of literary texts, comparative and historical analysis, and comparative cultural methods drawn from anthropology. This interdisciplinary quality will only increase as other disciplines begin to reexamine conventional wisdoms as gender-based ideologies.

### ***Beyond "Sex Roles": Gender as a Social Construction***

This interdisciplinary perspective developing within men's studies echoes the interdisciplinary perspective developed by women's studies in



the last two decades. It does so for reasons of both form and content. As I mentioned above, men's studies requires the reinterpretation of conventional wisdoms as gender-based ideologies, a formulation it gratefully borrows from women's studies. Formally, then, this reinterpretation slowly encompasses the different academic disciplines—at differing rates of speed, to be sure—but the sweep of the compass can cover all academic fields. More important, however, men's studies is beginning to follow women's studies' lead in the content of its inquiry into the structure of gender in the United States.

For several decades, the study of gender has used a "sex-role" model, a model that specified the ways in which biological males and biological females became socialized as men and women in a particular culture. But this sex-role paradigm has come under increasing criticism for being ahistorical, psychologically reductionist, and apolitical. (See Pleck, 1981, for the most comprehensive critique of the male sex-role model, and see Stacey & Thorne, 1985, and Gerson & Peiss, 1985, for comparable critiques of sex-role research in general.) Because many of the articles collected here move beyond this paradigm—and because transcending the sex-role paradigm is essential to maintaining the strongly interdisciplinary perspective of men's studies—it may be useful to spell out this critique in a bit more detail.

The sex-role paradigm posits a historically invariant model, a kind of static sex-role container into which all biological males and females are forced to fit. This process of fitting into preexisting roles is called "socialization." As such, the paradigm ignores the extent to which our conceptions of masculinity and femininity—the content of the male or female sex role—is relational; that is, the product of gender relations that are historically and socially conditioned. Masculinity and femininity are relational constructs, the definition of either depends upon the definition of the other. Although "male" and "female" may have some universal characteristics (and even here the research on biological dimorphism suggests a certain fluidity), one cannot understand the social construction of either masculinity or femininity without reference to the other.

Further, the sex-role paradigm is based upon the traits associated with the role—a kind of laundry list of behavioral characteristics—rather than their enactments. This makes sex roles not only more static than they might otherwise be but posits an ideal configuration that bears little, if any, relation to the ways in which sex roles are enacted in everyday life. In addition, the sex-role paradigm minimizes the extent to which gender relations are based on power. Not only do men as a group exert power over women as a group, but the historically derived definitions of masculinity and femininity reproduce those power