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Men, Masculinities and Peace, Justice, Conflict and Violence:
A Multi-level Overview

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ABSTRACT

The relations between men, masculinities and violence, peace, justice, and conflict are of clear importance, yet often remain unaddressed explicitly in analysis, policy, and practice. This chapter overviews the large body of feminist and critical literature on these multi-level connections. Violence, non-violence, peace, justice, conflict, and post-conflict are approached through the lens of Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities (CSMM), and in terms of theory, politics, policy, and practice. The chapter begins with an overview of CSMM as a body of scholarship informing theory, policy and practice interventions around violence, peace, justice, and conflict at interpersonal, communal, institutional, national, and transnational levels. The authors continue with an analysis of key contributions of CSMM in understanding the challenges and possibilities of peaceful, non-violent masculinities within different levels, while acknowledging intersections and overlaps between levels. It is contended that CSMM provide necessary hope and evidence that positive peace is achievable through the transformation toward more healthy, non-violent masculinities and gender relations.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we examine the relations between men, masculinities and violence, peace, justice, and conflict, through an overview of critical literature on these multi-level connections. A large body of feminist and critical scholarship on men and masculinities brings "home the point of men's violence as specifically *gendered* and perpetrated predominantly by men" (Boonzaier and van Niekerk, 2019, p. 459; see Hearn, 1998; McCarry, 2007; Messerschmidt, 1993). Conflict and peace, and their complex genderings, can be understood at different

analytical levels. Compared to work on violence and masculinities, there is still less work on peace and masculinities relatively (Breines et al., 2000; UNESCO, 1997; Wright, 2014).

Building on recent critical work on men and masculinities, we approach violence, non-violence, peace, justice, conflict, and post-conflict through the lens of Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities (CSMM), and in terms of theory, politics, policy and practice, at interpersonal, communal, institutional, national, international or transnational levels. Indeed, different levels of analysis open up different views on men and masculinities; such multi-level analysis is needed to understand the connections of violence/peace, men, and masculinities. CSMM is relevant in analysis of social and political institutions, movements and actors, along with the question of what counts as politics in the first place (Hooper, 2001; Higate, 2003; Enloe, 2013). Politics do not only constitute formal mainstream public domain politics but pervade gender ordering of and across societies, before, within, and after violence and conflict.

We present key contributions of CSMM in understanding the challenges and possibilities of peaceful, non-violent masculinities within different levels, while acknowledging intersections and overlaps between levels. Masculinities refer to patterns of gender practice that are structured, institutionalised, relational, embodied, dynamic, contested, intersubjective, performed, and performative. Masculinities are constructed in relation to societal definitions of men and males within gender orders, whilst being analytically distinct from people called men and males. Masculinities can thus be performed and sustained by men, women, and further genders (Connell, 2005).

The chapter begins with an overview of CSMM as a body of scholarship that informs theory, practice, and policy on violence, and thus non-violence. We continue by considering peace and conflict at multiple levels, and their connections with men and masculinities, before linking positive peace and justice with the project of working with men and masculinities.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON MEN, MASCULINITIES, AND VIOLENCE

Inspired by feminisms and further critical gender scholarship, over the last 50 years there has been significant growth of Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities (CSMM) (Hearn and Howson, 2019). These studies have multiple implications for transforming men and masculinities, as well as the analysis, reduction, and challenge to violence and men's diverse

relations to violence and conflict, including non-violence and opposition to violence. Critically gendering men and masculinities entails considering how men and masculinities figure within intersectional social relations. The broad critical and explicit approach to men and masculinities, rather than an implicit or incidental approach, can be characterised as:

- informed by *feminist, LGBTIQA+ and other critical gender scholarship*;
- recognising *gendered social constructions*;
- cognizant of *variation and change* across time (history), space (culture), within societies, and across life spans;
- emphasising men's differential relations to *gendered power*;
- spanning *material and discursive* analyses;
- highlighting *intersections of gender and further social divisions* (Connell et al., 2005, p. 3) – in short, men are not only men.

The most influential approach in CSMM proposes that various masculinities are framed in relation to gender hegemony, patriarchy, and patriarchal relations (Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell, 1995). The concept of hegemonic masculinity – "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" (Connell, 1995, p. 77) – is a central pillar, while related concepts, such as complicit masculinity, have been taken up less. Various critiques of the concepts of masculinity and hegemonic masculinity – lack of clarity; postcolonial, transnational and queer challenges; usefulness as a heuristic rather than precise concept – have led to reframings (Demetriou, 2001; Donaldson, 1993; Hearn, 1996, 2004, 2012b; Moller, 2007; Schippers, 2007). For example, "the hegemony of men" addresses "the double complexity that men are both a *social category formed by the gender system* and *dominant collective and individual agents of social practices*." (Hearn, 2004, p. 59). CSMM involves the critical gendering of men, "naming men as men", whilst simultaneously deconstructing both masculinities and the social category of men.

CSMM approaches provide many relevant insights on men's relations to war, militarism, and violence (Hearn, 2012a; Hearn et al., 2013 for research overviews), and thus justice, peace, and conflict. First, men are regarded members of a social category invested with relative gender

power, including in some contexts power as violence. Violence can be an accepted, if not always acceptable, way of being a man, and may be a group or interpersonal reference point for boys, men, and masculinity. In many contexts, violence is bound up with dominant gender constructions, whilst at the same time cut through by class, race, and other social markers of difference. While physical violence may not be part of many men's routine behaviour, men's complicity is widespread (Pease, 2008). In most societies, men enact most interpersonal violence, especially planned, repeated, heavy, physically damaging, non-defensive, premeditated, non-retaliatory, and sexual forms of violence, along with most economic, collective, institutional, organised, public, communal, gang, and (para)military violence, which are themselves often interpersonal, sometimes involving intimate relations (WHO, 2014).

Men's violence is enacted both towards men and those other than men. Certain groups of men, subordinated by class, race/ethnicity or conscription, may be expendable, sometimes in large numbers, thereby continuing (other) men's structural power and domination. Men's violence can be means to an end, enforcing and solidifying established power and control, maintaining patriarchal systems of domination or routinely reaffirming power in intimate relationships. They can be a reaction to loss of or perceived threat to power, and a way of resisting the power of others, subordinate or superordinate. Violence may be a source of pride, shameful, or ambiguous; constructions of men and masculinity may have complex even contradictory connections with, say, 'honour', 'shame', and 'violence'.

Some men's engagement in peace, opposition to violence, non-violence, and movements for peace, justice, and anti-violence operate counter to all of this. Men and violence are not equivalent: men are not biologically fixed as violent; this is obvious when one considers the huge global variations in violence (Hearn, 2012a, 2012b; Pease, 2019). Clearly, not all men are fascinated by weapons, or feel that carrying a gun is integral for demonstrating masculinity. There are also many examples where women have taken up arms as fighters, terrorists and active combatants, contrary to notions of women as inherently peaceful.

Critical engagement with men as predators or perpetrators of violence explores the (gendered) contexts that explicitly or implicitly allow, support, and/or accept such acts. This serves as a point of reference to frame strategic interventions towards justice and peace and keep men away from direct violent conflicts. Feminist methodologies and methods in analysis, policy and practical interventions, highlighting asymmetrical gender power relations, whether with

combatants, ex-combatants, those who manage war and peace, and/or victims, are vital.

PEACE AND CONFLICT AT MULTIPLE LEVELS: CONNECTIONS WITH MEN AND MASCULINITIES

In recent years, critical research on men, masculinities, violence, and peace has tended to move from an interpersonal, local, and institutional focus to the broader global picture (Connell, 1993), including opposition to men's global violence (Breines et al., 2000; Ferguson et al., 2004). Men's gendered violence can be understood at the macro-level of society, but also at other levels such as within local communities (meso-level), between persons and against selves (micro-level). In this section, we first move from macro-level to meso-level analyses of peace and conflict, and then onto micro-level analyses of peace and conflict.

Peace and conflict can, first, be approached from a macro-analytic perspective. Macro-level studies of men, masculinities, violence, peace, and conflict have been, and need to be, informed by greater engagement with macro-questions of globalisation (Connell, 1998), world-centered-ness (Connell, 2014), neoliberalism (Cornwall et al., 2016), postcolonialism (Farahani and Thapar-Björkert, 2019; Ratele, 2016), transnational patriarchies and change (Hearn, 2015; Hearn et al., 2019). In the ex-colonies and elsewhere, analyses of gender relations, men and masculinities, and related programme implementation, could benefit from decolonial and postcolonial perspectives that highlight the impact of colonial and imperialist histories and geographies, for example, in the delineation of nations and national borders (see De Smet and Hwang, this volume). The numerous armed conflicts around the world in the second decade of the 21st century have often been fueled by global economic and political context and global economic inequalities, with many concentrated in colonised, poor, low- and middle-income regions (HIIK, 2018).

Peacebuilding policies for disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration (DDR) require a gender-sensitive framework where both women, men, and children are fully involved. The United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) is acclaimed as the landmark in acknowledging the negative impact of conflict on women, and their integral role in peacebuilding. Follow-up UN Security Council resolutions such as 1820 (2008), 1889 (2009),

and 2122 (2013) provide a global mandate to develop a protective framework for women during conflict and empower them for their participation in peacebuilding (Hassink and Baringer, 2015; see also Basu and Nagar, this volume), prompting the question of the implications for men and masculinities. Analyses of conflict and peace, as well as peacebuilding attempts that limit the impact of conflict and peace on only women, tend to exclude strong consideration of men and masculinities (Wright, 2014).

Meso-level analyses involve sub-national concerns, including problems and catalysts within local communities, groups and organisations, including gang wars, armed conflict, and intra-country racial tensions. With respect to organised crime, while girls and women are not absent from gangs, including in leadership, men are usually disproportionately represented in gang-related activities. In armed conflict, it is men who are overwhelmingly expected, persuaded or compelled and recruited to support military action and become combatants by taking up arms – fighting, killing, and dying for the nation, communities and personal glory. Masculinity, specifically hyper, tough, violent masculinity underpin gangs and armed conflict, impacting not only individual men but seeping into families, communities, and societies (Duncanson, 2019; Enloe, 2015).

Micro-level approaches focus on various interpersonal and individual behaviours and dynamics, including dialogical practices of men and women in supporting or destabilising violent or peaceful masculinities. Micro-approaches to understanding the relationship between men, masculinities, and the challenges of peace and justice are not disassociated from macro- and meso-approaches demonstrating how patriarchal power is entwined with global institutionalised frameworks of intersectional inequality (Hearn, 2015). The entanglement of dominant forms of masculinity with power, aggression and violence within institutions, such as military and corporate organisations, and family and interpersonal relations, is key in both transnational and local contexts (Boonzaier and van Niekerk, 2019; Duncanson, 2019; Hearn, 2015). While notions of hegemonic masculinity have been critiqued, for example, in postcolonial and queer challenges, the concept has proved useful in micro-level studies of boys and men in relation to violent and non-peaceful practices associated with dominant forms of masculinity and male power.

CSMM scholarship, across diverse contexts, has emphasised how dominant practices of masculinity, including risk-taking, aggression and violence, are policed by other boys and men,

girls and women, and shaped within family, school, military, workplace and other institutions. Dominant and stereotypical masculinity and male practice not only cause problems for women and girls, but also undermine boys' and men's health and well-being, and indeed pursuit of peace and justice (Hearn, 2007). Intersections of gendered norms with poverty and other forms of inequality place young men in many contexts at particular risk of their own risk-taking and male violence. For example, in post-apartheid South Africa, Ratele and others (Ratele, 2012, 2018; Ratele et al., 2011) have flagged the high rates of mortality among young, poor men through (male) violence and other risk-related factors, often linked to pursuit of dominant masculinities in contexts where economic and racial injustice undermine such aspirations.

A specific lens on men within the larger framework of intimate partner violence, historically focused predominantly on women, has shown the intersectional complexities of violence for men. Men's violence cannot be understood outside dominant forms of masculinity, often characterised by male sexual prowess, control over women, and complex intersections with other forms of inequality, such as legacies of colonialism, slavery, racism, and inequalities of age, class, and sexual and gender orientation (Boonzaier and van Niekerk, 2019; Ratele, 2018). A recent South African study, documenting a group of male perpetrators of violence against their female partners who participated in pro-feminist anti-violence interventions, foregrounds participants' conflicts between embracing a non-violent masculinity, ideologically associated with whiteness and middle class-ness. Meanwhile participants attempt to avoid the racialised shame of not living up to hegemonic forms of masculinity in their communities, shaped by histories of subjugation and othering through colonisation and apartheid (van Niekerk, 2019).

In micro-level research on and intervention work with boys, men, and masculinities, a more nuanced focus on masculinities, particularly towards resisting the reproduction of violent masculinity, has emerged as a key terrain in thinking about shifting male subjectivities and practices (Gibbs et al., 2015). Although men's resistance to changes in gender relations, particularly to losing male privilege, has been highlighted in CSMM scholarship (Ratele, 2015), there has been growing emphasis on men's resistance to hegemonic and dominant masculinities, through activism and (pro-)feminist activities (Peretz, 2019), and acknowledging men's precarity as men. Empirical studies with young men have increasingly highlighted male vulnerability and the challenges of striving for idealised representations of manhood, usually unachievable for most and resulting in practices that are potentially risky for men's safety and well-being (Boonzaier and van Niekerk, 2019; Hearn, 2007; Ratele, 2016; Robinson, 2019).

Such studies illustrate the contestations, vulnerabilities, anxieties of men that 'trouble' the dominant notion of men as engaged in violence and risk. Ethnographic studies across diverse contexts document how individual men shift between different versions of masculinity and respond to contradictory demands on them as men, at times resisting desires that emerge in contradiction to dominant versions of masculinity and male sexuality. These contestations and vulnerabilities are important in resisting deterministic, unitary representations of young men, as well as a potentially powerful resource in working with young men (Shefer et al., 2015).

As part of a larger theoretical turn to embodiment and affect, a focus on shame can point to the intersectionality of violence and be a way into challenging male violence and promoting peaceful and just masculinities (Gottzén, 2019; van Niekerk, 2019). Men's shame may be deployed as a constructive vehicle for justice and peace, rather than simply a means to regulate hegemonic practices of unsafe or coercive male sexual practices, violence, and risk-taking. An important example here of connections between men, masculinities, violence, and shame concerns the fact that, while most soldiers are men, and most rape victims/survivors and victims/survivors of sexual exploitation during war are women, men and boys are also victims/survivors of sexual violence, often involving denial and shame (Féron, 2018). Male rape is often very challenging to report with the strictures of dominant masculinity that construct 'real men' as 'unrapeable', meaning invulnerable to rape. Low reports of male rape exemplify why and how some of the effects of war on men go unremarked.

WORKING POST-CONFLICT TO TRANSFORM MEN AND MASCULINITIES, AND CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS JUSTICE

The effects of violent conflicts, such as war, are immense, and not limited to fatalities, injuries, victories, or losses, but more insidiously work to cement or threaten power, and specifically gender power relations. While men are the main perpetrators of violent and armed conflict, it is also necessary to reflect on how to change men and masculinities towards peace and nonviolence. Still, the international policy framework for the inclusion of men as victims and change-agents in conflict situations is slow. The implementation of frameworks and policies for peace that only considers women and girls as victims, and men and boys as perpetrators, might omit both men's and women's sufferings, vulnerabilities, risks and needs (Myrttinen et al., 2014; Féron, 2018).

Only relatively recently have global instruments such as the UN Security Council Resolution 2106 (2013), the G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict (2013), and Resolution 2467 (2019) explicitly recognised men and boys as survivors of sexual violence in armed conflict and trouble-bearers in post-conflict, as well as in working with men and boys in preventing sexual violence (Myrttinen et al., 2014). Following war and other violent conflicts, both victims and perpetrators need to be involved in peacebuilding, and again here insights from gendering and transforming men and masculinities can assist in working towards peace and justice. A concern with women and children victims of war is clearly necessary, but failure to pay adequate attention to both non-combatant and combatant men and boys can invisibilise the effects of war on them. Indeed, as noted, men and masculinities can be positioned very differently in relation to such violent conflicts, as non-combatants, whether chosen, disappointed or military managers, or combatants, whether reluctant, dutiful, self-selected, enthusiastic, or sadistic.

There is growing recognition that the neglect of the needs and denial of the victimisation of boys and men, as well as a lack of critical gendered lens on masculinities, in understanding violent conflict might end up in prolonging violence and undermining gender equality (Kaufman, 2012). For example, after an official peace agreement is signed, a high level of domestic and sexual violence is often evident in post-conflict societies as the demobilised, uncertain, and unemployed ex-combatants use violence to reinstate masculine identity and men's position and power as men and masculine identity in families and communities. Attacks on other men, international peacekeeping personnel, and armed robbery are common (Harders, 2011; Schäfer, 2012). Additionally, if economic opportunities or basic needs for subsistence remain unaddressed, further derailments become likely. A specific case is Angola in the mid-1990s, where the post-conflict reconstruction process did not appropriately consider men's needs. Men were returned to communities without proper education and skills. Finding no appropriate means of livelihood, some turned to alcoholism, addiction, rape, and domestic violence. Fighting was renewed due to failed reconciliation efforts (US Institute of Peace, 2011). This kind of situation needs further research and post-conflict policy intervention.

There are also post-conflict and peace-building policy and practical initiatives at the regional level which have at their core engaged men and masculinity, gender-relationality, and anti-violence against women, with varying success (for example, Wu, 2018, on Afghanistan,

Pakistan and Timor-Leste). Further examples of interventions include: Living Peace Groups Project in DR Congo and Burundi; the Refugee Law Project, Uganda; Questscope Mentoring Programme, Jordan; Young Men Initiative, the Balkans (Hassink and Baringer, 2015); Men's Association of Gender Equality, Sierra Leone (Kaufman, 2012); Bringer of Light, Burundi (Schäfer, 2012); and Children's Assistance, Liberia (Large, 1997), all of which engage with focused practical change with boys, men, and masculinities.

Relatedly, while most war refugees may be women and children, discourse on war often glosses over the fact that many men flee from such conflicts and end up in refugee camps (Cockburn, 2013). Unsettling hegemonic masculinities can open up possibilities for transforming gender relations, as when men migrating from war zones forge positive alliances with local progressive social movements (Ingvars, 2019).

A comprehensive analysis of intersectional gender relations, and varied war and violence experiences of boys and men is essential for the formulation and implementation of post-conflict peace-building policy and programmes (Schäfer, 2012). The more generic work of the global (pro-)feminist umbrella organisation, MenEngage Alliance, especially in terms of the development of preventative interventions (MenEngage, 2015) along with policy research work on violence prevention (Hassink and Baringer, 2015; Flood, 2019), is highly relevant here. Thinking about men and masculinities in positive peace and the lack of structural violence (Farmer, 2001; Galtung, 1969, 1990) is necessary. Positive peace and intervention work that seeks to transform boys, men, and masculinities goes beyond simply ending conflict but considers inequality and poverty, men as a gendered social group, and masculinities as relational ideological constructions within macro-relations.

In their 1990 book *Societies at Peace*, Howell and Willis posed the question: what can we learn from peaceful societies? In societies where men were permitted to acknowledge fear, levels of violence were likely to be lower; in those where masculine bravado, repression, and denial of fear defined masculinity, violence higher. Where bravado was prescribed for men, definitions of masculinity and femininity were often very highly differentiated. With less gender differentiation, the more men were nurturing and caring, and the more women were seen as capable, rational, and competent in the public sphere, less likely was men's violence. The more recent, ongoing IMAGES (International Men and Gender Equality Survey) project has found predictors of men's more gender-equal attitudes include own education, mother's education,

men's reports of father's domestic participation, family background of mother alone or joint decision-making parents, and not witnessing violence to mother. Such self-reported attitudes from men tend to predict men's gender-equal practices, including less violence (Levtov et al., 2014).

At the structural level, men's domination of labour force participation links with greater likelihood of societal internal violent conflict (Caprioli, 2005), whilst women's well-being tends to link with societal peacefulness (Hudson et al., 2012). Indeed, the most gender unequal and homophobic countries are those with the highest level of societal violence and most at risk of internal armed conflict (Ekvall, 2019). On the other hand, societies with the most positive attitudes to homosexuality are also those most likely to be arms exporters (Ekvall, 2019) – with perhaps an indirect relation to homonationalism, the promotion of nationalism, often in a racist form, through highlighting of homosexual rights within the nation and the derogation and Othering of *other* nations, assessed as inferior, through their asserted lack or lesser rights (also see Chapters on queer theory, this volume).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have discussed how Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities (CSMM) can inform analysis, policies and interventions around peace, justice, and conflict. It remains remarkable how conflict and peace are still often addressed without considering the naming and deconstructing of men and masculinities. The lack of peace in global, local, and glocal contexts is maintained by continued practices of violence at macro-, meso-, and micro-levels. A layered multi-level understanding of men and masculinities and their positions, roles, and participation, or non-participation, regarding conflict and peace, offers a complex, substantial view.

Moreover, widespread images of violent and armed conflict and militarisation can easily (re)create a picture of gender and male dominance in which are men as portrayed as essentially violent and women as essentially peaceful, thus reproducing culturally prevalent models of men and women, masculinity and femininity (Myrttinen, 2003). Addressing the needs of male combatants and survivors of conflict, engaging and empowering both women and men in peacebuilding processes as partners, and avoiding reinforcement of stereotypes of boys and

men as invulnerable to violence and conflict, have huge potential for creating sustainable peaceful, gender-just societies (Carpenter, 2006; Solangon and Patel, 2012).

CSMM provide necessary hope and evidence that positive peace is achievable through the transformation of more healthy, non-violent masculinities, and gender relations (Ratele, 2012). Critically gendered, positive peace work carries far-reaching and multiple social, economic, political, cultural, and intersubjective social justice possibilities beyond protecting women, men, and children from direct, bodily, or psychological violence.

Many possible future avenues for research exist around men and masculinities, including the interrelations between different levels of analysis; interactions between theory, policy, and practice interventions; and the connections between perpetration of violence and victimhood, between war, post-conflict, and positive peace, and between focused anti-violence intervention and generic preventive work.

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