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Placing Masculinities and Geography

LAWRENCE D. BERG, *Okanagan University College, Vernon, BC, Canada*
ROBYN LONGHURST, *University of Waikato, Hamilton, Aotearoa/New Zealand*

Introduction

There has been an increasing focus in feminist and pro-feminist inspired studies on examining men, male subjectivities and masculinities in the decade since *Gender, Place and Culture* began publication. Our aim in this article is to provide readers with a brief overview of some of this recent research, and then to place these works within a critique of the Anglocentric character of geographic knowledge production. The article proceeds in the following manner. We begin with a brief definition of masculinity, in order to stress its temporal and geographical contingency. We follow this discussion with a brief review of some of the research on masculinities undertaken in the past two decades, with a particular emphasis on studies of the social and cultural geographies of masculinity completed in the decade since *Gender, Place and Culture* began publication. It is important to note that our review is far from exhaustive, but rather, more indicative. Our purpose here is to provide a context for our subsequent critique of a specific scaling of knowledge that constitutes much of the context for the way that work on masculinities is understood in Anglo-American geography.

Defining Masculinity

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term 'masculinity' refers to: 'The state or fact of being masculine; the assemblage of qualities regarded as characteristic of men; maleness, manliness'. In defining masculinity in this way, without qualifying the social character of what it means to be a man, male or 'manly', the editors of the *OED* implicitly draw on taken-for-granted and common-sense understandings that draw on binary divisions of sex/gender. In this sense, the *OED* defines masculinity as an object, that is, as an assemblage of qualities, a natural character, a set of behaviours, or a norm. These qualities or characteristics arise from the taken-for-granted attachment of masculinity to essentialist understandings of male bodies (see Longhurst, 2001). If we are to avoid the pitfalls of definitions of masculinity that rely on essentialist—and closely related positivist or normative understandings (see Connell, 1995)—we need a more critical definition of masculinity that accounts for the relational character of identity (re)construction.

In order to think masculinity relationally, it must be connected to the system of gender relations within which it arises. Although a focus on the relational and processual

Correspondence: Lawrence D. Berg, Department of Geography, Okanagan University College, 7000 College Way, Vernon, BC, Canada V1B 2N5; e-mail: Lberg@ouc.bc.ca

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contexts of masculinity (re)construction makes it more difficult to define the concept, we think that Bob Connell (1995, p. 71) provides a useful starting point for a working definition of masculinity:

> Masculinity … is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture.

Although Connell understands the temporal contingency of masculinity, ironically (given his use of spatial metaphors), he does not explicitly acknowledge its geographical specificity. Yet, given the importance of contexts, relationships, and practices in both the (re)construction of masculinity and the way that we come to understand the meanings of the term, it should be very clear that masculinity is both temporally and geographically contingent. Perhaps equally important is the implication that given the multitude of possible gendered contexts, relationships and practices that come together in the structuring of identity in different times and spaces, we should not speak of a singular masculinity, but rather, of multiple masculinities. Moreover, any one masculinity, as a product of practice, can be simultaneously positioned in differently structured relationships. Accordingly, masculinity 'is always liable to internal contradiction and historical disruption' (Connell, 1995, p. 73; also see Jackson, 1991; Dawson, 1994; Berg, 1999; Bonnett, 1999). Masculinities, then, are highly contingent, unstable, contested spaces within gender relations. It is this very contingent and unstable character that makes the process and spaces of identity production so important in both the construction of masculinities, and—we argue—in the construction of ways of understanding masculinities.

We would like the reader to keep this double movement, the construction of identities and the understanding of such constructions, in mind as they read the rest of this article. We want to argue that while geographers have been cognisant of the first aspect, the spatial construction of identity, more attention needs to be paid to the second aspect, the spatial construction of (geographic) understanding. Our object of analysis in the rest of this article, then, is both masculinities and geographers' analyses of them. The next section outlines a brief (and perhaps somewhat schematic) history of work on masculinities and geography in Anglo-American geography.

Masculinities and Geographies

Beginnings

Present-day critical analyses of masculinities owe much to the early work of Bob Connell (see Connell, 1985, 1987) and his work with Tim Carrigan and John Lee (see Carrigan *et al.*, 1987). Carrigan *et al.*, for example, argued that 'the starting point for any understanding of masculinity that is not simply biologistic or subjective must be men's involvement in the social relations that constitute the gender order' (Carrigan *et al.*, 1987, p. 89). Prior to that time, most sociological analyses of men and masculinities had focused on 'sex roles', an approach that failed to recognise the unequal power relations between men and women and between dominant and subordinate men (also see Donaldson, 1993). Carrigan and his colleagues argued instead that we must be cognisant of the power relations that inhere in the 'sex/gender system'. They borrowed this phrase from Gayle Rubin (1975) to describe 'a patterning of social relations connected with social reproduction and gender division that is found in all societies, though in varying shapes' (Carrigan *et al.*, 1987, p. 89).

The period between 1987 and 1990 was a productive time for the development of critical analyses of masculinity (see, for example, Brod, 1987; Davidoff & Hall, 1987; Hearn, 1987; Mangan & Walvin, 1987; Chapman & Rutherford, 1988; Brittan, 1989; Seidler, 1989; Segal, 1990). While Anglo-American geography has a long history of androcentrism and masculinism (Rose, 1993) and therefore geographers have long been preoccupied with the activities of men, it took somewhat longer for a critique of hegemonic masculinities to develop in the discipline. It was not until 1989, then, that we began to see the beginnings of an outline for the study of masculinities (Jackson, 1989). Two years later masculinity really started to become a primary object of analysis in Anglo-American geography when Peter Jackson (1991) published his programmatic paper on the necessity of studying the cultural politics of masculinity.

Jackson followed his programmatic paper with a substantive analysis of the relationships between white desire, heterosexual masculinities and black male bodies in advertising in the UK (Jackson, 1994). Published in the premiere issue of *Gender, Place and Culture*, Jackson's work was the first substantive analysis of particular forms of hegemonic masculinity to be published in the journal. Jackson and his colleagues have played an important role in the development of Anglo-American geographic studies of gender in general and masculinity more specifically. More recently Jackson, Nick Stevenson and Kate Brooks have published an extensive analysis of masculinities and men's magazines (Jackson *et al.*, 1999, 2001).

Masculinity, Masculinism and Geography

Feminist geographers have long been engaged in discussions of masculinities in a rather indirect way, by focusing on the androcentric and masculinist character of much work being done in the discipline. Early examples of these kinds of critiques can be found in the work of Janice Monk and Susan Hanson (1982), who pointed out the failure of American geographers to acknowledge the androcentric character of their supposedly 'universal' findings (also see Zelinsky *et al.*, 1982). The Women and Geography Study Group of the Institute of British Geographers carried out a similar critique of British geography a few years later (WGSG, 1984).

By the early 1990s, however, analyses of geographic knowledge production began to focus more specifically on masculinity and masculinism. Gillian Rose's (1993) work, *Feminism and Geography*, was perhaps the harbinger of this more explicit focus on masculinism and masculinity in the discipline. Subsequent years saw a range of critiques of the masculinism of the discipline, with the masculinity of particular aspects of geography as the primary object of analysis (see Berg, 1994, 2001; Longhurst, 1994, 1995, 1997; Pile, 1994; Sparke 1996).

Late 1990s

In a recent review of work on masculinities and geography (Longhurst, 2000, p. 440), one of us noted that 'the late 1990s have seen something of a flurry of geographical research on masculinity, male identity and men'. Following Peter Jackson's lead earlier in the decade, social and cultural geographers, particularly those utilising feminist perspectives, in the late 1990s intensified their interest in masculinities (see Gregson & Crewe, 1998; Johnston, 1998; Woodward, 1998; Campbell *et al.*, 1999). In the late 1990s masculinity also continued to be a focus for geographers interested in sexual–spatial relations,

especially gay sexual–spatial relations (see Brown, 1998; Knopp, 1998; and a special issue on masculinities in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 1998).

Perhaps the most interesting trend in the 1990s, however, was not the increasing attention being paid to masculinities by social, cultural, sexuality and feminist geographers but by other geographers interested in a range of disciplinary areas. Masculinity was extending its reach into urban geography (see Sommers, 1998), economic geography (see Blomley, 1996), geographies of employment (see McDowell, 1997; Massey, 1998), geographies of illness, impairment and disability (see Valentine, 1999), and post-colonial geographies (see Phillips, 1997; Berg, 1998a, 1998b, 1999). No longer was geographical work on masculinities being produced solely under the rubric of social, cultural, sexuality and feminist geographies.

This is not to suggest, however, that in the late 1990s all geographers began turning their attention to masculinities. Discussions of masculinities were still notably absent or at least limited in a number of subdisciplinary areas, including physical geography, geographic information systems, environmental studies, transport geography and population geography.

Early 2000s

The 2000s saw the flurry of work that began in the 1990s continue with little sign of abatement. The newer works on masculinities are too numerous to list in the space of this article, so we shall try only to give an indication of the range of works that were published in the last three years.

Masculinities became an important focus in rural studies in the 2000s, with articles examining the gamut of rural life, including masculinities and mountain climbing in New Zealand (Morin *et al.*, 2001); changing rural masculinities in Ireland (Ni Laoire, 2002); the contested relationships between rurality, masculinity and homosexuality in the UK (Bell, 2000); changing masculinities in the forest industry in Norway (Brandth & Haugen, 2000); farming masculinities in rural Australia and New Zealand (Liepins, 2000; also see Saugeres, 2002); and military masculinities in the UK countryside (Woodward, 1998, 2000). Jo Little and Ruth Panelli (2003) and Little (2002) provide useful overviews of the burgeoning research on gender and rural studies (also see the special issue of *Rural Sociology*, 2000).

Social and cultural geographers have been equally productive when it comes to research on masculinities and geography. Stuart Aitken and James Craine (2002), for example, examine the 'emotional geographies' of Matt Johnson's music in order to elucidate potential liberatory aspects of heterosexual masculine desire (cf. Hubbard, 2000). Anne Sofie Lagran (2003) outlines diverse forms of masculinities as constituted in the intersection of Internet cafe spaces, computers and computer games in Oslo, Norway (also see Holloway *et al.*, 2000). Karen Lysaght (2002) analyses the performative character of dominant and subordinate masculinities in the divided city of Belfast, focusing on the way that spatial context affects the performance of gender identities. In the same special theme issue of *Irish Geography*—'Engendering the human geographies of Ireland'—Aoife Curtin and Denis Linehan (2002) explore the construction of masculinities among Irish teenagers. Kathleen Mee and Robyn Dowling (2000) examine changing representations of working-class masculinities, (un)employment and filmic representation in suburban Sydney, Australia. These are only a sample of the many social and cultural geographies of masculinities produced in the past few years. What is interesting about these works is

that they have analysed a broad range of phenomena across a wide array of spaces and places.

As one would expect, *Gender, Place and Culture* has played a significant role in publishing works on masculinities. Since 2000, the journal has published articles that examine a range of issues, including the uneasy masculine spaces constructed through the work of the charitable 'Big Brothers' organisation in Canada (Hopkins, 2000); the (re)construction of oppressive gender relations in Brisbane, Australia's heavy metal music scene (Krenske & Mckay, 2000); the relationship between the (masculinist) state, masculinity and policing in the USA (Herbert, 2001); the historical origins of a localised gender division of labour found in Burkina Faso (Freidberg, 2001); the construction of masculine identities in Irvine California based on perceptions of women as fearful and endangered (Day, 2001); the connections between sports, gender (especially masculinity), nation and class in Finland during the period before the Second World War (Tervo, 2001); the relationship between masculinity, (dis)ability and British colonial discourse in Africa, circa 1929 (Myers, 2002); and white, working-class men's sense of themselves as masculine workers in the context of debates emphasising a growing 'crisis' of masculinity in the UK (McDowell, 2002; also see McDowell, 2000).

There is a sure sign that studies of masculinity are beginning to mature in geography: the appearance of edited collections on such issues. Both Frances Cleaver (2003) and Cecile Jackson (2001) have edited volumes that present a series of articles focusing exclusively on masculinities and development. Lisa Lindsay and Stephan Miescher (2003) have collected together a number of primarily historical accounts of the construction of masculinities in various parts of Africa. Tamar Mayer's recent collection (Mayer, 2000), while not solely about masculinities, presents a number of useful papers that focus on the relationship between masculinities and nationalism. Bettina van Hoven and Kathrin Hoerschelmann (forthcoming) have an edited collection on *Spaces of Masculinity* forthcoming that promises to provide some important papers on masculinity and geography. They have lined up authors working in a wide variety of contexts, with papers that examine the construction of masculinities in Australia, the Czech Republic, former East and West Germany, England, Fiji, France, India, Scotland and the USA.

Place and the Hidden Identity Politics of Masculinity Studies

An interesting point to note about more recent geographical research on masculinities published in English is that it was being produced in a wide range of places, and dealt with an even wider range of geographical locations. This, we suggest, plays at least a partial role in opening up a politically useful line of enquiry about the spatiality of knowledge construction. There is a growing body of literature that examines the spatial politics of geographic knowledge production (see Berg & Kearns, 1998; Minca, 2000; Gutiérez & López-Nieva, 2001; Berg, 2002, 2003; Gregson *et al.*, 2003; Hones, 2003; Raju, 2003; Ramirez, 2003; Simonsen, 2003). These works suggest that there exists in the production of academic knowledge what we shall term an international division of attributes (after Farmanfarmaian, 1992, p. 4). This international division of attributes arises within a political economy and cultural politics of academic accumulation strategies and it results in a hierarchical scaling of the significance of various kinds of geographical writing (Berg, 2003). In this regard and following a number of previous studies (e.g. Berg & Kearns, 1998; Minca, 2000; Binnie *et al.*, 2001; Gutiérez & López-Nieva, 2001; Berg, 2003; Gregson, *et al.*, 2003; Simonsen, 2003; Vaiou, 2003), we want to suggest that the international division of attributes leads to a scaling of knowledge

produced in metropolitan Anglo-America as universal (read: 'theory'); while work produced in the non-metropolitan 'peripheries' is scaled as local (read: 'case study').

This theoretical assertion is difficult to 'prove' empirically, as it is more a 'structure of feeling' that most people who have worked outside the metropolitan centre of academic knowledge production will be all too familiar with. Nonetheless, it is possible to try to outline—in schematic form at least—an empirical example of this process in action.

Linda Peake and Alissa Trotz's (1999) work on regulation of sexuality in Linden, a Guyanese corporate bauxite-mining town, provides an excellent illustration of a nuanced relational analysis of the process of constructing gendered identities. Starting from the premise that 'masculinities and femininities are not given but historically produced via struggle and consent' (Peake & Trotz, 1999, p. 127), Peake and Trotz examine in close empirical detail the practices of the Demba Bauxite Mining Company in its attempts to develop hegemonic control over constructions of working-class spaces of domesticity and work. In so doing, they produce a theoretically rich analysis of the production of masculine (and feminine) gender identities as made in the mutually constitutive relationships between class, gender, sexuality, 'race' and place. Ironically, however, this work appears to have received less attention in the feminist geography literature than it deserves precisely because it focuses on the 'local' construction of gendered identities in Guyana (read: parochial), rather than the ostensibly 'metropolitan' case of the UK or USA (read: universal). In this sense and working within the taken-for-granted international division of attributes, Guyana is read as a local case study rather than as a universally applicable theoretical example. It is scaled as local rather than global.

Gillian Rose argues that:

> Geography is masculinist … [and] masculinist work claims to be exhaustive and it therefore thinks that no-one else can add to its knowledge. … Masculinism can be seen at work not only in the choice of topics made by geographers, not only in their conceptual apparatus, not only in their epistemological claim to exhaustive knowledge, but also in seminars, in conferences, in common rooms, in job interviews. (1993, p. 4)

Guided by Rose's insights, we suggest that the scaling of knowledge in studies of masculinity is another by-product of the 'ghosts of masculinism' (Butz & Berg, 2002) that structure the production and consumption of geographic knowledge. This helps explain the continued scaling of knowledge that sees work produced in the Anglo-American 'centre' as universal while that produced in the 'peripheries' is seen as 'particular'. We are also aware that this centre–periphery language is itself highly problematic, and subject to the structuring of hidden masculinisms.

Conclusion

For us the journey of 'placing masculinities and geography' over the past two decades, and especially the last decade, has been both interesting and productive. Definitions of masculinity that focused on the sex/gender system have been extended to stress the temporal and geographical contingencies of masculinities. Masculinities, once an area of interest only to Anglo-American social, cultural and feminist geographers, is now being embraced by geographers working on an array of topics and locations, from a variety of perspectives, and in a range of different places.

Writing this review—reflecting on the journey as we see it—has made us question 'where to from here?' It seems likely that the surge of geographical work on masculinities

over the past few years will continue. There appears to be a momentum in this research that we expect will continue for some time to come. Now that edited collections are making their way on to library shelves it is probable that over the next few years we will also see more authored books on masculinities, such as Glen Elder's (2003), appearing. A trend that we are already witnessing, and one that is likely to continue, is a focus not on masculinities per se but on the mutually constitutive relationships between masculinities and other axes of identity such as class, disability, sexuality and 'race'. As we have argued in the article, geographers are also beginning to pay attention not just to the processes that help produce identity but to the places and spaces that help produce identity. The literature that examines the spatial politics of geographic knowledge production, and its links to masculinism, is likely to grow with the effect of opening up discursive space for 'others' to articulate their geographies.

It is always difficult to envisage what twists and turns journeys will take—the journey of 'placing masculinities and geographies' is no exception. One thing we do feel confident about, however, is that whatever directions are pursued, *Gender, Place and Culture* will remain a reliable and worthy vehicle for the journey. Since publishing Peter Jackson's (1994) article, 'Black male', in the premiere issue, *Gender, Place and Culture* has continued to provide a forum for productive debate for geographical research on masculinities. We look forward to this continuing over the next decade.

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