

# From Hegemony to Inclusivity: Perspectives on Models of Masculinity by R.W. Connell and Greg Anderson

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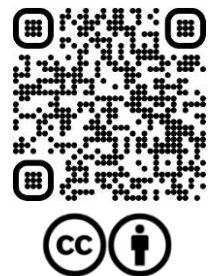
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**Abstract**— Masculinity Studies developed in ‘dialogue’ with the feminist movement. By the 1970s, it gained momentum, drawing energy from the women’s liberation movement. The notion of gender being a derivative of biological sex was rejected by social scientists and thinkers, it emerged that gender is not a stable category, but is “performative”, dynamic, and relational to the temporal and spatial context. I have relied on Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990) to elucidate this concept. The paper explores how ‘masculinity’ transformed from being a homogeneous concept into becoming ‘masculinities’, an idea that endorsed multiplicity and plurality. In the present article, R.W. Connell’s model of hegemonic masculinity and Greg Anderson’s theory of Inclusive masculinity have been explored to decipher the layers of masculine behaviour and chart its development in the field of masculinity studies.



**Keywords**— Gender, Performativity, Masculinity, Hegemonic Masculinity, Inclusive Masculinity, Embodiment

## I. INTRODUCTION - GENDER IDENTITIES, MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY

Gender is an analytical category that is socially constructed to differentiate between men and women. It is conditioned in a way that certain codes are created and replicated in society, thereby leading to masculine and feminine behaviour. The feminist movement sought to decode patriarchy, a system that validates masculine domination over women. It led to the emancipation of women in the private, as well as the public sphere. It also galvanized interest in Masculinity Studies. Feminists challenged the unjust treatment of women and sought to subvert the patriarchal power structure that propagated sexist oppression. Men’s studies also explored how men construct their domination within the existing gender structure (Bhatti,2022). This led to growing academic interest in ‘men’, and Masculinity Studies. Feyza Bhatti explains (2022):

Masculinity Studies mainly examines how masculine power is constructed and represented. It collaborates and debates with feminism and queer

studies to reach a full equality where gender is no longer inherent to social structures. It tries to move men away from being a subject to be blamed by highlighting the pressures of masculine dominance that impact all genders. Thus, it urges that the fight should not be against men but against the unequal structures that make all genders a victim. (p.2)

In *The Second Sex* (1949) Simone De Beauvoir asserted that gender was constructed through the process of cultural socialization. According to her, gender is a socially constructed binary, and “men” and “women” are well-defined categories that abide by the discursive construction of gender through their bodies, behaviour, personality, and desires. Culture articulates and defines gender positions and their relationship to each other (Schippers,2007). Judith Butler introduced the concept of ‘performativity’ through which she established that gender is a fluid, unstable category that is determined both spatially and temporally. It cannot impart a stable identity or a “locus of agency”, rather it is “an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts”

(Butler, 2011, p. xiv). She explains “performativity” as an anticipation of a “gendered essence” which produces “that which it posits as outside itself”. She continues to say that performativity is not a single act, “but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body” (ibid, p. xv). Butler states:

The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through a gendered stylization of the body. In this way it showed that what we take to be an “internal” feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts, at an extreme, an hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures. (p. xv)

Gender, sex, sexuality, and the body are fictional products of gender discourse born out of heterosexual normativity. Gender identity is a cultural performance, which creates a “hallucination” of being an extension of some innate essence through its repeated stylized acts. Butler seeks to ‘subvert’ the construct of identity and destabilize the defining institutions of heterosexuality and phallogocentrism. This consequently creates the possibility for resistance and change. Jagger (2008) comments on Butler’s intent:

She wants to reveal that heterosexuality and the binary system of sexual difference on which it is based, is compulsory yet at the same time show that it is permanently unstable and to argue that it is this instability that opens up the space for change. (p. 18)

Jagger (2008) further explains that subversion of identity becomes possible through “agency and critique, resistance and change” (p. 18). This opens space for alternative signification and displaces the existing discourse which lends primacy to heterosexuality, that is an imposed regulatory social mechanism. Butler’s critique brought into focus the “performativity” of masculinity and femininity, the traits that men and women were expected to display. Regarding male and female stereotyped gender roles, Johnson (2005) observes:

According to patriarchal culture, for example, men are aggressive, daring, rational, emotionally inexpressive, ... dominant, decisive, self-confident, and un-nurturing. Women are portrayed in opposite terms, such as unaggressive, shy, intuitive, emotionally expressive, nurturing... lacking in self-control (especially when menstruating... indecisive and lacking in self-confidence. (p. 86)

Human beings are not ‘autonomous’ entities, but relational beings whose behaviour is shaped by the social situation and context. Johnson attributes the construction of socially acceptable male and female behaviour to some “cultural magic” (p. 89) of the patriarchal structure which values maleness and devalues femaleness. Masculinity and femininity do not adequately describe us as human beings, because we are relational beings who respond to contextual situations in individual ways, and because there is no universalist idea that represents all men and women, there are exceptions based on intersections of class, caste, race, sexuality, and ethnicity.

From the above description, it is evident that Masculinity refers to socially produced norms embodied by men. Differentiating between patriarchy and masculinity, Srivastava (2015) points out that:

Patriarchy refers to a system of organising social life that is premised on the idea of the superiority of all men to women. Masculinity, on the other hand, is not only a relationship between men and women but also between men. Hence, we might say that while patriarchy “makes” men superior, masculinity is the process of producing superior men. (p. 33)

Srivastava (2015) maintains that Masculinity Studies emerged from a “conversation with feminism” (p. 33), rather than being an outcome of a historical political movement like the feminist struggle against oppression. It is a “supplementary discourse to feminism” (p. 33). It brought focus to the gendered identities of men. All men need not be aggressive or display machismo or subscribe to heterosexuality such as transgender men, homosexuals, or ‘straight’ men who may not necessarily be able-bodied or who may not embody attributes associated with maleness.

Connell (2005) asserted emphatically that masculinity and femininity are relational concepts and that the “knowledge of masculinity arises within the project of knowing the gender relations” (Connell, p. 44). She worked on the diversity of gender patterns among men through empirical data and contributed significantly through her works, such as *Gender and Power* (1987), *Masculinities* (1995, 2005), and *Men and Boys* (2000). Her findings were based on ethnographic studies of workplaces, schools, athletic careers, and historical accounts of changing ideas of masculinity. She explains how:

a debate about men and gender had taken off in the wake of the Women's Liberation movement; there was even a small Men's Liberation movement in the 1970s that attempted to reform the 'male sex role'. This gave rise to interesting political discussions about men, power, and change. (p. xii)

In the subsequent section, I will discuss the model of Masculinity proposed by the sociologist R.W. Connell (1995,2005), and the theory of Inclusive Masculinity given by Eric Anderson (2009), to support the argument that the concept of Masculinity is multi-layered. It will be established that masculinity is fluid and men are subjected to discrimination for not subscribing to the dominant idea of masculinity.

## II. CONNELL'S THEORY OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

R.W. Connell (1995,2005) maintains that everyday life is an arena of gender politics. Determined by Sex Role Theory the traditional gender discourse argued that biologically determined sex identified men as the provider and women as the nurturer. It endorsed the construction of masculinity through institutional practices in the arena of school, sports, factory, or office workspace. Such practices led to coercive discrimination. Mainstream masculinity was fundamentally linked to power which was organized to dominate and was resistant to change. Such institutional arrangements produce inequality, leading to the marginalization of black, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender not conforming men. Connell draws attention to the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct "gendered lives", she defines masculinity as a "place", a location where individuals both men and women can move into through practice; it is a set of characteristics that can be embodied by men and women, and once embodied these characteristics have a widespread social and cultural effect. Schippers (2007) explains this further:

occupying the masculine position and performing it affects the way individual experience their bodies, their sense of self, and how they project that self to others. While these are individual *effects*, it is important to point out that, for Connell, masculinity is not reducible to individual expression or experience...Instead of possessing or having masculinity, individuals move through and produce masculinity by engaging in masculine practices. (p.86)

These set of "practices" are enacted collectively by a group of people, which in turn structure the production and distribution of resources, power, desire, and sexuality. Thus, masculinity can be summarised as a social position, a set of practices and the impact of these collective practices can be seen on individuals and institutional structures globally.

Connell (2005) describes gender as:

a way in which social practice is ordered. In gender processes, the everyday conduct of life is

organized in relation to a reproductive arena, defined by the bodily structures and processes of human reproduction. This arena includes sexual arousal and intercourse, childbirth and infant care, bodily sex difference and similarity. ... Gender relations are a major component of social structure as a whole, and gender politics are among the main determinants of our collective fate (pp.71-76).

Connell's pathbreaking model indicates how the male body is gendered into four types of masculinities:(i) hegemonic, (ii)subordinate, (iii)complicit, and (iv)marginalized. Her theory of Hegemonic Masculinity employs Gramsci's concept of hegemony, to show how the dominant group establishes its authority on women and other gender identities. This legitimizes patriarchy and ensures the subordination of women, as well as, of men who embody subordinate masculinity like gay or transgender men. This is a dynamic concept that is subject to change temporally and spatially in each culture, as it "requires new strategies and performances to stay in power and rebuild power" (Bhatti,2022, p.3). Men who are complicit in supporting hegemony belong to the category of 'complicit masculinity'. Those who do not belong to the heterosexual hegemonic system, such as gay and transgender men embody 'subordinate masculinity'. Lastly, 'straight' men who belong to a lower class, race, or ethnicity, or who are disabled belong to 'marginalized masculinity'. There is an ascendancy of hegemonic masculinity in the social structure. Connell (2005) states:

Hegemony relates to cultural dominance in the society as a whole. Within that overall framework there are specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men.... Oppression positions homosexual masculinities at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men. (p.78)

In their work, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the concept', Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), proclaimed that the theory of Hegemonic Masculinity has had a wide influence on Gender Studies, but had also attracted criticism. They offered a reformulation in four major areas, "the nature of gender hierarchy, the geography of masculine configurations, the process of social embodiment, and the dynamics of masculinities". (p.848). They sought to give, "a more holistic understanding of gender hierarchy, to understand the agency of the subordinated groups, as much as the power of the dominating groups and the mutual conditioning of gender dynamics and other social dynamics" (p.848). It was declared that the focus of hegemonic masculinity should encompass local, regional, and global representations to make the approach more

comprehensive. The authors also underpinned the dynamic nature of masculinities and stated that masculinities are configurations of practice that are not stable but are constructed and reconstructed through time.

Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, first promulgated in *Masculinities* (1995) and later reformulated in 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the concept' (2005), has been one of the founding ideas that have contributed phenomenally to the field of gender studies and masculinities. Though it provided a conceptual model for research in the field of social sciences, criminology, education, and transnational relations, the concept was also challenged by thinkers who contradicted Connell and developed alternate models and theories. Greg Anderson's theory of Inclusive Masculinity discussed in the following section establishes that as homosexuality gains acceptance in society, there will be more and more men who would be unafraid to express their feminine attributes and become more inclusive. The rigid construct of masculinity can then be deconstructed and allow men to be more expressive without the stigma of being branded gay or effeminate.

### III. ANDERSON'S THEORY OF INCLUSIVE MASCULINITY

The model of Hegemonic Masculinity has been employed as a heuristic tool to understand gender relations and identify the social processes through which hierarchy is established and legitimized. Such supremacy is not maintained through violence but through power and discursive marginalization. McCormack (2013) suggests that in her reformulation of the theory in 2005, Connell expanded her model beyond the local to examine transnational relations through a study of global gendered power. However, McCormack believes that an understanding of masculinity is most effective only when it is used to "investigate patterns of masculinity within a particular institutional or local context" (p.38). He argues that the utility of Connell's model of Hegemonic Masculinity has been overrated because it is founded in the context of heterosexual normativity. In his work, *The Declining Significance of Homophobia, How Teenage Boys are Redefining Masculinity and Heterosexuality* (2012), McCormack shows how the relationship between male youth and masculinity has changed. Through a series of ethnographic studies of teenage boys in England, he identified that young boys did not think homophobia was in vogue. While Connell's study was largely based on assuming homophobia among men, McCormack reveals that such an assumption does not hold water anymore as cultural homophobia has declined dramatically. It is as unpopular amongst the youth as being racist is. This finding

is evident through mass media, there are more and more films, web series, books, and literature available on gay themes. The same can be said of India as well, there have been popular films such as *Cobalt Blue* (2022) *Badhai Do* (2022), *Shubh Mangal Zyada Savdhaan*(2020) which offer a serious representation of same-sex relationships.

Increasing criticism of hegemonic masculinity as a framework to study masculinity led to the emergence of Hybrid Masculinity and Inclusive Masculinity Theory. Bridges and Pascoe (2018) describe Hybrid Masculinity as, "men's selective incorporation of performances and identity elements associated with marginalized and subordinated masculinities and femininities" (p.246). There has been a recent growing body of research in social sciences on transformation in men's behaviour, appearance, opinion, sexual orientation etc. "Hybrid masculinities" refer to the selective incorporation of elements of identity typically associated with various marginalized and subordinated masculinities and –at times – femininities into privileged men's gender performances and identities" (Bridges and Pascoe, 2018, p. 246). It seeks to locate whether such a transformation would be more liberating and less rigid. The writers further assert that:

A central research question in this literature considers the extent and meaning of these practices in terms of gender, sexual, and racial inequality. More specifically, this field of inquiry asks: are hybrid masculinities widespread and do they represent a significant change in gendered inequality? (p.247)

Eric Anderson's, *Inclusive Masculinity, The Changing Nature of Masculinities* (2009) developed the idea of hybridity further. He conducted ethnographic studies amongst a cross-section of young boys and deduced that homophobic tendencies had diminished amongst the youth, which is responsible for softening of masculinity traits. He asserts in the introduction of the book:

I am not alone in suggesting that the dominant form of masculinity, in sport or any other cultural location, can change. The sociologist primarily responsible for promoting the study of hegemonic masculinities, Robert (now Raewyn) Connell (1987, 1995, 2005) also accounts for the contestation and replacement of any given form of dominant masculinity...The premise of this volume is that the esteemed versions of masculinity among university-attending men are changing. ... (p.5)

Anderson (2009) argues that the young generation is exposed to sexual content on the internet which has made the erstwhile tabooed homosexuality more acceptable. For

young boys being homosexual is appropriate, being homophobic is not. Additionally, there is a positive cultural message about homosexuality through mass media, films, and popular literature, which has made same-sex relationships socially acceptable. He points out that:

All of this is crucial to the discussion of inclusive masculinity theory because my driving theoretical hypothesis is that homophobia directed at men has been central to the production of orthodox masculinity...Homophobia made hyper-masculinity compulsory for boys, and it made the expression of femininity among boys a taboo. (p.7)

The culture of homophobia and compulsory heterosexuality creates 'homo hysteria' (p.7), which in turn produces hypermasculinity and misogynistic discourse that encourages gender differences among men and between men and women. However, decreasing the stigma attached to homosexuality brings about the possibility of building "inclusive masculinity" (p.7). This has made it possible for heterosexual men to embody behaviour erstwhile considered to be feminine, such as crying, cuddling, or caring. Through this argument, Anderson builds the thesis that, "Connell's (1987) notion of hegemonic masculinity is unable to capture the complexity of what occurs as cultural 'homohysteria' diminishes" (p.7). He launched the theory of 'Inclusive Masculinity' and hypothesised that homophobic discourse is used as a policing agent in high homophobic culture, which in turn stratifies men in the "hegemonic mode of dominance" (p.8). He argues that in a culture of diminishing homo hysteria, two dominant kinds of masculinities prevail, which are, "orthodox masculinity", and "inclusive masculinity". Whereas men are homophobic and distant from one another in the former, in the latter, they become more comfortable in displaying homosocial behaviour. In a culture of diminished homo hysteria, men do not rely on 'control and domination'.

The theory of Inclusive Masculinity maintains that declining homophobia leads to social inclusion of 'subordinate' and 'marginalized' masculinities. It leads to a proliferation of "multiple masculinities", with lesser hegemony and hierarchy. Inclusive masculinity is about the inclusion of gay men and of straight men who do not feel compelled to embody hyper-masculinity but are comfortable to reveal the feminine side of their personality. Anderson believes that this in turn leads to decreasing sexism and ultimately erodes patriarchy. He claims:

In such a culture, the differences between masculinity and femininity, men, and women, gay and straight, will be harder to distinguish, and masculinity will no longer serve as the primary method of stratifying men. (p.9)

In one of his interviews with Benjamin A Boyce, 'Mutations in Modern Masculinity', Anderson says that 'bromance' is now on the rise as against 'romance' in heterosexual relations. Based on empirical data, he says that men are now what women always wanted them to be—gentle, emotional, caring fathers and lovers, there are fewer men who embody 'toxic masculinity'. In his talk, 'A Generational Perspective on Softening Masculinities' delivered at the University of Winchester Anderson claims that Masculinity has changed and shifted in present times in response to decreasing cultural homophobia and decreasing antipathy towards homosexuality. The model of Inclusive Masculinity endorses multiplicity of male gendered identity thereby breaking the shackles of sexist practices which promoted toxic masculinity and deterred men from embracing their identity.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Masculinity Studies has evolved rapidly since the 1990s. 'Masculinity' was earlier interpreted as an embodiment of the personality traits displayed by men. However, it was not only women but also men who suffered discrimination due to such rigid gendering of identities. Masculinity Studies contributed to the shift of such a limited reading of men and masculine traits. In his theory, Anderson maintains that inclusive masculinity ensures that patriarchy is eroded, which in turn leads to the elimination of hypermasculine toxic practices. Having inclusivity improves the lived experience of gay men and encourages heterosexual men to display feminine qualities. Anderson asserts:

Once heterosexual men are freed from the burden of having to reprove their heterosexuality, and once they no longer care if others think they are gay, they maintain more liberty to explore and embrace once tabooed social spaces, behaviours, and ideas. As men increasingly occupy traditionally feminized terrain, the gendered and stigmatized nature of those gendered spaces is destined to change (p.19).

The theory of Inclusive masculinity gives insights into gender polarization, rejects stereotyped gender roles, and offers a release from the rigidity of the male/female binary. The models discussed above provided a link between men's studies and the anxieties faced by boys and men due to the mandatory adherence to social norms. It is enormously important that such conceptual tools are formulated and reformulated to keep pace with the dynamic nature of gender studies. The move from 'masculinity' to 'masculinities' has democratized gender roles and has been a liberating and empowering process both for men and women. Identity formation and gender are crucial to the

existence of human beings. Both categories are integral to our understanding of men and women as being products of the environment. Masculinity Studies liberate the identity of men from the essentialism attached to biological sex and free men from straitjacketed gender roles. It offers emancipation and allows an individual to celebrate his being by exercising his right to choose and having the self-assurance to embrace his identity unflinchingly.

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