

# INTRODUCTION: MATURATION OF THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MEN AND MASCULINITIES

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The psychology of men and masculinities is a dynamic young field that has come a long way in a relatively short time. It benefitted from the foundation laid by the psychology of women in conceptualizing, theorizing, and investigating the protean effects of gender. Not only has it contributed to the reconstruction of masculinity that is still evolving in response to the dramatic changes in women's roles that began 50 years ago, it has also addressed significant problems for men's physical and mental health (e.g., men's higher mortality rates, substance use, and stigma associated with help-seeking) and for society (e.g., men's gender-based and sexual violence).

When the first author first began to approach colleagues about starting a division in the American Psychological Association (APA) devoted to men's psychology, he was greeted with incredulous questions such as "Why do we need that? Isn't all psychology the psychology of men?" As noted in the Foreword, that statement had a certain truth to it, but the psychology they

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were referring to took males as a proxy for the species and did not think it necessary to study females. This was challenged in the 1970s by feminist psychologists. By redefining sex and gender (Unger, 1979), the psychology of women upended the old order in psychology and paved the way for a critical analysis of gender. Therefore, there would not be a psychology of men and masculinities as we know it today had there not been a psychology of women. As a result, the mission statement of the Society for the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinity (Division 51 of the APA) states that the division “acknowledges its historical debt to feminist-inspired scholarship on gender, and commits itself to the support of groups such as women, gays, lesbians and people of color that have been uniquely oppressed by the gender/class/race system.”

The critical study of men began in the 1970s (Pleck & Sawyer, 1974). It gained steam in the 1980s, when task forces on men’s roles and special interest groups were formed in three APA divisions (17: Society of Counseling Psychology; 29: Psychopharmacology and Substance Abuse; and 43: Society for Couple and Family Psychology), which together presented symposia at the annual APA conventions on the emerging specialty of the psychology of men and masculinities and thus laid the foundation for the formation of Division 51 (Brooks & Elder, 2016). By 1995, the new psychology of men had arrived. In that year, the Society for the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinity entered the vestibule as a candidate to become APA’s 51st division. In addition, *A New Psychology of Men* (Levant & Pollack, 1995) was published that year. This volume has been cited as “the most salient publication” in the new psychology of men (Cochran, 2010, p. 45) and has served as the standard graduate text and professional reference book for the fledgling field of the psychology of men and masculinity.

In the 20-plus years since the formation of Division 51 and the publication of *A New Psychology of Men*, the field has experienced tremendous growth and development. The original pioneers of this field have spawned several generations of scholars and practitioners, many of whom hold tenured and tenure-track positions in doctoral programs across the country and are now training the next generation of scholars and practitioners. A search in the PsycINFO database on December 28, 2015, for the terms *masculinity* or *masculinities* turned up 13,270 citations, compared with only 108 references in 1983 (Wong & Wester, 2016). As of this writing in 2016, the APA journal *Psychology of Men and Masculinity* (PMM) is in its 17th year of publication. PMM published two issues a year and 150 pages in the 7 × 10-inch trim size when it was launched in 2000; it now publishes four issues per year and 500 pages in the 8½ × 11-inch trim size, and has a 2015 Impact Factor of 2.947. As a result of these developments, the literature has grown and developed in many expected and unexpected ways, in terms of both the science and its applications. There is therefore a great need for a new resource that synthesizes and critically evaluates this evolved and expanded field, which is the aim of the present volume, *The Psychology of Men*

*and Masculinities*. The very title of this volume, in referring to masculinities in the plural, alludes to some aspects of this development—in particular, the influence of social constructionism, multiculturalism, and intersectionality—that have led to a consensus among scholars that definitions of masculinity vary with time, place, culture, and circumstance.

There are five major parts to this volume. Part I, the lengthiest part, consisting of five chapters, covers the major theoretical perspectives and associated research in the psychology of men and masculinities. The first three chapters cover in depth the major theories that have been used in United States—namely, the gender role strain paradigm (GRSP), masculinity ideologies, and gender role conflict. These three theories (and related ones covered in Chapter 5—e.g., reference group identity dependence, conformity to masculine norms, masculine gender role stress, precarious manhood, and masculinity contingency) could be broadly defined as the GRSP and related approaches, which is the dominant research paradigm in the psychology of men and masculinities in the United States (Wong, Steinfeldt, Speight, & Hickman, 2010). Together they could be broadly described as empirical feminist and social constructionist approaches (Deaux, 1984), which are based primarily in psychology and rely largely (although by no means exclusively) on quantitative research. Meanwhile across the pond, another empirical feminist social constructionist approach took root and became the dominant approach in the United Kingdom, Europe, and in some of the Commonwealth countries (particularly Australia, New Zealand, and Canada). Going by several related names (discursive psychology, critical men's studies, critical discursive psychology), these approaches tend to be more interdisciplinary, focus on theoretical perspectives, and take a qualitative approach to empirical research. Recently *PMM* published a special section titled “Forum on the Intersection of Discursive Psychology and the Psychology of Men and Masculinity” to invite dialogue between these two perspectives on the psychology of men and masculinities originating in different parts of the world. In the hopes of continuing this dialogue, we have included Chapter 4 on critical discursive psychology, and a later chapter (Chapter 7) considers this perspective. Finally, Chapter 5 reviews in briefer form a selection of other theories and research used in the psychology of men and masculinities.

In Chapter 1, “The Gender Role Strain Paradigm,” Ronald F. Levant and Wizdom A. Powell review and critically evaluate the GRSP. First fully formulated by Pleck (1981) in his landmark volume *The Myth of Masculinity*, the GRSP deconstructed and helped replace the earlier, biologically deterministic conceptualization of gender, the gender role identity paradigm (GRIP), that dominated research in the United States from about 1930 to 1980. In providing an alternative paradigm, the GRSP complicated and problematized the construct of masculinity. In much of this research, the focus has been on

investigating the strains placed on men, women, children, and society as a result of socializing men for positions of dominance over women. The GRSP has been updated twice, most recently situating it in the framework of social psychology (Levant, 2011; Pleck, 1995). This chapter covers the development of the GRSP, types of masculine gender role strain (including discrepancy, dysfunction, and trauma types of strain), social contexts of masculine gender role strain, assessment of the GRSP, and directions for future research.

In Chapter 2, “Masculinity Ideologies,” Edward H. Thompson, Jr. and Kate M. Bennett review the research on masculinity ideologies. This chapter begins with a discussion of the origin of the construct *masculinity ideologies*, considering both definitional and conceptual issues. Next the chapter considers the content of contemporary masculinity ideologies and provides a helpful table of “canons” used in the measurement of traditional (or, as the authors prefer) mainstream masculinity ideology, illustrated by items from the various scales. The chapter then reviews recent work in masculinity ideologies. This review is aimed at conveying how the construct is being studied and focuses on three areas in which masculinity ideologies have had negative implications for men and for society: health status and health behavior, health-related help-seeking, and the performance of marital status. Finally, avenues for new research are suggested.

In Chapter 3, “Masculinity as a Heuristic: Gender Role Conflict Theory, Superorganisms, and System-Level Thinking,” James M. O’Neil, Stephen R. Wester, Martin Heesacker, and Steven J. Snowden present gender role conflict theory (GRC) in a new epistemological context to enable researchers to conceptualize gender roles as problem-solving strategies. Research questions would then investigate the ways in which men might use their masculinities to solve problems, evaluate the outcomes, and change as a result of experience. As such, this chapter does not provide a point-by-point review of the extant GRC literature, which is available elsewhere. Rather, this chapter first briefly summarizes the more recent empirical work. Next, similar to the direction taken in the GRSP, it offers a theoretical framework based in social psychology—specifically, social cognition, including heuristics and system-level thinking—within which GRC theory can continue to evolve.

In Chapter 4, “A Critical Discursive Approach to Studying Masculinities,” Sarah Seymour-Smith provides a primer on the critical discursive psychological (CDP) approach to studying masculinities, which treats masculinity as a situated, fluid, and negotiated set of contingent actions and responses. CDP is a particular version of discursive psychology, focused on the performance of identity and using qualitative research to chart the ways in which men talk about themselves. This enables the investigation of the complex, dynamic way that masculinities are created, negotiated, and deployed and demonstrates how identity fluctuates within each participant. The chapter provides three

illustrations of the CDP approach using processed transcripts of interviews: how medical personnel construct the identities of male patients, testicular cancer patients' views of self-help groups, and Afro Caribbean men's views on the digital rectal exam to screen for prostate cancer.

In Chapter 5, "A Review of Selected Theoretical Perspectives and Research in the Psychology of Men and Masculinities," Anthony J. Isacco and Jay C. Wade review six other theories and research in the psychology of men and masculinities, including masculine gender role stress, male reference group identity dependence, conformity to masculine norms, precarious manhood, positive psychology–positive masculinity, and masculinity contingency. The first three are more established approaches, whereas the latter three are emerging perspectives. Masculine gender role stress, which integrates stress and coping literature with the GRSP, is the oldest of these approaches; it was initially applied to cardiovascular health but has also been applied to aggression. Male reference group identity dependence is a theory of male identity based on psychodynamic ego identity development theory and reference group theory. Conformity to masculine norms is a theoretical model based in the social psychology literature on social norms, conformity, and compliance. As a relatively new approach, it has produced an impressive body of research.

Part II of this volume consists of three chapters on several of the major research topics in the psychology of men and masculinities. In Chapter 6, "Men's Depression and Help-Seeking Through the Lenses of Gender," Michael E. Addis and Ethan Hoffman focus on research on men's depression, stigma, and help-seeking. After critically reviewing the literature on sex differences in the epidemiology of major depression, they address issues related to the diagnosis of depression (e.g., do men tend to be underdiagnosed relative to women, and are the diagnostic criteria for depression gendered?) and to coping with depression. They then critically review research on masculinity and help-seeking in relation to mental health. They find evidence that the social construction and social learning of traditional masculine norms is associated with stigma in regard to both depression and help-seeking. A unique feature of this chapter is its insistence that we move away from generalizing (negatively) about all men and consider how, when, where, and why men might position themselves differently in regard to health issues (e.g., the contexts) so that more tailored interventions can be developed.

In Chapter 7, "A Review of Research on Men's Physical Health," Brendan Gough and Steve Robertson present a critical overview of psychological theory and research on men's health. This chapter is unique in that it covers both the quantitative work in the United States using the GRSP and the qualitative work in the United Kingdom and Europe in the interdisciplinary field of critical studies of men and masculinity (which overlaps with

the CDP perspective discussed in Chapter 4). They examine the evidence linking aspects of masculinity to specific health behaviors. Recognizing that relationships between masculinity factors and health practices are complex and tied to race, social class, sexual orientation, and other social identities, they consider the importance of intersectionality and include literature on health disparities in the United States and on the health of men in non-Western regions of the world (e.g., the global South). Their concluding section evaluates recent approaches to men's health promotion (e.g., salutogenic masculinities) as well as policy initiatives in this area.

In Chapter 8, "A Review of Research on Men's Body Image and Drive for Muscularity," Sarah K. Murnen and Bryan T. Karazsia review research on men's body image and drive for muscularity. They emphasize recent research (after 2000) that seeks to understand male body image in its own right, rather than in comparison with female body concerns. They document the existence of a masculine muscular ideal in popular culture that is hypothesized to pressure men to adopt muscularity motives, and they review several scales designed to measure this phenomenon. Research conducted on subgroups of men with heightened body concerns is reviewed, as is research on several maladaptive and potentially serious body change behaviors, including the use of anabolic-androgenic steroids, unhealthy eating, excessive weight training, cosmetic surgery, and muscle dysmorphia.

Part III consists of two chapters on multicultural diversity. In Chapter 9, "The Intersection of Race, Ethnicity, and Masculinities: Progress, Problems, and Prospects," Y. Joel Wong, Tao Liu, and Elyssa M. Klann delineate three research paradigms for the application of intersectionality to the psychology of racial/ethnic minority men. The intergroup paradigm involves quantitative group comparisons based on individuals' social identities. The interconstruct paradigm investigates the relationships among constructs associated with individuals' social identities. The intersectional uniqueness paradigm assumes that social identities are inherently intertwined; thus, experiences associated with multiple identities cannot be separated, nor can they simply be added together to account for individuals' overall experiences. Although these three paradigms can be broadly applied, this chapter focuses in particular on the intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender as applied to men of color.

In Chapter 10, "Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Masculinities," Mike C. Parent and Tyler C. Bradstreet provide a critical overview of empirical, theory-driven research on gay, bisexual, and transgender (GBT) men's masculinities and highlight areas for growth of the field. They focus on qualitative and quantitative work with GBT men that has been conducted within the frameworks of four paradigms: hegemonic masculinity, gender role strain or conflict, gender role ideology, and gender role conformity. They cover the following topics: heterosexuals' attitudes toward GBT masculinities, relationships, health, body

image and eating disorders, mental health, and help-seeking. They highlight areas for future research and note that research has focused on cisgender gay men to the exclusion of bisexual and transgender men.

In Part IV of this volume, we have two chapters on the implications for practice of the psychology of men and masculinities. Gary R. Brooks contributed Chapter 11, “Counseling, Psychotherapy, and Psychological Interventions for Boys and Men.” Because there are (happily) a lot of books on psychotherapies for men, this chapter restricts its focus to how established therapy approaches—psychodynamic, cognitive and cognitive behavioral, interpersonal, humanistic/existential/experiential, and group therapies—can be adapted to fit the needs and styles of male populations and refers the reader to the available resources. Next the chapter highlights the expanding possibilities for interventions with boys and men. This is a surprisingly vast area and includes mental health consultation (such as Courtenay’s HEALTH model, executive coaching, men’s groups in religious organizations, gender-aware programs in the military and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in jails and prisons, and in physical and alcohol rehabilitation programs), primary prevention (including psychoeducational programs and consciousness-raising activities such as the Gender Role Journey approach, the Boys’ Forum, and Alexithymia Reduction Treatment), weekend retreats, adventure therapy, men’s centers, public service announcements and use of digital media, and primary prevention programs for vulnerable boys and young men. Finally, this chapter discusses several ways that practitioners can welcome and treat reluctant male clients, including contextualizing the stages of change model, incorporating insights from research on the working alliance and multicultural competence, and offering an overall framework for male-friendly therapy.

Chapter 12, “Dysfunction Strain and Intervention Programs Aimed at Men’s Violence, Substance Use, and Help-Seeking Behaviors,” was contributed by Christopher T. H. Liang, Carin Molenaar, Christina Hermann, and Louis A. Rivera. *Dysfunction strain* refers to the type of strain resulting from conforming to traditional masculine norms. This type of masculine gender role strain often has a greater negative impact on others and society at large than on the men who experience it. This is the first attempt to identify dysfunction strain as a distinct focus for intervention and to catalogue such programs. The chapter covers interventions aimed at reducing gender-based and sexual violence, substance use, and stigma associated with help-seeking. This review covers both treatment and prevention efforts, focuses on several major types of problems associated with boys and men (e.g., violence, alcohol use), and includes programs with and without empirical support. Small effect sizes, in addition to the high levels of recidivism that are found in the literature, suggest that interventions for gender-based and sexual violence and substance use are at an early stage of development and can be strengthened.



The authors advocate a gender-transformative approach, in which men are encouraged to transform their gender roles and work toward more equitable gender relationships, as one way for programs to yield stronger effects.

Part V of the book is a conclusion by Y. Joel Wong and Ronald F. Levant. This final chapter examines a few unresolved and controversial issues concerning the nature of masculinities. We address criticisms of the construct of masculinities and explain why it remains useful and vital to the psychology of men. We also explore the debate on whether masculinities research reflects social constructionist or essentialist perspectives on gender. We argue that a continuum perspective acknowledging that masculinities research can reflect a hybrid of both perspectives is preferable to one that simply categorizes studies into one of two mutually exclusive paradigms. The chapter concludes by analyzing the evolving nature of masculine norms, noting that existing measures of masculinities developed over the past few decades might not adequately capture recent and rapidly shifting trends in masculine norms and ideologies. We then discuss several methodological strategies for identifying contemporary masculine norms and ideologies.

As Levant (2014) noted, “We have come a long way, baby.” Benefitting from the insights of the psychology of women, we have built a new psychology of men and masculinities, one that we can pass on with pride to the next generations of scholars and practitioners. As scholars and practitioners, we have much to offer men in our society to help them find new ways to be men in 21st century. The current generation of boys holds promise for developing new ways to be men in their resistance to masculine norms (Way et al., 2014). The specialty seems to be coming together in certain ways, for example, the fact that several chapters point toward integration with social psychology and in the increased engagement between the U.S. and U.K. psychologies of men and masculinities. There are also points of tension and controversy, such as that between Chapters 1 and 6 on whether the individual differences approach taken in quantitative GRSP research is essentialistic or (framed less critically) acontextual. In the final analysis, we believe that gender can be conceptualized from many perspectives, and it has been our aim to promote a “big-tent,” “both–and” approach to investigating masculinities. As noted earlier, this topic is discussed more fully in the Conclusion.

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