

## Theorising Masculinities and Crime: A Genetic-Social Approach

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### Abstract

This paper examines competing notions of 'masculinities' in relation to crime, and the global nature of gendered inequalities. It is the contention here that social constructionist theories of male sexualities contain certain theoretical deficits. It is suggested that a post-Postmodern analysis of 'masculinities' might incorporate some of the insights from Owen's *Genetic-Social* meta-theoretical framework. Owen's 'sensitising' framework has been 'applied' to the *sociological* study of human biotechnology, ageing, 'trust' and professional power and crime in recent times. Owen's notion of *the biological variable*, in particular, might be incorporated into an analysis of 'masculinities' in relation to violence and crime. Additionally, it is recommended that these notions are combined with Layder's concept of *Psychobiography* in order to theorise 'masculinities' and crime in the post-Genome age.

### Introduction

The notion of 'masculinity' is both an essentially contested concept and praxis of everyday human existence and social relations yet its understanding is complex. Connell (2000), a major protagonist of masculinity studies, claims that in the past several years there has been an increase of concern with issues about men- a 'Men's Studies' movement has gained momentum in which Connell's (2000) work is bound up. Indeed, men in general remain the principle holders of economic and political power. Men make up a large majority of corporate executives, top professionals and holders of political representation and mandate. Globally, men held 93% of cabinet-level posts in 1996 and most top positions in international agencies (Powell, 2006).

In Western culture in particular, men continue to control most technology such as the Internet (consider the major corporate 'owners' of Microsoft and Netscape-the two owners are men with a combined personal wealth of £97 billion-an amount which outstrips the combined GNP of most non-Western nation-states) and weaponry (Powell, 2006). With only very limited exceptions it is men who staff and control the agencies of military force and judicial systems such as armies, intelligence agencies, police, prison and court systems (Connell, 2000).

There is also a clear connection between men and violence. In the USA, for example, men are 90% of those charged with aggravated assault, murder and manslaughter (Stanko, 2000). Men are much more likely than women to bear weapons: in the US, researchers have found rates of gun ownership among men running four times the rate for women, even after a campaign by the arms manufacturers to get women to buy guns (Connell, 2000). In the USA, UK and Europe, though both men and women can be involved in domestic violence, men are far more likely than women to be the perpetrators of serious injury against their partners (Stanko, 2000).

In what follows we examine competing theories of 'masculinities' in relation to violence and crime, and the global nature of gendered inequalities. Drawing upon the work of authors such as

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Connell (2000), Messerschmidt (1993), Collier (1998), MacInnes (1998), Powell (2006) and Jefferson (2007) who work within the sociological and criminological traditions, we consider the evidence for the social construction of 'masculinities' (Connell, 2000), and male violence etc. It is the contention here that social constructionist theories such as those associated with Connell are interesting and useful in relation to the theoretical analysis of 'masculinities' as gender and gendered identities. However, they contain theoretical deficits and shortcomings in relation to the analysis of male sexualities. Here it is suggested that a post-Postmodern analysis of 'masculinities' might incorporate some of the insights from Owen's (2006a; 2006b; 2007a; 2007b; 2009a; 2009b; 2012) Genetic-Social metatheoretical framework. Owen's 'sensitising' framework has been 'applied' to the sociological study of human biotechnologies, ageing, 'trust' and professional power and Garland's (2001) 'Culture of Crime Control' thesis in recent times. Here it is suggested that Owen's emphasis upon *the biological variable* (the evidence for genetic, or partially genetic, causality in relation to some human behaviour) in particular might be incorporated into an analysis of 'masculinities' and male sexuality in relation to violence and crime. Evidence from behavioural genetics and Evolutionary Psychology (Pinker, 1994; Ridley, 1999, 2003; Hamer and Copeland, 1999; and Cosmides and Tooby, 1997) is presented to counter the *oversocialised* (Owen, 2006a; 2006b; 2007a; 2007b; 2009a; 2009b; 2012) idea that sexuality, and in this case male sexuality, is merely a socio-cultural creation and the production of a particular set of historical circumstances and obtains only within the terms of a discourse developed since the seventeenth century (Foucault, 1980; Gagnon and Simon, 1973). In addition, it is recommended here that an analysis of 'masculinities', violence and crime might incorporate Layder's (1997) notion of *Psychobiography*; the unique, asocial aspects of the person such as disposition etc. It is argued that there are clear theoretical links between the approaches of Owen and Layder, and that an analytical framework such as Owen's Genetic-Social 'sensitising device' which advocates a flexible ontology, relies upon multifactorial analysis rather than unitary, *reductionist*, *essentialist*, and *reified* accounts, is better equipped to point a possible 'way forward' beyond pure social constructionism and anti-foundational Postmodern relativism. An approach such as Owen's which side-steps the *nature/nurture* divide, avoids the *reductionism* of hardline Sociobiology, and emphasises the *mutuality* between genes and environment, is arguably better placed to conceptualise the connections between 'masculinities', violence and crime in the post-Genome era.

### **'Masculinities', Violence and Crime**

There appears to be evidence that men are more likely than women to be the targets of certain kinds of violence. They are more likely to be casualties in combat such as war. They are more likely to be the victims of assault in public violence such as 'brawls' and 'fights', and victims of what might be called 'business violence' such as the intimidation and murder associated with the illicit drug trade especially in USA (Connell, 2000). There is also evidence that men are more likely to be arrested or imprisoned. Additionally, men as a taxonomic collectivity gain real and large advantages from the current system of gender relations; the scale of this dividend is indicated by the fact that men's earned incomes, world-wide, are about 180% of women's (Connell, 2000).

Such power, control and male involvement in the complex web of major systems of domination are often thought to be "natural", either prescribed by God or a consequence of biology (Connell, 2000)-the insights of science were vocal in articulating 'truths' about gendered behaviour concerned with shaping 'who gets what, when and how' in contemporary society. Indeed, essentialist views of gender are still popular and are consistently reinforced in the media on a daily basis. However, they are increasingly under challenge: the rise and consolidation of the 'women's liberation movement' and the many feminisms that have manifested from it have produced a disturbance in the popular imagination concerning ideas about gender and behaviour. Such acceleration and impetus of sociological work has focused on the social construction of masculinity.

The idea that masculinities are socially constructed goes back to early psychoanalysis, and in social science research first took the shape of a social-psychological concept, the 'male sex role'. Such an approach emphasised the learning of norms for conduct and has been popular in social areas of concern such as educational studies (Connell, 2000). However, sex role theory is inadequate for

understanding the power and economic dimensions in gender. Further: 'it is telling that discussions of 'the male sex role' have mostly ignored gay men and have little to say about race and ethnicity. Sex role theory has a fundamental difficulty in grasping issues of power' (Connell, 2000:27).

Connell points to an explosion in masculinity studies which focus on: marital sexuality, 'homophobic' murders, body building culture, insurance industry, public and private violence, professional sports, criminal justice and the literary genre. Connell (ibid) calls such an array of research an 'ethnographic moment' in which the local and specific are emphasised. As Jefferson (2007:246) has recently suggested, within criminology, scholars such as Messerschmidt (1993) have utilized Connell's (ibid) concept of a, 'tripartite structure of gender relations and hegemonic and subordinated masculinities, as well as the importance of practice', and applied them to contemporary theorising about crime and criminal behaviour. Messerschmidt conceptualises all structures (class, race etc) as being, 'implicated simultaneously in any given practice, and practices are situationally constrained by the need to 'account' for our actions to normative conceptions (of appropriate gender/race/class conduct)' (Jefferson, 2007). Within such a theoretical framework, crime may be conceptualised as a 'resource' for specific men in specific social settings for the 'accomplishment' of masculinity. The significance and importance of crime as a 'resource' for certain men depends upon other 'resources' at their disposal, and these in turn, are a 'product' of, their position in class, gender and race relations and the sorts of situations they find themselves in' (Jefferson, 2007: 246). As Jefferson makes clear, critics of Messerschmidt's attempts to offer explanations for 'the 'doing' of all kinds of crime, from varieties of work-based crime to diverse forms of street crime' as different ways of 'doing' masculinity, have begun to question whether the author's key ideas are in effect unitary, reductionist explanations.

Some scholars such as MacInnes (1998) view masculinity as an 'ideology' which has developed to enable people to understand continuities of sexual and gender inequalities in what Jefferson terms, 'an age of formal equality'. Collier (1998) has sought to develop a relational account of masculinities which acknowledges the 'sexed' body (in common with writers of the 'embodied' school) without 'reverting to a biological essentialism' (Jefferson, 2007:247). Arguably, as Owen (2009a) demonstrates, it is quite possible to 'bring in biology' in theoretical analysis without resorting to 'essentialism'. Essentialism, as employed as a 'cardinal sin' to avoid in theorising by both Sibeon (2004) and Owen (2009a), refers to a form of theoretical reasoning that in an aprioristic fashion presupposes a kind of unity of homogeneity of phenomena, such as 'white men' or 'working class women' etc. Owen utilises the meta-concept of *the biological variable* in a non-essentialist fashion, and we should regard the term as referring to the evidence for an, at least in part, *biological* basis for some human behaviour. The evidence for *the biological variable* comes directly from the literature of evolutionary psychology and behavioural genetics such as the work of Ridley (1999, 2003), Dunbar (1996), Hamer and Copeland (1999) and others. The evidence for genetic/partially genetic causality in relation to selected behaviours such as *sexuality* (Hamer and Copeland, 1999; Owen, 2006a; Bogaert and Fisher, 1995) *language* (Hamer and Copeland, 1999; Dunbar, ibid; Enard et al, 2002; Pinker, 1994) *reactions to stress* (Ridley, 2003; Pollock, 1988) are discussed in some depth in Owen's (2009) *Social Theory and Human Biotechnology*, and the meta-concept of *the biological variable* is incorporated into his *Genetic-social* sensitizing device/meta-theoretical framework. It is the contention here that this meta-concept is of great value and should be incorporated into the theoretical analysis of 'masculinities'.

The modern term of 'masculinity' assumes that a person's or group's behaviour is a result of the type of person/group they are. It presupposes a belief in individual difference and personal agency. It builds upon the concept of individuality developed in early-modern Europe with colonialism and capitalism (Connell, 2000). It exists in contrast to 'femininity'. This idea that men and women are qualitatively different did not exist until the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the so-called 'bourgeois' ideology of separate spheres.

The rise of the Enlightenment saw the consolidation of embedded images of 'white masculinity'. It was at this point that notions of reason, science, progress and masculinity were merged into a unified concept of 'manhood'. Reason and objectivity also provided the moral legitimacy for the rise of capitalism and the modern organisation of society. For philosophers such as Kant, reason tempered by science could overcome feelings and intuition. At the time of the

Enlightenment, utilitarian doctrines were gaining momentum enshrined by the idea that 'success is happiness'. As industrial capitalism and the world of machines grew and flourished, this rationality included competition, planning, and goal attainment.

Further, Powell (2006) makes the point that men also learned to see themselves as *extensions* of the industrial world around them. They learned to see themselves in both body and mind as machines, which included rigorous discipline, precision, and self-control. For some men, the fear of losing control also applies to sexuality such that emotional responses to sexual experience are seen as signs of weakness. Sexual expression becomes performance, with outcomes to be ranked and rated. Sexuality itself is related and shaped to what Connell (2000) refers to as 'social structure'. From this, Connell (2000) argues that the structures of power in our society create different forms of masculinity for different groups of men. The dominant masculinity Connell refers to as 'hegemonic masculinity', which includes the expectations of 'manhood' held by white upper-middle and upper class men ('Hegemony derives from Gramsci which translates as, 'dominant ideology'). Below hegemonic masculinity are several forms of subordinate masculinities. These include white working-class men and men from ethnic minority backgrounds. Subordinate groups of men carry out the work of dominant men (e.g., physical labour, subordination of women, upholding masculine imagery), but they do not reap the benefits of social dominance and political-economic control.

Several aspects characterise 'masculinity': firstly *essentialist definitions* pick a feature that defines masculinity (risk-taking, aggression, responsibility, irresponsibility, and more) and describe men's lives according to it.; secondly, *positivist definitions* define masculinity as that which men actually *are* in terms of psychology, biology and physiology; thirdly, *normative definitions* offer a standard for what men 'ought to be like' (aspirational standards), but the problem with this is that we cannot define masculinity according to a standard that only a minute, if any, number of men actually meet; fourthly, *semiotic approaches* define masculinity through a system of symbolic difference between masculinity and femininity. Masculinity is defined as that which is not feminine. This definition uses masculinity as the master signifier, the place of symbolic authority, with femininity defined by 'lack'. This definition has been very effective in cultural analysis.

Connell's argument is that rather than attempting to define masculinity, we should be focusing on 'the process and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives' (2000:78). Indeed, according to Connell, when we refer to masculinity and femininity, we are talking about configurations of gender practice. Masculinity and femininity are gender projects which are 'processes of configuring practice through time, which transform their starting-points in gender structures' (Connell, 2000:72). Connell claims these three projects can be used to study culture and society:

- 1) Individual life-course, personality or character
- 2) Discourse, ideology or culture
- 3) Institutions such as the state, schools or workplace.

To consolidate this, Connell describes a three-fold model of the structure of gender:

- a) *Power relations*: in Western society, the subordination of women and the domination of men, often referred to as patriarchy. It persists despite resistance.
- b) *Production relations*: the gender division of labour and its consequences, the benefit that men gain from unequal shares of the product, and the gender character of capital.
- c) *Cathexis*: the gendered character of sexual desire and the practices that shape that desire which are aspects of the gendered order. For example, the relationship between heterosexuality and men's position of dominance.

Connell (2000) notes that gender, as a way of structuring social practice, is unavoidably connected to other social structures; 'race' and class for example. Gender, it is argued, intersects with 'race' and class. For example, white men's masculinities are constructed in relation to black men as well as in relation to white women. White masculinity is viewed by Connell as being fused with institutional power. For Connell working class masculinities depend on class as much as they do gender relations.

The argument behind this is that to understand gender we must constantly go 'beyond' it. We must not only recognise multiple masculinities but we must also investigate the gender relations between them-historically, inter-personally, locally, and globally in order to explain the manifestation of dominant ideas which centre on 'masculinity'.

### A Genetic-Social Approach to 'Masculinities'

Although such perspectives may well be useful in conceptualising 'masculinity' as a form of gender identity and social construct, but they concern shortcomings in relation to the conceptualisation of male sexuality. As Ridley (1999) has suggested, after over twenty five years of research into behavioural genetics it is impossible to deny that genes *do* influence behaviour, and it is the contention here that this applies to male sexualities. However, environmental influences are equally important too, if not more so. We need to recognise the mutuality between 'nature' and 'nurture' and avoid reductionist and essentialist forms of theoretical reasoning. Owen (2006a, 2006b) cautions against the use of two illicit form of reasoning in theoretical analysis, which he terms, 'the oversocialised gaze' and 'genetic fatalism'. Genetic fatalism' is the equation of biological determinism with inevitability, and the 'oversocialised gaze' refers to strongly 'environmentalist' accounts which seek to deny biological variables in causality (instincts etc) altogether. Owen's (2006a; 2006b; 2007a;2007b) recent work is a contribution towards theoretical development as part of the 'return to' sociological theory and method associated with Sibeon (2004), Layder (1997, 1998), Mouzelis (1991, 1995) and Archer (1995), in tandem with a cautious attempt to 'build bridges' between sociological metatheory and insights from Evolutionary Psychology and behavioural genetics. Owen argues for a 'way forward' beyond, on the one hand, the relativism and nihilism of the Postmodern 'cultural turn', and on the other, illegitimate theoretical constructs such as the previously mentioned *oversocialised* conceptions of the person and *genetic fatalism*. Here it is suggested that some insights from Owen's Genetic-Social 'sensitising' framework might be usefully employed in attempts to theorise masculinities, violence and crime. In *After Postmodernism: Towards an Evolutionary Sociology*, Owen (2007a) suggests that a modification of Sibeon's (2004) original *anti-reductionist* framework to include focusing upon the *biological variable* (evidence from Evolutionary Psychology and behavioural genetics for an, at least in part, genetic basis for some human behaviour) has an explanatory potential which is best expressed in terms of large-scale synthesis. Owen (*ibid*) considers the evidence that genes play a role alongside environment in terms of causality in relation to human behaviour, drawing upon the work of Ridley (1999, 2003), Hamer and Copeland (1999), Pinker (1994) and Cosmides and Tooby (1997). He is of the view that there is sufficient evidence to warrant the incorporation of a focus upon *the biological variable* into his new, metatheoretical framework alongside the meta-concepts of *agency-structure*, *micro-macro*, *time-space* and modified notions of Foucauldian *power* employed in Sibeon's original framework. The latter notion of 'modified' Foucauldian power entails a recognition of the *dialectical* relationship between *agentive* and *systemic* forms of power; the *relational*, *contingent* and *emergent* dimensions of power; and the concept that *contra* Foucault power can be 'stored' in roles and social systems/relations. Owen considers it very important to keep in mind Ridley's (*ibid*) notion of *nature via nurture* when focusing upon biological variables in analysis, the 'feedback loop' which embraces genes *and* environment acknowledging *plasticity* and *mutuality*. Drawing upon Evolutionary Psychology and behavioural genetics, the framework posits that 'nurture' depends upon genes, and genes require 'nurture'. Genes predetermine the broad structure of the brain of *Homo Sapiens*, but they also absorb formative experiences, react to social 'cues' or, as Ridley (1993:53) suggests, 'need to be switched on, and external events-or free-willed behaviour-can switch on genes'.

Owen's *Genetic-Social* framework in its current stage of development, arises out of a critique of the following illegitimate forms of theoretical reasoning: *reductionism*; *essentialism*; *reification*; *functional teleology*; *relativism*; *duality of structure*; *genetic fatalism* and the *oversocialised gaze*. Arguably, the framework's usefulness lies in its avoidance of anti-foundational, Postmodern/Poststructuralist relativism; harshly 'environmentalist' *oversocialised* accounts of the person which deny genetic or even partially-genetic explanations altogether (such as those of Gagnon

and Simon, 1973); the common tendency in social science towards *genetic fatalism*; and its adoption of the Post-Postmodern sociological 'realism' of those such as Sibeon (2004), Layder (1997,1998), Mouzelis (1991,1995) and Archer (1995). It is contended here that Owen's *Genetic-Social* approach, and in particular the emphasis upon acknowledging *the biological variable* in analysis, is a useful theoretical 'toolkit' with which to conceptualise masculinities in the context of violence and crime, and in particular male sexuality. The framework is an example of meta-theory, entailing methodological generalisations as opposed to substantive generalisations, and the intention is to 'prepare the ground' for further empirical investigation.

Surprisingly, in the post-Human Genome Project landscape and rapid advances in the field of genetics, many such *oversocialised* accounts may be found within social science. For example, as Owen (2006a: 907) shows, 'Giddens (1993:57) suggests that, 'human beings have no instincts in the sense of complex patterns of unlearned behaviour''. Owen (2006b:190) also identifies Foucault's (1980) suggestion that sexuality is purely a socio-cultural creation, 'that sexuality as we know it is the production of a particular set of historical circumstances and obtains only within the terms of a discourse developed since the seventeenth century' as another example of *the oversocialised gaze*. Owen (2006b:190) has argued that Foucault's position is very similar to that of the symbolic interactionist writers, Gagnon and Simon (1973). The latter authors adopted a 'radical form of social construction theory which is extremely oversocialised', in arguing that there is no 'natural' drive in human biological make-up' (Owen, 2006b: 190). Sexual drive must, under their terms, be regarded as a cultural and historical construction. As far as Gagnon and Simon (1973) are concerned, not only do we 'learn' what 'sex' means, and what is sexually arousing to us, but we also 'learn' to want sex. The authors acknowledge that the human body has a repertoire of 'gratifications' (including the capacity to experience an orgasm), but this does not mean that we automatically, instinctively want to engage in them. Certain 'gratifications' will be selected as 'sexual' through the learning of 'sexual scripts'. From Gagnon and Simon's perspective, socialisation is not concerned with controlling innate sexual desire so that it is expressed in 'civilised', acceptable ways, but rather with the 'learning' of these complicated 'scripts' which serve to specify circumstances which elicit sexual desire. From this standpoint, similar as it is to Foucauldian conceptualisations of sexuality, 'sexual drive' is a learnt social goal.

Contradictory evidence, as Owen (2006b: 190) suggests, can be found in the work of Hamer and Copeland (1999:163) who have cogently shown how genes influence our sexual desire, how often we have sex etc and, 'help make us receptive to the social interactions and signs of mutual affection that we feel instinctively and now call 'love''. Importantly, the authors, alongside providing evidence for 'emotional' and sexual instincts, also provide evidence that genes are not fixed instructions, but rather 'take their cue from nature/the environment' (Owen, 2006b: 190). Hamer and Copeland (1999:179) investigated whether there was a 'correlation between the D4DR gene and number of sexual partners' in male subjects. They had previously established that 'novelty seeking' and sexual behaviour are linked, and that 'novelty-seeking' is in part mediated by the D4 dopamine receptor gene. The authors found that there was indeed a link between D4DR genes and the number of sexual partners in men. Looking first at heterosexual men, Dean Hamer found that the men with, 'the long form of the D4DR gene, the high novelty-seekers', had slightly more female partners than those with the short form, 'the low novelty-seekers' (1999: 179). It should be emphasised that the trait referred to here as, 'novelty-seeking' means, 'finding pleasure in new, varied and intense experiences' (Hamer and Copeland, 1999:178).

It was the study by Bogaert and Fisher (1995) at the University of Western Ontario which probably did more than any other towards establishing the idea that a novelty-seeking score was a better predictor of the number of sexual partners than the other variables such as masculine age, physical attractiveness etc. 'The more a person was a thrill seeker, the more partners he had' (Hamer and Copeland, 1999:178). Hamer and Copeland's study became rather interesting when they asked how many other men had the respondents slept with. Despite the heterosexual orientation of the respondents, 'some had slept with another man, usually just once and when they were young' (Hamer and Copeland, 1999: 179). Here was a strong correlation to the D4DR gene. 'Straight' men with the long form of the gene, the high novelty-seekers, 'were six times more likely to have slept with another man than those with a short gene', and , 'about half of the long gene subjects had ever had a male

sexual partner', compared with only eight per cent of the short gene males (Hamer and Copeland, 1999:179). The reverse was true for 'gay' men. As Hamer and Copeland expected, the homosexual respondents, 'had more male partners than the straight men did female partners', and 'the D4DR gene had the expected effect' (1999: 180). However, the effect of the gene was much stronger for the number of female partners of the gay men. Those with the long, high novelty-seeking form of the D4DR gene had sexual intercourse 'with more than five times as many women' as did those with the short, low novelty-seeking form (1999:180). Although, as the authors acknowledge, the gay men may have had sexual relations with women in part because of social pressure, and it 'seemed that a desire for new experiences also played a role' (1999: 180). According to Hamer and Copeland

These results show that the D4DR dopamine receptor gene does influence male sexual behaviour, but indirectly. For a straight man, sleeping with another man is about as novel as you get. For a gay man, having sex with a woman is equally unique. Does this mean that D4DR is a 'promiscuity gene' and that an errant husband can tell his wife, 'I couldn't help it, it was genetic?' Of course not. A gene doesn't make a person commit adultery. It simply determines the way certain brain cells respond to dopamine, which, in turn influence a person's reaction to novel stimuli. How a person reacts to that stimuli is more a matter of character than of temperament. (1999:180)

Arguably, Hamer and Copeland provide convincing evidence here that it is a mistake to engage in *genetic fatalism*; predisposition need not imply inevitability. Additionally, it is a mistake to deny altogether the influence of genetic variables in relation to causality, in the form of *oversocialised* accounts of the person in the fashion of Gagnon and Simon (1973) and Foucault (1980). As Owen (2006a, 2006b) has suggested, it is very important to recognise and acknowledge the elegant mutuality between genes and environment, to understand that genes 'take their cue' from nature and can be 'switched on' by environmental and agentic stimuli. In other words, we need to reject the 'nature versus nurture' paradigm in favour of what Ridley (1999, 2003) calls, 'nature via nurture'.

### **Psychobiography**

It is the contention here that there are close theoretical links between Owen's (2006a, 2006b) concept of *the biological variable* and Derek Layder's (1997) cogent, useful concept of *Psychobiography*; the largely unique, asocial components of an actor's disposition, behaviour and self-identity. These aspects are regarded by Layder as relatively independent of face-to-face interaction and the macro-social. For Layder, human beings are composed of unique elements of cognition, emotion and behaviour that are, in some sense, separable from the social world, while at the same time related in various ways to social conditions and social experiences. Arguably, it would prove useful to incorporate notions of unique, asocial *Psychobiography* into the analysis of masculinities, and in particular male sexuality, in relation to violence and crime. As Layder suggests, asocial elements are separable from but yet linked to the social world. This form of reasoning appears to have much in common with the *Genetic-Social* approaches of Owen in the sense that it acknowledges the *mutuality* of the social and asocial. Derek Layder, like Roger Sibeon, Tim Owen, Nicos Mouzelis and Margaret Archer, appears to be advocating to some extent a 'Post-Postmodern' renewal of sociological theory and method, favouring a flexible ontology which avoids both the 'absolutist' knowledge-claims of meta-narratives and the *reductionism* and *essentialism* of modernist paradigms. Layder appears to favour a cogent, 'modest' approach to social explanation, which retains a distinct epistemological commitment to realism, recognising that society is multiform, relatively indeterminate and difficult to predict. This metatheoretical approach is similar to Sibeon's (2004) original framework, in that it avoids unitary, *reductionist* explanations and opposes the idea of *duality of structure*, indeed any attempt to collapse distinctions between agency and structure, micro-macro etc.

Recently, Owen (2007b:9) has drawn upon Layder's notion of *Psychobiography* in relation to David Garland's (2001) 'Culture of Control' thesis, and in particular, 'Garland's rather under-theorised concept of 'the individual''. Here, Owen suggests that Garland's implied call for a recognition of criminals as 'individuals' would be, 'strengthened by a recognition of the individual-

subjective referred to by Layder as *Psychobiography*, and the intersubjective, which is labelled *Situated Activity*'. Arguably, these insights should be incorporated into the analysis of masculinities in relation to violence and crime in order to avoid reductionist, *oversocialised* concepts of male identity and male sexuality. In the foreword to Owen's *Social Theory and Human Biotechnology* (2009a) Layder himself writes

Owen wants to emphasise the importance of the 'biological variable' in social analysis and draws on evidence from evolutionary biology and behavioural science to suggest an at least in part, genetic basis for some behaviour. It is clear that Owen wants to avoid the sterile 'nature versus nurture' confrontation and to replace it with the more subtle and productive view that 'nature' operates 'via nurture'. Support for this he finds in the work of Ridley, which stresses the mutuality and plasticity of the causal relations between genes and environment. In particular Owen agrees with Ridley's view that genes can be 'switched on' by external environmental events, or 'free-willed behaviour'. Here, Owen points out a connection with my own notion of 'psychobiography'. By this concept I originally intended to emphasise the relatively autonomous and unique psychological aspects of individuals' predispositions and behaviour that interact with social influences to produce emergent effects. However, I fully concur with Owen's 'extension' of the implications of the notion of psychobiography to embrace the mutuality and plasticity of the relations between genetic and environmental influences. (2009a: xiv)

### **Gender Relations, Masculinities and Violence**

Structures of gender relations change over time, sometimes in response to external sources, and sometimes from internal sources. With the so-called 'Women's Movement' in the UK, the conflict of interests embedded in gender relations became obvious. The unequal structure placed men as a taxonomic collectivity in a defensive position and women in an offensive position, seeking change. Such a 'battle' is hard to imagine without violence, and it is generally the dominant gender that has access to and uses the means of violence. Two patterns emerged:

- (1) Members of the privileged group may use violence to maintain their position (domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, and murder).
- (2) Violence becomes important in gender politics among men. It becomes a way of asserting 'masculinity'.

According to Powell (2006), violence is part of the system of domination, while at the same time a measure of its imperfection. If the hierarchy were actually legitimate, violence would not be necessary to maintain it. Crisis has tendencies; it presupposes a coherent system so that one cannot talk about a 'crisis in masculinity', but we can talk about a crisis of the gender order as a whole. Across differences of class, race, sexuality, age and disability, one of the few commonalities that men share, as a distinct group, is their gender privilege. Men, like women, are affected by gender power structures that are interwoven with other hierarchical structures such as those based on race and class. Yet men, regardless of their positioning in other hierarchical structures generally have a strategic, common interest in defending and not challenging their gender privilege (Powell, 2006). However, it does not appear to be the case that Powell is engaging in *reification* here in the sense of implying that taxonomic collectivities such as 'men', 'white men' etc are to be regarded as actors in themselves.

As Connell (2000) points out, a gender order where men dominate women cannot avoid constituting men as an interest group concerned with defence, and women as an interest group concerned with change. The emphasis on the pressure that masculinity (in a non-reified sense) imposes on men to perform and conform to specific masculine roles (emotional and psychological as well as political and social) has highlighted the costs to men of current gender arrangements.

One of the significant achievements of Radical Feminist scholarship has been to name the connections between men, gender and power and give them visible expression in the term 'patriarchy' (Connell, 2000). In both the public and domestic spheres, 'patriarchy' refers, in



theory, to the institutionalisation of male power over women within the economy, the polity, household and heterosexual relations. However, it is the contention here that the term 'patriarchy' is an example of what Sibeon (2004) calls the 'cardinal sin' of *reification*; an illegitimate form of theoretical reasoning. 'Patriarchy', like 'the state' (and taxonomic collectivities such as 'white men', 'middle class men' etc.) is *not* an actor in the sense of being able to formulate and act upon decisions.

Psychiatric social workers test, probe and hypothesises about women, constructing and re-constructing quantifiable profiles of the bio-psychological and narrowly conceptualised sociological factors deemed to be lying at the root of female 'instability'. Such individualised responses appear to generate intervention in female lives, reinforcing the view that it is 'their' problem rather than what Connell (2000) suggests; the idea that the state's policies are possibly at fault.

Ridley (1999:298) makes the point that Western democracies have rejected government eugenics programmes, 'merely to fall into the trap of allowing private eugenics'. He refers to the 'pressures' female patients are subject to with regard to adopting 'voluntary eugenics' from professionals such as doctors, health insurance companies and from the culture at large. The point is made that 'stories abound' of women, 'as late as the 1970s' being 'cajoled' by doctors into sterilisation 'because they carried a gene for a genetic disease' (Ridley, 1999:298). In the cases Ridley refers to, we might 'apply' the idea of Sibeon's (2004: 136) *systemic power*, in the sense that doctors and other professionals (aside from being individual social actors capable of 'possessing' power) occupy *roles* and *positions* within which, *contra* Foucault (1991) and Callon and Latour (1981), certain elements of power can be 'stored' in positions/roles, social institutions and social systems. As Sibeon (2004: 136) has suggested, Foucault and Callon and Latour, 'tend to push their relational and processual conceptions of power to the point of denying that power can be 'stored' in roles and in social systems and networks of social relations'. Here, we might adopt Sibeon's (2004) and Owen's (2009a) synthesis of a combination of Foucauldian and other *relational* concepts of power, with a *systemic* understanding of power. As Sibeon (2004: 136) suggests, the synthetic conception of power leads to the idea that, 'agentic power nearly always has a relational, contingent and emergent dimension', which is arguably why the position of what Sibeon calls 'top dogs' in any institutional sphere is sometimes 'precariously sustained'.

We therefore should regard as legitimate the idea that an actor, such as a doctor in the case of female patients being 'cajoled' into sterilisation referred to by Ridley (1999) has power (which invokes the idea of 'storage') as long as we do as Sibeon (2004:136) suggests, and recognise, 'how that power is constituted and reproduced relationally'. The latter author makes a reference to the work of John Law (1991) here in relation to this point. As Sibeon (2004:136) has made clear, there is good evidence to regard power as, 'partly preconstituted and stored' (in roles etc.), and 'partly relational, emergent and contingent, with the extent to which power is 'systemic' or 'relational' being an empirical variable ' that may vary situationally. This leads to the idea that there are *multiple* forms of power like agentic, systemic and relational ones previously mentioned. In the case of power's multidimensionality, we must consider the possibility that there is a multi-level aspect to this phenomenon. In other words, there could be 'hybrid' more 'variegated' forms of power than systemic-relational distinctions might imply. As Sibeon (2004:136) suggests

Agentic power in some circumstances has a largely systemic source deriving, say, from position/role. In other circumstances agentic power may be of a relatively contingent, emergent kind that emerges during and as an effect of social interaction at the micro or mezzo [for example, inter-organisational] levels of social process. Such power may interact with systemic or positional/role power of the type that is 'stored' in discourses, social institutions, and social systems/social networks. There tends, in other words, to be a two-way [dialectical] relation between systemic and relational forms of power, with each to some extent conditioning the other.

Discourse may then, in a sense, be seen to 'embody' power, for example, the discourse around/about 'techniques' of human biotechnology and reproduction such as IVF and pre-natal screening (Owen, 2009a). The discourse 'stores' power which relates to multiple, countless decisions

taken by largely male professionals and administrative actors that, in turn, 'shape' the structure within which the professionals such as doctors, scientists etc operate and influence agency/decision-making. However, we must apply caution here as discourses themselves are *not* actors. *Contra* Foucault, discourses are (in the sense that they are patterned ways of thinking and behaving), a form of material that must be mobilised by actors before the discourse can be regarded as having, 'any consequence or effects' (Sibeon, 2004:72).

According to Connell (2000), the concept of 'hegemony' is particularly useful in recognising the relationship between domination and disempowerment. Alternative definitions of realities and ways of behaving are not simply obliterated by power networks. Thus, while physical and psychological violence might be a cornerstone of female confinement which supports dominant cultural patterns and ideologies, they are utilised within a balance of forces in which there is an everyday contestation of power, and where there is always the possibility for individual, social and historical change (2000: 184). Connell's point is arguably an important one. It is also one which is often forgotten when Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony' is applied theoretically. Domination is emphasised at the expense of contradiction, challenge and change both at the level of individual identities (women) and social formations (staff/regimes). The process of normalisation and routinisation underpins and gives meaning to the self-perception of the individual and the perceptions of the significant others in the power networks of the institution. As a comparison to the prison system, the work of Sim (1994) makes the point that prisons sustain, reproduce and indeed intensify the most negative aspects of masculinity, moulding and remoulding identities and behavioural patterns whose destructive manifestations are not left behind the walls when the prisoner (or even patient) is released. Disempowerment on the inside, it appears, can be mirrored on the outside.

A gendered reading of the social order and hierarchies of the female special hospital moves therefore beyond bio-psychological models and organisational imperatives or individualised profiles. What we need to draw attention to is how the maintenance of order/security both reflects and reinforces the pervasive and deeply embedded discourses around particular forms of masculinity. However, it must be emphasised that *contra* Foucault, discourses are not in themselves actors. Arguably, as emphasised earlier, they are forms of material that must be mobilised by actors before the discourse can be regarded as having any consequence/effects upon society (Sibeon, 2004; Owen, 2009a). We may view discourses as a potential *influence* upon social actors, but to regard them as agents is to engage in illicit *reification*.

In its very 'celebration of masculinity' (Connell, 2000), the Special Hospital, like other state institutions such as prisons, materially and symbolically reproduces a vision of order in which 'normal womanhood' remains unproblematic, the template for constructing everyday relationships between men and women, prisoners/patients/professionals working with them.

### **Globalizing Masculinities**

For some authors, power relations underpin a gendered and inequitable division of labour and access to resources. The marketplace, transnational organisations, geopolitical institutions and their attendant ideological principles (economic rationality, liberal individualism) express a gendered logic (Powell, 2006). For Powell (2006), the increasingly unregulated power of transnational corporations places strategic power in the hands of particular groups of men, while the language of globalization remains 'gender neutral', so that the 'individual' of neo-liberal theory has in general the attributes of a male entrepreneur. Gender inequality is 'responsible' for, and expressed in, the different articulations of the global 'feminisation of poverty' (Powell, 2006). Women represent approximately seventy per cent of the 1.3 billion poor people in the world. Compared with men, girls and women are most likely to be undernourished, and girls and women are most likely to receive less healthcare. Out of approximately 900 million illiterate adults in the world, 66 per cent are female (Powell, 2006).

Male violence at physical and symbolic levels appears to be a key determinant of the inequities and inequalities of gender relations, both disempowering and impoverishing women. Yet, male 'natural aggression' is often invoked as a defining characteristic of an essential gender difference and as an explanation for the gendered hierarchical arrangements in the political and

economic lives of richer and poorer countries alike (New Statesman, 2000, 14<sup>th</sup> April, p.22). For Powell, an understanding of 'development as freedom' and as a 'right' means recognising that male violence restricts female development by curtailing freedom and restricting rights. The 'celebration of masculinity' may therefore be possibly interpreted, in Powell's view, as the exercise of globalised power over women to enforce subordination and the maximisation of male power. However, it must be emphasised that Powell is not suggesting that the explanation is the *only* explanation in the sense of unitary reductionism.

There are those too, who are deeply sceptical about the 'determinist grand narratives of 'the logic of post-industrialism' and 'globalisation' (Owen, 2009b:217). Arguably, we should strive to avoid reductionist and essentialist theoretical accounts relying on unitary explanations for complex social phenomena which serve to exaggerate the scale and/or the intensity of 'globalisation in relation to 'masculinities', and which underplay the uneven impact of globalising tendencies. It is the view here that, 'the social world is contingent and *not* determined by macrostructural motor-forces' (Owen, 2009b: 217). Any adequate global analysis of the 'current state of play' in terms of 'masculinities' or gender relations must surely also, 'recognise the role played by *agency*: patterns of social life and the reproduction of social change are in varied ways influenced by human social *actors* whose ways of thinking and formulations of interests/purposes are *not* structurally predetermined nor guided by inexorable 'post-industrial' motor forces of change' (Owen,2009: 217).

## Conclusion

The intention here has been to 'theorise' masculinities in relation to violence and crime, to examine the evidence for the social construction of 'masculinities' and for the gendered nature of global inequalities. It is the contention here that those such as Connell (2000), who appear to advocate a social constructionist model of 'masculinities', drawing upon theoretical constructs such as 'hegemonic masculinity', have some useful and interesting contributions to make to the analysis of 'masculinities', violence and crime. However, purely social constructionist accounts of 'masculinities' contain theoretical deficits and shortcomings. In particular, it is suggested here that they are less than adequate in relation to the conceptualisation and analysis of male sexualities. Arguably, Owen's (2006a; 2006b; 2007a; 2007b; 2009a; 2009b; 2012) post-Postmodern, *Genetic-Social* approach, which focuses upon *agency-structure*, *micro-macro*, *time-space*, modified notions of Foucauldian *power*, *the biological variable* (the evidence for a genetic, or partially-genetic basis for some human behaviour), *psychobiography* (unique, asocial aspects of the person) and arises out of a critique of illicit forms of theoretical reasoning such as *reductionism*, *reification*, *functional teleology*, *essentialism*, *duality of structure*, *relativism*, *the oversocialised gaze* (harshly 'environmentalist' accounts of the person which serve to deny genetic or partially-genetic causality altogether), and *genetic fatalism* (the illicit equation of predisposition with inevitability) is better placed to theorise 'masculinities', violence and crime in the post-Genome era. The intention in this paper is to 'prepare the ground' for further theoretical and empirical investigation involving large-scale synthesis. There is currently considerable interest in the field of 'masculinities' and crime, as is evidenced by the work of Winlow (2001), Winlow and Hall (2009) Hall (2009), Tomsen (2008), and Owen (2012a; 2011b, forthcoming). It is hoped that the recommendations outlined here may be regarded as a useful contribution towards theoretical debates pertaining to gendered power relations and the 'idea of masculinity as a key concept in understanding why most crimes are committed by men' (Jefferson, 2007:247).

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