

Discipline, Suppress, or Kill: From “Ages of Man” to Masculine Temporalities

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Scholars across disciplines operationalize masculinity as a cultural construct internally complicated by its multiplex and divisive anchoring to life phases. This critical review essay examines various dimensions of this internal division by looking at sociological, political, historical as well as comparative, social, psychological, and linguistic anthropologists’ theorizing of maturity and gender as interdependent cultural foci. It reviews Cartesian and intersectional models to arrive at a more thorough temporalities-minded appraisal of “genders.” Masculinity appears thoroughly structured and ordered by ideas of temporality, so that its conventional moral and analytic anchoring in “men” or “adults” can be examined as being centrist, a-historical and a-cultural.

Keywords: gender; masculinity; life phases; temporality; intersectional models; literature review

Carl Horner (1989) observes that in 20th-century American literature mainstream businessmen must either “discipline, suppress, or kill boyish tendencies that collide with the expectations of American business or suffer the frustration, demotion, or demolition of corporate Darwinism” (pp. ii, 9). This observation, though pertinent mainly for Americanists, hints at the much broader anthropological question of stages in male biography, more generally still to the developmental underpinnings of codified masculinity. Indeed, time is found to be a key analytic attribute of masculinity across cultures. Masculinity, accordingly, is variably conceived as a product of an enduring disciplinary regimen, a corollary of a repressive principle, or considered instantiated by a metaphorical death.

While the above opens up a range of questions too extensive to be dealt with in full, in the paragraphs below, I attempt to illustrate how biographic time may confound both conceptual and ethical writing on men/masculinities. A score of recent contributions to the study of masculinity has, promisingly, focused on “temporal scripts,” life-course perspectives, and on ethnographic and discursive intersections with life phases (Aap-

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ola, 1997; Comeau & Kemp, 2007; Gardiner, 2002; Jackson, 2003; Spector-Mersel, 2006). Spector-Mersel (2006), however, notes a sustained under-theorizing of temporality by canonical masculinity theorists. In this review I argue, not quite to the contrary, that temporality is, and often remains, covert yet pivotal in most political operationalizations of masculinity. Motivated by three cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary bibliographic inquiries into the notions of boyhood, manhood and initiation, respectively,¹ I offer a critical review of various interpenetrations of age and masculinity as they fundamentally inform and complicate bipolar and mono-variate concepts of gender. Pursuing a radically cross-disciplinary perspective, I ask how gender and age structures have been theorized as partial to compound identity positions, “gender phases” or “temporized genders,” the analytic and cultural complication of which may be lost to analytic procedures that *a priori* break such positions down into demographic (and thus politicizable) coordinates.

Specifically, I will briefly examine (1) limitations of so-called ages-of-man models; (2) the notion of maturity as a framework for gender; (3) the distinction between developmental and what I call *post-developmental* models of genders; (4) the need to historicize developmental notions of gender; (5) cultural and analytic equations of masculinity and maturity; (6) limitations of quantitative anthropological approaches; (7) general qualitative observations across cultures; (8) indigenous notions of masculinity as they show plurality in temporal and developmental delimitations of gender; and (9) the complex of gender/sex/sexuality as it illustrates political and anthropological conventions in theorizing temporalities. Added is (10) a brief conclusion.

Ages of Man

The launch of a *Journal of Boyhood Studies* in 2007 (followed in its wake by *Girlhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* in 2008) invites reflection on temporized inclusions and temporalities in “men’s” and “women’s” studies. There has been an explosive attention to both junior and senior genders during the 1990s and since. This may be partially explained in the light of emerging theoretical and political conceptions of gender as instable, alterable, developmental, relational, multiple, performed, emergent, “tried on” and “in crisis.” According to this line of ethics- and policy-driven conceptualizations, masculinity encompasses a simultaneously gendered and generational matrix of aspects that can meaningfully be critiqued only as it orders or organizes social structure and privilege over a range of “axes” (including age and gender) at the same time.

Such simultaneity is being documented across the full range of current perspectives on masculinity, to the point of organizing the monitoring of “sex roles” in Western societies. Social psychological inquiry has produced measures dealing with “socializa-

¹ The bibliography on manhood is published (Janssen, 2008), the others are available upon request.

tion” and “transitions” of “sex role” as well as life-phase specific measures for “gender identity/role” and sex-specific measures for “age identity/role.” Life phase is no adequate parameter of masculinity however. Men would “modify their conceptions of masculinity at a number of points throughout their adult years” in response to cognitive-emotional conflicts between “sex role standards and the age-related demands” placed upon them (Moreland, 1980; Theodore & Lloyd, 2000). Others have argued that normative concepts of normal life stages may articulate androcentric theorizing (Murty, 1978) and thus that the problem of intersectionality may importantly refer to the analytic process itself. Current theorizing indeed suggests that even within academe “age intersects discursive practices of gender” (Søndergaard, 2005, p. 200).

Regrettably, these suggestions rarely add up to a culturally comparative perspective. Moreland, for instance, nowhere even identifies the geographic orientation of his early review other than with “our [?] culture” (p. 808). Also, studies typically conflate *a priori* (age segment, cohort), *statistically arrived* (age group), *theoretically imposed* (“life cycle”), *ethnographically encountered* (“life phase”) or simply *assumed* (“maturity,” “developmental”) effects on gender “role.” Furthermore, many sociologists of adolescence and adulthood (e.g. Côté, 2000) report on sex differences rather than gendered semantics. Certainly in most psychometric studies age functions as explaining, not as explained, variable.

Focusing on *masculinity-and-temporalities*, other than strictly on *men-and-temporalities*, a more useful but small body of literature looks at the interplay of gender and maturity both as rhetorical, conversational or narrative devices. More often than not, however, maturity often remains a mere, stable point of orientation. For instance, where Williams (2002, p. 49, 29, 31) laments gender scholars’ failure “to fully integrate age as a political construct,” and supplements the idea “doing gender” with that of “trying on gender,” she nowhere explains why or whether it follows from her data that New England girlhood and adult womanhood relate through what is called a “critical transition,” why adolescence should be a “critical time” in life at all (other than by academic consensus), or why it should be an adolescent privilege to try on (“resist, experiment, and practice”) gender.

Seemingly useful at first sight, to temporally distinguish *trying on* from *doing* seems only to consolidate adulthood (or futurity) as a central, unitary and exclusive encoding/ordering of gender, namely in temporized terms of productive, purposive or genuine agency. It is nonetheless an interesting proposal, and a paradoxical one if, as is claimed, in the U.S., “adolescence is the age of maximum gender differentiation” (Gardiner, 2000, p. 1258). Diversifying the analytic notion of *performance* can be more productive than plotting gender practices in a developmental grid. For instance, the notion of *doing boy* (e.g., Swain, 2000, pp. 106, 107) or *lad* may be more useful than that of “gender socialization,” “internalization of male sex role” or even “pre/adolescent masculinities.” Research shows, however, that this last option is too broad still: self-marking may involve a juxtaposition of *young* and *younger* boy positions (Aasebø, 2005). Maturity, then, cannot plot (and thus: cannot explain) the contingencies of genders in a facile way, since it is itself subject to elementary contingencies.

Framing Gender: “Maturity”

It in fact seems profitable to invert Williams’ picture: adolescents (but not only adolescents) *try on and do maturity* by deploying *gender styles* as a “critical” practice. Most of the few recent studies that do take maturity as an explanandum regrettably do not focus on gender as well. And as Coyle and Walton (2004, p. 519) warn, even in constructivist literature specifically dedicated to the task of distilling “maturity” from masculinity discourses, the notion may be partial to researchers’ interpretative framework imposed on, rather than emerging from, data. In sum, most social psychometry, even contemporary discursive psychology, seems unsuited for a cross-cultural (or any ethnographic) appraisal of “age-based” masculinities.

“*Man*” (Oedipus’ answer to the Sphinx) disintegrates in a succession of ages so that it becomes a riddle. Theorizing however may be most profitable to gender studies if based on approaches that focus on *gendered temporalities*, beyond ages-of-man. Literary theorists and anthropologists suggest such a focus delivers rather a set of riddles, with many possible solutions: *masculine time* may entail a denial of flux or absence of periodicity; conversely it may connote uncompromising linearity and rigid chronologies. If, moreover, gender may amount to “an identity tenuously constituted in time— an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*” requiring “a conception of a constituted *social temporality*” (Butler, 1988, p. 519, 520), it seems “stabilized, polarized, rendered discrete and intractable” (p. 528) primarily where it attaches *to* social time, where it feeds on a temporal logic, and cumulates or disaggregates *over* time.

In other words, Butler’s gender breaks down in time, but social time itself also breaks down in stylized repetitions of acts. Maturity, according to discursive psychologists, refers to “the discursive effect of concessive repair practices [...] locally emergent sets of interactive positionings that situate boys along developmentally gendered pathways [...] the gradual refinement of a range of discursive techniques” (Korobov & Bamberg, 2004a, p. 483; 2004b, pp. 526-527). Accordingly, masculinity is “massively central” to maturity. Critical problem is that despite this promising formulation here maturity is imposed on data as a theoretical construct, not distilled from data. The “doing” of maturity, authors admit, is still more analytic work than it is analyzed practise: “an interpretive move that draws on the analyst’s cultural knowledge” (2004b, p. 527). Thus the doings of maturity seem to interpenetrate those of gender precisely through the process of study. I suggest this “interpretative” problem is a rather crucial and politicized one in masculinity studies.

Surprisingly a required sensibility to time and time-compounded identities progressively dissolved in the West during the 20th century. It is so because analytic approaches to “man” became *multivariate* (isolating variables in terms of “factor load”) rather than aimed at cultural complexities (looking at semantic interpenetration of seemingly independent variables). Although this would require another paper, we can trace this first with the peri-1900s advent of developmental psychology, further with 1950s-1980s clinical and political gender theory, and even in 1990s third wave feminist masculinity studies. Life phase and gender are often still being theorized as comprising a

Cartesian coordinate system (with a perpendicular arrangement of abscissa = age and ordinate = gender) other than as irreducibly and “always already” convoluted. Gerontologists (Calasanti & King, 2005; Krekula, 2007; Schwaiger, 2006; Thompson, 2004) currently embrace intersectionality in addressing an observed neglect in gender literature of aging and the concurrence of sexism and ageism, and in contesting prevailing ideas about the outcome of this concurrence. Ageism however has not succeeded in mobilizing an integrative and cross-cultural interest in temporal genders and gendered temporalities. This theorizing tends to be held back by its ultimate (Cartesian) motivation to “include” ages-of-man (aged/older wo/men) — held back to *inclusively* re-think socially pervasive conceptual intersections.

An example may further illustrate the problem with and of isolating masculinity from the idea of maturity. Kimmel’s (2007) interpretation of “Nazism” as a Scandinavian “adolescent male rite of passage,” he writes, was triggered by the mid-teens age range of interviewed boys’ entry to thus-identifying groups. Kimmel’s data indeed show that both the notions of *little boys* and *men* (Swedish terms are not offered) were salient markers in ex-“Nazi” boys’ narratives, but so were *child/kid*, *puberty*, *older guys*, *parents* and *fathers* (but not: *adolescence*). And even though masculinity is evidently a potently symbolic organizing principle in “Nazi”-identifying groups (a useful insight), it does not follow from the data that the boys joined to “establish and sustain a hyper-masculine identity as a hedge against feelings of psychological emasculation.” The offered data equally suggest that for these boys, groups delivered access to the “power” and affiliation of (male) older teens, and an end to the frustrations possibly not of emasculation but of juniority. It was not shown, for instance, that bullying, a consistent antecedent in the narratives, was rationalized either in terms of masculinity or as detrimental to it. According to Kimmel (p. 215, 216), only “personal development and maturity” and retrospection could occasion the possibility of detaching the necessity of masculine passage from abject ideologies. The interviewed boys however do not seem to have “jumped” (dropped out) because they had secured a sufficiently rigid masculine, or mature, position, rather because they grew tired, bored or disinterested. Kimmel’s inference of over-compensatory *masculinization*, the trope of *passage*, the concept of *ritual* and the idea of *maturity* remain mostly unsupported by the offered data, or rather: projected onto it. We indeed do learn what Kimmel values: men who come out “soft spoken, thoughtful, and deliberate in speech [...] ‘better men’” (p. 217).

This example, then, suggests research needs to be sensitive in disentangling maturity and masculinity discourses, and may have to accept as a conclusion their irreducible intertwining. One aspect is terminology. Is “adolescent masculinity” (1) masculinity in “adolescence” as chronometric parameter, (2) masculinity operational in “adolescence” as a mode of psychosocial functioning, or (3) masculinity typical, or expected, of classificatory “adolescents”? What presuppositions may be projected here? Can we speak of gender/maturity rather than <gender and maturity>?

Another aspect is theory. One observes that masculinity has been ubiquitously and widely theorized, e.g., in terms of hegemony (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) and multiplicity, whereas life phases have received less of such political operationalizing

(consider *hegemonic adolescence*; *adolescences*). If it may be hypothesized that preadult life phases, as gender, lend themselves for identitarian or political anchorage in many possible (be it variegated, oblique and implicit) ways, how and where *masculinity* and *teenage* overlap or intersect often remains unexplored. While “the concept of hegemonic masculinity originally was formulated with a strong awareness of psychoanalytic arguments about the layered and contradictory character of personality” (p. 843), Connell leaves out these problems in this important reappraisal.

Elsewhere Connell theorizes adolescence as a “main site” for the construction of masculinities: where “existing masculinities are appropriated and inhabited [granting] imperfections of the match” (Connell, 2005, p. 24). While Connell proposes a (conventional) constructivist conception of adolescence (it is not entirely clear why “adolescence” is singled out other than as a response to what are rightly recognized as essentialist mainstream notions of youth in the West), the radical potential of this seems minimized when accepting adolescence as a mere canvas for the “learning” of adult masculinities, granting “contradiction, distancing, negotiation, and sometimes rejection of old patterns” (p. 24) rather than opening up a promised “reconceptualization of the field of adolescence and masculinity” (p. 12).

Adolescence is psychomedical jargon unsuitable for comparative anthropologists with a critical (other than demographic) interest in life course systems. It even seems hardly useful in the study of life course concepts in contemporary U.S. youth who may rarely if ever refer to the idea of *adolescence*, at least in the perspective of identity construction. Given that *puerility* may stand in discursive opposition to *manhood*, and “immature” behavior is by convention considered ethically suspect, can or should we discuss such culturally validated, even romanticized, notions as male “acting out,” “protest,” “rebellion” and “restlessness” as pertinent, or indeed indexical, to what is called masculinity, to what is called immaturity, or (alluringly) “both”? Another problem: what use is there in recognizing *masculinities* as such (plural) when one is struck by diametrical and paradigmatic oppositions thereby “included”? Does the notion of *maturities* help?

Ages-of-Gender: Post-Developmental Models

The multifaceted notion of masculinity as an articulation of developmental stages, historically mutable though it may be, aligns with mainstream poststructural theory on masculinity that proposes a “performative” appraisal of its merits, eradicating the idea of role stability and instead taking gender’s unending recalibrations, polarizations and developments, that is, its *crisis*, as (paradoxically) its sufficient and ultimate index. This line of thought departs sharply from the early anthropology of sex roles that imagined “sex” and “age” to be interlocking “principles” of social differentiation (e.g., La Fontaine, 1978). Structure deprived codification of course fails to produce stable, anchored codes. Here, too, masculinity is, among other failures, a failed aspiration: imminent boyness negatively understood, as decompensation, stasis, disengagement, and withdrawal. But boyness, as observed, is no stable anchor either: masculinity’s instability is itself instable, it is *radically instable*.

Such instability requires models that look critically into the developmentalist underpinnings of ages-of-man, as proposed at the outset of this paper. Masculinity entails a hierarchical range of ethical agenda or sets of codes pivoted around a centralized and singularized normative set the normalization of which critically entails its conventional distribution by life phase. Such at least has been a frequently encountered perspective in Gramscian (“hegemonic” masculinity), Butlerian (performative), feminist, and developmental psychological concepts of masculinity, which seek to uncover comparable principles in the orderings of comparable “masculinities” in primary schools and on playgrounds as in college football, corporate business, and war politics. Here masculinities are in principle continuous over life phases, according to a “developmental” logic. This view recognizes boys and seniors as aspiring to (yet lacking) the predominant set of manly attributes, and as “boys” those that may aspire to but are denied that set in spite of being in an optimal life phase for doing so. Thus male prostitutes of any age, virile able-bodied slaves and indigenous adult servants were classificatory “boys” (deficiently masculine) across historical settings.

Ages-of-man can, perhaps more productively, be seen as encompassing a variety of code sets that are connected to life phases in such a stringent way that important (albeit often continuous) attributive shifts may be observed between such “temporized genders.” We can call this approach *post-developmental*. In the Anglophonic experience code sets (“genders”) may rather be called *boy(ish)ness* and *manliness* than “young” versus “adult” masculinities. As Haywood, Popovicu, and Mac an Ghaill (2005), note:

[A]ge contains a range of cultural codes that impact upon ideals of manliness. [In their observations] ascendant codes of adult masculinity stood in opposition to “boyness.” Therefore “boyness” may not be necessarily captured by the adult defined and applied category of “masculinity.” (p. 204)

While it cannot be argued that an oppositional category necessarily evades being “captured” by the elementary category, it can be maintained that boyness indeed cannot be reduced to the notion of developmental masculinity/ies or to immaturity/ies. Boy(ish)ness has not been the subject of much scholarly inquiry, be it historical, ethnographic or comparative. Comparable notions have been studied to some extent, however, in *tomboyism* and *ladette* behavior, metropolitan lesbian *bois*, Indonesian *tomboys* (transsexuals), the Shakespearean and Kabuki *boy actress*, selected historical *boy-men*, among other itches to conventional developmental-gendered schemas (Janssen, 2007a). Analysis of these divergent markers undividedly points to the cultural interpenetration of maturity and gender identifiers not merely in terms of reversals but indeed of expansions and subversions of binary genders.

Historicizing Mature Men / Masculine Maturities

Historians agree that codified maturation categories act as key binarizing and exclusionary operators on gender (apart from “race” and class). Thus, “Law and public

opinion in the antebellum United States defined adulthood independence as a stage of life specific to white men” (Field, 2001, p. 129). “Age,” expands Smith (2001), “from its integration into ideas underpinning the formation of the modern individual that emerged during the seventeenth century in England to its place in the concepts which formed a basis for modern psychology at the beginning of the twentieth century, has been consistently and perniciously tied to personal characteristics and stages of life deemed relevant only for men” (p. 84). In another light, in 1920s-30s Britain and across aesthetic, demographic, economic, and political contexts, the cultural fad of “gendered age” would be more demanding to women than to men (Port, 2006).

Historians compete over the issue whether in Western nation states masculinity has become crucially and progressively, or, conversely, *progressively less* dependent on the emergent framework of developmental psychology (juxtaposing and cross-rationalizing male life “stages”) during the late 19th century (Robertson, 2001). Robertson himself concludes that “By the mid-twentieth century, even as [U.S.] ideals of masculinity incorporated and celebrated many of the traits that had belonged to boys in the nineteenth century, those ideals required men to separate themselves from boys to achieve masculine identities” (p. 33).

Taking up this problem of manhood-as-trajectory, some historians have focused explicitly on masculine maturities (e.g., Celovsky, 2005; Chojnacki, 1992) rather than merely on stages-of-the-male-life-course or masculinity-in-circumscribed-male-life-phases. However, problems with historical lines of argument were signaled by Grant (2004), whose work aligns with Robertson’s conclusions (and Horner’s, referred to above) but admits that

Although I use the “term” masculine to refer to identity and development, in fact, few educators of this period [early 20th century] applied this term to boys [i.e., prior to “adolescence”]. They used the terms “boys,” “boy nature,” “boyish,” and “manly” instead. The word “boy” had somewhat of a different meaning from what it has today and was used to refer to youth as old as twenty. (p. 848, N 36)

Where men were being studied “as men” only from end of the 20th century (e.g., Gutmann, 1997), we can observe less of a political imperative to historicize “boys as boys,” “adults as adults,” or “men as adults” even as such study, it is being realized, is ultimately pertinent to understanding “male privilege” historically. Where the concept of *man* may serve “to problematize the ambition of separating the male sex and masculinity as two distinct ‘things’” (Garlick, 2003, pp. 159-160), *boy* may currently challenge the political ambition to project the notion of masculinity/manhood onto male lifetimes. Various sociolinguistic indications confirm that by the late 20th century the lexeme *boy* has become an ultimately versatile and widely appropriated signifier of subject positions within the politicized matrices of gender/sexuality/“race” (Janssen, 2007a).

In the U.S., as Kidd (2004) and others (e.g., Jacobson, 1994) suggest, masculinity can be fruitfully studied in observing the grooming, progressive rationalization, senti-

mentalization and indeed *emergence* of “the boy” not only as a newly salient stepping stone in its formation (e.g., Rotundo, 1993) but as a potent operator on its semantic parameters and cultural logic. The semantic collapse of adulthood and manhood is hereby made culturally and historically contingent—at least the conditionality of this collapse has been recognized in a variety of observations on 20th century U.S. consumer culture (Gardiner, 2000, p. 1258; Register, 1999), film culture (Cohan, 1997), bachelor culture (Chudacoff, 1999), metropolitan gender scenes (Trimble, 2005), in Canadian working-class bachelorhood (Heron, 2005, 2006) among other contexts. Steven Cohan, for instance, argued that postwar young Hollywood stars’ youth was “interpreted, both on film and in the fan discourse, through the trope of boyishness which mainstream American culture repeatedly drew upon after the war when representing deviations from hegemonic masculinity as a boy’s impersonation of manhood, as a performance that always falls short of the original” (p. 203). According to Cohan, this amounted to “an important reconfiguration of masculinity in movies of this period because their ‘new look’ challenged the conflation of ‘gender’ and ‘sexuality’ underwriting the symbolic economy with which ‘boys’ were made legible as the opposites of ‘men.’” Indeed, boyishness seems to be an emergent analytic tool for culture scholars (Mavor, 2007; Turley, 2004).

We may even go so far as to say that a focus on male and masculine maturities quite profoundly informs a broad range of historical and anthropological questions dealing with the rationalization of men/masculinities. For instance, around 1900 both the scientific and countercultural contemplation of homosexuality (a pivotal concern again in late 20th century men’s studies) was critically informed by the idea of maturity (e.g., da Silva, 1998; Romesburg, 2006). Hoad (2000) puts it boldly:

From Krafft-Ebing to Queer Theory, the language and assumptions of evolutionary theory, often displaced into contemporary discourses of development, reverberate to create a disturbing consonance between ideologies of liberation and ideologies of oppression. (p. 133)

Reproductive manhood, according to recapitulationists and developmentalists, would “proceed beyond” the collective of immature forms and tendencies thereby opposed and resisted: boyhood, “adolescence,” women, decadents, and scores of primitives (degenerates, savages).

Masculinity = Maturity

Immaturity, largely abandoned as a viable analytic index to sexual identity since the 1970s, is maintained in contemporary nosologies of *paraphilia*: a contemporary antipole of Western heteromascularity and an enduring Freudian projection at that. One observes, in fact, an enduring *maturity politics* framed as a *masculinity politics*. In the popular press in the aftermath of third wave feminism we see masculinity conventionally defined and critiqued in terms of development (for one of many recent examples, see Hymowitz, 2008).

A key 1990s schism occurred, for another instance, between U.S. “mythopoet” Robert Bly’s weekend “initiation” retreats instantiated to undo the deleterious corollaries of a culture in which male “[a]dults regress toward adolescence; and adolescents—seeing that—have no desire to become adults” (1990, p. viii, cf. 1995), and profeminist Michael Kimmel, dismissing such retreats as themselves “regressive,” as part of a quest for not manhood but “boyhood [...] masculinity without adult responsibility” (Kimmel & Kaufman, 1993; cf. Gardiner, 2002; on the mythopoetic notion of initiation, see Howard, 1997). Masculinity, in both Bly’s mythopoesis and Kimmel’s profeminism and in concurrence with David Gilmore’s neo-analytic approach (see below), is ultimately tied to a moral idea of maturity in terms of it being perceived as an evasion of imminent regression that is typically male, or typically deleterious when occurring in males. Culture, all agree, suffers from masculinity where it is “not”: regressive, boyish, unproductive of mature orientation and ethos. Masculinity, then, would allow analytic condensation to a more basic, or at least a focus on a more critical, anthropological classifier: [male] adult status.

Many masculinity scholars not so much critique masculinity as harmful onto itself, as endorse an assessment of its stakes in conventional, meritocratic, even capitalist, terms of productivity, optimal securing of social justice, and societal benefit. This is usually operationalized in the West by such terms as commitment, productivity, responsibility, and ethical conformity, and its absence as lying in the realm of “fantasy, uncertainty and boasting” (Connell, 2000, p. 162). Such (dis)qualifications remind me of the stages of life called *augmentum* and *status* in the Aristotelian triadic *cursum aetatis* (Burrow, 1988, p. 6), a centrist-developmental model privileging “adult” functioning and extrapolating all other. Gender critique often allows a reading of an abjectly hierarchical ordering (gender) in terms of a “commonsensical” one (maturity). Illustratively Connell’s extended case study of Iron Man (an Australian surfing champ) in *The Men and the Boys* (2000, ch. 5) is ultimately a critique of “pleasure and success at the cost of his adulthood,” of “extended adolescence” (p. 85). Iron Man is, Connell admits, young and undeniably a winner in his scene. “But,” Connell (a 1970s authority on adolescence) concludes, “most other men his age are facing the problems of earning a livelihood, constructing long-term relationships, building households, making hard choices, and facing social issues” (p. 85). This is an insistence on ages-of-man, not a critique of masculinity (as implied in the book’s line of argument, advertisement and contexts of being cited), and rather a proposition than analysis of how masculinity may intersect with maturity concepts.

Both in the deconstruction and in the enactment of abject masculinity we may see at work an ethical dismissal of what can be defined as puerile. This “work” parallels negations and constructions of gender as “opposite.” In a broad range of ethnographic data the feminine and the boyish/childish are indeed conflated notions. Then again, men can readily claim they were never women or girls; they were once boys and can, undeniably, remain boyish/puerile viably and indefinitely (if unethically) in *at least* many late capitalist settings.

Limitations of Quantitative Cross-Cultural Research

We may discern in contemporary masculinity studies a general confluence of *positional* and *developmental* notions of crisis, where masculinity is reasoned to be compromisable by collapse of exclusive structures of entitlement (“positions”), as well as constituting a psychogenetic conundrum that is specifically gendered and gendering. This may require a *circular* model of maturity/gender: masculinity is politically and psychodynamically coextensive with developmental hierarchies, which, in turn, perpetuate and legitimize developmental operationalizations of masculinity. We could also think of a *situational* model where occasions for male mobilization (e.g., tribal warfare) may be construed to legitimize a cult of masculinity *as well as* a ritually or rhetorically rigid age grading, which by such constructions may be thought of as co-legitimized, cross-rationalized or reciprocally confabulated as (ultimate) necessities.

Such models invite cross-cultural observations suited for hypothesis testing. However, available research tools are hardly suited for this task. Gender having become a single most organizing analytic pivot of masculinity studies, one is struck by the minimal theoretical exploration of its interplay with age systems in anthropology. It may well be that the key political conundrum of masculinity—*are masculinity’s ills symptomatic of or instrumental in cultural processes*—may be most fruitfully explored at the site of age organization. A key question in the study of North-East African age systems, for instance, has been whether age classes are a latent military system presenting a mere “ceremonial facade for gerontocratic [male] power,” or whether their functions are as important as “generating communal identities from enmity and belligerence [by being] part of the institutionalization of the confrontational scenario between enemies” (Simonse & Kurimoto, 1998, pp. 7, 11).

Exploring this structural hypothesis, we find no works comparing age categories by sex in standardized samples. Age graded systems have been studied extensively but few sources tune in on the intersectional aspects of sex/gender and age stratification. Age set systems are a typically male phenomenon, formalizing antagonistic tendencies between sets, and organizing periodic “revolutionary” renewal of political establishment. Few of the several classic historical-comparative works on age set systems, however, engage critically with masculinity as a problem.

Unsuitability of tools is problematic also in quantitative cross-cultural studies, structuralist anthropology, and encyclopedic ordering of anthropological data. Multi-cultural and international works on sex/gender/sexuality, such as Ember and Ember’s (2003) *Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender* and Francoeur’s (1997, 2001) *International Encyclopedia of Sexuality* use a standardized chaptered ordering of the “life cycle” that in both cases, and more often than not, obeys to a conventional 20th century, Western, academic bracketing. This is so while included chapters variably propose age categories, logics of age bracketing, strategies of age bracketing, histories of age bracketing, and discursive investments in age brackets that are substantially different from those pertinent to contemporary Western scholastic systems, which enact a capitalist logic and an absolute chronometric attitude to age. While encyclopedic ordering may

facilitate comparison, here standardization of entries steers into the direction of a structural-demographic (age/sex) rather than semantic-discursive (maturity/gender) comparison. Chronometric age, furthermore, may obscure more than it delivers the exactitude it promises; it often is an analytic intrusion, rarely an explicit focus for comparative anthropologists.

This projection of Western lexis of life time has equally been the norm in 1970s and 1980s cross-cultural research on “sexual behavior” and “sexual norms” using standardized samples. Here “socialization” variables were coded separately for sex, and for standardized life phase categories, even where such variables pertain variably to age-graded societies and/or initiation-based reckoning of the life course (Janssen, 2007a, p. 45). Standardized cross-cultural research, it turns out, not only did not clarify gendered aspects of age organization, but obfuscated an analysis of all pertinent foci as may interrelate in the indigenous experience (initiation; gender; life phases), by introducing analytic descriptors and demarcations. In Schlegel and Barry (1979), an “adolescent initiation ceremony” was simply taken as a sex neutral analytic concept, loosely and circularly defined as “some social recognition, in ceremonial form, of the transition from childhood into the next (in most societies, this will be an adolescent stage)” (p. 199). Taking sex and life stage as explaining variables, this line of research says nothing at all about genders or maturities, their conceptual variability or the mutability of their interpenetrations.

Qualitative Comparison: Pluralizing Ages-of-Man

By contrast, in qualitative anthropology masculinity and age organization have been critically interrelated research foci. Important ethnological concepts and topics such as men’s houses, male initiation, age grading and setting, patrilinearity, gerontocracy, reproductive virility, and *Männerbünde*² ubiquitously seem to require a bivariate plotting of manhood, yet much more divergently than in anthropological uses of Oedipal, archetypal, and Eriksonian psychology.

Manhood pertains to a considerable continuity between adult habitus and masculine ethos routinely highlighted (or else *projected*) across cultural contexts. In warrior cultures, notes Mazrui (1975, p. 71), “Adulthood and manhood were sometimes indistinguishable for the male line of the tribe.” In other societies, however, “exaggerated,” “caricatured,” or “hyper-” masculine performance is seen to typify youth rather than senior generations (Murphy, 1983, p. 387). Recognized arenas for the display, enactment or dispute of masculinity are commonly accessible only to selected age segments, either *de jure* (spear-carrying warrior sets, military hierarchies) or *de facto*, as based on social or physiological exigencies (gangs, professional sports). In many societies, generally, what should constitute “masculinity proper” or indeed “proper masculinity” is a negotiation about situational appropriateness of action or inaction played out *between*

² See Vögler and v. Welck (Eds., 1990) for a worldwide exploration of this notion.

generations as well as *in terms of* generation. This negotiation may be ritualized, politically formalized and dramatized to various degrees.

Working with these data anthropologists observe “a range of masculinities cross-cut by generation,” and age-grades as the structural anchor of “generational masculinity” (Hodgson, 1999, pp. 125, 126). Some more ambitiously propose a psychodynamic embedding of life stages in gender constructs. A pioneering cross-cultural “panoramic view” of masculinity, according to the author, Gilmore’s *Manhood in the Making* (1990) locates the puzzle of manhood in Kohutian terms, masculinity emerging as evaded regression to primordial symbiosis: “a hard-fought renunciation of the longing for the prelapsarian idyll of childhood,” a defence “against puerility, against what is sometimes called the Peter Pan complex” (pp. 29, 228-229; the said complex is a term from 1980s American pop psychology). Codified masculinity mobilizes men, proposes Gilmore, to maintain familial structures and to service human reproduction. Gilmore’s formulation would seem to resonate with the observation that cultural notions of masculinity comprise as frequently a negation of feminine association as of latent boyhood—or indeed genderless, unproductive, maternalized immaturity: the imminent result of giving in to the normative direction of social inertia. Hodgson’s and Gilmore’s masculinity, although incompatible theoretically (with some justice Hodgson considers Gilmore’s descriptions of manhood “essentialized, ahistorical”), both internally break down into mutually incompatible, antagonistic or antipolar, sets of attributes if not ritually then rhetorically and enduringly articulated as ages-of-man.

Beyond Ages-of-Man

How does anthropology fare with regard to “masculine temporalities”? Ritual initiation, for example, is a fruitful site for studying this element of articulation in masculinity studies. However, it is complicated by political interests, analytic intrusions and terminological issues (Janssen, 2007b) compromising comparative (certainly any quantitative) study. Practices commonly grouped by the term *initiation*, are usually characterizable by a dual plot of masculinization/defeminization, but such practices variably pivot around “boyhood,” “adult” status, ancestor lines, the mother, or social ontogenesis *per se*. In one instance, men must paradoxically “appropriate female reproduction as a transformative symbol of their power” and “birth a ceremony” before they become real men (Lattas, 1990, p. 95). The indigenous ordering of “initiation,” in other words, must be distinguished from its analytic-theoretical ordering before comparative inferences can be made about its significance in understanding gender/maturity practices. Kimmel (2007)’s case, as discussed above, is illustrative here.

We should, then, look at masculinity across diverse systems of age-grading. Age-grading is commonly seen as regulating access to previously restricted venues, symbols or occasions of *communitarian* articulations of masculinity, and on the other hand as compromising *identitarian* articulations. It has long been argued that in the West “boy codes” would be incompatible with school attendance and academic performance. Competing age-grading institutions, such as European schools and native initiation

“schools,” are frequently seen as mutually incompatible, however many reports suggest a widespread co-existence of such institutions. Masculinity, then, seems more compatible with institutionalized age grading than with institutionalized sex-neutrality. A fundamental categorization problem, even novel gender/maturity categories, may arise where traditional systems are ignored en masse (a key example was provided in Hutchinson, 1996, Ch. 6).

Some ethnic notions that approximate “masculinity”, e.g., *da-ñolre* among Xavante (Graham, 1994, p. 726), and *ngoso* among Chagga (Moore, 1976), are critically tied to maturity concepts. In Xhosaland notions of masculinity “pivoted around the axis of circumcision and the differentiation of boys and men,” circumcision signifying “masculine identity and male power, constructed over against boys and women” (Mager, 1998, p. 658). The Ethiopian notion of *wand-nat* connoting soldierly “masculinity,” by contrast, “may refer to any age and has nothing to do with moral maturation” (Levine, 1966, p. 18).

Local ideas about masculinity may be confined to a life phase, which is thereby consolidated conceptually. An example would be Trukese *pwara* “manliness,” which, in Gilmore’s reading, constitutes “a passing stage confined entirely to adolescence [...] a kind of basic training for a challenging, demanding male adulthood and is not an end in itself [...] a preparation for life’s severities” (pp. 64-65, 73; reading Marshall, 1979, p. 97). Drunkenness, according to Marshall, is a dramaturgy answering to consecutive sets of public expectations of male comportment; hence it is considered shameful for “an adult man to act like a young man” (p. 116) after alcohol consumption.

Here both authors fit emic gender phase concepts (*pwara*) to Western-analytic life phase concepts (*adolescence, adulthood*) for a developmental-functional appraisal of gender imagined as pancultural schema (variably called *manhood*). It remains unclear, then, how indigenous ideas of maturity historically interacted with colonial ones.

Rao (2001, pp. 91-92) supplies another example of a “gender phase” exactly how it relates to sex, age grades, moral immaturity, and moral futurity. Among the Bakkarwal (Himalayan Muslim pastoralists) the notion of *jawāni* represents “a romantic and idealized phase of life” and is used exclusively for men, while the root *jawān* may be used ambisexually for “roughly the end of the juvenile period [puberty] till one has a couple of children oneself.” Pre-*jawān* life is breaks down in four segments, but none of these seem to enjoy equivalent status.

The term *jawān* and its derivatives constitute something of a semantic network which stretches between positive connotations such as strength, bravery and sexual maturity through ambivalent ones such as romanticism to negative ones such as rashness, heedlessness and irresponsibility.... *Jawāni* in a person who is physically just about *jawān* is accepted as perfectly normal, but it is not considered befitting those who are well into this phase.... Up to a point *jawāni* can be excused and at times appreciated even in a young adult, just as boyishness is in English society. As opposed to childishness, which implies the lack of reasoning, boyishness evokes reason tempered

by spontaneity and youthful dynamism. *Jawāni* expresses precisely this ambivalence, and if its negative aspects are not curbed in time they *may* lead to a man becoming *shoñki* [fanciful] later in life. (Rao, 2001, pp. 116-117, italics in original)

Osella and Osella (2000) provide an additional example of how four styles of masculinity observable in Kerala (India) migrants to the Gulf answer to “a balanced combination of masculinity with maturity”:

In Kerala, partial integration of (or, we would prefer, articulation between) different aspects of the self takes place through reference to the passage from boyhood to manhood, a process involving labour, marriage and fatherhood and framed within a stereotyped ideal trajectory towards a strongly essentialized identity which draws upon notions of bourgeois paterfamilias and householder, as well as upon older ideas about patronage and centrality. (2000, pp. 118-119, 129, 130)

These examples may suffice, for now, in suggesting that both gender and maturity are conceptually interpolated, culturally sedimented and historically consolidated notions, and thus exposed both to change and intercultural exchange.

Afterthought: Gender <=> “Sexual” Temporalities

Sexuality having been so central in the historically recent politicization of masculinity the notion seems worthy of some specific remarks. I have suggested above that access to *de jure* age-restricted sites for masculine performance is delimited by historical, demographic, political and wider legislative contours of organized life. “Sexual” performance is usually both a *de jure* and *de facto* qualifier of manhood; its qualifying properties answer to legislative recognition of maturity (in current Western operationalization the ungendered, primarily chronometric assumption of the passive “ability to consent”) as well as assumptions and evaluations of neuropsychosocial maturity, but perhaps most importantly to cultural constructs that distinguish “man-making” (active penetrative procreative coitus) from juvenile or emasculating (receptive coitus, “play”) participation in “the sexual.” Conversely “age-structuring” (rather: organization by maturity categories) of what armchair anthropologists call male “homosexualities” is perhaps more common than any structuring principle (Murray, 2000, pp. 23-212).

This even seems to aid a deconstruction of “homo”-sexuality as a meaningful analytic device (and importantly so for masculinity). Anthropology, traditionally focusing on non-Western societies, still has a gendered operationalization of sexuality even where it recognizes the outstanding salience of life phases. So much so, sexuality’s current institutionalizations have foregrounded the category of developmental subjects while dismissing their sex and gendered status (e.g., Nelson & Oliver, 1998). If anything this constitutes an institutionalized and official denial of any man-making prop-

erties of “having sex.” Western societies currently de-escalate gender by their age-graded institutions and laws, and (paradoxically from an ethnographic perspective) escalate sex (the having of it) as an age-graded psychodrama. Sexualities are, in the post-1970s medicolegal experience of liberal nations and states, more “about” age and its “abject” disparity than about gender or its “queer” parity.

Policy and ethics driven gender/sexuality research, certainly also the feverish 1980s interest in anthropological research on this topic, has generally worked with concepts of gender in which the life course is either left unanalyzed, used as demographic parameter in historical sociology, or as informing opportune timing of political intervention. Life phases, then, have been used to situate gender/sexuality, to compartmentalize its study, and to map its continuities or discontinuities.

This is, as observed, an altogether conventional approach to life phases however, often involving a projection of familiar categories rather than a critique or discussion of their usefulness. We can argue that age stratification has been instrumental to localize, demarcate and orient gender/sexuality theory, while the reverse has hardly been the case, and that this has *compounded* sex/uality and gender over temporal lines. While time, very generally, has recently been taken up as a somewhat more central conundrum in radical poststructural reflections on gender/sexuality, these have so far been unconcerned with anthropological questions.³ Anthropologists themselves catered to 1980s and 1990s Euro-American interest in “alternative,” “marginal” and “dissident” sexualities understood as complex configurations of gender, but found less political appeal in exotic age structures or indigenous life course concepts in general. Sexuality in the hands of anthropologists, by the same convention, remained a fashionably gendered rather than generational problem, even where age stratification issues are now, as observed, much more “self-evidential” than gender. Such a paradox can squarely be located in the historical-political appeal of subject matter: Gilbert Herdt’s “Sambia” case became a popular textbook example of exotic gender ideology and same-sexuality, not age structures—as (in the innocent lexis of the 1980s) “age structured” and “ritualized homosexuality” rather than gender inflected structuring of the life course.

Herdt’s important early work, *Rituals of Manhood* (1982), however, is rather a case study of how specific ethnotheories of male developmental physiology concur with a whole curriculum of masculinization practices (he later changed his initial term ‘homosexuality’ accordingly). Here, “biased” ordering of anthropological data lies not so much in how textbook coverage of “homosexuality” is ordered as occurring between classificatory “men” and “boys” (Rind, 1998), but where such ordering occurs in terms of the cross-cultural signifier “(homo)sexuality” at all. Yet this latter problem, commonly and widely recognized, is much impacted by life phase. What is generally understood by *sexuality* can only reductively be defined by or delimited to gender (or sex); in a related vein “homo”-sexuality may not be useful (certainly not exhaustive or

³ See, for instance, Janssen (2007, in press).

necessary) terminology where same-sex intimacies occur between persons of differing (hetero-genic) systems of age grading.⁴

We see here illustrated, then, the ways in which gender's fragmentation over lines of life course and culture compromises its very disciplinary and conceptual ordering, not just its terminology or textbook classifications. Masculinity may be so thoroughly structured and ordered by the life course, that its political and analytic (beyond and outside its ethnographic) anchoring in "men" or "adults" or "sexuality" becomes both unstable and exposable as centrist, a-cultural and a-historical: revealing late 20th century political ontologies.

Conclusion

Anthropology makes it abundantly clear that both masculinity-patriarchy and seniority-gerontocracy are "myths," in a sense that only some men, and only some elderly, are likely to have power over only some women and some other men. This thesis, I have suggested, can be formulated more radically. Maturity and masculinity are inter-related ideas unendingly reconfabulated at the site of social negotiations over status and performance. Two caveats loom large in intersectional models: the imposition of analytic concepts on ethnographic data, and too restricted deployment of intersectional models.

This essay has aimed to review critically some hints in the extant literature, and suggests a radically cross-cultural and post-developmental view critical of analytic and ethical anchorage. Whether boyness is to be disciplined, suppressed, or killed is a more multifaceted anthropological question than developmental or post-developmental models may initially suggest (*cave* Herdt's New Guinean case among many others). Expectedly, Bly's *initiation* and Kimmel's *passage*, tropes seemingly common to mythopoetic, critical, comparative and popular views on manhood, variably inform masculinity: as a site of its production, test of its arrival, dramatic enactment of its emergence, proclamation of its inception, segmentation of its course, interruption of antecedent genders (boy-ness), negation of opposite genders (the feminine). How maturities are articulated with masculinities, according to indigenous rationale, is volatile and often has been subject to considerable change since the early 20th century. Ritualized temporalization of the male life course, then, does not, as suggested in popular or theoretical appropriations of the notion, provide any single, stable, or definite idea of gendered temporality to evaluate "Western" de-escalations and escalations of age/maturity/sex/gender.

⁴ It is striking that Herdt later even sought to biologize the timing of Sambian initiation, arguing that initiatory practices answered to anticipated demands and dangers of human adrenarche rather than regional ethnobiological notions of semen depletion (Herdt & McClintock, 2000). Anthropologists have rarely analyzed timing of initiation (less still its remarkable variability and changeability) in terms of biological necessities.

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