

C. J. Pascoe and Tristan Bridges

*Exploring Masculinities: Identity, Inequality, Continuity, and Change*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 430 pp. \$49.99. ISBN-10: 0199315671; ISBN-13: 978-0199315673.

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Each semester I open my undergraduate Gender Studies course by asking students to write words and phrases on the whiteboard that they associate with the word *gender*. The list is almost always composed mainly of terms such as *female*, *femininity*, *woman*, and *women's liberation*. Time and time again, I am reminded that college students new to the sociological study of gender typically approach the material with the expectation that they will be examining *women*, never men. C. J. Pascoe and Tristan Bridges anticipate this exact perspective early in their new textbook, *Exploring Masculinities: Identity, Inequality, Continuity, and Change*. In fact, in the introduction they even critique academic inquiry for overlooking men as “non-gendered subjects” and masculinity as “self-evident” or “invisible” (p. 3). Their project challenges the supposed “naturalness” of masculinity by forcing students and scholars to conceive of it as something just as complicatedly constructed and organized as femininity.

The book opens with an introduction, “Exploring Masculinities: History, Reproduction, Hegemony, and Dislocation,” which introduces readers to some of the guiding concepts and ideas of the text. Pascoe and Bridges explain social constructivism and socialization's role in shaping understandings of gender. They discuss the history of sex role theory, detailing its limitations but also how it laid the necessary critical foundation for future gender scholarship. They briefly outline the physical differences between men and women, and explore the ways that biological and teleological understandings of sex and gender have excused or perpetuated different forms of inequality. Finally, they introduce us to masculinity studies pioneer Raewyn Connell (1995), whose work on the four configurations of masculinity—hegemonic masculinity, subordinated masculinity, complicit masculinity, and marginalized masculinity—significantly grounds the material in the subsequent chapters.

Clearly, this introduction, as well as all the opening sections by Pascoe and Bridges, covers a large critical territory in a rather small number of pages. The material in these introductions is often dense and theoretical. Graduate students and undergraduates in

upper-level courses will keep up, but students less familiar with the field will likely require the help of an instructor to digest some of these weighty terms and concepts. The anthology is also a worthwhile primary or companion text for any introductory gender studies, masculinities studies, or sexuality studies course, but faculty may need to dedicate some time to unpacking certain critical terminology introduced in this opening passage. The “Exploratory Questions” placed at the close of the introduction will assist faculty in this process, and they offer students a sense of direction as they move on to the remaining material. Questions and prompts, such as “Where is masculinity ‘located’ in the theory?” or “What are the theory's implications?” are helpful benchmarks that students and faculty can return to when progressing through the remainder of the volume.

Following the introduction, the text is divided into what the authors argue are four trajectories shaping contemporary explorations of masculinity, titled “Historizing Masculinities,” “Multiplying Masculinities,” “Navigating Masculinities,” and “Dislocating Masculinities.” Each portion begins with an introduction written by Pascoe and Bridges and is followed by a series of carefully chosen essays by a variety of scholars both within and beyond the field or masculinities studies. The unique structure is a strength of the book, for it allows considerable flexibility in how the text is taught and assigned. Faculty can progress through the book chronologically and/or in its entirety but could also just as easily assign particular chapters that best fit the course's focus. Pascoe and Bridge's choice to collaborate with scholars whose work may fall outside the boundaries of traditional sociology—in fields such as cultural studies, philosophy, or American studies—is another undeniable asset to students, who will be acquainted with a broad sample of influential interdisciplinary gender scholarship without having to invest in numerous textbooks.

The first part, “Historizing Masculinities,” addresses masculinity's role in history, drawing attention to how its definitions have evolved over time. For Pascoe and Bridges, the diversity and instability of masculinity functions as a strong rebuttal for contemporary discourse surrounding its supposed “crisis.” From Gail Lederman's (1995) look at masculinity at the turn of the twentieth century, to George Mosse's (2000) examination of traumatized men during World War I, all the way to Michael Kimmel's (2008) analysis of the contemporary frat culture he coins “Guyland,” this first part well solidifies that masculinity has, historically, been anything but static.

Collectively, the essays aim to strip masculinity of its universal definitions and reframe it as a series of roles, behaviors, meanings, objects, and actions that are always subject to change.

The second part, “Multiplying Masculinities,” continues on this trajectory, introducing us to the “multiple-masculinities” approach. Again, this section is significantly grounded in the work of Raewyn Connell (1995), who was one of the first to speak of masculinity as a series of “practices” that are connected to, but not contingent on, the body performing them. What makes these practices all the more complex is their root in social structures; that is, the practices are not ever entirely the individual’s but, rather, are configured by a series of larger systems and social relations. She argues that gender practice is primarily organized by four separate structures: power relations, production relations, emotional relations, and symbolic relations. Pascoe and Bridges explain that this new theoretical model, along with Connell’s four configurations of masculinity detailed in the beginning introduction, all gave birth to a dynamic body of scholarship for decades to come. They spend almost an entire page acquainting students with the immense diversity of the field, briefly outlining projects that examine men in a variety of diverse contexts. Some of these are included in the anthology, such as Melanie Heath’s (2015) critique of evangelical Christianity’s conception of ideal manhood and Anahita and Mix’s (2006) discussion of “frontier masculinity.” The section closes with three essays that critique the multiple-masculinities approach and envision new ways to revise and expand the field.

The third part, “Navigating Masculinities,” consciously looks at a more expansive version of masculinity, taking into account a variety of other identity markers, such as race, sex, gender, religion, class, and ethnicity. While Pascoe and Bridges admit that it would be difficult to pinpoint a single theory governing the texts in this portion, they suggest that all the essays rely broadly on two dominant conceptual principles: the first, an intersectional feminist approach, and the second, Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) work on intersecting inequalities. This latter concept especially seems to be at the heart of the “Navigating” section, whose essays continually stress that a complex matrix of power dynamics constitute what we know to be masculinity. The essays are as vast as they are varied, and they acknowledge the often overlooked complexity and dimension of men’s diverse lives and experiences. For instance, Mark Anthony Neale’s (2013) piece critiques popular images in hip-hop

music and their role in constructing black masculinity, Richard Mora (2012) theorizes the role of puberty in gender identification processes among Latino boys, and Matthew Desmond’s (2006) analysis attempts to make sense of the common trend of poor, urban men becoming wildland firefighters. From white Christian men to gay Mexican American men, the research in this section introduces students to an intersectional study of masculinity—one that requires the reader to “navigate” a variety of complex, interlocking identities, groups, and systems.

The fourth and final section, “Dislocating Masculinities,” is composed of essays that Pascoe and Bridges refer to as not necessarily “part of the masculinities proper” (p. 326). While masculinity scholars traditionally focus on male-bodied individuals when discussing masculinity, the authors in this section deviate from those biological categories and explore gendered beings beyond physical maleness as well as the ways gender is constituted and constructed in symbolic and discursive realms. This line of thinking requires a somewhat markedly different theoretical lens, which Pascoe and Bridges explain to us to in the section’s introduction. They walk readers through the primary tenants of queer theory and poststructuralism, including but not limited to Judith Butler’s work on performativity, Eve Sedgwick’s notion of binary oppositions, and Michael Foucault’s idea of identity as disciplinary. In the true spirit of queer theory, this section exceeds all kinds of boundaries—biological but also disciplinary ones as well, drawing on scholars whose work can significantly inform the social sciences, even if it were not initially intended for it. This results in a worthwhile contribution to the field and sometimes also a warranted critique. For instance, Jack Halberstane’s (1998) analysis of “masculinity without men” reveals the way the social sciences have too often conceptualized masculinity as that which is solely connected to the biologically male body, while Emily Kayak (2015) examines both male *and* female masculinity, gesturing toward the commonly unacknowledged reality that women, too, can “do” masculinity. The “Dislocating” section is a dynamic body of literature that forces students and scholars to challenge categories, deconstruct binaries, think beyond the field, and theorize masculinity in a markedly different manner.

*Exploring Masculinities* closes with a story some of us might recall: college football star Michael Sam received mass critique and ridicule when he kissed his male partner on national television. Pascoe and Bridges analyze this event through each of their four modes of exploration—historizing, multiplying, navigating, and dislocating—in order to reveal how the different theoretical

frameworks they set forth might inform and complicate our understandings of masculinity. While short, the chapter is arguably one of the best; it is compelling, concise, and relevant, and undoubtedly illustrates the rich potential of the research. It seems fitting that Pascoe and Bridge's closing head is "Looking Forward," for that is certainly what *Exploring Masculinities* does. Overall, the book is a vital contribution to gender scholarship as it opens up many new and different ways of thinking and talking about masculinity, while still leaving much left to be explored.

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Brittany C. Slatton and Kamesha Spates, eds.  
*Hyper Sexual, Hyper Masculine? Gender, Race and Sexuality in the Identities of Contemporary Black Men.*  
 Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014. 200 pp. \$149.95.  
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*Hyper Sexual, Hyper Masculine? Gender, Race and Sexuality in the Identities of Contemporary Black Men* (hereafter abbreviated *Hyper Sexual, Hyper Masculine?*) is a compilation of autoethnographic, ethnographic, and other mostly qualitative research studies intended to demonstrate that powerful stereotypes about black masculinity have not only affected the identities and actions of black men (and the attitudes and actions of other toward black men) but also masked the diversity of black men's lived experiences. Slatton and Spates feel that this work addresses a significant gap in the literature on the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality by giving serious voice to the experiences of black men. They explicitly take an intersectionality approach, identifying that the interplay of social class, age, gender, and sexuality are consequential not only across racial groups but within them as well.

The book is organized into four parts. Part 1 contains three chapters that are united by a common theme of examining challenges and constraints to identity formation in black men in terms of masculinity and sexuality. In the first chapter, Earl Wright shares his personal narrative of how his childhood internalization of stereotypes concerning black heterosexuality were challenged when he met gay black men in graduate school who became his friends and mentors. While his story recounts how

he overcame his personal homophobia through these experiences, he also discusses the challenges related to being a heterosexual ally. Then Candy Ratliff provides an insightful analysis of how tensions in the identities of black men in contemporary North American society can be linked to socialization processes that began in the unique historical context of North American slavery. Brittany Slatton concludes this part of the book with a chapter outlining her arguments about how macro-, meso-, and microlevel factors are intertwined in creating ideologies and stereotypes that affect racial understandings by both whites and blacks that black men are hypermasculine, hypersexual, hypercriminal, and violent. She points out that these normative expectations about black men affect not only the difficulty black men have in establishing healthy identities but also the (over)reactions of whites toward blacks. She supports her arguments with the Trayvon Martin/George Zimmerman case and statistics that show that black men are disproportionately the targets of surveillance by law enforcement agencies and members of prison populations.

The second part of the book presents two chapters that emphasize how social class and sexuality affect black identity and experience. This section begins with Krystal Beamon's ethnographic study of how lower-class black males are affected by ideological messages from family, community, and the media that suggest their social mobility can be achieved through careers as professional athletes—an aspiration that is rarely achieved. Then Le'Brian Patrick uses content from an anthology of narratives of gay men, and reflections on his own experiences, to argue that normative understandings of gay black men as "reckless, diseased and destructive" leave them feeling isolated and disconnected from both the black community and the gay community.

In the third part of the book, two authors use their personal experiences to shed light on the construction of black masculinity. R. L'Hereaux Lewis-McCoy reflects on the notion of his black male privilege. Although the notion of black male privilege may at first seem like an oxymoron, he concludes that black men do have privilege because of the intersection of gender, class, and gender oppression. He points out instances where black male privilege can perpetuate patriarchy and misogyny. However, he also suggests that a critical examination of the issue of black male privilege could create allies against gender discrimination and lead to the creation of healthier black men, women, and children. In the next chapter, Catherine E. Harnois recounts how the incredulous reactions she