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Original Citation

Hearn, Jeff (2012) A multi-faceted power analysis of men's violence to known women: from hegemonic masculinity to the hegemony of men. *Sociological Review*, 60 (4). pp. 589-610. ISSN 0038-0261

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A multi-faceted power analysis of men's violence to known women:

From hegemonic masculinity to the hegemony of men

Jeff Hearn

Abstract

This article presents a multi-faceted power analysis of men's violence to known women, by way of assessing two main perspectives on research in men and masculinities: first, that founded on *hegemonic masculinity*, and, second, that based on *the hegemony of men*. Each perspective is interrogated in terms of understandings of men's violence to known women. These approaches are articulated in relation to empirical research, and conceptual and theoretical analysis. Thus this article addresses to what extent hegemonic masculinity and the hegemony of men, respectively, are useful concepts for explaining and engaging with men's violence to known women? The article concludes with discussion of more general implications of this analysis.

Introduction

What is the relationship between recent theorizing on men and masculinities and the problem of men's violence to known women? In this article I assess two approaches in critical studies on men and masculinities, that may be characterized as, first, hegemonic masculinity, and, second, the hegemony of men – in terms of men's violence to known women. This focus arises from reflecting on two puzzles: the relative lack of take-up of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in research on men's violence to known women,¹ despite its wide application more generally; and the relative inapplicability of the concept from my own and others' experience in conducting research on this problem area.

These mismatches are perhaps surprising bearing in mind the major growth of

critical scholarship on men and masculinities that has used the concept of hegemonic masculinity in recent years. On the other hand, a wide variety of texts have specified problems with the concepts of masculinity, masculinities and hegemonic masculinity (McMahon 1993; Jefferson, 1994, 2002, 2005; Donaldson 1993; Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994; Hearn, 1996, 2004; Clatterbaugh, 1998; Collier, 1998; MacInnes, 1998; Petersen, 1998, 2003; Wetherell and Edley, 1999; Demetriou, 2001; S. Whitehead 2002; Robinson, 2003; Howson, 2005; McCarry, 2007; Moller, 2007; Beasley, 2008; Aboim, 2010, Messerschmidt, 2010). The concept of 'masculinity/masculinities' has been critiqued for historical specificity, ethnocentrism, false causality, psychologism, tendency towards philosophical idealism, reproduction of heterosexual dichotomies, and conceptual vagueness. The concept of hegemonic masculinity brings further complications, including: does it refer to cultural aspirations, representations, everyday practices, or institutional structures? How do various dominant ways of men – respectable/corporate; tough/aggressive/violent; controlling resources – interconnect with each other? Overall, the hegemonic masculinity frame has been critiqued from two main directions: macro, historical, and *materialist* approaches (McMahon, 1993; MacInnes, 1998; Howson, 2005); and poststructuralist, *discursive* (Wetherell and Edley, 1999; Jefferson, 1994, 2005; Collier, 1998; S. Whitehead, 2002). This article draws on both these critiques to develop multi-faceted *materialist-discursive* theorizing on men and masculinities, via analysis of men's violence to known women.

In most societies men enact most 'domestic' and 'intimate partner violence', especially planned, repeated, heavy, physically damaging, non-defensive, premeditated, non-retaliatory and sexual forms of violence, along with most economic, collective, institutional, organized and military violence, which are

themselves often interpersonal, sometimes ‘domestic’ (WHO, 2002; Müller and Schröttle, 2004; Walby and Allen, 2004). While such violence may not be part of many men’s routine behaviour, men’s complicity is widespread (Pease, 2008). This is important as men’s violence to women is often *not* a priority focus in much of even ‘critical’ research on men and masculinities (McCarry, 2007). In view of the extent and urgency of the problem of men’s violence to women, one vital way of evaluating theories and studies on men and masculinities is in terms of how such violence is addressed (Hearn, 1998b): how such violence is theorized can also be a test of the validity of theories. Having said that, ‘violence’ is not a fixed set of behaviours; rather the very construction of violence is related to historical intersections of gender power, social divisions, ideology, and indeed hegemony.²

The notion of hegemony has become a key, if varied, reference in theorizing men and masculinities.³ The most influential use has been in ‘hegemonic masculinity’. The notion of hegemony addresses the relations of societal power, ideology and the domination of ‘commonsense’,⁴ the taken-for-granted, what appears ‘natural’ or ‘normal’. It highlights domination with degrees of consent, even if contingent and backed by force. Ironically, hegemony speaks more to complicity (cf. complicit masculinity) within the ‘fundamental outlook of society’ (Bocock, 1986) than brutal enforcement, as instanced in men’s violence to women. Hegemony and the hegemonic are fundamentally political-economic-cultural in addressing processes of construction of commonsense realities. In the Gramscian tradition hegemony may be seen as performative, combining ideology and materiality, a form of ‘non-structuralist historicism’ (Gill, 2008: 17), not simply matters of performance; it takes the cultural seriously as more than ‘merely cultural’ (Butler, 1997; Butler et al., 2000).

Violence, especially state violence as an ultimate near monopoly of coercion and force, operates in relation to consent and occupies a complex, contradictory place within a Gramscian view of hegemony, overriding interpersonal violence, and recasting the very notion of power (Gramsci, 1971: 175-85). At times, economy and coercion are seen as most powerful in the last resort; at others, the ‘dialectical unity of the moments of force and consent ...’ (p. 169, fn) is recognized. Interestingly, Gramsci noted with ‘the levels of force and of consent ... it often happens that the more the first ‘perspective’ is ‘immediate’ and elementary, the more the second has to be ‘distant’ (not in time, but as a dialectical relation), complex and ambitious.’ (p. 169). It is unlikely that men’s ‘domestic violence’ was foremost in mind when writing of such ‘immediacy’ of coercion. Indeed this illustrates how what counts as violence is itself related to intersections of social divisions, ideology and hegemony.

The work of Raewyn [formerly R.W. or Robert] Connell and colleagues (Connell, 1983, 1995, 2000; Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) has been an immense stimulus to critical scholarship on masculinities. Though there are various definitions of hegemonic masculinity, the most well-known is probably: ‘... the configuration of gender practice which embodies the *currently accepted answer* to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.’ (Connell, 1995: 77, my emphasis). Donaldson (1993) sees this as a culturally idealized form of masculinity, a personal and collective project that emphasizes aggression, dominance, heterosexual performance and homophobia as normal for men. Though rather stable, hegemony is subject to struggle and change, and open to internal and external distinctions and contestations (Demetriou, 2001).

Significantly, on some occasions Connell refers to hegemony, domination, subordination and marginalization as *social processes*, and on others, as ‘*configurations of gender practice*’, or even specific *kinds, forms, types* of masculinity or *sets of attributes or aspirations* thereof (see Jefferson, 2002: 70-1). Hegemony is: ... about the winning and holding of power and *the formation (and destruction) of social groups* in that process. (my emphasis) (Donaldson (1993: 645), and similarly Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985) note that the ‘... construction of hegemony is not a matter of pushing and pulling of ready-formed groupings but is partly a matter of *the formation of these groupings*.’ They continue, in rather different tone, ‘(t)o understand the *different kinds of masculinity* demands ... an examination of the practices in which hegemony is constituted and contested ...’ (p. 594) (my emphases). Thus, perhaps surprisingly, ‘masculinity’ is used to exemplify ‘social groupings’: a significant point I return to later.

In recent progressivist studies on men and masculinities the hegemonic masculinity frame has itself become almost hegemonic. One reason for this may be the presence of many influences on and possible interpretations of hegemonic masculinity. This speaks to the insight of its instigators and its conceptual flexibility. Yet heuristic and pedagogical strength may bring weaknesses that may partly explain why the concept has been much less used to address men’s violence to women (McCarry, 2007).

Hegemonic masculinity, violence and men’s violence to known women

Variable uses of hegemonic masculinity in relation to violence

While the hegemonic masculinity model has generally had powerful impacts on studies on men and masculinities, its application to and impact on the problem of

men's violence to known women has been subdued. One reason may be that violence is generally portrayed in the hegemonic masculinity scheme as a means, albeit *strategic*, to pre-existing 'ends', rather than *constitutive* of gender relations. Men's violence is seen as a strategic means of 'drawing boundaries and making exclusions' and a symbol of the injustice of the gender order: a 'thoroughly legitimate hierarchy would have less need to intimidate' (Connell, 2005: 83, 84; see Gadd, 2003: 334).

Edwards (2006: 57-8) has specified three aspects of violence dealt with in Connell's work: men's violence in male domination, primarily as a social, historical structural phenomenon related to wider patterns of inequality; the role of the state in perpetuating men's violence, for example, in wars; and men's violence *to other men* in relation to hegemony, specifically the (re)production of hegemonic masculinity. While all these are relevant to men's violence to known women, this violence is not foregrounded. Edwards comments that more recently Connell's work has tended to move away from more interpersonal questions of violence against women or men towards more macro-structural concerns (p. 58). Moreover, as Murphy (2009) discusses, some parts of Connell's work emphasize violence as an ideal masculine practice upheld in sport, war and brutal competition between men (Connell, 1987: 185; 1997: 8; 2005: 37), while other parts stress hegemony in institutional practices, family values, corporate profit, individual freedom and international competitiveness (Connell, 1995: 212-3). These two emphases suggest different, even contradictory, messages within the hegemonic masculinity frame: one more direct, more interpersonal, the more indirect, more institutional. What these messages, and their relations and contradictions, mean for men's violence to known women is unclear.

Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) re-evaluation of the concept of hegemonic masculinity suggested more attention to holistic understanding of gender hierarchy,

geographies of masculinities, and social embodiment. However, epistemological critiques from poststructuralism, postcolonialism and queer theory that suggest that the concept of masculinity is flawed (Petersen, 1995, 2003) in essentializing men or imposing false unity on fluid, contradictory reality are not interrogated. Variations in definitions of ‘masculinity’, vagueness of ‘configurations of practice’, questions around legitimacy, relations between one hegemonic masculinity and many possible hegemonic masculinities (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994; Jefferson, 2002; Beasley, 2008), and relations of ‘hegemony’ and ‘the hegemonic’, are not discussed.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) confirm that ‘(h)egemony did not mean violence although it could be supported by force’ (p. 832) – and perhaps that explains the ambiguity, even the lacuna, in this respect. They report that hegemonic masculinity has been used to elucidate various forms of men’s violence, such as homophobic violence, murder, sexual assault, football hooliganism, violence in sport. They also note some usage in violence prevention intervention (Denborough, 1996), but there is relatively little attention to men’s violence to known women.

An early example of framing violence to women through masculinities theory was Messerschmidt’s (1993) study of criminal behaviours as structured action and differential resources for ‘doing gender’ (West and Zimmerman, 1987), when ‘masculine-validating resources’ such as marriage, breadwinning employment, or educational success are unavailable. Subsequent, mainly qualitative, studies have explored such ‘compensatory’ dynamics, amongst, for example, marginalized or young men. One of few quantitative studies is Krienert’s (2003) of 704 newly incarcerated prison inmates. Operationalizing Messerschmidt’s relational logic on masculinity and violence, he found that ‘traditional masculinity and acceptable outlets [of masculinity] alone are not significant indicators of a violent event.’ (p. 18).

Rather, effects of masculinity on violence depended to some extent on ‘appropriate outlets’: less outlets meaning greater escalation of violence.⁵ In contrast, Schrock and Padavic (2007) analysed ‘local construction of hegemonic masculinity’ in group interactions in batterer intervention programmes, as ‘the most honoured way of being a man’ (p. 629), with ‘emotional invulnerability as a hegemonic element of masculinity’ (p. 637). Other applications are Gadd’s (2003) psychoanalytically-informed analysis of subjectivity and violence amongst ‘ordinary men’, and Kordvani’s (2002) legal-cultural review of domination and violence against women.

Problems with hegemonic masculinity in relation to violence

Despite these examples, overall, hegemonic masculinity has *not* become a key conceptual element in most feminist/profeminist theoretical and practical work on men’s violence against women. There are several possible reasons for this uneven impact of the concept of hegemonic masculinity on studies of men’s violence to women. First, the concept’s heuristic and pedagogical strength can mean that it can be used with quite different meanings, within different political, disciplinary and epistemological traditions. These range from Gramscian Marxism and critique of categoricism to pluralism, intersectionality, practice theory, structuration theory, psychodynamics, even discourse theory and poststructuralism. Hegemonic masculinity, as a concept, can provide a space, an ‘empty signifier’ (Howson, 2009) or even ‘fetish’ (Forsberg, 2010). Conceptual slipperiness in the concept can be a weakness in addressing the urgent problem of men’s violence to women. Additionally, the strength of other traditions, feminist and non-feminist, in studies and politics of violence against women may explain its less than enthusiastic take-up.

There may also be more fundamental reasons for its relative lack of

application to the problem of men's violence to known women. Let us return to the definition of hegemonic masculinity as '... the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.' The definition has two parts. First, hegemonic masculinity is a version of masculinity, represented or understood as a 'configuration of gender practice'. Second, it embodies a 'currently accepted answer' to a problem of legitimacy, and as such supports or assists legitimacy of patriarchy (with 'the dominant position of men and the subordination of women'). Both elements raise questions in relation to men's violence to women.

While hegemonic masculinity is often seen as a 'configuration of gender practice', it is sometimes presented as a *cultural ideal* or an *aspiration* that only limited numbers of men can practice (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 849) or even can never be fulfilled. Hegemonic masculinity is seen as not existing in any pure form to be found empirically here and now: thus it is a concept based in hypothetical theorizing. The hegemonic is distinct from domination delivered directly and materially. Indeed, recently, both Aboim (2010) and Messerschmidt (2010) argue for distinguishing dominant masculinity/ies and hegemonic masculinity/ies. An aspired configuration of practice or a configuration combining actual and aspired practices may be closer to what is intended. Moreover, *configurations of practice*, *aspirations* and *cultural ideals* are all different again from masculinity as *ways*, *styles*, *of being a man*, or *types of men*. In each case a key question is: how does men's violence to known women figure? Each possibility has different implications for enactment and acceptance of the legitimacy of patriarchy. Crucially, while hegemonic masculinity is elusive; men's violence against women is *absolutely achievable*.

Violence and the 'legitimacy' of patriarchy

According to the definition cited, legitimacy is at the centre of the issue in hand. This suggests the need to ask: for and from whom is legitimation obtained, and how is this achieved and maintained? Legitimacy can be from various vantage points: of more or less powerful men or women, and so on. Yet oddly, analysis of legitimacy and the mechanisms involved are virtually absent from these debates. Legitimacy can be through formal law, established 'custom' or through opinion-formation, media, ideology, social influence. This problematic is easily translated to one of social psychological acceptance, more or less, of legitimacy. One might argue that in such argumentation patriarchy and its reproduction are reduced to highlighting of configurations of practice, aspirations of the dominant group or social psychological processes of legitimation to explain structural social formations.

Proposing hegemonic masculinity as the enactment of legitimacy of patriarchy is similar to saying capitalists' hegemonic 'classility' (cf. masculinity) is the answer to the problem of legitimacy of capitalism. Hegemony is reduced to the configuration of practice of one set of actors in the social system, rather than being a characteristic of a complex combination of social, political, economic, cultural configurations, such as patriarchal social relations.⁶

It could be argued there are ways of linking hegemonic masculinity, legitimacy, and men's violence against women. One possibility is that hegemonic masculinity is that idealization or configuration of practice (of what it is to be a man) that involves the making of the body such that men's violence against women is available or in readiness to maintain and legitimate patriarchy (see Ray, 2011: 88). In this case, through the lesser or even non-use of violence masculinity is constructed so

as to make violence *available* to legitimate patriarchy. An alternative possibility is that hegemonic masculinity can be seen as the effect of mechanisms, *other than violence*, that legitimate patriarchy, such as mechanisms of persuasion and consent. In this interpretation, violence is that which is not used to legitimate patriarchy, so that means other than violence are used to construct masculinity to legitimate patriarchy. However, either way, men's violence against women does not easily legitimate patriarchy. Perhaps it is the mixing of 'the hegemonic' and 'masculinity' that is a problem, even without introducing violence. What exactly is meant in the use of the term 'hegemonic' *adjectivally* is less than clear in terms of its relation to hegemony of the social-cultural formation(s). In this argumentation a masculinity would seem be that which 'embodies the currently accepted answer' to legitimacy; it is not hegemony, a hegemon or hegemonic itself.

Hegemony has stopped being a configuration or social formation of political-cultural-economic social forces and ideological power, albeit contingent and contested, but is now something to be intuited hypothetically and described adjectivally (yet exactly how is unclear) in relation to masculinity, as configuration of practice, aspiration or cultural ideal, that legitimates gender domination. This shifts the focus of patriarchy from men to masculinity/ies, and to the primacy of the idea(s), has had lasting, partly negative effects. Though this is not intended, this prioritization of 'masculinity' may be used as part of and incorporated into a reformist agenda to let men, and indeed other 'non-hegemonic' masculinities, 'off the hook' (of the complex issue of responsibility). It may diffuse critique of men, generically and specifically.⁷

The hegemony of men

Several issues around violence continue to be difficult to resolve or make advances on

within the hegemonic masculinity frame. So what is the relation of violence, in this context men's violence to women, and hegemony (or 'the hegemonic')? What is the relation of legitimacy, violence and hegemony/the hegemonic? What are the practical and policy implications of hegemonic masculinity theory in relation to men's violence? Or is it complicit masculinity that is a greater problem? Does employing the concept of hegemonic masculinity assist analysis and stopping of men's violence to known women? Does the configuration of practice called hegemonic masculinity include promotion and enactment of men's violence against women or not? Is hegemonic masculinity most relevant or resonant for men at the top of societal gender hierarchy, those using violence against known women, or both?

In most analyses of men and masculinities the concept of hegemony has been employed in too restricted a way. As noted earlier, '(t)he construction of hegemony is not a matter of pushing and pulling of ready-formed groupings but is partly a matter of *the formation of these groupings*.' (my emphasis) (Carrigan et al., 1985: 594), but this has been translated to mean formation of 'masculinities' rather than of gender 'groupings' themselves, including the social category of 'men'. The category of 'men' is far more hegemonic than a particular masculinity, hegemonic or otherwise.

Man/men is a social category, just as is woman/women. Instead, a focus of hegemony can move analysis back from *masculinity* to (the social category of) *men*, that is, the hegemony of men. This involves addressing the double complexity that men are both a social category formed by the gender system, and dominant collective and individual agents of social practices (Hearn, 2004; Aboim, 2010; Lykke, 2010a).

While 'men' is a social category, and, like 'women', always open to interpretation, contestation and debate (Butler, 1994), it is a strongly established and powerful (in both senses) abstraction that effects social distributions and arrangements, including

violent ones (Gunnarsson, 2011).⁸ This is closer to the Gramscian notion of hegemony (Howson, 2005) and the historical constructions of social categories, engagement with which is oddly absent from most applications of hegemonic masculinity.

Thus I now turn to a different frame on hegemony and violence, reaching beyond hegemonic masculinity, emphasizing ‘men’ rather than ‘masculinity’: how the social category of ‘men’ is created and recreated in concrete everyday life and institutional practices, and in interplay with other social categories such as class, ethnicity, sexuality (Lykke, 2010a: 64). To analyse, critique the category, ‘men’ need to be thoroughly de-naturalized and deconstructed, just as postcolonial theory deconstructs the white subject, or queer theory the sexual subject. In focusing primarily on and so de-naturalizing ‘masculinities’, ‘men’ as a social category may even be re-naturalized, in assuming that it is masculinities that vary, without attention to the given social category of men. Yet the category of men is used and operates in many ways, as individual men, groups of men, all men, the gender of men, in state, medical, religious discourse, and in discursive, rhetorical and other ploys.

Roots of theorizing on the hegemony of men

The roots of theorizing on the hegemony of men and men’s practices lie in highlighting *both more materialist and more discursive* approaches. First, materialist feminist critiques of marxian prioritization of production over societal reproduction (and destruction) (Delphy 1977; O’Brien, 1981; MacKinnon, 1982) provided the basis for analysis of men’s material relations within patriarchy (Hearn, 1983, 1987). Accordingly, men’s domination of violence can be understood as material-discursive, bodily processes, a structural aspect of gender relations and enactment. A second set

of influences come from historical scholarship: historicizing gender relations, including violence, makes for questioning the notion of masculinities, including hegemonic masculinity. Transplanting contemporary concepts in time is difficult (Mangan and Walvin, 1987; Hearn, 1992, 1994), not least in casting men's experiences in the past as masculinities. Third, following poststructuralist and postcolonialist insights, masculinity is not a mentalist identity but a material-discursive construction of and by intersectional male/masculine subjects. Fourth, influences from deconstructive feminist and queer theory problematize gender and sexual categories, including 'men' (Lorber, 1994, 2000, 2005). Overall, key theoretical influences are feminist, especially materialist analyses, along with deconstructive poststructuralism: what might be called post-poststructuralism (Hearn, 2008; also see Johnson, 1987, Hearn, 1998c) or post-constructionism (Lykke, 2010b). Emphasis is placed on materiality and bodily effects of violence, violent acts, violent words/words on violence, and materialist-discursive theorizing of gender.

There are several aspects to this agenda of the hegemony of men:

- i. the *social processes by which there is hegemonic acceptance of the category of men*. This includes taken-for-granted categorizations of people as 'men' through biological and medical examination; conduct of state and statistical classifications; religious and educational practices; and institutional ways in which people are placed within the social category of men.
- ii. the *system of distinctions and categorisations between different forms of men and men's practices* towards women, children and other men. This comes closest to current uses of 'masculinities'.
- iii. *which men and which men's practices – in the media, the state, religion, and so on - are most powerful in setting those agendas of those systems of differentiations* rather than a particular hegemonic masculinity.
- iv. identification of *the most widespread, repeated forms of men's practices*.
- v. *description and analysis of men's various and variable everyday, 'natural(ized)', 'ordinary', 'normal' and most taken-for-granted practices* to women, children and other men and their contradictory, even paradoxical, meanings – rather than the depiction of the most culturally valued ideal or most exaggerated or over-conforming forms of men's practices.
- vi. *how women may differentially support certain practices of men, and*

- subordinate other practices of men or ways of being men.
 vii. interrelations between these six elements above (Hearn, 2004: 60-1).

At this point it may be useful to summarise some of the contrasts between the hegemonic masculinity and the hegemony of men frameworks. The table below (Table 1) notes some broad emphases, rather than setting out strict binaries.

Table 1: Broad emphases in hegemonic masculinity and hegemony of men framework

| | <i>hegemonic masculinity framework</i> | <i>hegemony of men framework</i> |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>focus</i> | masculinity | men |
| <i>use of hegemony</i> | adjectival to masculinity, though hypothetical and elusive | noun applied ambiguously to category of 'men' and men's enactments |
| <i>relation to masculinity</i> | central in analysis | part of analysis |
| <i>relation to men</i> | assumed | named, problematized |
| <i>relation to women</i> | emphasized femininity | named, problematized |
| <i>gender influences</i> | socialist feminism gay studies social constructionism | materialist feminism queer studies post-constructionism |

The hegemony of men and men's violence to known women

In this section I outline a multi-faceted power analysis on the place of men's violence to known women in the context of the hegemony of men. Combining materialist and discursive perspectives, across micro and macro levels, means addressing individual and collective, including violent, men's practices, in the context of construction of men as a social category – rather than the gloss 'masculinities'.⁹ Separating masculinities, hegemonic or not, from men (McCarry, 2007) may not have too much effect on gender domination; changing men as a gender category might, pointing to possible shortcomings of (disembodied) social constructionism rather than seeing

violence through embodiment and embodied experience. Men's violence to known women concerns much more than reference back to hegemonic masculinity.

This explicit focus on men engages with ways in which men, masculinities and violences interrelate, for men in general, particular groups of men, and individual men. Some such work focusing on men's use of violence to known women builds on traditions of feminist research and activism highlighting women's experiences (Stanko, 1994; Hanmer and Itzin, 2000; Skinner et al., 2005). Prevalence of men's violence against women is related to the ideological and institutional strength of unequal structural intersectional gender arrangements (Tifft, 1993; Lundgren et al., 2001; Walby and Allen, 2004).¹⁰ Men's violences are also constitutive of gender relations and men, and not only instrumental or strategic in nature (Lundgren, 1995). Engagement with men's violence to known women in terms of the hegemony of men is now discussed in relation to both empirical studies and theoretical analysis.

Conducting detailed empirical research on men's violence to known women has been a major prompt to questioning the concept of hegemonic masculinity. In researching men who were or had been violent to known women, along with extensive research contacts and subsequent policy development with police, social workers, lawyers and other professionals (Hearn, 1998c), it was unclear whether such violence was part of the configuration of practice called hegemonic masculinity (legitimizing patriarchy), and whether such violence reinforced or undermined such 'hegemony', not least in disrupting the commonsense and taken-for-granted, for example, in the men's experience of shame. In this research a crucial question has been the relations of men's talk (in the present, and about violence) and men's (past) actions/violences/body – highlighting the importance of the material-discursive in analysing and opposing violence. What indeed could be more material, more

embodied, and more discursive, than violence? My own research on violence has brought a practical and theoretical understanding of some of the limitations of the concepts of hegemonic, subordinated and other masculinities. Thus, I have since preferred to focus on the critique of men and *men's individual and collective material discursive practices* rather than critique of masculinities, a less than clear gloss which can change, come and go with less fundamental change in gender and gender relations.

Detailed empirical work points to the wide *variations in violence*, pluralized as violences, from relatively rare forms of violence, such as murder and torture, to more common forms, such as less damaging physical violence and threats thereof following divorce or separation. The latter may be commonplace, as seen, for example, in the Finnish national survey of violence against women that found that 'violence or threats [of violence] by their ex-partner had been experienced by 50 % of all women who had lived in a relationship which had already terminated.' (Heiskanen and Piispa, 1998: 3).

Another issue faced in empirical research and the difficulties of applying hegemonic masculinity is the contrast between *plural ways of being men* that perpetuate violence. Let us consider a man who said firmly at the start of the interview in a research project I directed that he was 'not a violent man', and then proceeded to describe at least 30 occasions when he had been violent, often using major physical violence, along with severe verbal and emotional violence. Then contrast him with those judges, often very respectable, who have dismissed or downplayed the impact of physical and sexual assaults. Are these both examples of the play of hegemonic masculinity? To address this requires a multi-faceted analysis of the relations of men, power and violences.

Another complication is the presence of *multiple, and sometimes contradictory, rationales* within men's accounts. An example of this is from recent research by Hamilah DeShong (2010) on men in the Caribbean who have used violence against women. One of her interviewees said:

I said 'who you really talking to'. 'Nobody'. 'What do you mean nobody? How could you be on the phone for so long talking to no fucking one? I said to her 'come off the damn phone. The person called back. I said 'what the fuck'? I took the phone and smashed it on the ground. I destroyed her phone, you know. Then she had the nerve to pick up her hand and hit me. That was her mistake. Man I gave her two hard lashes, dread [*He uses 'dread' here in much the same way one might use the phrase 'of course'*]. I told her to cool out [*'cool out' is a colloquial expression which means behave or 'chill out.'*]. Man, I took the broom stick and just gave her a hard lash and I broke it on her, because as God [*In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 'as God' is a shortened version of 'as God is my witness.'*], I didn't really want to hit her. I gave her a hard slap in her face man, you know. Afterwards, I told her that I was sorry too because it hurt me too because I know that I have my mother and my sister too and I have my daughter too and I don't really want to hit her . . . I think she got a mark on her face because she felt the slap. (DeShong, 2010, translations from vernacular and annotations by DeShong)

This quotation shows some of the multi-faceted character of violence and talk about violence, ranging from strict enforcement to the reparative assertion of family values, and even possible shame. This also illustrates the need for materialist-discursive analyses of violence, the interweaving of material and discursive elements.

Interestingly, three of the most referred to, yet presumably contrasting, masculinities might be seen as, in different ways, conducive to men's violence: the hegemonic as legitimating patriarchy; the complicit as condoning; and subordinated as compensating for relative lack of power. This might suggest the hegemonic masculinity framework is more suited to analysing relations, including violence, between men, rather than from men to women. In contrast, the hegemony of men addresses more directly men's violence to women. A promising strand of both analysis and policy development is to see men's violence to women, counter-intuitively, in part through relations *between men* (Hearn, 1998a, DeKeseredy, 2001;

A. Whitehead, 2005; Sanday, 2007). Violence can be a currency in and through which men are often defined, constituted, and women can be the object or means of that currency. Men may 'meet' each other through similarity regarding relations to violence to women.¹¹ Men's violence to women can thus be facilitated by the hegemony of men and men's homosociality, rather than a specific configuration of masculinity, hegemonic or otherwise. Such violence may seem paradoxical, since it is inconsistent with being the provider for and protector of women; yet this is only so if masculinity is understood in terms of personal identity (Hanmer, 1990: 34). In seeing men in terms of both plurality and what is in common across social divisions, men's violence to known women may assist maintenance of masculine identity, while seeming on the surface to undermine it.¹²

Detailed empirical researches, and indeed policy interventions, on violence also link directly to theoretical analysis of men. The linkages of the post-construction of men and men's violence to women are multiple; to understand such violence means understanding the 'post-construction' of both men and violence. When considering the translation of the seven aspects of an agenda based in the hegemony of men noted earlier to the analysis of men's violence to women, a more complex multi-faceted picture is suggested than follows from a focus on hegemonic masculinity:

i. the *social processes by which there is a hegemonic acceptance of the category of men*. Men are members of a social category invested with power, including violence and violence to women, if only by association, potential or related. Men are in a specific structural gender relation to women (Gunnarsson, 2011).

ii. the *system of distinctions and categorizations between different forms of men and men's practices* to women, children and other men. This suggests more attention to the social construction of *systems* of differentiations of and between men and men's

practices rather than the social construction of particular ‘forms’ of men, including men using violence, as ‘violent masculinities’.

iii. *which men and which men’s practices – in the state, religion, media, and so on - are most powerful in setting those agendas of those systems of differentiations.* Violence may be crucial here, even with control of consent in hegemony, often without coercion. Men are specialists, experts in violence, the main *doers* of violence to women, children, each other, animals, selves; these violences reinforce each other. Men’s domination persists in violent institutions and state control of violence, and indeed also in the construction, identification, naming and defining of violence, themselves often framed within institutions dominated by men.

iv. identification of *the most widespread, repeated forms of men’s practices.* In this identification those called ‘complicit’ are likely to take a more central place in the construction of men and the various ways of being men in relation to women, children and other men. Violence can be an accepted, if not always acceptable, indeed complicit, way of being a man; violence may act as a reference point for boys, men, being a man. Perhaps, it is the complicit that is hegemonic, including, for example, some kinds of everyday widespread violence, violence in sport, violence amongst boys, men’s violence to women around separation. Moreover, many men condemn violence against women and children, yet this does not necessarily, even probably, imply egalitarian gender relations. Rather this may involve views such as that a man who uses violence against his wife is not in command. Condemnation of violence might sometimes be ways to revalorize other or dominant forms of men/masculinity, such as the ‘superiority’ of non-violent or less obviously violent men/masculinity (Hearn et al., 2006: 33-4).

v. *description and analysis of men's various and variable everyday, 'natural(ized)', 'ordinary', 'normal' and most taken-for-granted practices to women, children and other men. Men's violences can be sources of pride, be shameful, be routine in reaffirming power, or they can be backlash reactions to loss of or perceived threat to power. Constructions of men and masculinity may be quite contradictory, with complex connections between 'responsibility' and 'violence', 'honour' and 'violence', 'respect' and violence'. In each case, both elements might contradict each other or go together (violence in the name of responsibility, honour, even respect). Violence can be enacted for what seems almost opposite reasons: first, the brutal showing of power, but in which case violence may no longer be necessary to enforce compliance; and, second, attempted reassertion of what is considered loss of power, in which case violence may seem as a sign of (potential) weakness. This latter form may be a cue for others in a similar position, for example, other husbands, to assign lesser power to the man who uses violence on his wife, and who thereby shows he cannot control her without violence. In this latter sense using violence may be shameful. All these combinations contribute to the construction of men.*

vi. *how women may differentially support certain practices of men, and subordinate other practices of men or ways of being men. This brings us to both the impact of violence and other dominating practices on women, and the place of women's 'consent' with the hegemony of men. A key issue here is the various ways in which men's violence affects the consciousness of women receiving that violence, for example, in sometimes 'accepting', normalizing definitions of their lives and the violence therein (Lundgren, 1995). This is a different conceptualization of women and women's relation to hegemonic masculinity from that in 'emphasized femininity' (Connell, 1987, 1995).*

vii. various interrelations between these six elements above. Perhaps of most interest is *the relationship between 'men's' formation within a hegemonic gender order, that also forms 'women', other genders and boys, and men's activity in different ways in forming and re-forming hegemonic differentiations among men*. In sum, violence can be understood as dispersed in relation to hegemony, at times part of men's complicity and compatible with complicit masculinity. Specifications are needed for different forms or aspects of violence, for example, collective violence, threats, experience of violations, and their interconnections with men's violence to women. Violence can be understood as a centre of patriarchal relations, yet, importantly, men and violence not equivalents: men are not to be seen as deterministically violent.

Concluding remarks

In this article a *multi-faceted* power analysis of men's violence to known women is presented, by way of assessing two main perspectives on men and masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity is relevant to analysis of men's violence to known women. However, to reduce such violence to hegemonic masculinity is unsatisfactory, not least as it is unclear if hegemonic masculinity is reinforced or subverted by men's violence to known women. To use the hegemonic masculinity frame as an explanation is at best partial or ambiguous, at worst misleading.

A more comprehensive understanding of men's violence to known women is to be gained in terms of the many different aspects of the hegemony of men, including complicit masculinity and the very constitution of men/humans/people 'as men' (cf. Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994: 14). This is partly because men's violence to known women varies: from physical to non-physical violence and abuse, from one-off to

lifelong violences, from planned to spontaneous, from enforcing of power to restorative of power, from reinforcing or subverting hegemonic masculinity or hegemony more generally; from society to society. Empirical, policy and theoretical applications are all reinforced by comparative and transnational work on different constructions of 'men'. 'Men (and masculinities)' are formed historically, societally, transsocietally. It is difficult to argue that men's violence to women is in a similar relation to 'hegemonic masculinity' (singular) in very different societal contexts. In some, such violence appears antagonistic to legitimacy of men's dominance; in others, the opposite may prevail. In some countries with higher levels of interpersonal violence, such as South Africa, it has been argued that men's violence to women is compatible with, a product of and even a feature of hegemonic masculinity (Morrell et al., 2012); in other countries with lower levels of violence and a more embedded gender equality ideology, the inappropriateness of this link has been argued (Hearn et al., 2012). Moreover, increasingly violence also needs to be understood transnationally, with movement away from the viability of the 'fundamental outlook of society' (singular) in constructions of hegemony (cf. Bocoock, 1986) to an understanding of multiple forms of (men's) transnational violence to women within transpatriarchies (Hearn, , 2009, 2010).

Thus a multi-faceted analysis is necessary, albeit within broader analysis of the category of men, that recognizes unities and differences amongst men, and their interrelations (Hearn and Collinson, 1994). The hegemony of men concerns both hegemony promoted by men and men's practices, and hegemony that forms 'men' as a social category of gender power. This agenda can be distinguished from that in hegemonic masculinity on several counts, raising some general analytical issues.

First, the *social category of men is problematized*. In masculinities theory the

concept of hegemonic masculinity is fundamental and social, while that of men, within patriarchy, seems more fixed, reproducing culture/nature binary. With the hegemony of men, men are social and contingent. The starting point for critique remains men rather than masculinity/ies. Men, like women, are socio-cultural political-economic embodied (re)productions, not only bearers of hegemonic and other masculinities, however contested. In contrast to some contemporary theorizing, dismissal of categoricism may be too eager, somewhat methodologically idealist, and contrary to some more structuralist analyses. This is certainly not to propose any biological essentialism, but what might be called 'social categoricism', a form of 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak, 1988) to employ against dominance, highlighting societal and provisional constructions of power-laden superordinate categories within embedded material-discursive politics and analysis of violence (see fn. 8).

Second, social relations are seen as *material-discursive*, both more material and more discursive. The *effects of violence on women* are conceived materially, discursively, experientially, in keeping with Gramsci's attempts to transcend ideology and material hegemony, coercion and consent. This contrasts with conceptualizing effects of violence in terms of 'emphasized femininity', as a complement to hegemonic masculinity.

Third, men's violence can work as a test, *a means of critical evaluation*, in theory development. The focus on the hegemony of men has developed in close engagement with questions of violence to women, not least as this is a major way in which gender hegemony of gender difference is maintained. Such coercion and force, with or without consent, can become taken-for-granted and partly constitutive of the taken-for-granted social category of men. It is often unclear how the framework of hegemonic masculinity deals with men's violence to known women – does it

reinforce or undermine hegemony? Do different kinds of men's violence to women operate very differently in relation to hegemony or the hegemonic, whether regarding masculinity or men? The hegemony of men highlights both the ambiguous place of violence in maintaining hegemony, and contributes to more complex analyses of violences. As Jefferson (2002: 71) points out, batterers rarely boast of their violence; they are not usually cultural heroes. In many contexts violence against women is far from 'the most honoured way of being a man'. There remains lack of clarity in the concepts of masculinity and hegemonic masculinity *qua masculinity* which means that it is difficult to contextually construe men's violence to known women, as well as whether such violence figures as a central part of hegemonic masculinity or not.

Fourth, this approach highlights the need for more work on the missing argumentation on how *legitimacy* works in patriarchy or patriarchal relations, and specifically how men's violence to known women produces (or does not produce) legitimacy, as part of hegemony.

The hegemony of men brings together modernist theories of hegemony, feminist materialist theory, poststructuralist discourse theory, and deconstructive queer theory. It involves placing the study of men more centrally within political-economic-cultural analysis, including violent political cultural economies, whilst at the same time deconstructing the category of men and those very political economies. A key challenge is to further the critique of men and men's violence to known women, with a view to stopping it, and without re-centring men.

Acknowledgements

I especially thank Sofia Aboim, Chris Beasley, Halimah DeShong, Richard Howson, Tanja Joelsson, Robert Morrell, Antony Whitehead, and anonymous journal reviewers

for comments on earlier drafts of this paper, and Kjerstin Andersson, Dag Balkmar, Lucas Gottzén, Marie Nordberg, Keith Pringle, Linn Sandberg, and participants in the Linköping and Örebro Universities Centre of Gender Excellence (GEXcel) and Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities Research Group for discussions on theorizing men and masculinities.

Notes

1. My focus here is men's violence to *known* women, i.e. women previously known to the men concerned, mostly wives, girlfriends, partners, friends, neighbours, relatives. This term is preferred to non-gendered 'domestic violence'.
2. There are intense debates among both feminists and non-feminists on definitions of violence and violation, such as female genital cutting and non-therapeutic circumcision of boys. Space prevents discussion here of the contested and changing definitions of the many forms of violence, and how they stem from gender and other social relations. In brief, with greater violation, the more violence may be normalized (see Hearn, 1992, 1998c, Hearn and Parkin, 2001; Hearn and McKie, 2010).
3. Diverse usages of hegemony include 'hegemonic heterosexual masculinity' (Frank, 1987), 'male hegemony' (Cockburn, 1991), 'the hegemonic male' (Vale De Almeida, 1996), 'hegemonic male sexuality' (Mooney-Somers, 2005).
4. Peter Thomas (2009: 16) notes, '(t)he term *senso commune* is one of the most difficult terms in Gramsci's vocabulary to translate into English.' There is not an equivalence between the Italian and English usages, partly, as Gramsci emphasised, 'those elements that are 'common', i.e. a subject's integration into an existing system of cultural reference and meaning, tending to devalorise processes of individuation and often with a negative connotation.'

5. Ray (2011: 89) connects this form of argumentation to institutional anomie theory.
6. See MacInnes (1998) for a critique of hegemonic masculinity as suggesting a focus on identity rather than social structure. Comparison may be made between patriarchal social structural relations and structures, not only practices, of the wage relation in capitalism.
7. Reformist formulations of hegemonic masculinity come close to the qualified idealism of utopian socialists, critiqued by Marx and Engels (Paden, 2002).
8. As Gunnarsson (2011: 23) puts it: 'Contrary to many contemporary feminist theorists, ... although the category 'women' does not reflect the whole reality of concrete and particular women, it nevertheless refers to something real, namely the structural position as woman.'
9. This may help to avoid 'an act of nomination' that can be performed safely 'because its taxonomic logic prevents one's own (gendered) practices of power from coming under scrutiny.' (Moller, 2007: 269).
10. This is not suggesting a crude association of lack of socio-economic class power and violence against women (Sanday, 2007). Indeed Walby (2009: 217) concludes, 'Violence is more usually from the dominant to the less powerful groups than the other way around when gender, ethnicity, and sexuality are brought into focus, challenging the assumptions of much contemporary criminology.'
11. Trading in the currency of real, implied or imagined violence may well be to the detriment of most men, and may generate a schism between a man's interests as a man and as an individual. If using violence to women is, in some societies, often not in individual men's interests, especially long term, it is hard to locate this within the configuration of practice called hegemonic masculinity. I am grateful to Antony Whitehead for clarifying this.

12. This complements Pease's (2008) advocacy of primary prevention of men's violence refocusing on system interventions, with far wider intervention directed towards non-violent men, as it is their silence which maintains men's violence.

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