(Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2010), and some of the information on Sam and Jerry in chapter 3 was previously published in James W. Messerschmidt, *Gender, Heterosexuality, and Youth Violence: The Struggle for Recognition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012). Although some of this material may therefore be familiar to previous readers of my work, the analysis is entirely new and based on an expanded and revised structured action theory.

I also wish to extend considerable appreciation to the entire staff at Rowman & Littlefield—my favorite publisher!—but especially to Sarah Stanton (senior acquisitions editor), who has graciously and wholeheartedly supported my work over the years, and to Kathryn Knigge and Karie Simpson (assistant editors), Alden Perkins (senior production editor), and Jacquan Mooney (copyeditor).

Most of all thanks to Ulla, Erik, Jan, and Mel—the most important people in my life!

HEGEMONY AND BEYOND

The academic appropriation of concepts long established as salient contributions to gender theory and research recently has come under scholarly scrutiny. For example, scholars have looked at how the historical trajectory of the concept of “doing gender” (West and Zimmerman, 1987) has been assimilated into theoretical and methodological practice (Wickes and Emmison, 2007), as well as how the concept’s implications might impact the construction of future gender research and theory (Jurik and Siemsen, 2009). Moreover, during the same period scholarly attention has focused on how the unceasing ambiguity and open-endedness of the concept of “intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1991) are the secret to its chronicled success (Davis, 2008) and on what it means to actually practice “intersectionality” as a theoretical and methodological approach to inequality (Yeon Choo and Ferree, 2010).

In this opening chapter I contribute to the scholarly dissection of crucial gender concepts by assessing the recent academic appropriation of the concept of “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell, 1987; 1995) and by determining how this appropriation engenders gendered knowledge. In what follows I first briefly revisit the concept of hegemonic masculinity as reformulated by Connell and myself (2005). Following this I address specific questions
regarding the growth of this knowledge by examining selected studies to illustrate how hegemonic masculinity has been appropriated differently and what this dissimilarity means for gendered knowledge construction. I then highlight several new directions found in selected publications that extend gendered knowledge on hegemonic masculinity. Finally, I discuss the relevance of my conclusions to the wider debates over the concept of hegemonic masculinity as well as how these conclusions relate to the chapters that follow.

HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY REFORMULATED

Raewyn Connell (1987; 1995) initially conceptualized hegemonic masculinity as the form of masculinity in a given historical and society-wide setting that structures and legitimates hierarchical gender relations between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities. The relational character was central to her argument, embodying a particular form of masculinity in hierarchical relation to a certain form of femininity and to nonhegemonic masculinities. Connell emphasized that hegemonic masculinity has no meaning outside its relationship to “emphasized femininity”—and to nonhegemonic masculinities—or to those femininities practiced in a complementary, compliant, and accommodating subordinate relationship with hegemonic masculinity. And in the legitimation of this relationship of superordination and subordination the meaning and essence of both hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity are revealed. This emphasis on hegemony in gender relations underscored the achievement of hegemonic masculinity largely through cultural ascendancy—discursive persuasion—encouraging all to consent to, coalesce around, and embody such unequal gender relations.

Notwithstanding considerable favorable reception of the concept, it nevertheless attracted such criticisms as 1) concerns over the underlying concept of masculinity itself, 2) lack of specificity about who actually represents hegemonic masculinity, 3) whether hegemonic masculinity simply reduces in practice to a reinscription of power or toxicity, and 4) the concept’s unsatisfactory theory of the masculine subject. Having successfully responded to each of these criticisms, Connell and I (2005) reformulated the concept in appropriately significant ways.

First, we discussed what must be retained from the original formulation, clearly noting that the relational idea among hegemonic masculinity, femininity, and nonhegemonic masculinities, as well as the conception that this relationship is a pattern of hegemony—not a pattern of simple domination—have withstood the test of time. Also well supported historically are the seminal ideas that hegemonic masculinity need not be the commonest and/or the most powerful pattern of masculinity in a particular setting and that any formulation of the concept as simply constituting an assemblage of “masculine” character traits should be thoroughly transcended.

Second, Connell and I nevertheless suggested that a reformulated understanding of hegemonic masculinity must incorporate a more holistic grasp of gender hierarchy that recognizes the agency of subordinated groups as much as the power of hegemonic groups and that appreciates the mutual conditioning (intersectionality) of gender with such other social dynamics as class, race, age, sexuality, and nation. Moreover, we asserted that a more sophisticated treatment of embodiment in hegemonic masculinity was necessary, as well as conceptualizations of how hegemonic masculinity may be challenged, contested, and thus changed.

Finally, Connell and I argued that instead of recognizing simply hegemonic masculinity at only the society-wide level, scholars should analyze empirically existing hegemonic masculinities at three levels: local (constructed in arenas of face-to-face interaction of families, organizations, and immediate communities), re-
gional (constructed at the society-wide level of culture or nation), and global (constructed in such transnational arenas as world politics, business, and media). Obviously, links among these levels exist: global hegemonic masculinities pressure regional and local hegemonic masculinities, and regional hegemonic masculinities provide cultural materials adopted or reworked in global arenas and utilized in local gender dynamics.

With these reformulations in mind, I want to discuss an assortment of selected studies that demonstrate how knowledge on hegemonic masculinity has been constructed differently since 2005. I focus in the next section on two sets of articles (three each) that appropriate the concept of hegemonic masculinity in two distinct and contrasting ways.

CONSTRAINING APPROPRIATIONS

The first set demonstrates how hegemonic masculinity is legitimated at the local, regional, and global levels and thus confirms the reformulated model of the concept. The second set appropriates the concept of hegemonic masculinity as exclusively constituting “masculine” character traits and consequently falls back on earlier statements of hegemonic masculinity that solely utilize trait terminology.

Legitimating Hegemonic Masculinity

Since 2005 the vast majority of research examines hegemonic masculinity specifically at the local level. An excellent example is the work of Edward Morris (2008; 2012), who studied gender difference in academic perceptions and outcomes at a predominantly white and lower-income rural high school in Kentucky. Appropriating the concept of hegemonic masculinity as a specific contextual pattern of practice that discursively legitimates the subordination of women and femininity to men and masculinity, Morris utilized a mixed methodology by observing in-school interaction, interviewing students (eight boys and seven girls), and analyzing school records and documents. Morris found that girls generally outperformed boys academically and that they had higher ambitions for post-secondary education. Morris demonstrated that in-school interaction positioned masculine qualities as superior to the inferior qualities attached to femininity as well as to certain forms of subordinate masculinity, thereby providing an in-school culturally ascendant discursive justification for unequal gendered social action. The article highlighted how in the localized, face-to-face settings of a rural Kentucky high school, gender inequality was discursively legitimated through the construction of hierarchical socially structured relations between a particular classed, raced, and sexualized hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity. Morris concluded that the boys’ academic achievement was embedded in these unequal gender relations.

Research is also examining the construction of regional hegemonic masculinities at the level of society-wide culture or nation. An excellent example is a paper by Ronald Weitzer and Charis Kubrin (2009). These authors appropriated the concept of hegemonic masculinity as the discursive subordination of women to men and used the concept to examine all the rap albums that attained platinum status (sales of at least one million copies) from 1992 to 2000. Weitzer and Kubrin chose platinum albums because their numerical success ensured analysis of a rap-music sample that reached a large segment of the U.S. population, thus justifying regional status. Their methodology involved content analysis of a random sample that consisted of 403 songs from 130 different albums. Analysis of the data identified five themes: 1) degradation of women, praise of men; 2) sexual objectification of women, sexual empowerment of men; 3) women as distrustful,
men as invulnerable: 4) normality of violence by men, normality of women as victims; and 5) women as prostitutes, men as pimps.

Weitzer and Kubrin’s study revealed how much of this rap music discursively constructed a regional form of hegemonic masculinity by depicting men and women as inherently different and unequal and by espousing a set of superior/inferior related gendered qualities for each, for their “appropriate” behavior toward each other, and for the necessity of sanctions if anyone violated the unequal gender relationship. This study demonstrated how within popular culture, through the widespread distribution of rap music, gender inequality was discursively legitimated at the regional level, thereby providing a society-wide cultural rationalization for patriarchal relations. Moreover, Weitzer and Kubrin showed how rap music initially had local roots but came to exercise a society-wide culturally ascendant regional influence on youth of all racial and ethnic groups.

An example of discussions of hegemonic masculinities constructed at the global level (in transnational arenas such as world politics, media, and business) is Elizabeth Hatfield’s (2010) important piece on the once popular U.S.-based television program Two and a Half Men. Hatfield concentrated her scrutiny on the way gender is constructed by the two main characters—Charlie and Alan—who are white, middle-class, professional brothers living together. Hatfield also examined the changing gender constructions by Alan’s son, Jake. Since its debut broadcast in 2003, the program led for many years the U.S. sitcom ratings in popularity, being the second most popular (behind Family Guy) U.S. television show for males eighteen to twenty-four, averaging approximately 15 million U.S. viewers per week, and it continues to be screened worldwide in at least twenty-four different countries (which approximately triples the number of weekly viewers). Thus, this show continues to have both extensive regional and global influence.

Hatfield employed a content analysis in reviewing 115 episodes of the show, concluding that Two and a Half Men offers a media representation of hegemonic masculinity through the gender practices of, and the relationship between, the two main characters. Appropriating hegemonic masculinity as a specific form of masculinity that subordinates both femininity and alternative masculinities, Hatfield found that Charlie constructs hegemonic masculinity and Alan femininity, and in the process Alan’s femininity consistently is subordinated to Charlie’s hegemonic masculinity.

Hatfield’s study admirably demonstrates how a particular sitcom—which has widespread transnational distribution—is an important example of the global legitimization and rationalization of gender inequality through the discursive depiction of a superior/inferior hierarchical relationship between the two main characters. A salient aspect of this sitcom then is how it primarily represents and legitimizes an unequal masculine/feminine relationship in and through two assumed male bodies.

“Masculine” Character Traits

Despite the research above, some scholars continue to exclusively equate hegemonic masculinity with certain “masculine” character traits. For example, Trevon Logan (2010) studied gay male escorts occupying the dominant position in the male prostitution industry. Logan was interested in how hegemonic masculinity might be reproduced through the practices of these gay male escorts: how these practices might be dominant in the male prostitution business because they allegedly aligned with a society-wide monolithic hegemonic masculinity that subordinated them. Logan (p. 683) appropriated the concept of hegemonic masculinity by identifying such “masculine” traits (that he claimed defined this monolithic hegemonic masculinity) as drive, ambition, self-
reliance, aggressiveness, and physical strength, as well as such bodily traits and practices specific to the hegemonically masculine “sexual arena” as physical appearance (muscularity, body size, body hair, and height) and sexual behaviors (sexual dominance, sexual aggressiveness, and penetrative sexual position).

Using a quantitative online data source that described gay male sex workers, Logan found that muscular men enjoyed a dominant position in the male prostitution market (overweight and thin men faced a penalty) that was “consistent with hegemonic masculinity” because “conformity to hegemonic masculine physical norms is well rewarded in the market” (p. 697). Because muscularity signified maleness and dominance, “the premium attached to muscularity in this market is consistent with hegemonic masculinity” (p. 694). Furthermore, according to Logan, the reward of being a “top” (sexually penetrative position) was substantial, as was the penalty for being a “bottom,” and thus this finding was “consistent with the theory of hegemonic masculinity” (p. 697). Finally, when Logan studied the interaction of these masculine traits with race, he found that black men were positioned at both extremes: they assigned the largest premiums for top behavior and the largest penalties for bottom behavior. Logan argued that the gay community valued black men who conformed to racial stereotypes of sexual behavior and penalized black men who did not. And Logan (p. 698) concluded that gay men who frequented male escorts “adopt and reiterate hegemonic masculine norms among themselves” and that this in turn was reinforced through the idealized “masculine” traits of dominant-gay-male sex escorts.

A second example of associating hegemonic masculinity with “masculine” traits is an article on aging, independence, and hegemonic masculinity. James Smith and colleagues (2007) specifically examined how men fifty-five years of age and older were encouraged by close acquaintances to seek independence as part of the successful aging process, yet simultaneously were criticized for maintaining their independence from health-service use. These authors appropriated hegemonic masculinity as “the traditional, patriarchal view of men and men’s behavior as the most influential and culturally accepted notion of ‘manliness,’” that is constituted through “masculine” traits of independence, toughness, assertiveness, emotional restrictiveness, competitiveness, hardiness, aggression, and physical competence (p. 326).

Smith and colleagues interviewed twenty-two men older than fifty-five and twelve men sixty-five or older. For the majority of these men, independence meant self-sufficiency as an indication of their masculinity and the capacity to maintain a good quality of life as they aged. These authors also found that such traits as being tough, strong, and in control were associated with independence and that not wanting to rely on others—and thus avoiding help seeking and health-service use—was a consistent theme influencing the men’s ability to enact “masculine” traits.

In addition to masculinity, the ability to function independently also was a reflection of one’s quality of life. Smith and colleagues found that maintaining daily physical and cognitive functioning was important for supporting the men’s independent state of being but also reflected the way they positioned themselves as men. These authors concluded that the concern of men fifty-five and older about independence reflected both their identity as men and their identity as older people. For these subjects, independence was a characteristic of masculine identity and a marker of successful aging, both of which were important to the assessment of how they negotiated help seeking and health-service use.

Finally, a third example is an article written by Elizabeth Gage (2008) who examined the impact that male college athletes’ participation in different sports had on their gender attitudes, hegemonic masculinity, sexual behavior, and sexual aggression. Gage (p. 1018) argued that her study offered “an opportunity to refine understanding of what it is about sports participation that leads to
hegemonic masculinity and sexual aggression.” Unfortunately, this study never formally defined hegemonic masculinity yet created the impression that the concept amounted to specific toxic character traits.

By means of a survey, Gage measured the “gender role identification,” “attitudes toward women,” “hypermasculinity,” and “sexual behavior, sexual aggression, and sexual orientation” of 148 college males, both athletes (football, tennis, and track and field) and nonathletes. Gage found that football players scored significantly higher on hypermasculinity and sexual aggression scales (toxic traits) than did the athletes in the other two sports but scored significantly lower than the same athletes on attitudes-toward-women scales (harmless traits). A similar pattern emerged when football players were compared to nonathletes, but fewer significant differences were noted between nonathletes and tennis and track and field athletes.

Despite never actually defining or measuring hegemonic masculinity, Gage (p. 1029) concluded that her research on the role that participation in sports—especially football—had on college males indicated a “more nuanced understanding of the relationship between hegemonic masculinity, attitudes toward women, and violence against women.” But the most we can reasonably deduce from this article is that for Gage, hegemonic masculinity was reduced to such toxic, hypermasculine character traits as “negative attitudes toward women,” “violence as manly,” and “calloused sex attitudes toward women” that primarily were embodied in football players.

**Summary**

No social science concept is ever fixed and no social science scholar has a monopoly on its correct use. Nevertheless, the concept of hegemonic masculinity was originally formulated to conceptualize how patriarchal relations are legitimated throughout society. The juxtaposition presented here of two contrasting appropriations of the concept demonstrates how the meaning of hegemonic masculinity has differed within recently published articles. The first three articles confirm the Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) reformulation of the concept by demonstrating that empirically existing hegemonic masculinities exist at local, regional, and global levels; that hegemonic masculinities are formed through an unequal and hierarchical relationship between masculinities and femininities (even though femininities may be constructed in and through male bodies); and that through this relationship hegemonic masculinities discursively circulate a culturally ascendant legitimating justification for gender inequality. The second three articles reveal that the meaning of the concept continues to be a troubled area in research on hegemonic masculinity. Although these latter three articles are similar in their concentration on “masculine” traits, they differ in the way they associate these traits with hegemonic masculinity: as constituting widespread character traits, as equated with the most influential manliness, and as consisting of exclusively specific toxic traits consolidated in a particular group of men (football players).

**NEW DIRECTIONS**

Recent research on hegemonic masculinity additionally takes the engendering of gendered knowledge in promising new directions. This new directions work demonstrates 1) how women contribute to the cultivation of hegemonic masculinity, 2) how hegemonic masculinity actually can be contested and thus challenged, and 3) how neoliberal globalization influences the orchestration of hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities in periphery countries. Here I focus on six articles (three sets of two) that represent these trends.
Cultivation

Research is emerging that features how the agency of women contributes to the cultivation of hegemonic masculinity. For example, Kirsten Talbot and Michael Quayle (2010) argued that the production of hegemonic masculinities requires “at least some kind of ‘buy-in’ from women” and that thus under certain circumstances and in specific situations women construct “emphasized feminities” whereby they “contribute to the perpetuation of oppressive gender relations and identities” (p. 256). Through in-depth interviews and an extensive focus group session with five heterosexual, middle-class, and university undergraduate South African women, Talbot and Quayle explored interviewee involvement in a variety of localized contexts—work, social, romantic, and family—and found that the five women uniformly grouped these four contexts into two parts: “work and social” versus “romantic and family” situations. In each part the women reported supporting specific and unique types of gender relations; that is, they identified certain inviolable masculine and feminine qualities that each considered essential to each situation.

In romantic and family situations, the women argued that men should be in control and dominant, should financially provide for family members, and should protect those in their care. In work and social settings, however, the women desired their male workmates and male friends to possess masculine characteristics centering on platonic, friendly, equal relationships. In work and social relationships with men, male passivity was valued and male agency was undesirable; in romantic and family relationships, agency was valued and passivity was undesirable. In work and social contexts, then, the women expected to be treated in an egalitarian and gender-progressive manner, they considered romantic and family masculine features as “violations,” and they valued those masculine features that “violated” hegemonic masculine qualities.

Although not a representative sample, the interviewees in this study supported and expected different types of gender relations in different local contexts. Accordingly, this study demonstrated how various forms of gender relations might be produced contextually and validated by both men and women and how women might construct differing forms of femininities—emphasized and liberated—in differing contexts as they recognize and support situational masculinities. And in regard to the specific cultivation of hegemonic masculinity, the women in this study were “particularly willing to accept subjugation to engage in ideals of romantic partnership congruent with emphasized femininity” and thereby legitimate gender hegemony (p. 255).

As a second example, in an article on hegemonic masculinity and the profession of veterinary medicine Leslie Irvine and Jenny Vermilya (2010) demonstrate that, despite contemporary veterinary medicine being numerically dominated by women, it is the women in this profession who often sustain, justify, and preserve hegemonic masculinity. Through interviews with twenty-two women who were practicing veterinarians or veterinary students, Irvine and Vermilya found that certain “inferior” gendered characteristics, such as nurturance, compassion, and emotionality traditionally were attached to female veterinarians. The women veterinarians interviewed actually placed little value on these particular characteristics and, in fact, they distanced themselves from these traits through their on-the-job practices. The women veterinarians instead constructed practices traditionally viewed by the profession as “superior,” such as emphasizing science rather than nurturance, insensitivity in place of compassion, and control instead of emotionality. Irvine and Vermilya demonstrated how women veterinarians participated in “the patterns of practice that sustain and justify the status quo, and thus preserve hegemonic masculinity” (p. 74). These women appropriated the same practices that men had long used to keep women out of the profession.
and therefore exemplified how hegemonic masculinity might be cultivated by those deemed subordinate and with interests at odds with that hegemonic masculinity. The consequences of hegemonic masculinity in this profession actually lower salaries for women relative to men, underrepresent women in the administration of veterinary schools, concentrate women in companion-animal services, and maintain low numbers of women who own veterinary practices.

Contestation

Always open to challenge when contested, hegemonic masculinities often inspire new strategies in gender relations and result in new configurations of hegemonic masculinities. For example, in an examination of autobiographical accounts of British soldiers involved in peacekeeping duties in Bosnia in the 1990s, Claire Duncanson (2009) explored whether or not a subsequent peacekeeping masculinity challenged the local hegemonic masculinity of the British military. Duncanson identified the British military hegemonic masculinity as consisting of the brave, strong, and tough masculine soldier/protector in contrast to the timid, weak, and tender feminine wife/mother in need of protection.

Through an analysis of four autobiographical accounts of British soldiers/officers involved in peacekeeping missions (formal and informal activities designed to prevent, halt, or resolve conflicts) in Bosnia, Duncanson found first that each of these soldiers experienced both *emasculating* and *masculinizing* aspects of peacekeeping: regarding the former, each soldier considered peacekeeping inferior, frustrating, and less masculine than “real fighting”; concerning the latter, each attempted therefore to position peacekeeping as one-hundred-percent masculine behavior. For Duncanson, the former (emasculating) reinforced the local military hegemonic masculinity but the latter (masculinist) both disrupted that hegemonic masculinity and attempted to position peacemaking masculinity as a new form of localized hegemonic masculinity in the British military. As Duncanson (p. 69) explained, “When soldiers valorize peacekeeping tasks as masculine, they are not only asserting that there is another way to be a ‘real man’; they are asserting that it is *the way.*” Although all the soldiers/officers regarded peacekeeping as often emasculating, they simultaneously constructed peacekeeping as masculine by claiming that actually it was tougher, more dangerous, and more challenging than participating in war.

At the same time, these soldiers/officers did not challenge the notion of women solely as wives and mothers in need of protection, and they feminized Balkan male soldiers as weak, irrational, and emotional while masculinizing themselves as controlled, civilized, and intelligent. Peacekeeping masculinity then challenged traditional British localized military hegemonic masculinity yet simultaneously was constructed in relation to subordinate racialized and feminized “Others.” The end result was a new form of hegemonic masculinity that discursively legitimated hierarchical gender relations between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities.

A second example of the contestation of hegemonic masculinity is a study of high school rugby in Australia by Richard Light (2007), who appropriated hegemonic masculinity as a localized discourse in the particular setting of the high school and operated “at an unquestioned, common-sense level” (p. 323). Light argued that this particular hegemonic masculine discourse shaped the performance of the high school rugby team members by emphasizing physical force and power during play instead of skills and tactical knowledge. Through interviews with team members and the coach, as well as observations of practices and games, Light found that the majority of players described this discursive approach to the sport as “no mistakes” rugby, which was “highly
structured, predictable, and heavy” (p. 329). The hegemonic masculine discourse encouraged players to take an instrumental view of their bodies as weapons to dominate and actually injure opponents. Value was placed on employing powerful and purposeful physical contact, bodily force, and mastery to overcome the opposition; to take control of “enemy” territory on the field; and to move the team forward throughout the season. Players were thus compelled to embody “heavy contact” so as to establish a superior power position over opponents—there was little room allowed for player autonomy, independence, and creativity in generating and utilizing space.

Within the confines of the high school setting, then, a powerful discourse emphasized a characteristic hard and tough hegemonic masculinity that the boys on the rugby team felt obliged to reproduce. No boy wanted to “let down the tradition” of the school, and this credo made it difficult for any player to challenge the contextual hegemonically masculine discourse in any explicit way. And because of its power, the boys reproduced this particular pattern of hegemonic masculinity over generations.

Nevertheless, and despite the struggle, the boys did attempt to contest the no mistakes form of rugby through a much-less-structured and more creative style of play. During a two-week break at school the team participated in a rugby tournament, and it was here that the players decided collectively to change their style of play in a way that allowed more risk-taking on the field and more support for each other when mistakes occurred. The new style also involved much less structure, better communication, respectful understanding among players, and increased excitement—enthusiasm for the new “open” rugby as opposed to the “no mistakes” rugby was dramatic. And because of the success with the new style of play, following the tournament the coach decided to allow the team to play open rugby in the remaining games of the season. Yet owing to an important loss to a regular season team, school administrators and coaches quickly dropped the new style of play. Again, Light attributed this to how deeply embedded the hegemonic masculine discourse was in the culture of the school. In other words, although the players attempted to mount a new form of masculinity that contested the established no mistakes rugby, the traditional hegemonic masculine discourse was far too entrenched in the school culture for any new hegemonic masculinity to emerge. Accordingly, Light insightfully documented the social processes involved in a localized struggle over hegemony and the reinstallation of a traditional hegemonic masculinity that had been contested and briefly displaced.

**Periphery**

Research also is appearing that highlights how neoliberal globalization influences the construction of hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities in *periphery* countries, such as those in Asia, Africa, and Central and Latin America. An excellent example is a study that utilized a mixed methodology—a survey, focus group discussions, and interviews. In this article, Christian Groes-Green (2009) examined the impact of neoliberal globalization on both urban middle-class and urban working-class young men (ages sixteen to twenty-three) in Maputo, Mozambique. Groes-Green found that in the local arena of Maputo, an established form of hegemonic masculinity involved men providing economically for their female partners and families, a practice that primarily defined hierarchical relations between them. Although both the middle-class and working-class young men Groes-Green studied intended to construct such hierarchical gender relations, with the arrival of neoliberal globalization only the former were able to live up to this particular hegemonic masculinity.

In 1987 the Mozambican government, through economic support from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund,
allowed considerable foreign business investment into the country. This policy subsequently heralded a growing middle class with access to higher education, steady and secure jobs, and excellent incomes. Nevertheless, the downside of this development was economic impoverishment of the majority of the population, mass unemployment among primarily working-class youth, and an increasing gap between the middle and working classes.

During his fieldwork, Groes-Green observed how middle-class and working-class young men constructed different hegemonic masculinities, and he attributed these contrasting masculinities to the neoliberal economic changes impacting Maputo. In particular, the middle-class young men had easy access to higher education, stable employment, and high incomes. Consequently, they were able to easily attract young women as partners who also supported hierarchical gender relations—these young men effortlessly constructed this particular type of localized hegemonic masculinity.

In contrast the working-class young men, who experienced much less access to higher education as well as escalating unemployment rates, were unable to live up to the standards of hegemonic masculinity in this localized environment. And as Groes-Green (p. 299) put it, these men developed “a masculinity that takes the body and its physical powers as its sources.” In the absence of higher education, stable jobs, and an adequate income, these working-class men engaged in two specific “corporeal performances” to construct masculine power relations over their female partners. The first corporeal performance involved their becoming preoccupied with particular “sexual techniques” (such as consuming large quantities of aphrodisiacs), allegedly to increase their sexual skills and sexual stamina and thereby provide “a gateway to staying in power” by preserving a sense of superiority over their partner by managing her sexual satisfaction (p. 298). The second corporeal performance involved some of these men increasingly engaging in physical violence against their female partner primarily to “make her respect you” (p. 294). These two identified corporeal performances were impetuous attempts to somehow legitimate patriarchal relations through particular practices of sexuality and violence at the local level.

For Groes-Green, then, the two masculine corporeal performances were bifurcated reactions to the inability of these young men to construct and legitimate traditional hegemonic masculinity because of neoliberal-produced poverty-stricken circumstances. Both forms of corporeal performances became an “option to which poor young men in Maputo resort when their hegemony (i.e., their ‘taken for granted’ authority based on stable jobs and financial abilities) is contested” (p. 296).

Similarly, Chad Broughton (2008) examined how neoliberal globalization in Mexico created a novel northward mass departure from the Mexican southern states by working-age men and women. In particular, Broughton analyzed how economically dislocated southern Mexican men negotiated hegemonic masculinity while confronting extraordinary pressure to migrate as well as the gendered strategies, practices, and identities they adopted during the undertaking.

Following implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on January 1, 1994, numerous trade barriers to foreign investment in Mexico were removed; NAFTA created the conditions for the concentration and acceleration of foreign investment and manufacturing growth at the U.S.-Mexico border, thereby “creating a strong draw for job-hungry, impoverished Mexicans” (p. 570). Moreover, NAFTA opened Mexico’s agricultural sector to U.S. agribusiness by increasing trade quotas and decreasing tariffs for major crops (such as corn), necessarily compressing rural economies and boosting northern migration.

Through life-history interviews of sixteen low-income men (eighteen to forty-two years old) who contemplated migrating
north from southern Mexico, Broughton found that these men constructed three differing masculinities in reaction to migration pressures in neoliberal Mexico. Drawing on a specific localized hegemonic masculinity that emphasized hierarchical gender relations in the family and vigilant fathering, these men deployed what Broughton labeled “traditionalist,” “adventurer,” and “breadwinner” masculinities, all of which provided differing gendered responses “to realizing both instrumental and identity goals in a time of rapid and wrenching change” (p. 585).

The traditionalist emphasized maintaining the established local hegemonic masculinity primarily through family cohesion. Viewing the border as a “minefield of moral hazards,” the traditionalist decided to endure destitution in the south and refrain from migrating in order to protect his family from such dangers up north. The traditionalist then maintained local hegemonic masculinity in his southern home “in spite of political and economic forces working against the maintenance of such ideals” (p. 577).

For the adventurer, the northern border and beyond offered a place to earn considerable money and to “prove” his masculinity in new ways, such as through seeking thrills and breaking free from the inflexibility of rural life. Rejecting the localized notion of hegemonic masculinity, migration to the north presented a progressive, avant-garde means to survive economic disorder by upgrading one’s masculine status and assessing his bravery. It proffered a “new and exciting life away from the limitations of a neglected and declining rural Mexico” (p. 585).

Finally, like the adventurer, the breadwinner migrated to the north, yet unlike the adventurer such migration was a reluctant but necessary choice under desperate circumstances—he had to do so to adequately provide for his wife and children. The breadwinner coped with “symbolic indignities” so that he could acquire sufficient economic resources that would conceivably promote social mobility for his entire family. The breadwinner accepted work at or beyond the border “as an inescapable duty” so that his family would enjoy a higher standard of living (p. 585).

Broughton’s study then demonstrated how low-income Mexican men experiencing economic dislocation intrinsic to neoliberal Mexico negotiated with a specific localized hegemonic masculinity discursively and in the process orchestrated old and new hegemonic and new nonhegemonic masculine configurations. This differing process of masculine identity formation involved much more than simply instrumental calculations; these men had to “make sense of the migration experience as men and arrive at specific and adaptive gendered strategies and decisions regarding northward migration” (p. 586). One of the important aspects of this article was its demonstration of how specific forms of complicity (traditionalist and breadwinner) with, and resistance (adventurer) to, a localized hegemonic masculinity discourse were constructed under identical neoliberal conditions.

Summary

These six studies have engendered gender knowledge in new and innovative ways by 1) recognizing how under certain situations women might be a salient factor in the cultivation of hegemonic masculinities, 2) revealing how hegemonic masculinities may be open to challenge and possibly reproduced in new form, and 3) demonstrating how neoliberal globalization impacts the construction of various forms of hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities in periphery countries. All six articles illustrate contemporary creative scholarship that contributes distinctively to academic gendered knowledge on hegemonic masculinity. The two articles on cultivation show that in studies of hegemonic masculinities, the focus can no longer center exclusively on men and instead must give much closer attention to both the practices of women.
and the social interplay of femininities and masculinities. Several of the new directions pieces document various ways hegemonic masculinities have been contested, resulting in the construction of new strategies of patriarchal relations and thus redefinitions of hegemonic masculinities. And within periphery countries experiencing the effects of neoliberal globalization, the articles reveal how attempts by men at the individual level to maintain localized power relations over women might occur and further display how certain alternative nonhegemonic masculinities might arise under such conditions. Each article in its own particular way then breaks new ground by concentrating on academic domains that previously have been disregarded (cultivation and contestation) or seemingly deemed incapable of exploration and analysis (periphery). This work can inspire additional gender research that further extends our knowledge in similar and/or previously unexplored areas.

In sum, then, the primary purpose of this first chapter is to set the stage for the remaining chapters by assessing the academic appropriation of the reformulated concept of hegemonic masculinity and the processes involved in gendered knowledge construction. The analysis reveals first that contrasting interpretations of the concept by gender scholars persist and that such disparities have crept into the accepted academic accumulation of gendered knowledge. Published articles hold an extremely salient position in academic gendered knowledge construction, and the publication of an article in an accepted academic journal sanctions its scholarly stature. It is through such journals that specific forms of gendered knowledge are substantiated academically and upon such journal articles that the academic community depends for the dissemination of new forms of gendered knowledge.

Nevertheless, a published journal article results from more than the author’s research and writing. As with all forms of social action, the publishing of an academic journal article involves interaction among editor(s), reviewers, and the author(s), and such interaction indispensably shapes the ultimate content of the final published draft. Published academic articles, then, are shaped so that they conform to the parameters fixed by the particular reviewers and editors. Contrasting and disparate forms of gendered knowledge—here regarding conceptualizations of hegemonic masculinity—thereby result from interaction among a variety of editors, reviewers, and authors.

More than seventeen years ago, Martin (1998) raised the issue of inconsistent appropriations of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, insightfully observing that some scholars equated the concept with a fixed type of masculinity or with whatever type of masculinity that happened to be dominant at a particular time and place. More recently, Beasley (2008; 2013; Elias and Beasley, 2009) labeled such inconsistent appropriations “slippage,” arguing that “dominant” forms of masculinity—such as those that are the most culturally celebrated or the most common in particular settings—may actually do little to legitimate men’s power over women and that some masculinities that legitimate men’s power actually may be culturally marginalized. Similarly, Schippers (2007) argued that it is essential to distinguish masculinities that legitimate men’s power from those that do not.

Although these scholars have correctly pointed to the relevant ambiguities in appropriations of the concept, what this chapter illustrates is that sundry scholars are demonstrating impressively through their published academic articles how specific hierarchical gender relationships between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities are legitimated—in my view superbly capturing certain of the essential features of the omnipresent reproduction of patriarchal relations. Additionally, these articles reveal in various ways how hegemonic masculinities express models of gender relations that articulate with the practical constitution of masculine and feminine ways of
living in everyday circumstances. To the extent they do this, they contribute to our understanding of the legitimization and stabilization of patriarchal relations locally, regionally, and globally.

Notwithstanding, “slippage” in the conception of hegemonic masculinity in this chapter has centered exclusively on equating the concept with “masculine” character traits. However, this particular form of slippage is not solely a matter of individual interpretation of the concept. Within the articles examined, there remains a fundamental collective intellectual tendency by numerous editors, reviewers, and authors “to read ‘hegemonic masculinity’ as a static character type, that is, to psychologize the idea and ignore the whole question of gender dynamics” (Connell, 2008: 245). The articles in this study that conceptualize hegemonic masculinity in this way—typified by Logan, Smith and colleagues, and Gage—unquestionably offer intriguing insight into the adoption of certain “masculine” traits by particular groups of men. Nevertheless, in terms of hegemony in patriarchal relations that is explicit in the concept of hegemonic masculinity, their presentation is noticeably abbreviated. That is, their work calls for an additional step to be taken, involving an analysis of the downstream consequences of how the particular “masculine” traits actually legitimate gender inequality and the subordination of women, femininities, and nonhegemonic masculinities. And the articles by Morris, Weitzer and Kubrin, Hatfield, Talbot and Quayle, Duncanson, and others discussed herein represent some promising approaches as to how such downstreaming can be accomplished. Unfortunately, it is impossible to do this vital extended analysis on Gage’s data because examination of the legitimization of patriarchal relations cannot methodologically be well articulated and formulated.

Accordingly, I agree with Schippers (2007) that to elucidate the significance and salience of hegemonic masculinities, gender scholars—which includes editors, reviewers, and authors—must distinguish masculinities that legitimate a hierarchical relationship between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities from those that do not. Hegemonic masculinities are unique among the diversity of masculinities, and making this distinction unambiguous will enable scholars to recognize and research various forms of mundane, run-of-the-mill, nonhegemonic masculinities that are constructed outside hegemonic relations, such as those constructed by the older men in the Smith and colleagues article, as well as risky and daring types of masculinities, such as the adventurer masculinity discussed by Broughton. Labeling these particular types of masculinities “hegemonic masculinity” confounds any analysis as to how nonhegemonic masculinities differ from hegemonic masculinities, thereby essentially confusing and obscuring the academic engendering of gendered knowledge.

Moreover, certain masculinities (without legitimating patriarchal relations) may be dominant and/or dominating. In this regard, I (Messerschmidt, 2010; 2012; 2014) recently distinguished—and throughout this book I will elaborate on—these two types of nonhegemonic masculinities: “dominant” masculinities refer to the most powerful or the most widespread types in the sense of being the most celebrated, common, or current forms of masculinity in a specific social setting; “dominating” masculinities involve commanding and controlling specific interactions and exercising power and control over people and events—“calling the shots” and “running the show.” Neither dominant nor dominating masculinities necessarily legitimate hierarchical gender relations between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities. Even though at times hegemonic masculinities also may be dominant and/or dominating, these latter masculinities are never hegemonic if they fail culturally to legitimate patriarchal relations (see further Beasley, 2008; 2013). To conceptualize fully hegemonic masculinities, then,
scholars must unravel dominant, dominating, and other types of nonhegemonic masculinities from hegemonic masculinities. I define "hegemonic masculinity" as those masculinities that legitimate an unequal relationship between men and women, masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities. The emphasis on hegemony underscores the achievement of hegemonic masculinity through cultural influence and thus discursive persuasion, encouraging consent and compliance—rather than direct control and commands—to unequal gender relations. And this distinction between hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities further facilitates the discovery and identification of "positive masculinities," or those that actually may help to legitimate an egalitarian relationship between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities. (For examples of positive masculinities, see the work of Deutsch (1999), Lorber (2005), and Schippers (2007) as well as chapter 3.)

Finally, although identifying a single society-wide or global "ascendant" hegemonic masculinity may be possible, no one to date has successfully done so. This is probably the case because it is extremely difficult to measure such ascendancy and thereby determine which particular masculinity—among the whole variety in the offering—is indeed the ascendant hegemonic masculinity. Until a method is devised for determining exactly which masculinity is the hegemonic ascendant, we must speak of hegemonic masculinity—as the reformulated concept suggests and the current evidence documents—wholly in plural terms, analyzing hegemonic masculinities at the local, regional, and global levels. Such research will provide a growing expansion of our understanding of the pervasive and omnipresent nature of how hegemonic masculinity and thus patriarchal relations are legitimized and solidified from the local to the global. And in the chapters that follow I contribute to the above research on hegemonic and nonhege-
To grasp the notion of "masculinities as structured action" we must turn to structured action theory that has been employed previously (Messerschmidt, 1993; 1997; 2000; 2004; 2010; 2012; 2014) in understanding the relationship among sex, gender, race, class, and sexuality. In this book I exclusively concentrate on sex, gender, and sexuality and I begin chapter 2 by explaining how structured action theory conceptualizes "doing" sex, gender, and sexuality.

**DOING SEX, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY**

Reflecting various theoretical origins (Archer, 2003; 2007; 2012; Connell, 1987; 1995; Ciddens, 1976; 1984; Goffman, 1963; 1972; 1979; Kessler and McKenna, 1978; Mouzelis, 2008; Sartre, 1956; West and Fenstermaker, 1995; West and Zimmerman, 1987), structured action theory emphasizes the construction of sex, gender, and sexuality as situated social, interactional, and embodied accomplishments. In other words, sex, gender, and sexuality grow out of embodied social practices in specific social structural settings and serve to inform such practices in reciprocal relation.
Regarding sex, historical and social conditions shape the character and definition of sex (social identification as "male" or "female"). Sex and its meanings are given concrete expression by the specific social relations and historical context in which they are embedded. Historical studies on the definition of sex show its clear association with sexuality, and gender has proved always to be already involved. The work of Thomas Laqueur (1990) is exemplary in this regard, and in his important book, *Making Sex*, he shows that for two thousand years a "one-sex model" dominated scientific and popular thought in which male and female bodies were not conceptualized in terms of difference. From antiquity to the beginning of the seventeenth century, male and female bodies were seen as having the same body parts, even in terms of genitalia, with the vagina regarded as an interior penis, the vulva as foreskin, the uterus as scrotum, and the ovaries as testicles. Women thus had the same body as men but the positioning of its parts was different: as one doggerel verse of the period stated, "women are but men turned outside in" (p. 4). In the "one-sex model" the sexes were not seen as different in kind but rather in degree—woman simply was a lesser form of man. And as Laqueur (p. 8) explains, "Sex, or the body, must be understood as the epiphenomenon, while gender, what we would take to be a cultural category, was primary or 'real.'" Inequality was imposed on bodies from the outside and seen as God's "marker" of a male and female distinction. To be a man or a woman was to have a specific place in society decreed by God, "not to be organically one or the other of two incommensurable sexes. Sex before the seventeenth century, in other words, was still a sociological and not an ontological category" (p. 8).

What emerged after the Enlightenment was a "two-sex model" involving a foundational dichotomy between now two and only two distinct and opposite sexes, as no longer did scientific and popular thought "regard woman as a lesser version of man along a vertical axis of infinite gradations but rather an altogether different creature along a horizontal axis whose middle ground was largely empty" (p. 148). And Michel Foucault's (1980: vii) well-known discussion of the "hermaphrodite" *Herculine Barbin* (what is referred today as the intersexed), demonstrates that by the mid-1800s there was no allowance for any human being to occupy a "middle ground" through "a mixture of two sexes in a single body," which consequently limited "the free choice of indeterminate individuals" and thus henceforth "everybody was to have one and only one sex." Individuals accepted previously as representatives of the "middle ground" ("hermaphrodites") were now required to submit to expert medical diagnosis to uncover their "true" sex. As Foucault (p. vii) continues:

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Everybody was to have his or her primary, profound, determined and determining sexual identity; as for the elements of the other sex that might appear, they could only be accidental, superficial, or even quite simply illusory. From the medical point of view, this meant that when confronted with a hermaphrodite, the doctor was no longer concerned with recognizing the presence of the two sexes, juxtaposed or intermingled, or with knowing which of the two prevailed over the other, but rather with deciphering the true sex that was hidden beneath ambiguous appearances.
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Arguably, then, under the "two-sex model" it became commonplace to view the male sex and the female sex as "different in every conceivable aspects of body and soul, in every physical and moral aspect—an anatomy and physiology of incommensurability replaced a metaphysics of hierarchy in the representation of woman in relation to man" (Laqueur, 1990: 5–6).

Predictably, these two now fixed, incommensurable, opposite sexes also are conceptualized as the source of the political, economic, and cultural lives of men and women (gender and sexuality), since "biology—the stable, ahistorical, sexed body—is under-
stood to be the epistemic foundation for prescriptive claims about the social order” (p. 6). To be sure, it was now understood as “natural” that women are, for example, passive, submissive, and vulnerable and men are, for example, active, aggressive, and perilous. And given that anatomy is now destiny, a heterosexual instinct to procreate proceeds from the body and is “the natural state of the architecture of two incommensurable opposite sexes” (p. 233).

The shift in thinking to a “two-sex model,” consisting now of two different types of humans with complementary heterosexual natures and desires, corresponded to the emergence of the public/private split: It was now “natural” for men to enter the public realm of society and it was “natural” for women to remain in the private sphere. Explaining these distinct gendered spaces was “resolved by grounding social and cultural differentiation of the sexes in a biology of incommensurability” (Laqueur, 1990: 19). In other words, “gender” and “sexuality” became subordinated to “sex” and biology was now primary: the foundation of difference and inequality between men and women.

Laqueur makes clear that the change to a two-sex model was not the result of advances in science, inasmuch as the reevaluation of the body as primary occurred approximately one hundred years before alleged supporting scientific discoveries appeared. And although anatomical and physiological differences clearly exist between male and female bodies, what counts as “sex” is determined socially. In short, natural scientists had no interest in “seeing” two distinct sexes at the anatomical and concrete physiological level “until such differences became politically important” and “sex” therefore became “explicable only within the context of battles over gender and power” (pp. 10, 11).

The historical work of both Laqueur and Foucault suggests that “sex differences” do not naturally precede “gender and sexual differences.” And as Wendy Cealey Harrison (2006) insightfully observes, it is virtually impossible to ever entirely separate the body and our understanding of it from its socially determined milieu. Arguably, what is now necessary is a reconceptualization of “the taken-for-grantedness of ‘sex’ as a form of categorization for human beings and examining the ways in which such a categorization is built” (p. 43).

Following this suggestion by Cealey Harrison, it is important to recognize that in an important early work Suzanne Kessler and Wendy McKenna (1978) argued that social action is constructed through taken-for-granted discourses, or what they call “incredibly propositions.” Our belief in two objectively real, biologically created constant yet opposite sexes is a telling discourse. We assume there are only two sexes; each person is simply an example of one or the other. In other words, we construct a sex dichotomy in which no dichotomy holds biologically, historically, cross-culturally, and contemporaneously (Messerschmidt, 2004).

The key process in the social construction of the sex dichotomy is the active way we decide what sex a person is (Kessler and McKenna, 1978: 1–20). A significant part of this sex attribution process is the notion that men have penises and women do not. We consider genitals the ultimate criterion in making sex assignments; yet, in our daily interactions we continually make sex attributions with a complete lack of information about others’ genitals. Our recognition of another’s sex is dependent upon the exhibit of such bodily characteristics as speech, hair, clothing, physical appearance, and other aspects of personal front—through this embodied presentation we “do” sex and it is this doing that becomes a substitute for the concealed genitalia.

Nevertheless, doing gender (West and Zimmerman, 1987) entails considerably more than the “social emblems” representing membership in one of two sex categories. Rather, the social construction of gender involves a situated social, interactional, and embodied accomplishment. Gender grows out of social practices
in specific settings and serves to inform such practices in reciprocal relation. Although “sex” defines social identification as “male” or “female,” “doing gender” systematically corroborates and qualifies that sex identification and category through embodied social interaction. We “do” gender as a demonstration of our self-attribution as “male” or “female” and in turn that “doing” validates our “sex” identity. In effect, there is a plurality of forms in which gender is constructed: we coordinate our activities to “do” gender in situational ways (West and Zimmerman, 1987).

Accordingly, early gender development in childhood occurs through an interactive process between child and parents, other children, and other adults. By reason of this interaction with others—and the social structures this interaction constitutes—children (for the most part) undertake to practice what is being preached, represented, and structured. Raewyn Connell defines the proactive adoption of specific embodied gender practices as the “moment of engagement,” the moment when an individual initiates a project of masculinity or femininity as his or her own (1995: 122). The young child has in effect located him- or herself in relation to others within a sexed and gendered structured field (Jackson, 2007). Children negotiate the socially structured sexed and gendered practices and their accompanying discourses that are prevalent and attributed as such in their particular milieu(s) and, in so doing, commit themselves to a fundamental project of sex and gender self-attribution—for example, “I’m a boy” or “I’m a girl.” This fundamental self-attribution as a boy or as a girl is the primary mode by which agents choose to relate to the world and to express themselves in it, and thus serves as an important constraint and enabler in the social construction of sex, gender, and sexuality. What makes us human is the fact that we construct ourselves by making reflexive choices that transcend given circumstances and propel us into a future that is defined by the consequences of those choices. Doing sex and gender—normally

concurrently—is a continuing process in which agents construct patterns of embodied presentations and practices that suggest a particular sex and gender in specific settings and, consequently, project themselves into a future where new situations are encountered and subsequently new reflexive choices are made (Connell, 1995). There exists a certain degree of unity and coherence to one’s fundamental sex and gender project in the sense that we tend to embody this particular sexed and gendered self—for example, “I’m a boy” or “I’m a girl”—over time and space.

Nevertheless, and although agents construct a fundamental project as either male or female, the actual accomplishment of gender may vary situationally—that is, gender is renegotiated continuously through social interaction and, therefore, one’s gendered self may be fraught with contradictions and diversity in gender strategies and practices. For example, agents may situationally construct a specific fundamental gender project (for example, masculine) that contradicts their bodily sex category (for example, female).

Sexuality involves all erotic and nonerotic aspects of social life and social being that relate to bodily attraction or intimate bodily contact between individuals, such as arousal, desire, practice, discourse, interaction, relationship, and identity (see Jackson and Scott, 2010). “Doing” sexuality encompasses the same interactive processes discussed above for doing gender and therefore likewise involves children initially acquiring knowledge primarily about heterosexuality through structured interaction with mothers, fathers, other children, and other adults. This initial process involves the acquisition of mostly nonerotic forms of heterosexual discursive knowledge, such as male-female marital relationships that suggest this is “where babies come from.” However, to adopt such rudimentary heterosexual discursive knowledge, “doing sex” must take primacy. As Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott (2010: 91–92) point out, “We recognize someone as male or female before we
make assumptions about heterosexuality or homosexuality; we cannot logically do otherwise.” The homosexual/heterosexual socially structured dichotomy hinges on meaningful sexed categories, “on being able to ‘see’ two men or two women as ‘the same’ and a man and a woman as ‘different’” (p. 92). The notion of two and only two sex categories then establishes the discursive rationale for the homosexual/heterosexual socially structured dichotomy.

Once children begin to develop a sense of the erotic aspects of sexuality—which usually occurs through interaction with peers in secondary school—their sense-making is governed by their embodied sexed and gendered self (Jackson, 2007). “Doing” sex, gender, and sexuality intersect here, so that our conceptualization of sex and gender impacts our understanding and practice of sexuality (both the erotic and the nonerotic aspects) and it is through sexual practices (once again both the erotic and the nonerotic) that we validate sex and gender. Agents adopt embodied sexual practices as a “moment of engagement,” a moment when the individual begins to affix a specific sexual project to their fundamental sex and gender project, constructing, for example, heterosexual and heterofeminine identities. Sex, gender, and sexuality are produced and reproduced by embodied individuals, and interaction with others is essential to one’s ability to negotiate and fit in to ongoing and situationally structured patterns of sex, gender, and sexuality.

Crucial to this negotiation and “fitting in” is the notion of “accountability” (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Hollander, 2013). Accountability—as the cornerstone of social structural reproduction—refers to individuals anticipating assessment of their behavior and therefore they configure and orchestrate their embodied actions in relation to how such actions may be interpreted by others in the particular social context in which they occur. In other words, in their daily activities agents attempt to be identified bodily as “female” or “male” through sex, gender, and sexual practices. Within socially structured interaction, then, we encourage and expect others to attribute to us a particular sex category—to avoid negative assessments—and we facilitate the ongoing task of accountability through demonstrating that we are male or female by means of concocted practices that may be interpreted accordingly. The specific meanings of sex, gender, and sexuality are defined in social interaction and therefore through personal practice. Doing gender and sexuality renders social action accountable in terms of structurally available gender and sexual practices appropriate to one’s sex category in the specific social situation in which one acts. It necessarily entails the particular structured gender and sexual relations in specific settings that give behavior its sexed, gendered, and sexual meanings.

In this view, then, although we decide quite early in life that we’re a boy or a girl and later we adopt an identity as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc., the actual everyday “doing” of sex, gender, and sexuality is accomplished systematically and is never a static or a finished product. Rather, people construct sex, gender, and sexuality in specific social situations. In other words, people participate in self-regulating conduct whereby they monitor their own and others’ embodied social actions and they respond to and draw from available social structures. This perspective allows for innovation and flexibility in sex, gender, and sexuality construction—and the ongoing potentiality of normative transgression—but also underscores the ever-present possibility of any sexed, gendered, and sexual activity being assessed by copresent interactants. Sex category serves as a resource for the interpretation of situated social conduct, as copresent interactants in each setting attempt to hold accountable behavior as female or male; that is, socially defined membership in one sex category is used as a means of discrediting or accepting gender and sexual practices. Although we construct ourselves as male or female, we situation-
ally embody gender and sexuality according to our own unique experiences, and accountability attempts to maintain congruence among sex, gender, and sexuality; that is, male equals masculinity equals sexually desires females and female equals femininity equals sexually desires males.

Moreover, sex, gender, and sexuality construction results from individuals often—but not always—considering the content of their social action and then acting only after internal deliberation about the purpose and consequence of their behavior. Reflexivity refers to the capacity to engage in internal conversations with oneself about particular social experiences and then decide how to respond appropriately. In reflexivity we internally mull over specific social events and interactions, we consider how such circumstances make us feel, we prioritize what matters most, and then we plan and decide how to respond (Archer, 2007). Although we internally deliberate and eventually make such reflexive choices to act in particular ways, those choices are based on the situationally socially structured available sex, gender, and sexual practices and discourses. Notwithstanding that sex, gender, and sexuality simply may at specific times be a habitual and routine social practice (Martin, 2003), accountability encourages people to do sex, gender, and sexuality appropriate to particular situations. And accountability and thus reflexivity especially come into play when agents are confronted with a unique social situation—such as a challenge to their sex, gender, or sexuality. Nevertheless, the resulting reflexive social action may not actually have been consciously intended to be a sex, gender, or sexuality practice.

STRUCTURED ACTION

As the foregoing indicates, although sex, gender, and sexuality are “made,” so to speak, through the variable unification of internal deliberations and thus reflexive self-regulated practices, these embodied practices do not occur in a vacuum. Instead, they are influenced by the social structural constraints and enablements we experience in particular social situations. Social structures, defined as recurring patterns of social phenomena (practices and discourses) that tend to transcend time and space and thus constrain and enable behavior in specific ways, “only exist as the reproduced conduct of situated actors” (Giddens, 1976: 127). In other words, agents draw upon social structures to engage in social action and in turn social structures are (usually) reproduced through that same embodied and accountable social action. In such duality, structure and action are inseparable as knowledgeable human agents of sex, gender, and sexual practices enact social structures by reflexively putting into practice their structured knowledge. Social structures are the “medium” and “outcome” of social action: medium because it is through the use of social structures that social action occurs and outcome because it is through social action that social structures are reproduced—and sometimes transformed—in time and space (Giddens, 1976; Mouzelis, 2008). Because agents reflexively “do” sex, gender, and sexuality in specific socially structured situations, they reproduce social structures. And given that agents often reproduce sex, gender, and sexual ideals in socially structured specific practices, there are a variety of ways to do them. Within specific social structural settings, particular forms of sex, gender, and sexual practices are available, encouraged, and permitted. Accordingly, sexed, gendered, and sexual agency must be viewed as reflexive and embodied structured action—what people, and therefore bodies, do under specific social structural constraints and enablements (Messerschmidt, 1993; 1997; 2000; 2004; 2010; 2012; 2014).

Although there exists a variety of social structures, two are especially salient for conceptualizing sex, gender, and sexuality: relational and discursive. Relational social structures establish
through social practice the interconnections and interdependence among individuals in particular social settings and thus define social relationships among people in terms of sex, gender, and sexuality. Relational social structures constrain and enable social action. Examples of relational social structures are the informal yet unequal network of sexed, gendered, and sexual “cliques” in elementary and secondary schools and the sex and gender divisions of labor within workplaces. Discursive social structures are representations, ideas, and sign systems (language) that produce culturally significant meanings. Discursive social structures establish through social practice regimes or orders of “truth” and what is accepted as “reality” in particular situations. Like relational social structures, discursive social structures constrain and enable the possibilities of social action. Examples of discursive social structures are the notion of “two and only two sexes” mentioned above and social conventions defining styles of dress in terms of sex, gender, and sexuality.

Relational and discursive social structures intersect and work in combination and jointly, but also at times contradictorily. Both relational and discursive social structures are actualized only through particular forms of social action—they have a material base—but such structured action produces simultaneously particular social relations and social meanings that are culturally significant because they shape a sense of what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior for copresent others in specific situations. Through embodied social action individuals produce relational social structures that concurrently proffer meaningful representations (through embodied appearance and practices) for others as a consequence of their social action. And in turn, through embodied social action individuals also produce discursive social structures that concurrently constitute social relations (through representations, ideas, and sign systems) for others as a consequence of their social action. Discursive social structures often are a part of relational social structures and the latter often are a component of the former. The intersection of relational and discursive social structures then constructs the knowledge we use to engage in particular practices—they recursively constrain and enable social action—and it actualizes specific forms of understandings that define what is normal, acceptable, and deviant in particular social situations.

Nevertheless, relational and discursive social structures are not all encompassing and are not always seamlessly accepted by agents without question or objection (Mouzelis, 2008). Through reflexivity agents actually may distance and separate themselves from particular social structures, clearing the path for improvisation and innovation in social action. For example, when confronting social structures, agents at times engage in reflexive internal deliberations and may decide to break from and analyze, investigate, and possibly resist situational structural constraints and enablements (Mouzelis, 2008). As Abby Peterson (2011) shows, it is in reflexivity where we find the mediatory processes whereby structure and action are connected or disconnected. And when such disconnect of agent from structure transpires—and thus duvetism rather than duality occurs—the result often is unique forms of social action. Furthermore, social action may also be influenced by forms of knowledge as supplemental constraints and enablements, which are nonrecurring (because they do not transcend time and space) and thus nonstructural. Examples of supplemental constraints and enablements are specific types of social interaction, such as a one-time intimate conversation with a trusted and influential individual as well as our bodies because the body changes over time yet it does situationally constrain and enable social action. In short, sex, gender, and sexual social action emerge from, and are constrained and enabled by, what is always possible within any particular social situation.
POWER

Power is an important structural feature of sex, gender, and sexual relations. Socially structured power relations among men and women are constructed historically on the bases of sex, gender, and sexual preference. In specific contexts some men and some women have greater power than other men or other women; some genders have greater power than other genders; some sexualities have greater power than other sexualities; and the capacity to exercise power and do sex, gender, and sexuality is, for the most part, a reflection of one’s place in sex, gender, and sexual structured relations of power. Consequently, in general, heterosexual men and women exercise greater power than do gay men, lesbians, and other sexual minorities; upper-class men and women exercise greater power than do working-class men and women; white men and women exercise greater power than do racial minority men and women; and cisgender people exercise greater power than do transgender people. Power, then, is a relationship that structures social interaction not only between men and women but also among men and among women as well as in terms of gender and sexuality. Nevertheless, power is not absolute and at times may actually shift in relation to different axes of power and powerlessness.

I introduced Raewyn Connell’s (1987; 1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity in chapter 1 and following Connell’s conception I define “hegemonic masculinity” as those masculinities that legitimate an unequal relationship between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities. The emphasis on hegemony and thus legitimation underscores the achievement of hegemonic masculinity through cultural influence and discursive persuasion, encouraging consent and compliance—rather than direct control and commands—to unequal gender relations. Hegemonic masculinities necessarily construct both relational and discursive social structures because they establish relations of sex and gender inequality and at once signify discursively acceptable understandings of sex and gender relations.

In this regard I find that Mimi Schippers’ (2007) work (mentioned in chapter 1) is significant because it opens an extremely useful approach of conceptualizing how such legitimacy in hegemonic masculinity transpires. Schippers (p. 90) argues that embedded within the meanings of structured gendered relationships are the “qualities members of each gender category should and are assumed to possess”; therefore, it is in “the idealized quality content of the categories ‘man’ and ‘woman’ that we find the hegemonic significance of masculinity and femininity.” For Schippers (p. 91), certain gendered characteristics legitimate men’s power over women “only when they are symbolically paired with a complementary and inferior quality attached to femininity.” The significance of hegemonic forms of masculinity then is found in discursive meanings that legitimate a rationale for structured social relations and that ensure the ascendancy and power of men as well as specific masculinities. What Schippers highlights, therefore, is first the relationship between masculinity and femininity and second how a certain masculinity is hegemonic only when it articulates discursively particular gender qualities that are complementary and hierarchical in relation to specific feminine qualities. For example, such a complementary and hierarchical relationship might establish masculinity as constituting physical strength, the ability to use interpersonal violence in the face of conflict, and authority, whereas femininity would embrace physical vulnerability, an inability to use violence effectively, and compliance (p. 91). When both masculine and feminine qualities establish a complementary and hierarchical relationship between them, we have the legitimation of gender hegemony, involving
the superordinate position of men and subordinate position of women (p. 94).

Hegemonic masculinities form relational and discursive social structures that have cultural influence but do not determine social action. Hegemonic masculinities often—but not always—underpin the conventions applied in the enactment and reproduction of masculinities (and femininities)—the lived embodied patterns of meanings, which as they are experienced as practice, appear as reciprocally confirming. Hegemonic masculinities relationally and discursively shape a sense of “reality” for men and women in specific situations and are continually renewed, re-created, defended, and modified through social action. And yet they are at times resisted, limited, altered, and challenged. Hegemonic masculinities operate like other social structures as recurring “on-hand” meaningful practices that are culturally influential and thus available to be actualized into social action in a range of different circumstances. They provide a conceptual framework that is materialized in the design of daily practices and interactions. As individuals construct gender hegemony they simultaneously present those relations as culturally significant for others as a consequence of their embodied social action. Power is then constituted through acceptance of and consent to hegemonically masculine forms of knowledge and practice.

In addition to the above, the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity underpins what has become known as heteronormativity, or the legal, cultural, organizational, and interpersonal practices that derive from and reinforce the discursive structure that there are two and only two naturally opposite and complementary sexes (male and female), that gender is a natural manifestation of sex (masculinity and femininity), and that it is natural for the two opposite and complementary sexes to be sexually attracted to each other (heterosexuality). In other words, the social construction of sex differences intersects with the assumption of gender and sexual complementarity, or the notion that men’s and women’s bodies are naturally compatible and thus “made for each other”—the “natural” sex act allegedly involves vaginal penetration by a penis (Jackson and Scott, 2010). Heterosexuality is understood culturally as the natural erotic attraction to sex/gender difference, as well as a natural practice of male active dominance and female passive receptivity, and thus this notion of “natural attraction and practice” reinforces hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity as innate, complementary, and hierarchical opposites (Schippers, 2007). Heteronormativity therefore refers to “the myriad ways in which heterosexuality is produced as a natural, unproblematic, taken-for-granted, ordinary phenomenon” (Kitzinger, 2005: 478).

Accordingly, there is nothing “natural” about heterosexuality and indeed the term “heterosexuality” actually did not appear until the 1890s, and then it was used to specifically designate an identity based not on procreation but rather on sexual desire for the opposite sex. Heterosexuality became disconnected from procreation and “normal” sexuality was henceforth defined as heterosexual attraction; “abnormal” sexuality was homosexual attraction. The concept of heterosexuality was defined in terms of its relationship to the concept of homosexuality, both terms categorizing a sexual desire unrelated to procreation, and individuals now began to define their sexual identity according to whether they were attracted to the same or the opposite sex (Seidman, 2010). Steven Seidman (p. 158) articulates well the historically constructed close connection between gender and heterosexuality:

There can be no norm of heterosexuality, indeed no notion of heterosexuality, without assuming two genders that are coherent as a relationship of opposition and unity. If there were no fixed categories of gender, if there were no “men” and “women,” there could be no concept of heterosexuality! So, heterosexuality is anchored by maintaining a gender order through
either celebrating and idealizing gender or by stigmatizing and polluting gender nonconformity.

Gender hegemony and sexual hegemony intersect so that both masculinity and heterosexuality are deemed superior and femininity and homosexuality (and alternative sexualities) are judged to be inferior. The social construction of men and women as naturally different, complementary, and hierarchical sanctions heterosexuality as the normal and natural form of sexuality and masculine men and feminine women as the normal and natural gender presentation; any sexual or gender construction outside of these dichotomies is considered abnormal. Heteronormativity then reproduces a sexual social structure based on an unequal sexual binary—heterosexuality and homosexuality—that is dependent upon the alleged natural sexual attraction of two and only two opposite and complementary sexes and that in turn constructs heteromasculine and heterofeminine difference. Nevertheless, some heterosexual practices are more powerful than other heterosexual practices; that is, normative heterosexuality determines its own social structure and thus internal boundaries as well as marginalizing and sanctioning sexualities outside those boundaries.

ADDITIONAL MASCULINITIES AND FEMININITIES

In addition to hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity, structured action theory identifies additional distinct masculinities and femininities: dominant, dominating, subordinate, and positive. To review (from chapter 1) and add femininities to the theoretical picture, “dominant” masculinities and femininities differ from hegemonic masculinities and emphasized femininities in that they are not always associated with and linked to gender hegemony but refer fundamentally to the most celebrated, common, or current form of masculinity and femininity in a particular social setting (see also Beasley, 2008; 2013). “Dominating” masculinities and femininities are similar to dominant masculinities and femininities but differ in the sense that they involve commanding and controlling specific interactions and exercising power and control over people and events—“calling the shots” and “running the show.” Dominant and dominating masculinities and femininities do not necessarily legitimize a hierarchical relationship between men and women, masculinity and femininity. Although hegemonic masculinities and emphasized femininities at times may also be dominant or dominating, dominant and dominating masculinities and femininities are never hegemonic or emphasized if they fail culturally to legitimate unequal gender relations; in this latter scenario, dominant and dominating masculinities are thereby constructed outside relations of gender hegemony. However, dominant and dominating masculinities and femininities necessarily acquire meaning only in relation to other masculinities and femininities (see Beasley, 2008; 2013; Messerschmidt, 2008; 2010; 2012; 2014).

“Subordinate” masculinities and femininities refer to those masculinities and femininities situationally constructed as lesser than or aberrant and deviant to hegemonic masculinity or emphasized femininity as well as dominant/dominating masculinities and femininities. Depending upon the particular context, such subordination can be conceptualized in terms of, for example, race, class, age, sexualities, or body display/behavior. Given the discussion above, it should be obvious that one of the most significant forms of subordination is that of gay boys/men and lesbian girls/women—the former are culturally feminized and the latter culturally masculinized. In a gender and heteronormative hegemonic culture, then, gayness is socially defined as the embodiment of whatever is expelled from hegemonic masculinity and lesbianism is demarcated as the embodiment of whatever is expelled from
emphasized femininity. Related to this, a second form of subordination usually occurs if there is incongruence within sex-gender-heterosexuality practices. For example, girls and women perceived as female who construct bodily practices defined as masculine, such as expressing sexual desire for girls (“dyke”), acting sexually promiscuous (“slut”), and/or presenting as authoritarian, physically aggressive, or take-charge (“bitch”) are viewed as polluting “normal” and “natural” hegemonic gender and sexual relations and often are verbally, socially, and physically subordinated (Schippers, 2007). Similarly, individuals perceived as male but who construct practices defined as feminine, such as sexually desiring boys or simply practicing celibacy (“fag”), being passive, compliant, or shy (“sissy”), and/or being physically weak or unadventurous (“wimp”) likewise are seen as polluting “normal” and “natural” hegemonic gender and sexual relations and often are verbally, socially, and physically subordinated (Schippers, 2007). Social structures that actualize unequal gender and sexual relations then are sustained in part through the subordination of the above genders and sexualities. Finally, subordination can also occur amongst individuals who construct situationally accountable masculinities and femininities. For example, the masculinity of a son may be judged to be subordinate to the masculinity of his father, and the femininity of a daughter may be considered subordinate to the femininity of her mother. Both of these forms of subordination occur primarily by reason of age, not because of any incongruence between sex and gender, and usually are established in relation to dominant/dominating masculinities and femininities and thus practiced independent of gender hegemony.

“Positive” masculinities and femininities are those that actually may help legitimize an egalitarian relationship between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities and femininities, and therefore are constructed exterior to gender hegemonic relational and discursive structures in any particular setting. Such masculinities and femininities do not assume a normal and natural relationship to sex and sexuality and usually are not constructed as naturally complementary.

Structured action theory permits investigation of the different ways men and women experience their everyday worlds from their particular positions in society and how they relate to other men and women; the embodied sex, gender, and sexual practices are associated with the specific context of individual action and are for the most part self-regulated—through reflexivity—within that context; social actors self-regulate their behavior and make specific reflexive choices in specific socially structured contexts. In this way, then, men and women construct varieties of sex, gender, and sexuality through specific embodied practices. And by emphasizing diversity in sex, gender, and sexual construction, we achieve a more fluid and situated approach to our understanding of embodied sexes, genders, and sexualities.

**EMBODIMENT**

As I have emphasized, constructing sex, gender, and sexuality entails embodied social practices—reflexive structured action. Only through our bodies do we experience the social world, and the very possibility of a social world rests upon our embodiment (Crossley, 2001). As Iris Marion Young (1990: 147–148) long ago pointed out:

> It is the body in its orientation toward and action upon and within its surroundings that constitutes the initial meaning-given act. The body is the first locus of intentionality, as pure presence to the world and openness upon its possibilities. The most primordial intentional act is the motion of the body orienting itself with respect to and moving within its surroundings.
We understand the world from our embodied place in it and our perceptual awareness of situational surrounding space. The body is a sensuous being—it perceives, it touches, and it feels; it is a lived body, and given that consciousness consists of perceptual sensations, it is therefore part of the body and not a separate substance (Crossley, 2001). The mind and the body are inseparably linked—a binary divide is a fiction—and live together as one in the social construction of sex, gender, and sexuality. In this conceptualization, then, the body forms the whole of our being and, therefore, one’s reflexive sexed, gendered, and sexual self is located in the body, which in turn acts, and is acted upon, within a social environment. And in contemporary industrialized societies the body is central to the social construction of self (Giddens, 1991). A proficient and able body is necessary for social action and, therefore, embodied discipline is fundamental to the competent social agent: “It is integral to the very nature both of agency and of being accepted (trusted) by others as competent” (p. 100).

Related to the above is Pat Martin’s (2003) differentiation between “gender practices” and “practicing gender.” The term “gender practices” refers to forms of embodied behavior that are structurally “available” in specific social settings for individuals “to enact in an encounter or situation in accord with (or in violation of) the gender institution” (p. 354). In other words, these are potential, situationally available embodied structured actions “that people know about and have the capacity or agency to do, assert, perform, or mobilize” (p. 354). The term “practicing gender” entails actually “doing” the situationally available embodied sexed, gender, and sexual practices and is usually accomplished with copresent interactants and usually reflexively. To do gender reflexively individuals must “carefully consider the content of one’s actions and act only after careful consideration of the intent, content, and effects of one’s behavior” (p. 356). Although we make reflexive choices to act in particular ways, that reflexivity is based on the situationally embodied gender practices associated with contextual relational and discursive social structures.

Through embodied structured action individuals “do” sex, gender, and sexuality while simultaneously reproducing structures and presenting such practices as resources for others as a consequence of their embodiment. The social situations in which embodied actions are oriented “are populated by others and it is these others, in part, towards whom the actions are oriented. Action is other oriented” (Crossley, 1995: 141). Embodied social action is embedded within the specific social structural context of the agent, so that what we actually conceptualize are social situations that require specific “practical accommodation from our action” (p. 136)—we reflexively respect, acknowledge, reproduce, and sometimes resist structured embodied practices. And as Goffman (1979: 6) acutely observes, such embodied actions are situational forms of “social portraiture” in which individuals discursively convey information that “the others in the gathering will need in order to manage their own courses of action—which knowledgability he [sic] in turn must count on in carrying out his [sic] own designs.” Doing sex, gender, and sexuality therefore is necessarily both reflexive and physical; it is intelligent, meaningful, structured, and embodied.

Bodies are active in the production and transmission of social structures as well as embodied social actions, and are based on the reaction of others to our embodiment—whether or not it is judged accountable is important to our sense of self. Embodied accountability is vital to an individual’s situational recognition as a competent sexed, gendered, and sexual social agent. If an individual’s embodied appearance and practice is categorized by others as “failed,” that degradation may result in a spoiled self-concept and identity (Goffman, 1968). Consequently, adequate participation in social life depends upon the successful presenting, monitoring, and interpreting of bodies.
Goffman helps us understand how doing sex, gender, and sexuality are socially structured in the sense that we accomplish all three bodily and in a manner that is accountable to situationally populated others. Individuals exhibit embodied sex, gender, and sexual competence through their appearance and by producing situationally appropriate "behavioral styles" that respond properly to the styles produced by others. In other words, "competent" individuals develop an embodied capacity to provide and to read structured discursive depictions of sex, gender, and sexuality in particular settings, and appropriate body management is crucial to the smooth flow of interaction essential to satisfactory attribution and accountability by others. To be "read" by others as male, female, masculine, feminine, straight, gay, lesbian, etc., individuals must ensure that their proffered selves are maintained through situationally appropriate display and behavior—the body is social and social settings are created through intercorporeality.

But in addition, properly accountable bodies construct relational and discursive social structures and they signal and facilitate through their appearance and action the maintenance of sex, gender, and sexual power dynamics. To be sure, suitably adorned and comported bodies constitute the "shadow and the substance" of unequal sex, gender, and sexual structures (Goffman, 1979: 6): "The expression of subordination and domination through the swarm of situational means is more than a mere tracing of symbol or ritualistic affirmation of social hierarchy. These expressions considerably constitute the hierarchy; they are the shadow and the substance." Individuals produce (and at times challenge) socially structured sex, gender, and sexual relations through their embodied appearance and actions.

The body is an essential part of sex, gender, and sexual construction in which we fashion appearance and actions to create properly and situationally adorned and performed bodies. The body is an inescapable and integral part of doing sex, gender, and sexuality, entailing social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do; it is not social practice reduced to the body (Connell, 2000). Constructing sex, gender, and sexuality involves a dialectical relationship in which practice deals with the biological characteristics of bodies: "It gives them a social determination. The connection between social and natural structures is one of practical relevance, not causation" (Connell, 1987: 78). In the social construction of sex, gender, and sexuality bodily similarities between men and women are negated and suppressed, whereas bodily differences are exaggerated. Indeed, the body is essential to, for example, the discourse of "two and only two sexes" in the sense that "men have penises and women do not." The body is significant for our fundamental sex, gender, and sexual projects discussed above, our sense of sex, gender, and sexual self that we reflexively sustain through time and space. Bodies impact our recurring self-attributions and thus one's identity as male or female, masculine or feminine, and straight or gay. Because "sex" is associated with genitalia there is likely to be a degree of social standardization of individual lives—we recursively construct ourselves as, for example, a "boy/man" or as a "girl/woman" with a particular sexual orientation and thus such identities constrain and enable our social action. For most people sex is the primary claimed identity that is relatively solid, unchanging, and taken-for-granted while gender and sexuality are qualifiers to the previously assumed sex (Paechter, 2006). Nevertheless, some turn this on its head—such as certain transgender people—whereby sex is the qualifier and gender is the primary mode in which one relates to the world (p. 250).

Bodies participate in social action by delineating courses of social conduct: bodies are agents of social practice and, given the context, will do certain things and not others; our bodies are supplemental constraints and enablers of social action and therefore they situationally mediate and influence social practices (Connell,
sexual challenges may motivate social action toward specific situationally embodied practices that attempt to correct the subordinating social situation (Messerschmidt 1993; 1997; 2000; 2004; 2010; 2012; 2014). Given that such interactions question, undermine, and/or threaten one’s sex, gender, or sexuality, only contextually “appropriate” sex, gender, and sexual embodied practices can help overcome the challenge. The existence of sex, gender, and sexual challenges alerts us to the transitory and fleeting nature of sex, gender, and sexual construction and to how particular forms of social action may arise as sexed, gendered, or sexual practices when they are regularly threatened and contested.

Social action is never simply an autonomous event but is amalgamated into larger assemblages—what is labeled here as socially structured embodied actions. The socially structured situational ideals of sex, gender, and sexuality encourage specific lines of social action, and relational and discursive social structures shape the capacities from which sex, gender, and sexuality actions are constructed over time. Men and boys and women and girls negotiate the situations that face them in everyday life and in the process pursue a sex, gender, and sexuality project. From this perspective, then, social action is often—but not always—designed with an eye to one’s sex, gender, and sexual accountability individually, bodily, situationally, and structurally. Structured action theory, then, permits us to explore how and in what respects sex, gender, and sexual embodied practices are constituted in certain settings at certain times. In short, to understand masculinities, we must appreciate how structure and action are woven inextricably into the ongoing reflexive activities of “doing” embodied sex, gender, and sexual practices.

Let us now turn to the application of structured action theory (in chapters 3, 4, and 5) to the data generated in the life-history interview and content analysis studies outlined in the introduction.