

**Theorising Progressive Change  
Among Men**

**by**

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To everyone – thanks a bunch. It's been huge.

# Abstract

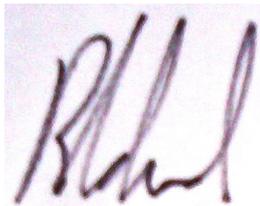
In bringing about progressive change in gender relations it is strategically sensible to portray change as also being beneficial for men themselves. This thesis argues that the best-known theory of masculinity, by R.W. Connell, is unable to foster progressive change among men because its interpretation of Gramsci's hegemony theorises gender relations as arising only from patriarchy. I use Laclau and Mouffe's post-structuralist account of hegemony to highlight how general processes of meaning-creation become stabilised via activism into discourses, out of which the material structures of social life are created when people take up subject positions in discourses. Goffman's interactionist notion of 'frames' is used to describe how social life proceeds as multiple discourses in social action, while personal identity is 'assembled' from multiple discursive subject positions.

This view is used to re-frame the gender phenomena described by Connell as the discourse of patriarchy, albeit a major and long-established discourse among several discourses dealing with gender. Connell's 'masculinities' describe only the variety of men's relationships in the discourse of patriarchy, while 'hegemonic masculinity' is the privileged subject position 'men' in that discourse. The multi-discourse view of social life draws attention to several vectors of major change in the discourse of patriarchy, as well as suggesting the possibilities for significant change in men's gender identity. Finally I argue that most men's current experience of gender is better described as an impasse for men between the discourses of patriarchy and feminism, that the entire range of men's activism can be seen as responses to this impasse rather than as merely support for or rejection of patriarchy, and that progressive change among men can be fostered by a re-appraisal of notions of legitimacy and equality arising in the discourses of patriarchy and feminism.

### **Certification**

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Bloodwood', is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B'.

David Bloodwood  
21 December 010

# Contents

<b>1 Men and Change .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Creating new knowledge .....	2
Epistemological reflection: ‘reframing’ knowledge .....	6
Structuralism, post-structuralism and pragmatism .....	9
The potential for a proactive sociology of masculinity .....	13
Politics and strategy .....	15
Silence and suspicion.....	17
‘Inclusive’ activism .....	19
Fostering progressive change among men .....	20
<b>2 The Field of Masculinity Theory.....</b>	<b>23</b>
History of conceptual development .....	25
The sociology of masculinity.....	26
Psychology .....	29
History .....	31
The Post-structural convergence .....	33
Feminist critiques and engagements .....	41
<b>3 The Connellian Framework .....</b>	<b>48</b>
Connell’s intellectual background .....	48
Connell on gender .....	52
The social landscape and hegemony .....	56
Connell’s politics.....	60
Hegemony the concept.....	65
<b>4 Hegemony and Meaning.....</b>	<b>73</b>
Laclau and Mouffe’s terrain of politics.....	74
The Logic of equivalence and the notion of ‘centre’ .....	83
Discourses and nodal points.....	87
The Connellian framework as a discourse.....	91
<b>5 Multiple Discourses in Social Life .....</b>	<b>94</b>
Multiple discourses in social action .....	95

Multiple discourses in identity .....	101
Multiple discourses and progressive change .....	108
<b>6 The Force of Discourses .....</b>	<b>110</b>
The creation of new discourses .....	110
Domination and gradients in capacity .....	117
Defining hegemony and discourse .....	123
<b>7 Re-framing Connell .....</b>	<b>130</b>
Connellian framework as a discourse .....	131
Hegemonic masculinity .....	134
Subordination .....	140
Marginalisation .....	141
Complicity .....	143
Femininities .....	145
Conclusion .....	147
<b>8 The Dimensions of Change .....</b>	<b>150</b>
Summary of multi-discourse view .....	150
The limitations of Connell .....	152
The dimensions of possible change .....	154
Changes internal to a discourse .....	155
Marginalisation and identity .....	163
<b>9 Theorising Progressive Change among Men ...</b>	<b>168</b>
 <b>Bibliography .....</b>	 <b>183</b>