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The
Connellian
Framework

Given my dissatisfaction with the products and effects of masculinity theory, it makes sense to examine more closely the most influential framework in the field in order to answer several key questions about its structure and operation. I cover the following questions in the first three sections of this chapter: What does the framework say, that is, what are its overt content and ostensible agenda and statements? How does the framework 'produce' its content, that is, how is the framework built, what elements does it include and how does it employ those elements? And what has it added to the field in terms of knowledge about masculinity?

In the final section of the chapter I sketch some preliminary problems with the framework, which I argue generates the framework's constricted field of political possibilities for men around change. These criticisms are preliminary in the sense of delineating areas for a more detailed investigation, which proceeds in the remainder of the thesis.

Connell's intellectual background

Raewyn Connell (formerly R.W. Connell) is one of Australia's most well-known sociologists, whose first published work was a study of "the extreme right" in the 1966 by-

election for the NSW state seat of Warringah (Connell & Gould 1967). His PhD thesis, *The Child's Construction of Politics* (Connell 1971), used in-depth interviews with primary school children to explore how children become aware of and are influenced by national politics. This was followed by a book chapter (with Terry Irving) in 1973, *Yes, Virginia, there is a ruling class*, arguing that the then-popular self-conception of Australia as a classless society was actually a story promulgated by a ruling class for its own ends. The piece reveals a committed orthodox Marxism:

> When we talk of a 'ruling class' we are talking about the way society as a whole is organised. The fundamental institutions of property have the effect of placing social power in the hands of a class of owners… The system as a whole is structured in the interests of one class. (Connell & Irving 1973:35)

Working class people "live under heavy psychological pressures", and "the culture of capitalism" offers an empty "ethic …[of] personal achievement, money and competitive success…" All these pressures are "impositions by the ruling class", and those who suffer inside them are unable to "see where the pressure is coming from." (Connell and Irving 1973:44)

In *Yes, Virginia…* Connell analyses Australian society and politics using a Marxist lens, while adpating elements of Marxism to the Australian situation. If *Yes, Virginia* reveals Connell as the "enfant terrible" of Australian sociology, his landmark 1977 book put Connell firmly on the map. *Ruling Class Ruling Culture: Studies of Power, Conflict and Hegemony in Australian Life* (Connell 1977) "…attempted as a one-man task the almost impossible – to rewrite Australian sociology from the point of view of class analysis" (Szelinski 1979:1313). Connell himself says the work is his "own attempts to reckon with the problem of hegemony" (Connell 1983: 3). One of the principal steps towards this is to reject the understanding of class as a social category and instead to see it as an event emerging out of history:

> If class is … an event, rather than a category… then we need an approach to class that makes it possible to reveal its historical emergence and analyse it as *a causal pattern…* [T]his type of theory underlies this book. Capitalist society… develops a class structure, and it is *this structure as a whole that is primary.* (Connell 1977:5, emphasis added)

So although Connell recognises the created nature of class, he nevertheless sees in class a master-key to understanding 'society'. This belief in the theoretical primacy of a single explanatory factor appears again in his work on gender, but reformulated as patriarchy rather than class.

The next major milestone in Connell's development was the 1983 collection of essays *Which Way is Up?,* which in a preface Connell notes all "have a common approach, a concern with practice as a way to the understanding of power and liberation" (Connell 1983:viii). Power and liberation are crucial for Connell because, as Howson (Howson 2005:42) puts it, "overcoming the problem of hegemony, or in other words achieving a balance between power and liberation, is the attainment of social justice.". This comment reveals a view of "power" *as opposed to* a desirable social outcome rather than, as Foucault (1998; 1980) argues, a resource for its attainment.

But Connell was very keen to develop Marxist thinking along other lines. His notion of "historicity" (1983:59-62) is a rejection of the fixed "categoricalism" (1987:54-61) that wants to divide the world into definite and clear classes, groups or categories. Instead, he wanted to emphasise the "generative nature of social phenomena through the efficacy of people in their everyday lives" (Howson 2005:41), that is, social phenomena are created through practice.

Another closely related concern for Connell is the issue of how change in social phenomena occurs over time. In another essay in the 1983 collection ("The Black Box…") he critiques the Marxist notion of a relatively mechanical 'social reproduction' of fixed social entities:

> If anything is 'reproduced' it is not a 'relation' or a 'structure' but a *situation*; and this is not strictly reproduced, but generated out of the situation before. (Connell 1983:150)

Situations have specific "traps" which exist not only "because of 'misrecognition' or an 'ideological effect'. It is a question of the structure of possibilities in the actual situations…", including bodily limitations, interpersonal relationships and so on (1983:150). Instead, a better approach involves "analyses of the possibilities and the traps in the situations various groups face" (1983:156).

Regarding gender, then, Connell's insight about the generative nature of practice and the concomitant focus on 'situation' leads him to conclude that

> A theory of patriarchy does not require a 'key', 'core', 'central' relation that organises all the rest. We may regard its unity as a *composed* unity, the (fleeting) product of the history of many processes, which always show some incoherence, some contradictions. (Connell 1983: 56)

This approach sits oddly with his subsequent account of gender relations (1987:109, see below for full discussion), in which he argues "There is a core in the power

structure of gender…" – although he does temper this by saying that that core comes "not the unity of a *system*," or a logical unity but an "empirical unification" (1987:116), presumably of juxtaposed practices.

As I will show through the main body of this chapter, Connell conveys a deep ambivalence around whether it is possible to conceptualise social phenomena as arising entirely from processes or whether it is still necessary to hold on to concepts which play an ontological role in social theory. In a sense one could view the trajectory of theoretical development across Connell's career as a gradual shift from classic Marxism towards a fully process-based social theory. But, at least in his work on gender, he stops short of being fully process-based because he fears that such theory will lack the crucial earthy saltiness of politics – that is, contestations over social power. His critique of the early post-structuralist work is telling here:

> Postmodernism, justifiably sceptical of the idea of a pre-political individual, also rejects the collectivist alternative and the idea of a 'foundation' for politics. With the 'grand narratives' of modernity discredited, politics in Postmodernity becomes a kaleidoscope of assertions and resistances whose end no one can formulate, let alone see. (Connell 1995:229).

Connell's enormous contribution to social science is to, in effect, insert politics into three large fields where politics was hitherto unspeakable: Australian sociology (1977); masculinity studies (1987, 1995); and global sociology (2007). This is a spectacular achievement by any measure but, as an early critic points out, "We should be aware that the subordination of theory to the ends of political practice is the end of theory" (Szelinski 1979:1315). Connell's political goal is "social justice" – indeed, in every work examined in this thesis Connell explicitly states this. But this goal is just taken as read; it is never argued for, nor is its constitution ever examined or its creation as a concept explicated.   Hence, as I show in detail below, 'social justice' operates for Connell as a fixed ontological ground, and hence for all its useful theoretical developments his social theory ends where it does not appear to support his political goal. Although he is progressing theoretically towards a conception of the social which has no centre or core relation, his conception of 'social justice' cuts across this progression, acting as a single unifying concept. To be sure, unlike classic Marxists, Connell recognises that class and patriarchy arise from history – they are not found to inherently exist.   What is perhaps unique to Connell, however, is that his theory still contains a concept which appears to inherently exist, but this concept exists in a desired future which is yet to be achieved, rather than in history.

As a brief preview of the next chapter, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue that such concepts as social justice are simply not enactable as a uniform quality throughout democracies because of the open nature of the democratic social space. They make an argument from the linguistic creation of meaning to call for a more limited goal of "radical and plural democracy", in effect a proliferating tapestry of subordinations and legitimations which, taken together, can largely balance each other but can never entirely do away with subordination.

Connell on gender

With Connell's intellectual heritage in mind, I now turn to a close examination of his theory of gender. What I am calling the Connellian framework appears in Connell's two most influential books on gender: *Gender and Power* (Connell 1987) and *Masculinities* (Connell 1995). Although published some years later, the second book, more specifically about masculinity, obviously builds on the conceptual foundations about gender as an entire system which were laid out in the earlier volume. Although the Connellian framework offers a comprehensive account of both social-level processes and personal-level processes, this thesis focuses upon the account of power and politics which Connell introduces into masculinity theory, most especially Connell's use of the concept of hegemony. Thus my discussion below leaves out discussion of Connell's account of psychological processes in the individual.

In addition, the second book encapsulates most of the first book's conceptual development into one chapter. Hence the earlier work offers a more detailed argument for the account of "the Social Organisation of Masculinity" presented as Chapter 3 of the second book. Because I will closely analyse the Connellian framework in detail, the summary of Connell's view of power and politics I present here comes largely from the earlier book.

Biology and gender

With respect to gender, Connell's framework first of all delineates between biology and 'the social'. A major difficulty in theorising gender is its very obvious association with the biological facts of sexual dimorphism, and this association easily gives rise to "doctrines of natural difference" (1987:67). Connell clearly and elegantly argues that "The connection between social and natural structures is one of *practical relevance*, not of causation.". (1987:78) The significant thing is that certain aspects of

bodies become incorporated and transformed in social process "by cognitive and interpretive practices" (1987:78), and so become enacted in social life.

Practice and structure

The conceptual foundation of Connell's framework is a sketch of social process which he calls a "theory of practice". He centralises the issue of "practice as the substance of social process"(1987:93), while social structure is "the pattern of constraint on practice inherent in a set of social relations" (1987:97). At the same time, "practice can be turned against what constrains it" (1987:95), and this allows the possibility of liberation politics.

From a mixture of recent "detailed research on women's subordination" (1987:96), and "the issues raised by gay liberation, by psychoanalysis and by feminist arguments of sexuality" (1987:97), Connell distils three key structures which shape relations of gender: labour – the arrangements of work; power – arrangements to do with formalised authority and the state; and cathexis – arrangements to do with emotional relations.

The most significant structure in Connell's account is power. "[T]he main axis of the power structure of gender is the general connection of authority with masculinity" (1987:109). At the same time there is another axis that denies authority to some groups of men and sets up "hierarchies of authority and centrality within the major gender categories" (1987:109). This in turn means that "There is a core in the power structure of gender…" (1987:109), which revolves around four main areas: institutionalised violence; heavy industry; the central state; and working class men's toughness and connection with machinery.

A highly significant ideological artefact associated with this core is the image of masculine toughness. Actual men rarely if ever fit the image, and that is not its purpose. Rather, the image works because it *contrasts to* most men, setting up a hierarchy of men close to and further from the image, as well as categories of men *against which* the image is defined. From this he suggests there are at least three positions in the masculine hierarchy: hegemonic masculinity, conservative masculinities (i.e. men complicit with the agenda of the 'core') and subordinated masculinities, (1987:110) somewhat similar to the notion of social classes in capitalism.

Of the two other main structures, labour is mostly organised around the logic of capitalist accumulation and the use of masculinity as an economic resource (1987:105),

while cathexis is shaped by the polarisation involved in heterosexuality and the "shadow structure" (1987:114) of emotional relationships.

A fundamental point he makes is that his three main structures all have differing organisational principles. This means that, firstly, analysis of each has to proceed along quite different lines and, secondly, the intersections of each with the others cannot be assumed from the examination of only one, or extrapolated from their structures. Nevertheless, there is a "unity in the field," which is "not the unity of a *system*," or a logical unity but an "empirical unification" (1987:116), presumably in the juxtaposition of practices.

Gender regimes and the gender order

With this conceptual skeleton in place, he proceeds to explore how the three main structures manifest as "gender regimes" (1987:99) in actual situations or "milieux" (1987:109). He posits that, while most gender theory looks at either the personal or the social levels, the connecting arena between these two is in actual social practice in institutions (1987:119). He examines how his three main gendered structures (i.e. labour, power and cathexis) pervade three main social institutions – the family, the state, and the street – shaping both the way these sites are structured as well as shaping the relationships between people at these sites.

Connell draws all this together into a picture of a macro-level 'gender order'. But the gender order is not a simply concatenation of all the various analytical levels he has presented so far. Key to his theory is that the gender order is politically contested and historically constructed around 'interests' (1987:137) as people interact with and are affected by the existence of

> … inequality and oppression. The interests are articulated by processes of mobilisation that define collective goals and strategies. (1987:137-138)

> The conflict of interest on this society-wide scale, the formation and dissolution of general categories and the ordering of relationships between institutions, together amount to a macro-politics of gender. This is analytically distinct from, though at all points linked to, the face-to-face issues that are the usual sense of 'sexual politics.' The 'gender order' … can be defined dynamically as the current state of play in this macro-politics. (1987: 139)

In conclusion Connell sees gender as a "a linking concept" that links "other fields of social practice to the nodal practices of engendering, childbirth and parenting" (1987:140).

Now Connell turns to explicating what 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are, and how they are generated at the level of the institution or milieu. He sketches how his three main structures which generate the gendered social landscape – labour, power and cathexis – pervade specific workplaces and erotic relationships in such a way as to imply that individuals must have a 'sexual character': either 'masculine' or 'feminine'. But in addition people enact a specific flavour of masculinity or femininity, depending on the setting, on the groups present, and on the relationships between the groups and the individuals.

Power as hegemony

At the very large scale, however, "the organisation of gender... must be more skeletal and simplified" than at the face-to-face level in milieux. Femininity and masculinity operate mainly symbolically at this level, and are thus

> ...stylised and impoverished. Their interrelation is centred on a single structural fact, the global dominance of men over women. (1987:183)

Men's global dominance

> provides the main basis for relationships among men that define a hegemonic form of masculinity in the society as a whole. ... The interplay between different forms of masculinity is an important part of how a patriarchal social order works. (1987:183)

Because hegemony is maintained over millions of people, at which level "the easily symbolised aspects of interaction become more prominent," hegemonic masculinity mainly operates for men as an ideal image or symbol, rather than being "what most men are." (1987:184) "[L]arge numbers of men are motivated to support it", most probably because "most men benefit from women's subordination, and hegemonic masculinity is the cultural expression of this ascendancy." (1987:185)

Hegemonic masculinity is also more sharply defined than other masculinities, which is part of the mechanism of its ascendancy. But the most important aspect of hegemonic masculinity is that it is heterosexual, closely connected to the institution of marriage, and significantly shaping men's relations with women and with homosexuality. (1987:186)

Femininity is not a mirror image of masculinity; there is no hegemony possible in femininity. But an 'emphasised' femininity is complicit in men's dominance (1987:183).

The social landscape and hegemony

In summary, humans rely on sexual dimorphism for reproduction, but this biological morphology does not determine patterns of behaviour peculiar to each sex. People enact practices which are recognisably patterned along familiar gendered lines via cognitive and interpretive practices, and the persistence of patterns in all these practices produce social structures. Structures in turn 'constrain' practices, i.e. operate as the container in which practices are enacted. Three principal structures pervade social life: labour, power and cathexis. All of these structures are also gendered, in that the practices enacting them are never gender neutral but have a gendered dimension.

Connell argues that institutions are the meeting point of the macro, society-wide level and the micro, personal level, i.e. institutions are where individual practices intersect with structures. He asserts there are three major institutions: the family, the state, and the street. Each institution is enacted as the relations shaped in the three social structures: relations of labour, of power and of cathexis, so that all aspects of these major social institutions emerge within those three broad categories of relations. These three types of relations in each institution are in turn enacted through people's concrete practices at the material sites or milieux in which the institutions occur.

This largely structuralist account of the social landscape is introduced and argued for in some detail. He takes most of a chapter to argue in detail for his conception of the association between biology and social formations of gender (1987:Ch 4). His discussion about the conceptual linkages between practice and structure are carefully developed in a whole chapter (1987:Ch 3), and the concept of practice is subsequently further expanded in the notion of body-reflexive practice (1995:Ch 2). And, although I have not summarised this part of the framework, his account of how social structures and processes become part of individual identity is once again thoroughly argued for and introduced over three chapters (1987:Chs 8-10).

Nevertheless, as Connell argues in the early chapters of both books, pure structuralism has massive conceptual and political shortcomings. Because of Connell's awareness of these shortcomings, he is at some pains to highlight the dynamic and open-ended nature of practice as the crucible in which structures are formed. But practice is not entirely open-ended. Practice is shaped by some force – as Connell says, practice is 'constrained' and, in his account, practice is constrained by the structural elements of the settings in which practices are enacted.

This gives us a picture of a circular relation between practice and structure: structure enables and limits practice, practice enacts structure. But some structures and practices endure across the social space – that is, specific patterns, such as women's inequality, persist. It is here that Connell employs some important non-material elements. First are the "cognitive and interpretive practices" (1987:78) which shape the social expression of biological dimorphism. More importantly, relations of power, already substantially shaped by "the general connection of authority with masculinity" (1987:109) and its closely associated image of masculine toughness (1987:110), are central in this conceptual landscape. Finally, the "empirical unification" (1987:116) observed across his structures of labour, power and cathexis is a recognisable similarity in patterns of practices rather than a determined or structured unity.

What is notable about all these non-material elements is that Connell simply asserts their existence, in contrast to the material or structural elements which are comprehensively argued for. This weakness in Connell's development of non-material conceptual elements is the principal shortcoming of the Connellian framework which I address in this thesis. I will now show the crucial role played by non-material concepts in the framework, and explore how the weak development of non-material concepts leads to the limitations of the framework.

Possibly the most dynamic and active forces in the Connellian account are the conflicts and tensions arising from "interests" flowing from the existence of inequality and oppression (1987:137). The inequalities and their related interests occur between large entities such as "general categories" and/or "institutions" (1987:139). At this large scale the non-material aspects of social life become more significant as a shaping force: although (presumably material) "mobilisations" occur, they "articulate" or "define" more symbolically developed "collective goals and strategies" (1987:139). And although this is large-scale social process, at the same time the micro, inter-personal, level of social life is also pervaded by and significantly shaped by the macro. An important example of this macro-micro interaction is in the structural relations of labour, power and cathexis, which have impact at the personal level by implying that people must be either male or female, masculine or feminine.

The Connellian account so far sets the scene for his most crucial addition to the field of masculinity theory: the relation between power and gender. I will summarise the state of play to this point as two important moves. Firstly, he has concluded that gender

operates as 'a linking concept', linking the biology of sexual dimorphism and its attendant physical aspects to the rest of social life. I agree that this is a good way to conceive of gender: the existence of sexual dimorphism must be taken up in every human culture in some way, just as other concrete aspects of human morphology must be. In Western cultures sexual dimorphism is taken up via 'gender', in which masculinity and femininity are recognisable patterns of practices, though their details vary with location and milieu.

Secondly, he has established a structural frame that encompasses the entire social landscape: persistent practices create structures; practices occur in institutional milieux; institutions are shaped by the relations inherent in structures. Three key structures are the relations of labour, power and cathexis; while three key institutions are the family, the state and the street. However all these six key formations emerge from contestations of interests; they do not simply flow effortlessly out of people's practices. Gender pervades social life but not simply as the cultural incorporation of biological morphology. In addition gender has a decidedly political or contentious element to it via the "general connection of authority with masculinity" (1987:109) – in other words, one gender has authority while the other does not.

With this conceptual skeleton in place, Connell simply asserts that there exists a "single structural fact" which "provides the main basis for relationships among men" as well as acting as the centre of relations between femininity and masculinity (1987:183). Connell expresses this "fact" variously as "the global dominance of men over women," "the global subordination of women to men," and "men's dominance over women" (1987:183, 185). There is no discussion about the relation between this structural fact and other structures he has identified: does its appellation as a 'fact' perhaps distinguish it from other structures which emerge from practice? Nor is there any description or specification of what is denoted by the adjective 'single': does this mean it is pre-eminent among structures? Or perhaps that it has some specific but unspecified property of internal cohesiveness? Despite this uncharacteristic vagueness, this 'fact' plays an absolutely crucial role in the Connellian framework. From this 'fact' the interests entailed in the masculine and feminine formations of gender flow out in a straightforward manner, and hence the 'fact' shapes the entire terrain of gender in a fundamental and pervasive manner.

In terms of theory construction, however, Connell is at pains to avoid the traps of structuralism, which means that men's domination of women cannot appear to exist prior

to social process. That is, men's domination cannot be theorised as uncontested (1995:76) even though it is a "structural" fact. Connell resolves this problem by drawing on the concept of hegemony to encapsulate his thinking here, that is, the Gramscian idea of a small group of people "which claims and sustains a leading position in social life" via "the successful claim to authority" (1995:77). This group enjoys a "social ascendancy" which is "achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organisation of private life and cultural processes" (1987:184). Everybody stands in some relation to this hegemony via the formulation of interests, but that relation varies enormously: some people's interests lie in supporting it, others' interests are in opposing it, and every variation in between. (1987:137)

In this account hegemony pervades social life and has the effect of evoking or calling forth a tapestry of varied relations between a wide variety of groups of people and the hegemonic group. It is this specific formulation of the concept of hegemony which Connell uses as the framework upon which he hangs his four main types of masculinity: hegemonic, complicit, subordinated and marginalised (1995:77-81). Hegemonic masculinity is the embodiment of social hegemony overall in that it "embodies a 'currently accepted' strategy… for the defence of patriarchy" (1995:77). The other masculinities have different relationships with hegemonic masculinity but all have *some sort of* relationship with it.

My focus here is only partly in how Connell defines hegemony, since as I will show below, the concept itself is immensely slippery, even in the works of Gramsci, its most well-known proponent. The main point I wish to highlight here, however, is the work which hegemony does in the Connellian framework. The framework's conceptual underpinnings create a picture of social life as arising out of conflict and contestation in open-ended processes but, at least in regard to gender, resulting in the known outcome that there is a hegemonic masculinity of some sort which always creates a patriarchy of some sort. There is no account of the emergence of that specific masculine hegemony, or of how the crucial cultural association of masculinity with authority arises at all, or how it intersects with social power. As I have shown above, Connell painstakingly develops his concepts of structure arising out of processes of practice, of processes of interaction across structures, institutions and milieux, and of the processes of personal identity not examined here. But this process-oriented view all comes down with a bump at the point where Connell explains the forces shaping the relations in the arena of gender: there is a

single structural fact of men's domination, and no matter what practices are enacted from time to time, no matter what or who is considered 'hegemonic' at any moment, this domination will always ensue.

Such a bald and simplistic view, however, is not acceptable to a rigorous thinker such as Connell. Men's domination cannot appear to be guaranteed in advance, because the logical failure of the structuralist approach is that structure exists prior to social process and therefore determines it. In this light hegemony is an attractive concept because it explicitly incorporates the possibility of the contestation of power and, at the same time, seems to also address the durability and resilience of the most persistent social formations.

On this account hegemony does a great deal of work in the Connellian framework: it must obscure Connell's structuralist view of gender relations by clothing his view in a complexity which has a certain modicum of indeterminism. Connell uses it to *suggest* open-ended social contestation but this contestation occurs in apparently very extensive but nevertheless vague and ill-defined "cultural processes". It is almost as though in the Connellian framework hegemony as a concept has the effect of being the gold trimmings on the gilded cage: we may like to think we live in an open-ended democracy, but in fact we are forever trapped in patriarchy.

Connell's politics

My claim in the previous section appears to stand in stark contrast with Connell's explicit calls for gender equality or the dismantling of men's domination over women. In this section I argue that this explicit politics, which I summarise in the first part of the section, occurs in the Connellian framework alongside another implicit political view. To elucidate this implicit political view, I then re-examine the overall form of the Connellian framework and how this form leads to his conclusions about progressive change among men.

Explicitly stated politics

Connell says he seeks "absolute equality of the sexes, ... sharing of childcare and all other forms of work, ... freedom of sexual behaviour, and ... multiplicity of gender forms, as being plain common sense and the ordinary basis of civilised life" (1987:xii).

Connell sees the current social moment as lacking his desired principles, and the main stumbling block towards the establishment of those principles as "common sense"

and "ordinary" is heterosexual men. The nature of this stumbling block is these men's collective interest in the status quo.

> For some groups the reasons [to accept these principles] flow straightforwardly from a collective interest in change. *The catch is always with heterosexual men*, whose collective interest – as the evidence through the book confirms – is broadly to maintain the existing system. (1987:xiii, emphasis added)

Possibly the most important conceptual strategy Connell employs in his whole framework is that of portraying the particular arrangements of the current gender order as a *socially-generated effect*. His argument is that, in order to bring about social change, we must come to see existing social arrangements as malleable because they are created in specific historical circumstances with specific social resources and processes: "The patterns of gender and sex … are specifically *social*", and these patterns form a "social *structure*, an organised field of human practice and social relations" (1987:16), which are thus open to change.

He also explicitly states that one of his major strategic criteria during the development of the framework has been not simply to "show where we have come from or describe where we are now" (1987:xiv). He points to the epistemological issues I have discussed in Chapter 1: descriptions of the current moment inflect into views regarding "where it is possible to go and how it is possible to get there" (1987:xiv). And one of his "main aims" in the development of the framework is to sharpen this view of potential futures because "Much of the literature on gender cannot do this job because of the way its theory is constructed" (1987:xiv).

The social process he portrays is, in principle, open-ended but in practice takes specific shapes which endure over time. And it is precisely here that Connell falters and retreats to a relatively unexamined and unexplicated mechanism: hegemony. This is not to say that the concept of hegemony is unexamined in the social sciences but rather, in the context of the framework Connell builds up, hegemony and its workings rate barely more than a page of explanation in total.

Implicit politics

I have shown in earlier sections of this chapter the brevity with which Connell introduces hegemony into the framework. I will now link this uncharacteristic and rather bald assertion with some other elements of the Connellian framework which, taken together, start to reveal a rather different dimension of the framework. In the first chapter of *Gender and Power*, "Some Facts in the Case", Connell presents very well known

statistics showing women's economic and political marginalisation. Connell has clearly selected these statistics and not included others which might complexify the picture, such as the widely-available statistics about men's shorter life expectancy than women, and men's greater propensity to kill themselves.

Building on the specific set of statistics he has selected here, at a key point he asserts that "the global dominance of men over women" constitutes a "single structural fact", and this fact underpins both relations between women and men and relations among men (1987:183). This 'single structural fact' is well-supported by his statistical "Facts in the Case", so that his structural fact aligns closely with the fact selection process. Were he to select a different set of initial statistics his 'single structural fact' may not appear so singular – that is, it may not stand out as the most significant organising principle of gender relations. Were he to include, for instance, the statistics about men's morbidity and mortality rates, somewhere he would have to account for these statistics also[1]. Here I do not question Connell's statistics, nor the general feminist contention that women are politically and economically marginalised. Rather, I am pointing to a *fact-selection process*: a specific formulation of the social world which includes some aspects and *de facto* excludes others through not explicitly including them.

But Connell is at pains to avoid appearing dogmatic about his 'single structural fact'. He notes that alongside men's global domination there are what he calls local "reversals" of power, (1987:111) for example "women having authority within a household" (1987:140), or the arrangements in "particular workplaces, particular settings" (1987:111). The way he incorporates these is to label them as a "*local* or micro-situation", which is analytically distinct from the "*global* or macro-relationship of power", and to characterise such reversals as "local victories" which "do not overthrow patriarchy" (1987:111). Yet elsewhere he presents very effective argument to portray specific local settings, which he calls 'milieux', as being structurally related to the society-wide 'gender order' – that is, that there are enduring patterns of relationship between specific milieux and the social whole. According to his account of the local-global relationship, local settings draw on global resources, while global resources are recreated in local settings. Thus his claim that local arrangements are 'reversals' which can safely be disregarded as insignificant is incoherent with one of the main elements of his framework: his portrayal of structure emerging from actually embodied, and therefore by definition always 'local',

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[1] He does note these statistics in a later work, but then states "Nor is it true that men's health is worse than women's health across the board." (Connell 2000:180, 193).

practices. Indeed, this is instanced by the issue of men's life expectancy: one could hardly describe men's life expectancy statistics in Western countries as simply a local situation – and it is difficult to imagine a plausible argument in which the 'predominant social group' is advantaged by shorter life spans for themselves.

This highlights Connell's implicit politics: that men and domination are not just culturally associated, but structurally welded together. The specific set of 'facts in the case' Connell selects are primarily political and economic – and it cannot be questioned that at a very broad level women are indeed politically and economically marginalised while men are politically and economically privileged. And it cannot be questioned that such arrangements are inequitable. But at the same time, in highlighting these facts and not others Connell is implying that politics and economics, that is, the material aspects of social life, are more important, more significant – *more real* – than other aspects of social life in that the material arena is where the important social shaping factors exist.

This is reflected in Connell's claim that men's material dominance is now "the global domination of women by men", and that this constitutes a 'single structural fact' which has the capacity to organise, at the global level, men's and women's relationships as well as relations between men. And then, to head off all possible objections, Connell makes a neat side-step to argue that any situations which do not reflect his 'single structural fact' are simply 'local' and not really part of the global situation at all.

What emerges, then, is a picture of an implicit agenda which seeks to reinforce the centrality of material aspects as of greatest value as indicators of social 'reality', and to centralise men's undoubted material privilege as being the organising source of gender relations. Connell has, in effect, created a theoretical framework which supports his starting contention: the stumbling block to a better future is the vast majority of men. His conceptual world is one where the material is of greatest value, and this is an unquestioned and unquestionable position – in effect it acts as an implicit ontological assumption. From the material all politics and interests flow, so that those who are materially advantaged are also automatically the most powerful and therefore able to protect that power. Then via his single structural fact of men's global domination he welds hegemonic masculinity to this most powerful area of social life so that men, authority, privilege and material power all coalesce into the shaping determinant of the entire terrain of gender. Connell presents a system which is locked up or 'enclosed',

much like the common workplace joke, "Workplace Rules: Rule 1. The boss is always right. Rule 2. When the boss is wrong, see Rule 1."

Thus it is that Connell's conclusion for a pathway into the future involves men in effect stepping away from any possibility of pursuing interests *as men*: rather, men must ally with other groups who are pursuing various agendas of progressive change revolving around issues *other than* those of central concern to men (1995:234-243). This view is inevitable from Connell's implicit politics: materiality is the real substance of social life; materiality is organised along patriarchal lines; therefore men's collective interests are entirely engaged materially and entirely expressed through material privilege. As he says, "The difficulty of constructing a movement of men to dismantle hegemonic masculinity is that its logic is not the articulation of collective interest but the attempt to dismantle that interest" (1987:276). Further, he stresses that this fact "is constantly evaded." (1995:236) What Connell is telling us here is that the *only* collective interest it is possible for men to have *simply as men* flows unproblematically out of hegemonic masculinity, and that it is structurally impossible for this to be different.

It may appear paradoxical that Connell's most widely-known works on masculinity, whose political agenda is so explicitly about change in gender relations, should be revealed to actually be resisting change. But this phenomenon is not unknown, and indeed was observed by at least one feminist writer three decades ago. Mary Westkott (1979:427) notes that it is possible to accurately record the present in such a way as to "allow no justification for attending to alternatives to present conditions". Ironically, Westkott points out, "this methodological conservatism is frequently accompanied by an ideology of social change." The example she uses is a particular sort of social science which records "Women's devaluation and the consequences of this devaluation" in a way that casts a "depressing pall … over this litany of past and present subjugation … because its methodological principles allow for no future that is not an extension of present facts." (Westkott 1979:428). In Connell's case, a "methodological conservatism" leads him to selects facts which he can employ to support his political agenda, and his political agenda, as far as men goes, is a conservative moralism: the gender enactments of most men are a blight upon the social landscape since they produce inequality. Men's relationship with masculinity is in effect immoral - Connell argues most men act in "bad faith" (Connell 1987:213) when it comes to equality - and men can only be redeemed by rejecting that relationship.

Were men to follow Connell's agenda for change, and to become extensively involved in alliance with obviously marginalised or oppressed groups, one wonders what happens to hegemonic masculinity or the complicit masculinity which Connell argues is currently the gender identity-position of most men? Are those masculinities simply evacuated? And how would these alliances deal with the existence of the specific form of equality enjoyed by most men and fought for across centuries of political and civil strife? What happens to this men's equality? Does Connell imagine that men's equality is now a completed social project which will simply continue to exist independently of further social events? Does Connell perhaps consider that *equality* exists prior to social process and the actions of people? Or perhaps that equality, once achieved, becomes a stumbling block for the still-marginalised? Or is the problem with equality restricted only to the equality of men?

Certainly I am in full agreement with feminist claims for women's equality in response to their continuing marginalisation. But how does the Connellian framework further these claims? What pathways for the reformulation of masculinity and of men's gender identity does it offer? Connell's starting point is that the stumbling block to women's equality is most men. His conclusion is that men's equality is bad and that men must walk away from most masculinity practices or formulations so as to be fair to women. This certainly seems to be a pretty dismal outlook, and might perhaps be usefully described as Westkott's 'depressing pall'.

Hegemony the concept

Despite my trenchant criticisms in the previous section, there are a number of elements of the Connellian framework which are valuable. Two issues are relatively unproblematic: firstly, as a broad group, women are marginalised. Secondly, structuralism as a useful account of social life and the processes of social change has limitations. But Connell makes several other significant contributions which require a good deal more careful discussion. These include: the notion of men's interests flowing from women's inequality; the general connection between masculinity and authority; and these two elements being combined in the notion of the hegemony obtained by specific forms of masculinity. By and large I agree that these elements do exist – that is, a masculinity exists which is in some crucial ways formulated around a femininity which is 'less than' masculinity; there is a very strong cultural association between authority and masculinity which, amongst other things, manifests in some very major social

institutions; and finally hegemony is a good way to think about the relation between masculinity, authority and the persistence of gender inequality.

However, in this thesis I seek to qualify the extent of Connell's claims about masculinity, authority, domination and power – that is, I argue that all these things certainly exist, but that they do not have the foundational role for gender which Connell attributes to them. To make this argument I develop a more extensive account of cultural/symbolic elements of social life into a wider conceptualisation of social process. The wider conceptualisation of social process is able to encompass the elements Connell brings forward, but it reduces their role to being significant rather than universal elements.

Given the central role played in the Connellian framework by the concept of hegemony, it is necessary to more closely examine that concept in order to contextualise the specific use Connell makes of it. This examination enables me to make some specific criticisms of Connell's deployment of hegemony in the framework. I then use these criticisms as a lead in to the extensive post-structuralist development of hegemony offered by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), which I set out in the following chapter. But in the remainder of this chapter I explore the dimensions of the concept of hegemony and then return to assess Connell's specific use of it.

"Hegemony" as a description of social power is situated within the Marxist tradition of social theory, and its best-known proponent is Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). Hegemony is used at first in Russian Social Democracy to describe "a kind of contingent intervention required by the crisis or collapse of what would have been a 'normal' historical development" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:7). This association with a deliberate intervention into 'business as usual' applies particularly during the Lenin era (1917-1924), immediately following the Russian Revolution. Lenin believed that following violent action to overthrow the established order, a continuing powerful command was necessary to keep steering society towards progressive goals. This powerful but progressive command was called 'hegemony' to distinguish it from the older Tsarist social control (Salvadori 1979). However despite its original progressive intentions Lenin's leadership became a brutal dictatorship, providing one of the conceptual problematics underpinning Gramsci's later rethinking of hegemony (Howson 2005:9).

A second problematic arose from events in Germany, which during the late nineteenth century, along with Russia, was the centre of Marxist thought and activism in

Europe. The twenty-three year depression in Germany from 1873-1896 coincided with an enormous amount of socialist activism, to the extent that "the unity and autonomy of the working class, and the collapse of the capitalist system, virtually appeared as facts of experience". But capitalism didn't collapse in Germany; instead, there was a new phase of 'organised capitalism' which generated a boom which lasted until 1914. (Laclau and Mouffe 1985:17).

In summary, there were two difficulties confronting Gramsci in considering the issue of leadership suited to a progressive social agenda. Firstly, leadership of any sort, no matter how progressive its stated aims, can become oppressive and dictatorial. Secondly, very large numbers of people had come to actually support capitalism and didn't want to see it disappear. These two problematics arose when historical events did not correlate with Marxist theory, pointing to a conceptual problem within Marxist theory itself. Classical Marxism accords explanatory priority to the tangible 'material' aspects of social life. That is, the question of how material goods are produced – who does the actual work of production, and who owns the means of production – is central to Marx's understanding of what gives social life its shape and how change comes about. But the two problematics from historical events cannot easily be explained in terms of this wholly materialist view of social life. The first is to do with the issue of leadership irrespective of where it arises in the production process, while the second confounds the Marxist assumption that workers will naturally wish to overthrow the capitalist order of production.

Both problematics, then, point to other non-material aspects of social organisation that are evidently very powerful. In Marxist theory non-material or cultural aspects are denoted as the "superstructure" to the more fundamental "structure" of material relations of production, and classic Marxism makes it clear that the superstructure is subordinate to the structure. The historical events giving rise to our two problematics challenge this classical view of the relationship between structure and superstructure, and it is this "crucial problem of… the dynamic and dialectical complex of relations between structure and superstructure" which was Gramsci's "point of departure" in his elaboration of hegemony (Howson 2005:26).

Gramsci's radical step is to reject material factors as the single major force in social organisation:

> [T]he rule of one class over another does not depend on economic or political power alone but rather on persuading the ruled to accept the system of beliefs of the ruling class and to share their social, cultural and moral values. (Joll 1977:8)

This formulation of hegemony introduces "cultural factors" into the very centre of social process, which allows explanation of "how a class can establish its cultural and moral superiority independently of its direct political power…" (Joll 1977:10-11) This opens the door to explaining how the general populus can come to see capitalism or the rule of a minority or elite as the legitimate form of social organisation, even though it may be significantly detrimental for most people: belief systems, which include moral standards and ethical codes, are here seen to be as important as economics and politics. Intellectuals are highly significant players in this picture: intellectuals "enable the ruling class to exercise their 'hegemony' by supplying the system of belief accepted by ordinary people…" (Joll 1977: 90).

The key explanatory function Gramsci's view performs is that it enables us to see that people can come to believe that a personally detrimental form of social organisation is 'the right way to be', and that their own personal suffering within it is a problem about themselves rather than a problem arising in social relations. Social relations are seen as having greater legitimacy than the individual's experience of them – and this is an important fact about society and individuals. Significantly, Gramsci differs here from earlier Marxists in another respect. Lenin developed the view that the ascendant legitimacy of the current social form is enforced through some sort of coercion or violence, which produces 'false consciousness' – that is, people are in effect strong-armed into accepting the legitimacy of capitalism. Gramsci's view, however, is that people willingly take up capitalism – that is, people really truly believe in capitalism and the legitimacy of the ruling class, and this is not some 'false' floor which covers some other more 'real' belief.

So important is the role of belief systems and other 'cultural' factors in Gramsci's view that he believes that any revolution has to be a two stage process, in which the aspiring group first establishes "intellectual and moral leadership". (Joll 1977:100)

Hegemony as leadership

Gramsci reveals here a very interesting view regarding the role of leadership in social process. His view of leadership is best revealed through the picture he draws of his preferred mode of social organisation for Italy – that is, his aspirational view of how

society could function in a better way. As Joll (1977:99) points out, "The hegemony of a political class means for Gramsci that that class had succeeded in persuading the other classes of society to accept its own moral, political and cultural values." Thus, the first step for this aspiring class is to establish intellectual and moral leadership, as noted above. A hallmark of this leadership is that intellectuals feel and are moved by

> … feeling the elemental passions of the people, understanding them and thus explaining and justifying them in a particular historical situation, connecting them dialectically to the laws of history, to a superior conception of the world. History and politics cannot be made without passion, without this emotional bond between intellectuals and the people-nation. (Gramsci 1971:418)

For Gramsci, the principal difference between the old hegemonic ruling class and the new class which aspires to hegemony is that the new class actively pursues a significant two-way flow between the class with hegemony and those they rule:

> [H]egemony undoubtedly presupposes that the interests and tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised are taken into account, that there is a certain equilibrium of compromise, that is, that the ruling group makes sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind, but it is also indubitable that such sacrifices and such compromises cannot affect what is essential. (Gramsci 1971:161)

This attractive Utopian vision implicitly takes for granted the continuation of hegemony even after the 'revolution' – in Gramsci's words, hegemony is "what is essential". Thus Gramsci sees the arrangement by which a minority of people provide leadership in social process as perfectly functional and completely acceptable. His criticism of Lenin is not, then, that Lenin exercised hegemony, but rather that his regime's relationship with the rest of the populus was one of domination and repression rather than co-operative give-and-take.

Howson (2002, 2005) argues that a more accurate rendering of "hegemony" is as "leadership" rather than more simplistically as "domination". He notes that in Gramsci's writings one can detect actually three different forms of hegemonic leadership. Following a crisis or moment of significant social change, and depending on the conditions in the crisis, a new hegemony (i.e. leadership) inevitably emerges which can take either a regressive or progressive direction. Within the regressive direction there are two possibilities: a *detached hegemony,* in which a disconnected elite comes to rule a relatively passive 'mass', or a *dominative hegemony* which must more actively enforce its agenda in the face of mass opposition. On the progressive path lies the possibility of *aspirational hegemony,* which foregrounds intellectual and moral leadership, and whose leaders only

ever generate unstable equilibria with the mass. Crucial in this latter form is the "mobility between the ruling party and the masses", mentioned above, which is enabled by an attitude of openness and also by the commitment of the leading intellectuals to immersion in the feeling-passions of the mass. (Howson 2002:61)

Gramsci further distinguishes the role or operation of the ruling class as having two distinct modes:

> …'leading' and 'dominant'. It leads the allied classes, it dominates the opposing classes. Therefore, a class can (and must) 'lead' even before assuming power; when it is in power it becomes dominant, but it also continues to 'lead'. (Gramsci 1992:136-7)

Implicit in both Gramsci's and Howson's views is a belief that leadership is a constant – that is, that leadership is a constantly needed resource in social process. Gramsci clearly believes that hegemony-as-leadership is inevitable, and that this leadership is, and inevitably must be, supplied by some social group or other. In other words, leadership is only ever supplied by a minority at any one moment. Hegemony as progressive intervention at a moment of crisis can go horribly wrong, of course. But what distinguishes Gramsci's aspirational hegemony from tyranny are three important criteria. Firstly, the attitude of openness and the passionately felt connection between rulers and ruled ensures that the leading group itself is impacted by social events – it is not remote. Secondly, membership of that leading group is not fixed – so that individuals can come and go between rulers and ruled, thus ensuring the passionately felt connection arises partly through lived experience. Thirdly, the current state of social affairs arises from unstable and therefore changeable equilibria (Howson 2005:26-32).

Connell and hegemony

I show above that Gramsci takes for granted that society is 'led' by a small group of people, and that this group perforce both leads and coerces: it leads those groups which support it and coerces those which contest its leadership. Thus Gramsci assumes that the organisation of social life revolves around a small group whose agenda predominates.

In addition, Gramsci argues that the hegemony of the predominant group is primarily maintained via control of key cultural resources such as "social, cultural and moral values." What is at stake here are issues of value and meaning, the capacity to establish the legitimate meanings to be applied to specific actions and events. And implicit in the concept of hegemony is the idea that only a small group holds this capacity. This does not mean, as Connell astutely points out, a lack of contestation or the

annihilation of opposition (Connell 1987:107). But the hegemonic group predominates – that is, overall the interests of the leading group continue to win out because that group has the capacity to "set the terms in which events are understood and issues discussed" (Connell 1987:107).

In my account of hegemony, in the previous section, it can be seen that a very significant contribution which hegemony brings to social theory is a more adequate incorporation of 'cultural' factors into the understanding of power. Discussion could thenceforward include not only the favourites of classical Marxism, economic systems and their intersections with politics, but less tangible and more 'symbolic' social objects such as values, beliefs, morality, and the systems which develop and disseminate these: intellectual activity and communication. This was an excellent step forward for Marxist theory, and underpins the continuing usefulness of the concept of hegemony.

Connell uses this aspect of hegemony theory at precisely the point where he introduces the concept of hegemonic masculinity:

> There is an ordering of versions of masculinity and femininity at the level of the whole society… [I]n key respects the organisation of gender on the very large scale must be more skeletal and simplified than the human relationships in face-to-face milieux. The forms of femininity and masculinity constituted at this level are stylised and impoverished. (Connell 1987:183)

This insight enables him to then go forward and suggest that there is a 'hegemonic' form of masculinity – that is, one form of masculinity which predominates. This form (and 'emphasised femininity') is in essence symbolic: skeletal, simplified, stylised and impoverished. And its symbolic quality is crucial, so that it is widely available and has an impact on millions of people. But here, however, I suggest he overplays the actual linkages from these symbolised versions to concrete patterns of social organisation by narrowing down the linkages to a single point. He describes the interrelations between women and men as

> …centred on a single structural fact, the global dominance of men over women. This structural fact provides the main basis for relationships among men that define a hegemonic form of masculinity in the society as a whole. 'Hegemonic masculinity' is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women. The interplay between different forms of masculinity is an important part of how a patriarchal social order works. (Connell 1987:183.)

There is no account here of how the symbolic processes creating 'masculinity' and 'femininity' then become Connell's crucial theoretical element – the 'single structural

fact'. As I point out in an earlier section there is no account of what a structural fact is, and what it is about it which is singular. The explanatory lacuna here is even bigger in the absence of conceptual connections between the symbolic and the structural. This combined conceptual absence, I argue, enables Connell to weld or fix in a deterministic manner the link between masculinity, social process and domination: symbolic formations unproblematically converge into a single structural relation which pervades the entire social space and hence structurally determines the relations between all parts of the gender terrain.

Connell's account of hegemony is severely attenuated, resulting in a lack of coherent directions for progressive change among men at a collective level. My critique of the Connellian deployment of hegemony as a concept raises three themes: durable formations in social life do not arise from one source, be it a 'fact' or a story. The formation of symbolic elements in social process, such as 'masculinity' or stories legitimating men's domination, occur via processes which need to be explicated. And hegemony can look like domination, but is not the same as domination. A more thorough account of hegemony is required which can address these issues in a coherent manner. This will be the subject of the next chapter.