

Editorial: The Future of Men – Men, Masculinities and Gender Equality

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The past decades have witnessed a paradigm shift towards a recognition not only of men as gendered beings, but also of a plurality of masculinities. The new interdisciplinary field of men's studies puts the particular instead of the universal male subject into focus. It conceives of masculinity as an intersectional category interlocked with other categories, such as race, ethnicity, class, age or sexuality.

At the same time, there has been a growing recognition that gender equality cannot be achieved without men and boys. Gender inequalities are embedded in a multidimensional structure of relationships between women and men that operated at every level of the human experience – from economic arrangements, culture and the state to interpersonal relationships and individual emotions.

Moving towards a gender-equal society involves profound institutional change as well as change in everyday life and individual behavior. Making progress towards this goal requires widespread support, including significant support from men and boys. This, in turn, requires further research and evidence about the changing social construction of masculinities.

This thematic issue

This special issue of *Analyze* looks at some of the recent trends in both the academic fields of masculinities, gender, and gender equality studies, and recent developments in (popular) culture and societies, including how men are increasingly being engaged in realizing gender equality.

Gender norms and conceptions of masculinity, and what it means to be a man, are shifting. A recent study showed that although a majority of the men surveyed in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Palestine, support a wide array of inequitable, traditional attitudes, a sizeable minority of the men surveyed in every country show support for at least some dimensions of women's equality and empowerment (El Feki et al 2017). The study is part of the ongoing International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), one of the most comprehensive household studies ever

carried out on men's and women's attitudes and practices on a wide variety of topics related to gender equality. As of 2018, IMAGES studies had been carried out in 27 countries around the world, coordinated by Promundo (an NGO that promotes gender justice and prevention of violence by engaging men and boys in partnership with women and girls) and the International Center for Research on Women, ICRW.

Gender norms and conceptions of masculinity, and what it means to be a man, are shifting around the world. While preeminent scholars like Australian Michael Flood continue publishing on the causes of violence of men against women and how to prevent this violence (see for example his latest book, *Engaging Men and Boys in Violence Prevention*, Flood 2019), multinational Procter & Gamble questioned "toxic masculinity" in a prominent Gillette advertising campaign "We Believe: The Best Men Can Be" (Topping et al 2019). And just last year, the American Psychological Association (APA) adopted the first-ever guidelines for practice with men and boys. The APA's new Guidelines for Psychological Practice With Boys and Men draw on more than forty years of research showing that traditional masculinity is psychologically harmful and that socializing boys to suppress their emotions causes damage that echoes both inwardly and outwardly (APA 2018).

The articles

This issue of *Analyze* explores both recent theoretical developments and empirical findings in the study of men and masculinities and how they relate to gender equality. The contributions discussing men and masculinities come from multiple disciplines: sociology, anthropology, media studies & journalism, psychology, history, and men's studies.

In "The Man Box" Rachel Giese examines how young men are subjected to damaging messages about manliness: they must muzzle their emotions and never show weakness, dominate girls, and compete with each other. She explores how toxic rules, symbolized by the "man box", can hinder boys' emotional and social development. She also investigates what is behind what has been labeled as "the boy crisis", a phenomenon that apparently first showed up in the middle of the nineteenth century. If girls can expand the borders of femaleness, could boys also be set free of limiting, damaging expectations about manhood and masculinity?

Ovidiu Anemțoaicei argues in “The (In)Essentiality of Male Bodies” that studies of men and masculinities should always have an explicit feminist framework and focus or, as Calvin Thomas put it, “masculinity studies can be not the betrayal or appropriation of feminism but rather one of its valuable and necessary consequences” (Thomas 2002: 62). In Anemțoaicei’s view the blindness, neglect or absence of sexual difference feminist theory in the works on men and masculinities is not accidental and, he argues, this neglect is more than sexism. He concurs with Braidotti, who wrote that “What the heterosexual men are lacking intellectually - the peculiar blindness to sexual difference for which the term *sexism* is an inadequate assessment - is a reflection of their position in history” (Braidotti 1994: 138-139).

“Romanian Men’s Masculinities in Online Personal Advertisements” is an empirical study by Sebastian E. Bartoș, Voon Chin Phua and Erin Avery. It analyses Romanian men’s masculinities via a quantitative and qualitative analysis of 380 online personal advertisements posted by men. Romanian men’s advertisements often express traditional gender relations: men-seeking-women are interested in attractive, less educated partners, while men-seeking-men emphasize discretion. Some men resist such patriarchal standards: men-seeking-women who are highly educated prefer educated women while some men-seeking-men give out recognizable photos of themselves.

“Men’s Attitudes to Gender Stereotypes in Ukraine” by Ganna Gerasymenko, Iryna Maidanik, Svitlana Polyakova, Tetyana Bachek and Elle Libanova is a research study of masculinity as a concept of men’s culture was undertaken with the purpose of generating data needed to understand the processes of formation of men’s identity and evolution of men’s cultural practices in order to find efficient communication channels for advocacy efforts to effect changes in social stereotypes. The study methodology is based on the International Men and Gender Equity Survey (IMAGES), which I referred to above. The survey topics covered men’s experience in childhood and their marital relationships, division of labor in households and attitudes to parenthood, perceptions of the gender norms, awareness on gender-sensitive legislation and attitudes to gender-based violence.

Eugene Sensenig's investigates the concept of 'affectedness' (or 'Betroffenheit'). In his article "Masculinity and Affectedness: An Intersectional Perspective on Gender, Power, and Activism in the Global South" he attempts to demonstrate how all participants in research, education, and social activism in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are impacted by the lack of a stable social environment, which is seen as the bedrock of scholarship by mainstream theories and scientific methodologies. Researchers, academics and activists must deal with this intentional lack of security, social justice and freedom. Whether women or men, from the Global South or North, they should consider how the topics we are studying and the conditions under which we work impact us individually and collectively. Sensenig reflects on the impact of affectedness-based research methods in the Middle East, and their application to work with men and masculinities in the region, which is the main contribution of his article.

Rouba El-Helou concludes this issue. In "Down and Out in Syria and Lebanon - Media Portrayals of Men and Masculinities: Towards a Research Agenda" she formulates a research agenda for investigating media coverage of male refugees, particularly from Syria. She links the narration of refugee stories to their mobility, their loss of home, belonging, possessions, people and social networks. However, these stories also entail the discovery of new territories and locations, of families in transition, of men whose ongoing mobility constantly impacts their ability or inability to take care of their loved ones and thus live up to the prescribed roles of men in the constructed conservative society from which they came.

The above is only a brief rendering of the contributions included in this special issue on men, masculinities and gender equality. I encourage you to read each contribution as they will give you an insight in the rich scholarship in the field of on men, masculinities, gender and gender equality studies.

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