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Language and Masculinities: History, Development, Future

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**Abstract**

In the past two decades, the field of language and masculinities studies has become an established part of language, gender and sexuality research, growing as a response to concerns about the limited criticality directed towards ‘men’ in sociolinguistics. In doing so, the field has added to the conceptual and theoretical toolkit of sociolinguistics, furthering both our understanding of the linguistic strategies used by men in a variety of contexts and the myriad ways language and the social performance of gender are linked.

This review offers an account of the historical trajectory of the body of work broadly concerned with men, masculinities, and language, charting its development from more critical work on men and masculinities within sociology through to its emergence as an independent field of enquiry. It outlines some of the key contributions this body of work has made to sociolinguistic theory, methodology, and knowledge and suggests some future research directions as the field engages with contemporary social issues.

**Keywords**

gender identities; language and gender; masculinities; men; sociolinguistics

**Word count**

9996

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the past 20 years, the field of language and masculinities studies (LMS hereafter) has become an established part of language, gender, and sexuality research, growing as a response to concerns about the limited criticality towards ‘men’ in sociolinguistics. From Johnson & Meinhof (1997), through to more recent work on language and queer masculinities (Baker & Balirano 2018), white supremacist masculinities (Brindle 2016), discourses of online misogyny (Hardaker & McGlashan 2016), and more, LMS has been central in developing our understanding not only of the interactional strategies used by men in different contexts, but also how language is implicated in the gendered structures of power, domination, and control. As such, the history of LMS is closely tied with charting the changing (linguistic) face of contemporary masculinities and has been central to opening up new research directions in the field, particularly through its intersection with queer studies and work on non-hegemonic masculinities (Milani 2013; Brewer 2017).

This review provides an account of the historical trajectory of LMS research and outlines some of the key contributions such work has made to sociolinguistic theory, methodology, and knowledge. In doing so, I argue that an examination of the range of communicative strategies used by men has been key to advancing our knowledge of how language is used by men to maintain their privileged (and hegemonic) position in society. It is only through the close examination of discourse that we can illuminate the myriad linguistic means through which the status of men is sustained, even if, as Kiesling (2007, p. 660) notes, most men do not feel as though they benefit from or the sociocultural privileges of being a man, or what Connell (1997, p. 64) terms the ‘patriarchal dividend’ (see also Messner 1998, p. 260). Such research ultimately problematizes men and masculinities more fully, offering a critical evaluation of their social practices and moving away from treating men as ‘ungendered representatives of humanity’ (Johnson 1997, p. 12).

This review is also timely given the re-establishment of traditional (masculine) gender values among the newly-coined ‘alt right’ movement (Kelly 2017), recent media coverage of sexual abuse and harassment carried out by high-profile men in the political and entertainment spheres (Blumell & Huemmer 2017), and the argument that Western society has reverted to an age of ‘aggressive masculinity’ (Peters & Besley 2018). Within all of these contexts, the institutionally-embedded linguistic means through which such structures of inequality are cultivated are typically unremarkable elements of everyday talk, but they yield incredible power, often by virtue of their ordinariness (Kiesling 2007, p. 655). I argue that the work of LMS scholars should continue to challenge the promotion of essentialist notions of masculinity, the power dynamics of men’s language (insofar as we can establish the existence of something like “men’s language”, a relatively problematic concept as Kiesling 2007, p. 670 highlights), and the ways in which women, gay men, and ethnic minorities are marginalized, subjugated, and discriminated against through linguistic (and non-linguistic) means.

### 1.1. Outline

In the next section of the review, I present an overview of the history of masculinities research and how this emerges as a standalone area from sociology, psychology, gender studies, and other related fields. As part of this discussion, I introduce a number of key terms in Section 3, including ‘male’, ‘men’ and ‘masculinity/masculinities’, in order to examine the contested

meanings with which these have been inscribed over the years. In Section 4, I chart how men and their linguistic behavior were conceptualized in early sociolinguistic research, before setting out how LMS research advanced the limitations of this body of work. The contributions LMS has made to the field form Section 5 of the review, where I outline some of the central concepts that have either emerged from, or have been informed by, insights from LMS, including covert prestige, gender performativity, and other concepts that are now an everyday part of the sociolinguistic toolkit. I finish by outlining some of the current research trajectories of LMS and the potentially productive research avenues that may emerge in the future. In particular, I argue that continued work on the language of men and masculinities is vital in a context where institutional sexism, sexual inequality, and gender-based discrimination appear to be re-appearing in contemporary civil society, if they ever went away in the first place.

## **2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF MASCULINITIES RESEARCH**

It would be fair to say that the critical study of men and masculinities is now well-established, with a range of journals now dedicated to the topic (e.g. *Masculinities: A Journal of Identity & Culture*, *NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies*, *Men & Masculinities*). But while the wealth of work on men and masculinities is perhaps now taken for granted, it took some time for the field to get to this stage. In this section of the review, I set out some of the major historical moments within masculinities research, although space necessitates that this discussion be relatively brief and selective (see Schrock & Schwalbe 2009 for a fuller review of the sociology of masculinities, up until 2008 or so).

Before beginning, however, it is important to note that the majority of work discussed below concentrates on white, heterosexual, middle-class men (or WHMC men, following Kiesling 2007, p. 655). This is not motivated by a desire to avoid work that focuses on the lives and experiences of non-WHMC men (some of this research is discussed further in Section 5.5), but to highlight the fact that the study of WHMC men is concomitant with particular contexts of privilege and power that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, especially in western academic settings.

The early beginnings of work on men and masculinities can be traced to the pioneering work of Sigmund Freud (1927), whose notion of the *Oedipus Complex* was central in psychoanalytical theory as a framework for the establishment of a ‘healthy’ male sexual identity, through the rejection of the mother and embracing the canonical male identity represented by the father. Other concepts, like *castration anxiety*, the *phallic stage*, and *identification* were further elements of Freud’s attempts at understanding how the psychological make-up of gender developed in early childhood and its influence on adult gender identity. Freud’s contemporary, Carl Jung, proposed an alternative framework and introduced several archetypal characters that he believed were important in men’s unconscious minds, including the ‘hero’, the ‘father’ and the ‘professor’ (see further the collected papers of Jung’s case studies in *Aspects of the Masculine*, Beebe 2003). Psychological studies continued in this vein over the course of the 1940s and 1950s, with its principle aim of understanding how psychological problems in adulthood could be traced back to childhood and subsequently treated through therapy (Margolin & Kubie 1944; Blanton 1947).

Conversely, fields like sociobiology and evolutionary psychology were more interested in how biological sex might determine character traits. Promoting a form of gender essentialism, scholars posited that people act in accordance with evolutionary instincts; thus, men are

aggressive, territorial, and risk-seeking due to pressures which go back to the prehistoric period in their role as 'hunter-gatherers' (Alexander 1974). While these approaches seem to make intuitive sense, questions have been raised about the validity of claims being made. For example, Fausto-Sterling (1992) concludes that it is impossible to determine what aspects of behavior are biologically based, and Ruse (2000) tackles the philosophical issues underlying such approaches (for some critiques of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology, see Cameron 2007; Hasinoff 2009; Matthews 2014).

The development of the 'sex role' (Parsons 1940), or the "personal qualities, behavioral characteristics, interests, attitudes, abilities and skills which one is expected to have because one occupies a certain status or position" (Hartley 1959, p. 457), proved to be a particular seductive addition to psychology and sociology (Komarovskiy 1946), in part because it "facilitated a partial break from biological essentialism. It connected personality formation and social structure and suggested principles for a politics of reform, especially emphasizing the need for less sex role stereotypical socialization processes" (Messner 1998, p. 258). In this approach, particular character traits were argued to be differentially associated with men and women (and by extension, 'masculinity' and 'femininity'). Thus, how well individuals aligned with these expectations was a marker of their normative integration into society.

There was, however, some resistance to the social assumptions that underpinned the kinds of roles which were assigned to different groups in society. For example, Klein (1950) stated unequivocally that "there is no uniform feminine 'type'", while Brannon & David (1976) argued that men were constrained by limitations inherent in sex role theory (e.g. that men were emotionally inexpressive or had to be stoic in the face of personal difficulties, although see Johnson 1997, p. 7 for an alternative take on these points). A framework that failed to account for men's lived experiences was unrepresentative and analytically problematic (Messner 1998). As Connell (1979, p. 9) highlights, "[t]he obviousness of role theory is the obviousness of ideology, not of truth" (see also Connell 1992, p. 735 for further criticism of the literature 'about men').

The limitations of sex role theory and gender essentialism, coupled with a growing sense of cultural dissatisfaction with established gender relations, institutional sexism, and social inequalities, both inside and outside academia, led to huge strides in theoretical and applied work on power relations, patriarchy, and the social dominance of men, with female scholars in Women's Studies overwhelmingly at the vanguard. Typically, however, men were under-theorized in this work and although some male scholars attempted to engage with these prevailing research trends from their perspective as men, these efforts were not without problems.

For example, in a wide-ranging treatment of his experience as part of a men's group in Birmingham, England in the 1970s, Tolson (1979, p. 143) discusses some of the tensions of men engaging with the political agenda of feminism and women's liberation, concluding that "the very notion of 'men's politics' was paradoxical. We had no experience of sexual oppression, violence, jokes at our expense. There were no issues to unite us – no basis for action against a system that already operates in our favour." Nevertheless, addressing the power relations between men of different types and backgrounds, and the intersection between men and patriarchy, were much needed areas of investigation.

The publication of Carrigan et al. (1985) marked the moment where 'masculinities studies' took its first tentative steps as an independent field of enquiry, integrating developments from sociology, anthropology, criminology, psychology, feminism, and gender studies, but forging

its own path with a particular focus on the lived experience of men. Not only did this article criticize sex-role theory for the way it failed to engage with issues of power, the patriarchy, and gender relations, it also articulated a new conceptualization of men that resisted the relatively one-dimensional view of “masculinity as more or less unrelieved villainy and all men as agents of the patriarchy in more or less the same degree” (Carrigan et al. 1985, p. 522; see also Hearn 1999, pp. 148–49). Both Tolson (1979, pp. 142–43) and Carrigan et al. (1985) suggest that viewing men and masculinities in this way overlooked the complexity of gender relations and reduced men to simple caricatures. The need for such critical examinations of men was not simply to ride the coat-tails of Women’s Studies, but rather to bring in a “qualitative different study of men ... not quantitatively more study of men” (Brod 1987a, p. 190).

The year 1987 was a landmark in the establishment of what came to be termed “The New Men’s Studies” (TNMS hereafter), with the publication of two edited volumes on masculinities (Brod 1987b; Kimmel 1987), while Connell (1987) was one of the first monographs to outline a systematic social theory of gender, with a specific focus on masculinity. Other work quickly followed, including Brittan’s (1989) discussion of masculinity and power, Gilmore’s (1990) cultural anthropological account of masculinity, Hearn & Morgan’s edited volume *Men, Masculinities and Social Theory* (1990), and Morgan’s monograph *Discovering Men: Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities* (1992).

As the potential social and academic value of masculinities studies was taking hold, particularly in terms of more fully articulating men’s lives and their social practices, the field expanded into a variety of new research directions, including sports (Messner 1989, 1990), education (Connell 1989; Skelton 1998), violence (Skelton 1997), heterosexuality (Messner & Sabo 1994), homosexuality (Connell 1992), homophobia (Nayak & Kehily 1996), bodies (Morgan 1993; Jeffords 1994), the military (Britton & Williams 1995; Barrett 1996), cultural politics (Jackson 1994; Martino 1997), alcohol (Wenner 1998; Capraro 2000), health (Sabo & Gordon 1995; Courtenay 2000) and more.

While the TNMS movement was undoubtedly important in furthering our knowledge about men, there was discontent with its politics, perhaps most persuasively captured by Griffin (1989), Canaan & Griffin (1990), and Wetherell & Griffin (1991). Even though TNMS drew extensively on the intellectual and political lineage of feminist thought, their rebuttal against such “malestream” academic projects warned against the dangers of TNMS becoming a form of patriarchal oppression, marginalization, and a silencing of feminist research (Stacey & Thorne 1985). Canaan & Griffin (1990, p. 211) were also pessimistic about the potential (or even actual) de-prioritization of funding for research within Women’s Studies or work which drew on feminist perspectives, noting that:

[The term TNMS] suggests that studies of men are complementary with those of women. As we know very well, so-called complementarity all too often results in power being wrested from the less powerful and the powerless. We recognise that ‘men’s studies’ can literally take women’s jobs in teaching and research at a time of financial cutbacks, political conservatism, and when academic institutions will be all too eager to fund potentially controversial work in the name of ‘doing something on gender’. As the cuts continue to hit, who will get the most resources?

It is impossible to determine whether these concerns ever came to pass, given that academia seems to be in a perpetual state of under-funding, but their discussion represents one of the few dissenting voices against the politics of TNMS, raising a number of important points regarding intellectual accountability, resourcing, and the hierarchy of knowledge.

At the same time as TNMS work was being carried out, a strand of mainly non-academic publications were exploring (or exploiting) a mythopoetic history of manhood, such as Robert Bly's *Iron John: A Book about Men* (1990), Sam Keen's *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man* (1991), and Michael Mead's *Men and the Water of Life* (1993), where men were called upon to recapture the essence of a 'primal' masculinity. Drawing on Jungian psychology, this body of literature was a reaction against the supposed 'feminization' and demasculinization of men, ultimately fuelling the growth of the "(Mythopoetic) Men's Movement" over the course of the early 80s and 90s (Kimmel & Kaufman 1993; see also Fox 2004 for an overview of the different types of men's movements between 1970-2000). While the Men's Movement more or less stalled in the late 1990s, it spoke to the growing sense of a 'crisis of masculinity' and the spectre that the shifting sands of contemporary gender relations were leaving men without a place in the world, something that was also being examined from a more critically-informed perspective (Kimmel 1987; Mac an Ghail 1996; Hearn 1999; McDowell 2000; Robinson 2000; Morgan 2006).

It is, of course, worthwhile questioning the contention that men were (or are) somehow in 'crisis' (Walsh 2010, p. 7; Milani 2011, p. 183), particularly given the abundant social capital that is usually afforded to them. Nevertheless, the changing context of men's lives became a departure point for further critical work, including research on physicality, masculinity and deindustrialisation (Pye et al. 1996; Nayak 2003a, 2003b; Roberts 2013), the loss of traditional labouring jobs (Beckwith 2001; Johnson & McIvor 2004; Iacuone 2005), the shift in sexual relations (Garlick 2003; Seidler 2003; Flood 2008; Hyde et al. 2009), the rise of technical and non-manufacturing specialisms and its effect on men's working lives (Lohan & Faulkner 2004; Mellström 2004), and changing familial and domestic patterns (Aitken 2000; Thébaud 2010; Walsh 2011).

Despite the political, epistemological, and academic contentions about men's studies, the field has carried on and new developments continue to emerge. Connell (2005a) provides a useful outline of the international expansion of masculinities studies beyond its predominantly American beginnings, while Tosh (2011) discusses how the tradition of TNMS ultimately led to the development of work on historical perspectives on men and masculinities in the UK context (Arnold & Brady 2011; Abrams & Ewan 2017). New framings of the field have also been suggested, reflecting the way that conceptualizations of men and masculinities are changing in contemporary society. This includes work on "inclusive masculinities" (Anderson 2009; Dashper 2012), where practices related to dominant and traditional forms of masculinity are being replaced with a more liberal and open notion of masculinity, while the related notion of "hybrid masculinities" similarly tackles the ways in which men and boys integrate feminized or marginalized masculine identities and practices through a process of 'strategic borrowing' from gay men, women, and ethnic minorities (Bridges & Pascoe 2014). Other work has developed the notion of "caring masculinities", based on the promotion of values like interdependence, relationality, and empathy (Hanlon 2012; Elliot 2016; Hunter et al. 2017). Queer approaches to masculinities, including the relationship between masculinities and women, homosexuals, trans, and 'non-normative' men, are also shaping ongoing research directions, suggesting a productive breakdown of the male/masculinity binary.

### 3. THE PROBLEM OF DEFINITIONS

Before sketching out the linguistic investigations of men and masculinities, it would be remiss to overlook the fact that masculinities research is a terminological minefield. What is a ‘male’? What is a ‘man’? How should ‘masculinity’ be defined? Should it be based on what men do? Should it be based on what men should be like? Should it be connected to biological features? Although these terms may seem, at least on the surface, straightforward to define, Clatterbaugh (2004, p. 201) observes that “it may well be the best-kept secret of the literature on masculinities that we have an extremely ill-defined idea of what we are talking about.”

#### 3.1. Males and men

A typical starting point for distinguishing between ‘males’ and ‘females’ is to use biological features and reproductive anatomy. To be categorized as ‘male’, particularly from a medical perspective, means to be in the possession of a penis and testicles, alongside XY sex chromosomes and specific hormonal traits (primarily higher levels of testosterone). This approach seems ‘common sense’ and something people learn from a very early age. Such accounts of sex as a biological category are beguiling, built as they are on a (seemingly infallible) foundation of science (Hasinoff 2009).

But a number of scholars have challenged this primacy of science. For example, Lorber (1993, p. 569) makes the point that “neither sex nor gender are pure categories. Combinations of incongruous genes, genitalia, and hormonal input are ignored in sex categorization,” while Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2013, pp. 2–4) argue that even the biological classification of an individual as ‘male’ or ‘female’ is very much driven by cultural, rather than scientific, beliefs (see also Cameron 2005, p. 486; Reeser 2010, pp. 12–13). Despite these observations, however, the notion that reproductive anatomy is indicative of the male sex is a thoroughly-embedded notion in contemporary society and one that has proved difficult to dislodge.

Moving beyond sex, it is usually the case that the term ‘male’ is culturally and discursively connected with the associated gender construct of ‘men’ (Clatterbaugh 2004, p. 202) – that is, individuals who claim “rights and privileges attendant to membership in the dominant gender group” (Schrock & Schwalbe 2009, p. 279). Indeed, there are a host of cultural pressures which facilitate the process of identifying as a man, including family encouragement, media representations, peer group friendships, and more. Of course, having a male body as a symbolic asset can strengthen claims to being a ‘man’ (see Connell 2005b, pp. 50–58 for a discussion of the interplay of the body, science, and society), but the latter does not necessarily follow on from the former. By dislocating the term ‘male’ from ‘men’, not only can intersex, drag, non-binary, and trans individuals be ‘men’, ‘males’ can opt not to be ‘men’ (Kiesling 2007, p. 656). Being a ‘man’, therefore, goes beyond the possession of particular reproductive organs and instead centers on the kinds of practices and behaviors that individuals might need to adopt in order to be normatively ‘read’ as a man (Schwalbe 2005; Zimman 2017, pp. 1000–04). This perspective treats gender as a social endeavor, something that has to be enacted or performed, rather than something that is inherent and stable. This draws heavily on Goffman’s (1977) idea of ‘affirmation’ and Butler’s (1990) notion of ‘performativity’, where individuals construct particular identities through their social practices (see also Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992, who introduced the notion of performativity into language and gender research).

But just as ‘male’ can be dislocated from ‘men’, the same principle of dislocation can be applied to ‘men’ and ‘masculinity’, since “all things that men do are not masculine, and all things masculine are not necessarily done by men” (Kiesling 2007, p. 654). This takes us neatly to a discussion of the thorny term ‘masculinity’.

### **3.2. Masculinity and masculinities**

Although some scholars have argued that defining masculinity/masculinities is a “fruitless task” (MacInnes 1998, p. 2), this has not stopped many from trying. Indeed, a number of approaches to defining ‘masculinity’ have been set out over the years, each with a different set of underlying assumptions and issues. Connell (2005b, pp. 68–70) summarizes four common frameworks in the literature about men, working through how masculinity has been operationalized in different fields. In the mythopoetic men’s movement, for example, essentialist definitions of masculinity are typical, where a particular characteristic is taken as ‘core’ to men’s identities (e.g. risk-taking or aggression). In social sciences and psychology, on the other hand, a more positivist definition is taken in the attempt to find out what men are really like (leading to things like male/female scales). In areas like media studies, normative definitions tend to predominate, where masculinity is defined as what men ought to be (such presentations abound in movies and television shows where the traditional male lead is physically strong, tough, courageous, and so on). Finally, semiotic definitions are typical within psychoanalysis and post-structural cultural analyses of gender, where masculinity is defined as ‘not femininity’.

Connell (2005b, pp. 68–70) points out, however, that each of these approaches comes with its own set of problems. Essentialist definitions are arbitrary; positivist definitions are based on assumptions; normative definitions are unrepresentative; and semiotic definitions are limited. Connell argues that scholars should, instead, approach masculinity through an examination of the processes and relationships through which men and women live their lives. So rather than seeing masculinity as an object of study, it is more productive to see it as “simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture” (Connell 2005b, p. 71). Relatedly, Kiesling (2007, p. 659) defines masculinity as “social performances which are semiotically linked (indexed) to men, and not to women, through cultural discourses and cultural models.” One of the benefits of this definition is that individual characteristics, traits or behaviors are not specified, meaning that the definition remains flexible across time periods and across cultures.

It is clear, however, that particular constellations of characteristics, traits, and behaviors of men tend to be culturally exalted, valorized, and dominant, a version of masculinity known as hegemonic masculinity, or ‘the currently most honored way of being a man [and requires] all other men to position themselves in relation to it’ (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p. 832). In western contexts, this usually means “young, urban, white, northern heterosexual, Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, and a recent record in sports” (Goffman 1963, p. 128; see also Kimmel 1994).

While hegemonic masculinity has been criticized for its lack of specificity and the fact that it is difficult to identify particular practices as being hegemonic (Demetriou 2001; Christensen & Jensen 2014), it has proved to be a useful concept in understanding how men position themselves in relation to one another as a form of masculine gender politics (Connell 2005b,

pp. 37–38; Balirano & Baker 2018, p. 5). So although hegemonic masculinity is a dominant gender identity, not all men are able to attain it, while others can be placed in subordinate or marginalized positions (e.g. gay men and men from ethnic minorities; see also Hillman & Hefry 2006; Jensen 2010).

In some cases, different forms of marginalized masculinities can even come to compete with one another, usually set against a backdrop of local and global contextual pressures. For example, in her analysis of race and ethnicity in Brazil, Roth-Gordon (2012; 2017) discusses how young Brazilian men manage the opposing identities of the *mano* ('black brother') and the *playboy* ('white wealthy male youth') through a range of semiotic practices, including language, jewelry, clothing, hairstyle, and music. While these two masculine identities are differently valued within young black male communities (generally speaking, *mano* positively and *playboy* negatively), young men develop strategies to manage and manipulate their racial appearance as they exploit the *mano/playboy* cline.

To demonstrate how this plays out in interaction, Roth-Gordon (2012) shows how Mano, a black *favela* youth, linguistically embodies the white *playboy* through his use of a more 'proper' Portuguese to challenge a police officer conducting an illegal stop-and-search. By drawing on the white voice of privileged Brazilian citizenship and white entitlement, Mano is able to "pull rank, to garner additional privileges, and to distinguish himself (over others) as someone who deserves respect and better treatment" (Roth-Gordon 2012, p. 44). So even though the *playboy* identity is positioned as a less-than-desirable masculine identity among the black youth community of Brazil, it nevertheless offers a means through which young men can reframe their racial appearance and engage with broader global cultures and discourses of gender, race, and region.

All of this highlights the fact that it is reductive to argue that men who adopt marginal positions are unmasculine. To that end, the field has embraced the idea of masculinities as multiple, fractured, and dislocated, a thinking initially inspired by Mort (1988, p. 195) who observed that "we are not dealing with masculinity, but with a series of *masculinities*" (see also Clatterbaugh 2004, p. 200 who discusses the political dimension of this reframing). In a similar vein, Milani (2015, p. 10) notes that "masculinity is never in the singular, but is instead a set of performances that one carries out by employing *linguistic and other meaning-making resources* within normative constraints about how a man should sound, appear and behave" (my emphasis). Milani's point here also highlights the fact that an analysis of the linguistic practices (e.g. patterns of segmental variation, lexical choice, pitch, discourse strategies, grammar, morphosyntax etc.) can significantly add to our understanding of *how* individuals manage these gender projects, enriching our understanding of how diverse masculinities and the lived realities of men play out across a range of contexts. It is to this body of work that I now turn.

#### **4. THE GROWTH OF LANGUAGE AND MASCULINITIES STUDIES**

While the study of men and masculinities was developing along the lines set out in Section 2 (above), this critical gaze had not yet taken root within sociolinguistics. Much of the research within the traditional quantitative paradigm, as established by Labov (1963), Trudgill (1972), Macaulay (1977) and others, treated the categories of 'men' and 'women' as relatively static elements in models of linguistic variation (Johnson 1997, p. 14). Consequently, their primary attention was on how speaker sex correlated with the use of standard and non-standard variants

in discourse. Eckert (1989) outlines in detail the limitations of this approach, pushing for a more comprehensive treatment of gender as social practice, an idea more fully developed in Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1992) and one I return to later in this review.

Outside quantitative sociolinguistic research, scholars started paying attention to the politics of gender in interaction, building from the general concern in feminist scholarship about the role language played in the maintenance of patriarchy, structural inequality and representation (Tolson 1979, p. 141). Although early theoretical treatments of language and gender emphasized the ways in which women were constrained through particular linguistic practices and attitudes, analyses tended to view “women’s language” as unassertive and ineffective through their use of conversational hedges, tag questions, and ‘empty’ adjectives like *lovely*, *adorable* and *sweet* (Lakoff 1973). In this ‘deficit’ approach, the predominant assumption was that “men’s language” acted as the de facto standard against which all other speakers should be evaluated (see also Johnson 1997, pp. 2–13).

The view of language as a comprehensive (and insidious) system of control, power, and dominance did not emerge until several years after the publication of Lakoff (1973), as her linguistics claims were put to the empirical test. Analyzing speaker interruptions, perhaps one of the most well-examined features of conversational dominance, Zimmerman & West (1975) argued that male speakers were more likely to interrupt female conversational partners than male conversational partners, especially in mixed-sex contexts (see also Brooks 1982; West 1984; Smith-Lovin & Brody 1989). Other research within the ‘dominance’ paradigm examined a range of linguistic features and strategies, including topic management (Fishman 1978), control of the conversational floor (Edelsky 1981), and questions (Harris 1995), while a more general discussion of male bias in English was forwarded by Spender (1980) in her influential monograph *Man Made Language*.

This work, though, echoed the kinds of representations found in other feminist work of the period (see Section 2). As Johnson (1997, p. 11) points out, “within the dominance paradigm.... a kind of ‘all-purpose male oppressor’ is constructed in the guise of a mysterious individual who talks too much, interrupts and generally dominates conversations with women.” By failing to properly problematize men, or by implicitly promoting the ‘male as norm’ discourse, both ‘deficit’ and ‘dominance’ approaches offered only partial answers to how men were implicated in structures of power and inequality (see Kiesling 2007, pp. 662–65 for a more nuanced discussion of men and conversational dominance).

While there had been some earlier observations on the nature of “men’s language” (e.g. Sattel 1983; Kaminer & Dixon 1995), the first serious examination was the seminal collection *Language and Masculinity* (Johnson & Meinhof 1997). Adopting an explicitly feminist perspective, the 12 chapters offer a critical analysis of men across a variety of contexts, with Johnson (1997, p. 13) noting “if it is male power we wish to contest, then it is all aspects of the male order that we must comprehend.” By making visible the hitherto invisible aspects of men and their associated linguistic and social practices (Kiesling 2007, p. 655), the authors outline the processes through which “certain bodies, identities and desires (and not others) become *unmarked*, *normal* and *normative*” (Milani 2011, p. 184). It is only by uncovering these hidden agendas that a socially transformative research agenda which challenges existing hierarchies, binaries, and expectations is possible.

It would be uncontroversial to state that Johnson & Meinhof (1997) was the catalyst for a new wave of LMS scholarship (although as Cameron 2009, p. 13 cautions, perhaps too much so), providing a number of useful insights into how, for example, men take on different

imaginary positions in interactions (Wetherell & Edley 1999), strategically cross into non-standard varieties (Bucholtz 1999), construct narratives of superiority and ‘one-upsmanship’ (Coates 2003), use language as a resource for homosociability (Kiesling 2005; Thurnell-Read 2012), and establish ‘tough’ masculine identities (Lawson 2013; Williams 2015). Other research has investigated the nature of men’s gossip (Cameron 1997), address terms and discourses of gender in sports contexts (Meân 2001; Wilson 2010; McDowell & Schaffner 2011), and the intersection of language, masculinity, and affect/emotion (Galasinski 2004; Bennett 2007; Oransky & Marecek 2009; Randell et al. 2016; Kiesling 2017). Some of these publications draw on in-depth ethnographic approaches to ground the accompanying analyses (Bucholtz 1999; Kiesling 2005; Lawson 2013), while others are more in keeping with traditional sociolinguistic methods (Coates 2003). Taken together, all of them help advance our knowledge about the intersection of language, masculinity, and gender in contemporary society.

In the next section, I outline what I consider to be some of the key texts in LMS and the major contributions this work makes to our overall understanding not just of men and masculinities, but the broader field of language and gender. Since space restrictions make it impractical to outline every major advance or theoretical development, this discussion can only cover a selected sample. That said, it is my hope that what follows provides a representative overview of the field as it currently stands.

## **5. LMS AND ITS LINGUISTIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

Before starting, it is worthwhile pointing out that there has been no systematic review of the scope and composition of LMS literature to date and we have limited information about the number of LMS-related publications, particularly after 1997. Following a similar approach to Schrock & Schwalbe (2009, p. 278), then, I conducted a search on Birmingham City University’s library database<sup>1</sup> using the keywords ‘masculinit\* AND sociolinguistic\*’. This returned over 1200 sociolinguistics-related publications, with the vast majority (950) of these published after 1997.

Benwell (2017, p. 241) offers a useful summary of what this work encompasses, including how men talk; how men discursively construct masculine identities; what patterns of speech exist within “exclusively male” communities, such as fraternities, gangs and all-male friendship groups; how specific discourses, behaviors, attitudes, and orientations are linked to culturally normative ways of ‘being a man’ (e.g. “lad culture”, “hard man”, “hero”, or traits such as aggression, toughness, physical strength, sexual competence, objectification of women), either in interaction or written texts; and how language establishes gendered power differences.

Taking all of these together, we can see a shift away from a static conceptualization of “men’s language” that characterizes earlier quantitative research, its preoccupation on sex differences in speech, and the treatment of gender and sex as binary concepts (for examples of this shift in focus, see Cameron 2005; Eckert & Podesva 2011). In any event, if something like “men’s language” did exist, it would posit that there is a common feature (or features) across the speech of all men, which does not seem to be the case. What follows in the discussion below is a (more or less) chronological précis of LMS work, starting with Trudgill’s (1972) idea of covert prestige through to more recent work on performativity, language and sexuality, and queer masculinities.

## 5.1. Covert prestige

One of the main arguments in early dialectology work was that was NORMs (non-mobile, older, rural males) maintained local vernacular lexical items and non-standard patterns of pronunciation (Orton & Halliday 1962), but there was limited scholarly interest in explaining *why* such patterns occurred. It was not until the publication of Trudgill (1972) that the first theoretical account of how gender might be implicated in the standard/non-standard cline was offered. Of particular importance to the question of why men led in non-standard realizations was the concept of ‘covert prestige’ – the idea that men, regardless of class, use specific linguistic strategies that are positively associated with canonically working-class male traits such as strength, physicality and toughness (Willis 1977). Since (-ing) deletion was a feature of working-class speech, Trudgill argues that its higher rate of use by male speakers in Norwich from all class background made sense because it indexed socially valuable male identities (I return to this notion of indexicality later); thus, even middle-class males benefitted from the cultural associations wrought through this feature.

Although covert prestige became a compelling addition to frameworks around language and gender (Poplack 1978; Edwards 1979; Labov 1990; Holmes 1997; Cheshire & Gardner-Chloros 1998), there was some resistance towards its explanatory utility. For example, Eckert (1989, p. 250) challenged the idea that prestige was the most important factor in sociolinguistic accounts of linguistic variation and change, arguing instead that issues of power and identity should be more central (see also Eckert 2000, p. 227), while Kiesling & Winosky (2003, p. 12) point out that “covert prestige does not explain why the men are using more [monophthongization of (aw)]; it only re-organizes the correlational pattern to say that men do it to be masculine, which verges on tautology.” Both Kiesling & Winosky (2003) and Lawson (2015) offer a fuller account of how particular linguistic variants come to be associated with specific performances of masculinity, each focusing on issues of stance (that is, speaker orientations to ongoing talk, Jaffe 2009) and ‘indexical complicity’ (that is, the process through which variants derive additional cultural associations vis-à-vis the ‘patriarchal dividend’) respectively. Such engagement with locally-grounded experiences of masculinity, rather than the more global level that Trudgill (1972) originally contends with, also allows for a more nuanced interpretation of linguistic behavior. Ultimately, however, the introduction of covert prestige moved the discussion towards a consideration of how linguistic choice might be bound up with identity projects, prefacing work that was to emerge as part of the ‘third wave’ of sociolinguistics (Eckert 2012).

## 5.2. Masculinities and Performance

I have already briefly set out the performative (or social constructionist) turn in academia in the previous discussion, but it is worthwhile reviewing how linguistics has helped uncover the role everyday talk plays in constructing masculine identities (I focus on masculinity-related work here, but there has been scholarly interest in a variety of components of identity; see Preece 2016 for relevant discussions).

As previously noted, LMS work (and language and gender research more generally) from the late-90s onward adopted a social constructionist stance, viewing linguistic practice as a means through which identities are performed and habitually constructed in interaction (McElhinny 2003; Eckert 2012, pp. 93–94). To that end, gender is not something pre-existing

but rather something accomplished during an interaction (or not, depending on the aims of the speakers during an interaction, Cameron 2005, p. 487). This approach was a sharp departure from more traditional approaches which suggested that speakers used language in a way that was reflective of their social characteristics. Thus, a working-class, urban man would use a specific constellation of linguistic features which reflected his social position as working-class, urban, and male (this kind of explanation found in Trudgill 1972, for example). The alternative view, however, proposes that identity is something a speaker *does*, rather than something a speaker *has*. Consequently, linguistic practice is one of the means through which identity is constructed, as part of an emergent and ongoing interactional project (Bucholtz & Hall 2005).

In order to understand the link between language and identity, however, we need to consider the concept of indexical meaning; that is “the connection between a linguistic feature and meaning that is not denotational” (Kiesling 2007, p. 660; see also Ochs 1992; Silverstein 2003 for a more detailed discussion of indexicality). Linguistic strategies of all sorts can function as indexicals, from pitch and other suprasegmental features like voice quality and vocal amplitude, through to segmental features like consonants/vowels, discourse features like overlaps, interruptions, latching, questions, lexical choice, and more (although usually the clustering of features carries more indexical weight, Bucholtz 2009, p. 148). As an example of indexicality at play, Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2013, p. 5) highlight how vocal pitch can index gender. Normally, men’s vocal pitch is low due to the fact that their vocal tracts are, on average, longer than women’s vocal tracts. But vocal pitch is also something under conscious control, so a man who might wish to enact a ‘more masculine’ identity may choose to lower his pitch. This might not only index a more masculine identity but also stereotypically masculine characteristics, like authority, dominance, aggression, or strength (and the experimental data seems to bear out this reading; Wolff & Puts 2010). As Kiesling (2007, p. 661) highlights, “masculinity is expressed in language through features of language indexical of cultural discourses of masculinity, or through features directly indexical of certain kinds of men.”

These notions of indexicality and gender as a social performance form the foundation of Kiesling’s (1997, 2001, 2004, 2005) ethnographically-informed analysis of the linguistic behavior of fraternity men at an American college and how they manage orientations towards ‘ideal’ masculine identities (as breadwinners, as physically strong), how different types of power (e.g. economic power, knowledge power, structural power) are implicated in their discourse, and how sexuality and desire are expressed in interaction. What emerges is that the linguistic strategies of men are many, varied, and nuanced, going against the then prevailing trend of seeing men as inexpressive and inarticulate (Kiesling 2007, p. 670; see also Lawson 2013, p. 390).

Using similar ethnographic methodologies, Lawson (2009, 2011) sets out an account of how high school boys in Glasgow, Scotland use fine-grained patterns of linguistic variation to distinguish themselves from one another as members of the Schoolies, Sports, or ‘Ned’ groups, showing that non-standard Glaswegian variants of (θ) occur at a higher rate in groups which adopt more ‘anti-establishment’ practices like fighting, truanting, and not paying attention in class (see also Phoenix & Frosh 2001; Preece 2009 for a discussion of language and masculinities in British secondary and tertiary educational contexts). Lawson (2013, 2015) goes on to examine how the same speakers construct ‘tough’ masculine identities in fight narratives, demonstrating that ‘tough’ masculinity is socially valuable even within those groups who typically reject fighting, aggression, and other violent social practices and suggesting that

within a post-industrial context like Glasgow, behaviors associated with traditionally working-class forms of masculinity are still influential.

The way in which ‘toughness’ is a valued aspect of masculinity is also part of Bucholtz’s (1999) discussion of how Brand One, a white American high school student, strategically crosses over into African American Vernacular English during a narrative about a confrontation with an African American male antagonist who was attempting to steal his backpack. By utilizing elements of AAVE lexis and phonology, Brand One exploits cultural stereotypes of African American men as strong, physically powerful, and aggressive, integrating these socially positive character traits into his own gendered identity as a man (albeit from a racialized and racist perspective through a process of essentializing African American men as violent and aggressive. See also Chun 2013 for an exploration of how AAVE and stereotypes of black hypermasculinity are deployed by a Chinese American YouTube performer).

Within conversational analysis and (critical) discursive psychology, the idea that identity is something constituted through language has also predominated, although its roots go back to the work of Harold Garfinkel and Harvey Sacks rather than (postmodern) feminist theory (Cameron 2005, p. 486). In one of the first papers in this vein, Edley & Wetherell (1997) investigate adolescent male masculinities in a British independent (i.e. fee-paying) school, using a discursive psychological approach to show how linguistic constructions of masculinity are often messy, complex, and contradictory (see Edley 2001a for an overview of discursive psychology and masculinities in relation to this project). While notions of ‘tough’ masculinity were important in this context, they also show how some of the young men reject the locally-dominant notion of the ‘hard lad’ (that is, boys who play rugby in the school). Building on these ideas (and analysing a different corpus of data collected from older men enrolled in Open University courses), Wetherell & Edley (1999) suggest that men adopt three different ‘imaginary positionings’ in interaction, namely ‘heroic’, ‘ordinary’, and ‘rebellious’, each highlighting how speakers align with (or more typically, resist) hegemonic ‘macho’ masculinity, something also investigated by Korobov (2005) who shows how adolescent boys use irony as a strategy for resisting hegemonic and hetero-normative forms of masculinity. On the other hand, Sidnell’s (2011) analysis of an episode of dirty joke telling among a group of older male friends highlights how such talk can function as a means of reifying a ‘exclusively-male’ conversational domain, while Bamberg’s (2004) discussion of ‘slut-bashing’ among high school adolescent males uncovers the processes through which the cultural double-standard of healthy male sexuality/deviant female sexuality is perpetuated and the gender order maintained.

A key debate underpinning these kinds of investigation is the extent to which concepts that go beyond an interaction should be part of an analysis of linguistic content, a debate captured in the exchange between Speer (2001a, 2001b) and Edley (2001b). In their discussions of the same excerpts of data, Speer and Edley outline two different approaches to the analysis of language and masculinity, each predicated on the (ir)relevance of material beyond the discursive domain (the so-called ‘extra-discursive’). More specifically, Speer (2001, p. 113) argues that an analysis should only attend to the content of speakers’ talk, following Antaki & Widdicombe’s (1998, p. 4) point that ‘one should take for analysis only those categories that people make relevant (or orient to) and which are procedurally consequential in their interactions.’ Thus, analysis should be grounded in the categories, content, and forms of talk that participants use. Conversely, Edley argues that analysis should be supplemented by

attending to ideas, concepts, and issues that may not be explicitly named by participants, since these over-riding global forces of power, gender inequality, hegemony, and so on influence the construction of gendered identities (see also Cameron 2005, p. 487; Benwell 2017, p. 249).

At the heart of the debate is the relevance of ‘hegemonic masculinity’, a term which, Speer points out, is never used by any of the participants; as such, she argues that it is difficult to claim this is a concept to which speakers orientate themselves. On the other hand, Edley (2001, p. 137) states that “hegemonic masculinity may never get mentioned in name, but it is a mistake to imagine that what it describes is entirely absent from everyday talk.” For Edley, the social, cultural, and ideological context in which talk is embedded is central to an analytical account, enriching the accompanying interpretation of the data. This debate is an important one in language and gender research, since it centers on the most appropriate way to analyse the embedded language of social life, raising questions about how analysts can tease out when and how gender is relevant in discourse, what speakers do with gender, and the range of social meanings that might be attached to performances of gender (McElhinny 2003, p. 33; Sidnell 2003, p. 329; see also McIlvenny 2002; Speer 2005; Benwell 2011 for attempts to reconcile these opposing positions).

Going beyond conversational data, some scholars have examined masculinity as a literal performance through the vector of traditional and ‘new’ media. For example, Talbot (1997), Sunderland (2000), Benwell (2003, 2004), Stibbe (2004), Coffey-Glover (2015), and Baker & Levon (2016) have analysed how discourses of men, maleness, and masculinity are textually constructed in books, magazines, and newspapers, while Bucholtz and Lopez (2011), examine how masculinity and ethnicity are inflected in performances of ‘linguistic minstrelsy’ (a form of mock language, following Hill 1998) in Hollywood movies, demonstrating the ways such minstrelsy simultaneously reproduces and undermines the dominance of hegemonic white masculinity. Alim et al. (2018) also show how white hegemony is challenged through their analysis of freestyle rap battles in Los Angeles and Cape Town, although they convincingly argue that these performances also marginalize “women, femininity, and all gender non-conforming bodies that challenge the gender binary” (Alim et al. 2018, p. 59), thus becoming a site for the continued legitimation of cisheteropatriarchy. Finally, the realm of new media (e.g. YouTube, Twitter, chatrooms, forums, and so on) has shown how masculinity has transcended the boundaries of cyberspace, playing with fundamental notions of language, sexuality, biology, embodiment, and space (King 2011).

All of these forms of media are important contexts for the continued critical investigation of language and masculinities, given the central role they play in promoting, endorsing, and mediating normative and essentialized notions of masculinity. That said, they are also sites where these notions can be challenged and resisted through the emergence of new (or alternative) modes of masculinity (SturtzSreetharan 2017a, 2017b). Linguistic analyses can shed light on the ways in which semiotic material becomes available as part of counterhegemonic or progressive social projects.

### **5.3. Homosociability and Male Solidarity**

As a great deal of work on masculinity has previously argued, the negotiation of relational closeness with other men can be a socially fraught endeavour. While heteronormative and hegemonic social script expects men to build solidarity with one another, “the more they pursue this bonding enterprise, the more they run the risk of being perceived as entering the realm of

same-sex desire” (Milani & Jonsson 2011, p. 257). Thus, men should strive to achieve closeness, but this must be constantly monitored to prevent it from being interpreted as sexual interest (Tosh 1994, p. 187).

Research within LMS has shown the role that language plays in facilitating these interpersonal connections between men and how homosociality, or “the nonsexual attractions held by men (or women) for members of their own sex” (Bird 1996, p. 121), is established and maintained, from “one-upsmanship” stories, where participants attempt to out-do one another in narratives of risk, danger, or audacity (Coates 2003), to insults, boasts, and other forms of competitive talk (Kiesling 2005). These features appear to be common across a range of cultural contexts, not because they are universals of men’s language, but rather because competition, risk-seeking, rivalry, and so on are pervasive elements of the cultural discourses of hegemonic masculinity (Kiesling 2007, p. 666).

Of perhaps more concern is the extent to which homosociality is predicated on the marginalization, relegation, and sexual objectification of women (Bird 1996, p. 123). Thus, it can be seen as a central part of how modern patriarchy operates, something a number of recent high-profile media cases have brought into sharp relief. For example, the 2016 revelation of Donald Trump’s infamous ‘grab them by the pussy’ episode with Billy Bush (the then co-anchor of *Access Hollywood*) can be read as a substantiation of male bonding through the verbal denigration of the two women who were the focus of the exchange (Nancy O’Dell and Arianne Zucker), reducing them to their bodies and their sexual desirability. The use of laughter, boasts, sexually explicit insult terms, and mutually appreciative evaluative comments by Trump and Bush are all part of the linguistic means through which misogynist and verbally violent ‘locker room banter’ is perpetuated, contributing to the participants’ co-construction of an intended sexually confident masculinity (interestingly, in his defence of Trump, ex-boxer Floyd Mayweather’s argued that “[Trump] speak like a real man spoke. Real men speak like, ‘Man, she had a fat ass. You see her ass? I had to squeeze her ass.’” Wells 2017). Cameron’s (2016) discussion of Trump and Bush’s exchange is instructive here, commenting that “banter is fraternal patriarchy’s verbal glue. It strengthens the bonds of solidarity among male peers by excluding, othering and dehumanising women; and in doing those things it also facilitates sexual violence”. Similarly, in the recent case brought against Brett Kavanaugh, Christine Blasey Ford noted how the sexual assault carried out by the accused parties (Brett Kavanaugh and Mark Judge) was accompanied by “the uproarious laughter of the two and their having fun at my expense. I was underneath one of them as the two laughed. Two friends having a really good time with one another” (Yurcuba 2018). These strategies of what Loofbourow (2018) calls “toxic homosociality” are part of the ways in which “males [woo] other males over the comedy of being cruel to women” (see also Toletino 2018; Coates 2013, pp. 547–48). Whether these strategies are changing among younger men remains an open research question and one well worthy of further investigation.

#### **5.4. Masculinities and Sexualities**

Although masculinity is intimately bound up with (compulsory) heterosexuality, how language is implicated in the discursive construction of heterosexuality has only recently become a focus for scholarly investigations. Indeed, most work within Queer Linguistics has tended to concentrate on non-heterosexual, gay male, and lesbian identities (Motschenbacher 2012, p. 127), while heterosexuality as the default ‘unmarked’ identity has been relatively unexamined.

That said, there have been some attempts at critically evaluating the intersection of heterosexuality and masculinity. For example, Francis & Skelton (2001) discuss how heterosexual male teachers deploy discourses of homophobia and misogyny in their interactions with male pupils as part of their own performances of masculinity, showcasing to their pupils a number of stereotypes/assumptions about what it is to be a man (see also Pascoe 2007, who examines discourses of homophobia and heterosexuality in an American high school), while the development and maintenance of the preadolescent heterosexual market place forms the basis of Eckert (2011). Looking at a range of everyday talk between men and women, Coates (2013) uncovers the relatively mundane ways through which different forms of heterosexuality (e.g. married heterosexuality, independent heterosexuality, ideal heterosexuality) are maintained. Through an analysis of a conversation between four male students who are all unmarried/unattached, she also demonstrates how young male heterosexuality is bound up with the discursive othering of women where they are reduced to their bodies and sexual desirability (in this case, women become replaced by various epithets for ‘breasts’ during an episode of ‘banter’ talk). Beyond English, Zwisler (2017) analyses the role of *tú* and *usted* (T-V alternation) among young, working-class men in Colombia, arguing that *usted* fulfils a social distancing function central to the maintenance of homosociability and heterosexuality.

Moving into online contexts, Erni (2016) discusses how the practice of internet based ‘sex chatting’ intersects with the construction of a ‘vernacular masculinity’, which he defined as a “curiosity toward all things bodily and sexual, a non-contemplative, even unrefined, sensibility, and a ‘social cool’ built on ... street knowledge and popular taste ... [which] speaks the idiom of the curious, the obscene, and even the vulgar” (Erni 2016, p. 107). Relatedly, Hess & Flores (2018) look at interactions in the website *Tinder Nightmares*, a collection of posts drawn from the online dating app Tinder which showcase misogynistic and toxic performances of masculinity. Through their analysis of men’s failed pickup lines (e.g. “Damn girl I’d make you a single mother of two”), hypersexual declarations (e.g. “I just finished a round of golf, wanna be my 19th hole today?”), and objectification through consumption (e.g. “Do you like ramen noodles? Cause I’m gonna be ramen my noodle in ya”), Hess & Flores (2018, p. 1095) argue that “men of Tinder are often following the scripts of hypermasculinity, both in the larger sense of toxic masculinity as a desirable performance and in the smaller sense of pickup lines as scripted attempts at playing the hookup ‘game’”. This idea of ‘game’ is also a key element in the language of heterosexual ‘pick-up artists’ or ‘seduction artists’, that is, men who initiate conversations with women with the sole intention of securing a sexual encounter (Hambling-Jones & Merrison 2012; Dayter & Rüdiger 2016; Lawson & McGlashan 2017).

## 5.5. Queer Masculinities

Other research on transmasculinity (Zimman 2013, 2015), intersex individuals (King 2015), and queer masculinities (Milani 2017; Guarracino 2018) has offered a useful critique of the conflation of ‘men’ with ‘male’ and ‘masculinities’ (see also Zimman et al. 2014, p. 1). This work convincingly demonstrates that language can be decoupled from the body, “establishing the floating and hence endlessly flexible nature of the linguistic sign” (Hall 2009, p. 139). In a comprehensive discussion of the biological versus the social basis for gender differences in speech, Zimman (2017) analyses variation in /s/ (specifically the mean center of gravity, a measure of the peak frequency of /s/ realization) across a group of 15 transgender men and

transmasculine individuals. This analysis shows that those speakers who identify as straight men have the lowest mean center of gravity of below 6000Hz; those speakers who identify as queer and as trans men have a mean center of gravity of between 6,400Hz and 7000Hz (the range where men's and women's productions overlap); and finally those speakers who do not identify as men, use labels like *boy* or *genderqueer*, or do not use labels at all, have a mean center of gravity of over 8,500Hz, a measure above even the higher end of the range for English-speaking women. Zimman (2017, p. 1016) argues that not only do "transgender speakers provide a perfect opportunity for teasing apart social and biological influences on the gendered voice," they can also augment analyses of cisgender speakers through highlighting the importance of gender expression and performativity. Taking this dislocation between men and masculinities even further, there is an emergent body of work on the intersection between language, women, and masculinities. Challenging Halberstam's (1998) influential notion of "female masculinities," Jones' (2015) argues that discourses of masculinity within a lesbian community should be viewed as a rejection of heteronormative femininity, rather than treating 'butch' lesbian identities as a desire to be masculine.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS: LMS AND THE ROAD AHEAD

It is clear that while LMS has played an important role in furthering our knowledge of the situated linguistic reality of men and masculinities across a variety of diverse contexts and has made a number of key contributions to sociolinguistic theory and method, a number of avenues remain under-investigated. The new political landscape of the West, represented by the growth of militarization, right-wing populism, and the deployment of (white) nationalist and anti-immigration rhetoric, coupled with the continued problem of sexual and non-sexual male violence and the ways in which 'toxic' masculinities are becoming more visible in contemporary civil society, has already had a significant impact on recent scholarly discussions about men and masculinities (Milani & Jonsson 2011; Ellis 2015; Cornwall et al. 2016; Johns 2017; Kimmel 2018). Linguists are in an ideal position to illuminate the ways in which language sustains gendered hierarchies and how it is part of reinvented translocal discourses of inequality.

This call has already been taken up in some quarters. For instance, Wodak (2015) discusses the politics of patriarchy in relation to right-wing nationalism, while Johnson (2018) and Norocel et al. (2018) examine the radicalization of white men and the discursive construction of white Nordic masculinities in right-wing populist media respectively. A number of scholars have also tackled the intersection of masculinity and militarization, including Disler (2005), Kennard (2006), and Marcellino (2014), who examine the links between language and masculinity in the US Air Force and the US Marines. In a more recent discussion, Cohn (2018) highlights the problematic link between 'tough' masculinity and military might through her analysis of nuclear bomb rhetoric between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-Un.

In the realm of interpersonal male violence, Mykietiak (2016) considers how the notion of fragile masculinity is deployed in the manifesto of Elliot Rodger, the man who carried out the Isla Vista shooting in 2014. Rodger's acts of extreme violence, and his subsequent appeal to victimhood, claims of unfulfilled sexual desires, and feelings of isolation and rejection, were predicated on a warped and toxic notion of masculinity concerned with power, dominance, and control (see also Vito et al. 2017; Blommaert 2018). The fact that Rodger's manifesto was celebrated by groups of young men styling themselves as 'involuntary celibates' (*incels*) raises

further concerns about ongoing discourses of sexuality and sexual privilege among young men in online contexts and the ways in which these views can have devastating real-world impacts. Consequently, the investigation (linguistic or otherwise) of outputs within the ‘manosphere’, a loose collection of male-authored websites, blogs, Facebook pages, and Twitter accounts concerned with men’s rights, seduction techniques, male self-ownership, and anti-feminism, would seem to be a crucial socio-political avenue for LMS work (see Ging 2017; Marwick & Caplan 2018 for some indicative directions this work can take).

As these contexts, and more besides, develop over the course of the next few decades, research within LMS will occupy a key role in our understanding of how men, regardless of whether they are in the center or on the margins, negotiate the changing pressures and shifting global tensions that are playing out in the very local contexts of schools, universities, workplaces, pubs, sports clubs, homes, and the countless other spaces of contemporary social life.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the number of publications presented here is only an indicative finding, for a number of reasons. First, while BCU's library database (known as 'Summon') is also used at other institutions, search results will vary depending on an institution's subscriptions and access rights. Second, specific parameters were used in this search, including subject area ('linguistics' and 'English language'), language ('English'), and publication type ('books', 'dissertation/thesis', and 'journal article'); naturally, different parameters would lead to different results being returned. Third, a number of 'language and gender' texts which were included in this search only tangentially discuss 'masculinity' as a critical concept. Finally, several duplicate publications were returned, but a work-around to exclude these results could not be found.