Promjene u konceptu muškosti od mlađih do starijih generacija

Jerleković, Laura

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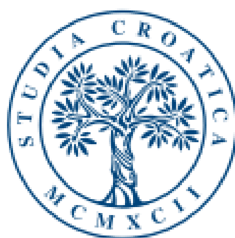

SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU

FAKULTET HRVATSKIH STUDIJA

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ZAVRŠNI RAD

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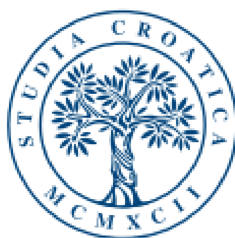

SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU
FAKULTET HRVATSKIH STUDIJA
ODSJEK ZA SOCIOLOGIJU

LAURA JERLEKOVIĆ

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Mentor: doc.dr.sc. Erik Brezovec

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Summary

The aim of this paper is to explore the concepts of masculinity across different generations, providing a comprehensive understanding of how masculinity has evolved and been perceived throughout history. By examining the development of masculinity over time, this study seeks to shed light on the various ways in which masculine identities have been shaped by cultural, social, and historical contexts. Furthermore, the paper aims to offer a deeper insight into what constitutes masculinity by employing a range of theoretical perspectives, including the exploration of different types of masculinity and the application of gender theory. Through this multifaceted approach, the research endeavors to analyze how traditional and contemporary notions of masculinity are constructed, challenged, and transformed across different eras and social settings. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to a more nuanced and informed discussion about masculinity, its expressions, and its implications for both individuals and society as a whole.

Keywords: masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, man, gender

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1. Introduction

The study of masculinity has come a long way, incorporating a range of theoretical approaches that provide light on the social construction and maintenance of gender identities. This paper explores major viewpoints that influence our conception of masculinity, emphasizing the ways in which these ideas interact with historical settings, societal conventions, and current concerns. According to Pierre Bourdieu (2001), societal standards often impose masculinity as a *obvious truth*. For example, gender roles are determined by cultural traditions; in the Kabyle society, masculinity is defined in sharp contrast to femininity. Adding to this conversation, Raewyn Connell (2005) notes that physical attributes are often used to define masculinity, either as a fixed quality or as a behavioral motivator. This contradiction gives rise to two opposing viewpoints: the first restricts male behavior based on physical characteristics, while the second associates aggressive behavior with the male physique. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity provides a framework for understanding how some masculinities and femininities subjugate other masculinities and femininities while dominating and justifying masculine authority. This theory emphasizes how social institutions support gender hierarchies and how conventional standards, like those seen in sports or traditional duties, are frequently associated with masculinity. Furthermore, as Schrock and Schwalbe note, masculinity is a social construct that is acquired through interactions and cultural conventions rather than an innate quality. The ways in which standards and expectations have evolved may be seen in the evolution of masculinity throughout history, from Victorian ideals to contemporary conceptions influenced by social and economic changes. One approach to achieve this is to look at how masculinity is portrayed in different historical periods and civilizations. Examples of these are the patriarchal models of the 16th and 17th centuries and the bourgeois masculinity of the 19th century. The idea of toxic masculinity questions accepted norms in modern contexts by highlighting undesirable characteristics connected to masculinity and demanding a reevaluation of how men are socialized into these roles. Because they highlight both continued inequalities and advancements, the advent of hybrid masculinities manifesting characteristics of privileged groups embrace of historically disadvantaged identities complicates the discourse around masculinity.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of masculinity and its implications for gender relations in society, this analysis will include a range of theoretical perspectives, historical developments, and contemporary issues.

2. Theoretical perspectives on masculinity

According to Bourdieu (2001), the social production of masculinity is imposed as a truth everyone can see. He cites the Kabyle community as one illustration, which is renowned for preserving its independence and cultural practices. Within this group, the definition of a *true* man is characterized by antagonism to femininity. According to Connell (2005), men's physical attributes are frequently seen as either innate qualities of their bodies or ways in which their bodies express themselves, and this is where authentic masculinity gets its start. Here, two key viewpoints come into focus: The first perspective holds that a person's anatomy determines their conduct, for example, men are inherently more violent than women; rape results from unbridled desire or a craving for violence (Connell, 2005). The second perspective, on the other hand, contends that the body imposes restrictions on behavior, for example, males aren't at ease with babies, and homosexuality is seen as aberrant and associated with a smaller, perverted population (Connell, 2005). But it's not accurate to say that a man's physical attributes are what make him a man; rather, men become men through their social interactions (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). For instance, in the Victorian era of England, which lasted from 1837 to 1901, the working class defined masculinity as physical strength, hard work, and family responsibilities, while the ruling upper class defined masculinity as gentlemanly behavior, education, and refinement (Tosh, 2005). Although no general approach to masculinity can be claimed, R. Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity, created in the early 1980s, can be used. This theory was established to better address the notion of masculinity and masculine identities in society, as well as to discover how masculinity contributes to the maintenance of gender hierarchies (Demetriou, 2001).

2.1. Hegemonic masculinity

Raewyn Connell developed the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which refers to a type of masculinity that dominates and justifies male dominance in society, and can be used as a universal approach to masculinity, despite the fact that masculinity is defined by various cultural and social factors (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This notion defines hegemonic masculinity as a set of behaviors and norms that allow for domination over women and subordinate kinds of masculinity. Dominance over subordinate forms of masculinity may be defined as a group of men who do not comply to commonly recognized behaviors and conventions, putting them in a subordinate position when compared to a dominant group, for example, gay men are put in an inferior position relative to heterosexual males (Demetriou, 2001). Although hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily the most common practice among men, it represents a socially recognized norm that legitimizes global subordination to women and other men. In this context, hegemonic masculinity serves as a standard for what it means to be a *real man* and influences the way masculinity is perceived and shaped in society (Connell, 1979). Sports, particularly contact sports, provide an illustration of hegemonic masculinity in action. In such sports, masculinity is frequently linked to physical power and hostility. Men who are elite athletes are regarded as perfect models of hegemonic masculinity because they fit the established ideals of physical dominance and emotional resilience.

On the other hand, Bourdieu explains that it is vulnerability that leads them to frantic investment in *male* games of violence, such as violent contact sports. Those who strive to produce visible signs of masculinity are more likely to engage in these games than those who do not (Bourdieu, 2001). Although hegemonic masculinity can be said to differ from other forms of masculinity, especially those in subordinate positions, because it represents an accepted standard of behavior, it is not only normative but also visible and recognized in social structures that acknowledge, promote, and reward such characteristics (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). While hegemonic masculinity does not always include physical violence, it may be reinforced by force when necessary. This is because dominance is established by cultural norms, institutions, and persuasion. Furthermore, men who accept patriarchal standards but do not demonstrate an overt form of male domination are

sometimes deemed complicit in supporting this system (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

2.2.Gender roles and theories

According to Butler (1990), gender is an ongoing set of actions and behaviors that align with societal expectations. Rather than being something one *is*, gender is something one *does* repeatedly through performance. Align with previous statement, De Beauvoir (2016) believes that people are not born with a predetermined essence; instead, we create our own identity through our choices and actions. Differentiation is, above all, fundamental for the creation and reproduction of gender inequality (Lorber 1994, as cited in Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Acts of masculinity are the ways in which men distinguish themselves from women, thereby establishing their membership in a privileged gender group. Specifically, the existence of the category *men* depends on the collective performance and affirmation of acts of masculinity. Successful acts of masculinity elicit respect from others in specific situations. In this way, acts of masculinity are inherently geared towards maintaining patriarchy and reproducing gender inequality (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2005). Joseph Pleck provided a detailed overview of the theory of gender roles through eleven key propositions that illuminate the complexity of gender role identity. According to the most important proposition, *gender role identity is defined through measures of psychological sex typing, understood in terms of dimensions of psychological masculinity and/or femininity*. (Pleck, as cited in Reeser, 2015). This means that a man can be assessed along a continuum where masculine traits are on one end and feminine traits are on the other. Thus, psychological masculinity and femininity are seen as variations that determine how well an individual fits gender norms (Pleck, as cited in Reeser, 2015). Pleck also highlights that, in more complex cases, the unconscious part of identity can play a significant role in shaping gender identity. For example, a man might be conscious of his masculinity while having unconscious aspects of femininity, or psychological masculinity and femininity can be considered independent of each other rather than merely opposites on the same continuum (Pleck, as cited in Reeser, 2015). This indicates that gender role identity is not always straightforwardly defined as purely

masculine or feminine. According to Pleck, gender-typed characteristics are organized along dimensions of psychological masculinity and femininity and represent aspects of personality that an individual experiences as masculine or feminine (Reeser, 2015). Gender role identity is seen as crucial for both psychological and sociological adjustment because it fulfills an internal psychological need to conform to gender norms. In this context, homosexuality was considered a disruption of maintaining a *suitable* identity. Although Pleck's propositions contained normative aspects, gender role identity was not viewed as a natural or divine gift but as learned behavior, particularly from parents and adults (Reeser, 2015). Additonaly, developing an appropriate gender role identity was especially challenging for black men, which might contribute to their difficulties in the educational system (Pleck, as cited in Reeser, 2015). Instead of viewing gender as singular and immutable, scholars began to approach masculinity as plural and variable, recognizing that it often exhibits recurring characteristics such as homophobia, power, and dominance over women (Pleck, as cited in Reeser, 2015). Connell (1993) addresses the three phases of men's gender role theory. In the first phase, she observes that the notion of gender roles was popular while conservative ideology controlled social sciences, therefore preserving the current social order. However, when conservative ideology declined, the theory of roles was no longer a comprehensive theory of society, but it was still applied in a variety of disciplines such as education, social work, and business, since it established social order and masculine domination. In the third phase, Connell (1993) highlights that new issues emerged, such as the sexual liberation movement, in which sociology created theories of sexual roles and detailed societal changes associated to these roles.

3. Men and masculinity through generations

After explaining the concept of masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, and gender roles, it is important to note when the concept of masculinity itself began to emerge. Discourses on men and masculinity started to develop in response to feminist movements and their impact in the 1970s. These initiatives began to spread in England, the Netherlands, Scandinavian countries, Germany, and later extended to the rest of Europe as well as

Central and South America (Seidler, 2006). Although discussions and research on the concept of *real man* and masculinity began only towards the end of the 20th century, there are explanations and perceptions of masculinity from much earlier periods. Harvey (2005) separates masculinity into historical models; in the 16th and 17th centuries, the patriarchal paradigm of masculinity was prevalent. This concept showed males as the heads of houses and guardians of traditional values. However, by the late 1600s, this sort of masculinity had begun to fade as a new form of masculinity evolved (Harvey, 2005). In the 18th century, the term *polite gentleman* rose to prominence, symbolizing a new ideal of masculinity separate from the libertine and fop forms. This ideal was connected with urban life and business activity, representing a transition away from the patriarchal model and toward new standards (Harvey, 2005). According to Harvey (2005), the central figure in studies of 18th-century masculinity is the patriarch of the household, whose authority was linked to notions of honor and power. The patriarchal paradigm was linked to the idea of *household confession*, which saw domestic life as part of a larger Christian responsibility (Gowing, 1998). Sexual control was an important aspect of masculine identity. Men were expected to regulate both their own sexual drives and the sexual conduct of women, which was critical to household stability. Gowing (1998) contends that domestic order was disproportionately linked to women's sexual activity. Such a system, in which masculinity was primarily defined by sexual dominance over women, was intrinsically unstable. Although Marx's theories were primarily concerned with economics and class relations, when applied to perceptions of nineteenth-century masculinity, they reveal that Marx investigated how workers, including *men*, who contribute to the creation of capital, determine their economic position and social status, reflecting their identity within the capitalist system. In this setting, masculinity is determined by labor positions and economic status as influenced by capitalist relations. Marx and Engels (1848) explore how capitalism perpetuates patriarchal systems, which influence masculinity and gender norms. Capitalism not only establishes economic divisions, but it also maintains patriarchal relationships that assign males certain responsibilities in the social order. Traditional norms of masculinity, such as dominance and power, are important parts of their social status. Marx and Engels (1848) argue that the eradication of capitalism would result in changes in gender norms, particularly masculinity. Men will be able to abandon old responsibilities linked with power and

prestige and instead focus on collaboration and the common good. Tosh (2005) also observes that a new set of masculine characteristics emerged in the nineteenth century to meet the needs of a more urbanized, market-oriented, and industrialized society. This new style of masculinity, known as *bourgeois masculinity*, grew dominant but was not the sole type of masculinity (Tosh, 2005). The words *modern masculinity* has been challenged for being imprecise, whereas bourgeois masculinity is more realistic since it associates masculinity with a certain social class and historical stage of development (Tosh, 2005). Although many aspects of this masculinity existed previously, the nineteenth century witnessed the spread of these principles to a larger social base, including the commercial, productive, and professional classes. Between 1800 and 1914, several types of masculinity had a tremendous impact on British culture. Bourgeois masculinity was predominant, but not generally accepted. Young men frequently experimented with forms of leisure and sexuality that contradicted bourgeois expectations (Tosh, 2005). Furthermore, the aristocracy did not always adapt to bourgeois norms, but had its own standards that differed from those of the bourgeoisie. After all, the British Empire had a huge impact on masculinity in the nineteenth century, not just as a source of otherness but also as a space for non-bourgeois masculinities to emerge (Tosh, 2005). The Empire offered a place for adventure and escape from the restraints of urban Britain, luring black sheep, incompetents, and adventurers (Tosh, 2005).

3.2. Masculinity and war

According to J.S. Goldstein (2003), war and masculinity are linked by a variety of elements. He observes that gender roles have impacted military systems, and wars have influenced the establishment and maintenance of these roles. Men have always participated in conflicts due to biological and cultural characteristics that associate males with fighting, courage, and protection (Goldstein 2003, as cited in Prugl 2003). According to Goldstein (2003), warriors are nearly always male, with women almost barred from combat positions. This is especially intriguing considering that neither men nor women have a natural proclivity for killing, and nations must expend tremendous effort to

persuade their citizens to join in armed battles (Goldstein 2003, as cited in Prugl 2003). Consequently, Goldstein (2003) offers four categories of possible explanations for the connection between masculinity and war: biological gender, gender differences in group dynamics, cultural construction of masculinity, and cultural construction of dominance/subordination relationships between men and women (Prugl, 2003). Although there are biological differences in average size, strength, and tendency toward hierarchies that favor men, Goldstein concludes that these differences are relatively weak and that there is significant overlap in characteristics between men and women. The strongest explanations for gender roles in war are found in cultural factors, such as the socialization of men for war roles (toughness, emotional suppression) and the socialization of women to support these roles (Goldstein 2003, as cited in Prugl, 2003). Seidler (2006) analyzes how global events such as the 9/11 attacks and later conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq influenced conceptions of masculinity. He describes how political figures at the time, including George Bush and Tony Blair, utilized *good versus evil* language to justify military assaults (Seidler, 2006). This rhetoric reflects global male power as well as the conflicts between different forms of masculinity. On the other hand, Germany and France refused to associate the aforementioned wars with a war on terror (Seidler, 2006). During the Dirty War in Argentina (1976-1983), the military dictatorship also identified with traditional masculinity, such as power, dominance, and control. The military dictatorship imposed censorship, persecution, and disappearances. The language stressed masculine power, authority, order, and control, with opponents represented as dangers to national security and stability (Rosenthal, 2000). The dictatorship portrayed itself as guardians, with military involvement seen as a necessary measure by genuine men working in the people's best interests. This sort of coercion was represented not just in public life, but also in private life, where oppressive tactics were utilized to maintain their *masculinity*, which denoted strength and authority (Rosenthal, 2000).

4. Masculinity in modern society

Sam de Boise (2019) examines the idea of "toxic masculinity" and analyzes its complicated and frequently contentious features. De Boise (2019) opens the debate with

defining the phrase, which refers to a variety of negative actions and attitudes connected with typically male characteristics such as violence, dominance, competition, and stoicism. According to De Boise (2019), these characteristics can be detrimental not only to others but also to males themselves, contributing to issues such as aggression, abuse, drug abuse, and mental health problems. De Boise (2019) also investigates the historical and cultural backdrop that has created the view of masculinity, wondering if the concept of masculinity is intrinsically harmful, or if simply certain acts resulting from conventional expectations are problematic. In this context, De Boise (2019) underlines that various groups of men may perceive and practice these features in distinct ways. De Boise (2019) also tackles concerns of the idea of toxic masculinity, notably from anti-feminists who claim that the word unfairly demonizes all males. These opponents frequently argue that the notion is used to generalize and stigmatize masculine conduct in general, rather than to address specific, harmful behaviors. Jeremy Posadas (2017) also talks on toxic masculinity and the significance of confronting modern masculinity. He emphasizes that in order to effectively prevent sexual violence, one must first recognize it as an issue rooted in masculinity, especially the phenomena known as toxic masculinity (Posadas, 2017). Furthermore, Posadas (2017) argues that rape culture, which channels toxic masculinity into socially legitimized practices of sexual violence, is a structural issue that requires a transformation in how boys are socialized into masculinity. He also suggests that the eradication of sexual violence and gender-based violence more broadly depends on transforming the cultural and social apparatuses that shape boys into men who embody toxic masculine traits. Tristan Bridges (2014) also focuses on contemporary masculinity. He investigates how straight males assimilate features often associated with homosexual aesthetics into their identities. His study reveals that, despite identifying as straight, men frequently characterize themselves or elements of their conduct as *gay* (Bridges, 2014) This tendency, he claims, is part of a larger trend of hybrid masculinities, in which men from socially privileged groups often young, heterosexual, and white selectively acquire qualities from marginalized groups to separate themselves from conventional, *toxic* masculinity (Bridges, 2014). Bridges (2014) also investigates the behavioral and ideological aspects of this *movement*. For instance, some heterosexual men consciously embrace behaviors, styles, and ideologies culturally coded as gay, such as flamboyant speech, a heightened concern with appearance, or strong support for

feminism and LGBTQ+ rights as a way of signaling their progressive values and distancing themselves from conventional heterosexual masculinity (Bridges, 2014). By embracing these *gay aesthetics*, they hope to further develop their identities and challenge traditional gender standards, therefore adding depth and authenticity to their political beliefs (Bridges, 2014). However, Bridges (2014) questions the intentions and implications of these activities. While many of these men want to stand out from what they regard as the monotony of traditional straight masculinity, their use of *homosexual aesthetics* might exacerbate existing gender and sexual inequity. This selective borrowing can be viewed as a sort of cultural appropriation, in which privileged groups elevate their social position by incorporating components from underprivileged identities (Bridges, 2014). They disguise their heterosexual privileges by presenting their usage of homosexual aesthetics as a method of distance from negative masculine tropes. This practice of adopting *gay aesthetics*, rather than truly destabilizing traditional power dynamics, may instead *reinforce* them, making these redefined masculinities seem more egalitarian and less oppressive than they actually are (Bridges, 2014).

5. Conclusion

This examination of masculinity demonstrates its multidimensional nature, molded by historical, cultural, and social factors rather than set biological or inherent characteristics. The study of masculinity has progressed from early patriarchal ideals to more nuanced understandings that acknowledge its diversity across situations. Throughout history, prevailing concepts of masculinity have evolved to reflect changes in social structures, economic systems, and cultural values. These variations highlight the flexibility of masculinity, which is constantly redefined in reaction to larger cultural changes. Contemporary conversations, particularly those centered on toxic masculinity and hybrid masculinities, show the constant battle to redefine what it means to be a male in modern society. Toxic masculinity, which is associated with aggression, domination, and emotional repression, is a serious issue since it not only damages others but also threatens men's own well-being. The critique of toxic masculinity pave the way for new forms of masculinity that prioritize empathy, cooperation, and emotional expression. Simultaneously, the phenomena of hybrid masculinities, in which males selectively embrace features historically associated with disadvantaged groups, demonstrates a desire to transcend conventional gender standards. However, selective adoption raises concerns regarding authenticity and the possible reinforcing of existing social inequalities. Finally, masculinity is not a static or unified idea, but rather a dynamic and changing identity that is inextricably linked to societal power relations. As society grapples with gender inequity, understanding the many forms and implications of masculinity is critical. This knowledge has the potential to pave the way for more inclusive and fair conceptions of what it means *to be a man*, promoting a society in which gender identities are recognized in their diversity rather than restricted by repressive standards.

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