UGLY BEARS AND ROOSTERS:

BETWEEN PRIVILEGES AND EPIPHANIES OF MASCULINITY

OSOS FEOS Y GALLOS SUELTOS:

ENTRE PRIVILEGIOS Y EPIFANÍAS DE LA MASCULINIDAD

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Abstract

My intervention offers a narrative of my intellectual trajectory in terms of studies on men and masculinities, in the context of what was happening in anthropology and the political world, mainly in the United States and Mexico, and also in China. The editors of the magazine have asked me for a reflective and theoretical text about my field work, my detours, contributions and failures, the pros and cons of my ethnographies and my teaching, that is, how I have tried to mark the unmarked. My purpose is to explore how my colleagues, friends and family have inspired and provoked me, how the experiences and aspirations with which my professional and personal life has been constituted have led me, in my studies on masculinities, to criticize harmful categories, biological extremisms. and cultural stagnation. In short, while gender and sexuality relations deeply affect the human mind, we cannot understand the human mind without understanding its political context. Of course, I have not been alone in this quest, as demonstrated by the other contributions by distinguished colleagues in this special issue of the journal. From the "ethnographic moment" to debates about power, "hegemonic masculinity" and "alternative masculinities", over more than three decades, I have tried to offer not only new ethnographic data and new perspectives on men, but also to promote a dialogue to ask: What future can we imagine for masculinities?

Keywords: Men. Masculinities. Anthropological Fieldwork. Ethnography. Gender Equality.

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Resumen

Mi intervención ofrece una narrativa de mi trayectoria intelectual en términos de estudios sobre los hombres y las masculinidades, en el contexto de lo que estaba sucediendo en la antropología y el mundo político, principalmente en Estados Unidos y México, y también en China. Los editores de la revista me han pedido un texto reflexivo y teórico sobre mi trabajo de campo, mis desvíos, aportaciones y fracasos, los pros y contras de mis etnografías y mi docencia, es decir, cómo he intentado marcar los no marcados. Mi propósito es explorar cómo mis colegas, amigos y familiares me han inspirado y provocado, cómo las experiencias y aspiraciones con las que se ha constituido mi vida profesional y personal me han llevado, en mis estudios sobre masculinidades, a criticar categorías nocivas, extremismos biológicos y estancamiento cultural. En resumen, mientras que las relaciones de género y sexualidad afectan profundamente a la mente humana, no podemos entender la mente humana sin comprender su contexto político. Por supuesto que no he sido el único en esta búsqueda, como lo demuestran las otras contribuciones de colegas distinguidos en este número especial de la revista. Del "momento etnográfico" a los debates sobre el poder, "la masculinidad hegemónica" y "las masculinidades alternativas", a lo largo de más de tres décadas, he intentado ofrecer no sólo nuevos datos etnográficos y nuevas perspectivas sobre hombres, sino promover un diálogo para preguntar: ¿Qué futuro podemos imaginar para las masculinidades?

Palabras clave: Hombres. Masculinidades. Trabajo de campo antropológico. Etnografía. Igualdad de género.

INTRODUCTION

"*El hombre como el oso: entre más feo, más hermoso*".
("Man is like a bear: the uglier he is, the more beautiful he is")
"*Cuiden a sus gallinas, que mi gallo anda suelto*".
("Take care of your chickens, my rooster is on the loose")
(Saying of dubious veracity)

We anthropologists make a living by unsettling categories and labels. Many of my own targets have been gendered, such as machismo, testosterone, sacrifice, fortitude, honor, fathering. As with many medical anthropologists, my analysis gets especially pointed with respect to those who try to explain human ideas and activities by overreliance on biology, in other words, on biological extremism. From my first ethnography I have tried to determine how and why certain commonplace assumptions about gender (for example, political leadership, pornography, alcohol use and abuse) are ahistorical, and why we need to understand processes of *degendering* as indications of, first, the possibility and reality of changing gender relations, of associating certain phenomena less and less with gender of any kind, and second, the importance of uprooting notions that masculinity of any kind (or femininity, for that matter) is inborn, intrinsic, inherent, and innate.

The editors of the magazine have asked me for a reflective and theoretical text about my field work, my detours, contributions and failures, the pros and cons of my ethnographies and my teaching, that is, how I have tried to mark the unmarked.

This is not an essay that I would have proposed or even contemplated, but I have sought to honor this request by trying to give coherence to an intellectual path of several decades. In particular, I have tried to find connections between my social and cultural background (for example, coming from a leftist secular Jewish family) and some particular personal experiences (e.g., been active in the US for almost 15 years) with aspects of the history of anthropology and world events over the last 35 years. The whole process of self-review has been daunting and humbling, making me even more aware of my debt to the scholarship of others. If we do things right, we select well from the panoply of good ideas of others that we encounter along the way. I have been very lucky indeed to learn from colleagues.

The study of masculinities is not the study of Baroque architecture: everyone has experience, knowledge, and opinions about masculinities. From my first efforts to unravel the history (and in some contexts racism) of the term machismo, I was interested in issues of consent and complicity, these simultaneously politicized and subjective aspects of masculinity. I found myself asking, Who is to blame for machismo? And what happens when masculinity seems to at least partially fade away in some situations, for example, with respect to alcohol use and abuse.

At a formal presentation at the Colegio de México for my first book in Spanish (*Ser hombre de verdad en la ciudad de México: Ni macho, ni mandilón*,[1] 2000), after the commentators were finished and just as I began my response, my old friend Doña Fili suddenly stood up in the audience of academics and said she had a few things to say, too. She said she knew my book was all about men, masculinities, and machismo in the comunidad de paracaidistas, land squatters, where I had lived for a year and she had lived for two decades, and she had listened to all the comments so far about machos. She acknowledged that she had little formal schooling, but she was an activist in the Christian Base Communities and she knew a thing or two. So how could all those smart people there that evening not know that the *real* machos were in Los Pinos, that the real machos were in the government and big business and big media? We shouldn't focus so much on the hard-working men in the poor neighborhoods like hers. We should instead study those in power, the world-class machos who controlled things. Doña Fili shamed and schooled us that night, take your pick.

GETTING TO MEN AND MASCULINITIES

I grew up in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the United States. Home to Harvard and MIT, the town exudes a center-of-the-universe mentality, an atmosphere I found politically numbing in the 1960s, as the antiwar and black liberation movements were surging across the country. I grew convinced that solutions to the great social crimes of the age lay elsewhere. When I was 17 years old I read a book of prison letters from Black Panther George Jackson (a gift from my mother), and I became interested in China, revolution, and radical thought. I decided to study Chinese language when I got to college. Or rather colleges, as I became an academic nomad, passing through the tiny hotbed of radicalism Antioch College, then the

[1] A *mandil* in Mexico is an apron, and a *mandilón* is a man who wears an *mandil* (apron) and is bossed around by a woman.

University of Chicago, and finally finishing with two years at UC Berkeley, having accumulated four years of modern and two years of classical Chinese along the way. My senior thesis was a translation of three oral histories from the Chinese revolution that teams of youth had compiled to honor the sacrifices of their elders.[2]

After which, of course, I promptly joined the revolution.

Or at least one version of radical hopefulness I found at that time. I spent close to 15 years in Oakland, Chicago, and Houston, chasing a particularly utopian chimera of social change. After many years, we still had little to show for our efforts, try as we did to prepare the ground for major social upheaval, and I decided to leave activism behind. Through a circuitous route, in 1989 I landed in Mexico City, where I came to the unexpected decision to return to academia and try my hand at anthropology, which seemed to offer the widest array of options: one could study families and political economy, chimpanzees and sexuality, contemporary and historical ways of healing, and more. It seemed you could do (almost) anything you wanted and call it anthropology.

The inescapable presence of injustice and the longing for fundamental changes in society have inspired a lot of my decisions in life, including the initial stimulus to begin studying men and masculinities in the late 1980s. I was many years out of college and in a hurry to start and finish my doctoral work. Looking around for a good topic to study, my then girlfriend asked me why it was only women who studied gender. I didn't have a good answer; it definitely seemed that if gender inequalities were to be transformed, you also had to look at men, so why not? And as an understudied field, that could be a good dissertation topic as well.

After 15 years in the wilderness of militancy, I had resurfaced to begin a doctoral program in Anthropology, again at Berkeley. Bearing witness and promoting progressive change seemed to connect my militancy and anthropology. The major intellectual difference, perhaps, is that as an anthropologist I have always tried hard not to let hope, no matter how badly desired, get in the way of a fair assessment of reality; anthropology has helped ground me and keep me from putting a wishful twist on what I was hearing, seeing, and learning. At the

[2] I only realized later that I had been attracted to these oral histories in part because of their quasi-ethnographic tone.

same time, human variation across space and time as documented by anthropology also has a way of canceling narrow ideas about what is humanly possible.

Applied to the study of men and masculinities, this meant walking the fine line that recognizes, analyzes, and seeks to uproot gender-based inequalities in the societies into which we are born and raised, with the recognition that men (and women) are made and not born,[3] that is, always appreciating the tremendous range of possible ways to be a man and that being a man is hardly the sum total of what men are, individually and in groups. How to navigate these waters was and remains the challenge.

Until the 1980s, there was barely a ripple of studies in any discipline, in English or any other language, on men and masculinities written through an explicitly gender lens much less a feminist perspective. Two of the earliest studies in English in anthropology were *Metaphors of Masculinity* (1980) about Andalucía by my mentor Stanley Brandes, and Gilbert Herdt's *Guardians of the Flutes* (1981) about New Guinea. Yet even these pioneering studies that explicitly discussed men and masculinities had little to say about 1970s feminist anthropology or gay activism around AIDS, the political and intellectual catalysts that gave impetus to the field. In sociology, most scholars were studying whomever they considered themselves. In anthropology, most research produced studies of men and masculinities in Latin America, Europe, the United States, and New Guinea. Regardless of discipline, most early studies considered questions of power, between men and women and between men, secondary to other issues.

It was a time of tremendous ferment in the world: the Fall of the Wall in Germany, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, growing concerns about climate change, more wars in the Middle East, the birth of the Web. Before starting fieldwork, I could not resist the attempt to turn a couple of seminar papers into published articles. One in particular, "Rituals of Resistance," represented a *cri de coeur* having nothing to do with men and masculinities but everything to do with my past years of militancy and my disappointment that the age of Reagan and diminished expectations after socialism had academics thrilling to concepts of resistance that explicitly belittled social movements. I published the essay in *Latin American*

[3] Against Gilmore 1990, one of the most read early anthropological texts on masculinity, in which he argues that men are made, while women are born.

Perspectives, because, contrary to then popular theories of resistance, social movements in that region were ongoing, strong, and important (Gutmann, 1993).

At the same time, in the early 1990s in anthropology, at least at Berkeley, the halls were abuzz with reflexive anthropology and issues of representation, hermeneutics vs. political economy, Foucault vs. Bourdieu, Clifford Geertz vs. Eric Wolf, Renato Rosaldo vs. the scientists of cognition. Regardless of the fact that I was almost 40 years old when I began my first sustained fieldwork, I can say that as an anthropologist I came of age in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a period of intense introspection about ethnography and complicity in the colonial history of anthropology, when many of my classmates in graduate school were sincerely questioning whether we anthropologist should try to study anyone but "our own communities."

I was sympathetic with these concerns to an extent, but I thought that anthropology also had a deservedly progressive history of providing witness to the lives of people around the world who had endured and resisted colonialism in all forms. I tried to learn as much as I could of the competing isms, but it was on the run, because mainly I was eager to get to the field and start my own research and not get bogged down in what seemed to me like internecine disputes.

Ultimately I had to demure from those who posited insurmountable chasms between anthropologists and those they studied, learning especially from the tradition of *antropología comprometida* in Mexico and throughout Latin America. Fieldwork informed my "*otredad*" as well, because while I was a gringo, a professional, and white working in a squatter settlement in Mexico City, I was also a man and a new father, and time and again, for the people I lived and worked with there, being male and a father seemed to trump my other identifying markers. In ethnography I found too much curiosity all around and sharing of social life and conversation to relegate it to a uniform adversarial activity that led some of my classmates to retreat to the library.

Whether it was because I found myself working with two psychological anthropologists at Berkeley (Stanley Brandes and Nancy Scheper-Hughes) or because of some personal (Jewish?) predilection for psychoanalysis, I am not sure, but from the beginning of my doctoral studies I found myself asking psychological questions and responding through ethnography and

theory with political answers. Identity and ideology can be flip sides of the same coin after all.

Earlier work on masculinity prominently included psychoanalytic studies of gay and trans men and women. Rather surprisingly, heterosexual men gained the sustained attention of gender scholars only later, in the wake of feminist and gay political movements. In Latin America, though decidedly not in North America, many of the leading figures in the study of men and masculinities in the 1990s were feminists who had earlier done studies focused on women, like Mara Viveros in Colombia (2002), Norma Fuller in Peru (2001), Teresa Valdés in Chile (Valdés y Olavarría, 1998), Ana Amuchástegui in Mexico(2001), and Ondina Fachel Leal in Brazil (2021).

Three people I had only a remote connection to were especially important for guiding my first years as an anthropologist studying men and masculinities: for her theorizing and empirical studies, the sociologist Raewyn Connell; as an anthropologist who linked social movements to male sexualities, Richard Parker; and as the unofficial dean of the entire field, the sociologist Michael Kimmel. In correspondence each was to offer me strategic advice as I began my own research in the field.

Claudio Lomnitz advised me when I began my doctoral studies to establish formal institutional relationships with colleagues in Mexico, and not just keep them formal. I quickly found kindred spirits in Mexico with Daniel Cazés (and his early Laboratorio de la Masculinidad) and Benno de Keijzer, as well as a very receptive feminist scholarly community, especially at Colegio de México, among them, Orlandina de Oliveira, Soledad González, Nelson Minelo, Brígida García y Ivonne Szasz. Among anthropologists, I was given affiliation in 1992 with the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana–Iztapalapa, where I found several colleagues amenable to the nascent study of masculinities, especially Federico Besserer and Eduardo Nivón. At the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, I was especially able to learn from Teresita de Barbieri. It was also during this fieldwork period that I was invited by Roger Bartra to publish an essay in *La Jornada Semanal*, the journal he then edited on Sundays. Thus began a long and deep friendship. My intellectual debt to Bartra regarding much of what I know about Mexican society is enormous; I have also been fortunate to have his support to publish translations of several of my books.

WOMEN AND THE STUDY OF MEN

In addition to the girlfriend who asked why just women studied gender, serendipity also played a role in selecting my dissertation topic. In 1989 I had taken a photograph of a man holding a baby while he talked to a customer on the other side of the counter in a musical instruments store. Several friends in Mexico and the U.S. told me they found the photo very odd: Mexican men were *machos*, *machos* don't hold babies while they work. Except this man was doing just that. So how to explain? Four years later I returned to the store and tried to explain to José Enríquez why a photo of him with what turned out to be an upstairs neighbor's child had consumed my life in the intervening period. He saw nothing strange in the photo: "Don't you gringos like babies?" he asked me.

I wanted to record in detail what Mexican men did and did not do and not simply rely on a lot of personal opinions of others, no matter how smart or well-intentioned. It would have to be a dynamic study of different generations of men dealing with their relations with women and other men. By looking at issues such as parenting, housework, gender-based violence, and sexuality I was able to ask: What was changing? What was staying the same? How are we to gauge change? What accounted for stasis and/or change in these gender relations: Formal education, remunerated employment outside the home, feminism and other progressive social movements?

One of the key questions I was intent on examining had to do with a classic issue for feminism and developmental psychology: parenting. Except that virtually all such studies were about mothers not fathers, and they all seemed to imply that while mothers had influence over their male as well as female children (leading to issues of male/female identification and separation), and while adult males might have influence over adult females and their sense of femininity, the tacit assumption was that adult women had little or no influence over the masculine identities of adult men. That just did not make much sense to me. The bearing of women on masculinity, the effect women have on men's sense of gendered self, seemed obvious. But if it was so obvious, why was it so understudied?

One reason is that most of the best studies by men on men and masculinities focused on self-identified gay men with little attention to men's relation to women. The number of studies focused on self-identified heterosexual men was negligible. Further, there were issues of power involved and for many studying gender and sexuality, on a grand scale, men were

clearly in control of all major institutions in societies around the world. Yet delving into the question of quién manda en la casa, in other words, gender relations on a more intimate scale, was exceedingly complicated. No one wanted to look like they were letting men off the hook, and talk of women having a lot of influence over men and masculinities, it was feared, could easily lead to just that.

All this was reflected as well on the job front: studying men and masculinities was a great topic for my doctoral thesis and for getting invited to publish; it was not a field that offered employment possibilities, in anthropology or any other discipline. The subject was too easily dismissed by deans and a more entrenched conservative senior leadership in academic departments. Further, like "white studies," one of the challenges of men and masculinities as a focus of research and teaching was how to study a dominant group in society? How to show and understand masculinities without losing sight of inequalities?

Widespread beliefs held that there were social benefits simply for being a man: *el hombre como el oso: entre más feo, más hermoso* (man is like a bear: the uglier he is, the more beautiful he is); and that men were not to be trusted: *cuiden a sus gallinas, que mi gallo anda suelto* (take care of your chickens, my rooster is on the loose). And there was the old discussion with intersectional relevance (in critical race theory, feminist masculinity studies, and elsewhere): do whites, men, and others with social privilege have more to win or lose from equality? And what would comprehensive equality might even look like? In a real sense it is a false framing of the issue, because if your real goal is to enlist whites in antiracism and men in antisexism, why appeal to them on the narrowest basis possible (their own self-interest)? It is as if "rational choice" political scientists were designing the question.

Years later I studied antiwar U.S. veterans of the Iraq war. I wanted to know what made these young men and women change their mind about the invasion and occupation of that country. These were people from the U.S. who had grown up in a country that has been at war or on war footing for most of the last 100 years. The currency they had been raised to value revolved around warrior mentalities. Yet the common thread I discovered among several dozen veterans interviewed was this: through a series of political epiphanies, they each had come to question the lie that they were sent to Iraq to save, protect, and defend anyone, Iraqi or American. They were convulsed by war epiphanies as they witnessed, and participated in, atrocities against the civilian population of Iraq. But they also saw that other

soldiers who similarly learned that the ideology of U.S. troops liberating the Iraqis was propaganda, instead became more ruthless tools of the U.S. military. That is, soldiers had some choice in Iraq. They could revise what they believed and did—often still couching their thoughts and actions in the very familiar language of masculine sacrifice and honor, or they could simply turn into even more vicious attack dogs for their country.[4]

If jobs for specialists in men and masculinities studies were scarce or nonexistent, I was very fortunate because there were abundant and generous offers to publish, present at conferences, and lecture. I was invited toward the end of my 1992-93 fieldwork in Mexico City to deliver lectures on my fieldwork at 10 universities around the country, which enabled me to return to Berkeley for write-up with drafts of five of ten chapters of my thesis already in hand. More importantly, in the discussions following the lectures I was able to learn from incisive comments, sometimes from opposite directions, on my work and conclusions, allowing me to write a more thoughtful final product. And in 1995 I was invited to participate on a panel at the American Anthropological Association meetings to mark the (roughly) twentieth anniversaries since publication of two early and highly influential collections of feminist anthropology in English (Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1973; Reiter, 1974). I was thrilled to be sitting beside so many women I admired in the field; my paper was titled, "Engendering Native Sons: Feminist Anthropology and the Man Question."

Having failed to secure a regular teaching position, at the time I had a postdoctoral fellowship at the Center for U.S.-Mexican at UC San Diego, soaking up the interdisciplinary and unabashed focus on area studies. I had turned down a different postdoctoral fellowship in demography when the director said, "You can take it, but I really don't think you'll make a good demographer." That year I finished the final stages of my first book (inglés: Gutmann, 1996; español: Gutmann 2000), which no doubt benefited from all I was learning about Mexico at the Center. I also got to know anthropologists at UCSD, including Charles Briggs and Tanya Luhrmann, whose scholarship has continued to awe me. In addition to finishing the book, I worked on two essays that still reflect central interests of mine in the field of men and masculinities studies. In "The Ethnographic (G)Ambit" I tried to address more directly the issue of women's influence among men (inglés: Gutmann, 1997a; español: Gutmann, 1999). In "Trafficking in Men" I provided a first survey article on the anthropology of masculinity still in its infancy (inglés: Gutmann, 1997b; español: Gutmann, 1998).

[4] See *Breaking Ranks: Iraq Veterans Speak Out Against the War* (Gutmann and Lutz, 2010).

Until landing a "real job" in 1997, the 1990s for my family were lovely, intense, and stressful. We were happy as parents of two small children, but we had little money and jumped from one job and postdoc to another in different cities, all too aware of our uncertain future. This no doubt contributed to my intellectual interest in gender, parenting, and the give-and-take among couples. Then I got lucky with a job offer at Brown University. It was not a position at a large, public university that I had hoped for, but throughout my time at Brown I was able to work closely with amazing students, including the children of undocumented immigrants, farmworkers from California and Texas, youths who themselves had been smuggled across the U.S.-Mexican border when they were little.

In 1998, at a conference in Santiago, Chile, for the first time I met a group of scholars from other parts of Latin America who were pioneering the field of men and masculinities (Valdés y Olavarría, 1998). Their studies based in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Peru were instrumental for me at this time in guiding the topics and conclusions of my own research in Mexico. We soon formed a gang of six in Latin American men and masculinities studies, convening in various venues across the globe. One or another of us organized a conference on gender equity and male identities (Santiago, 1998), fatherhood (Medellín, 1999, Lima, 1999), reproductive health (Rio de Janeiro, 2000), oral history (Istanbul, 2000), male friendships and homosocialities (Providence, 2001), masculinities in Latin America (Quito, 2002) and adolescent boys (Santiago, 2002). A few years later, Mara Viveros and I published a critical assessment of the studies on men and masculinities in Latin America (Gutmann and Viveros, 2007).

We were all engaged in trying to rewrite truisms, stereotypes, and shibboleths about men and masculinities, in other words, unsettling classifications, labels, and commonplace assumptions and in general figuring out how to *mover el tapete*. We sought to evaluate how categories about men and masculinities were used historically in different social contexts, for what purpose, and at whose cost and benefit. Each of my own ethnographies has tried to contribute to the undoing and redoing of categories. From the beginning it has been a politically charged field of study, always lively and often contradictory in its aims and conclusions. Because there were few previous ethnographies on the topic, conducting detailed case studies captured our attention from the outset of the "ethnographic moment."

At least one review of my first book on *The Meanings of Macho* complained that in a chapter on fathering, it was a shame I had said nothing about my own father and my relation with him. I have no regrets on that score, but in retrospect I do wonder if despite my attention to psychological questions I paid too scant attention to psychic issues, the centrality of the unconscious in human activity, for instance, with regard to humans and their fantasies. Or maybe I should not have tried to respond always to psychological questions with political answers. How, for instance, could one explain big guys with basso voices and tough demeanors who were a knot of insecurities inside? I firmly believe that men "getting in touch with their emotions" has never been the issue. Rather, we must understand which emotions are socially authorized and which are sanctioned and in what contexts and by whom. The role of gendered risk, guilt, curiosity, silences, compromises, fantastic imaginings, and solidarity in our lives, in our writing, and in our teaching are all vital topics we have too little considered in anthropology.

CHANGING MEN AND MASCULINITIES

In 1998, the World Bank approached me and asked if I would be willing to write a report on men and development. My initial reaction was to decline, but I kept that thought to myself until I could check with colleagues. Richard Parker counseled me, "Do it. We have to limit the damage they can do." I invited British geographer Sylvia Chant who was a gender and development specialist to co-author the report with me. She took over arbitrations. After interviewing several dozen practitioners around the world Syl and I wrote up and filed our extensive report with the World Bank, which promptly rejected it as too uncritical of feminists and their alleged exclusion of men from development projects. But the Bank was kind enough to allow us to shop the report elsewhere, and Oxfam stepped in by publishing an unexpurgated version (Chant and Gutmann, 2000).

Since the beginning of the 2000s, hundreds of books and articles have been written in anthropology on men and masculinities. They have covered every region of the world, and introduced a range of new topics from sports to religion to cyberspace. As my work began to focus more on sexuality, I deepened my respect for the work of Marcia Inhorn (2012), Mara Viveros (2002), Guillermo Núñez Noriega (2001), and Héctor Carrillo (2017). Although in all honesty, sexuality was just the excuse; my real interest was in understanding reciprocity between men and women in couples. In addition, as one of our children had bad

asthma, and I had already published two ethnographies based in the squatter settlement in Mexico City, we decided to spend a year in Oaxaca in southern Mexico.

Within a month of our arrival el 11 de septiembre took place. Although we felt far away from New York City and Washington, I have never before or since been so in touch with the ex-pat community in Mexico, none of whom, I am pleased to report, got whipped into a patriotic lather as did some colleagues in the United States. The subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were to provide the subject for future research and publications of mine, but for the time being we watched CNN and got on with our lives in Oaxaca. And there was plenty of political upheaval in Mexico and Latin America having nothing to do with the Middle East. The infamous drug war was gearing up, as was the death toll. The Zapatista movement in Chiapas continued to provoke. And a so-called "pink tide" was sweeping Latin American politics, with the elections of Michelle Bachelet in Chile, Lula in Brazil, Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Evo in Bolivia. Whether they each deserved the sobriquet pink is dubious, but that debate, too, was part of the heated political atmosphere of the times.

In Oaxaca I spent a full year and then several summers with my children, working in two clinics where doctors performed vasectomies, the main government AIDS clinic, the famous Ethnobotanical Garden, and roaming some 3000 kilometers around the state interviewing indigenous midwives and healers. My findings surprised me and they didn't. The best predictor of which men got vasectomies was not social class or formal education but who reported having a good marriage. I heard over and over, "She's suffered enough with birth control, pregnancies, and births. Now it's my turn." Meanwhile, the doctors *de bata blanca,* that is, the biomedical practitioners, told me repeatedly that the difference between men's and women's sexualities was *tajante*; the indigenous midwives one after another asked me, "It depends on the individual more than the sex, don't you think?" The result of my study was *Fixing Men: Sex, Birth Control, and AIDS in Mexico* (Gutmann, 2007; en español: *Por mis pistolas: Sexo, anticoncepción y SIDA en México*, Gutmann, 2016)

Postcolonialism is embedded in the academic world in many ways, including the fact that theories developed in the Global North is heralded over all others, while expectations that intellectuals in the Global South will apply these theories there are pervasive. Further, publications in English (and to some extent French) carry more inherent cachet than those

in other languages.[5] For my own scholarship, I made a commitment early on in my anthropological career to publish every article that appeared in English into Spanish as well; sometimes they appeared in Spanish first. In a world where problems are global, solutions must also be global, and translations can help. Translations for me have represented a continuation of my politics by other means, and I have made an effort to get books and articles published in many languages other than English.

In 2003, I edited *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America* (Gutmann, 2003). The volume had two main purposes: to focus attention in Latin American studies on the emerging field of men and masculinities studies, and to highlight the work of leading scholars in the field *from* Latin America like Mara Viveros, José Olavarría, Norma Fuller, Claudia Fonseca, and Xavier Andrade. In several other edited volumes and special issues of journals, I have attempted to follow suit, including the co-edited *Global Latin America: Into the Twenty-first Century* (2016, with historian Jeffrey Lesser).

Following the year in Oaxaca with my family I received tenure at Brown and published my second ethnography (inglés: Gutmann, 2002, español: Gutmann, 2009), providing a professional and financial relief and needed security. Unfortunately, the family was on the brink of splitting apart, and a short while later my wife and I decided to divorce. Our children seemed to emerge relatively unscathed, at least for a time.

By the end of the 2000s, I was involved in team research on men, masculinities, and militarism. In Haiti and Lebanon, we interviewed United Nations Peacekeepers personnel who arrived in contingents from around the world as soldiers, police, and administrators. The aim of the study was to better understand the conditions under which "sexual exploitation and abuse" (SEA) by the peacekeepers against the local population occurred. The research combined my interests in gender and development, militaries, and the naturalization of male sexualities. As one Chilean police commander told me, "If you put men in a situation where they are not going to have sex for three months, that is a challenge, but not insurmountable. If you extend this to six months, well, that is far more difficult. Beyond this point they become unmanageable." Such assumptions, no matter how specious, were remarkably contagious.

[5] While serving for a few years as a senior administrator at Brown (2009-13) I attempted (unsuccessfully) to get my University to evaluate publications in other languages on a par with those in English, for example, in hiring and tenure cases.

In the early 2010s, I was Brown University's ambassador to the world. I became more involved in promoting international scholarly collaborations. After several decades working in Mexico, I traveled often to lecture and research in China, and I increasingly looked for ways that the work of anthropologists and other intellectuals in general could reach a broader global audience. The 2010s was the decade of the Arab Spring and social upheavals in areas of the world that had seemed dormant; the #MeToo movement that for the first time targeted rich, white, powerful men for sexual predation; and trying to explain to the rest of the world why so many in the United States had gone crazy for Donald Trump and his revanchist, racist goals and how tens of millions of women who voted for him overlooked his boasts about assaulting women. My own research in China focused especially on a park in Shanghai where on weekends thousands of parents tried to find mates for their son or more often their daughter.

Through good fortune (and Brown's cultural capital), I became the principle investigator on a project from 2015 to 2019 initiated by the International Planned Parenthood Federation. This eventually developed into a study with the Mexfam affiliate of IPPF regarding young men, masculinity, and reproductive health in a poor borough of Mexico City.

MEN ARE ANIMALS

In the same spirit of trying to contribute scholarship that could make a broader impact, I decided to write a book on men and masculinities that I would attempt to publish with a major New York City trade press. I had given a lecture at the Chicago Humanities Festival in 2013 whose theme that year was "animals." After initially declining the invitation – What could I have to say about animals? – *me di cuenta de que, ¡¿Pues, así son los hombres, no?! Sí, son animales. ¿Y qué pito quiere decir?* This chance invitation eventually grew into a book, *Are Men Animals? How Modern Masculinity Sells Men Short* (Gutmann, 2019) that built on previous work I had done in the general constructivist current in anthropology and gender studies. But here I tried to take the critique of biological extremism into new realms, including the widespread and pernicious conflation of the males of all species, especially with respect to sexuality and aggression. We needed to think more carefully about the language we used in describing men. We sold men short when viewing them as overly controlled by their hormones (testosterone),

genes (Y-chromosome), heredity, and evolution. We needed to break with the thinking that, for men, to have a penis is necessarily more important than having a nose.

Around this time, too, along with Robin Nelson and Agustín Fuentes, two biological anthropologists, I organized a symposium sponsored by the Wenner-Gren Foundation on the topic of masculinities, maleness, and violence. Bringing together cultural, biological, linguistic, and archaeological colleagues from around the world, we sought to break with the "parallel play" so prevalent in anthropology, and instead see what we could learn from each other's studies on males (including but not only human men) and violence.

In a range of ways, biological extremism about men's and boys' sexualities has a ferocious grip on beliefs, terms, and language, all of which are allegedly grounded in unimpeachable experience and scientific corroboration. The words we use to describe male sexualities reveal inherent assumptions about causal links between physiology and conduct among males, human and other, and a disproportionate naturalization of how much we can reasonably generalize about cross-species male sexualities. To the extent we see them as primordially baked in, we can pathologize male sexualities. In popular discourse it is common to hear human and nonhuman male sexualities compared. Under the skin, fur, and scales, we're all animals, aren't we? To the extent that one views biology as the determining fount of male thinking and actions, one remains mired in antediluvian explanations for human relationships.

Anthropologists have responded to biological extremism in two ways among others: one, by showing variation in ways of thinking and doing across the globe and across time, and, two, by showing that change in thinking and doing can happen far more quickly than can be accounted for by biology (gene mutation, evolution, heredity). And like other medical anthropologists, I joined the quest to document how sociocultural factors influence thinking and behavior more than is often appreciated by biomedical personnel. As part of this, I have looked at animality, and the far greater range among humans than any other animal of what constitutes "normal." But it has been a challenging time to make this argument, perhaps, given widespread and growing popular enthusiasm to emphasize similarities and not differences between human and nonhuman animals (see, for example, Gutmann, 2019, 2021).

The 2020s brought COVID, more climate change, more war in the Middle East, retirement from Brown, and a new partner with a new binational life in Mexico and the United States.

A research project on men and suicide begun before the pandemic got stalled. But in 2021 I succumbed to the lure of reviewing men and masculinities studies again, mainly but not exclusively in English-language literature, to see what I got right and wrong, resynthesize the field since 2000, and point to new directions (see Gutmann, 1998, 2023). Preparing this review again confirmed that the future of gender identities, relations, and inequalities was anything but clear, that the forces of reaction were strong and variable from place to place around the world, and that progressive change could only take place through renegotiation, debate, and struggle.

In retrospect, in some ways my work on men and masculinities has continued to probe issues I tried to raise in my paper in 1995 on "the man question." It is still painfully clear that, even if 2024 witnessed the election of the first woman president of Mexico, men were in control of industry, governments, and most cultural institutions in most parts of the world, yet we continued to find infinite complexity and hardly uniform mini-patriarchies at an intimate level of households and families. And theories of displacement (boss attacks male worker so male worker goes home and attacks wife) still missed the essential character of gender relations.

My work has always concentrated on self-identified heterosexual men and masculinities, the male cishets. I have focused less on self-identified gay, bi-, and asexual men and masculinities. Early in the 1990s, when someone learned I studied men, I often got asked what group of gay men I worked with. Once in an interview for a gender studies position I was told, "You are well qualified for this position. Would you consider a sex-change operation?" And in one of my classes on masculinities a few students objected to studying cishet men, insisting that gay, bisexual, and trans men alone needed to be studied. What did cishet men have to do with gender and sexuality except by negative example, and why should we study them? Didn't we already know more than we needed to about them?[6] For me it was never about personally identifying as a cishet man. It has always been a political question: the less we know about cishet men, the more dangerous the world, and the farther we are from gender equality and even understanding what gender and sexual equality might even look like.

[6] On a perhaps more humorous note, I remember getting into a disagreement with an anthropologist of LGBTI+ studies over the English expression "cocksucker." My friend insisted this was a homophobic term. I demurred, saying it could just as easily be seen as misogynist. "How?!" he challenged me. When I pointed out that the majority of the people performing oral sex on men were women not men he replied, "I never thought of that!"

Yet I do not believe I have ever perfectly threaded the needle on this question. True, the translation of one of my books was banned by Eksmo, the largest publishing house in Russia, after 2022 anti-gay and trans laws were passed in Russia that made it illegal to publish the text because of its LGBTQI content. And to be sure, I have always tried to acknowledg my debt to gay and transgender movements and queer theory that, along with feminist movements around the world, have been central to challenging the way we think about gender, sexuality, and sex. This challenge has led to important changes in how we think and talk about what a man (or a woman) is. These challenges and changes are part of a global debate that is in effect renegotiating what it means to be masculine and feminine. But the studies on heterosexual men and masculinities, mine and virtually all others, have continued to be largely siloed, conducted in isolation from other populations identifying as male. Not only are most ethnographies dealing with men and masculinities about *men* and little about women, but most books about men are about either heterosexual men or about gay and trans men, although to be sure, most studies on women and gay and trans men, necessarily, do a far better job taking into account the heterosexual male population. I cannot shake the feeling that at some point, around some issues, we will all be better served by studies that more deftly integrate gender and sexuality in less binary renderings of the way the world is and works.

The phenomenal increase in the 2020s in the number of people, especially but not only youths, who began redefining their preferred pronouns has occurred at the same moment that a backlash over the gender binary—in governments, the Vatican, workplaces, and podcasts—exploded worldwide. The incipient trans political movement is of a piece with these and other defiant incursions into the gender status quo.

CONCLUSION

I take as axiomatic that we need men. Some of my work in the 2020s, however, has questioned whether we want and need masculinities. What would the world look like without them? Assuming we can even make such choices, Why do we even have masculinities? Were they needed in the past? Even if so, are they still? Or are they somehow inevitable, whether we like and need them or not? To an extent, then, this is simply a rhetorical question best used to think with, somewhat analogous to Judith Butler's query, "What would it mean to

begin the practice of undoing nationalism, of countering its claims, of beginning to think and feel outside its reach?" (2012: 50).

I concluded a draft for my 2023 review of men and masculinities studies in anthropology (Gutmann, 2023), "What would it mean and take for men to be genderless persons?" My colleague Daniel Smith was kind enough to offer comments on the draft, and about this sentence in particular he responded: "A provocative ending, but I certainly don't wish for it—or see it as even a remote possibility. And much as I am happy to have gender, if anything, gender (and many other identity categories) seem to be proliferating—to the extent that what we all share as humans risks being overlooked."

Why we have men and masculinities studies as a separate field, with special issues of journals like this one devoted to the subject, is a question we do not ask often enough. In my book about being a man in Mexico City I had a chapter on alcohol use and abuse titled "¿Adónde fue el género de las copas?, and "Degendering Alcohol" in the English original, pointing to the narrowing difference by generation at least in what and how much men and women drank.[7] Since then, in addition to alcohol consumption I have tried to make a similar case for political leadership (far more exclusively associated with men 100 years ago) and pornography (before the advent of the Internet, rather exclusively associated with men alone). The concept of degendering has thus been employed by me and others to point to substantial changes in practices that were more associated with gender than they have come to be. As such, degendering can also point to future possibilities of a world in which certain human activities we connect to gender today are no longer viewed in this way.

As Gayle Rubin wrote as long ago as 1975, "The dream I find most compelling is one of an androgynous and genderless (though not sexless) society, in which one's sexual anatomy is irrelevant to who one is, what one does, and with whom one makes love" (p. 204). Indeed, perhaps I should not have been taking the category of men as quite so axiomatic, or at least not the finite distinction between man and woman.

In 2014 or so I was asked to contribute to a compilation devoted to "alternative masculinities." I decided to write an anti-alternative masculinities piece instead, which fortunately the editors were kind enough to publish (inglés: Gutmann, 2014; español: Gutmann, 2015). Since that

[7] The English in this case is infinitely more concise and better than this Spanish translation.

volume I became preoccupied with adjectival modifiers for masculinities, concepts like alternative. How do they help our analysis of men and masculinities? And where might they interfere with our understanding? So I began collecting qualifiers used by anthropologists in English, labels like alternative: antisexist, atypical, business, caring, changing, conjugated, counterfeit, counterhegemonic, deconstructed, democratic, deviant, dominant, egalitarian, emerging, female, gay, gentlemanly, global, healthier, hegemonic, heteronormative, homophobic, homosocial, ideal, imploding, insubordinate, manly, manish, marginal, masculinist, modern, moral, new, nonconforming, nondominant, nonhierarchical, nonnormative, nonpatriarchal, nonphallic, nontoxic, nontraditional, occupying, patriarchal, philogynous, positive, positive deviant, pragmatic, progressive, radical, reconstructed, recuperative, reflexive, resignified, sensitive, Stoic, subordinate, toxic, traditional, transitory, transnational, unconventional, unorthodox, variable, and variant.

The authors of these adjectival masculinities are trying to distinguish hierarchies and political blocs, how people should and should not be masculine. If on the one hand the modifiers for masculinities critique a notion of the immutable, natural masculine, they also emphasize at least implicitly that masculinities must exist and our task is to determine which ones are manifest among which people, when, where, and why. In order to prove that alternative or any other kind of masculinity exists one must also gain some understanding how this modified masculinity becomes subjectivized and operationalized. Because the underlying assumption about any one of these masculinities is that they define in a consequential way the attitudes and behavior of greats swaths of people, one of the dangers I have been exploring in publications in the 2020s is precisely the tautological squeeze we can inadvertently stimulate when we overstate the case for the importance of masculinity.

I take seriously when men (or anyone else) objects to being categorized in a certain way. That doesn't mean that racists get to declare themselves nonracists at will. It does mean that when someone says that despite what others might think, they are *not* a man, for example, and that they do not view their ideas or actions as masculine, that should require some shift in thinking on the part of others. Similarly, for those blessed with a nonbinary self-awareness, here, too, outside labels fail to do justice to their lived reality of gender. If, many of us—whether most of us is irrelevant—at this point in history, experience life, both subjective and political, as men and/or as women, thanks to those most refusing the gender binary today, a less gendered, or more degendered, future has never been more imaginable.

Whether that is possible is one thing. Whether it is to be preferred is another.

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