

## **From identity politics to the politics of power: men, masculinities and transnational patriarchies in marketing and consumer research**

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### **Abstract**

Despite increased interest in men and masculinities in marketing and consumer research (MCR), mainstream research has neglected feminist perspectives that engage with issues of gender power relations. In particular, critical studies of men and masculinities (CSMM), including concepts such as the hegemony of men, patriarchies, transnational patriarchies, or simply transpatriarchies, are rarely theoretically or empirically developed. This chapter begins by highlighting the emergence of research on men and masculinities in MCR as based on images, representations and identities. This is followed by theoretical developments of CSMM, including the hegemony of men and transpatriarchies. We explain how these theories have appeared in recent research and how they can further impact change in relation to contemporary issues. This chapter then seeks to build on the momentum of recent feminist research efforts in MCR by calling out the more systematic gender power relations within the previously depoliticised research on men and masculinities.

As with the feminist mantra “the personal is political”, men, masculinities and transnational patriarchies have deeply shaped all facets of life, including our own. As this chapter has been written during the time of Covid-19, how can we begin a chapter on transpatriarchies, as a shorthand, in marketing and consumer research (MCR)? How can we begin any chapter these

days without looking at our personal lives first? In many ways, we all live in tight ‘bubbles’ these days and are confronted with our unique histories. So, how can we not look at our personal lives to understand transpatriarchies and their impact on us? Both authors have had different journeys, yet both share a deep connection to transnational movements and developments, which, we believe, help us illustrate the importance of why and how critical perspectives of men, masculinities and transpatriarchies matter, with a particular focus on the context of representations.

We therefore begin this chapter by providing some background to our childhood and how we have come to live our mobile lives, followed by a more mainstream review of how the study of men and masculinities emerged in MCR. Subsequently, we offer fundamental theories linked to feminist, critical studies of men and masculinities (CSMM), including transpatriarchies, seeking to maintain and to add to the momentum gained by collective research efforts which have started to change MCR towards greater considerations of power and transnational gender relations. Flash forward to our contemporary lives, we highlight how MCR needs to play a greater role in raising the gender equality agenda by offering insights into how transpatriarchies and the hegemony of men affect all our lives via continued systemic and structural, unequal gender power relations.

### *Biographical notes from the authors*

There are always many ways of telling biographical stories. For me, Jeff, one way is to talk of growing up in London with my mother, sister, nearby grandmothers, and a somewhat distant father, all making their way and trying to “do their best” after the traumas of the Second World War. Another is the experience of infant school from five to seven, where my best friends were three girls – Gillian, Judith and Mavis – never to be seen again with the totally “normal” move at seven to all-boys junior school, followed by all-boys grammar school – and then a men-only college at university in the 1960s, even whilst Women’s Liberation begun to flourish. I liked music from Melanie, Bob Dylan, and Neil Young, and then a little later, John Prine and the Roche Sisters – all, apart from Young, from the US (see Hearn and Melechi 1992). In the late 1970s, I became heavily involved in men’s broadly anti-sexist consciousness-raising groups and activities, and under-fives campaigning for better provisions for pre-school children and their carers, in practice mainly mothers, and after a while realised that personal-political agendas merged with those in academia and research. I didn’t feel comfortable in how I was

expected to behave “as a man”. Patriarchy was pretty much everywhere and pretty obvious, and was heavily inflected with class, race and racism, and much more. And again, moving to Finland in the late 1990s meant learning all about gender and patriarchy in a different way. The world still is immensely patriarchal, even if its forms have shifted and elaborated, not least through the spread of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and intensifying ecological damage.

Wendy’s journey begins in Berlin in the 1980s, born into a home where my mother had been the ‘breadwinner’ and my father a mature student. This would change as I grew up and moved across different parts of Germany, as my father’s career slowly took precedence and my mother, a kindergarten teacher, moved on to work as a main carer for my sister and me. Germany, especially Berlin, in the 80s was thriving culturally within its national borders, as I vividly remember Peter Schilling’s ‘Major Tom – Völlig losgelöst’ competing for the number one chart spot with Nena’s ‘99 Luftballons’, adding their voices to the immensely influential “New German Wave” (or Neue Deutsche Welle). German language music dominated and touched a cultural nerve by tackling politics, technology, often via a post-punk sarcasm. Women and men appeared in the media – at least in my childhood memories – as equals. Certainly not in equal numbers, but women were allowed to be fierce, loud and visible. I was a tomboy, immensely active, never able to sit still. My experiences of patriarchy linked to expectations of behaving like a ‘good’, quiet girl, which increased as I grew older and moved to more conservative areas in Germany. Upon finishing school, I benefitted from the freedoms brought along by further European integration, which allowed me to live and study in various countries – Ireland and Spain in particular - and which eventually led me to start career and family in the UK in the 2000s. Patriarchy continues to shape my life and the life of those around me, across countries, places and spaces, which makes me think how things could be different.

Contextualising the authors’ narratives within broader cultural representations of their time, the 1970s and 1980s saw their share of resistance and rebellion, even within the mainstream as for example seen in the case of David Bowie (Lindridge and Eager 2015). The UK produced its own “New Wave” music in the 80s, with groups such as Duran Duran featuring heavily in the charts. It was this time where men often had longer hair than women, women wore leather jackets, arm and headbands, and despite its temporary resonance, the effeminate, gender-fluid

male look would soon find its demise in the backlash era of the 1990s (Mort 1996, Nixon 1996). Music and representations are equally nested within the politics and socioeconomics of their time. Germany, along with France and the Nordic region, represented powerful counter movements to the drastically liberal politics of the US and the UK. Instead of privatising markets, their post-war politics were based on state-provisions with greater investments, in their respective ways, in social and care infrastructures. These political directions continue their impact within those countries to this day.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the Reagan/Thatcher politics that triumphed in the 1980s set the scene for the neoliberal politics that shape all our lives today, particularly within the Western world.

How does all this link to men, masculinities, transpatriarchies and feminism? Ultimately, experiences, identities and representations cannot be removed from the systemic values, ideologies, and structures that produce them. It also shows how we engage in and co-produce these structures, and appropriate values from a very young age, highlighting the importance of care in early years in particular. Patriarchy, or transpatriarchies, emerge as much in and as the macro forces that build our global politics, relations and institutions, including markets and consumption, as in the micro forces reflected in the whirl of everyday life. This chapter then aims to contribute to a surge of feminist writing in MCR that seeks to call out the more systematic gender power relations within marketing and consumption within the previously depoliticised research on men and masculinities with its heavy focus on representation and identity.

### *Men, masculinities and gender representations in MCR*

Men have often been the protagonists within MCR, yet, until relatively recently, remained notably ungendered in this research (see Belk and Costa 1995; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Wooten 2006). The initial and explicit gendering of men and masculinities can be mainly attributed to influences from other disciplines whose research focused on images and representations. Research from Cultural Studies, including work from Frank Mort and his

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<sup>1</sup> If you ask Wendy, Germany still has the best public swimming pools, sports centres, unbelievably good healthcare and some regions even have good childcare! No comparison to the Nordic region of course (Molander et al 2019, Molander 2021)!

1980s effeminate ‘New Man’ imagery (1988, 1996), followed by the 1990s ‘New Lad’ backlash discourse (Nixon 1992, 1996, 1997) heavily shaped initial studies on this topic in MCR. Examples include research on representations and the inversion of the gaze, or ‘mirrors of masculinity’ (Patterson and Elliott 2002, Schroeder and Zwick 2004),<sup>2</sup> which sparked an interest in men’s real-life engagements with ads (Elliott and Elliott, 2005) and self-presentations as negotiated through popular and normative discourses (Östberg 2010). This extended to research about the rise of the metrosexual male in the 2000s (Tuncay 2006, Tuncay and Otnes 2008a, 2008b) closely followed by the übersexual (Rinallo 2007) or retrosexual (Östberg 2013). This surge of research on men and masculinities in MCR led to an increasing awareness that men too were gendered (Östberg 2012a, 2012b).

Parallel and linked to research on representations, men’s lived identities emerged in MCR. As before, this research benefitted from discussions in other disciplines, particularly drawing on debates surrounding masculinity in crisis (Horrocks 1994, Pleck 1995). For example, consumption became a resource for the construction of heroic (Holt and Thompson, 2004), phallic (Thompson and Holt 2004) and productive (Moisio et al. 2013) men and masculinities. Playing and (re)inventing masculine norms has been central to this research, as for example linked to negotiations of ‘safe’ and ‘dangerous zones’ (Rinallo, 2007). The explicit gendering of men and masculinities linked to increasing vulnerabilities and potential crises within men, alongside their continued ambivalence, was central to studies on men’s consumption traditionally associated with women’s practices, with implications for shopping and retail spaces (Otnes and McGrath 2001; Tuncay and Otnes, 2008a, 2008b). Despite a focus on men as gendered, once again, the gendering aspects were still neglected. Studies of men and masculinities were largely directed by the Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) tradition (Arnould and Thompson 2005), where research on the commodified male addressed issues of lifestyle, fashion, body consumption, and ‘new forms’ of masculinities (see Edwards, 1997; Simpson, 1994; Osgerby, 2001). MCR followed the lure of the text and the visual, which led to research on identity politics. However, rather than addressing ‘the political’ within identities, this research remained void of challenges or critiques of existing gender power structures (based on feminist theorisations of men and masculinities for example).

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<sup>2</sup> see also Mulvey (1989), Goffman (1979), Williamson (1979), Neale (1992), Cohan and Hark (2012) as notable influences

Research has since then expanded the boundaries of men and masculinities in MCR, for example, linking to discussions of men in domestic roles and the gendering of ‘the private’ (see Gentry and Harrison, 2010; Coskuner-Balli and Thompson, 2013), men’s gender relations and socialisations (Littlefield and Ozanne, 2011), or humour in gender and gendering practices (Hein and O’Donohoe, 2014), all of which mainly focus on identity constructions. As we can see from recent research, the gendering of men and masculinities through MCR has had their impact of men’s consumption, arguably leading to greater inclusivity in some areas (Petrylaite and Hart 2021). Nevertheless, further and wider issues such as patriarchy and patriarchal relations remain widely neglected. While this body of work has significantly added to our understandings and theorisations of gender within MCR, research on men and masculinities still has to address deeper issues of gender power relations (Hearn and Hein 2015). In response to this, we now come to examine the growing research area of critical studies on men and masculinities and the theorising of transpatriarchies.

*What is the critical study of men, masculinities and transpatriarchies?*

From a critical and feminist perspective, gender is shorthand for a complex set of embodied, institutionalised structures, practices and processes, and one of the most fundamental and powerful structuring principles of most societies. Gender is not equivalent to either sex or sexuality, nor indeed is it to women and femininity; rather, it equally concerns men, masculinities, and LGBT\*IQ+ people and social movements. Gender is a matter of relations constructed with local and broader gender orders. Global and transnational gender relations are (still) characterised by various forms of male dominance, although of course with huge variations in the form and extent of that dominance, and the myriad complexities and complications in gender regimes – and thereby how this various forms of dominance relate to and impact on MCR.

Similar to some of the trends we have seen in MCR, studying men, and indeed policy development on men and boys, have become more popular in recent years across many parts of the world, perhaps most notably through the work of MenEngage Alliance and its members networks. Yet studying men is not anything special, and not anything new. In fact, men, and women, have studied men for centuries, but often as an ‘absent presence’. Academia, academic canons, and academic disciplines, including MCR, are all full of books and articles by men, on

men, for men (Prothero and McDonagh 2021)! And studying men is not necessarily in itself linked to progressive social change; it all depends on how it is done and can easily even be retrogressive.

### *Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities*

It is contradictory that Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities (CSMM), as a series of attempts to study men and masculinities differently from the malestream, have developed. CSMM have expanded considerably over the last 40 years or more (see Kimmel et al. 2004; Gottzén et al. 2019). CSMM refers to critical, explicitly gendered studies of men and masculinities that engage with feminist and other critical gender scholarship, as opposed to non-gendered, non-feminist or anti-feminist scholarship. They comprise *historical, cultural, relational, materialist, deconstructive, anti-essentialist* studies on men (Hearn and Pringle 2006). The idea that the gendering of men derives from a fixed, inner trait or core is antagonistic to CSMM; men are not essentialised or reified. Studies range from masculine psychology to ethnographies of certain men's and boys' activities, investigations of masculinities in specific discourses, and then onto broader societal, collective and more global analyses of men. Many studies have been local, personal, bodily, immediate, interpersonal, as in the so-called 'ethnographic moment' (see Connell 2000), but increasingly there is the turn to the place of men and masculinities in the 'big (historico-spatial-socio-political) picture' (Connell 1993).

The broad critical approach to men and masculinities in CSMM can be characterised in recognizing men and masculinities as *explicitly gendered*, emphasizing men's and boys' differential relations to *gendered power*. Accordingly, men and masculinities are seen: as *socially constructed, produced, and reproduced*, rather than as 'naturally' one way or another; as *variable and changing* across time (history) and space (culture), within societies, and through life courses and biographies; and spanning the *material, the discursive*, and the *intersections of gendering with other social divisions*..

Beginning from the critique of sex role theory, the most developed and well cited approach in CSMM is that in which masculinities – hegemonic, complicit, subordinated, and marginalised masculinities – are differentially framed in relation to theorizing of patriarchy and patriarchal relations, that is, including men's unequal relations to men, as well as men's relations to women (for example, Connell 1987, 1995, Carrigan et al. 1985). The concept of hegemonic masculinity

has been a central pillar, while other masculinities, in particular complicit masculinity, have been taken up far less in critical analysis. Hegemonic masculinity has been defined variously, most notably as "... the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women." (Connell 1995: 77). These gendered processes operate at institutional, interpersonal and intrapsychic (psychodynamics) levels, along with contradictions, contestations and long-term historical gender transformations. Masculinities theory has been extremely important and influential, with many applications and many different interpretations, and hegemonic masculinity in particular, in theoretical, empirical and policy studies (see Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, Hearn et al. 2012; Morrell et al. 2012), along with a range of critiques of masculinities theory and the concept of hegemonic masculinity (see Hearn 2004, 2012).

#### *From masculinities to the gender hegemony of men*

We now turn to two key challenges for masculinities theory, for CSMM more generally, and for MCR. Specifically, in focusing primarily on and so de-naturalizing multiple masculinities, men as a social category may be re-naturalised in assuming it is the variation in masculinities that is at issue, with less attention to the given social category of men. The primary focus on the diversity of masculinities may inadvertently divert attention from interrogation of the social category of men, and even naturalize men. In this sense, hegemony has often been applied in a relatively restricted way in some applications of hegemonic masculinity. On the other hand, we may ask: what is more hegemonic than the social category of men? This is fertile ground for critical analyses in MCR. Indeed, many contemporary forms of marketing research has pointed to greater variations in masculinities yet solidified the category of men.

Thus, we are more concerned here with *the hegemony of men* and gender hegemony. Thus, when speaking of 'men', we do not refer to any essence or given-ness. Rather, men are best understood as both a *social category* formed by the gender system, and *collective and individual agents*, often dominant, though not necessarily so, together constituting the hegemony of men (Hearn 2004) or, more widely, gender hegemony. While there is much literature and politics problematizing 'women' as a category, 'men' is much less problematised as a social category, typically *not* so problematised even within CSMM.



Dominant uses of the social category of men are contested and contingent in many ways. First, the assumption that men are based in the biological is typically seen as foundational, even though it is difficult to give a foundational definition of what male is: chromosomal, hormonal, genital, somatic, and so on. Second, the notion of men is variable historically across time and cultures – as is clear in the multifarious gender patterns, including transgender, non-binary, and third sexes/genders across societies. Third, the category of men is used differentially, as individuals, groups of men, all men, the gender of men, in state, military, educational, medical, and religious discourses, and in discursive, rhetorical and other ploys. Fourth, there are the shifting relations of identity, physiological variation, embodiments, and social movements, as in LGBT\*IQA+, gender ambiguous, gender plural (Monro 2005), and gender diverse politics and practice. Fifth, the differential definitions of age and generation, in terms of the social definitions of boys, young men, old men, disabled men, dying men, as well as men cast as insane or outcast in other ways, problematize a clear concept of men. Sixth, the diffusion of ICTs and other bio- and socio-technologies facilitate the creation of, for example, virtual men and non-binary categories. Seventh, the social category of men is (re)created in interplay with other social categories, such as class, ethnicity and sexuality. Finally, there are human-animal relations. To analyse the hegemony of men, men need to be thoroughly de-naturalised and deconstructed, as postcolonial theory deconstructs the white subject or queer theory the sexual subject.

#### *From the ethnographic moment to trans(national)patriarchies*

A second challenge for CSMM, and thereby for MCR, concerns moves from the local ethnographic moment(s) in studying masculinities to global, postcolonial and transnational approaches (Varman and Belk 2012). Interestingly here, formulations of both hegemony and patriarchy have characteristically been based on a single society or nation (Bocock 1986). Thus, in the cited definition of hegemonic masculinity, "... the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of *patriarchy*, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women." (Connell 1995: 77) (our emphasis), it is this reference to patriarchy that needs to be *transnationalised*. The contextualisation of much, probably most, research on men and masculinities, even within and whilst recognizing patriarchy, has been framed at the national or societal, 'methodologically nationalist', level, rather than transnational.

Despite insights on the relations of men, masculinities, nation and nationalism, gendering men has often remained primarily within confines of the nation-state or supra-nation-state, as in the case of the EU. This leads to reconsiderations of changing forms of neopatriarchy, neoliberal patriarchy and ‘neoliberal neopatriarchy’ (Campbell 2014), and transnational patriarchies in making sense of contemporary neoliberalism and globalisation. Indeed, in simultaneously affirming and deconstructing the nation, transnationalisation(s) is perhaps a more useful term than globalisation.

For example, while local patterns of work, or its lack, are still the major context for much labour market activity, globalisation challenges gendered work divisions, for example, through economic restructurings and migrations. The impacts of gendered global relations of production and reproduction are very uneven (Scott et al, 2011), often contradictory, as we can also see in markets such as sex tourism (Hein et al. 2016). Globalisation, seemingly paradoxically, both creates, even liberates, and constrains, even oppresses – even at the same time for the same people and groups. In many global processes, physical and virtual, particular groups of men are the main purveyors of power (Connell 1993, Hearn 2015). Intensification of gender inequalities proceeds by extending the means for accumulation and concentration of resources around those already with more resources – through increased mobility of labour, technologies, industry, production and reproduction. Gendered globalisation is severely complicated by financial crisis, that is, gendered financial crises (Walby 2015, Maclean 2016). This applies in the gendered structuring of moves to the financialisation of capitalism, and the consequent very uneven growth and development, and intensifying financial linkages, all gendered. Economic crisis highlights gendered aspects and biases in policy development (Young et al., 2011).

Concentrations of capital are increasing, and inequalities growing in China and much of Europe and North America, though not in all of Latin America. In the early 2010s, it was reported how the richest “1% are getting richer and the 99% are getting poorer. The wealth of the world’s 475 billionaires is now worth the combined income of the bottom half of humanity. (Nixon, 2012; also Fuentes-Nieva and Galasso, 2014; Hardoon et al., 2016). By 2020, the situation has escalated. The Oxfam report, *Time to Care* (Coffey et al. 2020), reported “The world’s 2,153 billionaires have more wealth than the 4.6 billion people who make up 60 percent of the planet’s population”. This is not only an issue of wealth inequality but is deeply gendered and

raced, with wealthy elites accumulating “vast fortunes at the expense of ordinary people and particularly poor women and girls:

- The 22 richest men in the world have more wealth than all the women in Africa.
- Women and girls put in 12.5 billion hours of unpaid care work each and every day—a contribution to the global economy of at least \$10.8 trillion a year, more than three times the size of the global tech industry.
- Getting the richest one percent to pay just 0.5 percent extra tax on their wealth over the next 10 years would equal the investment needed to create 117 million jobs in sectors such as elderly and childcare, education and health.” (Oxfam 2020)

If this does not provide evidence for the impact of gender on the systematic, globally unequal distribution of wealth, a recent briefing by US Aid (2021) explained how and that gender inequality is causing poverty, not the other way around. This means that any effort to reduce inequities requires the tackling of transnational gender inequality first. Related to tackling these inequities, global and transnational corporate managerial elites remain highly gendered. The ‘transnational capitalist class’ (Sklair 2001) is in practice very much a male transnational capitalist class. Men’s domination continues at the highest corporate levels, with relatively little gender change at high levels over time, even with greater numbers of women in some arenas of middle management and the established professions. Gender divisions of managerial control are also maintained partly through men’s domination of engineering and ICT industries, even with greater dispersal away from Western centres, to India, for example (Poster 2013). Global restructuring has led to the movement of capital, finance and industrial production, and facilitated large-scale, often precarious, employment, predominantly for women as cheap *labour*.

Movements of women into the labour market have involved both rural-urban migration and cross-national migration, and disruption of local gender orders and their relations of production and reproduction. Childcare and other reproductive care work, as also studied in recent transformative consumer research (Steinfeld et al. 2019a), are restructured to become the everyday responsibility of relatives and others in local communities, mirroring patterns long established in some regions, for example, Southern Africa. Gendered labour migrations based on shifts in reproductive labour include global care chains, for example, beyond Eastern Europe and global nurse care chains, for example, from Philippines. These care chains are deeply

embedded, normalised and frequently invisibilised within dispersed private worlds, and now possibly exposed during Covid-19, as research on global au pair work highlights (Cox 1997, 2014). Furthermore, global shifts affect men and women unevenly, with the loss of assumption of life-long employment for many, including those in the global North, formerly reliant on manufacturing or extractive industries.

Gendered and contradictory global change also concerns consumption flows (Kravets and Sandikci 2014), online image manufacture (Gurrieri and Drenten 2019), and transnational branding as essential aspects of MCR (Cayla and Eckhardt 2008). With growing inequalities, what may be a routine purchase of, say, trainers, in one part of the world may become a reason to mug or kill in another (Ratele 2014). Transnational commercialisation of sex, sexuality and sexual violence is another aspect of globalisation (Hein et al. 2016), with expansions of relatively new configurations of flesh/online sex industry. Virtualisation processes, the new normal of marketing in at least many parts of the world, present sites for both reinforcements and contestations of hegemony in terms of bodily presence/absence of men. ICTs bring contradictory effects for men's, and women's gendering, sexuality and violences, as men act as producers and consumers of virtuality, represent women in virtual media, and are themselves represented.

To make sense of all this means moving beyond limiting patriarchy, like hegemony, to a particular society or nation. In the contemporary world, the concept of patriarchy is now even more useful in looking at gender relations beyond the personal and interpersonal, and towards the global and the transnational. Gender hegemony can be seen in terms of not just patriarchy but as transnational patriarchies, or transpatriarchies, combining patriarchies, intersectionalities and transnationalisations. Transpatriarchies speak of the structural tendency and individualised propensity for men's transnational gender domination – focusing on non-determined structures, forces and processes, not totalizing unity or fixity. Within transnational patriarchal processes, the transnational carries overlapping meanings, both reaffirming and deconstructing the nation, as in:

- *moving across* something or *between* two or more national boundaries;
- *metamorphosing*, problematizing, blurring, transgressing, even dissolving national boundaries;

- *creating new configurations*, intensified transnational, supranational, deterritorialised, dematerialised or virtual entities (Hearn and Blagojević, 2013)

Transnationalisations, as noted, take many forms and have many implications for men and gender relations. They comprise acutely contradictory processes, with multiple forms of difference, presence and absence for men in power (Haase et al 2016) and men dispossessed (El Jurdi and Ourahmoune 2021), with the latter receiving rarely attention in MCR. Movements from the national to the transnational can be more voluntary or more involuntary (Sharifonnasabi et al, 2020); structural, institutional, organisational or individual; or through complex webs and networks (Djedidi et al 2017). Structured patriarchal gender domination shifts from being limited to domestic, national or societal contexts towards transnational contexts. These are historico-geographical processes, moving from the domestic and the individual to nation-state to the transnational: new forms of trans(national)patriarchies.

Within transpatriarchies, gendered distribution of wealth and well-being, presence/absence of sustainable gender egalitarian social and political arrangements, and long-term environmental (un)sustainability are strongly interconnected. Men's practices are heavily embedded in social, economic, and cultural relations so that men's transnational dominant or complicit practices are easily equated with that seen as normal. In contrast to the call for "equality, liberty and fraternity [or responsible solidarity]", economic exploitation and inequalities are both anti-democratic in themselves and facilitated by anti-democratic movements, and these social forces together facilitate ecological damage, all dominated by certain groups of men – against the interests of the mass of people.

Transnational processes and transpatriarchies entail intersections of gender relations with *inter alia* citizenship, ethnicity, location, migration, movement, nationality, racialisation, religion, space (Steinfeld et al, 2019b). Multiple transnational patriarchal arenas range from transnational business and global finance corporations and governmental organisations, and the persistence of the hegemony of men in dominating global value chains (McCarthy et al. 2020), to military institutions and the arms trade, international sports industries, and bio-medical industries and transfers, through to arenas of migration, religion, virtualisation, environmental change, knowledge production – and marketing and consumption (Hearn 2015: 20-21). Transnationalisations involve a variety of transnational spaces: physical, social, virtual. Changing relations of national and transnational space have different implications for

power, prestige and wealth – raising different connections between men, transnationalisation and social stratification. Different groups of men move transnationally, between nations, more or less situated in and between different national and transnational realms, with variable consequences depending on their political-economic power and prestige.

Importantly, transpatriarchies operate partly in the flesh, partly virtually, creating new forms of extended power for certain groupings of men. Apart from extensions of transnational patriarchal power, as through new technologies, corporate concentrations or ecological damage, they facilitate processes of transnational individual and collective *non-responsibility* of men; problems created are held to be the business of others elsewhere, as part of a long history of patriarchal imperialism and colonialism. Such changes bring processes of loss of entitlement and privilege for some men. Such losses, or perceived losses, of power amongst certain groupings of men interplay with processes of sustaining and recouping of patriarchal power. In such ways local men and local masculinities increasingly need to be understood within the contexts of *trans(national)patriarchal hegemony of men*.

*How do men, masculinities and transpatriarchies matter in marketing?*

Contrasting these conceptualisations with dominant research on men and masculinities in MCR, we can recognise how men's power and the politics of gender relations have remained largely invisible and arguably even silent. Paying due credit to this research, it introduced men and masculinities as gendered to marketing scholarship to a point where men realised they were actively marketed to, and not just producers of marketing discourses (Nixon and Crewe 2004). Men became targets, segments, not dissimilar to women. Their role as consumers was thus firmly established, and along with it, the multiple masculinities of a man, both in individual and relational terms. It seemed men were suddenly made conscious that they too are consumers who depend on commercial discourses for the construction of their identities, linked to a marketing dependency to display power and compensate for their insecurities (Witkowski 2020). Remember the Gillette ads in the 1980s? Was this really "The Best a Man Can Get"?

While this scholarship thus drew attention to men and masculinities as a topic of study, there was little talk of men's links to patriarchy. This does not mean that patriarchy has not been raised in MCR, but predominantly so in connection to how it affects women (McVey et al.,

2020), in the context of developing countries (Venugopal and Viswanathan 2020), or women's empowerment (Scott 2000). The notion that patriarchy has the purpose of naming the systematic power of men with the aim of *disempowerment* has been rarely acknowledged, similar to research on how patriarchy is produced, how, by what or whom.

An example of this can be seen in research on gender violence in MCR, which has only recently seen much-needed attention (i.e. Joy et al 2015). Gurrieri et al. (2016) examined the taboo of gender-based violence in advertising and raised concern regarding the normalisation of violent images of women. Varman et al. (2018) led conversations on violence in marketing, including sexual violence (Varman et al. 2018). Similar to normalised violence as featured in gendered advertising, this study used Butler (2004) to address the 'respectability' of women in the context of sexual violence. While this research makes reference to patriarchy and describes it as a source of power inequalities, it still often lacks more explicit conceptualisation. New research continues to advance debates on patriarchy within MCR, clearly recognising the void that has been left by a continued invisibility and 'normalised violence' within MCR to this point (Martin et al 2020, Gurrieri 2021). Men and masculinities and gendered power relations have been equally central within transformative consumer research (TCR, Zayer et al. 2017, Steinfield et al. 2019c). Given the momentum of research on these topics, it is important to add to these conversations by extending this transdisciplinary scholarship.

### *Maintaining momentum on men, masculinities and transpatriarchies in MCR*

As we find ourselves within this specific point in history, we link back to our biographical narratives and wonder how the above theorisations help us make sense of some of the contemporary realities of markets, marketing and consumption as they intersect across socio-political, cultural, economic realms and drip into everyday life, instilling in us continued systems and structures based on neoliberal capitalist transpatriarchies. These days, I – Wendy – regularly get up at 5 am and work well into the night. Yet, despite these long, at times interrupted, working hours, I still do not manage to clear the backlog left behind by months of caring duties alongside an increased, normalised and legitimated workload during the global pandemic. Even worse, I know I am not alone.. Decades of feminist efforts that have led to marginal progress to reduce unequal labour distributions, as for example articulated in the 'second shift' (Hochschild and Machung 2012), have been undone, almost overnight. MCR has its role to play in addressing these issues that require much-needed, urgent attention, and

not just at the margins, but across all levels of scholarship, policy, and most importantly at a transnational level.

In its Global Gender Report, the World Economic Forum (WEF) recently calculated that the impact of Covid-19 has set gender parity (as per their measurements) back by another generation, from a previous 99.5 to 135.6 years (WEF 2021). While millions of people across the globe continue to suffer and die from Covid-19, it thus emerges that and how women bear the brunt of this pandemic disproportionately. Without much-needed joint efforts, women and girls face a greater, lasting impact than their male counterparts. This is arguably due to the distinctive systems of transnational work, care and consumption chains that have, as stated above, liberated and at the same time oppressed us. The pandemic has exposed that advances on gender equality have remained at surface level, as clearly indicated by the massive breakdowns, revealing the deeply embedded, continued stranglehold of transpatriarchies and their distinctive impact on all our lives. MCR needs to continue its research efforts into transnational private and public, working and consuming lives with a focus on gender power relations.

As we said in the opening, if ever the private was political, it is now – but the personal is political now at a level well beyond nations. Isolation and restrictions of freedoms have led to extreme levels of (not just) domestic violence that are, once again, hidden and invisible, this time quite literally within the supposed ‘safe spaces’ of our homes (Kofman and Garfin 2020). Importantly, rather than focusing on the impact on women, research is required that exposes the structural and systemic issues – or ‘disaster patriarchy’ (V 2021) – contributing to this ‘double pandemic’. Research areas such as medicine, law and psychology have reported on issues of violence, oppression and abuse, yet MCR has remained silent. One example: the *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing* established research agendas in response to changing dynamics of Covid-19. The editors selected important research areas that require urgent attention. While all these are valid and often intersect with topics we raise above, such as race in the marketplace and the ‘essential workforce’ during the pandemic, gender (in)equities and the transnational structuring of patriarchies and patriarchal relations were not among the chosen agenda topics (Scott *et al.* 2020).

If anything, the pandemic has also exposed the lasting impact and possibly dangerous trajectories of incapable and irresponsible male leaders, contextualised in the rise of



transnational populist movements, all of which are deeply linked to the hegemony of men and MCR. Men's continued power becomes apparent via Trump's (and his different kinds of associates') politics and his lasting legacy in the US, Johnson's (and his different kinds of associates') politics in the UK, and the increasing boundaries – as in both in socio-cultural boundary-making and the strengthening of nationalism and national boundaries – which deeply affect the lives of many, including both Wendy's and Jeff's. Paradoxically, transpatriarchies exist alongside nationalisms and increasingly rigid national boundaries. Brexit in the UK has arguably created unnecessary expenses and diverted attention away from important areas, which legitimated cuts in social care, healthcare, a severe neglect of childcare, particularly during the early years (Guardian Editorial 2021), all underpinned by deeply neoliberal capitalist values which are contributing to increasingly unequal wealth distributions – all of which are once again linked to transnational markets and dynamics.

We often associate poverty with developing countries, yet, despite growing, unprecedented levels of wealth, the US leads in poverty rankings within the developed world (Rank 2004). The pandemic has worsened these rates once again (Tanzi and Saraiva 2021) and threatens to destroy the many advances to address these issues. Remember that gender inequality creates poverty (US Aid 2021) not the other way around? This emphasises yet again the urgency to raise the gender equality research agenda, and along with it, research on systems and structures of transpatriarchies and the hegemony of men. MCR research plays a vital role in maintaining and adding to this collective research agenda.

Examples of Trump and Johnson, alongside other leaders of their time, also draw attention back to the importance of extending the research agenda on men, masculinities and transpatriarchies in the context of representations and power displays (Collinson and Hearn 2020). The normalised narcissism, controversial jibes by both leaders, and at times seemingly expected transgressions are exemplary of celebrity, PR (Summers and Morgan 2008) and corporate culture (Cragun et al. 2020) rather than responsible governmental leadership, especially during times of crisis. Alongside critical investigations of power constructions in their representations, research is required on the propaganda machine afforded by some groups of men's privileged access to media which sustains transpatriarchies. MCR has a role to play in extending the research agenda by adding much-needed critical perspectives on the structures that have led to and sustain the power of these 'opinion leaders'. Given the authors' shared biographies - one raised by post-war parents in Germany, the other directly impacted by post-

war UK – it is important to raise consciousness regarding the pervasiveness of social class, imperialist, militaristic and downright nastiness within everyday cultural and often normalised representations. A transpatriarchal lens can equally advance understandings on the increase in nationalism predominantly, but not exclusively, by men and masculinities in power, which have arguably led to the legitimising of political activities such as Brexit and the need to control national borders. Paradoxically, much of this upsurge in nationalism arises through transnational nationalistic collaborations.

Lastly and importantly, MCR has made vast strides in its research on consumer movements on the one hand (Chatzidakis et al. 2021), while unpacking the politics and exploitations of social justice marketing on the other (Sobande 2019). Critical gender and feminist perspectives have emerged in this research stream in the context of sexualised labour in digital cultures (Drenten et al. 2020). Conceptualisations of transpatriarchies and the politics of ICTs could provide potential for adding and extending this research further and thus maintaining its momentum in addressing structures and systems that liberate at the same time as creating new forms of violence and oppressions. Movements such as #MeToo (Chandra and Erlingsdóttir 2021) or Black Lives Matter (Crockett and Grier 2021) lend themselves to further interrogations, and link to intersectionality research in MCR (Steinfeld et al. 2019b) and new materialist configurations (Steinfeld 2019). These are just a few examples to highlight how men and masculinities can be approached differently via a wider lens of transpatriarchal MCR.

### *Conclusion*

Despite increasing interest in critical work on men and masculinities in MCR, significant gaps remain to address the systemic and structural issues linked to transnational patriarchies and the hegemony of men. Recent research has shown that there is a place for this scholarship in MCR and related disciplines (Varman et al. 2018, Zayer et al 2020, Gurrieri 2021). Yet, deep issues continue with research on men and masculinities that is unfeminist and apolitical. Speaking of the political: some disciplines where gender, feminism and patriarchy are well established have argued for a need to move away from politicising research due to its potential to limit change (Halberstam 2020). However, if the political is a problem in some feminist research, MCR sits somewhere near the other end of the spectrum in that it has hardly begun political interrogations to understand the deeply concerning practices, systems and structures that maintain existing power relations. While the wider subject discipline of MCR thus needs to address its own

issues, it is equally important for feminist scholars in MCR to engage in transdisciplinary research and contribute to the many debates on the issues we raise above that are dominant and recognised in other fields. Ultimately, given the challenges we face at this point, it is our collective responsibility to maintain this research agenda, and MCR, at this point, is not doing its fair share!

The research area on men, masculinities and transpatriarchies as it links to MCR cannot be easily reduced to a 4x4 matrix. Given that transpatriarchies are deeply intertwined with neoliberal capitalism, and link in their own ways to political, economic, socio-cultural and technological arenas – which include representations and identity politics – this research is complex and at times uncomfortable. Yet, it is these broader macro structures and power relations that also impact our everyday lives and are instilled in us from a very early age. Addressing these complexities is aided by multiple voices and perspectives, again benefitting from transdisciplinary engagement. It is these complexities that link to broader issues, such as transnational poverty, ecological sustainability (Steinfeld and Hein 2018), violence and global inequities based on gender power relations as potentially a source, not a product or consequence of these issues (US Aid 2021). Given these insights, we require a research agenda in MCR that can contribute to these challenges. If, even by conservative measures (WEF 2021), Covid and other dynamics have set us back by yet another generation before we reach gender equality – more than 100 years – it is these complexities that need to be collectively and urgently tackled.

The personal continues to be political. Although this message may still not have reached mainstream marketing and consumer research, it is our responsibility to change it.

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