



Masculinities in the Making: From the Local to the Global

By James W. Messerschmidt

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In this book, James W. Messerschmidt explores how masculinity is created through life histories on very different subjects-genderqueers, boys who have been bullied at school, and presidents-that illustrate theory in action. Taken together, Masculinities in the Making is compelling insight into masculinity today.

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Editorial Review

Review

A leading figure in the interdisciplinary field of men's and masculinity studies, Messerschmidt takes a novel approach in theorizing on masculinity: he looks at its social construction over the life course. In chapters devoted to interviews with what he labels 'wimps' and 'genderqueers' and content analysis of presidential speeches by Barack Obama and George Bush, the author offers a poignant illustration of the relationship between personal life history and sex, gender, and sexuality construction. Messerschmidt has a long history with this topic, and he draws heavily on his own previously published work, with the result that in places the book seems like a unique form of meta-analysis. That said, he does so with an eye aimed squarely on developing a revised 'structured action theory,' one paying particular attention to the intersection of gender, sex, and sexuality in masculinity's construction. Perhaps Messerschmidt's greatest contribution, however, is found in the conclusion of the book: he provides ten well-thought-out, clearly articulated suggestions for future research on masculinity. Scholars—especially those beginning their careers—will be well served by reading this section closely and heeding the author's sage advice. **Summing Up: Highly recommended.** Graduate students, researchers, faculty. (*CHOICE*)

In the final and short concluding chapter, James Messerschmidt advances ten priorities for future directions for masculinity scholars that arise from his analysis of the case studies. It is a fine way to finish the book, and it poses some excellent challenges for future research on men and masculinities. Although perhaps not ideal for complete newcomers to this field of study, in bringing James Messerschmidt's theoretical and empirical work together in one volume, this book will be of immense value to masculinity and gender studies scholars, especially those who are exploring the research implications of hegemonic masculinity and masculinities as forms of structured action. (*Gender And Development*)

Basically we get a new way of looking at key concepts and what we see is backed-up by data. By examining new gender practices and the older patterns of dominance, Messerschmidt provides valuable ways of looking at masculinity. (*Reviews by Amos Lassen*)

This book is indispensable for anyone working in the area of gender. James W. Messerschmidt, one of the founders of masculinities studies, refines and expands the concept and theory of masculinities as structured action, and illustrates this analysis with wimps and genderqueers. He ends by provocatively focusing on Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, both of whom portrayed themselves in their speeches as 'hegemonic masculine heroic protectors.' The result is an excellent combination of original theory and close-read data. (Judith Lorber, professor emerita, Graduate School and Brooklyn College, CUNY; author of *Breaking the Bowls: Degendering and Feminist Change*)

James W. Messerschmidt has a rare gift: he uses the well-chosen case study to make bigger and bigger claims, not by imposing some prepackaged theoretical frame onto his subjects, but by letting them frame their own stories. From micro-level interactions of gender nonconforming guys to public performances of our most recent presidents, *Masculinities in the Making* is both compelling and thoughtful. (Michael Kimmel, SUNY Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies, Stony Brook University)

Masculinities in the Making is an important contribution to gender studies—a book that develops hegemonic masculinity theory, discusses new non-conformist sex and gender patterns, and includes an utterly scary analysis of how masculine fantasy can become global political reality. Warmly recommended! (Øystein

Gullvåg Holter, Centre for Gender Research, University of Oslo)

In *Masculinities in the Making*, James W. Messerschmidt brings together some of his key ideas, ranging from theoretical and sociological concerns such as structure and action, to detailed analyses of wimps, genderqueers, and US presidents. The book shows the complexity of this venture and sets out a clear agenda for further and future studies of masculinities. This is another must-read for all those concerned with these questions. (Jeff Hearn, Örebro University, Sweden; Hanken School of Economics, Finland; University of Huddersfield, UK; and author of *Men of the World*)

In this book, James Messerschmidt, one of today's leading researchers on masculinities, re-thinks key concepts and offers rich data. *Masculinities in the Making* brings us inside the turbulence of young people's lives through fine-grained case studies, and also takes us to global power politics, in the Bush and Obama presidencies. Both new gender practices and old patterns of dominance come into view. This important text will be valuable to everyone concerned with questions about masculinity and the lives of men. (Raewyn Connell, University of Sydney; author of *Gender: In World Perspective and Masculinities*)

About the Author

James W. Messerschmidt is professor of sociology and chair of the criminology department at the University of Southern Maine, where he also teaches in the women's and gender studies program. He is the author or coauthor of a number of books, including *Masculinities and Crime* and *Gender, Heterosexuality, and Youth Violence*.

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