

## **ABSTRACT: Reflexive Explorations of Masculinity in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy**

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In response to the question as to how masculinity figures in psychoanalytic psychotherapy, this study produces a narrative in support of the notion that gender is an inescapable and constitutive dimension of both the psychotherapeutic relationship and psychoanalytic discourse. Drawing on a mix of autoethnography, case material, focus group data and psychoanalytic narratives on sex and gender, five papers are presented in the service of exploring the experience and performance of situated White masculinities, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The research supports the notion that masculinities are slippery, multiple, and contingent relational constructs, and argues for the importance of interrogating how the psychoanalytic practitioner is positioned within gender and other related identity positions. This study supports and argues for masculinities as complexly constituted within the reflexive tensions of subjectivity and subjectification, within the dynamic instability of the fixed and the fluid, and within a dialectic involving the play of sexuality, sex and gender, in context. In that regard, it illuminates masculinities in relation to social positioning and discursive formation, and is more concerned with how masculinity is understood, how it is constituted, positioned and performed, than what it essentially represents. Along with being situated within psychoanalytic practice and praxis, the study explores how masculinities stand in relation to femininities and the maternal feminine, to paternal representations and relations, and how this intersects with experiences of race, social roles and historicity. Among other theoretical constructs, the study draws strongly on notions of colonisation and interpellation, Edward Said's conception of exilic consciousness, and Jean Laplanche's theory of primary seduction and his elaboration of the notion of afterwardsness.

**Key words:** Masculinities, masculinity, fatherhood, gender, psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic psychotherapy, reflexivity, hermeneutics, exilic consciousness, primary seduction, enigmatic signifier.