DEGENERATING AND REGENERATING: RECOMPOSING MASCULINITIES THROUGH ANTI-SEXIST MASCULINITY PROJECTS

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ABSTRACT

This is an interview study of anti-sexist men who are engaged in dissident masculinity politics in their everyday lives. I discuss the importance of adopting a cultural analysis that looks at practices and discourse and the importance of drawing upon a more expanded definition of agency than is often used in studies of gendering practices and the practicing of gender. I find that there is a common set of experiences and relationships that supported the men’s anti-sexism and made it more likely. I also find that they are engaged in a range of degendering and regendering practices in their attempts to renounce hegemonic expectations for what it means to be men. These practices pose personal and collective possibilities for change. The men draw upon at least two vocabularies of motives: therapeutic and social justice. The kind of change they attempt to produce depends on the vocabulary upon which they draw. The therapeutic vocabulary encouraged a focus on meeting “needs” and promoting mutual personal growth within relationships, and it discouraged men from developing political projects that make them feel guilty. The social justice vocabulary encouraged a focus on producing equity or equality within relationships, and it also encouraged them to develop more explicitly political stances that had the potential to broaden the scope of their attempts at change beyond their individual relationships. I also look at the parenting practices of a set of fathers, noting the importance of degendered parenting.