

# 5

## GENDER AND VIOLENCE

Violence is gendered. 'All over the world', say Bengiano et al. (2010) 'men try to exercise dominance over women ... to the point of resorting to violence', and Steve Hall (2002) notes that 'The claim that men commit most acts of physical violence is possibly the nearest that criminology has come to producing an indisputable fact. (Hall 2002). This includes family violence such as infanticide, genital mutilation, child marriage, dowry-related violence, battering and sexual abuse, and in the community sexual harassment, rape, prostitution and trafficking. This chapter explores the bases of masculinity and violence in terms of differential crime rates, theories of masculinity, especially 'hegemonic masculinities', and with reference to trafficking, the way gendered power and violence are embedded within global socio-economic structures.

### Crime and masculinity

Crime, especially violent crime, is an overwhelmingly masculine activity. This gender pattern is not new – males have been over-represented in all major violent crime categories since the collection of crime statistics began and the same pattern is found in all countries. According to the UK Ministry of Justice (2016) prosecutions of men outnumber those of women by 3:1 and in most violent crimes (with the exception 'Cruelty or neglect of children') around 9:1. In the teenage years, the gap between girls and boys in delinquency, broadly defined, is relatively small, although the gap in more serious offending is considerably wider (Smith and McAra, 2004). Offending is highly gender- and age-related as we saw in Chapter 1 (Figure 1.1). Among males, the highest rate of offending for the most serious (indictable) criminal offences was among 17-year-olds, at 6,116 offenders per 100,000 population of that age. The highest rate for females was among 15-year-olds (2,168 per 100,000 population). For male offenders in 2005, 15-year-olds received more cautions than any other age group, while 19-year-olds received the most convictions. Among female offenders, 14- and 15-year-olds received the most cautions and the most

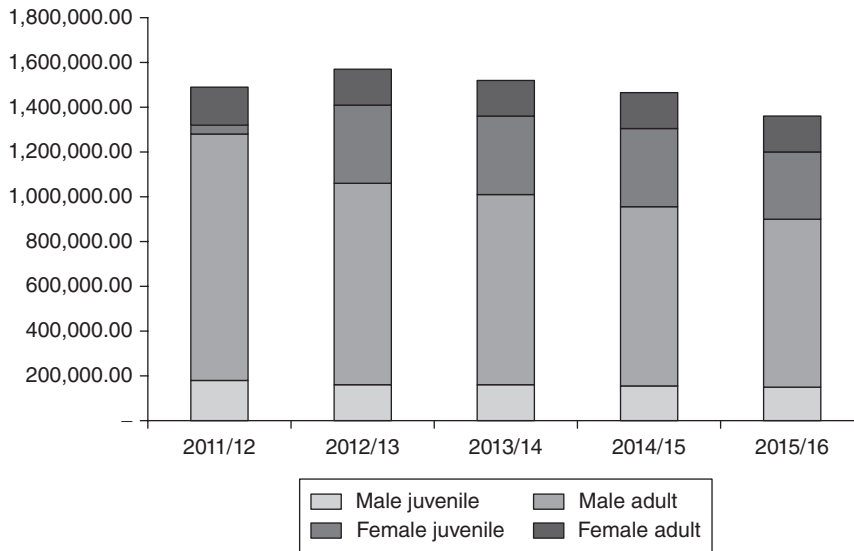
common age to be convicted was 16. The pattern of offending for both men and women falls away after about age 25, and in later life is negligible for both, which suggests a strong age as well as gender factor underlying offending behaviour.

It was noted in Chapter 4 that known violence is strongly correlated with socioeconomic inequalities and relative deprivation. However, if this were a sufficient explanation, women should commit more violence than men since they are consistently, on average, in lower socio-economic positions than men. It is often therefore suggested that in cultures of competitive masculinity minor affronts to reputation, face, social status and enduring relationships can result in violence. However, such responses themselves are distributed by social location, class and age – so the relationship between masculinity and violence is complex. Masculine reputational violence may be most common among young, working-class men and street-corner societies.

The masculine bias in offending should not mean that we ignore female violence. Motz (2001: 89) says that 'to deny female violence is to deny female agency' and reflects women's confinement to the private sphere. Further, she says that women's violence is treated as monstrous – like Lady Macbeth 'unsex-ing' herself to assist in the murder of Duncan – rather than understood as subject to particular emotional processes. There has recently been concern about rising levels of violence among girls that has featured in the UK media and crime prevention agencies.<sup>1</sup> Convictions for both men and women in the UK have been falling, but more steeply for men, although women charged with violence against the person are less likely to be sent to trial at Crown Court, suggesting lower seriousness or higher mitigating circumstances (Ministry of Justice, 2016: 82). Further, arrest figures shown in Figure 5.1 do not show a significant changes in gender ratios. In the USA there is evidence for a trend towards convergence in simple assault figures, although the gap remains large for more serious violence (Steffensmeier et al. 2005). This convergence could be a result of reduced differences in expectations of behaviour for young men and women. Or they could be a result of net-widening enforcement, broader definitions of youth violence and greater surveillance of girls that have increased arrest figures for girls relative to boys. This is discussed later in this chapter.

## Explanations

While it is often taken for granted that (especially young) men do more crime than women, recent work has undertaken a more complex analysis of the nature of masculinity and its relationship with violent crime. A division has appeared between biosocial, evolutionary approaches on the one hand, and sociological explanations on the other.



**Figure 5.1** Number of arrests by age and sex 2011–2016 for violent crime (Ministry of Justice 2016)

## Evolutionary explanations

It was seen in Chapters 1 and 2 that there are evolutionary explanations of the human propensity for aggression that also attempt to explain the connection between masculinity and violence arising from hunting, competition and risk-taking that aided survival chances. The male age–crime curve suggests that offending is concentrated among men in the 11–25 age range (see Chapter 1). Evolutionary psychologists suggest that the bulk of offenders are ‘young men displaying behaviour that evolved to increase their chances of finding a mate and having children’ (Marsh and Melville 2006: 29). Further, this is also the age where male testosterone peaks and young men are more aggressive and risk-taking. Pavelka (1995: 28) argues that it is difficult to maintain that the connection between sex and aggression is purely learned and grounded in patriarchal human society, when there is a strong connection between the two among primates. It was noted in Chapter 2 that males (especially between the ages of 15 and 24) are more violent than women in all cultures, which suggests a biological dimension in addition to social factors such as alienation, low income, weak social bonds, status differences and discrimination. Even so, primal violence would have been balanced by the need to preserve the size of the group and cultural norms of reciprocity and reconciliation emerged to limit violence (Hatty 2000: 50). Further, Pavelka continues that ‘no knowledgeable evolutionary theorist would argue that men (and women) are not responsible

for their choices' (1995: 30). Pinker (2012: 482ff.) claims that while aggressiveness is encoded in the human brain stem, increased social complexity and learning have led to the long-term diminution of violence.

It was further noted in Chapter 2 that evolutionary social theory pays little regard to the symbolic and culturally mediated forms that violence takes (e.g. in rituals) and cannot easily explain why rates of violence vary among social locales, times and countries. If there is an underlying biological tendency towards masculine violence, this should manifest similarly in different cultures and places, which it does not. Violence, like sex, has been subject to cultural constraints throughout known human history, especially with reference to the killing of members of the in-group. Further, James (1995) takes issue with evolutionary theories of human aggression, arguing that family influences are critical. He claims that children born to violent parents but raised in peaceable households are no more likely to have violent criminal records than those born to non-violent parents. Further, these accounts cannot address the ways in which 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are multiply constructed through cultural and social processes and the complex ways in which violence and masculinity are interrelated.

## Social learning

There are many social and cultural theories of violent behaviour, stressing social learning, youth subcultures, economic inequality (e.g. Newburn and Stanko 1995) and the potential thrill and enjoyment of violence (see Ferrell et al. 2008; Katz 1988). Learning theorists argue that children are more likely to use violence as adults when they have witnessed violence in families among parents, siblings and other relatives, and where this is reinforced in childhood as a coping response to stress and conflict. However, men are more prone than women to familial influence. This is perhaps because men are more affected by additional influences of the reinforcement of aggressive attitudes in a macho culture while being less affected by mediating factors, which are discussed below. It has been claimed that 'young people exposed to family violence in multiple forms were twice as likely to be violent as those from non-violent families' (Youth Justice Board 2009: 27). However, social learning theories do not claim that exposure necessarily produces violent individuals, but that there is a complex process of learning and reinforcement.

An elaborated social learning theory is associated particularly with Albert Bandura, who argued that rather than being inherited, aggression is learned through a process of 'behaviour modelling' according to three principles (Bandura 1977: 204). First, how aggressive patterns of behaviour are developed; second, what provokes people to behave aggressively; and third, what

determines whether they are going to continue to resort to an aggressive behaviour pattern on future occasions? Bandura is well known for the Bobo doll experiment where children would watch a video in which an adult role model would aggressively hit an inflatable doll, '... pummel it on the head with a mallet, hurl it down, sit on it and punch it on the nose repeatedly, kick it across the room, fling it in the air, and bombard it with balls' (Bandura 1977: 77). After watching the video, the children were placed in a room with attractive toys, which they were prohibited from touching and told they had been reserved for other children. Unsurprisingly perhaps, the children became angry and frustrated. Then they were led to another room where there were identical toys used in the Bobo video and Bandura found that 88 per cent of the children imitated the aggressive behaviour. Eight months later, 40 per cent of the same children displayed the violent behaviour observed in the Bobo doll experiment.<sup>2</sup> However, despite the influence enjoyed by his work, Bandura's results were inconclusive and were subject to a number of limitations, in particular that of observer effect – the children may have punched and kicked dolls because they thought that the study was a 'game', and that this was what Bandura wanted them to do, rather than because they had previously watched an adult punching and kicking the dolls. Moreover, since the dolls were designed to bounce back when knocked over, this 'violence' lacked realism.<sup>3</sup>

Further, learning takes place in a wider social context that creates a large number of mediating factors. Mihalic and Elliott (1997) suggest that the effects childhood exposure to violence will lessen where the child has the love and support of one parent, a supportive relationship as an adult, fewer stressful events in adult life, and self-reflective acknowledgement of childhood abuse and a determination not to repeat it. The latter is particularly important since there is also evidence that where violence is depicted and understood as justified, acceptable behaviour, it is more likely to be imitated in later life. For example, Messerschmidt (2008) reports the case of 17-year-old Kelly, who at the time of her interview was on probation for assaulting several boys at school.

When I asked Kelly whether it bothered her that her stepfather physically abused her mother, she responded that her mother 'had it comin', 'cause she always hassled my stepfather, you know. She got what she deserved.' Kelly defined her mother as a 'hassle' to her stepfather because she 'just got drunk all the time, give him shit, not do anything around the house, just lazy, you know.' In contrast, Kelly looked up to her stepfather because 'He taught me all kinds of things and he didn't take no shit from my mom. So that had a lot of influence on me, you know. My mom didn't really care about me, you know, but my stepfather did'. (Messerschmidt 2007)

These mediating conditions indicate that the genesis of violence is complex. In particular, the normative acceptance of violence as a legitimate response to

stressful situations means that violence is not simply a conditioned reflex (whether this is evolutionary or learned) but occurs within a language of normative justification. Further, the idea of a moral as well as a cognitive learning process links with the thesis that violence (especially extreme violence) is 'moralistic' behaviour born of righteous rage-shame.

## Hegemonic Masculinities

One of the problems with biological and evolutionary theories is their assumption that masculine (and presumably) feminine personality characteristics are given and fixed at least on the level of underlying predispositions. But as MacInnes (1998) says, 'masculinity does not exist as the property, character trait or aspect of identity of individuals' and no one is born knowing how to be 'male' or 'female'. Interactionist sociology has made the techniques by which social roles are enacted and presented in interaction contexts central to social analysis. Connell (1987 and 1995) and then Messerschmidt (1993 and 1997) developed a performative analysis to understanding gender dynamics, violence and masculinity. Their central claim is that one does not 'possess' gender but it is rather something *done* and enacted especially on and through the body. It is possible that through violence men may attempt to affirm a positive self-concept, enhance self-esteem and reclaim personal power, while women, on the other hand, may see violence as a failure of self-control. Drawing on psychoanalysis, they argue that the adult personality is under tension and develops from a range of possibilities in gender development. Justifications for violence are learned speech acts that prepare the ground for violence and deploy wider available narratives in society.

In these terms, excess male violence reflects patterns of socialization in which the male role involves greater readiness to use violence as a means of control and assertion of power. In Connell's and Messerschmidt's theory, 'hegemonic masculinity' is viewed as a crucial point of intersection of different sources and forms of power, stratification, desire and identity. 'Hegemonic masculinity' refers to cultural representations of dominant cultural ideals of masculinity that reinforce the subordination of women and marginal masculinities, such as gay and racialized minorities (Connell 1995: 77ff.).<sup>4</sup> Unlike socialization learning theories, Connell and Messerschmidt emphasize performance and choice rather than passively learnt behaviour. Violent behaviour is *chosen* while calling upon dominant discourses of masculinity for support and legitimation. Connell thus sees crime as a way of 'doing gender', which manifests differently in social situations structured by the influences of race, class and age. Violence is a resource that men can call upon, based on prevailing

idealized cultural conceptions involving the dominance of women, heterosexuality, the pursuit of sexual gratification and independence.

Patriarchy is not a static but a fluid process, embedded within culture, presentation of self and bodies, in which there are struggles for hegemony. 'In our daily interactions', says Messerschmidt (2008: 83), 'we continually make sex assignments and attributions with a complete lack of information about others' genitals. ... Our recognition of another's sex, then, is dependent upon the presentation of such visible bodily characteristics as hair, clothing, physical appearance, and other aspects of personal front (including behavior).' Thus, he continues, embodied gender is an interactive process involving both 'sex (body)/gender' presentation and a reading of that presentation by those who are party to the interaction. 'Hegemonic' masculinities are not necessarily statistically normal (they might be enacted only by a minority of men), but they are normative and represent the most honoured way of being a man while legitimating the subordination of women and non-hegemonic – notably effeminate, gay and some racialized – masculinities. Sports, especially at school, represent an 'endlessly renewed symbol of masculinity', and men who participate in sports that most exemplify the qualities of hegemonic masculinity are reconstructed as embodiments of the ideal (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).<sup>5</sup>

Criminal behaviour is seen here as a resource for 'masculine validation'. For example, white, middle-class boys can achieve masculinity through moderate academic success, sports, and preparation for a career. But schools are repressive and authoritarian, so these boys will deviate outside school through, for example, vandalism, drinking and petty theft. This is 'opposition masculinity' that demonstrates to peers dominance, control and aggressiveness. White, working-class boys, on the other hand, tend to demonstrate opposition masculinity outside school, but also in school, through fighting, vandalism, and so on. They do still have opportunities in the labour market, however, whereas disadvantaged (racial minority and lower-class) boys have even fewer conventional opportunities to accomplish gender (they perceive no future in schooling or good job prospects in the real world), and are more likely to use illegal means, such as robbery and crimes of violence, to demonstrate their masculinity. They are more likely, then, to engage in serious crime in and out of school. This somewhat generalized claim is similar to institutional anomie theory – men who are unable to 'achieve' cultural goals of normative masculinity validate masculine identity through non-legitimate means or perform non-hegemonic forms of subordinated masculinities (see Hood-Williams 2001).

How useful is the concept of hegemonic masculinity for explaining the predominance of men in violent crime figures? This approach has the advantage of avoiding the reification of 'masculine' and 'feminine' traits and emphasizing the active process of 'doing gender'. One limitation is that it does not explain



the meaning of crime perpetrated by women, while at the same time 'over-predicting' male criminality (see Miller 2002). There are problems with specifying *what* performance of masculinity is hegemonic, since these will vary by class, ethnicity and generation (Demetriou 2001). While a willingness to fight is seen as an attribute of the hegemonic masculine identity, this needs to be balanced by the point, following Elias, that physical fighting contradicts societal and individual aspirations to civility and is not therefore a hegemonic norm. Demetriou says the concept of hegemonic masculinity constructs a closed and binary opposition between hegemonic and non-hegemonic forms that appear to be alternatives. But these might actually be hybrids that are continually negotiated. In modern societies, he suggests that there has been a gradual ascendancy of 'feminized' masculinity, in which gay identity has become more visible within a commodity culture. So Sylvester Stallone, whom Connell sees as the epitome of hetero-sexual masculinity, subsequently acquired a new masquerade (in *Lock Up* and *Tango*) with homoerotic male bonding that may partially subvert traditional concepts and power relationships (Demetriou 2001). Further, cultures of masculinity vary by class, race and generation and many men in power do not embody idealized masculine attributes, while normative models provided by the mass media change over time – Leonardo DiCaprio rather than John Wayne might represent the aspirational face of contemporary masculinity. Masculinity involves multiple meanings among which men can transform. Similarly, MacInnes (1998: 57ff.) argues that we cannot explain violence just with reference to patriarchy because there are multiple situational factors involved in any violent confrontation.

Hall (2002) argues that hegemonic masculinity theory plays down political economy and class power in a theoretical 'evacuation of capitalism's global socio-economic process'. For Connell, legal violence and street violence combine with economic discrimination to enact domination which establishes 'destructive masculinity' as the hegemonic form from which most men receive a material reward, whether or not they enact the dominant form of masculinity. However, following Bourdieu, Hall argues that the rule of capital is more dependent on symbolic cultural capital than on overt violence (it competes with words and strategies rather than swords), and anyway vast fortunes are accumulated by very small numbers of men. Connell, he suggests, ignores the 'less exotic young men who populate streets, pubs and clubs of every western town and city' (2002) and it is implausible to depict a crude caricature of destructive masculinity as legitimating a 'natural order'. Rather, 'useless inter-male violence' represents little 'reward' for hegemonic masculinity, while violence, death and imprisonment do not indicate a successful application of dominance strategy. Similarly, Winlow (2014) describes men who are 'highly conversant with the rich symbolism of violence and attuned to the syncopated rhythms of its enactment' in post-working-class cultures. These, however, are



related to deep traumas of internal life and unconsciousness and represent a pathological rather than 'normal' masculinity.

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) respond to some of these and other critiques but present a reformulated concept of hegemonic masculinity that is explicitly ambiguous. They concede that they had developed too simple a model of the social relations surrounding hegemonic masculinity, especially in terms of its global dominance. They wish to retain the core idea of a plurality and hierarchy of masculinities, while the 'hegemonic' mode might not be the most common and is open to challenge and variation. They recognize that there is a hybridization of styles of masculinity and that heterosexual men might appropriate 'bits and pieces' of gay lifestyles but they do not regard these as hegemonic. At the same time, they reformulate their understanding of reciprocal relations and the influence of masculinities on each other. There are, for example, claims to power by regional hegemonic masculinities among local working-class, ethnically marginalized men which will include 'protest' masculinities.<sup>6</sup> These might include the participation of otherwise marginalized men in sports such as rugby that value domination, ruthlessness, competitiveness and commitment. They further suggest that the concept needs to develop a more sophisticated understanding of social embodiment, in which men's bodies are seen as both objects and agents of social practice. Finally, this should acknowledge that the dynamic of masculinities does not necessarily translate into satisfying experience.

The empirical support for the theory in relation to violence is mixed. Krienert (2003) undertook a study of 704 offenders in Nebraska and found that masculine traits alone failed to predict violent events. But men with very high 'masculine' traits and few acceptable outlets to assert masculinity (such as education, marital status, children, employment and income) *were* more likely to have been involved in violent incidents. Similarly, Dutton and Corvo (2006) claim that there is no evidence that men who perpetrate acts of violence have 'traditional' or stereotypical 'sex role beliefs', but that the roots of violence lie much deeper in personality formation. Age is a critical variable in offending, as noted above, and a willingness to fight in response to a perceived slight might be an aspect of performative masculinity for some young men (and women). But as Hall argues, this is not necessarily institutionally hegemonic nor is it the norm for mature adulthood. Day et al. (2003) found in interviews with men about fears in public spaces that despite the way 'masculinism condones confrontation in public space, the young men in this study rejected confrontation as a means to establish masculinity' and did not regard this as part of being 'mature'. Phillips (2003) found a similar pattern among girls who had been violent in their teens, but who subsequently regarded this as wild and immature behaviour. So even in its reformulated version, the theory is indeterminate and cannot show why some men are sometimes violent and (most) others are not.

Like many theories of crime, it over-predicts the incidence of offending. Nonetheless, the emphasis on performativity and 'doing gender' is a significant advance on more deterministic theories. The next section examines a different possibility – that violence is better addressed through an understanding of the intersection of social exclusion and marginalized masculinities.

### Crisis of masculinity?

Under the heading of a 'crisis in masculinity' there has been attention over the past decade to problems of men's health, boys' educational attainment and the unsettling of traditional masculine expectations. MacInnes (1998) argues that men's material privileges are under scrutiny and attack, but this combines with deindustrialization, long-term unemployment and social exclusion in some places. The movement of manufacturing overseas has forced a re-evaluation of muscular work as a validation of masculinity and the idea of the traditional macho man in control of his life creates false expectations. But this has prompted, as Bairner suggests, a muscular masculinity of 'toughing it out' and taking refuge in the cultivation of hyper-masculine bodies and men and adolescents 'with dead-end lives' finding allure and meaning in guns, violence and the 'gangsta' lifestyle (Bairner 1999).

With the post-Fordist restructuring of work, dominant forms of masculinity are thrown into crisis. Segal (1990) noted that men's desire for dominance at work is connected with the preservation of masculine identity, which is diminished by unemployment, and therefore, one might add, of potential shame. Similarly, Hatty (2000: 6) comments, 'Violence is the prerogative of the youthful male, especially when confronted by the contradictions and paradoxes of thwarted desire and personal and social disempowerment'. The implication of this line of argument is that violence or youth subcultures of violence might be part of a response to perceived crisis rather than an expression of a dominant masculinity. Hatty's account suggests that unemployment and the decline of traditional working-class male occupations, combined with increasing women's equality, provokes a 'crisis of masculinity'. Whereas the fathers and grandfathers of today's young men spent their lives in male spaces of manual work and associated leisure activities, young working-class men are often unemployed and spend time at home or on the street. However, home is still a female space, whereas the street offers opportunities for alternative experiences of dominance and risk-taking (joyriding, theft, burglary, competition) and 'business' (drugs and organized crime). At the same time, youth cultures emerge that emphasize and exaggerate features of traditional white working-class masculine appearance and behaviour. Nayak (1999) argues that skinhead culture, for

example, represents a violent consolidation of masculinity, sexuality and white ethnicity in working-class culture. Similarly, Hebdige (1987) regarded skin-heads as expressing a nostalgic exaggeration of white working-class characteristics and a 'mime of awkward masculinity' that was a macho, working-class, white (often racist) 'geometry of menace'. The uniform – boots, braces and cropped hair – represented a caricature of the traditional dress mode of a working man.

Bourgois's (2003) ethnography of Puerto Rican migrants to the USA exemplifies this argument. Street-level drug dealers in East Harlem had found that the work they had migrated to do was disappearing, but they would not take work in the service sector, which was regarded as 'women's work'. However, their wives and girlfriends did take this work and gained more financial independence than they had previously had, thereby threatening the basis of male dominance in the household. The men often took refuge in the drug economy, where there were very violent norms of gang rape, sexual conquest, abandonment of families and 'real manhood' based on devotion to group membership. Thus, the crisis of masculinity is more acute at lower socioeconomic locations where violence is a way of confirming status in a street culture.

If resources for the performance of hegemonic masculinities are available in the dominant culture, then film media is one source from which cultures of masculinity might be derived, but which might also reflect changing moods of perception of masculinity and violence. In post-Second World War war films and westerns, masculine heroes showed little emotional sensitivity and were prone to impulsivity and anger. War was 'what good men do' and its portrayal was unproblematic, especially since in the war zone sexual differentiation was reaffirmed. During the 1950s, though, there were films that conveyed the internal emotional violence of characters, such as *In A Lonely Place* (1950) and *Vertigo* (1958), that in the 1960s developed into a genre that was subversive of traditional gender categories, exemplified by Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) where, as Slocum (2005: 18–19) notes, a tale of adultery and promise of heterosexual desire turns into obsessive and homicidal psychosis. Yet the fact that the killer had assumed his dead mother's persona and dress suggested that the violence did not come from traditional masculinity, and in a succession of films (*Baby Jane* 1962, *Repulsion* 1965 and *Rosemary's Baby* 1968) terror was domesticated but psychotic (Schatz 2004: 4–5). Later, Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976) and *Raging Bull* (1980) possibly 'encouraged viewers to reflect on the exploitation of violence for the purposes of entertainment' (Carter and Weaver 2003: 61).

In the 1980s the action genre reflected a mood of 'back to basics' and the legitimacy of masculine power (Carter and Weaver 2003: 62), although with an edge that perhaps also acknowledges departure from lived experiences. In the 'hard body' films, such as the *Rambo* series and *Die Hard* (1988), violence and single-handed rescue fantasy is unproblematic and unchallenging but also

exaggerated, suggesting uncertainty about real-life masculine roles. Cinematic representations of combat – robotic masculinity of *Robocop* (1987) and *Judge Dredd* (1995) – concealed a growing crisis in masculinity, in which an alienated individual experiences potency through experiencing and inflicting pain – an idea that becomes thematic in films around this time. For example, in *Falling Down* (1993), a middle-class man, ‘D-Fens’ (Michael Douglas), divorced and unemployed, unable to visit his children, engages in an escalating spree of violence that ends with his own demise. Playing to the theme of compromised masculinity, D-Fens is successfully pursued by Detective Prendergast of the LAPD (Robert DuVall), who took a ‘safe’ desk job some years ago to appease his ‘bossy’ wife. The denouement, in which D-Fens is shot while carrying only a toy gun, compounds the sense of masculine aggression as impotent rage. David Fincher’s *Fight Club* (1999) offers a more complex exploration of the crisis of masculinity and violence. Though sometimes regarded as an overtly masculine film, the powerful white masculinity of the 1980s and hard body films of the 1990s is absent. It features Jack (the narrator) and Tyler Durden, his destructive alter ego, whom we find first in a support group for men recovering from testicular cancer (‘remaining men together’) where, following chemotherapy, one character, Bob, has lost his testicles and grown breasts (‘bitch tits’), symbolizing both masculinity’s demise and the hatred it engendered. Indeed, the threat of castration recurs throughout the film ‘like a hysterical leitmotif’ (Windrum 2004: 308). Jack’s addiction to self-help groups has replaced his addiction to consumerism (again, ‘feminized’ activity), which is then replaced by a search for authentic masculinity in the self-inflicted violence of the fight club. But the lead woman character, Marla Singer (Helen Bonham-Carter), is dominant in the unfolding plot and enables Jack to renounce violence. However, when the film looks as though it has reverted to a familiar hero-rescue fantasy, Jack is unable to prevent the terrorists of Project Mayhem from blowing up large commercial buildings, their falling symbolizing the failure of the masculine corporate world (Saw 2002). By the 2000s social anxiety around violence combined with the appearance of a range of cultural modes of masculinity – including ‘alpha male, new age guy, hairy man and new lad’ (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 840). *The Wrestler* (Darren Aronofsky and Robert Siegel, 2009) again portrays hard body masculinity as compromised and self-destructive. An aging wrestler, Randy ‘The Ram’ Robinson (Mickey Rourke) is past his prime but keen to rejoin the hyper-male pro-wrestling circuit, outside of which he is just ‘an old broken-down piece of meat’. In keeping with the genre though, The Ram fails both on the circuit and in his quest to repair his relationship with his estranged daughter and the lack of redemption, as in *Fight Club* and *Falling Down*, depicts a failed ‘hegemonic’ masculinity.

These examples suggest that multiple cultural representations of masculinity and femininity are available, and these can be deployed in various ways – but

one contemporary theme is that violence may be an outcome of a perceived *failure* to perform traditional masculine roles rather than necessarily an emanation of power. These kinds of filmic representations resonate with analysts who suggest that violence is a manifestation of (perceived) powerlessness rather than of power.

However, despite the *trope* of subverted masculinity, there may not be a 'crisis of masculinity' as such, but rather a modification in the modalities and cultures of social power and gender. Hall (2002) concludes that there is not so much a 'crisis of masculinity' as a crisis of the traditional capitalist order where the boundary between criminality and legality is blurred, where hyper-masculinity is deeply embedded and pointless hostility rages on the margins of neo-capitalism. The injuries of class – shaming and self-doubt – set the scene for contests for dignity. A recurrent theme in this book is that violence is largely a response to situations of exclusion, marginalization and inequality, in which traditional modes of masculine identity might well be deployed to provide a framework of justification for confrontational behaviour.

### Debate over 'girl gangs'<sup>7</sup>

It was noted above that some suggest women's violent offending might be increasing. It is further suggested that girls today face struggles in maintaining a sense of self while confronting more complex and contradictory sets of expectations as to appropriate behaviour. The effects of these contradictions may be intensified by the greater exposure of young women to stressful economic circumstances following recent changes in community social organization and family structure, while any increased appearance in the crime figures could be an artefact of reduced permissiveness of law enforcement agencies (Steffensmeier et al. 2005). This issue has been raised, too, in the debate over women's violence (specifically 'girl gangs') in relation to hegemonic masculinities. Miller (2002) argues that there is value in a situated action approach to explaining the gendered nature of crime, which challenges the notion that there are 'natural differences' between male and female behaviour. However, she argues that women's participation in crime then remains unexplained except as an anomaly. For Messerschmidt, Miller says, the street gang is an ideal setting for 'doing gender', and girl gangs actively participate in the construction of gender relations and orchestrate forms of heterosexuality – they 'do difference differently' via a form of 'bad girl femininity'. So when women are involved in violent gangs they still enact 'femininity'. However, Miller sees this approach as flawed and risks tautology since anything women do 'accomplishes femininity', which collapses gender back into biological sex. Rather, she argues, people have the ability to draw from a wide range of schemas (conventions, habits of speech, gestures, etc.) in ways

that include 'role experimentation'. Among mixed gender gangs she finds that some girls do 'gender crossing' and construct a masculine identity in which gender markings are minimized – 'just like a dude in a girl's body' (2002). There are greater rewards for women to 'cross' into culturally defined masculine terrain – creating distance from a denigrated sexual identity and getting status as a 'true' gang member. However, in all-female gangs Miller found more evidence of Messerschmidt's 'bad girl femininity' in that members did not situate themselves as 'one of the guys', but dressed in ways that more distinctively highlighted sexuality and used sexuality for gang purposes. This might include carrying drugs or guns while playing on police officers' lack of suspicion of girls and using gender stereotypes to lure men off guard by feigning sexual interest as a prelude for performing a robbery. Miller concludes, then, that it is not sufficient to examine women's crime as a means of accomplishing femininity since cultural gender is fluid and people strategically use prevailing norms to accomplish particular tasks.

In reply, Messerschmidt (2002) argues that Miller has misread his thesis, which is that 'bad girl femininity' constructs gender in different situations of the gang setting, showing the 'unique fluidity of gender'. However, he disagrees with Miller since this does not involve embracing a masculine identity, but rather girl gangs maintain bodily empowerment (e.g. through violence) combined with displays of femininity. Where girls do engage in behaviour that is culturally masculine, this does not always have the same meaning as for men. He cites third-wave feminist literature to the effect that toughness and femininity are not mutually exclusive and there is a 'lived messiness' through which people engage with difference. Girl fighting, for example, might be a strategy for preserving or earning position as a girlfriend of a male member or to deter male members from 'messing' with them. In this a largely sympathetic exchange, and Miller and Messerschmidt agree that it is necessary to move towards a more disaggregated concept of agency as a means of examining not just normative gendered action but gender as a taken-for-granted background.

A few comments here are in order. First, while the emphasis on fluidity, agency and hybridity might seem to capture a complex reality that evades simple theoretical constructs, it is not clear what remains of a theory when it is stretched to encompass all possibilities. Second, the emphasis on 'agency' in this exchange is problematic – as though the women (and men) in violent street locations are simply making lifestyle choices and playing with gender categories in an ironic postmodern way. Neither Miller nor Messerschmidt directly address the likelihood that many women gang members have escaped abusive families and use drugs as sedation to block out traumatic experiences that may go back to early childhood. Interviewed by Angela Neustatter (2008), Susan Batchelor says that 'powerlessness defines the experiences of most young women who turn violent. ... They believe they have no value except for their sexuality.' Miller and Messerschmidt further avoid the issues of violence and



sexual exploitation against women by male gang members, which can be followed by self-harming, and street fights, often with vulnerable people, such as recent migrants (Neusattter 2008). Neustatter further reports comments from women gang members such as 'The boys would treat us as their bitches, phone whoever they felt like fucking' and 'order them to come over' but 'by doing that [violence] I got what felt like respect' (Neusattter 2008).

Batchelor (2009), however, suggests moving away from the dichotomy between girl gangs as either sexually exploited or liberated 'postfeminist criminals'. Most gangs, she says, are not involved in serious criminal activity, though many have had difficult family backgrounds and experiences of bereavement and loss, bullying and neglect. Even so, Phillips (2003) points out that 'while girls appear to be less involved as victims and perpetrators of aggression and violence, their involvement in physically aggressive behaviour seems to be rather more common than previous research would suggest'. But unlike the US literature reflected in the Messerschmidt/Miller exchange, in the UK most young women do not 'join' the group and there is no evidence, for example, of initiation rites. Indeed, Batchelor (2001) did not find evidence of the existence of girl gangs – not one of the 800 teenage girls interviewed in their research claimed to be in a girl gang nor did they know anyone else who was a member. They are more likely to pursue thrills, engage in fights and cause more trouble than male members as a form of fun risk-seeking, 'not [as] liberated young women but young women who are severely constrained by both their material circumstances and attendant ideologies of working class femininity' (Batchelor 2009). At the same time, there is evidence of social learning in that young women learn by example that violence is poised to erupt at any moment and that respect and reputation are founded on physical force. In this context, their violence is neither hysterical nor irrational, but rather 'a reasoned response to intimidated or actual harms' (Batchelor 2005). Further, the media interest in 'girl gangs' is driven in part by its very impact on gendered stereotypes since it challenges the way 'nice girls' behave in contrast to the presumed naturalness of men's aggression (Batchelor 2001).

## Sport, masculinities and the civilizing process

Sports exemplify traditional gendered performance and while sport 'is a domain of contested national, class and racial relations ... gender is its central organizing principle' (Bairner 1999). Such is the significance of sport to mapping gender identity that until just prior to the 2000 Olympics in Sydney women international contestants had to submit to chromosomal 'gender verification' tests. But sport also occupied an important place in Elias's civilizational



theory as being indicative of a shift in the balance between external and self-constraint (Dunning 1999: 62). Sports exemplify the civilizing process – Ancient Greece was based on an ethos of warrior nobility, with high levels of violence reflecting the importance of war in everyday life. In Medieval Europe, tournaments became mock displays of combat, although folk games in villages tolerated forms of violence that are now prohibited and often resulted in extensive injuries. From the mid-nineteenth century, associations such as the Rugby Football Union and the Football Association defined rules and regulated contact, kicking, handling and throwing and so on, while also generating community and identity among supporters. Thus, sport became less a training for war and more an end in itself – often simulating violence, as in wrestling, rather than doing the real thing. However, contemporary sport also poses challenges to the civilizing thesis. If sport is a quest for excitement that is regulated to prevent actual violence, how does the theory account for on-pitch violence between players and spectator violence, especially ‘football hooliganism’? Further, Hargreaves (1992) argued that Elias’s theory failed to acknowledge the dynamics of gender and masculinity in sport and leisure, marginalized women in sport and thereby perpetuated the view that sport is more suited to men than women. These issues will now be examined.

Masculinities have become significant in explanations of violence in sport. It was noted above that in contact sports (such as American football, baseball, soccer, ice hockey, rugby, boxing and martial arts) actions are permissible that in a different context might be considered ‘violent’. It is non-legitimate violence that we are concerned with here that ‘causes harm, occurs outside of the rules of the sport, and is unrelated to the competitive objectives of the sport’ (Terry and Jackson 1985). King (2001) describes the conventional paradigm that violence arises as a result of an interactional dynamic of heightened confrontation and masculine self-understandings. The performance of aggressive masculinity is closely bound up with toughness and an ability to withstand pain. In their study of US collegiate rugby players, Muir and Seitz (2004) argue that the self-image of the male rugby player is dependent on meeting peer expectations. So ‘the more crude his behaviour with regard to women or homosexuals the greater will be peer esteem’ while hesitation to adhere to the group’s norms will likely be met with ostracism. Further, suffering and the endurance of excessive pain reinforce heterosexual masculinity and bravado – so they found that ‘non-injured players would look at a bleeding teammate or opponent and remark, “He’s just having his period”’ (2004). Machismo, misogyny and homophobia were core to subcultural identities, but also underpinned ‘deviance’ on and off the field. Bairner (1999) concludes his study of soccer in Northern Ireland by saying that ‘far from playing a role as aggression-displacer, sport ... and especially sport spectatorship, feeds hegemonic masculinity, which in turn can encourage violence by men at large’.

Attempting to counter the criticism that Elias's theory ignores gender issues, Dunning (1999: 219–39) argues that the thesis explores sport and gender by providing an explanation of the significance of sport in traditional male identities, the empowerment of women who challenge this and develop a new 'female habitus', along with the reactions of men who thereby feel threatened. It is not immediately clear how this is a specifically 'figurational' analysis. However, he continues that in a 'pacified society', sport is an enclave for the legitimate expression of masculine aggression and a 'male habitus' (1999: 234) and one of the few occasions for men to be 'heroes' (1999: 219) in a male-dominated context (1999: 223). This theme is evident in much of the literature here, although it does not necessarily support the civilizational thesis. Kreager (2007) writes of sport as a hyper-masculine culture in which violence is an acceptable means of developing valued male identities. He further argues that this is not evidence of a lack of self-control but rather stems from learned normative definitions that are favourable towards violence. On-pitch confrontations play to audiences and might encourage violence against opposing supporters. In the USA, football players are at the centre of their school's peer culture, so their behaviour is not explained by weak social bonds but might rather involve over-conformity to competitive norms that results in anti-social behaviour. He argues that in heavy contact sports there are 'endlessly renewed symbols of masculinity' that confirm a sense of superiority relative to women and other masculinities, such as non-sporting and therefore 'effeminate' 'puisies' and 'fags'. These definitions of masculinity, Kreager suggests, derive from childhood relationships with male role models. There is a similar analysis of Australian rugby as positively sanctioning violence within a context of performed masculinity as the 'flag carrier' of masculinity in Australian society (Hutchins and Mikosza 1998). The segregation of men into a homosocial environment and locker-room culture limits social contact with women and fosters an 'oppositional masculinity' that sustains traditional gender stereotypes, although when the same men participate in gender-integrated sports they 'positively reformulate their attitudes toward women' (Anderson 2008).

The other issue here is spectator hooliganism. Dunning (1999: 64) argues that there is a 'civilizational downswing' – a de-civilizing process (of uncertain duration) linked to the growing commercialization and competitiveness of sports – that has given rise to spectator violence, especially around UK soccer matches. These, for Dunning, are expressions of male aggressiveness among the 'rougier' sections of the working class, where the civilizing process is less embedded, although this can also be viewed in Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) terms as seeking masculine validation where other outlets have been blocked. Dunning uses the theory of 'segmental bonding' to depict a process in which young men have not been incorporated into pacified social spaces but rather experience high deprivation, poor education, are unskilled or unemployed,

raised with low adult supervision and involved in street corner gangs (Dunning 1999; Mennell 1992: 153). In this context, the formation of gangs and the pleasure of the fight are associated too with a process of informalization and enjoyment of the carnival of the game – which is also apparent in non-violent cultural manifestations such as face paints and ‘soccer casual lifestyle’. However, the football match is also a space for a ‘moral holiday’, permitting displays of excitement, pleasurable emotional arousal, hard masculinity, territorial identifications, individual and collective reputation management and solidarity (Spaaij 2008). These events are about controlling and occupying public space in which rude and obnoxious behaviour is aimed at shocking bystanders and mostly attacking the weak, while backing away from evenly matched confrontations where there is a serious risk of injury. A further dimension of supporter violence might be to transcend the subordinate role of ‘fans’ and achieve equality with the players – ‘take the manor’ to emancipate themselves from the subservient role of supporters (Collins 2008: 331).

Collins (2008) focuses on the situational factors in spectator violence. He argues that sports violence cannot be about ‘masculinity’ *per se*, since fights are unheard of among weightlifters and male gymnasts, who nonetheless display hard body masculinity. For Collins, struggle for dominance is crucial, and some large-scale disturbances are governed by rhythms of dramatic tension but are also deliberately contrived for the sake of having a good time. These do not depend on the events in the game but rather confrontation is sought through pursuit of emotional thrills. The participants in this violence are not necessarily the poorest but, in common with other forms of mobilization, they are led by those who have the necessary resources, including the financial means to attend matches. Organized violence involves learning techniques such as the capacity to manoeuvre through the streets and public areas while managing performance so as not to alert the police before the action is due to ‘kick off’. Supporters know that the police want to move them on and probably will not intervene in low-level fights and vandalism. King (2001) similarly sees violence as a resource deployed by fans in the maintenance of the gang identity. Most confrontations are quick and indecisive, but the discursive re-creation of the fight is lengthy and enters the memory of the gang – the telling of the account of a fight contains emotional rhythm that is important for engendering group solidarity, but it has to be told well and with the right resonance. While actual violence will often involve weaker victims, such as lone rival supporters, to admit to attacking unequals is to risk unmanning oneself in the eyes of the gang. Thus, the social group provides a framework in which memory and the re-telling of a narrative of violence is given meaning and through which groups must periodically gather together to re-affirm their collective memory.

Violence in sports, then, is crucially bound up with shifting forms of hegemonic masculinity and its intersections with age and class. The spaces of ‘decivilization’,

moral holidays, and public entrainment generally involve the deployment of traditional hard masculinity and the exclusion of women in complex contexts where traditional masculinities are challenged in everyday life.

## Trafficking and global systems of patriarchy

The discussion of the NTE in the last chapter showed how the performance of masculinity and violence were connected to the neoliberal restructuring of urban space and commercial leisure activities. The global phenomenon of trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation represent further aspects of these processes, though their extent is disputed. Trafficking, unlike smuggling in the limited sense of illegal movement of goods and people across borders, involves continuing dominance over the victim after their arrival and involves the use of force, fraud or coercion of those recruited for the purpose of exploitation (Jac-Kucharski 2012). Because of the global and illegal nature of the trade it is difficult to get reliable figures, but Walby et al. (2016: 57–92) provide a comprehensive account of relevant measurement methodologies. The US State Department estimates that one million children work illegally as domestic servants in South America and are subject to physical and sexual abuse and 20 per cent of the workforce has been trafficked (Seelke 2011). The International Labour Organization estimates that there are 20.9 million victims of trafficking of which 22 per cent are in commercial sexual exploitation (Richmond 2015). Trafficking is embedded within the structures of the global economy and Kevin Bales (2012) calls this the ‘new slavery’, which is also ‘neoliberal slavery in that it’s mode of operation has adapted to new global economies, means of communication and travel. There is’, he says (2005: 88), ‘a glut of potential slaves’ and obeying the rule of supply and demand the price of slaves has fallen perceptibly. ‘Slaves are now less expensive than at any point in recorded history.’ His account of the ‘new slavery’ suggests in that by contrast with classical slavery, the new traffickers avoid the costs of ‘ownership’ and ‘asset management’ – such as feeding and providing shelter. The trafficked person is a consumable item to be disposed of once they are no longer of use (2012: 30). Of girls sold into sexual exploitation in Thailand he says, ‘enslaved girls are at the lowest end of the market’, forced into sex work for as long as they are able by debt bondage, exorbitant interest and violence (2012:30). The conditions for global trafficking are:

- High demand for low cost domestic servants, agricultural labour, sex workers and factory labour.
- Disasters and socioeconomic crises creating large pools of dispossessed people.

- Patriarchal structures in which the lives of women are of little value.
- Immigration controls that limit legal migration.
- Corruption and lack of government interest in the phenomenon; the criminal trafficking networks themselves (Seelke 2011).

Sex trafficking as a sub-set of trafficking in general is a form of gender violence. It is at the intersection of global structural violence and everyday violence based on multiple forms of vulnerability. 'Trafficking for sexual exploitation is a particularly gendered, severe and sustained form of violence against women... with physical ... reproductive ..., mental health impacts ... and secondary victimisation harms ..., often different and more severe than those after domestic violence' (Walby et al. 2016: 34). Approximately 75 per cent of known traffickers are male and grooming techniques are likely to be similar when applied to both adult women and children (Walby et al. 2016: 179). Structures of patriarchy, power and violence are embedded within global relations with which they interact. 'Organized criminality, is to a considerable degree, a man's world' but women, especially with a background in prostitution, are used as recruiters (Korsell et al. 2011). Patrilocal marriage practices increase restrictions on escape from situations with limited choices and improve the prospects for traffickers (Shah 2003). In the family women are vulnerable to infanticide, genital mutilation, child marriage ... dowry-related violence, violence, battering and sexual abuse (Bengiano et al. 2010). These are hugely profitable activities and victims are kept from public view in brothels, homes and businesses.

What links men, women and children trafficked for labour exploitation and women and minors trafficked into sexwork is vulnerability arising from precarity in the global economy. It is suggested that trafficked girls and women are taken from the pools of the most vulnerable in the global economy and once trafficked across borders their illegal status is used as a tool of exploitation (Jones et al. 2007). Violence is core to this process and rape by traffickers is used to 'initiate a cycle of abuse and degradation' (UNODC 2011). Indeed, there are economic and political structures that create the conditions for victimization. 'Women and girls are not often trafficked for sexual exploitation from areas fulfilling structural conditions of equality and justice; policy and research consistently recognises that trafficking thrives in areas of high poverty, violence against women' (Walby et al. 2016: 42).

However, the view of victims as passive is questioned and there may be an interplay of choice and coercion, illustrating complex relationships between perpetrators and victims of violence. Shah (2003) says that it is difficult to draw a line between choice and coercion and women are drawn into trafficking by promises of work, participation in beauty contests, modelling, vacations, marriage and 'exotic' sex work. Kleemans (2011) argues that the victim-oriented

perspective simplifies too much the complex interactions between offenders and victims. As with victims of domestic violence (see next chapter), victims of trafficking get trapped into relationships and situations both in sexual exploitation and as low-paid seasonal workers (Korsell et al. 2011). Women usually cannot finance their own travel and are not necessarily unwitting victims but rather there are complex relations between slaves, pimps and clients. Berman (2010) argues that women's 'reasons for acceding to smugglers/traffickers' assistance are economically rational', so 'rather than the result of bad luck or poor choice, ... they warrant more examination' rather than invoking fears of foreigners, immigrants, criminals, terrorists and globalization. Women drawn into trafficking might have immigration problems, past use of alcohol and drugs, a prior criminal record, involvement in prostitution, which might make them reluctant to seek help (Richmond 2015). Robert Weitzer (2007) argues that the response of the US and international agencies to sex trafficking is a moral panic based on unverified claims and an ideological alliance of the far-right and some feminist activists. Similarly, Erin Sanders-McDonagh argues that it is not clear that trafficking is a serious problem and these discourses fail to address many of the pressing issues, especially labour rights and working conditions, affecting sex workers that arise because sex work operates on the fringes of society and is often illegal (2017: 45). The stigmatization of sex workers as 'low-others' combined with the emphasis of agencies on trafficking fuels calls for its containment, thereby making it more invisible and the women more vulnerable and open to exploitation (2017: 132).

That stigmatization and marginalization of sex workers increases risk is also relevant to women's possibilities for exit. Weitzer (2007) says that 'It would be mistaken to assume that coercion and deception are myths or that facilitators are necessarily benign agents even when they employ no force or fraud.' Some women do not understand the terms of the contract, have little prior knowledge of the specific working conditions or risks, and some facilitators alter the terms of the agreement after transit. Migration for sex work is therefore a complex and varied process with multiple migration trajectories. Indeed, Richmond (2015) notes that even if someone willingly begins work, and later wants to withdraw but is then forced to remain and work against their will, their service becomes involuntary.

Structures of gender inequality combined with the generation of markets for sex work in the NTE intersect with the pursuit of profit in the global economy and trafficking has some of the highest profit margins and lowest risk of any illegal activity. Different modes of power and patriarchy generate different relationships between traffickers, suppliers and clients which are different modes of power and patriarchy. Perhaps the most-often imagined sex trafficking model is 'pimp-directed', where the pimp directs the victim's actions and takes all the earnings. But Richmond (2015) points out that with 'family-directed'



sex trafficking, instead of a pimp, it could be a victim's family member such as a mother, aunt or male, where 'the trafficker exploits the very people she is supposed to protect'. There are also 'establishment-based' sex trafficking operations, based around the brothel, but also massage parlours, nail salons, bars, restaurants, and other businesses operate as fronts for the commercial sexual activity that goes on. Then there are 'gang-based' models where women live in fear of the power and organization of the gang, and are victims of rape, threats, drugs, alcohol, bolstered by the gang's reputation (Richmond 2015). There is some cross-over with the drugs trade but gang members recognize that while drugs could only be sold once, women could repeatedly be sold (Richmond 2015).

Women and girl victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation experience sexual brutality and increased HIV exposure from the first experience of being prostituted and regularly within the first month of being sex trafficked. The sexual violence may be hyper-violent, causing vaginal injuries and significant blood loss, which in turn leads to high rates of sexually transmitted infections and greater risk of contracting HIV (Walby 2016; Bales 2012). Specifically, gendered harms also include spontaneous or multiple pregnancies and unsafe (illegal) abortions which lead to long-term chronic vaginal and pelvic pain and infertility (Walby 2016: 35). Like other forms of violence against women, the harms of trafficking for sexual exploitation are exacerbated when women attempt to exit (2016: 35). 'Organised crime groups involved in trafficking have adapted easily to new technologies that reduce risks to them (of detection and prosecution) whilst still retaining high profitability' (Walby 2016: 174).

## Conclusions

There is a cultural and political association between masculinity and violence. The theory of hegemonic masculinities indicates how gender is performative but highly structured by class, social position and age. There is not *a* hegemonic masculinity, but rather multiple articulations of oppositional and embodied masculinities. These have been crucially influenced by global economic restructuring and its interaction with traditional cultures of work and masculinity. These create conditions for pathways into violent offending that will be facilitated by the range of alternative avenues to status and success in local illicit markets and cultures, along with opportunities for thrill-seeking behaviour. In this context, 'girl gangs' can perform both gender-conformist and transgressive behaviour, although one should not see this just in terms of 'playing with style', but also as expressions of situations of deprivation and exclusion. While the civilizational thesis is non-linear and can therefore account for most outcomes – so