

Migrant Men

Critical Studies of Masculinities and the
Migration Experience

**Edited by Mike Donaldson,
Raymond Hibbins,
Richard Howson and Bob Pease**

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Foreword

That globalization is gendered has become such an axiomatic truism in the social sciences that it is rarely interrogated. Yet the gendered dynamics of globalization usually focus on the experience of women—displaced, trafficked, employed—and the resulting transformation of domestic relationships that stem from the disruption of traditional family forms.

But it's equally important to examine the ways that globalization changes masculinities. Globalization shifts the social arrangements between men and women, between husbands and wives, between parents and children, between state and citizen. Particularly, globalization has widened the rifts between the rich (class, country, region) and poor, resulting in massive wealth transfer upwards. Every industrial country has witnessed an increased divide between rich and poor, just as the world economy as a whole has witnessed a widening chasm between rich and poor nations.

Globalization includes the gradual proletarianization of local peasantries, as market criteria replace subsistence and survival. Local small craft producers, small farmers, and independent peasants traditionally stake their definitions of masculinity in ownership of land and economic autonomy in their work; these are increasingly transferred upwards in the class hierarchy and outwards to transnational corporations. Proletarianization also leads to massive labor migrations—typically migrations of male workers—who leave their homes and populate migrant enclaves, squatter camps, labour camps. Most migrants are men.

The essays in this book mark the first attempt by social scientists to delineate this gendered migration. Whether the discussions are more thematic and theoretical (as in Bob Pease's examination of the relationship between public and domestic patriarchies) or particular (as in Ray Hibbins' and Richard Pringle and Paul Whitinui's ethnographic portraits of Chinese and Māori men in Australia), the essays together provide the first country-specific collage of different migrant masculinities that are patched together in a mosaic of identities.

Most social science is like abstract painting: big patterns, large structures, giant swatches of colour outline the grand patterns of interaction

and inequality. The essays in *Migrant Men* are more pointillist—tidy, contrapuntal, precise. Only from afar, and taken together, can the eye put the pieces together and engage the larger pattern. Reading this book, we both get both closer to the action and feel the larger shapes and patterns shifting before our eyes.

Michael Kimmel
New York

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1 Men and Masculinities on the Move

Raymond Hibbins and Bob Pease

INTRODUCTION

We live in turbulent times, in which socio-cultural and political changes involving technology, terrorism, violence, refugees, natural disaster, the consequences of 'failed' states death by disease, and have become part of what we live with every day. These phenomena transform cultures and nations, as do transnationalism and globalisation. Such transformations have implications for communication, citizenship, national affiliations, immigration policies, health regulations, safety and security, crime, state borders and identity crises. Together with socio-demographic changes, these transformations have economic, political and diplomatic, religious, sporting and other cultural implications. The gendered nature of these massive transformations is only now being addressed. This has been obvious in research on the exploitation of female labour, international sporting labour and the corruption surrounding vulnerable groups fleeing terrorism and intranational conflicts and violence involving different ethnic groups. As Connell (1995: 82–83) has argued, in the world gender order involving most of these movements, there is a 'patriarchal dividend' for men collectively arising from higher incomes, higher labour force participation, unequal property ownership and greater access to institutional power. Men are privileged sexually and culturally. What influence have these global phenomena had on Australia's gender regime and more particularly on those men and women who have migrated to Australia either by force or of their own volition? This raises questions about the influence of migration on identification and ethnic, gender and sexual identity; the role of the diaspora in identity formation; the influence of dominant local groups and local hegemonic masculinity on male gender identities; and the influence of transnationalism and global movement on identities.

To examine these issues, we adopt a social constructionist approach to gender. Masculinity is socially constructed within specific historical and cultural contexts of gender relations. Such an approach emphasises not only the variation of masculinities between different cultures and within different historical moments, it also emphasises gender differences arising from

race, class, ethnicity, age, sexuality, region of the country within particular cultures (Kimmel 2000). We are now entering a new stage in masculinity studies in which varieties among men are seen as central to the understanding of men's lives.

Connell (2000) illustrates how the diversity of masculinities is marked by hierarchy and exclusion. This hierarchy of masculinities means that men do not benefit equally from the 'patriarchal dividend'. Dominant forms of masculinity thus need to be understood in relation to masculinities that are marginalised by class, race and sexuality. Furthermore, to understand masculinities more broadly, we must make sense of the impact of class, race and sexuality hierarchies on men's lives. Masculinity is thus something that has to be accomplished in specific social contexts (Messerschmidt 1993). While men's subjectivities are socially constructed, however, they are also open to challenge and change. Men are thus involved in a process of continually constructing themselves. This book is concerned with how this process of challenge and change occurs for migrant men, most of whom are subordinated and marginalised within the hierarchies of localised male dominance. We note that this may not be so for those professional and business men who spend most of their time in the diaspora with much the same power and status they had in their home countries.

RACE, ETHNICITY AND THE (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY IN AUSTRALIA

The writings of black men in North America emphasise the role of racism in the development of masculinity. It is argued that due to their exclusion from satisfying paid work, most black men do not expect to attain the benefits of traditional white masculinity. As prevailing definitions of masculinity imply power, control and authority, these attributes are seen as being denied to most black men (Staples 1986).

Similar debates about the experiences of marginalised non-English-speaking-background men have occurred in Australia. Luke (1997), for example, has written about the struggles that Asian men face in Australia in endeavouring to construct masculine identities without the defining characteristics of dominant forms of masculinity. Drawing upon Cheng's (1996) research in America, he illustrates how white men represent these different forms of masculinity by creating images of the 'nerd'. Similarly, Messner (1997) notes how Asian men are stereotyped as feminine and desexualised and portrayed as unscrupulous and untrustworthy.

Furthermore, Poynting et al.'s (1998) research with Lebanese young men in Sydney found a highly developed solidarity against 'Aussie' males that took forms of what Connell (1995) calls 'protest masculinity'. This protest masculinity, which involves exaggerated claims of potency and hypermasculinity, as a result of marginalisation, is similar to the 'cool pose' of African-American

men discussed by Majors (1989). Poynting et al. found a strong nexus of masculinity and ethnicity amongst the Lebanese young men.

This research parallels a study of African-Caribbean and Asian males in the United Kingdom whose masculinity was powerfully influenced by ethnicity and their responses to the racism they experienced (O'Donnell and Sharpe 2000). Similarly, Messner (1997: 75) discusses how Mexican men in the United States "displace their class antagonism into the arena of gender relations". Because they are unable to challenge their class oppressors, Mexican immigrant men display exaggerated expressions of masculinity to express power over women within the context of their relative powerlessness. Similar arguments have been advanced about other groups of marginalised and subordinated men. However, in representing aggressive displays of masculinity as a form of resistance against race and class oppression, these studies neglect the impact of the behaviour on women (Messner 1997).

This limited research all confirms that race relations and ethnicity play an important part in the way in which masculinity is constructed and expressed. It points to the need for further research that explores men's migration experiences and the impact of ethnicity and migration on the construction of masculinities. It also emphasises the need to research the interaction "between class structures and the social relations of racism in the making and remaking of forms of masculinity" (Poynting et al. 1998: 78).

During the settlement process and beyond males need to adapt gender, sexual, ethnic and class dimensions of identity. This process of negotiation involves differential emphases on each dimension dependent on context. For gay males this may involve 'passing', where they deemphasise their sexual identity and highlight the gender or ethnic dimensions. Here we see the development of hybrid identities where different dimensions are emphasised strategically in diverse socio-cultural contexts. Resistance, accommodation, subordination, segregation, marginalisation, 'protest' and rebellion are all possible practices used, as migrant males adapt in the new environment. During this settlement period, migrant males are learning new codes and symbols associated with local variants of masculine behaviours. These symbols are adapted to or modified to accommodate those practiced in home countries traditionally or in contemporary times. This shifting, fluid and fractured nature of gender identity is a challenge to capture theoretically and conceptually as well as methodologically, as the case studies in this book demonstrate.

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND GENDER

Gender has been regularly sidelined in scholarly research on international migration. But over the course of the last twenty years, a more fully engendered understanding of the migration process has gradually emerged (for example, see Morokvasic 1983; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, 1999; Kofman et al. 2000; Pessar 1999, 2003). Numerous case studies are now emerging

that document how men and women experience migration differently, how they reproduce and encounter patriarchal ideologies and institutions across different cultures and transnational migration circuits, and how patriarchal systems, ideologies and practices are reaffirmed, reconfigured, or challenged in the process of migration and settlement (Pessar 1999: 13). While the nexus of gender and migration is a growing area of research, the vast majority of immigration studies are still conducted as though gender relations are either largely irrelevant to the structures and contexts within which migration takes place or are seen as simply one of many factors effecting and effected by migration (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999).

Early studies on migration focused primarily on men, with women viewed as secondary participants in the migration process. Therefore, much more attention was focused on male individual decision-making processes rather than those of their female partners, their family or community. However, this not only disregarded the role of women in the migration process but also failed to fully explore the experiences of men *as men* in the complexities of the ways in which migration and settlement are negotiated. The focus on gender and migration has been paralleled by what Castles and Miller (2003: 9) call the "feminisation" of labour migration and the greater attention given to households, family, friends and social networks in migration decision-making processes (see Boyd 1989). In an article that critiques both of these points, Annie Phizacklea (2004) argues that the labour migration literature ignores and undervalues women's labour that has always been present. Phizacklea goes on to argue that the focus on households as the centre of decision-making needs to avoid reifying the communal nature of the household and draw out the ways in which households themselves are "deeply implicated in gendered ideologies and practices" (2003: 124). In a similar vein, Pessar (1999: 6) contends that while social networks are central issues in the study of migration, we need to ask in what ways does gender "configure and organise immigrants' social networks". All of this takes place in what Connell (2000: 40; 1990) calls a "gender order", both national and global, where large institutions, international relations, global markets and the State itself are gendered in specific ways.

As such, many scholars have attempted to rectify the apparent lack of analysis of gender in the migration process and we have seen a large amount of study emerge on women and migration. But this analysis has not been free of problems. The focus on gender has tended to be solely on women, as if the previous research on migration were sufficient to account for men's experiences. As has been mentioned, this generic 'migrant' was perceived as an individual, rational decision-maker seeking to maximise his labour and this generalised 'man' also failed to explore men's particular experiences and views *in addition to* marginalising the role of women in migration. Hondagneu-Sotelo argues that the "preoccupation with writing women into migration research and theory has stifled theorising about the ways in which constructions of masculinities and feminities organise

migration and migration outcomes" (1999: 566). But, some have argued that the pendulum has shifted so far in the opposite direction that the male migrant as study subject has been ignored almost to the same degree as the female migrant had previously (see Pessar 2003).

It is understandable that the feminist literature is concerned with women's experiences of migration, which gender-neutral models of migration have neglected. However, gender neutrality has meant that both genders' experiences have been ignored. While traditional immigration research has predominantly focused on men, it has done so by examining men as non-gendered humans and it too has ignored the gendered dimensions of men's experiences. There is thus a need to place a stronger focus on treating gender less as a variable within the causes and experiences of migration and more as a central analytical concept for studying the causes and outcomes of the migration process.

The result of these struggles is that there is the development of a 'more fully engendered understanding of the migration process' that enables further analytically coherent studies that interconnect the simultaneous nature of factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, class and so on (Pessar 1999: 13). What Pessar is aiming at is consolidating the "theoretical innovation of treating gender less as a variable and more as a central concept for studying migration" (2003: 814). Notwithstanding the recent gendering of the migration literature, the focus on men and masculinities is still only emerging from the field, as very little is currently known and documented about how men negotiate, react and respond to male and female gender identities that they encounter throughout the migratory process. With pressures on men to be the main breadwinner in the societies in which they are settled, and to continue to maintain their authority in the family, they face a range of personal, cultural, educational and systemic barriers that hinder their ability to realise their expected role as 'men'. This is even more so for refugee and diasporic communities where the sense of displacement and disjuncture with their cultures of origin can be even more disorienting. Such disorientation can contribute to social pathologies, including family violence.

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES IN AUSTRALIA

For many male migrants, arrival in Australia exposes them for the first time to ethnic diversity as well as multiple variants of masculinities in a multicultural setting. This can be confusing and a challenge as they experience generational difference even within their own ethnic group. Diverse representations of masculinities are influenced by, among other factors, age, geographic location, socio-economic status, sexuality, duration of residence, prior migration experience, the media, ethnicity and sub-culture. Connell (1995) refers to hegemonic, marginalised and subordinate variants

of masculinities as well as “protest” types and to these could be added ‘flexible’ masculinities and hypermasculinities. Male migrants need to negotiate their way through this array of types, some of which may conflict with their own constructions of masculinity. Personality, sub-cultural and cultural variables will influence the direction of personal constructions and formations of identity. While some literature appears to present men in Australia as homogenous and mono-ethnic and atomises and essentialises them as well, this is not the reality.

Edgar (1997: 33) believes we are now in a period of competing models of masculinity. In Australia, he argues, sport, drinking and surf life saving have been areas of male control, together with pursuits of fishing and the garden tool shed (Edgar 1997: 40). Fiske, Hodge and Turner (1987) also argue that beach culture of lifesavers and surfers is an important development in the ritual of the Australian beach and myth of national manhood. Reference is also made by Chambers (1991) to the importance of power and control, self-reliance and independence and the separation from the feminine as the qualities that constitute both the masculine and Australian. The masculine pub culture and male surfing culture, suggests Chambers (1991: 9), have been appropriated by men as symbols of opposition to the civilising institutions of the family, school and work. Sport, according to Edgar is one of the great ‘proving grounds’ of masculinity. While there is evidence from many sources that these locales and milieux are important in the formation of male gender identity in Australia, there is a need to be careful of potential homogenisation of Australian masculinity. This raises the question, however, of how migrant males react to the influences of these spaces and how this impacts on their constructions of masculinities. How important are sport, gambling and drinking as gender and class delineators (Summers, 1975) for male migrants?

With such a long history of migration, Australia is now witnessing the emergence of a new generation of offspring of migrants. These male children have been acculturated into the new culture to a deeper extent than their parents. The influences of family dynamics in these migrant households on the education and behaviours of male children are worthy of consideration. Are there attempts by parents to instil by example or through language education, traditional values and practices with respect to gender identity? Are there changes in the status and authority of male heads of families as male children take on more responsibility as intermediaries between the old and new cultures? Is there a softening of more traditional masculine practices and a closing of social distance between children and their fathers? What are the rites of passage of these younger males? These younger males are exposed to the influences of media and new technologies on representations of masculinities at a much earlier age than was the case for their fathers. They are also growing up at a time when the consumer lifestyle and second-wave feminism have influenced the revolution of women entering the paid workforce. The question of the evenness of the spread of these influences across diverse ethnic groups in Australia and