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2009

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Publication Details

Donaldson, M & Howson, R, Men, migration and hegemonic masculinity, in Donaldson, M, Hibbins, R, Howson R & Pease, B (ed) *Migrant Men: Critical Studies of Masculinities and the Migration Experience*, Routledge, 2009, 210-217. Original publisher information available [here](#)

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Chapter 12

Men, Migration and Hegemonic Masculinity

Mike Donaldson and Richard Howson

Introduction

There is little currently documented about how migrant men react to, negotiate with, and counter the demands imposed and changes required of them by the people and cultures they encounter during their migration and settlement. But while the research on men as men in these processes is nascent in the scholarly literature to date, migrant men are often the "primary movers" whose desire to relocate is decisive in their families' emigration because of their major contribution to their families' livelihoods (Hearn and Howson, Chapter 3). But while it is usually men who gain more than women from migration, it is also men who are more likely to need welfare support, and men who are exposed to greater intolerance, violence and discrimination, in the host country.

Migrating men do not arrive in their new homeland bereft of notions about their own manliness. To the contrary, they usually bring with them firm beliefs and well-established practices about manhood and gender relations. On arrival in Australia, they engage with well-established sets of assumptions and practices about what it is to be a man in this continent (Coleman 1998). Many scholars (for example, Kufman et al. 2000; Willis and Yeo 2000) have suggested that migration provides them with an occasion to change themselves as men and to alter their personal relationships, particularly with their families and their partners, with the very often unwritten assumption that this is 'for the better', 'for their own good' and 'for the betterment of their families'.

What is largely unexplored is the extent to which migrant men (successfully or unsuccessfully) renegotiate the hegemonic masculine identifications, practices and sensibilities embedded in their 'old' gender relations; and further, if their pre-migration masculine identifications and practices change, remain unchanged, or are strengthened. In short, there is very little evidence to indicate what happens to their sense of hegemonic masculinity and whether it is eroded or fortified by their active engagement in migration and resettlement. This is the question we address in this chapter by reflecting on the accounts of migrant men presented in this book.

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Paid Work

Men who seek asylum in Australia are dominated by paid work: finding employment; keeping it, the nature of it, and migrant men more generally consider their authority and power, both 'at home' and 'overseas' to be based upon work they are paid to do. For the migrant men, paid work represents a "key element" in their manhood (Conway-Long 2006; Pease, Chapter 5; Crossley, and Pease, Chapter 7) and it is in stark contrast to the duties of women whom they usually expect to sacrifice their own careers and to be largely responsible for men's physical and emotional well-being and for the unpaid care of their children, parents and households (Hibbins, Chapter 9).

Yet for migrant men to undertake paid work, day after day, year after year for most of one's lifetime, requires mental and physical stamina and determination, and Maori men are far from alone in valuing these virtues very highly (Pringle and Whitinui, Chapter 11). Chinese men in Queensland studied by Hibbins (2005) described themselves as hard working and committed to providing for and protecting their families. Similarly, a worthwhile Maori man goes to work, earns money, supports his family. This is "his lot" (Pringle and Whitinui, Chapter 11), but it is one that he is proud to undertake and very reluctant to relinquish.

Given the significance of paid work in their lives, performing work beneath their skill levels has a significant effect on migrant men's sense of manhood (Hibbins 2000). They feel 'lessened', used, and taken for granted when the qualifications that stood them in good stead in their own country are treated contemptuously. Additionally, some men feel let down and cheated when, in order to bring their families to Australia, they have to leave good jobs behind (Pease, Chapter 5). Many professionally qualified migrant men from Asia, according to Ip (1993) and Mak (2006), find their occupational skills undervalued in the Australian labour market and many are unable to obtain positions commensurate with their education and experience. Some men are forced to take up employment below their qualifications and expectations (Pease, Chapter 5). Economic necessity forced many Chinese migrants with university qualifications into entrepreneurial activities, even while they still preferred their sons to work in the professions as they had done prior to their immigration (Hibbins, Chapter 9). Post-war European migrants were often more skilled than the average Australian worker but despite this, they were under-represented in professional, technical and 'clean' jobs (Haggis and Schech, Chapter 4). Not only does the work undertaken by migrants often under-utilise their skills, but also it is frequently badly paid and precarious. Migrants in low-paid, labour-intensive, casual jobs are sometimes unable to be the sole providers for their families, even when they are employed in more than one job. Thus their ability to meet their families' needs and to demonstrate their own worth by doing so, is deeply compromised (Haggis and Schech, Chapter 4), and because of this they often experience considerable unhappiness (Pease, Chapter 5).

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Even more devastating than the effects of changing from being a sole-provider to a dual-provider in the family household is the disempowerment and emasculation that unemployment brings with it (Hibbins, Chapter 9). The inability to provide at all for the family leads to the loss of respect, dignity, power and authority (Haggis and Schech, Chapter 4). An Iraqi man said that being unable to find work meant that "there is no recognition even to my humanity . . . Those who do not work are like dead people" (Pease, Chapter 5).

Breadwinning

There are three prerequisites to be met if a man is to start and maintain a family. He must have a full-time, regular, paying job; be responsible for and about the money thus earned; and ensure that nothing jeopardises the continuation of the economic stability that the job and the wage bring about (Pringle and Whitinui, Chapter 11). Even so, it is not necessarily paid work itself that gives meaning and dignity to migrant men's lives, for paid work itself can be meaningless and demeaning. It is the

choosing of the indignity, the embracing of the difficulties and impositions of paid work, for the sake of one's family, that gives meaning to the paid work that men undertake. There is honour in self-sacrifice for the family.

At the same time, by 'bringing home the bacon', a working man exerts control over property, income and what it can buy. This is one of the material bases of the maintenance of patriarchy. For successfully supplying the family household with the bulk of its income, he expects respect and loyalty, even obedience, in return. The family household gives meaning to the paid work that pays (most of) the money costs of its material reproduction. Paid work often made meaningless by capitalist social relations is given significance and value by patriarchy (Donaldson 1987). As a Vietnamese man explained: "The main thing is to be the provider, the one who looks after the family" (Pease, Chapter 5). And Pease (in Chapter 5) reports, "For all of the men we interviewed, whether they were from Africa, Asia, Latin America or the Middle East, being a provider was essential to being a man. Being a man was based on providing for a family and being a 'family-man'; that is, by 'having kids-you become a man'".

The men's responsibility as the breadwinners or key providers for the family household is a very strong part of their sense of self and masculinity regardless of nationality, education, family background and experience. Just as Fuller (2001) has noted that in all Latin American countries, masculinity is closely associated with the provider role, so too this volume shows how important being the breadwinner is to all the men interviewed whether in their countries of origin or in Australia. This primary concern links the strong tradition of the man as the sole or principal earner for the family

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household with the paid work that men do as a key element in men's identities (Crossley and Pease, Chapter 7; Howson, Chapter 2).

The strong pressures on migrant men to be seen to be and actually to be the breadwinner puts them in a difficult situation. They often must deal with a range of personal, social, educational and institutional barriers that hinder their ability to settle and to meet these expectations. These impediments are even more profound for men in refugee and diaspora communities (Hibbins and Pease, Chapter 9). Being a provider is premised both on having a family to provide for and on being able to maintain a family through regular engagement in wage labour. Even those from a wealthier background expect to work for money and to contribute substantially to the support of the family household, and having children is commonly seen as a marker of manhood (Crossley and Pease, Chapter 7). This role of breadwinner not only brings with it pride, honour and respect, it also confers a sense of being 'in charge' of the household. The inability to be a provider puts an immense strain on men (Crossley and Pease, Chapter 7), particularly (but not only) on those from parts of Africa and the Pacific, where men are explicitly expected to be the guides and protectors of women and children, and to be responsible not only for their own families, but also for and to the wider community (Mungai and Pease, Chapter 6; Pringle and Whitiui, Chapter 11).

Changing Women, Changing Men

The ideology of gender equality propagated by the Australian state and sometimes reflected in elements of popular culture, means that migrant men think that women already resident in Australia have more power than they formerly possessed in their countries of origin (Pease, Chapter 5). Some men, particularly those married to Anglo-Australian women, feel marginalised by 'the system', which they regard as biased towards women to the detriment of men (Crossley and Pease, Chapter 7). Many Latin American men found it hard to "figure out" Australian women who were "more independent", and who regarded Latin American men as "passionate" and "good fun", but who did not consider that they could be taken seriously as potential husbands and fathers. Australian women's attitude to men was "more contractual" and "businesslike" and less loving and unselfish (Crossley and Pease, Chapter 7). In the view of African men, too, the gender order in Australia favoured women, and it undermined their own masculinity, disempowering them (Mungai and Pease, Chapter 6). Most men take their superior status and their advantages as men for granted. They believe that as the head of the family, they should be obeyed unquestioningly. However, in a new country where women are more articulate about their rights, these relations of authority may have to be renegotiated (Pease, Chapter 5) and men are very conscious that it is they who will lose out if this occurs.

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The tasks that men prefer to perform "are those that women cannot do". There is a very strong sense that the gender division of labour is both natural and inevitable, that there are distinctive and separate functions for men and women (Hibbins, Chapter 9). But the restructuring of the labour market has tended to favour women over men (Mungai and Pease, Chapter 6), making them less dependent on the male wage (Pease, Chapter 5). Men tend to value their engagement in the public sphere over preoccupation with domestic life (Hibbins, Chapter 9) but greater opportunities for women to enter the work force and the increasing economic and social independence that comes with wage earning have challenged many men's conceptions of themselves. Changes in the women in their lives, then, lead the men to alter their marital and domestic relationships (Crossley and Pease, Chapter 7). When men cannot do men's work and women can, then men must do women's work; and when men must do women's work, what it means to be a man must change. Migration to Australia, then, shifts the household division of labour and responsibility (Pease, Chapter 5). Just as Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner (1994) had noted of Mexican men, Pease (Chapter 5) has observed that respondents no longer exercised a monopoly over decision-making in the family household and became more involved in domestic work. Some African men, too, said that they were "taking small steps towards equality and sharing domestic chores" and took "more responsibility" for domestic matters (Mungai and Pease, Chapter 6). This can be hard to undertake. A Vietnamese man observed that it was difficult for men like him in Australia, because in the changed context of being head of the family, he now had to cook for and feed his family (Pease, Chapter 5), and this resulted in a drop in his own self-esteem and a diminution of his status in the eyes of his community.

'Blokes' Through the Eyes of 'The Other'

However, if migrant men seek to modify their behaviour, as they may do largely in response to their own and their partners' altered positions in the family, community

and labour market, they do not see Australian masculinities and men as providing the model upon which to re-develop their sense of self. Migrant men will accommodate change when they must, but they very definitely exercise a form of transnationalism (Hearn and Howson, Chapter 3) that suggests they do not want to become 'a bloke', that is, a man with Australian sensibilities. Indonesian Muslim migrant men see Australian men as immature, irreverent, egotistical, distant, anti-social, aggressive, competitive, uncontrolled and animalistic (Nilan et al., Chapter 10). Chinese men largely concur, and are unimpressed also by Australian men's deficient filiality and lack of sexual modesty, and by their proclivity for alcohol and violent sport (Hibbins, 2005). To become like 'a bloke'

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would not only occasion great shame, but would guarantee a lonely and unfulfilled life, one devoid of family and community, empty of dignity and respect.

Additionally, Australian men are "under the thumb" of women who have become "masculinised" (Pease, Chapter 5) and some men (Crossley and Pease, Chapter 7) believe that "Itlthe macho in the family is the female now". This sense that women have usurped the place of Australian men, explains why to some migrant men. Australian men seem to lack the capacity to feel. To feel is to be vulnerable and vulnerability can only be permitted when one is secure in one's position, and thus Australian men are thought too be unable to express emotion, unlike "emotionally open" and "loving" Maori men. As a Maori man explained "Itlthey are a hard lot, the Australians. They are very proud but they 're shallow. They have no depth, no feeling, nothing that we have ... they are not in touch with their feelings" (Pringle and Whitinui, Chapter 11). Even 'mateship', that is, the Australian "ethos of solidarity and looking after your mates", often regarded as "quintessentially Australian", seems rather pallid when compared to the affection and warmth openly demonstrated in some countries by men for their male friends (Poynting et al., Chapter 8).

Conclusion

Masculinities are challenged, problematic, variable, changing, shifting, fluid, fractured, contextualised, contested, complicated, plural, different, diverse, heterogeneous, self-constructing and always emerging. These are exactly the words used to describe masculinities in this hook. Indeed, it is very unusual to find, anywhere, a mention of masculinities without one or more of these adjectives, or some very like them, attached or at least, close by. Yet this is not how migrant men generally experience their gendered sense of self. Instead, they understand their masculinity to be most often quire solid, reliable, dependable, durable and transportable, rather like themselves, in fact. Sometimes religious beliefs, or sometimes notions of a fixed and immutable biology, or both, help sustain this sense of stability.

On arrival in Australia, migrant men encounter masculinities not so different from their own, at least in regard to work and family and the responsibilities that attend both of these. Often, they also engage with masculinities very much the same as their own if they become, as many do, part of a settlement community. They strongly adhere to the ethos of the breadwinner, the notion of the '*pater familias*', a belief in 'natural' gender differences and a gendered division of labour. While they consider

their own particular variant of masculinity to be superior to the Australian versions, some men consider that what makes them 'men' is stronger than the national and ethnic dissimilarities that separate them from each other (Pease, Chapter 5). Consequently, they are usually not too uncomfortable with what they discover

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in Australia, recognising familiar patterns and experiencing similar expectations. An Iraqi man considered that "Masculinity is masculinity anywhere you go" (Pease, Chapter 5). So profound is this, that some Latin American men speak of the machismo of Australian males, some suggesting that it was "less" in Australia, while others felt that Australian men were equally as macho as Latin American men. Thus, they did not see machismo as different 'here' or 'there', but considered it to be "a global category, existing in some form everywhere" (Crossley and Pease, Chapter 7).

In the face of the difficulties, uncertainties and discrimination that they suffer, migrant men often respond by trying even harder to live and act like 'real men'. To achieve this, they work harder and longer (Haggis and Schech, Chapter 4), earning the admiration and respect of those like the State government minister who praised Filipino workers as being "very dedicated, disciplined and productive" (Haggis and Schech, Chapter 4). In aspiring to always be better workers and better providers, to become more loyal, more self-sacrificing and less selfish, migrant men show signs of an "exaggerated masculinity" (Pease, Chapter 5). However, by developing themselves in this way, they regard themselves as 'better men', able to demonstrate their success to their families and to those in the host country who would otherwise regard them as failures. Paradoxically, they embrace the very practices through which Australian men, too, define themselves as men, for paid work and breadwinning are "cornerstones" of Australian masculinity which have been emphasised especially in the last two decades as part of the "ubiquitous political rhetoric" of neo-liberalism (Haggis and Schech, Chapter 4; Howson, Chapter 2).

There is a view that gender relations become more egalitarian as a result of migration (Pease, Chapter 5) because many men lose their ability to control completely the decision-making in the family household and some become more involved in domestic labour. However, while the 'patriarchal bargain' (men's sexual and cultural privileges) may be 'renegotiated' after settlement, fundamental elements of gendered behaviour and beliefs remain unchanged, and may even be reinforced. In particular, working hard in a paying job and doing so for the family while guiding and protecting it, are very strong practices and beliefs that migrant men both bring with them from their homelands, and encounter on their arrival in Australia. This cannot be a product of chance or an historical accident, but must reflect resilient underlying structures existent in private and public life. Thus while 'patriarchy' as a concept has a long and chequered history, it is beyond doubt that some globally significant -structuring practices" (Haggis and Schech, Chapter 4), some form of "global patriarchy" (Daly 1979), "patriarchy on a world scale" (Mies 1986), "world gender order" (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) or "trans(national)patriarchies" (Hearn and Howson, Chapter 3) are real and determining in the lives of men all over the world. And what this volume reveals is that while men may move themselves

with relative ease across the globe, shifting their own masculinities proves rather more difficult.

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Note: In this chapter, in references such as (Pease, Chapter 5) and the like, the chapter referred to has appeared earlier in the book to which this chapter is the conclusion.