

Masculinities under Neoliberalism

Andrea Cornwall, Frank G. Karioris and Nancy Lindisfarne

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M*asculinities under Neoliberalism*, edited by Andrea Cornwall, Frank G. Karioris and Nancy Lindisfarne, is a collection of ethnographic studies seeking to examine emergent masculinities performed under neoliberal rationality. The book is a follow-up to Cornwall and Lindisfarne's earlier edited book, *Dislocating Masculinity* (1994), a seminal work that has advanced our understanding of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities. This book, therefore, builds on the conception of multiple masculinities that are formed across complex dynamics of power and difference. It expands upon an understanding of gender fluidity by means of focusing on neoliberal contexts. In this respect, this is a groundbreaking collection that makes an indispensable contribution to poststructuralist perspectives in masculinity studies.

The book is comprised of seventeen chapters. The introduction authored by Andrea Cornwall and the second chapter authored by Nancy Lindisfarne and Jonathan Neale offer precursory analyses of two major concepts: neoliberalism and masculinity. Remaining fifteen chapters present thought-provoking ethnographic accounts of transforming masculine enactments in specific socio-economic contexts. I believe that the merit of this book lies in its far-reaching scope. The studies presented in this collection come from varying cultural and economic contexts such as Russia, China, South India, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Brazil, Sierra Leone, Angola, Zimbabwe, Gambia, Britain, Jamaica, New Zealand and the USA. Besides, the contributors investigate

masculinities dealing with diverse practices and relations such as family relations, sex tourism, embodiment, transnational mobility, street cultures, intergenerational relations, religiosity, faith-based organizations, football cultures, hunting and intimacy.

Andrea Cornwall, in her introductory chapter, frames neoliberalism by drawing on Foucauldian terms –as an art of government that cultivates the norms of entrepreneurialism, competition and self-responsibilization, and produces certain subjectivities abiding by this normativity. Viewing through this lens, this book seeks to answer the question of how neoliberal mode of self-making is manifested or contested in masculinities. In a similar vein, Nancy Lindisfarne and Jonathan Neale identify three main axes of the gendered nature of neoliberalism: (i) individualization of one's success or failure to conform to masculine norms, (ii) increasing salience of gender differences, and (iii) new or reinforced symbolic/material demarcations between the elite and the ordinary.

Framing gendered character of neoliberalism from this vantage point, a number of studies focus on economic uncertainties, which recent socio-economic changes have brought along, and the way that they remake masculine identities. Charlie Walker's examination of working class men in contemporary Russia, for instance, reveals how men engaged in manual labor face with new forms of inequalities as a result of the collapse of Soviet system and de-industrialization. He illustrates the age-based differentiation in men's experiences of impoverishment, devalorization of manual work and precarity. Penny Vera-Sanso illustrates the difficulties of men to sustain the provider role along with increasing costs of living, and constraining and informal work opportunities. She suggests that these difficulties redefine the gender and age-based hierarchies within the households. Luisa Enria examines the construction of *tough* masculinity through street cultures, which is portrayed by policy-makers as a threat to post-war Sierra Leone's economic and political stability.

The redefinition of idealized masculinities through the rise of entrepreneurial subjectivities is the overriding attention of several authors. Ross Wignall's study on gendered discourses of self-making, for instance, dissects how faith-based organizations (namely Young Men's Christian Association – YMCA) feature and promote certain models of masculinity. She gives a potent account of 'neoliberal masculinities' by suggesting that YMCA seeks to align masculine aggression with business models of leadership. Likewise, Mairtin Mac an Ghaill and Chris Haywood shed light on the discursive frameworks idealizing entrepreneurialism while simultaneously emphasizing the Britishness and reinforcing the depictions of Muslim men through the terms of extremism and radicalization. Their study brings forth the narratives of young Muslim men negotiating these discursive constructions. John Spall's research illuminates the ascent of masculinities valorizing monetary wealth, consumerism and global lifestyles in post-war Angola. Bearing in mind this transformation, he illustrates the intergenerational conflicts between the male veterans of civil war and their sons. Rachel O'Neill explores London's emergent pickup industry and the ways that it cultivates neoliberal regimes of intimacy. She illustrates the intricate ways of governing men's bodies and practices to enact 'successful' masculinity while interacting with others in this pickup industry.

Other chapters draw on the local cultural contexts and deal with the (re)making of masculinities in neoliberal uncertainties. Xiaodong Lin, for instance, scrutinizes the cultural effects of China's socio-economic transformation from planned to market economy. In this transformation, he sees the robustness of traditional familial norms in male migrant workers' gender identities. Diane Jeater's study elaborates on novel forms of religiosity that come along market rationality in Zimbabwe and revitalize traditional gender norms. The shifting regimes of religiosity, she contends, are a callback for masculine norms re-approving of polygyny, virility, and sexual violence as markers of men's wealth and authority.

Another theme some authors deal with is transnational mobilities. Joe Hayns' study examining Moroccan men's relations with European

tourists in the tourist destinations of Marrakech sets an example of this dimension. Considering these interactions as a neo-colonial institution of globalized world, he views that Moroccan men constitute a subordinate masculinity due to not conforming to gender and sexual norms. Jane Bristol-Rhys and Caroline Osella provide an analysis of masculine hierarchies in the United Arab Emirates' multi-ethnic context. They illustrate the complex dynamics of these hierarchies situating men according to their ethnicities and embodiment. Adriana Piscitelli's research examines the Brazilian masculine body as a social construct through sexualized and racialized gaze. Conducting a comparative ethnographic research in Brazil and Spain, she, then, scrutinizes how Brazilian *capoeiristas* diversely experience and perform this embodiment.

Among these accounts, some authors set forth the possibilities of alternative constructions resisting dominant discourses and practices. In his study on football cultures in Jamaica, William Tantam explains the football field as an arena in which middle and lower-class men perform contrasting images of masculinities. He then regards that field as a performative domain of lower class men where they recuperate their masculinities suffering from precarious employment and symbolic violence. Frank G. Kariotis provides an analysis of campus life in a US university, which is intricately characterized by symbolic and material hierarchies. Within this context, he finds a sense of friendship that informs students' masculinities and its creative capacities to alter neoliberal self-making. Carmen McLeod examines the practice of hunting and its centrality to rural masculinity in New Zealand. Although hunting's association with hypermasculine performances, she suggests, neoliberal discourses transform it into its more egalitarian variants.

Although it is a notable collection intricately dealing with gendered nature of neoliberalism, there are some drawbacks that require some attention here. I believe that some studies would benefit from a more detailed contextualization. In particular, Jane Bristol-Rhys and Caroline Osella's chapter on the construction of masculine stereotypes in Emirati society needs a further elaboration on country-

specific characteristics of transnational mobility. Likewise, William Tantam's chapter on football cultures in Jamaica fleetingly and superficially touches upon the economic marginality which lower class men suffer from. As it stands, they portray static cultural images of masculinity. Thus, they hardly conform to the historicity of gender identities, as it is conceptually framed in theoretical chapters. Apart from these, Carmen McLeod's chapter on men's hunting in New Zealand barely provides an account of neoliberalism. It is not clear how the author comes to conclude that neoliberalism is gendered. Therefore, this chapter is vaguely linked to the general theme of this collection.

Overall, this collection broadens our horizons, revealing diverse ways that neoliberalism unmakes and remakes masculinities in different contexts. This book could be read as a caution to avoid omnivalent conceptions of masculinity and neoliberalism. Chapters unanimously call for considering intricacies of gendered lives getting tortuously twisted in neoliberal times. In this sense, it is a resourceful book for those interested in gendering of contemporary capitalism.

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