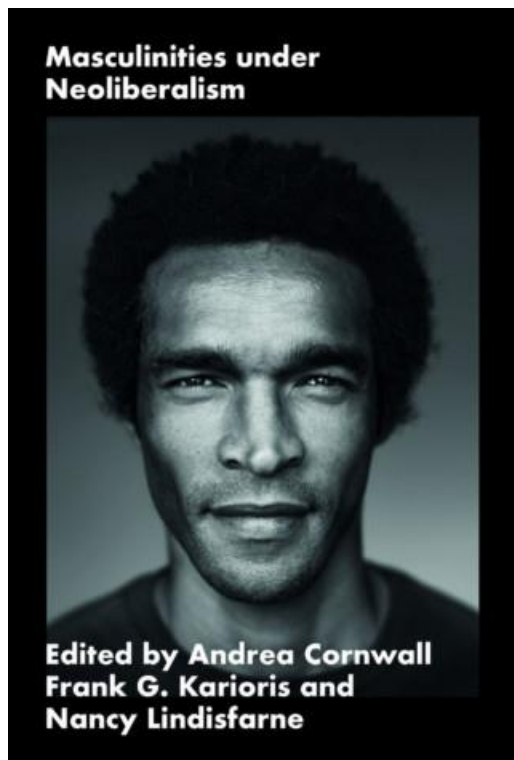


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Masculinities Under Neoliberalism

edited by Andrea Cornwall, Frank G. Karioris and Nancy Lindisfarne, [Zed Books](#), 2016

Reviewed by Jeff Hearn and Anika Thym



Masculinities Under Neoliberalism is a return to or continuation of the project embodied in the book *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies*¹ published over 20 years earlier, and, as explained in this book's Preface, invigorated through a workshop held in the UK in 2014 that sought to break some academic modes of working. The new book is the outcome of the process, though is itself perhaps not so unconventional in style of presentation. It focuses on the economic, social, and cultural effects of neoliberalism on men's lives in diverse locations. Both the earlier and this newer book are part of an engagement between anthropology and critical studies on men and masculinities (though worryingly the term 'Men's studies', which does not necessarily suggest a (pro)feminist stance, is used on p. xiv), within a broadly feminist, postcolonial framing. Most contributors come from the fields of anthropology or development studies, with a few located more centrally in sociology or cultural studies. Most chapters are based on ethnographic studies or similar. This anthropological method allows authors to make the familiar strange, disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions concerning gender, race, class, and age, and reveal the material impact and experience of inequalities under neoliberalism. However, at the same time, the focus on the plurality of masculinities and geopolitical contexts limits insights concerning the hegemony of men and masculinities, as well as the relationship of marginalised men to a neoliberal hegemonic masculinity.

The introductory chapter by Andrea Cornwall provides an overview of some relevant studies on men and masculinities, before emphasising what is new, with discussion of new 'dislocations', picking up the earlier book's theme. Masculinities under neoliberalism is the umbrella theme, with subthemes of, amongst others, everyday life, disappointments, (dis)locations and discontents, gender and generations, and homosocialities (that is, men's preference for men's company). Neoliberalism is seen in terms of the destruction of rules, institutions, and rights, but also the production of certain identities and ways of being and experiencing, especially through the changing role of the state. A line is trodden between specific experiences in particular localities and the effects of neoliberalism more broadly.

Chapter 2 by Nancy Lindisfarne and Jonathan Neale is also an overview, but with a focus on lived experience(s) of neoliberalism. The chapter presents a very accessible summary of political and economic changes brought by and making up neoliberalism, with an eye for cultural analysis. Key critical themes around masculinities are discussed, including essentialism, hegemony, and subordination. New ideologies of gender (in)equality are highlighted, such as the relative demise of the value and valuing of working-class toughness (in some localities), taking gender inequality for granted, and increasing levels of migration. There is also a fascinating, if all too short, discussion drawing on the work of Marilyn Strathern.² Her notions of 'partible people', impingements (of power), and 'dividual' (sic) people, with changing permeable boundaries, are very helpful in digging deeper into people's experience, reflecting the contextual nature of identity.

The subsequent chapters are tightly edited in dependent units, though the linking with the overview chapters, and the overarching theme of neoliberalism, is not always so obvious in some. The 'anthropological gaze' persists in quite a few, with some authors seeming to be looking on to their 'subject(s)'.

The gender relations and contexts in which neoliberal policies and aspects of life manifest themselves differ depending on the context. Charlie Walker looks at young working-class men in post-soviet Russia, where de-industrialisation and the undermining of old forms of employment dominated by men has resulted from the collapse of the state-led system. This has caused material and symbolic impoverishment of the young, in comparison with the previous generation, and a wish to escape this life, without being able to do so. Xiaodong Lin focuses on rural-urban labour migrants in post-Maoist China. Since the 1970s the country has shifted from a planned economy to a market economy shaped by a process of 'neoliberal modernisation' (p. 67). Traditional familial gender norms as fathers, sons, or brothers serve these men as a resource in new urban contexts. Penny Vera-Sanso illustrates – in a slightly functionalistic way – the contingency of patriarchal gender relations in South India, which have become apparent in current social changes. With most men earning only low salaries, women are increasingly entering the workforce and taking on provider roles, thereby challenging the discourse that ties men to breadwinner masculinity. Joe Hayns presents results from ethnographic research in Marrakech, Morocco, on men in the tourist industry, pointing to how class, gender, and sexuality are interconnected in specific ways. Relations between the Emirati minority and migrants in the United Arab Emirates are analysed by Jane Bristol-Rhys and Caroline Osella. While Emirati do not consider migrant men as men but as neutral, Indian immigrants perceive Emiratis as unmanly, lacking rationality and self-mastery. Shifting to Brazil, Adriana Piscitelli analyses the sexualised and racialised way in which some Brazilian men – especially windsurfers, *capoeiristas*, and musicians – are perceived by European women, regardless of skin colour, thus shaping the sex and marriage market.

Three chapters on African localities follow. In Sierra Leone, marked by ten years of civil conflict, followed by post-conflict recovery, Luisa Enria shows the importance of analysing gender relations and masculinity in order to prevent future conflicts. She stresses the necessity of understanding men's struggle to achieve social standing within socioeconomic exclusion. John Spall presents results from ethnography in Angola, analysing fathers' intergenerational struggles with their sons and their different gender norms. Diana Jeater analyses the Zimbabwean 'hard' masculinity of new Pentecostalism, and its militaristic superstars.

The later chapters are diverse, addressing: football, bars, and street corners in rural Jamaica (William Tantom); movement from the BIG Man to the Whole Man in the YMCA via two very different locations, Brighton and Hove, UK, and Banjul, the Gambia (Ross Wignall); 'natural' masculinities in duck hunting (and with dogs) in rural New Zealand, showing contradictory 'additional masculinities' to those that are simply tough (Carmen McLeod); homosociality in a US all-male university residence hall (Frank Karioris); the interweaving of homosociality and heterosexuality in the London 'seduction community' (in which men learn techniques to seduce women) (Rachel O'Neill); and young Muslim men in the UK (Máirtín Mac an Ghaill and Chris Haywood). These last two chapters raise some important general issues: Rachel O'Neill points to how men show they are heterosexual by spending most time with men; and Máirtín Mac an Ghaill and Chris Haywood are among the few authors to reflect back on the impact of *Dislocating Masculinity*; more of this would have been welcome.

Overall, the book is a very welcome contribution to anthropology, development studies, and critical research on men and masculinities.

Notes

1. Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne (eds.) (1994) *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies*, London and New York: Routledge.
2. See Marilyn Strathern (1988) *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*, Berkeley, CA: California University Press.