



# GEXcel Work in Progress Report Volume VII

Proceedings from GEXcel Theme 2:  
Deconstructing the Hegemony  
of Men and Masculinities  
Spring 2009



Edited by  
Katherine Harrison and Jeff Hearn

Centre of Gendering Excellence – GEXcel

**Towards a European Centre of Excellence in  
Transnational and Transdisciplinary Studies of**

- Changing Gender Relations
- Intersectionalities
- Embodiment

Institute of Thematic Gender Studies:

Department of Gender Studies, Tema Institute,  
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August 2009



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# Centre of Gender Excellence, Gendering Excellence – GEXcel

## Towards a European Centre of Excellence in Transnational and Transdisciplinary Studies of

- Changing Gender Relations
- Intersectionalities
- Embodiment

*Nina Lykke*

*Linköping University, Director of GEXcel*

In 2006, the Swedish Research Council granted 20 millions SEK to set up a Center of Gender Excellence at the inter-university Institute of Thematic Gender Studies, Linköping University and Örebro University, for the period 2007–2011. Linköping University has added five million SEK as matching funds, while Örebro University has added three million SEK as matching funds.

The following is a short presentation of the excellence centre. For more information contact: Scientific Director of GEXcel, Professor Nina Lykke ([ninly@tema.liu.se](mailto:ninly@tema.liu.se)), Administrator, Berit Starkman ([berst@tema.liu.se](mailto:berst@tema.liu.se)), or Academic Coordinator: Katherine Harrison ([coordinator@genderexcel.org](mailto:coordinator@genderexcel.org)).

## Institutional basis of GEXcel

Institute of Thematic Gender Studies, Linköping University and Örebro University

The institute is a collaboration between:

Department of Gender Studies, Linköping University

Centre for Feminist Social Studies, Örebro University

Affiliated with the Institute are:

Division of Gender and Medicine, Linköping University

Centre for Gender Studies, Linköping University

## GEXcel board and lead-team

– a transdisciplinary team of Gender Studies professors:

- Professor Nina Lykke, Linköping University (Director) – Gender and Culture; background: Literary Studies
- Professor Anita Göransson, Linköping University – Gender, Organisation and Economic Change; background: Economic History
- Professor Jeff Hearn, Linköping University – Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities; background: Sociology and Organisation Studies
- Guest Professor Liisa Husu, Örebro University – Gender Studies
- Professor Anna G. Jónasdóttir, Örebro University – Gender Studies with a profile of Political Science
- Professor Barbro Wijma, Linköping University – Gender and Medicine

## International advisory board

- Professor Karen Barad, University of California, St. Cruz, USA
- Professor Rosi Braidotti, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands
- Professor Raewyn Connell, University of Sydney, Australia
- Professor Emerita Leonore Davidoff, University of Essex, UK
- Professor Emerita Kathleen B. Jones, San Diego State University, USA
- Professor Elzbieta Oleksy, University of Lodz, Poland
- Professor Berit Schei, Norwegian University of Technology, Trondheim, Norway
- Professor Birte Siim, University of Aalborg, Denmark

## Aims of GEXcel

- 1) to set up a temporary (5 year) Centre of Gender Excellence (Gendering EXcellence: GEXcel) in order to develop innovative research on changing gender relations, intersectionalities and embodiment from transnational and transdisciplinary perspectives.
- 2) to become a pilot or developmental scheme for a more permanent Sweden-based European Collegium for Advanced Transnational and Transdisciplinary Gender Studies (CATSgender).

## A core activity of GEXcel 2007–2011

A core activity is a visiting scholars programme, organised to attract excellent senior researchers and promising younger scholars from Sweden and abroad and from many disciplinary backgrounds. The visiting scholars are taken in after application and a peer-reviewed evaluation process of the applications; a number of top scholars within the field are also invited to be part of GEXcel's research teams. GEXcel's visiting scholars receive grants from one week up to twelve months to stay at GEXcel to do research together with the permanent staff of the Gender Studies professors and other relevant local staff.

The Visiting Scholars Programme is concentrated on annually shifting thematic foci. We select and construct shifting research groups, consisting of excellent researchers of different academic generations (professors, post-doctoral scholars, doctoral students) to carry out new research on specified research themes within the overall frame of changing gender relations, intersectionalities and embodiment.

## Brief definition of overall research theme of GEXcel

The overall theme of GEXcel research is defined as *transnational and transdisciplinary studies of changing gender relations, intersectionalities and embodiment*. We have chosen a broad and inclusive frame in order to attract a diversity of excellent scholars from different disciplines, countries and academic generations, but specificity and focus are also given high priority and ensured via annually shifting thematic foci. The overall keywords of the (long!) title are chosen in order to indicate currently pressing theoretical and methodological challenges of gender research to be addressed by GEXcel research:

– By the keyword “*transnational*” we underline that GEXcel research should contribute to a systematic transnationalising of research on gender relations, intersectionalities and embodiment, and, in so doing, develop a reflexive stance vis-à-vis transnational travelling of ideas, theories

and concepts, and consciously try to overcome reductive one-country focused research as well as pseudo-universalising research that unreflectedly takes, for example, “Western” or “Scandinavian” models as the norm.

– By the keyword “*changing*” we aim at underlining that it, in a world of rapidly changing social, cultural, economic and technical relations, is crucial to be able to theorise change, and that this is of particular importance for critical gender research due to its liberatory aims and inherent focus on macro, meso and micro level transformations.

– By the keyword “*gender relations*”, we aim at underlining that we define gender not as an essence, but as a relational, plural and shifting process, and that it is the aim of GEXcel research to contribute to a further understanding of this process.

– By the keyword “*intersectionalities*”, we stress that a continuous reflection on meanings of intersectionalities in gender research should be integrated in all GEXcel research. In particular, we emphasise four different aspects: a) *intersectionality as intersections of disciplines and main areas (humanities, social sciences and medical and natural sciences)*; b) *intersectionality as intersections between macro, meso and micro level social analyses*; c) *intersectionality as intersections between social categories and power differentials organised around categories such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age, nationality, profession, disability etc)*; d) *intersectionality as intersections between major different branches of feminist theorising (for example, queer feminist theorising, Marxist feminist theorising, postcolonial feminist theorising)*.

– Finally, by the keyword “*embodiment*”, we aim at emphasising yet another kind of intersectionality, which has proved crucial in current gender research – to explore intersections between discourse and materiality and between sex and gender.

## Specific research themes for first 2.5 year period of GEXcel

The research at GEXcel focuses on shifting themes. The research themes to be announced for the first 2.5 years are the following:

Theme 1) “Gender, Sexuality and Global Change” (on interactions of gender and sexuality in a global perspective), headed by Anna Jónasdóttir.

Theme 2) “Deconstructing the Hegemony of Men and Masculinities” (on ways to critically analyse constructions of the social category “men”), headed by Jeff Hearn.

Theme 3) “Distinctions and Authorisation” (on meanings of gender, class, and ethnicity in constructions of elites), headed by Anita Göransson.

Theme 4 + 5) “Sexual Health, Embodiment and Empowerment” (on new synergies between different kinds of feminist researchers’ (eg. philosophers’ and medical doctors’) approaches to the sexed body), headed by Nina Lykke and Barbro Wijma.

The thematically organised research groups are chaired by GEXcel’s core staff of Gender Studies professors, who make up a transdisciplinary team, covering humanities, social sciences and medicine. Seven more themes are under planning for the second 2.5 year period.

## Ambitions and visions

The scholarship programme of GEXcel is created with the central purpose to create transnational and transdisciplinary research teams that have the opportunity to work together for a certain time – long enough to do joint research, do joint publications, produce joint international research applications and do other joint activities such as organising international conferences.

We build on our extensive international networks to promote the idea of a permanent European institute for advanced and excellent gender research – and in collaboration with other actors try to make this idea become real, for example, organisations such as AOIFE, the SOCRATES-funded network Athena and WISE, who jointly are preparing for a professional Gender Studies organisation in Europe. We also hope that collaboration within Sweden will sustain the long-term goals of making a difference both in Sweden and abroad.

We consider GEXcel to be a *pilot or developmental scheme* for a more long-term European centre of gender excellence, i.e. for an institute- or collegium-like structure dedicated to advanced, transnational and transdisciplinary gender research, research training and education in advanced Gender Studies (CATSgender). Leading international institutes for advanced study such as the Centre for the Study of Democracy at the University of California Irvine, and in Sweden The Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies (SCAS at Uppsala University) have proved to be attractive environments and creative meeting places where top scholars in various fields from all over the world, and from different generations, have found time for reflective work and for meeting and generating new, innovative research.

We would like to explore how this kind of academic structures that have proved very productive in terms of advancing excellence and high level, internationally important and recognised research within other ar-

eas of study, can unleash new potentials of gender research and initiate a new level of excellence within the area. The idea is, however not just to take an existing academic form for unfolding of excellence potentials and fill it with excellent gender research. Understood as a developmental/pilot scheme for CATSgender, GEXcel should build on inspirations from the mentioned units for advanced studies, but also further explore and assess what feminist excellence means in terms of both contents and form/structure.

We want to rework the advanced research collegium model on a feminist basis and include thorough reflections on meanings of gender excellence: What does it mean to gender excellence? How can we do it in even more excellent feminist innovative ways?

## Editors' Foreword

The contributions to this volume are the result of the activities carried out within the frame of GEXcel's second research theme, *Deconstructing the Hegemony of Men and Masculinities*. Most of the authors were GEXcel Visiting Scholars spending varying periods of time at Linköping University to work on their projects between January and June 2009. All the Scholars participated in the GEXcel Conference 'Men and Masculinities, Moving On! Embodiments, Virtualities, Transnationalisations' held on 27th–29th April, 2009. In addition, two presentations from the Conference are included. Most of the conference presentations were published in GEXcel Work-in-Progress Report VI. Some of these presentations were also given at the GEXcel Symposium 'Men/masculinities, Transnational, Spatial, Virtual: Hegemony, Power and Deconstruction', held on 5th May, 2009 (see Appendix).

This volume is of a work-in-progress character, and thus the texts presented here are to be elaborated further. The reader should also be aware that, as this is a report of working papers, some minor editorial modifications have been made to some papers, but the language of those contributed by non-native speakers of English has not been specifically revised.

We thank Alp Biricik, Berit Starkman and Kjerstin Andersson for all their assistance in the arrangements for Theme 2, and Tomas Hägg for his care with the printing of the text.



# Chapter 1

## Deconstructing the Hegemony of Men and Masculinities – the Research Theme

*Jeff Hearn*

*Linköping University, Sweden*

This introductory chapter provides a brief outline of the research theme, *Deconstructing the Hegemony of Men and Masculinities*, and its sub/themes, and also gives a review of the research theme's process and progress over the last year. The GEXcel project was launched in May 2007 with a conference arranged in Linköping (Volume 1 of this Work-in-Progress Report Series). According to the work plan included in the application to VR (The Swedish Research Council), the first half of the first year was intended for preparations and detail planning. From early February 2007 the Örebro team worked to prepare for the first theme on *Gender, Sexuality and Global Change* as the focus during the academic year 2007–2008 (Volumes 2, 3, 4). Collaboration has developed between the research themes, for example, with Theme 1 and the Conference on 'The War Question for Feminism', held in Örebro, September 2008. Planning for this second theme, *Deconstructing the Hegemony of Men and Masculinities*, began during the first theme, since GEXcel is primarily a Visiting Scholars programme, gathering prominent scholars from different countries to work with scholars based in GEXcel.

### **What is the research theme *Deconstructing the Hegemony of Men and Masculinities* about?**

This theoretical and conceptual background to this research theme has been outlined in previous GEXcel publications (Hearn, 2007, 2009a). At this point, suffice it to say that the programme approaches theorising of gender and sexualities through a focus on the concept of hegemony in theorising men. The place of both force and consent of men in patriarchies is illuminated by such a concept that can assist engagement with both material and discursive gender power relations. Recent conceptual and empirical uses of hegemony, as in 'hegemonic masculinity' in the analysis of masculinities, have been subject to qualified critiques

for over 15 years. This programme examines the shift from masculinity to men, to focus on ‘the hegemony of men’ (Hearn, 2004a). It addresses the double complexity that men are both a social category formed by the gender system and collective and individual agents, often dominant agents. It examines how the category “men” is used in national and transnational gender systems. These uses are both intersectional and embodied in specific ways.

Dominant uses of the social category of men have often been restricted by, for example, class, ethnicity/racialisation and (hetero)sexuality; these issues have been explored in, for example, postcolonial theory and queer theory. Less examined is the construction of the category of men in terms of assumptions about: age, ageing and (dis)ability; nationality/national context; and bodily presence.

Indeed, despite the explicitness of some of the statements of Connell and colleagues, there have been a number of neglected or missing elements in some recent debates on and applications of hegemony to men and masculinities, including: relations of hegemony to “patriarchy”; relations of hegemony to “bodies”; relations of hegemony to the (changing) “form” of the social, cultural, and indeed the virtual; and relations of hegemony to moves away from notion of fundamental outlook of ‘society’ (Bocock, 1986), nation and the nation-state to the growing importance of the “transnational”.

Thus this programme examines how the hegemony of men is being (re)defined in relation to three intersectional, embodied arenas: in terms of problematising hegemony in practice, by way of these neglected arenas: (older) ageing, bodies, (dis)abilities; virtuality; and transnationalisations. In each case these are arenas that can be seen as forms of absent presence, by marginalisation by age/death, disembodiment, and disconnection from nation, respectively. These three aspects and ‘exclusions’ are problematised as the focus of this programme over the five years of GEXcel. In each case these are arenas that can be seen as forms of “absent presence” (Hearn, 1998), by marginalisation by age/disability/death, disembodiment, and disconnection from nation, respectively. Each of these presents reinforcements, challenges and contradictions, to hegemonic categorisations of men. Moreover, the theme of ‘contradictions of absence’ refers to these three arenas in which absence of some men (or aspects of some men) may both, and contradictorily, reinforce hegemony of men and potentially at least subvert that hegemony; absence acts as both a source of power and a way of undermining power.

## Three sub-themes in the research theme

The three sub-themes briefly described below have evolved a little during the development of GEXcel. The first sub-theme in Theme 2, though centrally based in the interrogation of age, ageing, gender relations and older men, has developed somewhat towards a more general engagement with questions of embodiment, and thus is slightly renamed. This is fitting as this is one GEXcel's central cross-cutting general themes. The second sub-theme below keeps the same title. The third sub-theme below has been renamed to be more precise and clear in its broad attention to transnationalisations and transnational men. The order of the second and third sub-themes has also been reversed from their original listing, to reflect the logic of moving from embodiment to virtuality and then to transnationalisation.

In each case there are, for different people in different ways, personal, political/policy and theoretical reasons why these sub-themes are particularly important in contemporary critical studies on men and masculinities. These three different, yet interlinked, rationales provided a framework for my introductory talk given at the Theme 2 Conference 'Men and Masculinities, Moving On! Embodiments, Virtualities, Transnationalisations', held on 27th–29th April, 2009.

### (i) Embodiment, Age/ing and Older Men

Debates, dominant constructions and media and other representations and images of men and masculinities are dominated by younger men and men "of middle years", as if men and masculinities "end" pre-old age. When images of older men are presented in the media they are generally very partial, very limited. Age, ageing, men, maleness and masculinities intersect in many different, complex ways. An under-explored area is the frequent exclusion of older men, men with certain disabilities and dying (though not dead) men from the category of "men". (Older) Age is a contradictory source of power and disempowerment for men; the social category of older men is contradictory (Hearn, 1995). In many societies age and ageing has been a 'traditional' source of patriarchal power, and of (some) men's power in relation to women, older women, younger men. This relation of men's age and men's gender power has become more complex and problematic. In many contemporary societies, age and ageing can be a source of some men's lack of power, in relation to loss of power of the body, loss of and changing relations to work, and significant extension of the 'age of weakness'.

Men's generational power in families and communities has been widely overtaken by major national and international institutions, most obviously in the state and business. These latter institutions have their

own patterns of domination by particular groupings or segments of men. Contemporary contradictions of men's ageing stem partly from interrelations of sexism and ageism. Put simply, older men benefit through sexism, while, at the same time, older men are disadvantaged by ageism. Older men and older masculinities can be understood as an "absent presence". Indeed (some) older men may even become a contradictory, another Other – to younger men, even women. On the other hand, age and ageing do not necessarily reduce men's power. Age and ageing are a source of financial power for some men, so that age also brings greater economic divergence. Men's labour-power may be extended, through information technology and 'cyborg-ageing', pacemakers, disability aids, and so on.

These questions, and many other related issues, are of interest for a variety of personal, political/policy and theoretical reasons that can be briefly summarised as:

- PERSONAL: my and our own ageing, and, in my case, distancing from what I would call "*dominant aged groups*" of men of "younger and middle years";
- POLITICAL/POLICY: *growing policy/political questions* on men, the body and ageing – especially with the dramatically increasing numbers of older people, and the need for both caring of men and caring by men, bringing changing configurations of the politics of gender, age and care;
- THEORETICAL: the problematising of men's privileges and men's bodies, and the interrelations – this involves attention to both *men's disembodiment*, and *the embodiment* of dominant aged groups of men, also raising the question of how ageing may change the form of, perhaps even disrupt patriarchy.

## (ii) Virtualisation and Virtual Men

Virtualisation processes present sites for contestations of hegemony in terms of bodily presence/absence of men. The focus here is the positive, negative and contradictory effects of certain uses of information and communication technologies (ICTs) upon men's, and women's, sexuality and sexual violences, as men act as producers and consumers of virtuality, represent women in virtual media, and are themselves being represented, even made dispensable (Hearn, 2006). These structural and agentic differentiations, with and without force, suggest multiply differentiated (trans)patriarchies that are stable and changing, fixed and flexible. Charting the particular, changing forms of these rigidities and movements of and around the taken-for-granted social category of men may be a means of interrogating the possibility of the abolition of 'men'

as a significant social category of power. The implications of ICTs for the reformulation of social space and public (sexual) domains are examined.

The personal, political/policy and theoretical reasons why this theme of virtualisation and virtual men is important can be summarised as follows:

- **PERSONAL:** as is the case for many others, my own life and work are strongly *constructed through the virtual*;
- **POLITICAL/POLICY:** the development of virtualisation makes (some) *men dispensable, yet creates potential for extensions and reinforcements of power*. There are positive, negative and contradictory effects of uses of technology, e.g. upon sexuality and the massive expansion of the sex trade, as well as reformulations of social space and public domains;
- **THEORETICAL:** virtualisation can be understood as a form of *absence, with complex relations of men's embodiment and disembodiment*, and the problematising of the category of 'men'.

### (iii) Transnationalisation and Transnational Men

The personal, political/policy and theoretical rationales behind this theme are, or include:

- **PERSONAL:** my own life spread *across different countries*, as is also so for many and perhaps increasing numbers of individuals;
- **POLITICAL/POLICY:** the importance of the development of *transversal politics, in the light of transnational (pro)feminism*, which also recognise transnationalisations as contradictory processes and multiple forms of absence, most obviously for the dispossessed, along with the emergence of transnational business men, transnational elites, global sex trade, that provide complex cases of the hegemony of men;
- **THEORETICAL:** *the disruption of both 'methodological nationalism' and "god's" eye view sociological paradigms*, and the expansion of transnational patriarchies and the need to deconstruct the dominant "we".

Transnationalisation takes many forms and has many implications for men and gender relations (Zalewski and Palpart, 1998; Hearn and Parikin, 2001; Hearn and Pringle, 2006). It is perhaps the most acutely contradictory of processes, with multiple forms of absence for both men in power and those dispossessed through, for example, forced migration. Different transnationalisations problematise taken-for-granted national and organisational contexts, and men therein in many ways. It may be noted that transnationalisation refers to two different, if related, processes:

*moving across* or *between* two or more somethings, in this case, across national boundaries or between nations, as in migration or policy negotiations between sovereign states; *metamorphosing*, problematising, blurring, transgressing, breaking down, even dissolving something(s), nations or national boundaries – in the most extreme case, leading to the demise of the nation or national boundaries, as in blurrings of identity in migration or even blurring of policy responsibilities or responses between states (Hearn, 2004b)

One example of the impact of transnationalisation is the importance of managers in transnational organisations for the formation and reproduction of gender orders in organisations and societies. In light of the globalisation of business life and expansion of transnational organisations, the concept of “transnational business masculinity” describes a new form of masculinity among globally mobile managers. Connell (1998) sees this as marked by “increasing egocentrism, very conditional loyalties (even to the corporation), and a declining sense of responsibility for others (except for purposes of image-making)” (Connell, 1998: 16). It differs from “traditional bourgeois masculinity by its increasingly libertarian sexuality, with a growing tendency to commodify relations with women.” Studies on senior managers, overwhelmingly men, are necessary to understand how the hegemony of men is reproduced and changed globally. There are many other under-researched areas of transnational activity that are very important in the critical study of men and masculinities.

## Review of the research theme

The work of Theme 2 builds upon a substantial pre-existing body of work and network of internal scholars at Linköping University within the Research Group on Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities formed in 2006. A substantial core of these researchers have been Internal Theme 2 Members (see Appendix). These have been supplemented by a group of invited Swedish External Affiliates of Theme 2 who are based in other universities (see Appendix).

The Theme 2 work has been hugely enhanced by the hosting and the presence of four senior GEXcel Scholars (Professors Toni Calasanti and Sheila Jeffreys in autumn 2008, and Drs Chris Beasley and David Bell in spring 2009), five competitively selected postdoctoral GEXcel Scholars (Dr Winifred Poster in 2008, Drs Marina Blagojević, Fataneh Farahani and Karen Gabriel in 2009, and Dr Neils Ulrik Sørensen for shorter times in both periods), three competitively selected doctoral GEXcel Scholars

(Anna Boden, Nil Mutluer, P. K. Vijayan), and three self-funded GEXcel Open Position Scholars (Dr Richard Howson, Dr Neal King and Professor Robert Morrell). These visiting scholars alone in different ways are from or are based in Australia, Canada, Denmark, Hungary, India, Iran, the Netherlands, Serbia, Sweden, South Africa, Turkey, UK, and USA.

In addition, numerous others have joined the events organised through the Theme. The April 2009 Conference was attended by citizens/participants from Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, England, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Iran, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Scotland, Serbia, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, and USA.

Professor Raewyn Connell has been a major external support throughout the work of the Theme, in the evaluation of GEXcel applicants, assessment of prospective open position scholars and in offering other advice, as has Professor Nina Lykke as GEXcel Director.

Two previous Work-in-Progress Reports have been produced from the Theme: Volume V, on the work of Visiting Scholars during autumn 2008 (Hearn, 2009b); and Volume VI, on the presentations from the Conference, 'Men and Masculinities, Moving On! Embodiments, Virtualities, Transnationalisations' held on 27th–29th April, 2009 (Biricik and Hearn, 2009). Two reports have also been compiled of the individual statements from the GEXcel Scholars on their visits. These are all available on the GEXcel website.

Before saying more on the three sub-themes some comments on the selection of the GEXcel doctoral and postdoctoral competitive Visiting Scholars for Theme 2 may be useful. There were 55 applications for 7 or 8 places. Far more men, about three times the number of women, applied as doctoral applicants, while more women, about two times the number of men, applied as postdoctoral applicants. The postdoctoral women applicants, and especially those who were successful, were tending to place their studies on men and masculinities within the larger canvas of feminist and gender studies, compared to some of the doctoral men applicants, who tended to have a more limited frame of reference. Many of the applicants had multi-disciplinary backgrounds, and many of those who were successful are pursuing research of an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. There were also some real differences in the extent to which different sub-themes were addressed in the applications. A broad summary follows. It should be said that in some cases it was difficult to allocate applications to a single sub-theme, as some addressed more than one sub-theme. While best attempts have been made to summarise the situation, the specific amounts should be treated as general indications and thus with caution.

## GEXcel Doctoral Theme 2 applicants

	Age/body	Virtuality	Transnational	Other	Total
<b>Women</b>	2	3	2		7
<b>Men</b>	9	3	7	2	21
<b>Total</b>	11	6	9	2	28

## GEXcel Postdoctoral Theme 2 applicants

	Age/ body	Virtuality	Transnational	Other	Total
<b>Women</b>	5	2	9	2	18
<b>Men</b>	6	2	1		9
<b>Total</b>	11	4	10	2	27

## GEXcel Theme 2 total applicants

	Age/ body	Virtuality	Transnational	Other	Total
<b>Women</b>	7	5	11	2	26
<b>Men</b>	15	5	8	2	29
<b>Total</b>	22	10	19	4	55

There has been substantial progress with each of the three sub-themes within Theme 2. The first sub-theme was a major focus in the first half of the work in 2008 (Hearn, 2009b), with visiting contributions from Anna Boden, Professor Toni Calasanti, Dr Neal King, Dr Niels Ulrik Sørensen and Professor Sheila Jeffreys in 2008 and Drs Chris Beasley and Niels Ulrik Sørensen in 2009. This was extended in the work of the workgroup on Ageing and Embodiment at the April 2009 Conference (Biricik and Hearn, 2009; see especially the four rapporteurs' reports). The work of this sub-theme stands on a reciprocal relation of critiques of lack of attention to age, ageing and ageism in gender scholarship, and critiques of a lack of attention to gender in age scholarship. There has been a growing development of such research in critical studies on men and masculinities. It has also been important to broaden the formulation from age and ageing to questions of embodiment in relation to men and masculinities more generally.

At the April 2009 Conference, the workgroup on this sub-theme emphasised the importance of the following questions:

1. Reflexivity in Research: Is it a privileged position to deconstruct privilege? How does the social location of the researcher affect studies of older men? In interview-based and ethnographic research, how is the researchers' body positioned in interaction with older men who participate? How do we consider insider/outsider status in doing research on aging men, ultimately acknowledging that these intersecting locations (aging/being old and masculinity) are only some of the social locations under investigation? How do we conduct this research with credibility?
2. Approaches to Age and Ageing Embodiment: In researching and identifying old age, at what point do bodies matter? Is it when they are breaking down? Is it when they start to look different than a normatively healthy male body? We discussed the effects of the social construction of ageing as decline, which tended to make the body more visible or important in research on older men and carried with it the potential for increased agency and positive change.
3. Privilege, Power and Hegemony: Most importantly, in studying power and hegemony in the context of older men and their embodiment, what are the contradictory and/or negative implications contained within our research and our research assumptions? Are we reformulating masculinities in ways that empower men so that hegemony is reinforced? Are we in fact constructing new forms of hegemony that we will need to deal with in the future? Might it be possible to counter this tendency through developing self-critical, autobiographical work and other forms of research which explicitly problematise male researchers' own contradictory, embodied relationships to patriarchy and power? How does this relate to older women? If we are to consider masculinities as relational, how do we include women, femininities and feminine ageing embodiment? (Boden and Calasanti, 2009).

The relationship of the first sub-theme with the second sub-theme on virtualisation and virtual men has been important. In key senses, Niels Ulrik Sørensen and Sheila Jeffreys, along with Dr Winifred Poster, all contributed both to the second sub-theme, and affirmed the links between virtualisation and embodiment. This sub-theme was reinforced by the visit of Dr David Bell, and then the work in first workgroup on Virtualities, Representations and Technology at the April 2009 Conference. This embodied/virtual relation mirrored another constant issue,

namely the relation of the material/discursive. This work also showed the importance of spatiality and virtual spatiality. It is clear that there are an immense number of possible research issues in the arena of this sub-theme, not only in terms of men's practices and practices of masculinity in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), but also the representation of men and masculinities in virtual worlds, and more general social and cultural changes around and impacts of ICTs. Moreover, these are matters that are undergoing very rapid change, technologically, socially, culturally. They also present challenges in terms of the epistemological and ontological status of the virtual and the online, and the relation of life online/offline. More specifically,

The [Virtualities, Representations and Technology] workgroup spotted both commonalities and interesting differences in the ways in which the topics discussed related to each other and to the conference themes. We pondered that the issue of “virtualities” had not been foregrounded as clearly as might have been expected [in their work], but then went on to re-use the term to discuss the notion of “virtual hegemonic masculinity” – not to use “virtual” to refer only to Internet or other “new” technologies, but more to consider “virtualization” as a process of abstraction. (Bell and Biricik, 2009).

The sub-theme of transnationalisation and transnational men has been particularly active, and this is strongly represented in this volume. This was also a focus in the visits of Winifred Poster and Sheila Jeffreys, showing links with second sub-theme. Professor Morrell, Drs Beasley, Blagojević, Farahani, Gabriel and Howson, and the doctoral researchers Mutluer and Vijayan have all contributed to this sub-theme. The focus of much of this work has been on migratory and diasporic processes, but other aspects covered include nationalism, religion, locationality, semi-periphery, embodiment, violence and non-violence, and resistance. The Transnationalisation Workgroup highlighted the impact of transnationalisation on masculinities as involving:

- The Othering of certain men and women and their engagement with it
- De-development, marginalisation and the semi-periphery
- Opportunities, negotiation, reshaping of gender, sexuality and power relations

They also stressed methodological issues, including:

- Multilevel analysis and the problem of integrating local and global, micro and macro phenomena

- Positionality and social location
- Power play in the field and academy
- Structure and Agency
- Multiplicities: locations, historicities
- Institutions, processes and policies. (Blagojević and Gabriel, 2009).

A major issue throughout has been the recognition of key connections between the three still relatively neglected sub-themes, and the different men and masculinities thereby implicated. These connections include: social processes across and between arenas, for example, men's violence; forms of re-engagements with "absent" bodies; diverse links across the economic, the political, and the cultural; possibilities for both extensions and subversions of men's power; the presence and absence of different forms of spatiality.

The Transnationalisation Workgroup at the Conference noted the important connections between their own discussions with those of the other workgroups and sub-themes, including:

- Ageing and embodiment: intergenerational relations, changes in status of the aging men.
- Virtualities, representations and technology: media, ICTs, images, money flows, elite formation.
- Theorising: Transnationalisation, masculinity, core and margin, knowledge production and policy, everyday life, nationalisms and technology, state and nation-state. (Blagojević and Gabriel, 2009).

In all these discussions, the concept of transpatriarchies may be relevant and useful (Hearn, 2009c). The persistence, and usefulness, of the concept of patriarchy, despite critiques, remains. Following earlier debates on historical shifts to, first, public patriarchies, analysis of transnational patriarchies or transpatriarchies is needed. These contradictory social processes may also further the possibility of the abolition of the social category of "men, as a category of power", an approach and prospect bringing together materialist theory/politics and queer theory/politics.

Importantly, all three sub-themes raise questions for and contribute to theorising on men, masculinities, gender and gender relations. This was the focus of the fourth workgroup at the April 2009 conference. Among the visiting scholars, Beasley, Howson

and Vijayan contributed here, though all were involved in the theoretical discussions in different ways. These theoretical concerns are part of the general cross-cutting theme of theoretical and methodological development that is emphasised within GEXcel.

In the light of the all-embracing nature of this focus, the Theorising Workgroup in the Conference decided to offer a 'modest proposal' hoping to be helpful rather than excessive in their claims. They wrote:

We began by agreeing that it is important not to reject what is currently in the sub-field but perhaps to recast, to refocus some of the terms of the debate. The key issue was of the extent to which the reiterated use of particular privileged terms in particular ways in any field of thought, including studies of men/masculinities might involve some degree of inadvertent delimitation in what is discussed or can be discussed, and how it is discussed.

We suggest that there is an advantage in thinking about how to move from what we see as some degree of fixed/calcified/ossified conceptualisation of gendered power in the subfield to a more dynamic conceptualization. In other words, we saw advantages in moving towards a more PROCESSUAL/ more explicitly political conceptualization of gendered Power, towards an emphasis on 'doing power'.

In order to do this, we suggest a recasting of the terms of the debate towards terms like **LEGITIMATION/LEGITIMISING (gender 'legitimation studies')**, which might still enable the use of existing privileged terms that have a more macro-structural casting, like hegemony, hegemonic masculinity, and/or patriarchy. At the same time we propose moving towards a way of understanding gendered **POWER** as more permeable/dynamic, (which can include less macro-structural approaches), with the intention of highlighting the **POLITICAL** that is at stake.

The aim is then to move beyond an emphasis upon the negative conceptualization of power towards one which more often captures and pays attention to both **limits and possibilities/capacities**. This means, in practical terms, the recasting of delimiting terms like 'gender equality' towards a notion of 'gender justice'; the recasting of hegemony/hegemonic masculinity(ies) towards an approach which deals with gendered power relations in less categorical ways; the enabling of space for other or new terms to enter the subfield in relation to a recasting of understandings of gendered Power. It means the exploration of similarities between men and women/crossovers; the acknowledgment of absences/missing/not said (for instance, in the paper attending to the uncertain relation between hegemonic masculinity and young boys in Australia); the need to investigate new articulations/shifts (as is considered in the paper on

Cossacks and iconic masculinity); and even the elaboration of counter-articulations/social change.

Relatedly, the group also acknowledged the need for renewed attention to generative/positive analyses (as for instance was raised in relation to the paper on care and intimacy and their refashioning under the sign of masculinity). (Beasley and Vijayan, 2009).

This conference and many other research discussions emphasised the need for critical studies on men and masculinities (CSMM) to be understood as a sub-field of Women's/Gender/Queer Studies. Accordingly, CSMM needs to draw on the full range of feminist and critical gender theorising. In the case of the conference, special engagement took place between CSMM and studies on ageing, embodiment and intersectionality (Workgroup A), science and technology studies, ICT studies and studies of representation (Workgroup B), and globalisation, migration and postcolonial theories (Workgroup C). The interplays between theory and practice – between deconstructing the hegemony of men and masculinities, care in organising and organisation, and feminist theory and practice – have also been highlighted.

## The Visiting Scholars and the following chapters

This volume includes papers, first, from invited senior GEXcel Scholars: Dr Chris Beasley, Reader in Politics, University of Adelaide, Australia, and Dr David Bell, Senior Lecturer, Department of Geography, University of Leeds, UK. The first of these addresses the question of 'The Challenge of Pleasure: Let's Talk about Sex in Gender-Masculinity Studies'. This thus engages critical studies on men and masculinities with other approaches, aspects and sub-fields in gender studies, through the lens of sexuality. This is of special relevance to the sub-theme on embodiment, but is also relevant to the whole research theme. The second highlights the second sub-theme on virtuality and virtual men, and is a more focused account of 'The Gays and the Geeks: Recentring Marginalized Identities in the Creative City'.

The third sub-theme is the focus of the remainder of the volume. Several of the papers (Blagojević, Farahani, Mutluer, Sünbülőğlu) from the Transnationalisations workgroup at the GEXcel Conference 'Men and Masculinities, Moving On!' are included here. Some of these presentations were given at the GEXcel Symposium 'Men/masculinities, Transnational, Spatial, Virtual: Hegemony, Power and Deconstruction', held on 5th May, 2009 (see Appendix). The first paper, 'Transnationalisation and its Absence: The Balkan Semiperipheral Perspective on Masculinities',

is by Dr Marina Blagojević, Director of Altera AB Research Centre on Gender and Ethnicity, Budapest, Hungary, and of the Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research, Serbia. This is followed by a paper by Dr Richard Howson, a GEXcel Open Position Scholar, from University of Wollongong, Australia, who previously visited in 2008, on 'Why Masculinity is Still an Important Empirical Category: Migrant Men and the Migration Experience'. The theme of migration is continued in the next two papers. Dr Fataneh Farahani, from Stockholm University, and one of the competitively selected postdoctoral GEXcel Scholars, considers 'Cultural and racial politics of representation: A study of diasporic masculinities among Iranian men'. This is followed by the chapter by Nil Mutluer, a doctoral student at Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, addressing 'The Role of Transnational and National Institutions in Internally Displaced Men's Everyday Life in Tarlabasi in Istanbul'.

The last three papers engage more with detailed cases studies on the intersections of nation, transnationalisation, men and masculinities. First, Nurseli Yeşim Sünbülüoğlu, a doctoral researcher from University of Sussex, UK, continues the Turkish focus and considers the case of the assassination by a young nationalist of the Turkish-Armenian newspaper editor, Hrant Dink, in 2007, in terms of 'Reconfigurations of Nation-States and Implications for the Processes of Transnationalisation'. Next, Dr Karen Gabriel, another of the competitively selected postdoctoral GEXcel Scholars, from St. Stephen's College, Delhi University, and Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi, India, writes on 'Resisting Men: Gandhi, Gender, Anti-colonialism and Nation'. Finally, PK Vijayan, a competitively selected doctoral GEXcel Scholar, from The Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, the Netherlands, and Delhi University, India, discusses 'the RSS (the Indian Hindu nationalist organization) and '... the Cultivation of the National Man'.

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# Chapter 2

## The Challenge of Pleasure: Let's Talk about Sex in Gender- Masculinity Studies

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### Introduction

When I was initially thinking about this paper, I was driven by two things. On the one hand I have a sense that we all—and perhaps young people in particular—are constantly bombarded with images of sexual identity by a range of cultural forms. This bombardment amounts to a provision of sexual education by privatised commercial sources, with sexuality presented in terms of material consumption: 'Buy this, be sexy'. On the other hand, I have a sense of missed opportunity. What I mean is that critical, non-commercial voices regarding sexuality seem to me to be offering a decidedly limited alternative. I argue that we need to undertake a re-thinking of sexuality and sexual health (of sexual citizenship) that attends to significant existing absences in critical non-commercial writings concerned with sexuality.

These critical voices—which include writings arising from the Gender/Sexuality field, and from the Preventive Health field (such as sex education policy materials)—aim to offer alternative understandings of heterosexuality and masculine sexuality to those which are on offer in the popular media. Yet such critical approaches remain undeveloped, largely negative and/or focussed upon danger/risk rather than considering heterosexuality in terms that might encourage young men in particular to be inspired by the possibilities of egalitarian sexual practices and embrace the aim of ending sexual violence.

When I concentrate upon the critical voices within Gender/Sexuality studies and Preventive Health I am particularly looking at heterosexuality, because I see it as the most problematic arena in analyses of sexuality at the moment and also because I do not think heterosexuality should remain the unmarked and un-remarked category. It seems to me that it is important to make heterosexuality visible, just as we might aim to render masculinity and whiteness visible.

## Plan

My aim is to develop this overall analysis by outlining three interconnected arguments. Writings in (1) the Gender/Sexuality field and (2) in Preventive Health, both have a primarily negative 'sex as danger' approach with regard to heterosexuality. What this means is that (3) the two critical non-commercial voices which are the focus of this paper are not able to attend to hetero-pleasure.

Why would that matter? Why would lack of attention to pleasure matter? Existing research indicates that recognition of pleasure in sexual health education results in increased negotiation of sexual practices. It would seem that attending to hetero-pleasure generates greater gender equity. Hetero-pleasure, in short, has ramifications for anti-violence strategies. This means that not attending to hetero-pleasure in the Gender/Sexuality and Preventive Health writings begins to look like a problem.

## Heterogeneous trajectories in the Gender/Sexuality field

The Gender/Sexuality field (which is a crucial source for alternative understandings of masculine sexuality and anti-violence agendas) contains disparate sub-fields. Tensions between heterogeneous trajectories in the Gender/Sexuality field then impact upon analyses of heterosexuality.

I have suggested elsewhere that the three main subfields of Feminist, Sexuality and Masculinity Studies in the Gender/Sexuality field are not simply commensurable bits that fit together neatly like pieces of a jigsaw. The subfields contain differing knowledge cultures involving (amongst other things) different theoretical underpinnings and emphases (Beasley, 2005). On this basis I argue that, since the 1960s/70s, the subfields have aligned in shifting ways, and that this is particularly evident in relation to sexuality. Initially Feminist and Masculinity Studies developed closely linked Modernist theoretical paradigms under the rubric of the term 'gender'. However, with the rise of Postmodern approaches Feminism and Sexuality Studies have moved closer to one another in terms of overarching theoretical frameworks. By contrast, Masculinity Studies increasingly appears as 'the odd man out' (Beasley, 2009). This dissonance between the subfields became explicit in the 1980s so-called 'sex wars' and has continuing effects in relation to analyses of heterosexuality.

## Feminist/Sexuality/Masculinity Studies and the sex wars

Feminist and Masculinity Studies literatures—that is, Gender Studies literatures—have been in an ongoing ‘conversation’ with Sexuality Studies writings. A crucial theme in this conversation may be summarised as the ‘pleasure and danger’ ‘sex wars’. The ‘sex wars’ amounted to a debate between on the one side *Modernist Radical Feminist* (Gender studies) thinkers like Catharine Mackinnon, Andrea Dworkin, Susan Griffin and Mary Daly, amongst many others, talking about ‘sex as danger’ in the 1970s/80s, and on the other side the growing influence from the late 1980s/1990s of *Postmodern* thinkers associated with Sexuality Studies, talking usually from a Foucauldian and Queer Theory perspective about ‘sex as pleasure’: the so-called ‘pro-sex’ position. In short, the ‘sex-as-danger’ stance became aligned with Modernist feminist thinking and the ‘pro-sex’ stance with Postmodern thought in both feminist and sexuality thinking.

Modernist radical feminist writers like Catharine Mackinnon and Andrea Dworkin in the 1970s and 1980s drew attention to the ways in which sexuality was socially constructed along gendered lines to uphold men’s social dominance. They noted the links between normative heterosexuality and displays of men’s power over women such as rape, and were rather courageously critical of penis-centred conceptions of sexuality. They were consequently inclined to depict women as a group as vulnerable and men as a group as predatory. In this analysis, men and women were categorically divided. The emphasis was on gendered power and in this context men’s sexual power over women.

The Modernist radical feminist approach was, in short, focussed on, the ‘danger’ of heterosex, and the evils of prostitution, pornography and rape. In this account men were ‘hegemonically abusive’ (Heise, 1997: 423). Though men had access to pleasure, it was oppressive sexual pleasure. Lesbians, by contrast, because they were women, engaged in gentle womanly sexual pleasure. Heterosexual women appeared predominately as passive victims who had no fun at all, or at least not with their sexual partners (Kanneh, 1996: 173). Importantly, this ‘sex as danger’ position remains *the* most common viewpoint in Masculinity Studies today since—along with feminist work on violence—it remains one of the last bastions of support for Modernist radical feminist agendas.

However, such a position increasingly came under fire from the 1980s onwards with the rise of the so-called ‘pro-sex’ position (Echols, 1983; Echols, 1984; Rubin, 1994; Califia, 1996; Sullivan, 1997; Epstein and Renold, 2005). The ‘pro-sex’ stance set itself in opposition to radical feminism in particular and was strongly associated with the rise of Foucauldian Sexuality Studies and Queer theory developed by theorists

like Judith Butler, Gayle Rubin and Steven Seidman. These theorists were considerably less attached to gender categories. Moreover, sex in this approach was precisely about *embracing* danger, power and even consensual violence.

This shift in focus towards pleasure did not however produce a renewed understanding of heterosexuality, because the 'pro-sex' position was primarily, even almost exclusively, about queer sexualities. In such pro-sex theorising, queer minorities were discriminated against, but at least they now all had fun. Heterosexual men were still sexual and still nasty. And heterosexual women largely disappeared from sight, probably because of the sheer embarrassment in this pro-sex context of being so boring. They were still stubbornly having no fun at all (Beasley, 2005: 122–3; Jackson, 1999: 13–15). The pro-sex stance was a new development but it basically attended to queer sexualities and largely ignored heterosexuality, except as that which was mentioned in passing in order to be refused. Heterosexuality was for the most part merely the starting point against which the pro-sex approach constituted itself. In sum, while the pro-sex stance has become important in Gender/Sexuality studies, this pro-sex viewpoint has almost never been applied to heterosexuality.

The upshot of theoretical tensions and shifts in the Gender/Sexuality field expressed in the 'sex wars' debates is that heterosexuality is simply rarely examined nowadays in Gender/Sexuality studies writings. There are for example very few current (post 1998) books on heterosexuality (Jackson, 1999; Holland et al., 1998; Johnson, 2005; Scott and Jackson, 2007; Hockey et al., 2007; Ingraham, 2008). Heterosexuality is largely taken to be of little critical interest, as simply to be *equated* with heteronormativity, and remains mired in the old 'sex wars' divide. In that debate heterosexuality is cast by the 'sex as danger' perspective as immured in gendered inequality with an emphasis on its nasty and normative features. More recently, the combined Feminist/Queer 'pro-sex' perspective has become prevalent, but in this approach non-heterosexual queer becomes the site of subversive, transgressive, exciting and pleasurable sex, while heterosex continues to be locked into its earlier constitution as problematic. Insofar as heterosex is mentioned at all in such pro-sex theorising, the emphasis only shifts somewhat from earlier conceptions of it as largely nasty and normative to the implication that it is boring and normative (see Halley, 2008). These existing accounts of heterosex as either primarily nasty or boring, but in any case normatively exclusionary, do not provide much room for manoeuvre.

In essence critical scholarly voices in the Gender/Sexuality field have almost frozen and remain largely undeveloped regarding heterosexuality. To the extent that it is discussed, these voices effectively confine hetero-

sexuality to the abandoned backblocks of theoretical history by leaving it stuck in the predominately negative ‘sex-as-danger’ camp. For example, it is almost impossible to find any account of heterosexual men’s pleasure in Masculinity Studies that does not presume desire=damage. Only gay men’s desire involves permissible pleasure. Similarly, if we look at International Studies writings attending to sexuality it would seem that predatory men and vulnerable women abound (Peterson and Runyan, 1999; Bayliss and Smith, 2001–3rd edition; Tickner, 1992; Tickner, 2001). More specifically, most of the limited debate on sexuality in a global context has been fashioned by themes of trafficking, slavery and rape in war, themes largely dominated by gendered representations of male victimisers and feminine victims (Sabo 2005; Re-public: re-imagining democracy 2008, ‘Gendering Border Crossings’ [www.re-public.gr/en](http://www.re-public.gr/en); Women’s Worlds Congress 2008, [www.mmww08.org/index.cfm?nav\\_id=41](http://www.mmww08.org/index.cfm?nav_id=41)).

Such themes are unquestionably crucially significant. I do not intend to discount the weight of Feminist and Masculinity studies critiques of heterosexuality. However, I do want to challenge heterosexuality’s comparative absence in contemporary Gender/Sexuality thinking and to challenge its continuing restrictive constitution as unremitting cruelty and pain in the service of oppressive normativity. Heterosexuality is a majority orientation but, relative to other sexualities, it is under-theorised as a potential source of pleasure, interest and transgression, and over-determined as a source of domination. Such a stance offers little in the way of strategic directions for positively engaging young men (or young women) in the development of an egalitarian heterosexuality. This failure regarding strategies relevant to young men is perhaps particularly ironic in the case of Masculinity Studies. It is here that the intriguing status of Masculinity Studies as ‘the odd man out’ in Gender/Sexuality thinking—as at a distance from the now more thoroughly ‘pro-sex’ agendas of Feminist and Sexuality frameworks—comes home to roost, since Masculinity Studies’ general advocacy of a ‘sex-as-danger’ stance may well have implications for its capacity to re-conceptualise heterosexuality and sexual violence strategies.

The problematic analysis of heterosexuality in the Gender/Sexuality field reoccurs in odd ways in the Preventive Health field and thus in sex education materials.

## Preventive Health, Sexual Health

Preventive health has constituted itself as a field of thinking which moves beyond the narrowly instrumentalist medical model of health which emphasises disease and illness. The way in which the more expansive Pre-

ventive Health theoretical framework is expressed in sexual health is evident in the definition of the World Health Organization (WHO; World Health Organization), revised in 2002. This definition states,

[s]exual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social *well-being* related to sexuality; *it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity*. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled [[www.who.int/reproductive-health/gender/sexual-health.html#2](http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/gender/sexual-health.html#2)] (emphasis added)

In the Preventive Health framework sexual health not only has physical and mental aspects (biomedical aspects), but is also defined within a social framework. Sexual health is further defined in an *affirmative way*, stressing *positive well-being* and not just stating *the absence of negative qualities*. In other words, there are important links here with the pleasure oriented 'pro-sex' position I outlined in the 'sex wars' debate previously. This association is evident in the WHO definition of sexuality:

[s]exuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. [[www.who.int/reproductive-health/gender/sexual\\_health.html](http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/gender/sexual_health.html)].

What then is the problem? Preventive Health appears to be attending to pleasure quite adequately. However, while Preventive Health sometimes has a rhetorically expansive 'pro-sex' framing, it frequently fails to live up to its promise. It frequently falls back into more traditional models of health. This is because Preventive Health as a field—at least in relation to sexuality—draws upon a dual legacy: the influence of Gender/Sexuality field (evident in its attention to gender/sexuality justice) and a concern with health as management of risk. Broom (2007) and Diprose (2007) amongst others, have outlined and problematised the crucial focus on prevention of danger and risk within Preventive Health. This dual legacy induces a predisposition to fall back upon the primarily negative 'sex-as-danger' orientation with regard to heterosexuality. In many, if not most, accounts of sexual health, the 'sex-as-danger' feminist position I discussed earlier is reborn as populations and individuals being exposed to health 'risk' (on 'risk' see also Beasley and Bacchi, 2007). More affirmative and expansive accounts of (hetero)sexuality, which en-

able consideration of hetero-pleasure, become side-lined. The question is, how does this regression to a primarily negative account happen? Sexual Health becomes aligned with danger and 'risk' with regard to sexuality via *both* medicalised and social versions of risk management.

In the first instance it lapses into an instrumental medicalised account of sexuality, reinforcing a focus on sexual 'problems' conceived in biomedical terms. For an example of this, consider the first World Congress for Sexual Health in April 2007, with a classic Preventive Health conference theme of 'Achieving Health, Pleasure and Respect' the main topics—a rather grim and decidedly medical looking list—involve a disturbing number of disorders, infections and dysfunctions [[www.sex-sydney-2007.com/callabstracts.htm](http://www.sex-sydney-2007.com/callabstracts.htm)]. The list reveals the tendency in Preventive Health to discard its more expansive pro-sex claims in favour of returning to medical management.

Secondly, even when Preventive Health models of sexuality do not lapse into miserable medicalisation, more socialised versions of 'risk' frequently still dominate. For example, in the 4th Edition of *The Puberty Book*, (Darvill and Powell, 2007: 127) a book recommended by a doyen of Preventive Health in the arena of sexuality, Family Planning Australia, in answer to the question 'can sex be fun?' the answer is,

[s]ex can be lots of fun...it depends on the circumstances. If both partners want to have sex together and are protected against unwanted pregnancy or catching an STI, it is more likely to be enjoyable.

A pro-sex agenda quickly becomes, 'avoid pregnancy and don't get STIs.' Tellingly the clitoris gets four lines in this book, while vaginas get over 20. This is, I should add, one of the better Australian books for adolescents.

Non-consensual heterosexual sex and sexual violence is undoubtedly a world-wide concern. Obviously paying attention to sex as danger/risk is important. For example the 2003 Australian Study of Health and Relationships (ASHR, 2003) and the 2003 National Survey of Australian Secondary Students (NSASS, 2003) both show a significant pattern of forced sexual activity in Australia (Combes and Hinton, 2005). Yet sex education is not compulsory in Australian schools and there is no nationally-consistent curriculum for teaching teenagers about relationships or sexual and reproductive health. This is not a problem in Australia alone. Furthermore, most sexual health education programs throughout the world remain restrictively focussed upon biomedical and reproductive information (Powell, 2007; ARCSHS 2003; SHine SA, [sexual\\_health\\_statistics\\_2008.pdf](#); Campbell, 2005; Irvine, 2000).

However, perhaps an even more important limitation of sex education programs is the insistent use of fear and risk of disease to try to motivate people to practice ‘safer’ sex (Philpott et al., 2006). In this setting it is no wonder that there is considerable evidence that the ‘the “official” discourse of sex education [does] not relate to teenage lives’ (Chambers et al., 2004). Specifically, the sex education curriculum almost entirely evades minority heterosexualities, but it also all too often neglects the complicated process of choices regarding sexual behaviour, and is *de-eroticised*. My point here is that a proudly pro-sex orientation in sexual health agendas can still involve a heavy dosage of regulatory imperatives and does not necessarily produce attention to pleasure, even to heterosexual pleasure.

For example, the SHARE Project (a sexual health program for upper level high school students in South Australia which ran between 2003 to 2005 under the auspices of SHine SA) strongly emphasised its holistic Preventive Health framing, Yet SHARE was explicitly shaped by concerns about risk and danger, and although the program did stress being positive about sex, at the same time, the program could barely mention pleasure. This is not a criticism of SHARE, which faced vitriolic attack by Christian Right-Wing lobbyists precisely for its ‘pro-sex’ stance (Gibson, 2007), but simply to point out, that Preventive Health in sexuality—even in its more progressive manifestations—is rarely in practice about sexuality. It is rarely about doing sex, let alone about experiencing or giving pleasure, and much more about health as regulatory management of social risk.

Debra Lupton, along with many others who offer critical perspectives on Preventive Health, employs Foucault’s work on the modern surveillance of bodies to challenge its risk/danger orientation (Lupton, 1994: 20–40). Is this the answer? Should we simply turn away from the Modernist ‘sex-as-danger’ approach and adopt a Postmodern Foucauldian ‘pro-sex’ stance? While I see advantages in the latter perspective, I am not sure this analysis is sufficient either.

The Foucauldian ‘pro-sex’ camp does at least bring Queer sexualities into view. However, it is inclined to equate pleasure almost exclusively with Queer sexualities, while heterosexuality=heteronormative and heterosexual women simply disappear from view. The Foucauldian pro-sex stance may not be the answer. Indeed, as I have noted in relation to sex education programs such as SHARE, a ‘pro-sex’ framework, affirming sex is ‘healthy’, does not get us very far. It certainly does not necessarily involve recognition of pleasure.

## Recognition of pleasure in sexual health and strategies for gender equity

What if we refused the sex wars binary of danger versus pleasure and took a different direction? What if a concern with risk—with making sex safe—and a concern with pleasurable sex are not mutually exclusive. In this context, existing research indicates that recognition of pleasure in sexual health has resulted in greater safety, in increased use of condoms by men and greater involvement of women in negotiation of sexual practices. (Philpott et al., 2006; Ingham, 2005; *The Power of Pleasure*, <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/news/powerpleasure.html>; Holland et al., 1992).

Recognition of pleasure paradoxically appears to produce more egalitarian rather than non-consensual sexual relations between men and women. This research information is not just relevant to prevention of disease. Recognition of hetero-pleasure can in other words inform a shift towards *positively* reconstructing men's identities in ways that exclude violence against women and promote gender equity (White, 2000; Jenkins, 1990).

I have attempted here to indicate the limits of a primarily negative orientation to heterosexuality which emphasises danger and warnings. I have suggested that both Gender/Sexuality scholarly writings and Preventive Health sex education materials remain captured by precisely such a narrow agenda. Yet it is possible, even likely, that without attention to hetero-pleasure we will not engage young heterosexual men. Moreover, without engaging young men anti-violence discourses run the risk of continuing by default to leave young women with the task of being responsible for 'risk management' of sexuality and sexual violence (Carmody, 2005). While pleasure is not the answer to everything, we must face growing evidence that promoting pleasure when discussing sex is likely to encourage forms of sexuality that are safer and more egalitarian. Talking about pleasure is not necessarily at odds with safety but instead may well produce it.

### In conclusion

I suggest we may need to move away from the standard binary thinking of the old sex wars. Both Gender/Sexuality writings and Preventive Health in the form of the sexual health literature tend to be populated by vulnerable wombs and vaginas and troublesome penises. Perhaps we could instead learn from aspects of the HIV/AIDS work and refuse to accept the established binary of pleasure versus danger, such that 'safe sex' can also be hot sex.

Strategies to encourage egalitarian (hetero)sexuality, and to end sexual violence, must move beyond conceptions of heterosexuality simply as a problem and instead *generate* positive identification with forms of heterosexual masculinity attuned to egalitarian sexual practices. As Moira Carmody (2005) puts it, we need an ‘ethical erotics’.

Making safe sex hot may well provide a more attractive counter-discourse than the existing emphasis on heterosexuality as monolithically normative, inequitable and risky. But how do we do this without also energising conservative and/or religious forces? Putting hetero-pleasure back into Gender/Sexuality studies and into sex education is not just a question of getting out the aromatic oils and an exotic massage book, but is a deeply political question.

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# Chapter 3

## The Gays and the Geeks: Recentring Marginalised Identities in the Creative City

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After years and years of persecution, ridicule and never, ever getting the girl (or guy), geeks are finally, irrefutably, certifiably chic. They appear on the covers of magazines ... eat at the best tables ... and elevate the price of real estate in every important city in the world (Feineman, 2005: 9)

In this paper, which is part of a larger project exploring geek cultures, I want to focus on the revaluing or recentring of geek identities, along with other previously marginalized identities, in accounts of contemporary urban change. In particular, I am interested in a formulation of the new ‘value’ of two groups, “geeks” and “gays”, in accounts of the rise of a new “creative economy” of cities.<sup>1</sup> In terms of geeks, this paper is thus concerned with the revaluing of IT workers in the so-called digital economy. As Winifred Poster (2008) argues, the shift to an informational economy has led to traditionally subordinated identities (such as IT geeks) gaining a new dominance, unsettling previous equations of high value and low value economic activities and cultural identities. In my own work on geeks, I am seeking to explore further the repositioning of geek identities across a range of social locations, of which the “creative city” is a prominent example.

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1 I should make it clear that this paper concentrates on male gays and geeks, not least in order to line my work up with the GEXcel theme. Moreover, I am especially interested in how geekiness interfaces with masculinity. I acknowledge, of course, the growing and fascinating ‘geek girl’ scene, which articulates geekiness to femininity in really interesting ways. Sherrie Innes (2006) has edited a great book on popular culture’s girl geeks. In terms of the gays, I’m particularly interested in the way that gay men have been constructed as a ‘pioneering’ group within the creative class thesis (which draws its ideas in this regard at least in part from the ‘pink economy’ discourse). Florida himself occasionally discusses lesbians in the same breath as gay men, but tends to draw all his imagery and ideas about ‘gay lifestyle’ from a men’s perspective.



The notion that cities need to be “creative” builds upon the broader policy and academic discourses of entrepreneurial urban governance, which argue that cities have been encouraged (or forced, depending on your viewpoint) to act entrepreneurially, to behave like businesses in a competitive marketplace. Shifts in urban economics and politics, since the 1970s oil crisis and subsequent deindustrialization, are argued to have led to a situation where different cities have to compete with each other to attract increasingly footloose flows of capital and high value populations. To render themselves “attractive”, cities have undertaken branding and marketing strategies, and have sought ways to transform their postindustrial landscapes into desirable locations. Urban managers and policymakers continue to scout for new forms of competitive edge, and there is a heightened awareness of each city’s “position” in various new “league tables” of attractiveness and success (Hall and Hubbard, 1998).

One of the most widely sought after “solutions” to the problem of the postindustrial urban economy has been to attract populations of professionals with the skillsets alleged to be the key to new economic prosperity. Gone are the traditional riches of cities, and in their place must be tapped new reservoirs of potential capital. Again, policymakers and urban managers have sought ways to appeal to the lifestyles and taste cultures of these high value groups, and to compete with other cities attempting to do the same thing. While various professional groups have been targeted by urban branding campaigns, from business tourists to the financial sector, arguably the most sought after group currently being courted by cities is the so-called creative class. Cities are thus trying to brand themselves as places where creativity can flourish, or as in themselves creative cities (Leslie, 2005).

## Creative accounting

The best known advocate of the creative class as the key to success for cities is Richard Florida. In his most famous and widely read account, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002), he assesses the ability of different US cities to attract creative professionals – a group he defines in very broad terms, to include cultural workers, high-tech and knowledge workers, and various other supporting services. In this book and his subsequent research and policy advice, Florida explores the success stories (and the failures) of cities, and attempts to quantify a number of factors which he argues have causal influence on the ability of different cities to become creative, to attract this creative class. Florida’s work has been immensely influential in policy and urban management circles, and Florida has spun out a successful business in helping cities and regions maximise their

creative potential. At the same time, the work has attracted substantial academic criticism (e.g. Peck, 2005). Such important criticisms notwithstanding, it is nevertheless no exaggeration to call Florida's creative class thesis one of the most influential discussions of urban policy of the early twenty-first century. This influence aside, I want to ask what is at stake in this revaluing of geeks as part of the creative class.

There is a particular part of Florida's analysis that interests me here. In his attempts to understand why some cities are attractive to creatives and some are not, he assembles a range of pre-existing data and compiles various indices that rank different characteristics of cities and their populations. His proposition is that the traditional assets that a city might have traded on, such as raw materials or transport links, no longer have much pulling power in a postindustrial economy. Instead, he explores the "place climate" and "people climate" of cities: what kinds of cities (and neighbourhoods within cities) are conducive to creative labour and attractive to creative workers looking for the "best" place to set up home and work?

Florida settles on a number of such indices, and then proceeds to test their correlation with his overall assessment of cities' creative talent. Talent is in fact one of the three Ts at the heart of his new equation for successful cities, along with technology and tolerance. And this is where the marginalised identities of my title come into play. Of the different indices Florida runs against one another to look for the best match, he finds that an index of the size of a city's gay population correlates most strongly with its technology index:

The leading indicator of a metropolitan area's high-technology success is a large gay population. Gays not only predict the concentration of high-tech industry, they are a predictor of its growth (Florida and Gates, 2001: 1)

Note the tenor of that second sentence: this relationship is no mere correlation of independent variables, it is *causal and predictive*. It was this equation that first excited my interest in thinking about Florida's work. At one level, he is saying that among the most valuable assets a city can now have is its gay population, which represents something of a turnaround from conventional views of the 'value' of the presence of minoritised sexual cultures in urban spaces. Of course, gays have been selectively revalued in other ways too in recent years, for example as sweat-equity gentrifiers willing to move to run-down neighbourhoods and do up old houses, or as discerning, high-spending consumers (and therefore as a target market for high-end goods), or as a form of exotica that can be marketed to (selected) tourists in search of a bit of the 'oth-

er' (Badgett, 2001; Bell and Binnie, 2004; Binnie, 1995; Knopp, 1990). Visible gay neighbourhoods and leisure and consumption spaces ("gay villages") have been embraced to some extent in some cities, added to the promotional arsenal (within limits). But Florida's equation makes an even bolder claim than these forms of market value: the size of a city's gay population *will determine* its success, in that it predicts the possibility for high-tech growth. Why is this?

The assumption is not, to be clear, that lots of geeks are gay. Instead, the assumption is that geeks are sensitive to the openness of cities, and are looking for signs of tolerance. As a group that has been marginalised by "mainstream" society and therefore struggled to find acceptance, geeks are argued by Florida to be on the lookout for a place where they will be welcome. And they allegedly apply the following logic to their locational choices:

Gays can be thought of as the canaries of the knowledge economy because they signal a diverse and progressive environment that fosters ... creativity and innovation ... To some extent, the gay and lesbian population represents what might be called the "last frontier" of diversity in our society (Florida and Gates, 2001: 3)

So geeks are using the gay population as a proxy measure for tolerance; where other forms of "difference" might be more assimilable into mainstream society (Florida also considers ethnic difference and the size of the "bohemian" population as correlates, but argues that these populations have weaker predictive potential in relation to high-tech growth), the gay population represents the "last frontier": a city that welcomes gays will surely welcome anyone, including geeks (Eakin, 2002).

This, to me, is a fascinating proposition. It has, moreover, potentially far-reaching implications for urban managers and policymakers, who presumably should now be trying to nurture their gay populations into greater visibility, and trying to encourage other gays to move in. Florida himself speculates that the reason why Singapore recently relaxed some of its laws against homosexuality was its desire for repositioning as creative (a desire inflamed by a visit from Florida himself) (Dreher, 2005). But before we celebrate this new found impetus for gay liberation, we should pause for a moment to consider the assumptions that underlie Florida's claim, and its implications.

The first pause for thought is methodological. Florida and Gates' formulation draws its empirical data from 1990 census data – from a census that stops well short of gathering data explicitly about the US population's sexuality. How can the size of the gay population in each

city be measured, then? Florida and Gates go for a proxy measure, which they claim has statistical reliability: the number of households which contain two or more unmarried people of the same sex. Now, they are not quite claiming here that every household with, say, two unmarried men cohabiting means that they are assumed to be a gay couple (though in a footnote they do suggest that households with two men living together will be mainly gay couples; and interestingly they make this assumption for households with men living together, writing out lesbians almost as soon as they have mentioned them). But they are suggesting that this measure is the “best guess” for the size of the gay population and hence of “gay friendliness”. They might be right, but what I think is more important is the surrounding causality and inference: that gay cohabitation is a sign of tolerance and openness, and that gay cohabitation is somehow a readily discernable feature of a city’s landscape that can be scoped and assessed by would-be in-migrating geeks. These assumptions seem to me more controversial than the use of cohabiting same-sex couples as a proxy measure for the size of the gay population, though that in itself merits a line or two of critique, not least for failing to register other economic and social forces at work that might encourage same-sex cohabitation (recent immigration of male workers, for instance). But the two problems with Florida and Gates’ formulation noted above are the ones I want to think about here, together with the third: that geeks want to live in open and tolerant places (including being open and tolerant to gays).

## Gay spaces and geek moves

Let’s begin with the assumption that gay cohabitation is a sign of a city’s tolerance. To be sure, there is evidence of gay migration, nationally and internationally, where ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors are clearly at play. Kath Weston’s (1995) talk of the ‘great gay migration’ in postwar USA has explored the appeal of certain cities, such as San Francisco, as places to move to in order to live a certain kind of ‘gay life’. But the migration patterns of lesbians and gay men are much more complex than this, and are not only driven by the desire to live particular lifestyles enabled only by particular cities and cityspaces. Lesbians and gay men relocate as workers, family members, refugees, and for numerous other motives unconnected to their sexual identities. Furthermore, this simplified migration model homogenises the gay population and its relocation patterns, ignoring diversity. Not all gays dream of moving to San Francisco, and even those who do, don’t always find it as welcoming and ‘tolerant’ as they imagined. This is not to deny that the US’s gay population is unevenly distributed, and some cities have greater numbers of gays than

others. It is more about the assumptions at work here, in terms of how the gay population is imagined: as cohabiting in a city they have chosen to live in as a result of rational decision-making processes based on their own measure of the place's 'tolerance' and motivated mainly by the desire to experience that 'tolerance' in relation to their sexuality. Or maybe Florida and Gates' 'canary' metaphor suggests that gays will be the first to flee when the situation becomes toxic – indicating a different kind of flighty footlooseness, a canary-like sensitivity to (in)tolerance and, again, the primacy of sexual identity as locational decider.

Next is the issue of the assumption that gay cohabitation is the best measure of the size of a city's gay population: this assumes a teleology for urban gay life in which living together as a couple is the end point: gays feel so welcome here that they will settle down. In current sexual politics, there is much debate over such assimilationist strategies as campaigns for gay marriage or registered partnership, which claim that the effective disappearance of gay culture as it is assimilated into the 'mainstream' of suburban domesticity counts as success (Weeks, 2007). This is a contentious point for those who would refuse an assimilationist agenda, arguing this represents the erasure of lesbian and gay 'difference' (Berlant and Warner, 1998). Could an alternative proxy measure get at this population who, in their refusal to assimilate, are argued to exist in marginalised and ephemeral 'queer counterpublics'? Would a measure of such counterpublics offer a more significant sign of openness than the 'right to be tolerated' as a domesticated couple? What other indices of 'gay friendliness' could be used, and what forms of 'friendliness' are desirable and legible?

The issue of legibility is crucial, as noted earlier: there is a second key assumption in Florida's formula, and that is that (gay or straight) geeks and creatives can and will somehow assess how 'gay friendly' a city is when making their relocation choices. Again the link back to same-sex cohabitation as a proxy measure raises questions: how can the 'gayness' and 'gay friendliness' of the domestic landscape be read by prospective incomers? What signs might they look for? Presumably Florida imagines the familiar outward markers of gay neighbourhoods, such as rainbow flags, gay bars, and other consumption spaces targeting the pink economy. But what types of gay lifestyle are catered for through these amenities? And how can their presence be judged by prospective in-migrants?

So, in these respects (and in others), Florida's seemingly simple formula raises more questions than it answers. The assumptions that underpin it are never laid bare (except for the reasons for and rightness of using same-sex cohabitation as a proxy), but clearly there is a particular image of what a 'gay-friendly' city looks like, how that might be read by other

high-value potential incomers – and the most basic assumption, that gay equals tolerance and that geeks and creatives are attracted by that tolerance. Such troubles have done little, however, to slow the spread of Florida’s ideas worldwide (Peck, 2005), though as they have themselves migrated, they have taken on new meaning and significance.

## Creative Sweden

The ready applicability of Florida’s toolkit for assessing creative potential and future economic success means that variations of his indices have been developed in many different places, working towards a mapping of the global creative class (Florida, forthcoming). Part of building this map has been the running of the Florida model in different national contexts, checking it against other features and factors that might be at play. One such national assessment is provided by Hogni Kalso Hansen (2007) in a detailed report on Sweden’s creative economy. In this report, Hansen correlates numerous indices in order to assess the workings of the three Ts across the country’s cities and city-regions. His indices include a bohemian index, two indices of ethnic openness and one of ethnic integration, plus indices relating to education, cultural provision, welfare, entrepreneurialism and high-tech growth. One index absent from Hansen’s Swedish report, however, is the gay index. His explanation? In his own words:

Indicators of tolerance have given us many headaches. The Gay Index, one of Florida’s tolerance measures, is a poor measure in Europe because being gay is not as controversial as in the USA. ... Furthermore, the data is poor (Hansen, 2007: 91)

The gay index is jettisoned, therefore, because in countries like Sweden it does not perform the ‘canary’ function that it does in the US: being gay just isn’t different enough to function as a marker of openness and tolerance. (In fact, the best predictor of creative success in Sweden, Hansen argues, is the bohemian index, measuring the presence of artists. It is worth pausing once more to think about this, to consider the assumptions at work.) There are two that spring out: that countries like Sweden are more tolerant of lesbians and gay men than the US, and that this tolerance is so great that the gay population no longer works as a predictive factor in accounting for the ‘pull’ of cities for geeks and creatives. This sounds like a coded warning against assimilation, as heard in other laments about the ‘disappearance’ of the homosexual as ‘gay friendliness’ is further extended (Bech, 1997). But it also signals that the positive effects of Florida’s equation, as he alleged to be seen in Singapore, do not apply

in a country like Sweden: cities do not need to cash in on the presence of their gay population, because the ‘success’ of assimilation is so complete that being gay has become a non-issue. This clearly is an ambivalent outcome. On the one hand, it escapes from the troubling elements of Florida’s proxy measure (not least, in Hansen’s words, because ‘the data is poor’); on the other hand, it writes the gays out of the equation – an equation which in its own way acknowledged the symbolic and economic ‘value’ to cities of attracting, nurturing and supporting gay residents. Like other critiques of assimilationism, it demands that we ask what is lost in this apparent ‘success’.

In fact, Florida has himself shifted the focus of his attention from gays to another group that he now sees as his canaries for the cultural economy: foreign students. In *The Flight of the Creative Class* (2007), Florida worries that this high-value group might be put off from coming to the US to study (and thereafter to stay and work) because of homeland security and tightened anti-immigration and anti-terrorism legislation. This, Florida says, is the biggest mistake the US could make, as these potential migrants will simply reroute to somewhere else, somewhere more welcoming. Again, there is an interesting progressive message in Florida’s commentary, which singles out the last Bush administration as responsible for damaging the US economy through its obsession with the ‘war on terror’. Yet at the same time, it is of note that the gays have been usurped by foreign students as the group most sensitive to (in)tolerance, and as the predictors of future success or failure.

## Geek myths?

In the end, it is worth returning to the starting point of Florida’s original formula, even if it has been lost in Sweden or in the ‘war on terror’. Geeks – IT workers – have been revalued and repositioned in the new economy. This repositioning is also cultural: ‘It’s as if the economic hegemony of the geek in the 1990s, when high tech and the internet were driving the economy, has somehow been converted into a cultural hegemony’ (Grossman, 2005: 1). The rise of so-called ‘geek chic’ suggests that the geek, once marginalised and devalued, is now desirable and emulatable (Feineman, 2005). For Florida’s model, the geek is high value, and the key to a city’s economic success. Attracting and retaining geeks is thus the most vital imperative; cities must be ‘geek-friendly’. This elusive group is attracted (or repelled) by the place climate (the ‘vibe’ of a place) and the people climate (tolerance to difference, including geek-difference). Whatever the merits and problems with the creative class and creative city thesis, its role in recentring geek identity must be acknowledged. But we might want to scratch a little at this ‘myth’, too,

to ask whether geeks really are the new saviours of the city. The ‘disappearance’ of gays and the trailblazers for incoming geeks, meanwhile, reveals the ambivalent outcomes of assimilation as the dominant tactic in gay politics right now. Too different or not different enough – which is the best ‘gay index’?

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# Chapter 4

## Transnationalisation and its Absence: The Balkan Semiperipheral Perspective on Masculinities

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Q: You have left for more than 10 years now. What is for you today the concept of Eastern Europe?

A: *I have left in 1993. All the things are changing and you can not capture something now which should be rearticulated over and over again every single moment. Whatever you can say is both the truth and not the truth. I always have nostalgia when I discover still existing Eastern Europe, the one I knew.(...) I do not know what to think because the whole picture is very chaotic, but one thing is sure, that specific culture – and I think that it was a culture – that of Eastern Europe, has disappeared.* (Dubravka Ugresic, Interview in “Politika”, 27 March, 2009)

### Selfpositioning

Since I am not simply starting with one clear set of already accepted theoretical ideas, but instead, I am trying to introduce a critique coming from both the semiperipheral epistemic stand point and my own contextual knowledge, I am aware of the high risk of miscommunication, which is why this selfpositioning is even more relevant, than a ‘normal’ feminist epistemological requirement. Besides, I always doubt whether the complexity I am trying to deal with has any kind of immanent systematicity, or instead, is it simply a construct of a scientific mind. I often prefer to be a writer who can be comfortable with this dilemma spelled out by Ugresic: “Whatever you can say is both the truth and not the truth.” Elsewhere I have also discussed the problems of ‘muteness’ (towards the ‘outside’ of the context) and ‘numbness’ (towards the own context) of a gender scholar from the semiperiphery. She/I, is/am mainly functioning outside the authentic epistemic communities, and therefore outside the shared, accepted and recognised set of consent based meanings, con-

cepts, paradigms and messages. However, I have no other possibility, but to speak from the **discursive void** about the semiperiphery and from the **epistemic void** out of the semiperiphery. I also need to speak from the kind of **diachronic void** created by the forward and backward movements of historical time, and the present intensified pluralism of historicities (Blagojević, 2009). So, my primarily sociological training, research, imagination, and my feminist engagement simply make sense only if this very concept, the concept of the semiperiphery, with its clear materiality and with all the difficulties and ambiguities, is being employed, and only if I can still, behind the phenomenological chaos, see the links with the globalised hierarchical structures.

Also, to position myself even further, I claim that I am oriented towards political and social change and I find myself largely dissatisfied with the academic 'l'art pour l'artism' and academic elitism. Social theory, including feminist theory, I see as an open ended possibility for intellectual exercise, but above all, as a tool for change. And most of the time I have a feeling of urgency when it comes to social change, on a global or local level. I approach knowledge production, including theory production, from a perspective of the sociology of knowledge, meaning that I try to understand how it is being produced, where, by whom and for whom, or what is missing and why. I reject 'the theory' which is not open to experience and research, or 'social philosophy', for example, which stays in the corridors of literary texts. I am a kind of 'generalist', one who moves across the boundaries of different theoretical schools and traditions, canons and paradigms (Davis, 2008). I see myself as someone who is struggling to make sense of academic knowledge for social change, and to bridge the gaps between theory, research, activism and policies, and all that, by thinking from the context of the semiperiphery, and following the tradition of 'problem oriented', not 'theory oriented' academic research. I read knowledge from the context where it is being produced and believe that 'the knowers' are responsible for the creation of discourses that have powerful material impacts. Self/reflection of the knowers should include reflection on responsibility and accountability to certain audiences and contexts, as well.

## Deceiving Concepts: Transnationalisation and/or Globalisation?

The concept of transnationalisation is increasingly coming in to use, in parallel with, but more often instead of, the concept of globalisation (for example: TransEurope project, 2009). In academic discourse transnationalisation is being articulated as a more inclusive notion and as

a notion which is especially useful for addressing the issues related to movements and crossing the boundaries of states and/or nations. This, on a phenomenological level, really represents the most tangible and visible aspect of the present day globalisation. Transnationalisation usually addresses the flows of people (migrations), goods, services, information and financial flows, which take place across the boundaries. It is largely perceived as a set of mainly spontaneous series of movements mostly based on individual choices, which are related to the increased individual and group agencies. Globalisation, on the other hand is more often used to denote global structural arrangements which involve international financial institutions and trade agreements. Globalisation is encouraging transnationalisation. Two concepts are necessarily linked, but they are not synonymous. There are several problems related to seemingly neutral shift from the concept of globalisation to the more general concept of transnationalisation. The major problem comes from the fact that the present transnationalisation is de facto taking place **within the context** of neoliberal model of globalisation. This also means that many of the notions 'we', scholars, use, as well as theories that are created, are already 'polluted' by that context, even when there were critical intentions in the first place.

The notion of transnationalisation is often neutralising and blurring the very hierarchical nature of the globalisation. Moreover, the extreme and hierarchical nature of globalisation is disguised even further because the concept of transnationalisation bears the inscription of positive memory related to yet another similar concept, that of 'internationalisation' which was connected to the leftist movements and their solidarity (i.e. women's movements). Tracking alterations of the meanings and concepts which lead to the neutralisation of the true meaning and dominant practice of present globalisation, is highly politically relevant. Besides ultimate positivity, 'transnationalisation' has also inscribed ultimate progressivity. The attribute which is at the core of description of the process of transnationalisation is 'increasing'. To simplify: the increasing exchange and circulation is per se taken as both positive and progressive. It very much reminds of the very logic of 'economy of scale', meaning that growth is beneficial per se. This leaves in fact very limited space for the questions of: what, who, why, how, with what consequences? These inscriptions are often misleading, since they suggest an overall positivity of intensification of transnationalisation, regardless of its real effects for different parts of the populations in different parts of the world. Even when human costs and 'social suffering' (Bourdieu, 1999) are documented, usually by ethnographic research of migrants and ethnic/racial minorities, the overall ideologically inscribed positivity of the process pre-

vails. Transnationalisation, similar to globalisation, has in time acquired the almost indisputable quality of inevitability, 'normalcy', 'naturalness'.

While globalisation is experienced and discursively articulated very differently, by different social agents and stakeholders, who question the 'universal truth' about present type globalisation from the perspective of critical thinking, transnationalisation is mostly escaping the critique as seemingly more 'neutral' and more agency dependent. In research practice, the emphasis on the agency of those who take part in the transnationalisation process, is often disguising the material and structural constraints which in the first place create the motivation for the movement. But the positive, self-centered and self-referential framing of the notion of transnationalisation, which originates from the core, is shaping the dominant discourse, globally as well. To free the concept from its obvious ideological burden, much research is still needed. There are still many blind spots. This is also the truth for yet another concept, which emerged from the political pragmatics of European unification, but is increasingly present in theoretical, not only policy discourse – the process of Europeanisation. Europeanisation is in fact part of the overall globalisation process, but in its essence it is simply the set of top-down procedures and legal adjustments and therefore closely favoring national and international elites and contributing to the increased global hierarchies.

Possible strategies which are being used for demystification and deideologisation of the concept of transnationalisation, or for its 'cleaning' from the bias coming from the global domination of the knowledge produced at the core, often blurring new global hierarchies include: epistemic interventions; theoretical developments which clearly define the major structural causes of increased inequalities and 'social suffering' world wide (Bourdieu, 1999); or provision of research evidence which can clarify practices and discourses related to transnationalisation. The very definition and choice of the research problems could work in the direction of either strengthening the ideological burden or questioning it and showing the bias of immanent progressivism of the process. For example, if the process of transnationalisation is understood as a process which is particularly favoring elites, and especially elites from the core countries, than it would also be important to examine the social and environmental consequences of high physical mobility of those elites which create 'transnational spaces'. It would be important to relate lifestyles of transnational elites to the realities of those who are bound to stay 'territorial', or to those who simply choose territoriality as an alternative to nomadism and constant movement.

An interesting possible epistemic strategy to deal with the concept of transnationalisation to make it more useful as a tool for knowledge

generating, comes from linguistics and the related idea of ‘transnationalisation of literature’. Sirpa Leppanen (1991) is discussing texts which are ‘heteroglossic’ in their nature. Similarly, I would suggest, we could imagine ‘heteroglossic’, or better even, ‘heterolocational theories’, to enable integration of contextual knowledges. Leppanen is building on Mary Louise Pratt’s theory on transnational literary texts, which suggests that the mainstream tradition of ‘linguistics of community’ should be replaced by community of ‘linguistic contact’. My feminist political reading of this strategy would call for the transnationalisation of the feminist theory through community of contacts, horizontally defined, instead of community built on canons. Canonisation of theory is disabling transnationalisation of theory, at least in the present state of global knowledge hierarchies and clear commodification of knowledge and that in turn is justifying the progressivistic bias of the concept of the transnationalisation. But, if there would be a step out of the canon (maybe that is in a way already happening with the intersectionality concept, Davis, 2008), and to enable (to paraphrase Leppanen) ‘polyphonic theoretical texts’ based on different contextual knowledges, that could create different knowledge field for situating research and experiences of globalisation and transnationalisation coming from different contexts.

Another way to deal with the limits of the concept of transnationalisation is to explore its validity by empirical research. I will give examples of two pieces of research which, in my reading, show how problematic and biased the concept of transnationalisation is. The first example is related to the research on ‘corporeal dimension of transnationalisation’ and explores personal mobility of Swedes through long distance traveling (Frandberg and Vilhelmson, 2003). The research has found that a small hyper-mobile group of Swedes makes almost 60% of international business trips. The number of international business trips per person and year is fifty times as high among the hyper-mobile as it is among the ‘slightly mobile’. If business travel is left out, the difference in travel intensity between men and women largely disappears. The internationally most highly mobile group constitutes 3–10% of the total Swedish population. Travel pattern of the internationally most mobile is distinguished from that of other groups by a high frequency of business travel. The authors conclude that ‘transnational social spaces involving Swedish residents are mainly a matter of transnational communities of professional elites’ (Frandberg and Vilhelmson, 2003: 176).

The second example relates to Sabine Mannitz’s research (2002) in which she explored what are the normative claims and effective practices of transnationalisation in German secondary schools. The author convincingly shows that neither textbooks, nor teaching practices, in the

public schools succeed to adequately promote the ideas of transnationalisation, or ideals of postnationalisms, or to truly integrate minority students and favour their cultural hybridisation. In other types of schools, Euroschools, attended by children of the Eurocrats, the European transnational elite employed in the supranational European institutions, children become prepared for their future elite position by getting 'hybridised', becoming individuals who grow up 'between national cultures' and who never quite get fully integrated into any national group. By contrasting them with the immigrant children in state schools in Germany, the author shows clearly how transnationalisation in one case works in favour and in the other against the children in question:

It does make a considerable and meaningful difference if someone's personal background gives them a qualifying club-card, signifying membership in a highly valued and privileged avant-garde of transnationalisation, or is understood as an indicator of lesser rights and underprivileged status in society. Since there are no efforts to do away with this factual imbalance, unifying Europe can hardly be thought as common platform for comprehensive integration, let alone radiate any considerable appeal for collective identification. (Mannitz, 2002:16).

In my own research, I also tried to deconstruct a myth of unquestionable privilege and gains of transnational migrations, even when elite groups are in question, such as women professionals or/and women scientists from postcommunist countries (Blagojević, 2009). While in some aspects of transnational migrations women do appear as agents and turn their lives into the positive scenarios, the overall effects of large scale migrations often serve to petrify or even strengthen patriarchal structures in the core countries and global hierarchies.

Theoretical developments question the concept of transnationalisation, directly or indirectly, by clearly linking territoriality, or locationality, or virtual space, with the process of globalisation. According to Young, for example, there is a division between 'money society' which is linked to financial flow of capital, and 'work society' which is territorially defined (Young, 2003). Present day globalisation, as a form of capitalism, is shaping specific gender orders, which are necessarily localised, even if they are localised in a transnational space of global mobility. Cheap wage zones and enclaves of informal economy are an integral part of the global economy. The present globalisation is clearly favouring a certain type of 'winners':

The almost exclusively male global elite managing the transnational corporations and the designers of the global financial architecture have not only welcomed the new global order, they also have **benefited** the most from the increased flexibility and informality of labor, money and politics. (Young, 2003: 4)

And defining the 'losers':

If women, ethnic minorities, and marginalized groups do appear in any of these elite accounts, it is only in terms of their deficiencies: they lack human capital; they have failed to adapt to the speed of technological change; and they are burdened with the time-consuming task of rearing children and caring for the elderly. These deficiencies have made them the 'losers of globalisation'. (Young, 2003: 5)

The previously discussed prevailing implicit positivity and progressivity of the notion of transnationality could be theoretically challenged from yet another angle, which is becoming increasingly relevant. The process of transnationalisation appears to be deeply ambivalent especially in relation to the fast developments of ICTs and creation of transnational virtual spaces.

Such technologies have major implications for sexualities and sexualised violences, and raise profound implications, contradictions and challenges for sexual citizenship. These implications include the affirmation of sexual citizenship, with the creation of new forms of sexual communities; and the denial of sexual citizenship, with the production of new opportunities for pornography, prostitution, sexual exploitation and sexual violences. (Hearn, 2006: 944)

Transnational movements are happening in physical space, social structural space, and virtual space, and they are necessarily connected to the time dimension, from its daily expression to different historicities. The phenomenological complexity of those time-space movements, together with their fragmentation, and fragmented knowledges about them, is disguising their primary causes which could be related to the certain type of globalisation. An unclear and blurred boundary between the concepts of transnationalisation and globalisation, is putting limits on critical approaches. So, it is necessary to make an effort to define a clear analytical distinction between the two. It appears that transnationalisation is a wider concept which in fact includes not only those movements which can be clearly connected to the neoliberal globalisation, but

others as well. It also includes the movements which are not only hierarchical, but horizontal, and which are agency driven more than structurally driven. So, transnationalisation 'works' as a wider, more inclusive concept, than globalisation. It can refer to both horizontal and vertical aspects of global exchanges of people, goods and information. On the other hand, for the critical perspective on globalisation, it is necessary to define present day globalisation as the top-down process of neoliberal development which increased global hierarchies, and which is mainly engineered by the global financial institutions and multinational corporations. It is strengthening global hierarchies between and within the societies, largely in connection to the locationality of the societies, regions, or even communities in question. Much of what appears as horizontal cross-boundary process, driven by simple increase of human agency, and often referred to as transnationalisation, is the consequence of previously established hierarchies by globalisation process. Further on, the concept of transnationalisation could be de-ideologised, by exploration of its origin, covert and overt meanings and use in different texts and for different audiences. It could be carefully examined with all its concrete, economic, political, ethical consequences for different social actors and locations. Transnationalisation is closely connected to the localisation, to the level where actual and tangible consequences of neoliberal globalisation get materialised.

### **Necessary concepts: The semiperiphery, de-development and 'surplus' of humans, communities and cultures**

The semiperiphery is a concept which emerges from the world system theory (Wallerstein, 1979). The renewed relevance of this concept is closely related to the process of 'transition' referring to the open ending processes of state and social transformation which took place in former socialist/communist societies and which was supposed to lead to market economy and multiparty democracy. In short, that is a process from communist to postcommunist societies, in fact capitalist societies, within the context of the neoliberal globalisation. The process is considered formally finalised for those states which became members of the EU, and went through the Accession process. However, in reality, there are still many deep structural similarities between the former communist states regardless of the fact whether they became the EU members or not. Those similarities can not be simply reduced to their developmental level, but more to: 1. legacies of communism and 2. their semiperipheral position in the context of globalisation. On the other hand, there are many dif-

ferences between ‘countries in transition’, which can not be reduced to the fact that they all share communist legacies, since those are also very different (i.e. former Yugoslavia and former Soviet states), and they can also be very culturally different (i.e. Former Soviet states).

The semiperiphery refers to the location of the regions, states, or sub-regions, even community, which are in the process of the present globalisation positioned **between the core and the periphery**. In the European context, it refers to the postcommunist countries, regardless of the fact whether the countries belong to the EU or not. However, the semiperiphery is more an analytical concept, even ‘strategic concept’ (Harding, 1998), then empirical generalization, since it brings into the light the phenomena of **de-development** of former industrialised societies and regions, closely connected to the structural adjustment towards ‘weak states and strong markets’ philosophy of neoliberal development. In the present intense transnationalisation processes location is not a simple geographical location, but primarily a position within the global hierarchy which has been largely shaped by that very position and its own territoriality. Locationality is connected to opportunity structures, and it connects global/macro level to micro/individual level. Structurally, the semiperiphery is characterised by its effort to ‘catch up’ with the core, which closely ties to its own **self-colonisation tendency** (Kovacevic, 2008). ‘Catching-up’, creates specific gender regimes, which highly mobilise women’s resources both in the private and public domain, and generally improves women’s bargaining position, but strengthens misogyny to counterbalance women’s gains and enable continuous high exploitation of their resources (Blagojević, 2009).

The de-development is closely linked to yet another social fact: many people, globally, and many communities and cultures, are becoming ‘surpluses’. Locationality of communities and cultures, their positioning in global hierarchies, decides also about individual probability to become ‘surplus’. Individuals all over the world are becoming increasingly dependent on locationality. They become ‘surplus’, meaning socially excluded, ‘social problems’, they become slaves, victims of human trafficking, or heavily exploited labor force in cheap labor zones, depending on their locationality. They can not become relevant consumers, so they can become cheap producers, or disappear, all together. It is especially striking how intense de-industrialisation, which is happening not only at the semiperiphery but in the core as well, is simply not connected to the overall de-development paradigm. The prevailing progressivistic view, supported especially by the optimism related to the development of ICTs is simply distorting the overall picture of the global developments.

## Transnationalisation and its absence: Winners and losers

Masculinities in the Western Balkans are being defined within the context of an overall de-development process of the semiperiphery, on one hand, and transnationalisation of the certain locations and parts of the populations, on the other hand. The first process, the one of de-development, is defining the losers, the second one, is defining the winners. The level (top or bottom) and the type of the transnationalisation ('work society' vs. 'money' society), or even the absence of transnationalisation, is determining on which part of the 'winner-loser' continuum one individual or group will find him/her/itself. Conditions which have been created at the semiperiphery by neoliberal globalisation clearly establish that those individuals and communities which are not included into the process of economic transnationalisation become 'losers'. Territoriality of the 'work society' and its locationality within the global hierarchies is a framework for the local hierarchies as well. However, inclusion into the transnational flows depends largely on locationality, and the very locationality of the semiperiphery creates possibilities or lack of them for individual and group actors. Global restructuring is making real winners of those who are integrated into the global financial flows, lesser losers of some of the professionals who can sell their services on the local and global markets ('New European Proletariat', Blagojević, 2009), and absolute losers of those who stay in the communities which are not integrated into the transnational flows. In those communities, local actors, even if they are in some official position of elite members, are in the most of the cases just 'little bit lesser losers'. This could be illustrated by the following example, which is on purpose reduced to its pure factuality.

In April 2009, Milan Simic, forty-two year old worker from the extremely poor Kursumlija municipality, southern Serbia, lost his job in the local bakery since he has stolen two bread rolls and several pieces of pastry. Milan Simic is a single man, a widower (his wife died four years ago), living with an old father, three sons and an unemployed brother. His household is below poor, by any standard. He lives five kilometers away, in a village, walking every day to his work and back. The other actor in this social tragedy is Milan's director, Dragan Gvozdenovic. Gvozdenovic found himself in this position only few weeks earlier and had a clear mandate to stop stealing from the company which is still not completely privatised, and with only few assets left. He himself felt torn apart about the event, and he returned Milan Simic to work, after only several days. He was severely attacked by media for his 'cruelty', and now he wants to sue the media back. Finally, the third actor is a mayor of the municipality, a man, who suddenly decided to give some very small

help (100 euros) to Milan Gvozdenovic. Citizens in Kursumlja have different comments on the event, but since most of them are extremely poor, they openly wonder whether they should have stolen something to be able to get some help in return (“Vreme”, March 26, 2009).

This story is a perfect example of a **dead end** created by the de-development of the semiperiphery. Milan Simic is a clear representative of one of the marginalised groups of men in society in transition. Moreover, as a widower, living in a rural area, in an impoverished part of Serbia, which is still not one of the EU countries, experiencing extreme poverty, being the single breadwinner for five dependents, and with no prospects for any positive change, he is a good example of non-hegemonic masculinity, one of the ‘losers’. That masculinity, as other marginalised masculinities, is marginalised in media, in public policies, and in public discourses. Milan, his brother, his father, and most probably even his three sons, are ‘surplus’ which is being created by the combination of his socio-demographic characteristics (42 years old, widower, father of the three children, living in a rural area, worker), but even more so by the de-development and locationality of his community. And these are only the facts related to material poverty, not insights related to ‘social suffering’ that Milan and many other men in a similar societal position experience. Masculinities which are being connected to the locationality which stayed out of the process of globalisation, or transnationalisation, are on the loser’s side, even if they appear to be functioning within the local hierarchies. In fact, local hierarchies are increasingly becoming irrelevant in comparison to global hierarchies.

This is something I have seen over and over again, in different countries of transition, where I was engaged to work in my capacity of international gender expert (for UNDP or International Fund for Agricultural Development). The number of communities, and the scope of regions which out of a sudden stayed isolated, and cut from the rest of the world, without the clear development strategies, and indeed without the possibility to define the one in ever changing global environment, is simply striking. Most striking is the fact that otherwise rich agricultural regions lost their capacity to enable sustainability even for the local population. De-development meant impoverishment for many, which is qualitatively different from poverty existing in developing nations. Although this has often been explained as a failure of previous command economies to enable development, the truth is that neoliberal development was working at the cost of human development.

Globalisation, even more than the wars in the Balkans, has created the situation in which most of the population becomes ‘surplus’. It is ‘surplus’ for the poor states, captured by the irresponsible elites, new

political entrepreneurs, who are increasingly in a position to accumulate both wealth and power, due to the privatization, transnational flows of financial capital, war and crime, as well as due to the increasingly complicated and nontransparent transformation procedures coming from the top-down Europeanisation. Wars in the Balkans, as it turns out very clearly, were a method of transition, and inclusion into the globalisation by different means, but moving societies involved in the same direction as it is the case with other postcommunist countries. Since local economies, much before the wars started, could not absorb population through employment and social integration, wars actually even more drastically 'legitimised' the 'low value' of humans. After the wars, with persistent economic crises, in the neoliberal environment, this 'surplus' of humans persists in actual way of governing. It corresponds well with the 'survival values' as opposed to 'self-realization values' which are prevailing in postcommunist societies (Inglehart, 2000; Poznanski, 2000).

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# Chapter 5

## Why Masculinity is Still an Important Empirical Category: Migrant Men and the Migration Experience

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### Introduction

Introducing the idea of the “hegemony of men”, Jeff Hearn (2004) questioned the way that both hegemony and masculinity have been employed in the Critical Studies of Men (CSM). In particular he argues that the focus on masculinity “is too narrow” and that what is required empirically is a return to a more critically detailed and comprehensive deconstructive approach to the study of men. The aim of this paper then, is not to reject this argument by simply bringing back masculinity as an empirical category but rather to develop a new approach within the CSM that will contribute to the type of deconstructive study of the hegemony of men that Hearn (2004: 59) suggests. To do this, the following discussion aims to present my current work that involves developing a theoretical link between the CSM and postmarxist theory and its application into the field of migration and men. This work also engages substantively with the project of *deconstructing the hegemony of men and masculinities*.

### Hegemonic masculinity as the empty signifier of gender

In ‘Deconstructing Hegemonic Masculinity’ (Howson, 2009) an examination of hegemonic masculinity using deconstruction methodology is presented. The emphasis here is to unpack the hegemonic masculinity and analyse its constituent processes such as, contradiction and dialectic that in turn exposes inherent antagonisms and ultimately the dislocation of the gender order it supports. This theoretical analysis was informed by a postmarxist approach because it more than any other contemporary theory offers an innovative approach to hegemony and the nature of social ontology (Sim, 2000: 5). Specifically, postmarxism calls into question the possibility of a complete and coherent social reality. By utilising a deconstructive methodology it seeks to expose the inherent instability or dislocation of the social world produced by antagonism (see

Laclau, 1990, 1996, 2000, 2005, 2006). It is at this point, that is, social dislocation, that postmarxism draws on the theory of hegemony to explain the inexorable desire to overcome this situation so as to present the social world as unified, ordered and complete. My previous and current work (see Howson 2006, 2009) seeks to develop an application of these postmarxist ideas and methodology to the politics of gender. In particular, to develop the idea that hegemonic masculinity represents an “empty signifier” (Laclau, 1996: 36–46) in so far as its task is the signification of a complete and coherent gender order. This task takes place from what I refer to as a *mediatory* position. In other words, hegemonic masculinity must speak to both men and women and produce the signification of gender identities and configurations of practice that are in turn capable of creating ties between men, men and women and women, that crucially will enable both men and women to know what identities and practices to aspire<sup>2</sup> towards and in so doing become complicit actors (Connell, 1995: 78) within the hegemony of men. Aspiration and complicity requires legitimacy and the latter is based on what I have described as “hegemonic principles” that in Western gender orders, at least, are signified by heterosexuality, breadwinning and aggression (Howson, 2006: 74). These principles though, are not just *descriptors* of real gender identities and practices but more importantly, they set out the *conditions* for the existence of the hegemony of men<sup>3</sup>.

Following Laclau (2006: 107; 2005: 170) the idea of empty signifier represents the signification of a social completeness that is inherently impossible to achieve in reality. Nevertheless, an empty signifier finds the conditions of overcoming this impossibility in the process of hegemony. This idea of an impossible completeness that is, social dislocation made possible through hegemony is of crucial importance for the CSM project because it challenges the idea that the hegemony of men can ever be complete and coherent or that the conditions for this existence are natural, essential and a priori. Impossibility is reflected in Connell’s (2000:

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2 The development of *aspiration* as a concept applied to hegemonic masculinity as empty signifier is a work-in-progress. Very briefly, as opposed to necessity and the idea that men must and can only do and think certain things, aspiration seeks to highlight a more agentic but complicit approach. In particular, that men’s agency is always part of a continuing process of signification that is ultimately framed within hegemony.

3 This is an important distinction in postmarxism and draws on Heideggerian philosophy in an attempt to emphasise the exploration of the conditions that give rise to and sustain social life. This type of analysis operates at the ontological-level. While on the other hand research that accepts the conditions of social life and simply seeks to describe or classify life and its categories is operating at the ontic-level (see Howarth, 2004: 266).

54) discussion of gender orders as sets of relationships that represent systemic connections but also, and most importantly, divisions between people, groups and institutions. Hearn's (2004: 65) reference to the importance of "intersectionalities" also resonates with the postmarxist argument that social life and thereby gender orders are multiply dislocated situations whose completion requires a hegemonic operation. However, such an operation can only ever express the appearance of a complete gender order. To reproduce and sustain this appearance the hegemonic uses both coercion/consensus. However, a reliance on the former leads to domination. In other words, hegemony produced and reproduced by dogmatically protecting the hegemonic principles in the last instance by coercion and exclusion is referred to as "dominative hegemony". In contrast, hegemony that is based on moral and intellectual leadership and appears to grow and change through organic shifts in thinking and acting and thereby acting inclusively is referred to as "aspirational hegemony" (see Howson, 2006: 29–32). However, it is only a dominative form of hegemony, ambiguously introduced, that continues in the CSM literature as marking the current gender order.

Hegemony then, whether dominative or aspirational, relies on the construction of its own form of unity or universality, based on what postmarxism refers to as "logic of equivalence" (Laclau, 2000: 302–303). This logic produces chains of equivalences representing social formations constituted of identities that may well be different but whose interests and values align or chain with others and can be represented by an empty signifier that has emerged from the chain itself. This approach has significant implications for the ongoing critique of hegemonic masculinity within CSM particularly those focused on reification and essentialism. In other words, that hegemonic masculinity is either presented as some thing which represents principles that inhere in all men as material/natural facts (that is, essentialism) or become abstracted from real men and then are asymmetrically imposed on them in their everyday life (reification). This type of confusion produces the slippage that is central to the critique of hegemonic masculinity in the CSM literature. However, as an empty signifier the content of hegemonic masculinity is always born of and embedded back into social relations. Thus its principles are never essentialised in the individual man but rather represent the expectations of the gender identities it represents. Most importantly, the reality of antagonism suggests that in social relations these expectations are not always able to be met resulting in dislocations within the hegemony of men for example, subordination and marginalisation.

Hegemonic masculinity is also referred to as an ideal as well as what ideal men actually do. The difficulty with this type of approach is that it

gives hegemonic masculinity an objectivity and transcendence that does not match the reality of its own limits. The limiting of objectivity and therefore the inevitable incompleteness of any social order is a central aspect of politics in social life (see Laclau, 1990: 89–92). In effect, in any society there is always an “excess of meaning” that hegemony must try to master (Laclau, 1990: 89). We can of course see this in the structuring of gender identities around hegemonic masculinity and in particular, how this hegemonic structuring today attempts to manage often by exclusion subordinate and marginalised meanings such as queer, feminine, black, Muslim, effeminate, aged and disabled from its normativity. Thus, to maintain the appearance of completeness the hegemony of men must continuously produce aspiration that creates complicity with its hegemonic principles and in so doing divert legitimacy away from the so-called anti-community and its principles, practices and identifications. The impossibility of a unitary and totalised gender order is effectively tied to the success of ensuring a “frontier” (see Laclau, 2000: 302) is not exposed because it acts as a line of delineation between the hegemonic and the antagonistic other. It is at this frontier that the gender order experiences dislocation (Laclau, 1990: 3–84) and as a consequence it is at this point that hegemonic masculinity is required to either suture or exclude the various antagonistic identities with the hegemonic. More importantly, the depth of the limit of the frontier or what we might understand as the distance between the included normative and the excluded other also represents the source of the ethical experience (Laclau, 2004: 287) in hegemony. And it may be the case that the ability of hegemonic masculinity to suture such a dislocation is impossible and at that moment it must impose complete exclusion or at least obfuscate the reasons for this exclusion. For example, Higate and Hopton (2005: 432–447) argue that “militarism is the major means by which the values and beliefs associated with ideologies of hegemonic masculinity are eroticised and institutionalised” thus the hegemonic principle of aggression exposes the frontier between the hegemonic aggression of the Western soldier and that of the subaltern terrorist. In turn it also exposes the frontier between what is deemed to be ethical in masculine aggression and what is not. At the current moment Western hegemonic masculinity is struggling to suture this dislocation.

In the West at least, it is possible to argue that the hegemony of men takes a dominative form given the level of protection afforded its principles of heterosexuality, breadwinning and aggression. However, the resultant homogeneity can only ever stay successful if the distinction between the categories hegemonic and other/s is kept clear (ontic reality) while the conditions for the distinction/exclusion are obfuscated (onto-

logical necessity) (see Laclau, 2004: 309). In effect, completeness in the hegemony of men is enabled more from what men know they are not, then by what men know they actually are. This idea of contingent identification sits at the core of hegemonic masculinity as a logic of difference. In other words, hegemonic masculinity achieves the appearance of homogeneity and stability by producing at best complicity and at worst ambivalence to its hegemonic principles. Hegemonic masculinity does not need to and in fact cannot correlate directly to the great mass of men and/or women's real bodies, or to their real actions or to their real knowledge of their self. Instead, the primary task of hegemonic masculinity is to act as the representation of the hegemonic principles. Thus hegemonic masculinity as the empty signifier of gender does not set out to simply describe the practices that men and women achieve but rather, what men and women must aspire towards within hegemony.

## Migrant men and the migration experience

The task for hegemonic masculinity in the context of migration and settlement is similar to that for all empty signifiers. In effect, what we are dealing with is the problem of differential gender identities or heterogeneity that in some way must constitute equivalents within a gender order. Further, because postmarxism rejects the idea of some structural centre that contains an identity endowed with an *a priori* determining character, the best that can emerge from this situation is a mediating (or representative) identity whose signification seeks to be the representation of all identities. This identity acts as an empty signifier. However, such a constitution produces a precarious (even impossible) completeness that postmarxism refers to as hegemony. This mediating identity is what we have referred to following Laclau, as an empty signifier and in gender this signification is assumed by hegemonic masculinity. Further, through migration the operation of hegemonic masculinity as a mediating identity can be clarified. The following discussion develops, albeit briefly, this hegemonic operation through analysis of African men's migration experiences in Australia.

In 'Rethinking Masculinities in the African Diaspora' by Mungai and Pease (2009) the difficulties associated with different cultural approaches to masculinities brought to Australia through migration are highlighted. In particular, the authors note that Africa itself is not a "homogenous continent" either socially or culturally and so the African feminist's stress for the West not to think ethnocentrically when trying to understand African conceptions of gender is very applicable to CSM. In particular, social relations and activities are organised differently across this transnational space for example, the emphasis Africans

place on “ethnic groupings, kinship and family groups” contrasts with the legitimacy of the individualist thrust that marks Western (neoliberal) societies. Further, the distribution of material resources for Africans is substantively determined for example, as much by age as gender differences. Notwithstanding these differences in the environments in which gender relations are developed and organised, the authors point out that African manhood does bestow on men specific responsibilities to himself and the broader community made up of “age groups, family, clan, tribe and nation”. Therefore, how masculinity is played out for African men in a Western context requires application of both an intersectional approach as well as a continuation of socialised responsibilities within gender relations. A focus on the importance of *responsibility* in African men’s understanding of their masculinity will illustrate the difficulties experienced by them in terms of gender as well as the consequent precariousness of hegemonic completeness.

For African men to be responsible is the first and foremost aspect of masculinity and is ineluctably tied to family. Men are expected to practice “high levels” of responsibility but this expectation, regardless of achievement, also comes with privileges that all men enjoy. The crucial responsibility is to show that you have control over the female members in the family. Even though within the family there is an effort for equality of work and effort grounded in reciprocity. Without this form of control there can be no way men can express responsibility and this in turn leads to the potential of being seen as weak. It is also noted by Mungai and Pease that when responsibility is connected to religion and in particular Islam, men are put on “a pedestal, irrespective of age or abilities”.

This system of privilege is shown to be placed in jeopardy through migration because *inter alia* it brings African men’s particular way of balancing the influence of modernity on tradition into difficulties if not crisis. Not least because of a perceived imperative for African migrants to accept the legitimacy of the Australian hegemonic and thereby adopt *inter alia* the individualist (neoliberal) emphasis that, crucially, enables women to work outside of the family and so provide a sense of autonomy that is not generally experienced in African cultures. This for many African men is the beginning of their loss of control and thereby responsibility and ultimately, masculinity.

In contrast, within the Australian context the hegemonic has developed an approach to breadwinning (a hegemonic principle) that has been able to incorporate women and paid work and the idea of autonomy that is inherent to this activity into its form of legitimacy. Breadwinning for the Australian man is more an ideologically sustained symbol of masculinity than a practical reality. However, the continuing data showing women in

Australia doing far more domestic unpaid labour than men supports the argument that through this symbolic alignment men gain a “patriarchal dividend”, part of which is a disconnection from housework.

This ability to recognise the symbolic as more legitimate than the practical is not that easily assumed by African men upon migration and the interviews bear this out with comments that suggest African families are subjected to “a lot of tension between the wife and the man” so much so, that it has caused “a lot of conflict and some couples have separated”. Thus the men interviewed in this research make very clear that they have had to make adjustments to accommodate the changed circumstances they have landed in. These adjustments are not made in the first instance, at the level of practice. But crucially, the authors point out that for African men such adjustments do not mean that they must (or even can) change their identities and practices completely. These men do not need to “forget everything they have learnt” but rather, learn to take what is “constructive and abandon what is a hindrance to the settlement process”. This suggests that how men construct their identities and organise their practices, in particular around domestic work and financial matters, occurs at the level of signification, representation and cultural ideology. These men must learn how to aspire to what is locally hegemonic that in turn, must be balanced against what is traditionally (African) hegemonic. Therefore, the resultant identifications and configurations of practice must and do, span the transnational field created by migration.

In this way the hegemonic masculinity that expresses the legitimate local aspirations for men, can and must, be able to create complicity in these new immigrant men with the legitimacy embedded in the new gender regimes and gender order. While at the same time hegemonic masculinity cannot obliterate the particularity of the African or for that matter Indonesian, Latin American, Chinese, etc. identities and configurations of practice. This is precisely the task of an empty signifier that in turn is able to produce an equivalential relationship with all (new) Australian men. Of course, marginalisation and subordination will always exist and act as frameworks of potential antagonism that when articulated/realised will inevitably produce social dislocation and new forms of politics.

## Conclusions

Throughout the volume *Migrant Men* (Donaldson et al., 2009) there are numerous examples of men struggling to come to terms with a new way of identifying and behaving. Applying a postmarxist approach to the analysis of the situation these men find themselves in relation to shows inter alia the existence of a hegemonic form of masculinity that does not

impose itself as pure domination and thereby asymmetrically determine the configurations of practice and identities that these men must assume. Instead, it becomes apparent that there is a process operating that involves hegemonic masculinity as the representative of men through the signification of men's aspirations. In this way, hegemonic masculinity operates as an empty signifier within a hegemonic system understood as the hegemony of men.

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# Chapter 6

## Cultural and Racial Politics of Representation: A Study of Diasporic Masculinities among Iranian Men

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“[a] man was expected to behave like a man.  
I was expected to behave like a black man”  
(Fanon 1986:114).

The subject of men and masculinity formation has become a popular topic in Western academia during the last two decades (Connell, 1995, 2007; Brod and Kaufman, 1994). Moreover, in Multicultural contexts, the conceptualisation of the Orientalist stereotypes of Middle Eastern men as nationalist heroes, oppressive and overprotective vis-à-vis the equality-oriented and liberated men is vastly embedded in the Orientalist discourses (Connell, 2007; Khosravi, 2006). Writing on gender in the Middle East and Middle Eastern diasporic contexts, on the other hand, has focused mainly on women (Bauer, 2000; Ghousoub and Sinclair-Webb, 2000). As a result, study on men, masculinity and male sexuality in (and from) Middle Eastern contexts remains poorly examined. For the ongoing and recently started research, I seek to examine the under-researched area of (re)presentation of masculinity and sexuality of Iranian men living in three heterogeneous cities: Sydney, Stockholm and London. For the purposes of this research I seek to investigate the effect of Iranian Islamic culture and socialisation, migration or displacement experiences on the men's practices of masculinity and sexuality, and how these influences may complicate their (re)presentation and perceptions of their masculinities and sexual experiences.

Through ethnographic accounts this research aims to examine how normative values and social practices surrounding masculinity enter men's personal narratives, and how they articulate the cultural, social and religious values of masculinity and sexuality in their narrations of their everyday experiences in diasporic contexts. Moreover, by studying the impact of Orientalist views on the Iranian/ Middle Eastern/ Muslim men's identity formations in the contemporary multicultural contexts, this study aims to explore how Iranian men negotiate masculinity and

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sexuality as they confront the variety of Orientalist stereotypes. A key issue regarding the men of Iranian descent in different Western contexts (who are very often undifferentiated as Muslim or Middle Eastern men) is how they are (re)presented in comparison with (white) Western men. Moreover, by analysing how the dichotomisation of ‘we and them’ arises in different Western metropolitans (Sydney, Stockholm and London), this study aims to understand not only what prejudices the Iranian-born men face on a daily basis, but also how the stereotypes are used to differentiate Iranian men from ‘liberated and equal seeking’ Western men in different contexts. In this paper, I will mainly discuss and reflect over some of the theoretical, analytical and methodological concerns that will shape the ongoing study.

## Islamic views on sexuality and masculinity

Religion has historically been a conservative force in terms of its impact on the relationship between the sexes (Ahmed, 1992). In Western contexts, Islam has increasingly become perceived as the most “notorious” religion in this regard (Moghissi, 1999). Similar to other religions, Islamic discourses of sex, gender and sexuality are tightly interrelated. Therefore, a study on Islamic constructions of masculinity and sexuality is impossible without examining gender and gender roles. One of the crucial enquiries for researching the position of men (and women) in and from Middle Eastern has been the necessity of (dis)associating cultural authenticity from Islam. This tension has resulted in the double bind of, as Kandiyoti (1996) asserts, either denying that Islamic practices are necessarily responsible for patriarchal practices or asserting that patriarchal practices are not necessarily Islamic. Each of the poles of this dichotomy has its own shortcomings. On the one hand, it is vastly reductionist to accuse Islam of being exclusively accountable for repressive gendered practices. Doing so opens ways for ahistorical, essentialist and Orientalist stereotypes (Said, 1994). On the other hand, it is problematic to entirely exonerate ‘Islamic doctrines’ (in all of their multiplicities). Doing so leads to discounting and underplaying their hegemonic and disciplinary power in societies and communities where Islamic ideology is normative.

By avoiding monolithic assumptions that identify Islam as the sole accountable component in the construction of gender identity, the importance of the disciplinary power of Islamic policy makes its impact indisputable. The few but significant studies about masculinity within different Islamic cultures show how masculinity is multiply constructed in complex ways in various and differing Islamic discourses (Bilgin, 2004; Bouhdiba, 1998; Ghousoub and Sinclair-Webb, 2000; Khosravi, 2006;

Najmabadi, 2000, 2005). Therefore, it is important to veer away from generalising or giving a homogenised, fixed representation of *the* 'Islamic context,' or the 'Iranian context'. Moreover, since sexuality, both inside and outside Iran, has predominantly been identified as heterosexuality (Shahidian, 1999), the main focus is to examine the men's narrations of their heterosexuality. However, by employing queer analysis, it is important to pay particular attention to how and in what ways the ideal and desirable heterosexual masculine subject is always and already constructed in relation to abnormal and unacknowledged masculinities. By being attentive to how men recognize, long, challenge, avoid, negotiate, distance from (un)desirable masculinity, it will also become apparent how normative masculinity is performed and established through shifting boundaries within variety of historically specific social contexts.

## Masculinity in diasporic space

A major concern in studying diasporic masculinity (and femininity) is to examine whether displacement and diasporic experiences change men's notions of masculinity(ies) and sexuality(ies) or re-affirm and reproduce normative concepts of masculinity while men struggle with the changing socio-cultural values they find themselves in. It is important to pay attention to how the wide-ranging (re)presentations of Middle Eastern/Muslim men influence men in their every day lives. Furthermore, while the study of migration is not a new trend, focus on gender and changing gender roles in general and sexuality and masculinity in particular have been frequently neglected in studies of migration (Anthias, 1998; Espín, 1999; Moghissi, 2005). According to Floya Anthias (1998), diaspora cannot stand as an epistemological category of analysis, separated and distinct from the stifflingly exchangeable intersectionality of race, class, gender and sexuality. A gendered understanding of the reasons, processes and consequences of displacement will undoubtedly offer new aspects for understanding and conceptualising diaspora. While both men and women undergo displacement and experience its consequences differently, class, ethnicity, age, and education, among other factors, have significant effects on how each goes through the immigration process. The receiving country also processes them differently and slots them into predetermined racially gendered boxes. As a result, men and women in the same family and community will experience their displacement and its consequences in different ways.

Family relations undergo drastic transformations due to the change in environment—different constructions of femininity(ies) and masculinity(ies), unemployment, marginalisation, credential and education invalidation, to name a few—and due to each person's negotiation

of, and changes in the shifting cultural, political, and psychic terrains. The changing dynamics of family relations and gender roles among immigrant families, and the challenges faced by them in their host countries, have gained significant attention during the last decades. In spite of the relative newness of the Iranian diaspora, research on gender imbalance among Iranian families (with a handful of reflections on sexuality and masculinity), has been the centre of several scholarly enquiries (Ahmadi Lewin, 2001; Darvishpour, 2003; Farahani, 2007 who looked at Sweden; Mahdi, 1999 who looked at U.S.A.; Nassehi-Behnam, 1991 who looked at France; Shahidian, 1999; Moghissi, 2005, 2006 who looked at Canada; Bauer, 1994, 1998, 2000 who looked at Germany and Canada). However, as I mentioned earlier, since writing on gender in the Middle Eastern diasporic contexts has focused mainly on women, study on men, masculinity and male sexuality in (and from) Middle Eastern contexts remains poorly examined. Moreover, while Shahram Khosravi's ethnographic study on Iranian born men in Sweden (2006) is one of the few (if not only) study on masculinity within Middle Eastern diasporic context, during the last years, focus on young immigrant men/ second generation has gained considerable attention in Swedish media and academic circles (to name a few see Hammarén, 2008; Jonsson, 2007). By focusing on how men's notion of masculinity and sexuality transform due to the movements across national and cultural boundaries, ethnographical research on construction of diasporic masculinities will make a contribution to fill the gap on a frequently neglected issue in existing debate on constantly changing gender roles in diasporic contexts.

## Masculinity and feminist practice

Focusing on masculinity, as Emma Sinclair-Webb (2000) points out in *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East*, should not be seen as a shift away from feminist projects but rather as a complementary endeavour. Men who have migrated are caught up in relations of gender, race, and sexuality particular to their new social, cultural, economic and political environments yet do not leave behind their histories. 'Migratory subjectivities' (Boyce Davis, 1994) are plural and reveal the multiple intersections of self and community, past and present, the political and the religious, and through the continual negotiation of identity, they assert agency. Further, while emphasising the nuances and the diversity of different notions of masculinity or femininity, it is necessary to escape essentialisation and reproduction of diverse stereotypes because total denial of their existence and power puts tangible limits on the sight of the observer. As Sinclair-Webb argues, refusing to engage with diverse stereotypes—particularly when it comes to the

popularly accepted notions of general public regarding masculinity or femininity among other – “is akin to ignoring or underplaying the power of dominant cultural values which in all societies generally prove harder to resist than to incorporate” (2000:13). While these stereotypes are resilient, as Sinclair-Webb continues to argue, they keep reproducing and contain enormous social power. Therefore, “there is no point in simply denying their truth and wishing them away” (2000:12).

Undoubtedly, sexism and misogyny are not essentially an indistinguishable part of masculinity, however, it is historically impossible to untie masculinity from the repression of women (Halberstam, 1998). Being reluctant to deny the history or acknowledge the presence of ‘truth’ in stereotypes, I would argue for practices of masculinity(ies) that support and promote dominant discourses. What needs to be done is to trace the threads that interact to produce those practices. There are too many power relations at play, particularly class-based, racist, sexist and homophobic ones, and too many positions of privilege and disadvantage. As Avtar Brah argues difference for the most part is about ‘difference of social condition’ (2005:435). Thus, it is crucial to study what makes people take up certain choices that they pick from. What is available around them and where are they picking them from? Where do they come from? Recognising masculinity as highly complex configurations of practices, one should take into consideration relation of rulings without turning a blind eye to their agency. By incorporating globalisation processes, Connell not only extends his conceptualisation of masculinity but also emphasises the importance of local ethnographic studies on men (2002, 2007) in order to observe and analyse the multiple and simultaneous presence of contradictory social relations that men face. An ethnological study on construction of diasporic masculinities will not only challenge a monolithic assumption of patriarchy but also will provide a deeper understanding of how masculinity, as a historical and shifting phenomenon is not only constructed in a power relation with femininity but always in relation to various forms of masculinities and how they are (re)presented (Connell, 2002, 2007).

## Research on Iranian men in England, Sweden and Australia

Earlier I discussed how the condition of arrival and living in the ‘receiving’ countries has imperative impact on how the masculine subjects are (re)constructed. In addition to the specific conditions of each and every country, different cohort of Iranians have moved and settled in different countries. For instance, contrary to England that attracted many Irani-

ans even prior to the Iranian Revolution (1979), the existence of the Iranian community in Sweden and Australia is a recent phenomenon. The Iranian community(ies) is young and Iranians make up one of the largest non-European minorities in Sweden, many arriving during the 1980s and 1990s due to the Iranian Revolution and the eight year long war with Iraq (1980–1988) that followed it. Due to the different migration and refugee policies, there is a difference between social and political component and the ways that Iranians arrive in England, Sweden and Australia. While a majority of Iranians who live in Sweden arrived as refugees or later due to the international refugee family reunion policy, Iranians who live in England arrived as students, professionals, refugees and etc. England's specific colonial history in general and its direct and indirect influences on the Iran's economy and political destiny in particular put it in a particular position among Iranians which Sweden lacks. In the early post-revolutionary years most of the Iranian who moved to Australia were immigrants and not political refugees like Swedish case. Many Iranians in Australia also have a bahai background. During the last decade many skilled immigrants (well-educated post-revolutionary generation of Iranians) have moved to Australia. These differences, along with their class background and specific condition in each country are some of the reasons that differentiate Iranians in each country. Therefore, a comparative ethnographic study of diasporic masculinities in three heterogeneous Multicultural western contexts with focus on the specificity of different contexts, representations, and practices will not only provide deeper understanding of each and every circumstance but also expose how diasporic masculinities are shaped differently in different contexts. Beside, it is also interesting to examine how Iranian men relate to different concepts of 'normative' masculinities in Britain, Australian and Swedish societies.

The most related study that includes similar same focus here is Shahram Khosravi's ethnographic study on Iranian men in Sweden. By drawing on a postcolonial theoretical debate of the irrefutable intermingling of racist and sexist discourses, Khosravi (2006) examines how, despite their satisfactory social status, the well-educated men in his study persistently negotiate the hegemonic discourses of immigrant/Muslim men. Torn between—what Khosravi calls—Iranian women's liberation process and a continuous confrontation with a variety of stereotypes of Iranian/Muslim men, the men in his study, as racially and sexually marked and discernible, feel "visible" yet without being "seen." Based on her ethnographic study among Iranian diaspora in German, Janet Bauer notes. "while it's been generalized that women refugees adapt better than men to the circumstances of exile," she emphasises that "it would be unreason-

able to assume that women have an easy time doing it” (2000:186, See also Farahani, 2007). While the patriarchal gender arrangements in the countries of origin differ from those of the host country, “in the practice of every day life, “immigrant women confront and grapple with their status as an ‘other’ within the imagined community as well as their multicultural identification” (Smith and Brinker-Gable, 1997:16; see also Farahani, 2007).

Moreover, Khosravi shows how the notion of *mard-e sonnati* (traditional man), which is used inside Iran to identify a man who (amongst other qualities) is dedicated to patriarchal values, in diasporic circumstances takes on a cultural and ethnic attribute and becomes *mard-e Irani* (Iranian man). This leads to, as Khosravi explains, modification of *mard-e Irani* from a noun to an adjective that is associated with certain characteristics which refers to the selective behaviours/ performances of men that serve to assert masculine authority over wives and daughters. *Mard-e Irani*, according to him, is linked with negative attitudes and is used as an insult (2006:80). Acknowledging Khosravi’s ethnographic research, I have noticed a similar phenomenon in my earlier research among Iranian born women in Sweden (Farahani, 2007). While phrases such as *mard-e Irani* (Iranian man) and *mard-e Irani bāzi dar āvardan* (playing the Iranian man) were mentioned frequently by the interviewees, however, I observed how a similar judgment (with different gendered characteristics) has been passed onto women. The notion of *zan-e sonnati* (the traditional woman) is (amongst other qualities) allocated to housewives that prioritise the wishes of their husbands and children. This ‘proper’ woman should also be highly concerned about her (sexual) behaviour. Like the notion of traditional man, the notion of traditional woman becomes ethnicised in the diaspora. It shifts to *zan-e Irani* (Iranian woman) and thereby becomes an adjective that implies specific (gendered) characteristics. *Zan-e Irani bāzi dar āvardan* (playing the Iranian woman) includes, among other things, women who in intimate (hetero) sexual encounters, play aloof and inaccessible. While failing to incorporate a feminist analysis of gender imbalance, Khosravi’s study is also limited to well-educated Iranian men. By including working-class men as well as those who feel marginalised due to the non-accreditation or non-acceptance of their educational and vocational degrees and skills, one can bring additional nuances into the analysis.

Moreover, regarding the class backgrounds of the interviewee, it is important to point out that due to the migration, the economic, cultural, symbolic and social capital (Bourdieu, 1987, 1989) of people undergo in a variety of, and at times contradictory, ways. For instance, due to the different living standards between Iranian and Swedish/ British/ Austral-

ian societies, some people might gain a better economic situation, yet they might still be positioned in a lower class compared to other classes in the current society and have a lower status than what they once held in Iranian society. The same happens often to their social, cultural or symbolic capital. For example, Iranians are often stereotyped as ‘Muslim/ Middle Eastern’ in the dominant gaze and are seen as ‘Other’ in the various social and cultural contexts they inhabit; whereas ‘back home,’ they did not find themselves in this same public gaze. Nevertheless, status and class are not reducible to each other. These considerations make the notion of class and class background of the interviewee additionally interesting and complex.

## Transnational masculinities: Theoretical and methodological concerns

In addition to the impact of Iranian Islamic culture and socialisation, some other momentous questions that arise in studying construction of masculinities in different diasporic contexts are; whether migration transforms concepts of masculinity and sexuality for men or do the men re-affirm and reproduce normative concepts of masculinity while struggling with the changing cultural contexts they find themselves in? How and to what extent do movements across national/cultural borders, boundaries, norms, and practices transform interviewees’ concepts of their masculinity and how they understand, (re)negotiate, (re)settle, (re)confirm, seize, challenge and turn around masculinity in their daily experiences? How can we understand the shifting and intersecting character of masculinity in different diasporic contexts?

A gendered and interdisciplinary use of Foucauldian discursive genealogy, which traces historically and culturally specific threads, can assist to investigate how, why, and in what forms masculinity and male (hetero)sexuality is constituted for Iranian men in different diasporic contexts. Foucault’s discursive model of power relations, which observes power everywhere, as exercised rather than possessed, productive rather than exclusively repressive and coming from the bottom up (Sawicki, 1991) allows also space for recognising resistance among men. By analysing the ways men communicate their refusal, acceptance, and reluctance, we can pay specific attention to their everyday struggles and tactics. This will also make us attentive to the simultaneous existence of opposing elements, which Foucault calls heterotopia. Contesting the homogenous space of the unreal “utopia,” Foucault (1986) advocates for a “heterotopic” space inhabited by contradictory and conflictual elements at the same time and place. The Foucauldian notion of heterotopia will allow

us to observe and analyse the simultaneous presence of contradictory social relations in diasporic space through which men navigate.

Moreover, in regards to challenging orientalist stereotypes and employment of postcolonial approach, it is noteworthy to mention that Iran has never formally been a colony. However, in addition to Western power's direct and indirect influences on the country's economy, culture, and political destiny, and the impact of global culture, Iran and the identity formations of Iranians (inside as well as outside Iran) have never been outside of colonial and Orientalist discourses (Moallem, 2005). According to Orientalist representations Middle Eastern men are seen as oppressive, controlling, or as nationalist heroes (Accad, 1991; Bilgin, 2004). In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952, 1986), Franz Fanon demonstrates the psychological impacts of colonialism on the colonised subjects, who internalise the image of the self as 'other' (McLeod, 2000). The colonising project represents, for example, the 'black' man as everything the 'white' man is not because, as Fanon explicitly declares, "[a] man was expected to behave like a man. I was expected to behave like a black man" (1986:114). The consequences of the internalisation of self as other, as historian Tavakoli-Targhi (2001) declares in a similar approach, result from the processes of *self-orientalisation*. This illustrates how the gendering and sexualising of men (and women) grows into a racialised/ ethnicised self within specific diasporic spaces. Therefore, due to the intermingling of racist and sexist discourses, as David L. Eng (2001) points out, sexual and racial differentiation and marginalisation cannot be understood in isolation. In analysing translational and diasporic masculinities, a postcolonial approach will enable us to study the impact of colonialist and Orientalist views on the Middle Eastern men's identity formations of their masculinity(ies) and sexuality(ies).

Regarding the methodological concerns in relation to ethnographic fieldwork and interviewing process, particularly when it comes to a sensitive subject such as sexuality and variety of gendered roles attach to that, the interplay and interaction between the interviewee and the researcher is one of the significant aspects that shapes the outcome of the research. Having experience of interviewing women on sexuality, I am fully aware of difficulties in talking to people on this sensitive subject. I am also aware of that my gender may well be an additional barrier for some male interviewees. The masculinity researcher, Lissa Nordin (2007) has recently pointed out some of the difficulties she faced while interviewing middle-aged heterosexual men in northern Sweden. Being aware of these obstacles, reflection around how and what creates silence when a man talks to a female researcher on masculinity and sexuality will certainly contribute to ethnographical accounts regarding the earlier

theorisation of what Foucault (1990) calls “archaeology of silence.” This requires listening to not only that which has been silenced in speech but also why and how it has become silenced. However, no research (in my knowledge) shows that men talk easier to men on these subjects. They will certainly tell different accounts to a man than to a woman as well as to a Swedish/ British researcher than an Iranian researcher.

## Recapitulation

By focusing on the importance of studying construction of diasporic masculinities, in this paper, I have discussed some of the theoretical and methodological concerns in regards to studying masculinity, displacement, gender imbalance, and sexuality among Iranian born men in different Western contexts. I have also argued how study on diasporic masculinity will fill the existing gap in masculinity studies—with all its layers and nuances—that traditionally has engaged with white men, as well as feminist/ Middle Eastern studies—with all their complexities and differences—that have mainly focused on the situation of women. I also have reflected over how the construction of Iranian men in Western contexts (who are very often undifferentiated as Muslim or Middle Eastern men) can be used to differentiate Iranian men from ‘liberated and equal seeking’ Western men in different contexts. In examining intersecting discourses that construct diasporic masculine subjects, it is also imperative to pay attention to types of masculinities and in which ways they have been ignored, marginalized, silenced, or empowered. That is why it is particularly significant to analyse how normative values and social practices surrounding masculinity enter men’s personal narratives, and how they articulate the cultural, social and religious values of masculinity and sexuality in their narrations of their everyday experiences in diasporic contexts.

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# Chapter 7

## The Role of Transnational and National Institutions in Internally Displaced Men's Everyday Life in Tarlabasi in Istanbul

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There have been bodies of literature both in transnational (Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Caglar, 2002; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Pries, 2008) and in men and masculinities studies (Connell, 1995, 2005; Hearn, 1996, 2004; MacInnes, 1998, Whitehead and Barrett, 2001; Halberstam, 2002a, b; Garlic, 2003; Ouzgane, 2006), yet the studies that combine both fields are new. Recent works of such combination focus on transnationalism as a framework and examine men and masculinities either at national (Pease and Pringle, 2001; Hearn and Pringle, 2006) or corporational level (Hearn, 2007; Hearn and Howson, 2009). Nevertheless, the area related to migration has been understudied and the question of how transnational institutions affect the everyday practices of men has not been responded to yet. This working paper written for GEXcel's "Men/Masculinities, Transnational, Spatial, Virtual: Hegemony, power, deconstruction" theme basically tends to contribute to the underdeveloped area of men and masculinity studies that examines the role of transnational social and political space in the everyday identification process of men and in the formation of masculinities.

This study aims to reveal the significant role of nationalist institutions through a transnational perspective in examining the everyday identification process of the internally displaced Kurdish men living in Tarlabasi in the centre of Istanbul. These migrants are from villages and hamlets in Southeastern Anatolia which were evacuated by the military forces when the armed conflict between the state and the PKK (*Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan*, The Kurdistan Workers' Party) was at its peak during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Internal displacement has a deep impact on the everyday identification of Kurdish men. As the state did not offer them any place to settle or any resources to maintain their living, it is harder for the internally displaced people (IDPs) to face this conflict than the internal migrants who come to cities for economic purposes. These

IDPs mostly settled in big cities such as Adana, Diyarbakir, Istanbul and Mersin, where they found themselves in a confined situation in the city where most of them became members of the poorest group and were forced to struggle for a living (Erder, 1996; Işık & Pınarcıoğlu, [2001] 2002; Ayata & Yüksek, 2005). Moreover, their relationship with the place of origin was extirpated (Ayata & Yüksek, 2005; Çelik, 2005; Kurban *et al.*, 2006).

The focus of this study is the internally displaced men who live in Tarlabasi, an inner slum area of Istanbul, which has a heterogeneous composition of various ethnic and religious groups from different professions, sexual orientations and so on. As stated by Yılmaz, it is an area with multidimensional exclusion which includes economic, political, social, spatial and discursive ones (2006). After the nationalist discriminatory policies of the state against non-Muslims in Beyoğlu and Tarlabasi in the late 1940s and early 1950s, most of the Armenian, Greek and Jewish habitants of the area left their homes. Since the late 1980s, large numbers of Kurdish immigrants from the southeastern part of Turkey migrated into or displaced to Tarlabasi and here they encountered the Roma population. Tarlabasi has also become the migration point of many immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees from Africa and neighboring countries like Iraq very recently. There is criminality and compulsory heterosexual and transgender sex work in the area, yet these phenomena are not new (Yılmaz, 2006). In addition, the state and the police regard pro-Kurdish political activities as the major crime compared to ordinary ones. Thus, the state authorities and the police turn a blind eye to the crime and compulsory sex work since they prefer to consider political activities of the Kurds as a ‘crime’ instead of the other ones.<sup>4</sup> The discursive exclusion by the authorities like the state and mainstream media embeds crime and compulsory sex work with ethnic groups and/or transgenders living in the region (Yılmaz, 2006). Therefore, the state and other authorities’ policies are shaped around the discourse of ‘cleansing’ the region. According to this ethnic stigmatisation, Kurds are identified with terrorism, the Romani people as well as Kurds with criminality, and Africans with drug dealing.

Under such circumstances, most IDPs became members of one of the “underclass” (Yılmaz, 2008<sup>5</sup>) groups in Istanbul. Such an dramatic

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4 As many interviewees mentioned during my PhD field work in Tarlabasi carried out between 2007 and 2008. Cases presented in this study are the part of this field work.

5 Here Yılmaz uses the conceptualization of “underclass” in reference to William Julius Wilson (1987) *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass and Public Policy*, The University of Chicago Press.

change also has an impact on the gender relations within the Kurdish community. Different from their practices in their place of origin, women and children have started to use public areas such as schools and hospitals and have become a cheap labour force in the cities. Notwithstanding, there are various cases where men, especially the elderly ones, cannot find jobs. This highly influences the traditional family and gender relations among the family and community members. In short, even though internally displaced men are still within the borders of the Turkish state, they feel as if they were a diaspora community. In this regard, they can be considered as members of the *internal diaspora* community and some of them are involved in transnational activities.

Internally displaced men experience different power relations emerging from different interactions in the everyday life of the city from the relations in their place of origin. In the Kurd's place of origin, Kurdish nationalist institutions, Kurdish communities (having a relatively more similar living style) and the Turkish state were the main external identifiers for Kurdish men. In the city, in addition to those, various social, cultural, economic and political institutions, and both Kurdish and non-Kurdish individuals from various backgrounds come into consideration. Transnational and national institutions are actors that play a role in the everyday identification process of those men who become part of the city where they shape and are shaped. The transnational social space provided by the Kurdish nationalist institutions such as DTP (Democratic Society Party) and MKM (Mesopotamian Culture Center) open a space to internally displaced men to strengthen their position while developing tactics (de Certeau, [1980] 1988) in the power loaded social, economic and political relations which include a range of encounters with the state, dominant media with their discriminatory strategies (de Certeau, [1980] 1988) of policies and discourse as well as Kurdish and non-Kurdish men and women urban dwellers from various backgrounds.

In order to examine the impact of the transnational and national institutions on the everyday life of the internally displaced men, in the first part, I discuss how I use the concepts of transnational, transnationalism and masculinity in this study, then in the second part I explain the transnational characteristics of Kurdish nationalism and introduce its influential organisations like the DTP and the MKM. Then, with the help of two case studies, the interconnectedness between person's identification and with institutions are revealed. One of these case studies focuses on how transnational actors like the state or the PKK have a tendency to regard individuals as "bare lives" as conceptualised by Agamben and then focus on reasons of regarding Kurdish nationalist institutions as transnational. The second example focuses on the intersectionality of various

gender based relations at the center of city. The everyday identification process of the internally displaced Kurdish men make them develop a “situational masculinity” depending on their stance in the power loaded relations. I argue that these institutions which are part of the city structures enable IDP men to utilize, set, fix, alter, redefine, transform and traverse policies and the discourses of Turkish and Kurdish institutions as well as the collective consciousness of family, community, traditional, national and religious values within, across and beyond the borders of Turkey.

## Key concepts, terms

Today both in the studies of transnationalism and men and masculinities literature, terms like transnational, transnationalism and masculinity are conceptualised in various ways. For instance, the terms transnational and transnationalism are used in such a vague way that they refer to any kind of border crossing relation (Pries, 2008). A similar thing is happening to the term masculinity. In many studies on masculinities, especially in the empirical ones, the meanings attributed to the term are confusing, essentialist or are based on the descriptions in the popular ideologies which are taken for granted (Hearn, 1996; Connell, 2005). Thus, before delving into the further discussion, it is necessary to explore these concepts in the framework of this study.

Being aware of the various usages, I follow the conceptualisation of transnationalism developed by Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton and the transnational relations’ impact on the nation discussed by Hearn (2004) and Hearn and Howson (2009). Glick Schiller *et. al.* argue that transnationalism “forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their [migrants’] societies of origin and settlement” (1995: 48). Such an explanation prevents the problem, mentioned by Glick Schiller and Caglar (2008), of regarding ethnic groups as homogeneous units of analysis. In addition it enables positioning individuals in the scale of various localities (Glick Schiller and Caglar, 2008). Regarding their discussion on transnational relations Hearn argues that with the influence of these relations “nation is simultaneously affirmed and deconstructed” (Hearn, 2004; Hearn and Howson, 2009). Currently, this kind of explanation is parallel to the definition of nationalism as a discourse that constructs meanings influencing and organising people’s actions, interpretations and conceptions of themselves and the world around them (Barth, 1969; Hall, 1992; McCrone, [1998] 2000; Özkırıklı, 2005), since, these explanations show that transnational social and political space and its actors such as the state, the migrant institutions enable the values of nationalism to be redefined in each encoun-

ter of its citizens and members in the scale of various localities; beyond the borders of the nation-state.

These explanations are helpful in analysing the multidimensional aspect of the Kurdish nationalism, nevertheless, the gender dimension of transnational relations which forms one of the basic elements of the power loaded everyday relations is understudied. So as to combine these two fields, I first discuss what is understood by the terms men and masculinity in this study.

Related to the vague usage of the term masculinity, Hearn (1996) suggests using “man”/“men” instead of “masculinity” and this enables identifying the agent of social practices (2004). Hearn’s point is very valuable, especially understanding structural and relational dynamics that are influential in power loaded everyday life practices. It is functional in explaining masculine behaviours and discourses of males mainly, yet not females’. Halberstam’s conceptualisation of female masculinity, is applicable in fulfilling this missing link in three points: first, it refuses the authentic relationship between male embodiment and masculinity; secondly by offering a new form of masculinity it separates misogyny from maleness and social power from masculinity; finally, by being an embodiment of the rejection of compulsory heterosexuality, it opens a way to think about inauthentic masculinity and its desires, political, social and economic relations (2002: 345). Although Halberstam’s vision has an extended scope of showing that the dimensions of masculinity are beyond male and heterosexual embodiment, she has not come up with a definition of masculinity. While examining another problematic term “man”, Garlick does not exactly define, however explains how gender, sex and sexuality have functioned since the invention of the modern biology (2003). According to him, as well as some scholars like Fausto-Sterling (2000), man is an invented concept by the modern scientific institutions, since with such a concept both heterosexual sexual identity and the ‘modern’ gender identity of a male are signified as the main character of the public sphere.<sup>6</sup> In this respect, “man as a concept perhaps signifies the inextricable intertwining of sex and gender” (Garlick 2003: 160).

In the light of these explanations, I use the term masculinity as all the configurations of discourses (behaviors, utterances, wordings, etc.) that

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6 Further readings are T. Lacquer “Destiny is anatomy” and “New Science on Flesh” in *Making, Sex, Body and Gender from Greeks to Freud*, (Harvard University Press, 1992); R. A. Miller “Women and the Political Norm” in *The Limits of Bodily Integrity. Abortion, Adultery and Rape Legislation in Comparative Perspective*, (Ashgate, 2006); J. MacInnes, *The End of Masculinity*, (Open University Press, 1998).

have been attributed to male embodiment since the rise of the influence of modernity, yet these discourses can be practiced by males and females as well as by institutions. In their everyday identification, men and women identify themselves with codes and values attributed to various types of masculinities of the specific locality or translocality. Masculinities are open to change in relation to gender as well as all power based relations such as economic (i.e. class, etc.), political (i.e. ethnic, national, transnational, etc.) and social (i.e. social movement, identity politics, etc.).

These explanations are helpful in analysing the multidimensional aspect of Kurdish nationalism in general and in examining the everyday identification process of the IDPs with Kurdish nationalism and how meanings attributed to masculinity have been shaped specifically in it. Concisely tracing the historical background of Kurdish nationalism makes it possible to comprehend the way it has established and institutionalised in the transnational social and political localities.

## Gendered transnational character of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey

The Turkish state has always denied the ethno-political dimension, in other words the *Kurdishness*, of the Kurdish issue and has applied assimilative policies towards Kurds who seek their cultural and political rights (Yeğen, 1999; White, 2000). After the 1980 military *coup d'état*, asylum seekers including Kurds migrated to various European countries where they started their transnational activities. The EU states supported the Kurdish nationalist movement and encouraged Turkey to develop multiculturalist policies (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003). Transnational actors such as Kurdish immigrant organisations, European states and organisations played crucial roles in strengthening the institutionalisation of Kurdish nationalism (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003; van Bruinessen, 2004). In short, Kurdish nationalism has been shaped by some strata of the Kurdish population as a reaction to being ruled centrally, to being identified as a Turk and to the assimilative policies of the state. Not only many states but also many institutions have been involved in the formation of Kurdish nationalism, yet it originated from the political tension between Turkish state. In time, the monopoly of Turkish state policies has been replaced by the complex duality and multiplicity of both Turkish and EU policies as external identifiers of Kurdish nationalism. In their identification process, the Kurds relate themselves to both local (i.e. traditional, *aşiret*, Turkish state) values on the one hand, and modern Western ones on the other.

Before examining the role of the DTP (Democratic Society Party) and MKM<sup>7</sup> (Mesopotamian Culture Center) which play a significant role in the identification process of internally displaced Kurdish men in Tarlabasi, it's worth discussing the ideological body of the Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey. Although the PKK was declared to be an illegal 'terrorist' organization by the Turkish state, it is the main ideological body that is influential on Kurdish nationalism through its activities beyond the Turkish state's borders. Its founders intended the PKK to be a Marxist and Leninist organization, yet its ideology as well as its practices have become the mixture of Stalinism and nationalism (White, 2000). Thus, the gender relations among the members of Kurdish nationalist movement have been shaped under the light of these ideologies.

The PKK's founder Abdullah Ocalan is the leading figure of the Kurdish nationalist movement. Although some Kurds are critical of the armed policies of the PKK, its founder Ocalan is regarded as untouchable, since Ocalan represents the PKK, which establishes a totalising hegemonic identity upon Kurdishness. The PKK is the organ which aims to homogenise the multiplicity of the Kurdish identity in its discourses through creating a mythical history, the representation of 'ideal' Kurdish men and women. Thus, Ocalan plays a significant role as an 'ideal' masculine figure in the identification process of the internally displaced people. The changes in the discourse of Ocalan or the PKK have the capacity to reshape the gender structure in the Kurdish community. As pointed out by Caglayan, until the 1990's, as women had not become the active members of the movement, the main focus was on men, and women were regarded as "weak people whom cannot be trusted" (2007). However, as the involvement of the women in the movement increased with the influence of the European relations, the discourse of Ocalan as well as the PKK started to emphasise the role of the women while criticising the traditional, 'feudal' virility of Kurdish men (Caglayan, 2007). Nevertheless, this does not mean that the community is not patriarchal anymore; the meanings attributed to various notions like *namus*<sup>8</sup> has changed. Both the DTP and the MKM are highly active in transnational political space. Both organisations represent the changing discourse in the movement's ideology as well as gender regime understanding.

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7 In Kurdish nationalist discourse Mesopotamia is regarded as the "holy" lands where the origin of the Kurds came from. In this regard, it has a holy meaning in the myths of national discourse or in the discourse of the leaders of the PKK, i.e. Ocalan, A (2004). *Bir Halki Savunmak*. Istanbul: Berdan Matbaasi.

8 I prefer to use the word *namus* instead of honour, since honour as a word cannot cover the meanings attributed *namus* in Turkish. Depending on the context *namus* may refer to women's sexuality, and men's trustworthiness in Turkish.

The symbol of gender equality is visible in the management of the DTP, the pro-Kurdish political party with 20 seats in the Parliament, since there is a co-presidency of the party who are supposed to be one man and one woman; now they are Ahmet Türk and Emine Aydın. The DTP is regarded as the successor of DEHAP (Democratic People's Party) which was also the successor of several Kurdish parties which were banned by the Constitutional Court which claimed that the party had connections with the outlawed PKK. The DTP and DEHAP are also regarded as the political wing of the PKK. Although DTP does not officially declare whether it has a link with the PKK or not, it makes symbolic gestures that refer to this link. For instance, in October 2007, the DTP sponsored a conference for changing the place of the jailed leader of the PKK, Abudullah Ocalan.<sup>9</sup>

The MKM, which was founded in 1991, also plays a significant role especially in the young generations' everyday life with its 19 branches all over the Turkey. The MKM is one of the crucial sites of the pro-Kurdish movement, since it is not only the first cultural center of the political movement, but also has a wide range of participation from Kurdish people. There is a mutual relation between the MKM and the PKK. Some of the activities including political discussions and art projects, reflect the ideas of the leader of the movement Abdullah Ocalan. The MKM plays a significant role in this identification process since it provides the opportunity to Kurdish people for raising their voices, in their own language and it provides the opportunity of education for the youngsters, especially the ones who have not had chance to complete their education.

## Two cases of being “bare lives” and developing “situational masculinity”

The following case studies aim to reveal the everyday identification process of internally displaced men in Tarlabasi. The first one focuses on the interaction of internally displaced men with the institutions, while the second part discusses their encounter with the other urban dwellers. In both parts, transnational actors like the state, Kurdish national institutions or other social, political organisations in the city play a significant role in the everyday identification of internally displaced men.

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9 <http://www.habervitrini.com/haber.asp?id=308701>

## Internally displaced men's bodies as "bare lives"

I didn't know there was a normal way of dying before I came to Istanbul ... either the state or the Hezbollah<sup>10</sup> or the PKK killed the people around me.

These are the words of Nurettin, a 25 year old internally displaced Kurdish man whose village was evacuated by the military forces during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since he came to Istanbul at age of 12, Nurettin has been working in the textile industry as a labourer. For dominant institutions such as state or political organisations, lives of their citizens or followers are something to be "sacrificed" as long as they obey rules and conditions set by the dominant. The time when these people cannot follow rules or fulfill conditions of the dominant group, their bodies become "bare lives"; to which any kind of policy in the name of the state of exception can be applied. In other words, they can "be killed, but not sacrificed" (Agamben, [1995] 1998). For the influential dominant institutions in the Southeastern Anatolia such as Turkish state, the PKK and the Hezbollah, depending on the level of loyalty of the people living in this geography, their bodies are regarded as something to be sacrificed or not. For the state, Nurettin and his family members' lives are something to be sacrificed since they did not support the rules of the state.

Paying attention to the voices of internally displaced men like Nurettin living in Tarlabasi makes it possible to understand the impact of the assimilative policies of the state, the stigmatisation discourses of the mainstream media and society in the everyday life of these men in Istanbul. Nevertheless, this does not mean that those men are confined within barriers of these discriminatory policies and can only be seen as the victims of these discourses. The everyday discourses and tactics (de Certeau, [1980] 1988) of internally displaced men in Tarlabasi, Istanbul, are shaped in collision with the reifying and homogenising strategies of the external identifiers (i.e. Turkish state, Turkish and Kurdish nationalist organizations, the hegemonic discourse of the society) that regard them as "bare lives"; and in their encounters with Kurdish and non-Kurdish men and women as well as institutions in the city. An example of such an identification can be given from Nurettin as well. At the end of his aforementioned sentence he added that the PKK does not want to harm the Kurdish people, but "... if it is necessary and during armed conflict anything can happen." While escaping from identifying himself with the assimilative policies of Turkish nationalism or the violent practices of Hezbollah, he identifies himself with an alternative discourses, Kurdish

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10 The Hezbollah referred to here is different from that in Lebanon.

nationalist, PKK's one; even if it owns a violent practice as well, since PKK provides him a homogenised identity behind which he can take shelter while positioning himself in relation to discrimination.

Nevertheless not all the internally displaced men's discourses are same. One of the ex PKK guerrillas, Huseyin, states that:

we were people who were waiting for death. While running from one mountain to another, love was forbidden, stating a different opinion was forbidden. We ran to be martyrs for our nation and freedom. Freedom without a life.

As can be understood from Huseyin's statement, when it is related to power relations and comes to the matter of domination, any life can be lost. But in this case, the subject matter is the loss of life with a sacrifice for the PKK's point of view.

Huseyin was sentenced to life long imprisonment by the state because of his involvement to the Kurdish movement's illegal organization PKK, however his sentence was decreased to 15 years while he was in the prison. After being released, he has decided to create a new life where there is no authority, neither the state's nor the PKK's. Although he is still searching for a job, he works in various nongovernmental organizations in Beyoglu municipality where Tarlabasi belongs to. According to him Beyoglu provides an arena for an alternative life:

they [the PKK] know that I am not thinking in the same way I used to, once they just warned me "not to be a traitor." Like the state, they are not different, traitors or comrades. That's the whole story. Life is beyond that. Now in the democratic circles we try to find a peaceful solution to put an end to the armed conflict in the Southeastern Anatolia. We are different, but we work for the same ideals.

Against the nationalist dominant policies to its own members, Huseyin prefers to identify himself with the democratic institutions which are critical to both the state's and the PKK's armed policies.

When Huseyin's ideas are thought with Nurettin's aforementioned ideas, Huseyin and he represent two sides of the same coin. For some, but very few of the internally displaced men, both the PKK and the state policies resemble each other. As a reaction to the oppressive nationalistic policies of the PKK this time Huseyin identifies himself with the social and political institutions in the city, whereas Nurettin who was subjected to the same discrimination prefers to identify himself with the Kurdish nationalist ones. Both men's masculinities are always in the process of

formation depending on the changes on the discourses of the identified bodies.

## The contextual visibility of IDP men

As mentioned above, internal displacement has influenced both the life style and the gender positionings of the Kurdish community (Şen, 2005). Although the IDP women and children have faced serious problems by becoming a cheap labour force for industries (i.e. textile) in both formal and informal ways, the projects of some of the nongovernmental organizations<sup>11</sup> have aroused at least certain awareness in the society about the existence of this group. Moreover, the Kurdish women's movement has also become powerful in the cities and supported internally displaced women and children.<sup>12</sup> While Kurdish women were becoming more and more visible, internally displaced Kurdish men were not only ignored, but also stigmatised with such terms as 'maganda', 'hanzo' and 'kıro'<sup>13</sup> by middle class city dwellers at the end of 1980s. Hasan, an internally displaced Kurdish man, who is at the age of 40, identifies himself with the common issue between the Turkish and Kurdish communities, the religion, while mentioning the mainstream stigmatization discourse about himself:

They [people in Istanbul] call me kıro, maganda. Everyday in the television they laugh at the way I talk, I walk. They think I am ignorant, I don't know anything about their Istanbul. They say we have only one Istanbul. But they forget the fact that Istanbul is ours with its mosques. My father was an educated man, he was imam [a leader of a Muslim prayer]. If someone from our village went to Istanbul, my father told him to go to all religious places. I know they want to humiliate me. But they couldn't. I am not ignorant as they think.

*Maganda* is emerged as a derisive term to refer to masculine figure "who is totally oblivious to his own uncouth and offensive masculinity – thus 'interfering' with the moral discourses of the decade, to destabilize and debunk the authoritative codes of 'civility'" (Öncü, 2002:174). The term

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11 Some of these organizations are TOHAV, MAZLUMDER, GOC-DER, Basak Culture and Art Foundation.

12 One of the examples of the support of feminist Kurdish women is the speeches of these women in the Kurdish Conference, in which they criticize not only the policies of the Turkish state, but also the patriarchal system in the Kurdish community. The Kurdish Conference was held in Istanbul on March 10–11, 2006.

13 All of these terms, which are used interchangeably with the same meaning in the city, means "yokel", "yahoo", "lout" or "hick" in English.

*maganda*, encapsulates the fact that the interconnectedness of contemporary consumption patterns and narratives of masculinity depend on place, setting and context (Öncü, 2002), is not used in every context for every Kurdish man, but for the ones whose behaviours and manners are different than the ones regarded as ‘civilised’ and ‘modern’ by middle class city dweller. The media’s interest in the issue of honour killings and the increase in the crime rates in Istanbul also present Kurdish men as criminal and ‘uncivilised’ figures.

Under these circumstances, I argue internally displaced Kurdish men have found themselves in a position of both being *invisible* in the search of their economic and social rights and *visible* in debunking the authoritative civil codes of the city as ‘maganda’ in the society on the one hand; and both being *dominant* over less powerful women and men and *subordinated* by the patriarchal, dominant values of Turkish and Kurdish societies on the other. The internally displaced men who live in Tarlabasi, suffer from this dilemma more than other IDPs since this area has been stigmatised as a ‘place of crime’ and the inhabitants with heterogeneous composition of ethnic and religion groups from different professions, sexual orientations as the ‘dirty inside’ that are supposed to harm the “clean outside” in Massey’s sense (1994) by the state authorities and the mainstream media since late 1940s. Non-Muslim citizens such as Armenians, Greeks and Jews, and Muslim citizens like Roma people have all suffered from the state policies. Since the armed conflict in the South-eastern Anatolia, Kurdish people have become the main target of this stigmatisation.

Kurdish institutions with transnational connections in Tarlabasi like DTP provide both IDP and Kurds with a space where they can gain status in their everyday interactions with Kurdish and non-Kurdish women against stigmatisation. Like *maganda*, the construction worker metaphor, *amele* can also be used for stigmatising mostly Kurdish under-class men. Seyhmus is another internally displaced man, a construction worker who is responsible for various office work of the DTP in the Tarlabasi region. Holding such a responsibility gives Seyhmus a confidence of being more than *amele*, which is a slang used in every day language instead of worker, and which he is used to hearing from middle class city dwellers. About the word *amele* he states that:

It [amele] is not a bad word normally. But sometimes I realized that Turks used it to humiliate me. They look down on me. Of course not all of them, but some. But in DTP I am dealing with the office work from financial affairs to paper work. We had a congress last week. My audits were transparent. They reelected

me for this duty. We, Kurds are equal in the movement and in the organization.

While referring to his feelings about DTP, Seyhmus is proud of himself and tries to show me, a non-Kurdish middle class woman researcher whom he says he trusts and calls *beval*—meaning friend in Kurdish—that DTP manages what Turkish nationalism could not manage. This political capital provides him a social capital in which his status is not discussed, but justified. With this justification, he can show his capabilities in confidence. This confidence plays a crucial role in the formation of his masculinity. On the one hand, he identifies himself with Kurdish nationalism, on the other hand he challenges the power hierarchy of the mainstream discourse which regards internally displaced men as illiterate people who cannot deal with any paper work that signifies literacy. With such an identification, he can show a middle class literate Turkish woman that he can be the subject of the knowledge rather than the object of it.

As a reflection of the Turkish nationalism's mythical 'classless, unprivileged society' discourse, Kurdish nationalism also aims to create a 'classless' equal society and it openly declared it in its 1995 of party program.<sup>14</sup> Under the light of this discourse, Kurdish nationalist institutions open a space to fulfill this agenda and to strengthen Kurdish nationalism among community members. As mentioned by the members of the DTP and MKM, both organizations constitute Kurdish people from various classes and educational backgrounds. 'Classless society' discourse plays a significant role in the everyday identification processes of internally displaced men. As pointed out by one of the members of MKM, "people, including construction workers or the ones with very poor conditions, for the first time in their life act and sing at the stage in their own language".

This discourse is also influential in the gender relations in Turkey's context. Through this discourse, both nationalisms argue that they have gender equality among the members of their community, yet this is a curtain that veils the discriminatory reality. Although MKM provides a space shared by men and women, these men and women are not supposed to have any intimate relationship and are not supposed to be homosexual.

Like in all nationalisms and like in all educational centers, homosexuality is a taboo in Kurdish nationalism as well as institutions (Foucault, [1978] 1990). When the issue is started to be talked about, some of the internally displaced men make of fun of it whereas some stay distanced but respectful as a sign of their respect to any kind of identity politics,

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14 1995 PKK Party Program was declared after the party congress held in January 24.

because they are aware of the fact that Kurdish nationalism is based on and reshapes itself through identity politics. Nevertheless, some interviewees regretfully mention how homosexuals are excluded from the MKM as well as the DTP. The approach to homosexuality has changed as well. One of the internally displaced men states that:

It used to be a taboo. Those days were awful for us too, because I hid one of my homosexual friends. No one in MKM knew that he stayed at my place for couple of months. If they knew, they could harm him, and could apply exclusionary policies on me. It is still a taboo, but at least there is no physical violence. Few of our friends start to come to MKM, but they don't talk about their homosexuality.

Even if a homosexual Kurdish man identifies himself with the nationalism, his homosexuality becomes invisible within the community members, since it is seen as a threat to national unity.

Under the eyes of the city dwellers or for the mainstream stigmatisation discourse of the media, internally displaced men who cannot perform 'civility' are pushed to be *invisible*, while for the authoritative nationalist policies of the Kurdish institutions, homosexuals who cannot perform the 'true' masculinity of Kurdish men are isolated.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored the significant role of transnational and national institutions in the everyday identification process of internally displaced Kurdish men in their encounters with institutions in the city as well as with urban dwellers. Their tactics and the meanings attributed to masculinity-ies—are shaped by these encounters. As their position of being dominant and dominated differ depending on each power loaded encounter, they become the subject and the object of domination and practice coercion, persuasion and consent in various ways in their everyday interactions. Internally displaced men's tactics in the formation of their masculinities reflect the gendered national, ethnic, class<sup>15</sup> hierarchy and power relations in the society. Their tactics reveal not only the institutional policies and distributive patterns (political, social, economic), but also the power loaded social relations in local and transnational

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15 In this study, I use the term class in Kalb's sense. According to Kalb the expanded conceptualisation of class searches for "the interconnections between relationships in (and of) production, narrowly conceived and social and cultural practices beyond the immediate point of production, albeit supportive of it, thus is really nothing new" (1997: 5).

field. In these power loaded relations transnational institutions either regard them as “bare lives” (Agamben, [1995]1998) to be killed without a sacrifice or provide space for them where they can act as an urban dweller. In this tension their masculinities are formed in a “situational” way, as argued by Monterescu (2006: 134), in which men’s tactics manoeuvre between the cultural and political force fields by manipulating them to serve their needs.

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# Chapter 8

## Nationalist Reactions Following Hrant Dink's Assassination: Reconfigurations of Nation- States and Implications for the Processes of Transnationalisation



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### Introduction

Processes of transnationalisation have profoundly affected the political, economic, and social restructuring of the world. Out of the processes of transnationalisation, a new form of sovereignty is constituted with new norms, legal and administrative apparatuses and hierarchies as Mendoza (2002) has stated. This new form of sovereignty has had, and will have considerable impacts on the cultural, political, and economic terrain of nation-states. Although there are arguments that the processes of transnationalisation has undermined the power of nation-states, Kim-Puri (2005) emphasises that states are constantly reimagined, reconfigured, and strengthened. In this paper, I am interested in relating processes of transnationalisation to the ways in which gendered power structures are constructed and operate in national contexts – in this case in Turkey –, and how these structures work to produce gender, ethnicity, and class exclusions. I argue that attention to the gender reconfigurations integral to processes of nation-building and the nationalist discourses that attend them helps provide a better understanding of transnationalisation as a gendered process.

The case study upon which my research is based is the assassination by a young nationalist of a Turkish-Armenian newspaper editor, Hrant



Dink, in 2007.<sup>16</sup> I concentrate in particular on those ‘public’ and media reactions to Dink’s murder which focused on the religion and ethnicity of the parties involved, and which, in my view, draw attention to hegemonic constructions of Turkish masculinity currently underway in the national context. Through my case study, I explore which (groups of) men are involved in hegemonic practices with an emphasis on the interplay of ethnicity, class, and gendered relations of power.

## Analysis of the case

The case of Hrant Dink’s murder provides illuminating insight into the involvement of the state both formally and informally as well as the active involvement of the masses in the process of drawing the ethnic boundaries of the nation. In exploring these involvements hegemony of men is a most useful conception since it “seeks to address the double complexity that men are both a social category formed by the gender system [which involves hegemony] and dominant collective and individual agents of social [and hegemonic] practices” (Hearn, 2004: 59). And these practices of men with both discursive and material aspects leads to “forming and reforming hegemonic differentiations among men” (ibid.: 61).

In order to unravel the role of the state in the reproduction of the national identity, I first explore the role of legal apparatus of the state. The highly controversial Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code, which penalises so-called insults against ‘Turkishness’ (later changed to ‘Turkish Nation’), clearly shows that the state is involved in defining the ‘ideal citizen’ with ethnic references through its legal system. It is significant that the state, by means of this article, almost reifies the concept of ‘protection of the nation’ and justifies any action serving this goal by explicit encouragement. Law suits based on this particular article and the ways in which these law suits are presented to the public mainly by the media have been a major driving force leading to collective reactions against ‘the enemies of the Turkish nation’. Article 301 also plays an important role in keeping alive the discourse of ‘defending the nation’, which func-

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16 Hrant Dink was assassinated in Istanbul, in front of the building of the newspaper where he worked on January 19, 2007. Ogun Samast, then 17, was arrested as the murder suspect on his way to his hometown. In his initial statement Samast admitted to committing the crime. Later, Yasin Hayal and Erhan Tuncel, who was found out to have been a police informant, were arrested on charges of plotting Dink’s assassination and instigating Samast to commit the crime. The Hrant Dink murder trial began at the Istanbul 14th Heavy Penal Court on July 2, 2007. The trial of 18 suspects including Samast, Hayal, Tuncel, and 6 police and gendarmarie officials, the latter on charges of negligence of duty, is still continuing.

tions as a 'call-for-duty' for the male citizens. Nergis Canefe (2007: 93) has argued that on account of the article in question "banal nationalism in a legal framework has permeated in the daily life of the society as an incontestable discourse. [F]or common people, it means no more than a detail regarding the governance". It is worth noting that on the Internet forums (Aktan, 2007) many people defining themselves as nationalists referred to the accusations directed against Dink during his trial as the cause of his murder, which was even defined as 'inevitable'.

Most of the political party leaders assumed a leading role in expressing and spreading nationalist statements directed against the slogan denouncing Dink's death: "We all are Hrant. We all are Armenians" which promptly became the focal point of the nationalist reactions (Çetinkaya, 2007). One of the first politicians to raise objection to the protests in the funeral procession was Şevket Kazan, the vice chairman of the Happiness Party (*Radikal*, 30.01.2007). Having formerly been a Minister of Justice, Kazan sets a telling example to show how the state and civil politics represented by political parties share similar views with regard to defining the boundaries of the nation. Kazan, who referred to the "We all are Armenians" slogan as "sucking-up", was among the first to utter the counter-slogan, "We all are Mehmet. We all are Muslims", which aptly summarises the nationalist reactions. Following the Happiness Party, four other political parties as well as the Prime Minister R. Tayyip Erdoğan raised similar objections, the latter with a milder tone. The counter-slogan, whose impact was enhanced by means of newspaper headlines and banners on the streets prepared by nationalist parties and soon adopted by masses has two striking implications. First, as Doğan Çetinkaya (2007, pp. 103–104) has noted, it lays bare the fact that ethnicity is the sole determining factor in defining 'Turkishness'. The counter-slogan constructs 'Mehmet' and 'Hrant' as mutually exclusive categories; therefore, it implies that 'Hrant' falls out of the national boundaries. The second significant point is the choice of the 'counter-name'. Mehmet, the Turkish equivalent of Tommy, is a deliberate choice in that it alludes to the war going on against separatist Kurds in the south-east of Turkey. The name, by means of connotation, involves Kurds, the major ethnic 'other', into the matter as one ethnic exclusion is followed by another ethnic exclusion, almost as a reflex.

Political party representatives were soon joined by the masses in the outcry about the 'pro-Armenian' protests against the assassination. White woollen hats, which the assassin was wearing at the time of the incident, became a symbol of the nationalists' approval of the murder. This tacit approval was demonstrated by crowds in football stadiums. Beside the widespread appearance of the white woollen hats on football sup-

porters' heads, banners reading "We are Turks. We are Mustafa Kemal", were unfurled and it was reported that during a particular match it was announced that "Supporters who do not cheer for our team shall be considered Armenians" (*Radikal*, 30.01.2007). The role the stadiums played in demonstration of the nationalist reactions is closely related to the role of sports in the construction of normative masculinities (Connell, 1995). As well as military service and war, sports games create distinctive spaces to establish a specific kind of male bonding with a particular component, which is violence directed against other men (Koyuncu & Onur, 2004). Violence, the culminating point of the collective activism, is justified by the perceived threat claimed to be evoked by 'other' men. Through the bonding formed among men who commit violence, hegemonic definitions and practices of masculinities are sanctioned and reproduced. As can be observed in the nationalist reactions occurring in the football stadiums, 'ideal' supporter behaviours pertain to the normative masculine identity intertwined with the nationalist identity, and symbolic violence is directed against the men of a particular ethnic group, namely Armenians. However, violent behaviours are not necessarily limited to one ethnic identity. Kurdish, PKK, and Armenian identities are intermingled and are at once placed in the category of 'threatening elements' of Turkey.

Popular figures in the music industry play an important role in conveying hegemonic definitions of any kind. In one particular example, a song entitled "Don't make any plans" was produced by quite a well-known nationalist singer, İsmail Türüt, and it became popular in expressing a profound anxiety regarding foreign elements in general and the assassination in particular drawing on a discourse of 'conspiracy against the motherland'. Lyrics mention Americans, Russians, Armenians, and more generally Christians as the enemies of Turks and more specifically of the people of Black Sea Region, which is significant because the assassin is from a city of Black Sea Region, and one characteristic of the city itself is its strong connotation with the nationalist identity. The lyrics address a particular male model—one that would make any sacrifice to protect the 'motherland-under-threat'. Joanne Nagel (1998: 252) uses the metaphor of 'siren calls' to explain the link between the 'love of nation' for male citizens and the implicit definition of the ideal male citizen it suggests. After all, as cited by Carol Pateman (1989: 50), "nationality (...) is tested by fighting". A striking fact about this call-for-duty is that it is generated within a discourse referring to the so-called pre-modern relations and obligations of kinship rather than the rhetoric of the 'modern' relations between the state and the citizens although modern masculinity defines itself in opposition to pre-modern masculinity (Connell, 1994: 150). My analysis suggests that in this case the use of a 'pre-modern' discourse is

particularly aimed to address lower-class men living in rural areas or slums. It can be argued that the use of references to 'pre-modern kinship obligations' has a function of making lower-class men better identify with nationalist causes. I treat this example as particularly indicative of the way in which modern nation states configure themselves using the seemingly incompatible discourses of both modernity and premodernity/tradition. I also argue that dichotomous constructions of the modern/premodern are enormously influential when it comes to constructing hegemonic Turkish nationalist masculinities. Influence of this scale accounts for the existence of the several videos broadcasted on YouTube and on Samast's Facebook page which was started to acclaim his action by 'his fans' even though an official video was not produced. Different versions of the video can be found on the Internet; however, all have the same recurring images including the pictures of the assassin and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, funerals of the dead soldiers combating against PKK (Kurdish Worker's Party), Turkish flag, a map of Turkey, guns, Koranic verses and scenic views probably alluding to the Black Sea Region. These images involve the religious, political, and cultural codes with which nationalists identify themselves. This example underscores the fact that the Internet has provided the masses with an easily accessible public space where disseminating and sharing information are relatively easier and more effective. This leads to nationalist reactions to have been expressed in different forms through various channels.

The final example I will analyse provides insight into the process of heroising the assassin and the state's symbolic affirmation of the murder. The 'souvenir photographs' of Samast and the police officers arresting Samast taken by the police officers themselves before he was taken to the police station indicate this symbolic affirmation. The mainstream media played an important role in legitimising this symbolic affirmation of the murder when some influential members of the media argued police officers' taking pictures with Samast should not be considered misconduct. Ertuğrul Özkök, the executive editor of *Hürriyet*, a newspaper with a high circulation, likened the police officers to hunters and thus the photographs gained an opposite meaning concealing the tacit support of the murder by the state (*Hürriyet*, 03.02.2007). Özkök claimed that the officers were simply proud that they caught their 'prey' and the aim of the photographs was to celebrate their success. The hunting metaphors used by him and later on an evening news programme with a considerable rating share underscore how profoundly the masculine references are inflicted on the perceptions of the state and its apparatuses.

## Some implications of the case study for transnationalisation

In the case of Turkey, along with general factors such as the global flow of capital and neoliberalism, some specific factors contribute to the processes of reconfiguration of the nation-state, including concerns of the bureaucratic elites about losing political power and Turkey's position vis-à-vis transnational organisations, the most influential of which is the European Union. As my analysis of the pop song shows, consolidation of Turkish identity is carried out through a process of defining it against a series of 'threatening' identities, usually combined under the category of 'the West'. The historical background of this somewhat tense relationship with 'the West' can best be understood with a consideration of the aim of the modernising elites of the late 19th and early 20th century which was to consolidate an official identity compatible and competitive with but different from European models of the nation state. Europe, often referred as 'the West' in modernising discourse, was taken as the example toward reaching the goal of 'civilisation', but this relationship also induced a strong fear of "super Westernisation", which refers to the fear of losing the 'essence' of Turkishness (Mardin, 1974). The metaphor illustrating 'the West' as a seducing woman was not uncommon in the late 19th century press, which distinctly emphasises that the relationship with 'the West' as the model of modernisation has been gendered right from the beginning.

As for the economic aspect, it is important to note that it is the nationalist discourse that creates and maintains the illusion that lower class men have as much access to economic resources by virtue of their ethnic identity although in fact they have very limited access to material resources. This symbolic granting of access can explain why certain men are addressed when a call-for-duty is in question and also why certain men are lured by the "siren calls" and take part in often violent actions in the name of the 'honour of the nation'. Similarly, states not holding a major position within the global power structure can be said to adhere more to their ethnic and religious codes when reconfiguring themselves often leading to exclusionary actions as my case study reveals.

Another implication of my case study concerns disorder in hegemonic gender relations due to nation-state's decline of power over the control of internal economy. In the context of the "global and regional transformations, such as Europeanization, as through the European Union", analyses of ethnic conflict prove to be fruitful in understanding the construction of hegemonic definitions of masculinity (Hearn et al., 2002; and Novikova *et al.*, 2004 cited in Hearn, 2004: 65). The reason for this is that the instability regarding the boundaries of the nation-state

is closely related to and perceived as the instability of hegemonic masculinity. I think it is this parallelism which makes it easier to mobilise men to take part in collective actions. Such challenges shaped by global forces and local concerns often result in a reaffirmation of “local gender orthodoxies and hierarchies” (Connell, 1998: 17). In the case I analyse, the reconstitution of hegemonic gender definitions is carried out with a strong emphasis on the existing ethnic and religious hierarchies.

The ‘spatial’ aspect of this reconstitution of gender order also provides valuable insight into the ways in which the reconfigurations of nation-states are developed vis-à-vis transnational dynamics. The nationalist reactions, as I mentioned above, occurred in ‘conventional’ spaces such as stadiums and streets as well as “non-places” such as the Internet, in which transnational politics and history are also built (Mendoza, 2002: 300). Especially the use of the Internet by the nationalists to spread their views is significant in the sense that the same means of communication is considered very effective in constructing alliances transcending national boundaries. One important point regarding nationalists’ use of web forums is that strong expressions glorifying dying and killing for the country and particularly the assassination of Dink are frequently used in these forums (Aktan, 2007). It appears that the anonymity facilitated by the Internet is the key to explain why violence is expressed so offhandedly. Further analysis of the ‘convergence’ concerning space and the like can unravel the extent to which the dynamics of reconfigured nation-states and transnationalisation are mutually constitutive.

One pitfall related to my case study is the risk of treating nationalist constructions of masculinity in Turkey as purely the effect of ‘local’ or ‘cultural’ norms. Therefore, taking into account the material inequalities between nation-states and linking constructions of Turkish masculinity to wider frameworks of power is important. However, it would be equally misleading to think that nationalist reactions (both in general and in the case of Dink’s murder) emerge(d) solely in response to global power structures. The unexpectedly high number of people participating in the funeral procession, the intensity of the denigration of murder, and especially the slogan, “We all are Armenians” which deconstructs the assumed naturalness of one’s ethnicity constituted a challenge against nationalist conceptions. Of the two competing discourses, nationalism was the one which attempted to evoke, and became successful to some extent, a process of reconstitution of ethnic boundaries of the nation-state in relation to hegemonic practices and definitions of masculinity.

## Conclusion

The assassination of Hrant Dink proves to be an ideal case for analysing the involvement of various political (different state institutions, political parties, the law, and journalists) and ‘non-political’ (individual and collective practices of the masses) actors, though not in the same potency, in the hegemonic practices of men and the role of the various means of media through which the 17-year-old assassin and his accomplices were represented as hegemonic ‘cultural ideals’, particularly constructed to appeal to young lower class men which can be considered in relation to their limited access to economic resources of the nation-state. The significance of the class element in my analysis is that it reveals the ways in which hegemonic masculine identity constructions can operate in relation to a ‘dominated’ group of men who, as representatives of an economic class, can actively take part in carrying out hegemonic practices when their ethnic identity is prioritised in the making of their group identity.

In the context of this particular case, the recurring elements of hegemonic definition of masculinity includes nationalism (at times the one which is in line with Kemalist popular nationalism), Islam, military, duty to protect the ‘motherland-under-threat’, and violence against the ethnic other(s) in achieving this goal. The violent act which led to Dink’s death can mistakenly be considered as the result of an individual initiative, which would be disregarding the profound power relations entrenched in the structure and dynamics of the state as well as among states on a global level. Highlighting these power effects is important for understanding transnationalisation processes, especially considering the reciprocal relations between the European Union and Turkey.

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# Chapter 9

## Resisting Men: Gandhi, Gender, Anti-colonialism and Nation

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This paper proposes that the gender dynamics of transnationalisation are both continuous and discontinuous with the earlier and highly significant transnational moment of the colonial encounter. I will argue that imperialism, the colonial encounter, nationalism and the Gandhian enterprise put the practices and meanings of self-definition – individual, communal and national – under severe pressure. The flow of these events, I will argue, were to play out with a scrupulous and even libidinal intensity in the fields of gender and sexuality, quite literally inserting physiological difference into analytics, sexual politics into policy and embodiment into theory and practice. Within this frame, I will attempt to understand how certain modes of masculinity (that remained, even at the best of times, subtly predatory on the feminine) were generated, operationalised, transmitted and embodied within specific hegemonic formations that reference that historical moment in one way or the other. To do this I map out the distinctive gender politics that was mobilised by imperial coloniality, Gandhi and by two politico-historical developments that are now almost emblematic of national and communitarian identity politics within the modern Indian nation-state.

Since colonial hegemony is crucially about embodiment and power, since gendering is always processual, interrupted, always located in the twin domains of history and culture, and since subjects, subjectivities, and selves are formed in the intersections of the 'stasis' of culture and the dynamism of history, colonialism – rough and inorganic as it was – interrupted local dynamics and their formative contexts.<sup>17</sup> In this encounter (and more recently in globalisation and its analogues), disparate rules of economic, social, institutional, and personal engagements came into

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17 The impact of British rule in India was multifaceted. New values, technologies, and institutions, some of which were part of the processes of founding the modern nation-state, were to have a profound impact on what came to be India (Niranjana et al., 1993; Sarkar, 1983).

conflict.<sup>18</sup> Colonisation, the nationalist struggle, independence, political democracy, the principles of welfare, industrialisation, and so on, brought structural, institutional and legislative changes as well as social, spatial, and occupational mobility, all of which effected ruptures in the 'sex/gender system'. The encounter itself left the colonial subject split, epistemologically destabilised, and faced with the challenges of dealing with theoretical, ideological and practical changes in sexual, social, political, cultural, and other practices. Moreover both the encounter and the colonial subject were sexualised.

Intuiting the trope of sexuality in imperialist projects and the equivalences made between the colonised and feminine subject, (male) members of the Indian intelligentsia attempted to identify and address the ideological and strategic collaboration between patriarchy, imperialism and the organisation of sexuality. Within this nexus, the prevalent gendered binary was extended to the colonised subject disadvantageously (Hyam, 1992 (1990); McClintock, 1995; Montrose, 1991; Sinha, 1995) as coloniser–colonised, masculine–feminine, civilised–barbaric, powerful–powerless, thereby modulating the organisation and meanings of race, gender and sexuality. The newness of both context and terms of relations served to reconstitute the sexual imaginary in unforeseen ways. We see for instance that the feminine (typically signifying vulnerability, passivity and emotion and so on) is typically deployed to consolidate the oppositionally situated masculine (typically signifying impenetrability, control, rationality), and both become attributes of not just individuals, but of institutions, systems, communities and even nations. This discursive impulse resonates still.

The colonial encounter notated the 'dynamic, shifting and intimate interdependence' (to borrow a phrase from McClintock (1996: 61)) of caste, class, race, gender and sexuality in the politics of empire. In fact, colonial hegemony was crucially about the distribution and management of power at both the microphysical and the systemic-structural levels, and we find policy exemplifications of how an epistemology of the social gets rooted in the sexual.<sup>19</sup> The related disadvantageous and confusing gendering (as both violent *and* effeminate) and sexualisation (as both inordinately promiscuous *and* impotent) of native men led to a

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18 This has been theorised variously in India (e.g., Chatterjee, 1993, 1998; Nandy, 1983). However, as Gyan Prakash (cited in Nicholson, 1996 (1995): 96) observes, the polyphony of the native voice does not merely highlight a value placed on multiplicity, but 'arises from the recognition that the functioning of colonial power was heterogeneous with its founding oppositions'.

19 See Ballhatchet, 1980; Hyam, 1990 and Stoler 1989 for instances of policy regulations of the sexual and social relations between coloniser and colonised .

situation where neither anatomical maleness nor social power prevented feminisation or the denial of 'exemplary masculinity' (Silverman, 1992). The 'femininity' of loss, alterity and disempowerment were in fact the colonial male's unwelcome heritage. Not surprisingly, those Indian men engaged with 'recovering manhood' (Vivekananda, Gandhi, Golwalkar, Tilak) insisted on the *distinction* between sex and gender ('we may be powerless but we are still men'), and attempted to restore the older and more familiar equations between power and masculinity, i.e. the gender of sex.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the destabilisation in the gender–sex relation remains unmistakable in the tautological insistence that men are men. It is then clear that the colonial encounter entailed a variety of structural, discursive, and epistemological shifts that were demoralising.

Recognising this, Gandhi began to innovate notions of subjectivity and selfhood that had moral, political, ideological and psychological dimensions, and would salvage the 'defeated' (male) subject. Propositionally, his espousal and even valorisation from 1916 onward of the feminine within himself, and his recuperation of femininity as a moral principle and a signifier of civilisational superiority, may be read as an index of the inventiveness with which a paradigmatic shift was conceptualised and undertaken. Yet, neither the work involved in such a project nor its angularities should be underestimated.<sup>21</sup> Gandhi's own active feminisation of himself is epitomised in the image of him at the spinning wheel, where both posture and activity are distinctly feminine. He also actively courted an image of motherliness through his intense, even obsessive involvement in nursing. On several occasions he observed and then maintained that only women – possessed of a strong 'soul force' that made them sacrificial and moral beings of a higher order than men – were exceptionally well-suited to such labour-intensive, painstaking and sacrificial tasks. The slippage whereby the circumstantial became the ontogenetic, occurred even though Gandhi like many within the nationalist elite, engaged quite sincerely with the raging 'woman question'. The investment in the feminine subject was announced by this slippage as much as by the attention to her in reform, a practice that was located clearly, strategically and very problematically in the interstices of religion, politics, morality and the sexual economy. These reforms

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20 'The historical novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are deeply communal in nature. The novels which set out to counter James Mill's picture of the cowardly and effeminate Hindu with the valorous and manly Hindu drew on medieval history (and on figures such as Shivaji or Rana Pratap) creating implicitly an image of the Muslim Other' (in Niranjana et al., 1993: 225).

21 Nandy (1983), Kakar (1989) and Alter (1996) are right to remind us that scholars tend to skirt the troubled and troubling area of Gandhi's sexual experimentation. Here, I too, for lack of space, will skirt the issue.

aimed both to enhance their status (by tempering customary law, for instance) and reconstitute and fashion woman within terms that declared the strategic investment in the embodied feminine subject (e.g., Gandhi, Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee). In the process they also bespoke the ambivalence of the nationalist elite toward the coloniser as notional femininities were crafted and then instituted through oppressive practices such as the revival of sati, on the one hand, and the adoption of Victorianisms like cumbersome climate-unfriendly clothing, 'English manners', and domestic incarceration, on the other. Sometimes, women were addressed with greater complexity and ambiguity as was the case with the Gandhian paradigm, where she was both *shakti* or the driving force behind national destiny and Sita, the exemplar of purity and virtue who would facilitate the creation of *Ramarajya*.<sup>22</sup> The equivocality with which Gandhi linked female domesticity, child-rearing and nurturing with national well-being (which in a Gandhian frame which always had both moral and material aspects), in an indicator of the ideological deployment rather than the recuperation of women's spaces. It has been argued that Gandhi like other 19th Century reformers addressed the woman question within the discursive dynamics of nationalism (Katrak, 1992; Patel, 2000; Mondol, 2002).

Despite being implicated in these politics, Gandhi also offered alternative conceptions of universalism to the post-Enlightenment ethnocentric model of the colonial rulers (Parekh, 1989: 26). This was articulated mainly through a set of beliefs, values, concepts and practices the most well-known of which are *Satya* (Truth), *Ahimsa* (Non-violence), *Swaraj* (both Self-rule and Home-rule), *Sarvodaya* (Universal benefit), *Bhramacharya* (the search for Brahma (truth) entailing celibacy)<sup>23</sup> and *Satyagraha* (broadly the philosophy of non-violent resistance, literally the pursuit of Truth, effectively the combination of the other five).

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22 A mythic metaphor for an ideal form of governance for India that refers specifically to the legend of Ram as the ideal king, under whose governance none were unhappy, and, more generally to any such form of governance. Of course this version denies Sita's story. According to popular and north Indian versions Sita the long-suffering wife of Rama is abducted by Ravana, whom she keeps at bay with her 'soul-force' till Rama rescues her. Unfortunately, he refuses to accept her because she may be suspected of sexual infidelity. In one version, Sita leaves him at this juncture, in another more popular one, she undergoes an *agnipariksha* (test by fire) to prove her purity. At any rate, precisely because she is venerated because of her utility for the mainframes of patriarchy, Sita is a highly oppressive model of patriarchal femininity (See Gabriel 2002 for a discussion of the relative worth of Sita for patriarchy within popular invocations of her).

23 See Vinay Lal's (2000) elaboration of *Brahmacharya*.

These ideas and practices themselves as the following discussion shows were gendered and offer an understanding of the relationship between practices of the self, stylisations of the self and political practices, between strategies of embodiment and political theorisation and strategies. To do this, I will undertake a necessarily quick review of some of the transformations in the processes of gendering that accompanied the evolution of the nationalist and anti-imperialist discourses, and their impact on Gandhian thought.

Two highly significant social and political developments of the nineteenth century in India were the emergence of the politics of representation (C 1909) (Zavos), and the introduction of the system of personal laws (from C 1811/12 onward) (Sangari). Vijayan (2008) has linked these two developments and argued that they were instrumental in the institutional formation of communal identities along religious and gendered lines.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, the notion of the communities themselves was riven by controversies because of intra-community disagreements between the elites of each community over the nature, scope and content of the personal laws; but also because of confusions and suspicions over who constituted the respective communities. This, he notes, was part of the process by which the disparate and multiple socio-religious practices – distinguished by caste, tribe and region – were stabilised under the rubric of a fundamentally Brahmanical ‘Hinduism’. As a result the notion of the communal self, as opposed to an individual self, is gradually institutionalised, importantly, in the realm of the personal, through the processes of personal law, where each community sought to legitimise the powers of its hegemonic and dominant masculinities. Personal law – pertaining as it did to issues of sati, child marriage, widow remarriage, inheritance and property, the education of women and their participation in the public sphere – became the means to *defining a communal self through a gendered self*. It was also the domain where local patriarchies exercised dominion and where upper-caste/ dominant norms were institutionalised, legitimised and gained ascendancy accounting for the institutionalisation of ‘upper-caste racism’ (Pandey in Mondol 2002: 933). This process of ‘re-masculinisation’ in no way challenged colonial interests and was supported by colonial powers (Sinha 1995: 140) notating a problematic and telling run-on between imperial power and the national(istic) elite.

Gandhi’s curious but important equivocation in challenging upper-caste formulations of Hinduism, especially in light of the doctrine of *ahimsa*, is consequential to evaluating his gender, caste and communal

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24 See P K Vijayan, ‘Gender, Nationalism and Gandhian Thought’ paper presented at the 2008 Conference Gandhi: Issues and Themes.

politics.<sup>25</sup> In fact it is possible to argue that his affirmation of caste serves to notate the extent to which his imagination and discourse were, finally and ironically (given his qualified<sup>26</sup> furtherance of the Muslim cause in India) communal. What is immediately pertinent to this paper is the reconceptualisation of both (gendered) selfhood and political-communal identity, and the ingenious ways in which Gandhi was to further yoke the two.

The coloniser's justifications of colonialism in the Indian context were several, many of which found an echo with the nationalist elite<sup>27</sup> but especially after the 1820s, was articulated as a generalised 'civilisational' weakness. This were addressed by Gandhi precisely in civilisational terms, a strategy that is most clear in his philosophical articulation of the principle and enterprise of *satya* or truth as a fundamentally civilisational and Hindu one. The conflation between Indian and Hindu while articulating the enterprises of *satya* and *satyagraha* is both deliberate and politic, indexing as it was supposed to, a paradigmatic shift/epistemological break or departure. This logic holds despite his assertion that any equivalent metaphysic, irrespective of the tradition from which it came, would suffice, since according to him there is a 'religion' that 'underlies all religions, which all human beings, without prejudice to their sectarian loyalties, can accept' (Parel in Baxi and Parekh 1995: 65). At the same time, his awareness of the instability and multiplicity of human truths and the possibility that one's conscience may mislead one, led him to aver that "*satyagraha*, as conceived by me is a science in the making" (*Harijan* Sept 24 1938: 266). In fact his circumspection is quite marked: in 1947 he observed that 'I see that what we have been practicing during the fight against the British under the name of non-violence, was not really non-violence' (in A Appadorai, 1969: 325). Unsurprisingly then, such a conception of *satya* and *satyagraha* is sustainable only in a strictly non-violent environment, hence the paramount importance of the notion of *Ahimsa*, which also served to reign in the fissiparous tendencies within the nationalist movement (Vijayan, 2008). Of course, Gandhi's rendition of this notion of Truth makes it a discipline in itself, a way of

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25 Stone (1990) has noted the analogy of caste in Gandhi's pro-imperialist politics in South Africa.

26 Judith Brown (1989) records Gandhi's refusal to sanction a marriage between his second son Manilal and a Muslim girl in South Africa: 'Intercommunal marriages are no solution to this problem'

27 Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru, Aurobindo, the early Gandhi, Vivekananda, Lala Lajpat Rai, among several others were deeply ambivalent about the British presence in India, which they saw as degrading, the result of degradation, and an opportunity to catch up with the rest of the modern world. See Chatterjee, 1986; Parekh, 1990 (1989).

approaching everything from the quotidian to the other-worldly, the material to the transcendental. It also inverted the discourse of civilisational weakness, not least because of the enormous discipline involved in its pursuit. These included 'biomoral' (Alter, 1996) means such as celibacy (a key aspect of *brahmacharya*), rigorous austerity, fasts, dietary experiments and vows of silence without which the mind stood to lose its firmness, stamina, courage and ability for great exertion (*Hind Swaraj*: 82). Moreover, celibacy, a key practice in the enterprise of *swaraj*, would free both the mind and the soul, and harness the power of *shakti* in the service of the nation. Sexual restraint was essential to an individual and to a nation's health and moral life both of which were viscerally interlocked for Gandhi. His denunciation of artificial contraceptives in favour of abstinence and the dislocation of sex from pleasure were part of his understanding of the former as necessary for true morality and the latter as crucial for *ahimsa*. We see that the rigors of *swaraj* (self-rule) would yield *swaraj* (home-rule).

*Swaraj* was the crucial conceptual link between the community of individuals in pursuit of the Truth and the (gendered) individuals themselves. It implied not freedom or independence from restraint but rather 'self rule' and 'self restraint'. It gets linked to the nation via the notions of self-government and home rule, and to the individual through the idea of self-rule. But its affixation to the notions of self-government and self-rule, led to a redefinition of the framework within which these political goals had been located within conventional political discourse on them. That is to say, in a politically and morally innovative move *swaraj* referred simultaneously to a specific political ordering and to a specific ordering of the self: to freedom from British rule, to a type of political governance after that event, and to a related governance of the self. So, for Gandhi, home rule was about true *swaraj*, 'Real home rule is self-rule or self-control' (*Hind Swaraj*: 103), and only then about the political arrangements of power. Gandhi's struggle with imperialism led him to conceptualise political (re) construction not as a state enterprise, but as a moral even quasi-spiritual one, a *metanoia* that remained always intricately linked to the doctrine of Truth. There was never any question of the realm of the political being dissociated from that of the personal, or of political work being undertaken independently of self-stylisation, or of any self-stylisation occurring independent of appropriate self-embodiment. In this deeply spiritual-moral work and self-stylisation, political gain was just incidental, a position that strained his alignment with the nationalist elite. His stand that modernity and its accomplishments were fundamentally flawed only intensified the strain, especially since the local nationalist elite already had stakes in modern technological, eco-

nomic and political systems. His scepticism about the state as an agent of reform along with his conviction in small scale and grassroots added to his understanding that 'industrial modes of production encouraged wrong standards of wealth and achievement, eroded spiritual values and enabled patterns of living based on greed and consumption' (Brown, 1995: 89). They did not facilitate a moral economic order or social justice, which the spinning of *khadi* on the *charkha* (spinning wheel) for instance symbolised.

Gandhi thus linked a model of development (*swadeshi*, small scale, self-sufficient, pro-poor, agricultural based production), political practice (*swaraj* as Home rule), a moral system (truth and *satyagraha*), self-stylisation (*swaraj* as self-rule) and sexual practice (*brahmacharya*) a complex that is well-symbolised in the *charkha* or spinning wheel. Like the practices of *ahimsa*, *satya* and *satyagraha*, the spinning of *khadi* too (which had been taken up enthusiastically by his women followers) became a civilisational and moral attainment. Importantly the practice of all of these, while generally recommended, was understood as especially compatible with femininity which by now had evolved into a chain of analogous signifiers: *shakti*—moral power—renunciation—sacrificiality —nurturance—suffering—asexuality—courage. Gandhi's post-1916 reformulation of courage as equally a feminine attribute (Lloyd and Rudolph, 1967: 191) with unique connotations of its own, led him to recommend the incorporation of femininity into the masculine. Later women come to be seen as the best candidates for *satyagraha* since they exemplified non-violent courage. Eventually as Parekh (1989: 220) notes, Gandhi wanted to become a 'complete woman'. This 'womanhood' — that hosted the chain of signifiers given above — would have to be adopted by men at large to yield a sustainable morally upright nation. Interestingly, women featured in this national landscape mainly as domestic renunciators. While Gandhi's movement brought women onto the public political stage, his nationalism here seeks to fix the unstable and shifting terrain of gender, doubly: firstly through the ideological appropriation of the terms of femininity as domestic, nurturing etc, to further a larger seemingly 'spiritual' agenda; and second, in that very move, fixing these terms by yoking them onto a national communal identity, so that to belong as women in the 'Hindu' fold, is to be domestic, nurturing, etc.. The constellation of Gandhian ideas clearly work together to weave a sign of moral superiority and civilisational achievement; the sign itself, however, is undone by its gendering.

While Gandhi disrupts and reconfigures the ways in which gender is aligned at the beginning of the C20, the crucial lapse in political terms is feminisation without any real empowerment of women. This happens

because patriarchal structures within the systems of religion, caste, class for instance are not addressed systemically; some in fact, are endorsed or reinvented. His political philosophy, driven by the moral practice of self-transformation, and aspiring to offer an alternative to notions of the self already in place, nevertheless retained markers of caste, religious exclusivity and gender-sex bias that have had historical effects that are still being assessed. The significant overlap between the Hindu nationalist ideology of the 1930s and 1940s with Gandhianism has been noted (Mondol, 2002: 931; Jaffrelot, 1969), and we note here for instance the complex relationship that the contemporary Hindu Right has with Gandhi whom they saw as a Muslim lover practicing Muslim appeasement. At the same time those discursive strains in his philosophy that valorise Hinduism and defend caste, have been effectively mobilised by the Hindu Right. This, along with the now well-known international impact of Gandhi as a moralist, a political strategist and a social theorist on figures like Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Einstein, or in the fields of peace and conflict studies is one of the many complex legacies of the historical amalgam that is known as the colonial encounter. The impact that he continues to have as a national actor-pedagogue is indexed somewhat by the extent to which his praxis is referenced explicitly or idiomatically in popular film worldwide, but especially in mainstream Bombay film (Gabriel, 2003). In a rather ironic trick, the present Gandhi family on the political stage (Sonia and Rahul Gandhi) – descendants of Jawaharlal Nehru and *no* relation to Gandhi at all – appear to have, through a public relations coup of sorts, successfully laid claim to being his political heirs, thereby harnessing the moral legitimacy that Gandhi still commands. Another lasting effect of the historical imperial encounter may be discerned in the communalisation of politics and society in India, which continues to be played out with devastating effects in genocidal experiments, but also in the realm of personal law.

Finally, urban centres – fundamentally modern and transnational in nature – are sites for much sexual experimentation, some of which are market driven, and some of which are driven by identity politics that at the moment retain a ‘western’ discursive frame. Yet while most sexual rights movements have, and are intended to have, a transformational politics and are therefore, overtly political, few so far have been able to coherently identify and politically articulate the links between themselves and other modern social movements around typically modern issues of equity or sustainability (say female infanticide, labour, casteism, displacement, poverty, racism). For its heuristic value alone, it would be interesting to trace the orientations of these linked but highly divergent practices of sexuality and the self. For this reason again, it is possible to

argue that the complex and innovative mechanics whereby Gandhi injected gender-sexual politics into political transformation and integrated *metanoia* and social change is among the most neglected legacies that we have of a previous, productive but equally fraught transnational moment. It will be especially interesting to see what emerges philosophically, ideologically and in praxis when the Gandhian paradigm is deliberately made to encounter contemporary thoughts on and practices of gender and sexuality.

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# Chapter 10

## The RSS and the Cultivation of the National Man

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### Introduction

This paper will attempt two large arguments: one, to examine the idea of embodiment theoretically and analytically as indexing a process that is both ideological and material in its operations – as, in fact, the process by which the ideological is materialised; to argue that this process of the materialisation of ideologies occurs both on and through the bodies of individual men and women, boys and girls, as well as institutionally – on and through the ‘social bodies’ that are the institutional and organisational manifestations of these ideologies; that the institutional manifestations of ideologies are fundamentally connected to the individual manifestations in mutually dependent ways that, together, may be understood as constituting a hegemony; and consequently, to argue that gender ideology specifically, may be analysed as a form of hegemony that is more often than not masculine. The second argument is essentially a historical elaboration on the first, in that, it will explore the ways in which the specific ideology of Hindu nationalism comes to be embodied in gendered terms – i.e., Hindu nationalism as a masculine hegemony. In order to do so, it will look specifically at the Hindu nationalist organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and the processes by which it inculcates the idea of the Hindu nation through bodily practices and rituals, as well as through its pedagogic programs and institutional policies.

### Understanding embodiment

The concept of embodiment has been, in Lois McNay’s words,

[C]entral to feminist thought, because it mediates the antinomic moments of determinism and voluntarism through the positing of a mutual inherence or univocity of mind and body in place of a Cartesian dualism. As the point of overlap between the phy-

sical, the symbolic and the sociological, the body is a dynamic, mutable frontier. (McNay, 1999: 98)

McNay's work provides a useful review of the debates on embodiment, before turning to and elaborating on the concept using Pierre Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus'. For McNay, 'Habitus', and the related idea of 'le sens pratique', serve to reconcile the many dualisms that haunt the debate on gender – subject/agent, subject/object, material/social, psychological/somatic, mutable/immutable, force/consent, etc. Without going into the details of McNay's discussion of Bourdieu, we can note the following points:

1. The debate around embodiment has been, expectedly, focused on the body (sexed and/or gendered, or abstract and undifferentiated, as in Foucault's work). It is therefore inevitably susceptible to reductionism and/or essentialism, and rarely *placed* in the socio-historical contexts of its functions, operations, consumptions, etc – i.e., its *life*. Instead, the debates invariably turn on the various dichotomies noted above – subject/object, volition/determinism, etc.
2. In this, we can therefore discern two kinds of problematics:
  - a. The tensions between the body as sexed/gendered, and not, i.e., what happens when the body is understood not just as an abstract *object* (of medical, political, economic, psychological or sociological science) but as a sexed and gendered *subject*? The question is not a new one and has been perhaps the most important feminist critique of Foucaultian thought. But I pose it again here to draw attention to an inversion of focus that occurs, that is of vital importance, and that we will return to in a moment, after we have had a look at the second problematic.
  - b. The tensions between the body (however conceived) and its contexts or environments (its 'field', in Bourdieu's terms), i.e., between understanding the body as (passive) *subject* and (proactive or reactive) *agent*.
3. In one sense the two problematics are only indicative of a linguistic-conceptual issue – the effects, so to speak, of a semantic distortion – whereby the term 'subject' can be dichotomously posed against both 'object' and 'agent'. But the moment we state this it becomes clear that both these terms ('object' and 'subject') in turn index an altogether 'other' entity (or entities), which can be drawn into visibility through the simple prepositional elaboration of these terms: 'the body' is not just 'object' or just 'agent', but 'object of' and 'agent in/of'. In other words, the apparent linguistic-conceptual

issue arises out of the suppression of the preposition – the grammatical indicator of location, that actually makes historical sense of abstractions – and consequently, by registering the preposition, the terms of the body (object/subject/agent) turn out to actually index a historical, perhaps even an ontological issue – one that must be articulated here through the re-statement of a truism: that the body does not exist in isolation but is always a situated body that, in being situated, is *simultaneously* object, subject and agent. The subjectivity, objectivity and agency of this body are therefore all derived in relation to the larger sets of social, political, economic relations that it shares with other bodies, and that are in turn constituted by collectivities of such bodies. Focusing on the body as pure corporeality (as in medical studies), or pure mind (as often with psychoanalysis), or pure agent (as for instance with economics and political science), then inevitably generates often irreconcilable dualisms of the subject-object or subject-agent kind. It creates avoidable complications (like trying to account for subjectivity through essentialist sexual differences, or conversely, for the gendering of the subject as ‘performance’ detached (or at least detachable) from its sex and sexuality (Butler, 1990; see also Morris, 1995).

4. It is here that we can recall how the gendering and sexing of the body affects our understanding of it: it necessarily refers the body to that larger environment of social relations in which it participates, and which in turn participate in it, i.e., gendering and sexing the body necessitates a shift of focus from the body to that larger dynamic, even when it is in fact the body that is the subject of study – which brings us back to the question of ‘embodiment’ and how to understand it.

The term ‘embodiment’ suggests a vectoring, directionality, a movement of ideas/beliefs/abstractions from virtuality into reality, immateriality into materiality, form into substance, thought into corporeality – and so on. It suggests the giving of body to that which has no body on the one hand, and on the other, to the ways in which that which is external to the body is brought into it and internalised and materialised by it. The focus of the debate on embodiment on the body in this sense has been determined by the logic of this vectoring. But it has consequently led to two somewhat divergent sets of problems. The first may be understood as a paucity of engagement with the ‘prior’ existence of the virtualities or immaterialities that thus come to be embodied – or has at least led to their being taken for granted – whether these are the genders themselves,

or other forms of identity and/or participation in collectivities (whether of sex, sexuality, race, caste, ethnicity, language, religion, political values, class affinities, etc). The second kind of problem arises from understanding these as existing only in their embodiment (whether as performance, or as ontological and/or biological and/or historical givens like caste, sex, race, ethnicity), with no 'prior' existence outside of the body. The second case may appear to be a resolution of the first, to the extent that it denies the possibility of a 'prior' existence to these immaterialities, but is not in fact so, because (a) implicit in the idea of 'performance' is the performing agent who chooses one (kind of) performance over another (Butler, 1990: 25), and is therefore not only distinct *from* it, but is the embodiment *of* it – which returns us to the issue of vectors, directions and displacements; and (b) in the case of sex, race and to a lesser extent, caste and ethnicity, which are apparently 'already' embodied conditions that again apparently have no 'prior' existence, simply by virtue of indexing collectivities outside of the individual embodied selves, these terms locate that which is embodied *outside* the body,<sup>28</sup> thus again returning us to the question of embodiment as vector, direction, displacement. In short then, the term embodiment continues to be haunted by a penumbra of meanings and resonances that belie its emphasis on the individual body as the site of stable meaning(s). It is therefore imperative that we address this penumbra, examine its locations and conditions of existence, and its relations to the body that embodies it. The 'embodiment' debates have noted the ways in which these non-bodily factors come to inhabit, possess and in turn be activated by individual bodies: but it is my argument that unless we examine the ways in which these come to be constituted in the first instance, and then see how they relate to individual bodies, we will always have a partial understanding of the processes of embodiment. In what follows, I will argue that this penumbra of non-bodily factors may be understood as in fact already possessing a materiality that needs to be traced, and that this materiality is to be located through the idea of 'hegemony'.

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28 For instance, black skin colour may feature across a wide variety of geographical and cultural zones, but becomes an index of race only when it is in fact associated with specific collectivities – and often in implicit contrast to other collectivities – as exemplified by categories like 'black American', 'aboriginal Australian', etc. Again, the terms 'male' and 'female' not only implicitly invoke each other oppositionally, but also invoke the collectivities of 'men', 'women', 'boys', 'girls' – thus becoming meaningful only through factors external to themselves.

## Hegemonic formations as embodiments

I will begin with the proposition that the materiality of what I have referred to above as the ‘penumbra of non-bodily factors’ is to be found not just in the individual bodies they inhabit, but in the institutional (social, political, economic, cultural, military) corpus constituted and sustained by the fields of interlocking hegemonic forces that are to be found in any given society at any given moment in history. In order to elaborate on this proposition, however, it is first necessary to explicate my use of the term ‘hegemony’. It is important to dislocate the idea of hegemony from (as it were) its hegemonic understandings, as a (often understood as single) totalitarian system constituted of both coercion and consensus working in tandem. The understanding that follows from this (and popularised especially by the work of Stuart Hall and others) is usually that hegemonic dynamics are seen to operate primarily in the realm of culture, representation and discourse. This understanding essentially seeks to explain how hegemonic systems invoke consensus and acquiescence to disparities in political, economic and other kinds of power. But the emphasis on consensus tends to ignore the fact that, since all hegemonies function through a combination of force and consent, and since force by definition is the manipulation of physical bodies, arguably all hegemonic orders, directly or indirectly, act on and affect the very physical process of the embodiment of their subjects within that order. This is borne out by the fact that hegemonies do institute what Raymond Williams refers to as ‘the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic, political, and cultural system’, which ‘seem to most of us the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense’ (Williams, 1977: 110). It is in this sense that the institutional organisations and arrangements of individual hegemonic formations constitute a materialisation of non-bodily forces that are nevertheless in a dynamic relation with their materialisation in the individual subject, and substantially affect that process of embodiment. For instance, upper caste hegemony institutes (a) notions of bodily purity, pure and impure spaces, pure and impure practices, even pure and impure body parts that directly affect and shape bodies and their exposure/concealment within and outside the upper castes; these may also (and on innumerable occasions, have been) enforced physically; (b) specific modes and relations of production that control occupations and professions, consequently incomes and consumption possibilities, consequently levels of well-being (physical or psychological), and thus (and again consequently) access to power and resources. Within the hegemonic logic, force is not just physical violence but the material conditions of possibility (these may require physical force to counter and transform, but that would be a counter-hegemonic

logic and dynamic); paradoxically, these very conditions of possibility then become the basis of eliciting consent to their in fact being impossible to transform/overcome/negotiate. In this sense, each hegemonic condition may be said to present itself as contained by and containing a limited horizon of possibilities (prescriptions and proscriptions), within which and to which it solicits consent. Revolutionary or other transformative possibilities emerge only when either the hegemonic formation is no longer able to elicit that consent – whether because of a failure in the modes of production and consequently in consumption, leading to the necessity of changing the modes of production; or because of a failure in implementing the perception of the conditions of possibility as fixed and unchanging/unchangeable/non-negotiable. In this sense, no hegemony can be a fixed or static condition, but exists in the continual reinforcement of the perception and acceptance of the immutability of its modes of production and reproduction. However, the very fact that it must be continually and continuously reinforced opens the possibility of the failure of and/or change in that dynamic.

Further, no hegemonic condition exists in exclusive isolation, but in extended and dynamic relations with other hegemonic conditions – interlocking with them, intersecting with them, overlapping with them – spatially (in terms of regional difference/overlap) as well as temporally (in terms of the reproduction and transmission of the conditions of possibility as well as the synchronicity and simultaneity of inter-relations). For instance, Brahmanical hegemony understood as the dominance of upper castes in ritual status as much as in economic and/or professional terms, negotiates with regional variations of caste and class, as well as with transformations in inherited and received hegemonic ideas and conditions (arising out of the colonial encounter, but also out of caste movements).<sup>29</sup> Within systems of multiple modes of production co-existing, as in the case of India, the individual hegemonic formations that arise out of the individual modes of production tend to reinforce each other, vertically and horizontally, to maintain their respective stabilities. Consequently, the conditions of possibility are reinforced as much by immediate hegemonic imperatives as by the meta-hegemonic formation that results from the series of mutually reinforcing hegemonic formations, at one end of which is the idea of the nation-state itself, with its attendant prescriptions, stipulations, exhortations, invocations and systems of penalisation, that directly address, solicit and command its individual subjects. At the opposite end of the continuum is the ‘smallest’ hegemonic formation, that of the family, which in turn is variously

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<sup>29</sup> This is part of the argument in my doctoral thesis, nearing completion, on masculinity and Hindu nationalism.

‘forced’ and/or solicited and/or persuaded to function in ways identical to the prevailing hegemonic idea of the family. But why does any given family have to conform to the hegemonic notions of family available? Firstly, because the family is itself one of the institutional embodiments of any given hegemonic order; attempts to reorganise it can lead to the delegitimising of the given family, and consequently to a fundamental destabilisation of its constituent subjects. And secondly, because in the final analysis, in the prevailing system of relations of production, reproduction and consumption, the given family’s subsistence will ultimately depend on its conformity, and that conformity is ensured and communicated through the embodiments of gender. But between the nation-state and the family there may be a range of other institutions that also embody the nation-state, and serve to mediate between the processes of embodiment of the nation-state and those of the subject. These may be clubs, political parties, cultural organisations, associations based on class, caste or gender, etc. The case of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS, often translated as the National Volunteer Organisation) in India, which I will now turn to, is a case in point.

## The RSS and the cultivation of the National Man

The RSS was founded in 1925 by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, with the specific intent of creating, maintaining and defending a Hindu nation. He was its first ‘*Sarsanghchalak*’ (the highest rank in the hierarchal structure of the RSS). Mohan Madhukar Bhagwat was recently appointed the sixth and most recent of the *sarsanghchalaks*, by the National Executive of the organisation. The National Executive has recently been expanded from a 16-member to a 22-member body. The total number of RSS *upa shakhas* (the primary unit) across the country stands at 45,960. With a very conservative estimate of 15 *swayamsevaks* (or volunteers) on average per *upa shakha* (the actual numbers can vary from 5 to 50 across the country), there are close to seven hundred thousand men and boys who daily don their khaki shorts and attend the *shakha*.<sup>30</sup> In addition, there are 7,923 *Saptahik Milans* (weekly meetings) and 7,200 *Mandalis* (meetings of volunteers who do not attend daily or weekly *shakhas*). At the moment there are around 4,000 *pracharaks* (full time workers), but the numbers are rumoured to be declining. There is a five-fold age-based

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30 It is notoriously difficult to get precise figures regarding the actual membership of the organisation, partly because it is a voluntary organisation, partly because of the many sub-organisations that it has spawned with which it almost always officially claims no connection, and partly because of the implicit but strict policy of controlling information almost with obsessive secretiveness that it follows.

division of the *shakhas*: The first stage is the *shishu shakha* (6–10 years), followed by the *bal shakha* (10–13), the *kishore shakha* (14–21), the *tarun shakha* (21–45) and the *praudh shakha* (45+). This is an important organisational detail as we shall shortly see. While Hedgewar laid the ground for the fledgling organisation, it was his mentor, patron and later, organisational contemporary B.S. Moonje, who provided some of the key organisational and institutional directions for the moulding of the RSS. Moonje had met Mussolini while travelling in Europe in the 1930s, and was profoundly inspired both by the man himself and by the various fascist organisations and institutions he had initiated, but especially the Balilla and the Avanguardisti. Marzia Casolari's (2000) pioneering research on these lines has convincingly shown how the RSS, right from its inception, was thus modelled on fascist organisations, with an emphasis on military training of youth from the age of six onwards, social and cultural homogenisation, unquestioning respect and obedience to a central leader or leadership, and so on. This is not to suggest that the term 'fascist' can be therefore be unqualifiedly applied to the RSS: there are differences at various levels – organisational, ideological, strategic – that indicate that such blunt reading of the RSS would be misplaced and dangerously misleading.<sup>31</sup> But one important theme that they share – that of militarisation – has direct relevance and consequences for my argument here.

The training into militarisation in the RSS is perhaps best defined by its blend of emphasis on formal rituals and physical discipline, with a carefully calibrated informality in personal and social relations. For instance, in my field work in the RSS *shakhas* in Kerala, it was evident that the youth who attended the *shakha*, came because it provided them a location for play and exercise, while giving them a sense of being 'special', in the sense of belonging to an exclusive group. This is reinforced by the carefully maintained boundaries between the different age groups during the drill and physical training sessions; these same boundaries are relaxed during the 'teaching' sessions. The ritual-cum-physical-training sessions are performed in a predefined area at a common meeting place at the same time across the 65,000 or so *shakhas* country everyday. The sessions are normally conducted under the direct supervision of a *pracharak*: while originally it was supposed to run for 15 minutes or so, they now may run up to 1–2 hours in the morning in a public place, usually municipal parks. It starts precisely at the same time everyday and very strict punctuality is maintained. All the *swayamsevaks* (volunteers) are required to wear the traditional uniform which consists of a white shirt,

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31 See A Vanaik (1997), Sumit Sarkar (1993), C Jaffrelot (1998), A Ahmed (1993) for the debate on the usefulness of labeling the RSS 'fascist'.

khaki shorts, and a black cap. There is no rigid compartmentalisation on the basis of age during the drills, in the sense that all age-groups participate together; however, they are segregated and allotted exercises on the basis of their age and capacities.<sup>32</sup> The sessions begin with approximately 15 minutes of prayer, including a prayer to *Bharat Mata* or Mother India, a salutation of the *bhagwa dhvaj* (the saffron flag regarded as the hallmark of ancient Hindu military presence, and therefore as a *guru* to guide them). This is followed by physical exercises and ideological training. The physical exercises begin with light warm-up exercise drills. Each of these exercises is performed with devoutness and commitment. The physical activities may include yoga, combative games (including sometimes training in *lathi* wielding/stick fighting).<sup>33</sup> This is followed by an educational discourse (*bouddhik*) normally delivered by a notable figure selected by the *shakha* coordinator. The *swayamsevaks* also train in first aid and in rescue and rehabilitation operations. The *swayamsevaks* are also encouraged to get involved in the developmental activities of the village or locality. RSS volunteers also run a number of ‘social welfare’ activities which include 36,320 service programmes: 809 organisations/trusts are involved in this activity which run 19,480 educational, 4,977 medical, 7,477 social and 4,396 self-help programmes (Chatterji, 2003).

The *swayamsevaks* realize that they have to compete with ‘the three Ts—television, tuitions, and technology’ (Chatterji, 2003)<sup>34</sup> responsible for what they refer to as the puny and feeble youth of the day, use popular games to gain young members. They are then gradually introduced to other sports, older and traditional games like *kabaddi* and *kho kho*, and exercises that form the daily ritual. Through this process of familiarisation, they are slowly introduced to the ideology and politics of Hindutva or Hindu nationalism. Because of the decline in numbers the RSS has tried to catch up with the changes and now permits ‘lazy and time-consuming games like cricket’ (Jayant, a respondent from my fieldwork), for instance. They have also opened up chat rooms and websites that are dedicated to their activities. To combat a declining participation in their daily activities, the RSS has begun to open what they call IT *shakhas*

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32 Space is also a consideration here, as particularly in the metropolitan areas, large numbers are required to be accommodated in relatively smaller areas and at the same time.

33 Increasingly this aspect of the training has been gaining in significance as *lathi* wielding is often used to intimidate the locals and gain psychological control over the locality/neighbourhood. This was acknowledged with no sense of embarrassment by Akshay, a respondent from my fieldwork.

34 ‘Tuition’ refers to the increasingly common practice of children being sent to after-school classes for additional coaching, in order to perform better in the school exams.

that target mainly young people. Interestingly, large numbers of IT professionals have actually joined RSS *shakhas* for a dose of daily exercise, a sense of well-being, community or for the facilities that these *shakhas* have started offering. These have been designated ‘software *shakhas*’ and contain everything—from power-point presentations on the RSS’s community work to yoga and *lathi* wielding. Jayant also noted that they soon plan to add video conferencing facilities to the list of amenities made available to these professionals.

Notable in the brief description above are already evident the relations we tried to outline in the first part of this paper. Firstly, by excluding girls and women from the *shakhas*, a profoundly gendered understanding of the nation and its social spaces is explicitly established, marking one kind of set of conditions as naturalised and immutable, in the understanding of the nation and of the bodies that inhabit it. Then, the strict adherence to time serves as a useful example of the way in which institutional embodiment occurs, and becomes a means for instituting what Benedict Anderson (1983) has referred to as the homogenous time of the nation-space: through the simultaneous practice of the physical drill and exercises, at the same time across the country, as well as through the common prayers to a common motherland, volunteers are persuaded to imagine themselves as part of a larger collective body that constitutes the ‘Hindu’ nation – a hegemonic formation understood as immutable precisely because it encourages a sense of immutability through and in its institutional practices. The productive and the reproductive relations that must necessarily constitute this nation but which can challenge hegemonic understandings of it – like that of the RSS – by virtue of changes in the modes of production and reproduction, are simply elided by exclusion (women) and/or disavowal (caste and class). Indeed, potential disruptions of this kind are sought to be pre-empted and controlled precisely through this mechanism – with the most telling instance of this being in 1988, when the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party launched its (highly successful) campaign to reclaim Ayodhya (the mythical birthplace of the hyper-masculine god Ram), at precisely the point when the controversial Mandal Commission recommendations were implemented.<sup>35</sup> The body that is constituted as the ideal body of the Hindu nation then is the muscular and often ascetic Hindu upper caste male, defined by his physical prowess and social service, but unmarked by differentiators of caste and class. This is a body that is celebrated in

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35 This was an affirmative action policy of reservations in all sectors of governmental employment for the so-called ‘Other Backward Castes’ – a move that was understood by the Hindu right as well as many outside it as fundamentally divisive (in caste terms) of ‘Hindu’ society.

its physicality through the inculcation of pleasure in games and in martial exercises; but it is also a body that is disciplined into obedience by those very pleasures. In other words, this is a body that is invested by the larger body (the hegemonic formation of the nation-state) that it is a part of, as much as it invests in that larger body – and it is in this sense that institutional embodiment and individual embodiment dovetail, in the service of the Hindu nation.

## Conclusion

Much of the work here is preliminary and requiring of elaboration. But the fundamental argument I sought to make – that the embodiment of gender in individual terms is inextricably related to its embodiment in institutional and organisational terms – if accepted, demands that we look beyond the individual self as bearer and site of ‘external’ signs, and see these signs as themselves generated by and thereby relating the individual self to, institutional and organisational embodiments of the hegemonies of gender that prevail.

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# Appendix

## GEXcel Symposium

### Men/masculinities, Transnational, Spatial, Virtual: Hegemony, power and deconstruction

Tuesday 5 May, 2009

*Location:* TEMCAS Room, Tema Insitute, T-Building, Linköping University,  
Linköping

#### Programme

- 12.30–12.45 Registration
- 12.45–13.00 Introduction Prof. Jeff Hearn (Linköping University)
- 13.00–13.45 The Challenge of Pleasure: Let's Talk about Sex in Gender  
Masculinity Studies  
Dr. Christine Beasley (University of Adelaide, Australia)
- 13.45–14.30 The Gays and the Geeks  
Dr. David Bell (Leeds University, UK)
- 14.30–15.00 Coffee
- 15.00–15.45 The Role of Transnational and National Networks in  
Internally Displaced Men's Everyday Life  
Nil Mutluer (Central European University Budapest,  
Hungary)
- 15.45–16.30 The RSS and the Cultivation of the National Man  
PK Vijayan (Hindu College, Delhi University, India)
- 16.30–17.00 Coffee
- 17.00–17.30 Roundtable with the speakers  
Chair: Prof. Jeff Hearn
- 17.30–18.30 Mingle  
Location: Brage, Tema Institute

For registration please contact:  
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