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Introduction: Men and Masculinities in Southeast Asia

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Men and masculinities are the subject of burgeoning scholarly interest, much of it driven by a desire to render masculinities visible. Masculinities scholars argue that men *as men* have rarely been treated as the subjects of scholarly research; the man as ‘male’ occupies the space of ‘the universal, normative subject’ (Louie 2002: 5) – a figure rarely problematized or deconstructed. These scholars claim that even within gender studies men have been largely absent (Connell et al 2005: 1). The aim of research on men and masculinities is therefore to put men at the centre of scholarly enquiry as *gendered* beings. This has led to an explosion of writing about men and masculinities. In the context of Asia, much of this work is focused on China and Japan (see Brownell and Wasserstrom 2002; Louie 2002; Roberson and Suzuki 2002; Louie and Low 2003; Geng 2004) or on South Asia (Derné 2000; Osella et al 2004; Banerjee 2005). There has been considerable less research on men and masculinities in Southeast Asia where, according to Peletz (1995: 102), masculinity and its constructions ‘have been taken for granted’.

The large body of scholarship on gender in Southeast Asia focuses almost exclusively on the lives of women. Where this works deals with the question of masculinity, it is often in the context of women’s interactions with men – as fathers, husbands, employers and agents of the state. Men are rarely treated as the subjects of gender-based research with the result that what we know about men and masculinity is usually inferred from the study of women and femininities. There are, however, some notable exceptions. These include Ong and Peletz’s (1995) seminal work on gender relations in nineteenth and twentieth century Southeast Asia; and a few chapters in edited collections on gender in Asia (cf Atkinson and Errington 1990; Manderson and Jolly 1997). There is also a growing body of work on male homosexuality in Southeast Asia, including Boellstorff’s (2005) work on gay men in Indonesia; Jackson’s (1996) work on Thailand; and two edited collections by Jackson and Sullivan (1999, 2001). A noticeable gap remains, however, in the study of hetero-normative masculinities – studies of ‘straight’ men are largely lacking (but see Nilan *et al.* 2009; Clark 2010). In particular, there is an absence of any sustained analysis of the interaction between hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities or examination of how the performance of heterosexuality is linked to dominant constructions of masculinity. This collection, *Men and Masculinities in Southeast Asia*, seeks to address these gaps by examining male hetero-normative models of sexuality in a range of different Southeast Asian countries.

Studying men and masculinities

Scholarly calls to recuperate 'men' and 'masculinities' stand in contradistinction to the claims of second wave feminists who argued that women's absence from scholarship created a body of knowledge that was primarily about men's behaviour and practice. This 'malestream' knowledge not only served to obscure women's behaviours and practices, but did so by denying the gendered basis of such knowledge. In other words, it made men the subject of research without ever acknowledging their gendered position as men. Feminist scholarship sought to challenge these assumptions by drawing attention to the gendered basis of all knowledge claims. Recent literature on men and masculinity thus 'uncannily mirrors' its feminist forebears: 'it focuses upon men's own experiences, generates evidence of men's gender-specific suffering and has given birth to a new field of enquiry, "Men's Studies"' (Segal 2000: 160). There is a danger, however, that in carving out a space that is analogous to that of 'Women's Studies' such accounts overlook the political role of women's studies as a space within which women were able to embark on the process of critical self-knowledge as a subordinated group. The central focus on the study of gender and power may be obscured, or, even more worryingly, men's studies may make equal claims to gender inequality as victims of patriarchy and/or feminist gains. For this reason, many scholars have rejected the term 'men's studies' in favour of 'critical studies on men' (CSM), 'critical men's studies', or 'studies of men and masculinities'.

Connell *et al.* (2005) claim that as a field of study, CSM is inspired by but not parallel to feminist research on women. This claim leaves unaddressed a number of questions, including: How do CSM scholars position their work in relation to feminist research on men? If 'critical men's studies' is a body of research inspired by feminist research what distinguishes it from other critical studies of gender? What is the relationship between CSM and other bodies of gender-based research, including queer studies and postcolonial studies?¹ One response to these concerns is to argue that CSM is by and large undertaken by men about men and masculinities, while feminist studies are primarily about women by women. Such a claim is not about an assumed sex-based division of research personnel and interests (although there may be evidence to support this conclusion), but points to a view present in much recent scholarship on men and masculinities that feminist research is not about the study of men. Even a cursory review of the last four decades of feminist scholarship demonstrates the spurious nature of such a claim. Feminist theorizing is about understanding the intersection of gender and power, and is thus always already about men. The significant contribution of feminist theory to the study of men and masculinities, however, is often overlooked in CSM. Neglecting the insights of feminist theory has left much of the recent research on men and masculinities without a strong grounding in gender analysis, with the consequence that it is often theoretically weak.

This weakness is evident in the ongoing debates within critical men's studies about the meaning and significance of such fundamental concepts as 'men' and 'masculinities' (Donaldson 1993). The concept of 'masculinity' has become ubiquitous with studies of men.² It has become shorthand for the meanings and experiences associated with 'being a man' in a particular socio-cultural context (cultural representations), the everyday lived experiences of

men (practices or identities), and as a way of understanding the unequal relations between women and men, and between men (social power). The multiple meanings associated with the concept of masculinity/masculinities have led to claims of conceptual vagueness (Hearn 1996). For this reason, Hearn and Pringle (2006: 7) prefer to talk about men's individual and collective practices – or men's identities or discourses on or of men, rather than about masculinity. They acknowledge, however, that the term 'masculinities' is 'convenient shorthand to refer to how men act, think, believe and appear, or are made apparent' (Hearn and Pringle 2006: 7).

The linking of men with masculinity appears to be based on an implied (and essential) heterosexual dualism – men/women – which gives primacy to the sexed body in understanding the performance of gender. Queer theorists and many feminist scholars have criticized such static and normative understandings of gender by arguing that the male/female dichotomy has no intrinsic biological or other essential reality; the sexed body is no more primary or 'real' – it is culturally constructed (cf Gatens 1983; Butler 1990; Haraway 1991). As Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994: 35) argue:

While the social construction of gender categories is carefully described in terms of particularities, the very notion of 'gender categories' usually presupposes an incontrovertible gender dichotomy, which in turn rests on notions of essential biological difference. ... Cultural and historical specificity has been laid on to presupposed biological universals – male and female bodies.

Comparative ethnographic research shows that each of the terms in the triad 'men/male/masculinity' (and women/female/femininity) has multiple and ambiguous meanings which alter according to context and over time.

This longstanding feminist and queer critique of the sex/gender distinction does not appear to have influenced scholarly writing within the tradition of CSM, much of which rests on a foundational distinction between men and women (but see Louie 2002). This is evident in the way in which the discipline is described ('men and masculinity studies' rather than 'gender studies') and the ways in which the concept of masculinity is used and debated. The term 'masculinity' is often used in a way that presents it as the singular preserve of men (Mac an Ghaill 1996). Such a view serves to portray an essentialist view of masculinity in which biology is intrinsically tied to the social construction of gender (Hoven and Horschelmann 2005). This has led some scholars to call for the need to distinguish 'being masculine' from 'being a man' (Clatterbaugh 2004), and to recognize that the terms men/male/masculinity and women/female/femininity can be used to describe a wide variety of different and even contradictory aspects of human bodies and behaviour (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994). For example, although masculinity evokes images of maleness, it is not necessarily shared by men and can be adopted by or attributed to women. As Sedgwick (1995: 13) notes: 'As a woman, I am a consumer of masculinities, but I am not more so than men are; and, like men, I as a woman am also a producer of masculinities and a performer of them.' Masculinity and femininity mean different things depending on whether they are lived out and experienced by male or female bodies. However, the implicit coupling of men with masculinities that is

present in much critical men's studies ignores the complex intersections between sex and gender.

Much work in the field of masculinity studies also fails to incorporate the insights of feminist thinking about gender, sexuality and power. Butler's concept of 'performativity' provides a useful way of theorizing the processes out of which identities are constructed. For Butler, the self is produced in the process of making performative gestures. In this sense, the performance of gender is compulsory and unconscious. The gender binary of masculine/feminine is perceived as natural via a process of sedimentation that 'over time has produced a set of corporeal styles which, in reified form, appear as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes which exist in a binary relation to one another' (Butler 1997: 407). Rather than understanding a person to be female or male, she theorizes that a person's gender is performative – that is, one's gender is created through a series of repeated performances: 'Consider gender, for instance, as a corporeal style, an 'act', as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where 'performative' suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning' (Butler 1990: 190). This analysis suggests that gender is not an identity but a 'set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame' (Butler 1990: 33).

Another significant limitation of much of the critical men's studies literature is that it deploys the figure of 'men' as a unitary, essentialist category. Feminists long ago rejected the concept of 'women' as both a political and analytic category because it has the homogenizing effect of suppressing women's diversity and overlooking the ways in which *all* men and women are simultaneously racialized, classed and gendered subjects (hooks 1981; Mohanty *et al.* 1991). Rather than focusing on gender as the source of women's oppression and men's domination, third world feminists and women of colour call for an approach which examines the multitude of ways in which women and men benefit from, or engage in, the exploitation of 'other' women and men. Such an approach is able to acknowledge that men have political interests in common with women, especially in the face of poverty, national insurrection and genocide. It is premised on an exploration of how both men and women are differently located within structural hierarchies. This is meant not to suggest precise ethnic, racial, sexual or cultural identities, but rather to describe a 'position in a structural hierarchical interrelationship' (Ang 1995: 60). Collins (1999: 263) uses the term 'intersectionality' to refer to these cross-cutting hierarchies of power and argues that 'viewing gender within a logic of intersectionality redefines it as a constellation of ideas and social practices that are historically situated within and that mutually construct multiple systems of oppression'. Although the concept of intersectionality has been taken up by some CSM scholars (see Hearn 2004), the notion of 'difference' is often poorly articulated. In part, this can be explained by the enormously influential role that Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' has had on the development of critical studies of men and masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity

The concept of hegemonic masculinity emerges in Connell's attempt to provide an alternative way of thinking about gender relations and the relationship between masculinity and power. Connell (1995: 77) defines hegemonic masculinity as 'the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy

of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.’ According to this view, two types of relationships shape the gender order – ‘hegemony, domination/subordination and complicity on the one the hand, and marginalization/authorization on the other’ (Connell 1995: 81). In any given historical moment, ‘one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted’ (Connell 1995: 77). Although Connell sees some correspondence between the cultural ideal and institutional power, this does not mean that the most powerful bearers of the cultural idea of hegemonic masculinity are the most powerful individuals. In this sense, hegemonic masculinity is not assumed to be normal (only a minority of men might enact it) but normative – it embodies ‘the currently most honored way of being a man, it require[s] all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimate[s] the global subordination of women to men’ (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832). In other words, the hegemonic ideal may not correspond to the lives of actual men but is an ideal to which the majority of men aspire.

Within the gendered order, in addition to hegemonic masculinity, Connell identifies subordinated, complicit and marginalized masculinities which are in constant interaction with each other. For Connell, marginalization is

always relative to the *authorization* of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group. Thus, in the United States, particular black athletes may be exemplars for hegemonic masculinity. But the fame and wealth of individual stars has no trickle-down effect; it does not yield social authority to black men generally.

(Connell 1995: 80-1, emphasis in original).

Subordinate masculinities are those relations labelled as deviant (e.g. gay men), whereas marginalized masculinities are those structured around the concepts of race, class and ethnicity (Howson 2006: 63). Subordinated masculinities have the potential to become protest masculinities when they challenge the defining hegemonic principles. Complicit masculinities are ‘lesser versions of the hegemonic ideal’ (Howson 2006: 65). Connell (1995: 81) reminds us that these are not fixed character types but ‘configurations of practice’ generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships.

Connell’s work been extremely influential, but it is not without its critics (see Donaldson 1993; Demetriou 2001; Hearn 2004). Much of the critique rests on the lack of precision about the meaning of the term ‘hegemonic masculinity’. Beasley (2008: 3) identifies three main ways in which Connell uses the term: (1) a political mechanism (drawing on a Gramscian notion of hegemony that refers to cultural/moral leadership) to ensure popular or mass consent to particular forms of rule; (2) the most dominant (most powerful and/or most widespread) versions of manhood; and (3) actual groups of men. She argues that the links and relationships between these different understandings of the concept of hegemony are not clearly articulated, not least because they are not ‘entirely discrete definitional entities’ (Beasley 2008: 4).

Some of the problems with the concept of hegemonic masculinity have to do with the way in which it has been used. Some researchers attribute its qualities to individuals or groups of

men (i.e. the masculinities of men who occupy elite or ruling class positions in society) rather than hegemonic power relations (Chen 1999). In other words, these accounts frequently overlook that gender is a set of power relations rather than an internalized characteristic. The most dominant ideals of masculinity are not necessarily the same as those that work to guarantee men's authority over women and those that do legitimate it may not always be socially celebrated or common. For this reason, Beasley (2008: 6) calls for the need to 'distinguish hegemonic from merely dominant men, from actual men or from their specific personality traits'. As Lusher and Robins (2009: 390) point out, however, it is not easy to envisage gender as a set of power relations (as Connell intends it to be understood) rather than a set of personal qualities.

The tendency to equate hegemonic masculinity with dominant men is reinforced by the continual use of the term 'hegemonic masculinity' in the singular. While a relational approach implies multiple, context-specific strategies, Connell and others write as if there was only ever one hegemonic masculinity at any given historical moment (Jefferson 2002). Thus, the fundamental problem with the concept of hegemonic masculinity is that it is grounded in the notion of a fixed (male) structure rather than hegemonic strategies that can 'vary across different parts of a social formation, creating conflicts or tensions for individual men between different hegemonic forms as they move across social practices' (Wetherell and Edley 1999: 337). This formulation is a useful starting point for thinking about the competing positions that men take up in patriarchy, it does little to account for the complexity of masculinities and how they are interconnected. So, although Connell's model insists on a 'distinct and legible hierarchy of masculinities' (Moller 2007: 265) within which some men exercise significant power and other have less, the precise articulation between hegemonic masculinity and dominant men remains unclear. In his critique of Connell, Demetriou (2001: 337) argues that, 'hegemonic masculinity is not a purely white or heterosexual configuration of practice but it is a hybrid bloc that unites practices from diverse masculinities to ensure the reproduction of patriarchy'. In other words, hegemonic and marginalized masculinities should be understood as mutually constituting processes.

Other scholars argue that, although recognizing the importance of racial and ethnic hierarchies in the construction of 'marginalized' masculinities, Connell overlooks the complex ways in which femininities and masculinities are constructed in and through other dimensions of oppression (Sinha 1999). Masculinity is not simply about 'male-female relations', but traverses multiple axes of race, class, sexuality, religion and ethnicity. So, although Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' provides a useful starting point to begin to interrogate these complexities, it has limited applicability in understanding the fluid nature of multiple identities. This has led some scholars to question whether Connell's approach is at all relevant to an understanding of men in non-Western contexts (Lindsay and Miescher 2003). For example, Ouzgane and Morrell (2005) caution against adopting European/American concepts of masculinities in the study of men and women in traditional African societies, where age and not gender was significant in determining the distribution of material resources (Schiele 2000).

Writing about Indian men, Osella and Osella (2006) reject the concept of hegemonic masculinity altogether because of its focus on singularity and homogeneity. Their work reveals two hegemonic ideals – ‘one appealing mostly to the hegemonic ideals of control and detachment and the other appealing to equally hegemonic ideals of non-vegetarianism, sociability and providing for the family’ (Osella and Osella 2006: 50). They argue that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is unable to simultaneously incorporate these two idealized forms of masculinity. They therefore reject it in favour of an alternative understanding of dominance based on multiple ideals of masculinity (Osella and Osella 2006: 51). In her study of a male prison in Kolkata, India, Bandyopadhyay (2006: 187) argues that ‘the notion of hegemonic masculinity is not juxtaposed with subordinate masculinities but rather with competing and alternate masculinities which challenge the homogenous idea of hegemonic masculinity’. While she accepts that hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to both subordinate masculinities and in relation to women, she demonstrates that within the prison, hegemonic masculinity is a ‘seriously contested idea’ (Bandyopadhyay 2006: 188).

The latter issue signals a need to move away from the structural dimension of hegemonic masculinity to the analysis of how masculinities are constructed and how different configurations of masculinity prescribe or regulate men’s lives. As numerous scholars have attested, masculinity does not mean the same thing to all men – it varies in how it is understood, experienced and lived in daily practice (Coles 2009; Lusher and Robins 2009). The concept of hegemonic masculinity takes into consideration dominant, subordinate and marginalized masculinities at the structural level without taking into account men’s lived realities. Attention to the ways men experience gender may reveal that marginalized men feel dominant in relation to other men. This leads Pringle (2005: 267) to conclude that although the concept of hegemonic masculinity is ‘useful for helping understand big picture accounts, [it] can be problematic for understanding the constitution of individual subjectivities’. Moller (2007: 275) goes as far as to suggest that it reduces ‘our capacity to understand the ways in which the performance of masculinity may be productive of new socio-cultural practices, meanings, alliances and feelings’. Although Connell has always insisted on the dynamic nature of the gender order and thus of hegemonic masculinity, such a theorization provides few positive accounts of how hegemonic masculinity can be subverted (Howson 2006).

Another shortcoming of Connell’s thesis is its inability to give sufficient attention to the operation of hegemony on femininities (Howson 2006: 66). Although the relation between masculinities and femininities is a constant theme in the work of Connell and others (see Kimmel and Messner 1992), there is tendency to focus on hegemonic masculinity in relation to patriarchy and male power over women. Part of this problem is that Connell fails to problematize the notion of masculinity itself and elides the terms man/male/masculinity. This has the effect of focusing exclusively on *male masculinity*, with the result that the relationship between men and masculinity seem incontrovertible (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994: 20). In response to these critiques, Connell and others acknowledge that not enough attention has been given to the role of women in the construction of hegemonic masculinity, and to the role of what was originally called ‘hegemonic femininity’ but later ‘emphasized femininity’. Connell and Messerschmidt call for a greater recognition of the ‘practices of

women and to the historical interplay of femininities and masculinities' and to the incorporation of 'a more holistic understanding of gender hierarchy, recognizing the agency of subordinated groups as much as the power of dominant groups and the mutual conditioning of gender dynamics and other social dynamics' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 848).

Most critics do not dismiss Connell's theory but seek to elaborate and expand the analysis of hegemonic masculinity.³ A number of scholars have sought to use Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus' as a way of highlighting the role of corporeality in the construction of gender (Light and Kirk 2000; Light 2003; Coles 2009). Light (2003), for example, argues that theorizing gender as a form of embodied capital can illuminate the ways in which particular bodily regimes act to embody particular forms of culture – and class-specific forms of masculinity. In other words, not only are bodies inscribed with culture, but the body's engagement in social and cultural practice also shapes the dispositions and tastes that structure behaviour, social action and access to resources (Light and Kirk 2000).

To account for the ways in which men's identities shift and change over time, other scholars incorporate Butler's concept of performativity in their analysis of masculinity (Evans 2005; Hoven and Meijering 2005; Moller 2007). According to Evans:

Masculinity is a performed social identity rather than a state of being... There are hierarchies of masculine performance and exceptional performance is equated with exceptional masculinity. How well one performs tasks and the actual performance of those tasks determines one's place in a masculine hierarchy, and that place is never full or permanent. For men, as well as for women, in other words, *not only must gender be done, but it must be seen to be done, again and again* – it must be iterated and, performed within a social space.

(Evans 2005: 201, emphasis in original)

Butler's insights allow us to see masculinity as a fluid, socially constructed concept that changes over space and time. Such an approach destabilizes gender binaries by de-emphasizing the study of 'masculinity' (or 'femininity') and focusing instead on the construction of 'gender' as multiple and variable. Not only does such an approach provide a means to acknowledge female masculinities and male femininities, but it also affords a means to examine how men negotiate masculinities in their daily lives.

While the concept of performativity provides a means to theorize fluid gendered identities, the focus on multiple and/or contested masculinities risks overstating the ways in which men actually experience masculinity. Ethnographic research reveals that for many men, 'masculinity' is an unfamiliar concept and when asked to speak about it with scholars, they are at a loss as to what to discuss. The notion of 'what it means to be a man' is much more readily understood. And yet, despite the scholarly focus on multiple and fluid identities, most men describe their gender identity as stable and unitary. In their study of migrant men in Australia, Donaldson and Howson (2009: 215) point out that men 'understand their masculinity to be most often quite solid, reliable, dependable, durable and transportable, rather like themselves, in fact'. While the experience of migration may challenge the men's sense of identity, they recognize and respond to familiar patterns of masculinity. These

similarities suggest the need to look beyond the local to understand the structuring practices that shape the gender order at a global level.

Globalizing masculinities

An interest in the global is another enduring legacy of Connell's work on men and masculinity. Connell asserts that a 'world gender order' exists that connects the gender orders of local societies on a world scale. She describes two basic links that constitute this global gender order: (1) interactions between existing gender orders brought about through their contact with each other (through imperialism, neo-colonialism, globalization and labour migration and so on); and (2) the creation of new transnational spaces (e.g. those created by multi-national corporations, supra-state agencies and the global media). The current global gender order, characterized by the patriarchal organization of society, has been shaped by the emergence and reconstitution of masculinities of conquest and empire, and more recently neo-liberalism and post-colonialism (Haywood 2007: 93). According to Connell, global history and contemporary globalization must be part of our understanding of masculinities because

the net result of these two forms of linkage is a partially integrated, highly unequal, and turbulent set of gender relations, with global reach and uneven impact. This is the context in which we must now think about the construction and enactment of masculinities.

(Connell 2005: 74)

The notion of a world gender order implies that hegemonic masculinity is a multi-level concept operating at local, regional and global levels and that masculinities at each level are linked and can influence each other (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 849). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 850) claim that a regional hegemonic masculinity provides an exemplary masculine model that influences, but does not wholly determine, the construction of gender relations and hegemonic masculinities at the local level. They suggest that processes such as economic restructuring, long-distance migration and development agendas reshape local patterns of masculinities and femininities. They describe the relationship between local and regional masculinities in this way:

[L]ocal plurality is compatible with singularity of hegemonic masculinity at the regional or society-wide level. The 'family resemblance' among local variants is likely to be represented by one symbolic model at the regional level, not by multiple models.

(Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 850-1)

Global masculinities are formed in a world gender order that privileges men over women. While there are always local exceptions, the 'patriarchal dividend' gives men greater access to power as well as cultural and sexual privilege (Connell 1995: 261). Globalization has thus created the conditions for the production of a hegemonic masculinity on a world scale: 'a dominant form of masculinity that embodies, organizes and legitimates men's domination in the world gender order as a whole' (Connell 1995: 261). Writing in a similar vein, Kimmel argues that globalization is changing masculinities and transforming the lives of individual men. He claims that the patterns of masculinity embedded within gendered institutions are

rapidly becoming the dominant global hegemonic model of masculinity, against which all local, regional, and national masculinities are played out and to which they increasingly refer... The processes of globalization and the emergence of a global hegemonic masculinity have the ironic effect of increasingly 'gendering' local, regional, and national resistance to incorporation into the global arena as subordinated entities.

(Kimmel 2005: 415)

Kimmel's view that gender is becoming the chief means of resistance to globalization is shared by Derné (2002) whose research amongst Indian men in North India and Fiji reveals that gender is affected by both transnational influences and local arrangements and concerns. Derné found that Indian men who are attracted to transnational media representations of male dominance simultaneously distance themselves from transnational media depictions of new possibilities for women (Derné 2005). Derné's findings support Connell's assertion that global forces that challenge men's identity and power often lead men to reaffirm local gender orthodoxies and hierarchies. By contrast, Hooper (2000) is less convinced that globalization has reconstructed gender relations in patriarchal ways. She argues that new technologies and new social divisions of labour may in fact fracture the male breadwinner role and 'soften' the hegemonic masculinity of early modernity.

A number of scholars have been critical of claims for a gendered world order. Among their concerns are the meanings attached to the concept of the 'global': 'what constitutes the global frontier? Where is it? And, if we are unsure where it is, what is the masculinity that it inscribes?' (Kenway *et al.* 2006: 30). Others focus their critique on the micro level and argue that Connell's study of the global rests on a tenuous and limited understanding of the local. For example, Louie (2003) is critical of Connell's call for a global approach to the study of men and masculinities because in the urgency to capture the global facets of masculinity, she ends up missing the importance of local factors and interactions at the local level. Louie (2003: 13) states that the consequence of Connell's call for the study of a global gender order is that:

[O]ne of the most exciting areas for research – the comparisons of masculinities between cultures within Asia itself – will be subsumed by more global concerns. We still need to dislocate researchers' comfort zones. While I applaud an internationalist vision, I believe that the groundwork for understanding local masculinities must still be done.

He does not dismiss the significance of globalization in the study of men and masculinities and acknowledges a hybridization process in which 'the mixing of different cultures has already produced global masculinities' (Louie 2003: 13). But, he argues, Connell's work on globalizing masculinities is in fact almost always from a Western perspective (Louie 2003: 1). For Louie, any understanding of the global must rest on a thorough knowledge of the local.

Like Louie, Hibbins is concerned about the potential ethnocentrism implied by the attempt to categorise a global hegemonic masculinity:

This would lead us to ignore diversity and heterogeneity, eliminate the possibility of different types of hegemonic masculinities across different cultures, and undermine the potential or actual power of marginalised and subordinated masculinities.

(Hibbins 2003: 198)

Louie and Hibbins both point to the need for sustained analysis of localized expressions of masculinity in non-Western contexts.⁴ They caution, however, that such analysis should not simply replicate Western notions of masculinity or generate simple and reductive comparisons between the two (Wang 2003: 42). In making this point, Louie's demonstrates that in his study of Chinese masculinity 'the cerebral male model tends to dominate that of the macho, brawny male' (Louie 2002: 8). Western paradigms of masculinity are thus largely inappropriate to the Chinese case because 'their application would only prove that Chinese men are 'not quite real men' because they fail the (Western) test of masculinity' (Louie 2002: 8-9).

The ubiquitous association of masculinity with Western models and ideals has led some scholars to suggest that the concept is of limited value in non-Western contexts. Haywood (2007: 90) warns that while the concept of masculinity (or masculinities) 'makes sense' within a Western sensibility it may have little analytical or conceptual value in other societies. In cross-cultural contexts, we must therefore be careful not to practise a form of 'conceptual imperialism' in which descriptive and analytical categories are extrapolated to other cultures. The alternative is to develop questions or paradigms that are generated from within specific cultural contexts (Louie 2002: 9). Such research contributes to the process of contesting taken-for-granted ideas about men, masculinity and sexuality. This is not to say that such research aims to reveal an 'uncontaminated' space of difference; after all, 'it is no longer even possible to conceive of a pristine theoretical and cultural world of 'non-Westerness', unmarked by a history of asymmetrical interactions' (Srivastava 2004: 27-8). Instead, what is required is research which seeks to foreground the specificities of the local while also taking into account sites of engagement and interaction with the global. This includes an analysis of the ways in which masculinities are shaped by multiple engagements with imperialism, colonialism, nation-building, and economic development programs. Cross-cultural research can further explicate these processes by demonstrating how gender categories are assembled in local contexts.

Overview of chapters

Through the presentation of detailed ethnographic studies of localized masculinities, the authors in this collection add weight to the critique of hegemonic global masculinity. At the same time, they assert the importance of engaging with the global by paying attention to the flows of ideas and people that constitute the processes of globalization. The chapters challenge the idea of emerging globalizing forms of masculinities. In doing so, they focus on two inter-related issues: the impact of cultural flows on the construction of what it means to *be* 'a man'; and the way global systems of production impact on the working lives of men. Chapter authors examine how flows of ideas, people and capital shape masculinities, and examine the debates that emerge in particular local settings about the meanings associated

with 'traditional' and 'modern' masculinities. In this way, the collection contributes to a better understanding of how cultural and economic globalization is shaping the nature of gender relations in contemporary Southeast Asia.

Global economic restructuring has brought about significant changes in the organization of labour in the Asia-Pacific. While a considerable amount of research has been conducted on the ways in which global production has become dependent on women's labour in Southeast Asia, men are marginal to this analysis. The chapters by McKay and Lucero-Prisno, Pattana and Thai address this gap. In their chapter, Steven McKay and Don Eliseo Lucero-Prisno III focus on the constructions and transnational performances of manhood among Filipino seafarers. They demonstrate that within the Philippines, Filipino seamen are often constructed as 'exemplars of masculinity'. This image sits in contradistinction to their location in the lower rungs of an occupational and multi-national hierarchy with limited opportunities for upward mobility. They argue that consequently Filipino seafarers are caught in a 'masculine dialectic' between models of middle-class professionalism on the one hand and working-class hyper-masculinity of adventure on the other. Their research suggests that because of the greater separation of workplace and home, migrant men are able to enact a range of multiple and sometimes conflicting masculinities.

Pattana Kittiaras's chapter on the working lives of Thai migrant men living in Singapore also reveals the resourcefulness of migrant men who occupy marginal and relatively powerless social positions in the host society. His research shows that sexual intimacy forms a core part of migrant men's subjectivity as transnational actors. Male foreign workers actively engage in patterns of sexual intimacy despite the strict regulation of their work and social life by their employers and authorities. Kittiaras suggests that to understand male migrant manhood, we must look beyond the men's experiences of exploitative labour and acknowledge the fact that workmen are actors with purposeful intent, especially in their pursuits of everyday romance and sexual intimacy away from home.

Hung Cam Thai's chapter on Vietnamese low-wage immigrant men living in the United States reveals another dimension to the intersection between international migratory flows and constructions of masculinity. His research explores the way these men's sense of masculinity and social class is altered through their return visits to their homeland to seek a bride. These return visits enhance the immigrant men's socioeconomic worth - they are able to assert 'high status' when they return to Vietnam to visit because of their foreign passports, even when they live in dire conditions in the USA. Thai argues that the intersecting categories of social class and masculinity need to be expanded globally because much of what we know about both concepts in the West are still nation-specific despite the enormous increase in transnational flows of capital and people in recent years. A fundamental concern here is the question of how transnational migration and transnational mobility can simultaneously challenge as well as reinforce patriarchy.

The themes of social subordination and mobility are taken up in the chapter by Sophie Williams, Lenore Lyons and Michele Ford, which describes Chinese Singaporean men's participation in a members-only online forum about sex tourism to the Indonesian island of Batam. While descriptions of sex acts are ever present in the forum's 'international field

reports', they are a vehicle for fraternity rather than eroticism or competitiveness. Williams, Lyons and Ford argue that the men's participation in this online community not only helps them escape from the demands of a heteronormative expression of masculinity predicated on the reproduction of the Singaporean state but also allows them to produce a localized form of brotherhood in which they share information and look out for each other's welfare in their encounters with Batam's sex workers.

While these chapters focus on the movement of people, those that follow address the global flow of ideas. The chapter by Trude Jacobsen explores the influence of traditional texts and discourses on the shaping of postcolonial masculinities, and how notions of 'tradition' intersect with dominant ideas about 'modernity'. In her study of Cambodian constructions of manhood, Jacobsen examines the tropes of 'good' and 'successful' men. International development agencies express concerns about Cambodian men's sexual promiscuity and the seeming contradiction between the two dominant 'manhood scripts' they are encouraged (and expected) to act out. Jacobsen argues that these conflicting scripts reflect the tension between modernity and the perception of tradition at work in Cambodian society. At the same time, the Cambodian past – including its social norms and gender roles – is persistently asserted as inviolable and bound up with national identity. Jacobsen's chapter challenges Western notions of the 'endlessly variable' nature of gender constructs and identities by revealing that in the Cambodian context, it is 'culturally essential that the manhood script remain static'. Her critique of hegemonic masculinity focuses on the dominance of masculine ideals rather than the performance of multiple masculinities.

In his chapter on public violence and gender-based violence in Timor-Leste, Henri Myrntinen explores the intersections between the country's violent past and a patriarchal culture in which hegemonic forms of masculinity condone the use of violence. His research amongst young, urban men reveals an ambivalent attitude towards violence – on one hand it is denounced, but on the other hand it is legitimated as a form of discipline or an appropriate avenue to settle differences. Myrntinen concludes that Timor-Leste society is defined by a patchwork of co-existing patriarchies produced by local culture and the cataclysmic impacts of conflict and displacement as well as those of urbanization, modernization and globalization.

The remaining chapters examine the intersections of race, class, sexuality and culture in the shaping of marginal men's relationships with hegemonic ideals. The chapters by Wilson and Lyons and Ford examine how marginal men seek to subvert hegemonic and/or dominant constructions of masculinity. Ian Wilson's chapter examines how latent class and ethnic resentments over the perceived institutionalized inequalities of Indonesia's New Order government, and the failure of the post-New Order state to adequately redress them, have shaped local cultural idioms of masculinity and power. At the centre of his analysis is the *jago* (strongman) who has been revived and gained increasing currency amongst many disenfranchised young men in Jakarta's slums and poor neighbourhoods. In the context of decentralized and democratized Jakarta, post-New Order *jago* identity has become an assertion of exclusivist rights over resources in a given place. Wilson argues that as increasing affluence, consumerism and global mobility, become more inaccessible than ever

to working class men, *jago* masculinity is a means for demanding respect and achieving social status with a minimum of resources.

In their chapter, Lenore Lyons and Michele Ford explore the relationship between military service, masculinity and citizenship as experienced by Malay Muslim men in Singapore. Their study examines the nexus between class and ethnicity in the construction of Malay masculinities and in the juxtaposition of those masculinities against hegemonic middle-class Chinese norms. For the men in their study, Islam is a means to demonstrate a Malay man's superior loyalty to the nation, standing as it does in stark contrast with the materialism and promiscuity they associate with the Chinese. Lyons and Ford conclude that Malay subaltern masculinity is not subversive of the existing hegemony because the men also gain from National Service, which they see as a positive experience where they grow up, learn respect and gain knowledge of the world – and thus as a means to achieve the status of normative Singaporean manhood. At the same time, however, their achievements are always partial because of their marginal location in class and ethnic hierarchies.

The study of men and masculinities in Southeast Asia is an under-examined field of research. Despite the strong and growing scholarly interest in issues related to gender and sexuality, much contemporary scholarship on the region continues to focus almost exclusively on the lives of women. The chapters in this collection address that gap by providing important new insights into the ways in which masculinities are (per)formed in different Southeast Asian contexts. In this way, *Men and Masculinities in Southeast Asia* contributes to the growing critique of hegemonic masculinity and offers innovative ways of thinking about the intersection between the local and global, and between the traditional and the modern, in the lives of men and women in the region.

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Notes

¹ Both queer theory and post-colonial theory take men and masculinities as the objects of their analysis. Queer theory seeks to problematise the categories 'man/male/masculinity' and 'woman/female/femininity'; while postcolonial theory has pointed out that the unspoken, silent man of history is heterosexual, white, and Western.

² In contrast to the almost exclusive focus on masculinities in the study of men, few studies of women address the related concept of 'femininities'. This fact points to a fundamental difference in the ways in which gendered identities and practices have been conceptualised within feminist studies.

³ Hearn (2004) is less positive about its continued centrality in CSM. He calls for a movement away from the study of hegemonic masculinity to the hegemony of men.

⁴ This call is not limited to studies of Asian societies. Morrell and Swart (2005: 91) argue that despite the emergence of postcolonial theory, and the strong influence of feminism, little has been done to rectify this omission.