

# Mobile masculinities: Men, migration and low paid work in London

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## **Abstract**

The impact of migration on gender identities, norms and conventions has been predominantly understood from the perspective of female migrants. Far less attention has been paid to the potential that migration entails for the negotiation and reconstruction of male identities. Drawing on 68 in-depth interviews with male migrants employed in low-paid work in London (including care work, cleaning, construction and hospitality), this paper explores the reworking of masculinities at different stages of ‘the migration project’, and the embodied and emotional nature of migration. It begins by exploring the decision to migrate, which is often linked to men’s responsibility to provide for the family and a perceived need to better the self. It then goes on to examine the loss and loneliness which can accompany the early stages of migration as migrant men attempt to re-negotiate their position in new gender regimes in the host country, and on the accommodation that occurs as male migrants are subsequently incorporated into both masculine but also feminized sectors of London’s low-pay economy. The paper draws attention to ways in which these re-negotiations are themselves cross-cut by ethnic, racial and class differences so constructing a more nuanced picture of mobile masculinities.

## **Introduction**

While there is a growing body of work on both masculinities (Berg and Longhurst, 2003; Datta, 2004; Gutmann, 1997; Hopkins, 2006, 2007; Longhurst, 2000; McDowell, 2000a and b; McIlwaine and Datta, 2004) and transnational migration respectively (Basch, *et al.*, 1994; Glick-Schiller *et al.*, 1992; Guarnizo, 2002; Levitt *et al.*, 2003), research in to the experiences of migrant men remains relatively limited. In part, this can be understood as a reaction to a previous bias whereby migration was depicted as quintessentially masculine, an activity ascribed to male bodies and a process imbued with masculine attributes including risk, adventure and courage (Chopra, Osella and Osella, 2004). Such constructions led to a subsequent preoccupation with the experiences of female migrants and attendant debates about the emancipatory potential of migration for women. Within this later literature, migrant men came to be rather erroneously and homogenously positioned as ‘custodians of patriarchy’ or ‘deviant others’ (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999; Mahler, 1999; Menjivar, 1999; Willis and Yeoh, 2000). Reflecting wider patterns within gender research, work on migration thus tended to highlight ‘deficit’ masculinities revolving around issues such as spousal and family desertion; ‘hyper-masculine’ identities associated with gender violence; or the failure of men ‘left behind’ to take on reproductive responsibilities.

These views are now being increasingly challenged by a small body of work devoted to male migration which is informed by more critical, transnational and gendered approaches to migration studies (Boehm, 2004; Charsley, 2005; 2006; Gardner 2002; Herbert, 2008b; McIlwaine *et al.*, 2006; McKay, 2007; Priblisky, 2004; Osella and Osella, 2000).<sup>1</sup> Taking these in turn, transnational approaches not only acknowledge the importance of multiple movements and networks that bind home and host countries, but also problematize the relationships between people, places and identities (Levitt, 2001). As such, there is an appreciation that “the multi-local life-world presents a wider, even more complex set of conditions that affect the construction, negotiation and reproduction of social identities” (Vertovec, 2001: 578). Within the specific context of gender

research there has been a growing appreciation of how gender shapes transnational migration while itself being reconstituted through it. Indeed, so entrenched are gender norms that “migrants often become particularly aware of the relational and contextual nature of gender as they attempt to fulfil expectations of identity and behaviour that may differ sharply in the several places they live” (Donato *et al.*, 2006: 6). Thus, essentialist notions of identity construction are challenged as it is acknowledged that gendered identities, ideologies and practices are formulated and negotiated in manifold ways as people move across borders yet maintain ties with their home countries in what have come to be known as ‘transnational social fields’ or transnational social spaces (Fouron and Glick-Schiller, 2001; Huang *et al.*, 2000; Mahler, 1999; Osella and Osella, 2000; Pessar, 2005; Yeoh *et al.*, 2003).

Emerging research on men and migration illustrates the variegated nature of men’s migration and its impact on male identities which is attributable to a range of factors, including: hegemonic (and counter-hegemonic) gender regimes in a migrant’s country of origin; the extent to which these gender identities and beliefs are reproduced, intensified or challenged in their chosen destination; and the type of migration undertaken (Pessar, 2005; also Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992; Parreñas, 2005; Pessar and Mahler, 2003). In many parts of the world increased international mobility continues to serve as a rite of passage into manhood and “an affirmation of [a migrant’s] masculinity and their increased value as prospective husbands” (Pessar and Mahler, 2003: 829). Yet, far from being pioneers, men’s migration status may now be one that has been traditionally reserved for women - that of ‘trailing spouses’ (see, for example Charsley’s (2005, 2006) research on Pakistani men’s migration to Bristol). Research also highlights a range of different motives prompting male migration *including* care and responsibility for children and families (see Priblisky, 2004 on Ecuadorian male migrants in New York).

And yet, even whilst male migration may rework previously held gender identities - such that men begin to participate in reproductive labour and, potentially at least, gain a new respect for what women do - such changes may be only temporary. On their return home men may quickly revert to the gender ideologies and conventions of their home place (Boehm, 2004; Priblisky, 2004). Hence, research also highlights the attempts by men to present themselves as 'successful' migrants which may involve the performance of a hyper masculine self that portrays their position as victor over adversity and abundant provider (Osella and Osella, 2000; McKay, 2007).

Drawing on the insights of both the transnationalism and masculinities literature, in this paper we argue that there is potential to extend this small but growing body of work on male migration and masculinity in three main ways. First, existing research on male migration is largely silent about issues of embodiment. As such it is at odds with the broader literature on masculinities which has highlighted the embodied and performative aspects of masculinities (Jackson, 1994; Jackson *et al.*, 1999; McDowell, 2000b). Nor has research in this field given much consideration to issues of *emotion* (on the failure of the wider migration literature to consider issues of emotions and embodiment see Anderson and Smith, 2001).<sup>2</sup> And yet, as Gardner (2002) argues, migration is first and foremost a series of *physical* embodied events which involve different *emotional* experiences including the pain of separation, regret, disappointment, a strong sense of grief as well as pride, excitement, contentment and acceptance. In fact, although research on global circuits of care and the geographies of home has begun to engage with issues such as feelings of belonging, displacement and dislocation (Blunt, 2005, 2007; Datta *et al.*, 2006), the focus of such work has largely been on migrant women – as carers or transnational mothers. There has been relatively little attention paid to the embodied and emotional geographies of *male* migrants.

Second, whilst the transnationalism literature is concerned with movements, connections and networks, the focus of much research in this field is on the experiences of migrants in host

countries, and their subsequent shaping of transnational social fields. As Harney and Baldassar (2007) suggest, such work needs to be tempered with more nuanced understandings of the experiences of migrants in their home countries (see also Mahler, 1999). This said, we must also consider how gendered identities *travel* and how these identities are made and remade at each stage of the migration project, drawing attention to the renegotiation of male identities in a range of different and often contradictory gender regimes encountered at different stages of this process.

Third, building upon the ‘new mobilities paradigm’ (Blunt, 2007; Cresswell, 2006; Sheller and Urry, 2006; Conradson and Latham, 2005a), we need to further unpack the category of ‘migrant men.’ As Conradson and Latham (2005a and b) observe, because transnational research has been dominated by the movement of migrants from the Global South to the North, and then studied predominantly from the perspective of migration to the US, it has tended to focus on the movement of global elites or ‘developing world migrants’ (Conradson and Latham, 2005a: 229) who migrate predominantly for economic reasons. As a result, there has been little research on what - defined in terms of their socio-economic and class positions in their home country (see also Walton-Roberts and Pratt, 2005) - Conradson and Latham term ‘middling’ migrants (*Ibid.*:229). As we illustrate, although many of those coming to a city like London from the Global South end up near the bottom of the occupational hierarchy, these migrants often come from a diverse range of class (and indeed, ethnic, racial and national) backgrounds (see also Walton-Roberts and Pratt, 2005). Indeed, building on Charsley (2005: 208) we need to recognise that “men are not simply men”. Rather, “masculinities are braided with [a range of] other identities” (see also Connell, 2005; Hopkins, 2006; McIlwaine *et al*, 2006; McKay, 2007). Yet, all too often the focus of masculinities research has been on relatively singular (and often marginalised) constructions of masculinity (see, for example, Datta, 2007; Hopkins, 2006; McDowell, 2000a and b).

A focus on migrant men is thus especially promising because it allows us to consider the experiences of those who – collectively – tend to be marginalised as migrants or, more especially, migrant workers, and yet who between them in fact articulate a range of different, often competing constructions of masculinities depending (in part) upon their ‘race’, class, ethnicity and nationality. We begin by outlining the methodological framework adopted in the study on which this paper is based before moving on to consider the highly diverse and mobile masculinities constructed at different stages of the migration project. Here we focus particularly on decisions to move to London; migrants’ arrival in London; their negotiation and interaction with the city through their insertion into the labour market and finally their assessments of the success of their migrations.

### **The study**

This paper is based upon a wider study which explored the roles and experiences of migrant workers employed in low-paid sectors of London’s economy through an examination of migrants’ lives both in, but also beyond, the workplace (Datta *et al.*, 2007a, Datta *et al.*, 2007b; Evans *et al.*, 2005; Herbert *et al.*, 2008; May *et al.*, 2007; McIlwaine *et al.*, 2006). The project drew upon a methodological framework designed to enable us to interrogate the boundaries, and inter-connections, between public and private lives but also to trace the connections between people’s lives in London and their lives – and indeed the lives of their families – in their home countries. As such, the study sought to chart something of people’s lives before migration, processes of migration and settlement, people’s employment trajectories in London, and the impact of this employment on their lives, and the lives of their families, in both London and elsewhere.

Responding to debates in migration research about the value of both quantitative and qualitative methods, the research was conducted through both questionnaire and in-depth interviews (Donato *et al.* 2006; Pessar and Mahler 2003). The in-depth interviews adopted a narrative approach, with analysis focused around both the events that structured peoples lives and on the ways in which people sought to

recount these events – including the genres (of success, failure, joy or pain, for example) through which people framed these events (on narrative analysis see Portelli, 1998; Rapport and Dawson, 1998; Singer, 1997). Whilst a narrative approach goes some way in returning a sense of agency to migration studies – casting migrants themselves centre stage in any explanation of their experiences – these narratives themselves are also attributed a certain rhetorical power: modes of expression through which people make sense of their own lives and hence past (and future) actions (see also Gardner, 2002; Ryan, 2003; Tonkin, 1992).

In total, 424 questionnaires and 103 in-depth interviews were conducted with migrant men and women working in five low-paid sectors of London's economy: construction, care, hospitality, cleaning and food processing. Of these, 68 interviews were conducted with migrant men. The men interviewed were a very heterogeneous group. Reflecting the super-diversity of London's 'new' migrant population (Vertovec, 2006), for example, respondents came from no fewer than 22 different countries, with the heaviest concentrations from Ghana and Nigeria (16 respondents) Brazil (16 respondents) and Poland (9 respondents). In terms of ethnicity, 29 respondents identified themselves as Black African, 27 as White (including migrants from Brazil and Eastern Europe), 1 Asian, 5 mixed, 1 African-Asian, 3 Latin American and 2 African-Caribbean.

The men ranged from 20 to 59 years of age, with some of the younger migrants having living with their parents prior to migration and others having their own families. Migrants also reported varying class locations in their countries of origin. Using education as a proxy of class position (see Cwerner, 2001; Jordan and Duvell, 2002; Margolis, 1998) amongst the 54 men who reported their educational qualifications, 44% had completed secondary school and 39% had first degrees or their equivalent. A further 2 had Masters degrees, and 6 had completed vocational training courses. On the basis of this, and respondent's own identification of their class positions in their home countries, the men thus came from a range of upper middle class to lower middle class backgrounds. Indeed, one group came from

very privileged backgrounds, although this privilege had not translated over space. Rather, as with all those whose voices are heard here, they were located in low paid sectors of the London economy (see below, also Herbert, 2008b; McGregor, 2007; Walton-Roberts and Pratt, 2005).

In terms of their labour market positions, the questionnaire survey revealed that migrant men tended to work in what we have termed 'semi-public' places such as the London Underground and construction work (Evans *et al.*, 2005). This said, it is important to acknowledge that a number of respondents were found in occupations more traditionally deemed 'women's work.' Thus, whilst 24 of the men worked (mostly as labourers) in the construction industry – long held as a key site of a particular, 'heavy' masculinity – almost half (31) worked as cleaners (23 in general office cleaning, and a further 8 on the London Underground), and a further 4 as carers. Thrown together in London, and categorized simply as '(low paid) migrant workers', the remainder of the paper considers the very different re-workings of masculinity that these men embarked upon with the move to London, and the embodied and emotional aspects of this process.

### **Masculinized moving**

Coming from very different parts of the world - Chittagong, Kumasi, Curitiba, Bydgoszcz, Sao Paulo, Goiania, Accra and Makow to name but a few - the men's narratives about why they had decided to migrate, how these decisions were reached, and how they undertook these moves, differed considerably - and were shaped by their social location in their countries of origin, as well as the location of these countries in the global order (see also Hopkins, 2006).

Taking the latter first, migration to the UK from the countries of the Global South and East and Central Europe (ECE) has been powerfully shaped by changing economic, political and social conditions in those countries (Massey *et al.*, 1994). As these countries have been subject to sustained programmes of neoliberal 'reform' in recent decades, levels of emigration have risen (Sassen, 1998). Thus, throughout

the 1980s and early 1990s, for example, the Brazilian economy experienced repeated periods of high inflation and economic instability, and declining job opportunities for those with professional qualifications or university training. As a result, and as many Brazilians found, in the face of economic decline at home even 'low-paid' menial work in northern hemisphere countries such as the US paid more than professional work in Brazil (Evans *et al*, 2007; Margolis, 1998) encouraging many to move. Very similar processes continue to play out in other countries in the Global South and East and Central Europe, including Ghana and Poland (May *et al* , 2008).<sup>3</sup>

Although clearly structured by these broader social, economic and political processes, migration must also be understood as being shaped by specific 'cultures of mobility' which promote the movement of people whether inter-regionally or transnationally. These, in turn, are shaped by historical factors including the relative role of migration in household survival strategies (Chant, 1998) and the historical connections between sending and receiving areas (Conradson and Latham, 2005b; Silvey 2006). Yet even this more nuanced understanding of the migration process can not fully explain why it is that certain people move while others do not. For this one has to look more closely at migrant's own narratives and, particularly their understandings of the places to which they might move. As Pessar and Mahler (2003: 817) have argued: "much of what people actually do transnationally is foregrounded by imagining, planning and strategizing".

As such we were particularly interested in exploring why migrants came to *London* - especially as some migrants, for example those from Latin America, were coming from countries from where migration to the UK has hitherto been overshadowed by movements elsewhere (especially the US). Perhaps unsurprisingly, many respondents recounted imagining London, or the UK more generally, as the land of plenty. For example, Vanga, a migrant from Congo who was working as a cleaner reported:

“While in Kinshasa, we have a different image of London. London is synonym of paradise where everything is easy to get, where there is no misery, where everything is perfect. But once here in London, the reality is completely different.”

This view was shared by his compatriot, Pitchens, who was working as a cleaner and had been in the UK since 1990. He told us that – before undertaking the move at least - in his imagination, one did not associate the UK with suffering. Rather, it was a place where “you don’t have to work hard to have more money, and hard jobs don’t exist” (see also Herbert (2008b) on East Asian male migration to the UK). Felipe, a Colombian migrant who arrived in London in 2003 and worked in the hospitality sector had a somewhat different, but still positive, vision of London:

“How do you conceive of London especially? The idea they sell is that they are large people, fair-skinned, blue-eyed and blond, the women are large, their English is perfect, where everybody speaks clearly, where they are friendly and likeable, where they are punctual, where they respect other peoples, where human rights are primordial, where everybody wants to help. So this is the idea that you have, that the city and the whole country is well organised, and the transport is very good.”

### *Reasons for migrating*

Shaped by both the material realities of life at ‘home’ in a period of profound social and economic restructuring, and these imaginations of life elsewhere, three main narratives emerged through which the men we interviewed made sense of their reasons for migrating to London. Each narrative valorises and projects a rather different masculinity framed by notions of risk and adventure; bettering the self; and providing for the family.

Migrant men like Kojo, for example, a Ghanaian who migrated to London in 1997, went to considerable lengths to present himself as a risk taker. Claiming that risk was part and parcel of being a man, this risk was inevitably dangerous, but also held the potential of great returns:

“Sometimes that is what, that is what it is all about - life, don’t care about the risk involved, because Columbus had to risk to explore and went and discover America in 1492. Men decided to risk it and design an aeroplane. That’s a lot of risk in life, and that thing comes by armchair, you’ve got to wake up, you see and do something.”

Kojo's narrative is in many ways a typically masculine rendition of migration which emphasises activity, personal initiative, an ability to take risks and an experiential attitude (see also Gardner, 2002).

Given that a significant proportion of the migrants in our sample reported that they had migrated to the UK to gain British qualifications, it is not surprising that a second reason put forward for migrating to London was linked to this (Evans *et al.*, 2005). To this end, Akelo, a Ghanaian who had come to London in 2000 having completed vocational training as a teacher in Ghana told us:

“The job in Kumasi was basically teaching, and as it normally happens if you have a degree in teaching you definitely go for PGCE. So I purposely came over here to upgrade my teaching profession by pursuing my education, that's the main reason why I travelled from Ghana to UK.”

Whilst Akelo's narrative clearly relates to Conradson and Latham's (2005b) suggestion that migration can in part be understood as a quest to develop the self through geographical mobility, amongst our respondents the pursuit of British qualifications was clearly linked to a widely held belief that such qualifications also offered the only route out of low paid work in London, - a belief held especially amongst those who had been de-skilled and de-qualified through their migration (see below; also Datta *et al.*, 2007a). For migrants like Akelo, the move to London was thus understood as a means of accumulating human and cultural capital which could be used to further their professional lives both at home (where British qualifications are highly valued) but also in London.

Thirdly, and not so often acknowledged, some men also attributed their move to a desire to provide for their families and, particularly, to care for children (see also Priblisky, 2004). Indeed, while there is a fairly extensive literature focusing on transnational mothers (Ehrenreich and Hochschild [eds], 2002; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001) there is rather less on transnational fathers (but see Waters, 2003 on 'astronaut' families; also Priblisky, 2004). While a number of the men that we interviewed were separated or divorced, many still maintained some contact with, and support for their children. This

included men like Jose, a Brazilian who was working as a labourer in London. He had been married twice in Brazil and had three children aged 13, 7 and 4. Jose spoke about his failed marriages and children right at the start of his narrative by way of explanation of why he had come to London. Not only did he send money back home regularly to support his children, he also maintained close contact with them via the internet and phone and sent them expensive presents. Keen to preserve his image as a generous father and successful migrant, he said: “Sometimes I send presents. At the end of last year I sent an X-box to the boy. I had to buy an electric motorbike for the daughter because the son had one. That cost me over R\$1000. I only give them expensive presents because they think ‘Well, my dad is living in London’.” The same need to support absent children was articulated by Kwame, a Ghanaian who worked as a cleaner on the London Underground who told us that he had no choice but to cope with poor working conditions “because I’ve got kids at home. Even school fees.”

#### *Decision making processes*

Turning to a consideration of decision making process relating to migration, Adalberto - a young Brazilian migrant - told us that: “I was the author of this idea of coming over here”. Adalberto’s narrative, which was echoed by other migrants in this study, can be read as a particular projection of himself as an independent, autonomous, active man, emphasising his agency. Yet, as the men’s narratives unfolded, it became clear that these decisions were in fact well considered, shaped by the views of family and friends who had already migrated to London and negotiated with family members. In terms of the latter, the role of fathers was particularly important in shaping some men’s decisions to move, especially evident among the younger respondents (see also Hopkins, 2006 on the role of fathers). For men like Bazyli, for example, a Polish construction worker, both his brother’s desire to migrate to London as well as his father’s own experiences of migration to Canada had a significant bearing upon his decision to move. Thus, Bazyli told us that his father “told me that I should go now, when I am still young because when I get older I would only see life out there on the TV screen – he said if you want to see something you should go.” Regretting his own decision to return to Poland from

Canada, Bazyli's father was keen that Bazyli migrate to London and he articulated a particular vision of masculinity linked with youth and experiencing life first hand (see also Ryan (2003) on how memories of youth are framed by movement, independence, activity and freedom).

For another group of three middle class Brazilian friends, Antonio, Adalberto and Danilo, the desire to move to London had to be negotiated with dominant and 'successful' fathers who both opposed their migration but then also facilitated it by paying for air tickets. Visibly different from many of the other migrants, the lives of these men were very privileged and consisted of hectic social lives with friends and girlfriends; weekends spent at beach houses and a variety of material possessions – a lifestyle largely funded by their fathers as their own work histories were punctuated by periods of unemployment as well as a general lack of direction (see also Batznitzky *et al.*, 2008; Walton-Roberts and Pratt, 2005). For these men, migration arguably enabled both a performance of filial defiance as well as a way out of the shadow of their fathers. In turn, even whilst their fathers were initially opposed to their migration, they appeared to rationalise it in terms of instilling a work ethic among their sons, reflecting to some extent an understanding of migration as a rite of passage (*Ibid.*, also see below). Thus, for example, Nivaldo, a Brazilian construction worker, told us that his father had “paid it all for me because I didn't have any money, but I chose the course, I organized my passport, I organized my visa, I packed my own suitcase, I was then 20 years old and he thought that it was a good attitude.”

Indeed, far from being a spontaneous decision made by individuals, the majority of the men we interviewed had paid close attention to the experiences and stories of family and friends who had already migrated to London. Transnational friendships were especially important in facilitating migration (see also Conradson and Latham, 2005b; Ryan, 2003) as Joao, a Brazilian labourer, told us:

“It wasn't only me that had thought of coming over, it was everybody who heard them. At that time a large group of friends had decided to come. Many people came up to me and said: ‘Well Ricardo, that guy, slow as he is, he went to England and came back with so much money. If we

go there, quicker than we are, we will do very well.’ And so we came over. I came with three of my friends from University.”

This reliance upon friends and family can most easily be interpreted as an attempt by these men to manage what Gardner (2002) has referred to as “inter-personal risk”, with respondents gathering knowledge of London from friends and family before they moved, and drawing on those same networks to help them find accommodation and work when arriving in the city (see also Datta *et al.*, 2007a). Yet, as many quickly discovered, their friend’s accounts of life in London could also be misleading, tied in with their own attempts to present themselves as successful return migrants in their home communities. As others have shown (see for example McKay, 2007; Osella and Osella, 2000) a large part of the success of male migration is measured in economic terms and the ability of return migrants to engage in conspicuous spending. Not surprisingly then, return migrants’ accounts of life in London often centred around the ability to earn good money and return home rich. Antonio, a labourer from Brazil who bemoaned the fact that he had not been able to save any money while working in London told us:

“No, I thought that I would come here and would be able to save some money because everyone says that it’s the best thing in the world. I think that Brazilians are very misleading, because they come here and they don’t do well and go back to Brazil saying how great it all is. It’s ridiculous! Everyone says: Oh! I went to London and saved some money then I came back home. Some of the people that live with me, having been here for two years and so far have not been able to save anything.”

These stories of wealth in London also permeated to other parts of the world. Pavel, a Polish construction worker who moved to London in 2006 had also been told by his friends that “working here as a labourer one can earn much more than in Poland..- four or five times more what I would get in Poland having many years of experience and good education behind me.”

While undoubtedly framed by broader structural processes, many of the men we spoke to chose to focus upon activity, agency and independence in their narratives on decisions to move to London. This

said, it is also important to stress these decisions were, in some cases, also informed by men's role as providers and carers of children and extended families. Furthermore, it was equally clear that interpersonal relationships and networks played a critical role in determining their migration to London while potentially reducing the risks associated with it. Yet, and in spite of these networks, arrival in London could itself be a rather traumatic process as we consider further below.

### **'Out of place and out of sorts': embodied and emotional arrivals in London**

Experiences of migration are expressed through the body. Yet, as Gardner (2002) argues, even though primarily a series of physical events, the body is rarely mentioned in accounts of migration. Within our research, migrant men's accounts of their arrival in London revealed the embodied experiences of migration. Their narratives touched upon the cold grey uninviting weather, finding their way around a vast unfamiliar city, a fear of getting lost and accounts of difficulties speaking English. These belied the bravado with which they presented their decision to migrate with many respondents highlighting their sense of vulnerability and loneliness in London (see also Ryan (2003) on Irish women migrants in London).

Crossing of borders is, of course, highly significant in that for many migrants it is their first experience of being the 'other': a realisation, perhaps, of their ethnic and racial distinctiveness, and a growing awareness of how this difference is recognised, interpreted and acted upon by others in their new country. Such experiences are by no means uniform however. Not least, to a significant extent, migrants' experiences of arriving in London are shaped by their position in the British immigration system. Indeed, the state plays a crucial role in shaping migrant identities – both at home *and* in their host countries. Whilst sending countries may valorise migrants as good citizens in an effort to encourage remittances (McKay, 2007), receiving states may in turn devalorise them for a number of reasons. Furthermore, the immigration regimes of a number of states, including the UK, are clearly gendered. In many cases male migrants are prioritised over women who are commonly identified as

‘trailing spouses’ or dependants. Gendered immigration regimes are further reflected in favouring migrant men in regularisation initiatives (see Pessar and Mahler (2003) on Mexican and Salvadorian migrants in the US in the mid-1980s).

Arguably current British immigration regimes are more clearly shaped by skills rather than gender. Under the British government’s new points based system (Home Office, 2005, 2006 and 2007), only highly skilled migrants or those identified as filling shortages in the British labour market are now granted entry – the latter only on a temporary basis (for more on the UK’s new points based system see Wills *et al.*, forthcoming). As such, entry to the UK for lower skilled migrant men and women, or those whose qualifications and skills are not recognised by British immigration rules (the majority of whom come from the Global South), is getting much harder. Indeed, with the assumption that any demand for low-skilled workers can be filled by the flow of migrants from EU accession states, migrants from the Global South who may once have gained access to the UK are now likely to find it much more difficult. Cumulatively, such policies work to construct a distinction between ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’ migrants, with attendant implications for identity construction. As Boehm’s (2004) research illustrates within the context of migration to the US, legal, documented migrants are perceived by their home communities as being at the top of the migrant hierarchy as they are better able to better support (extended) family in home and host countries as well as engage in regular transnational visits.

Setting aside migrants from the enlarged European Union who have the legal right to live and work in the UK as well as those who had acquired European nationality<sup>4</sup> for the moment, the range of possible *legal* immigration statuses available to other national and ethnic groups are increasingly limited, mainly restricted to the potential to hold a tourist and/or student visa.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, while these visas have to be obtained in home countries, entry into the UK is still at the discretion of the immigration authorities at the port of entry – potentially making arrival in the UK an extremely anxious process for many.<sup>6</sup>

Given such a system it is not surprisingly then that our respondents offered widely varying accounts of arriving in London. For those arriving from beyond Europe, arrival at Heathrow (Britain's main port of entry) was often quite traumatic. Both Antonio and Joao, from Brazil and working as labourers in the construction sector, for example, recounted being detained and closely questioned by immigration officials. As Joao told us:

“On the first day, when we arrived, we were very tired and stressed. We had had a very long and heavy interview at the airport [immigration]. I didn't imagine that it would be like that. I was nearly asking the lady for God's sake to send me back home. I could take no more.”

Indeed, arrival in London often required the performance of particular forms of masculinity – described best, perhaps, by another Brazilian migrant, Aláro, who had an elder brother already in Britain from whom he had tried to gather as much information prior to his own arrival. As Aláro describes it he arrived at Heathrow

“totally prepared, psychologically, all learned and rehearsed...Yes, I got hold of all information. If a person gets to the immigration department queue and gets shaky, there is a camera pointed down all the time and the immigration officer would be informed over the radio and when you get to the officer they won't even talk to you. I knew all that. The clothes for example: the guy has never worn a suit in his life and wears one to come here. The immigration officer notices that the suit has nothing to do with the person...I came dressed as I am here.”

Indeed, it would seem that Aláro made his way through immigration with something of a swagger, as he went on to explain: “There was a big guy waiting for me [at the immigration desk] at the *rest of the world*<sup>7</sup> queue, a big guy, he looked at me and I make the Victory sign for him. I was thinking: “If I they let me in fine, if not fine as well!”

In contrast to the studied (and perhaps necessary) bravado articulated by Aláro, those arriving in Britain from the EU accession states described a much less daunting experience. As a Polish citizen, Bazyli enjoys the legal right to live indefinitely in the UK. Having taken a short flight from Warsaw to

Stanstead, and the coach from Stanstead to London's Victoria coach station, Bazyli described the excitement he felt whilst waiting for his cousin to meet him:

“I spend two hours at Victoria waiting for my cousin because he couldn't find us. So we were just wandering around, standing and watching – I liked it. [Asked himself questions] Where have I come? – What is that? ... I was scared – I think I was scared...but on the other hand I was happy...and excited.”

Moving beyond the airport, a number of respondents spoke about the loneliness and sense of displacement they had felt on first arriving in London. For example, Akelo, who had been working as a teacher in Kumasi, Ghana and came to pursue a PGCE in Bolton (in the north of England), told us: “I just communicated with the accommodation caretaker who met me at the station, take me, took me to my block and then issued me my room so *it was a lonely day ever in my life.*” Or, as Nivaldo, a young man from Brazil, told us:

“So when first arrived, I closed the bedroom door, I felt like ‘That's it’. Please excuse my language, but I thought: ‘I am f\*\*\*ed! I have arrived! Now I am by myself and I have to fend for myself.’ In Brazil I never had to worry much, and suddenly you arrive here and think: That's it! Now I will have to deliver newspapers, clean and do something to get money.”

This sense both of isolation – but also an intense, and perhaps, new found vulnerability - was particularly profound for those who could not speak English: an experience described by Jose as feeling like a “one-year old child who couldn't speak” and Marcelo who told us:

“I need to learn English. I always tell my mum... I tell my mum everything about my life. I tell her: “mum, if I have the English language I will work little and earn a lot. With English I will be able to communicate with people. Thus far, I've been a nobody here. I am embarrassed to get near people and talk to them. I need the language.”

Arguably, encountering a London which was significantly different from the imagined one also intensified such feelings of isolation and vulnerability. Marcelo again told us:

My dream was ... do you know fairy tales? My fairy tale was to see the big ad screen in Piccadilly and the Big Ben. I saw and I thought it wasn't all what I was expecting. It is not that I felt frustrated. I have seen the London streets through TV but I imagined that I would see only white, beautiful people in the streets. I didn't imagine there were so many races.

Not surprisingly then, networks of family, friends - and indeed even friends of friends - played a crucial role in embedding these migrants in London. Picking them up from airports and coach stations; giving them temporary accommodation and - given that many men had migrated in order to work irrespective of their immigration status – providing them with information about employment opportunities, family and friends were invaluable. As Darek, a Polish migrant who worked in the construction sector told us: “Yes, there is unwritten rule that [when] one has neither work nor accommodation; one could stay at friend’s house for free.”

It is important to return to the issue of illegality here. Even while the majority of our respondents had entered the UK legally, some had since become ‘illegal’ or undocumented migrants having stayed beyond the time limit set by their tourist visas, because an initial student visas had lapsed,<sup>8</sup> or because they were working in contravention of their conditions of entry.<sup>9</sup> Although narratives of illegality were (initially at least) not infrequently shot through with the kind of bravado articulated earlier by Aláro (as people described their pride in ‘fooling the system’, for example) living illegally clearly also took its toll. Aláro recounted a time when sat at home watching the television, his friend suddenly rushed in and shouted:

““Run, run the police is here!” So I was wearing a pair of Bermudas, a t-shirt and a jacket. As soon as he told me that, I put my flip-flops on, and shoved some money in my pocket. .... All I could see were people scattering everywhere, walking quietly but fast as if they had nothing to do with the situation. Then you’d seen bus number 220 at the bottom of the road, the one that goes to Hammersmith, it was full of Brazilians with their rucksacks in their backs.”

Thus more often than not, men described the fear – and shame – that was part and parcel of day-to-day life as ‘an illegal’ – a life characterised by the constant threat of arrest and deportation. As Adalberto, another Brazilian labourer who had arrived in London in 2005 on a tourist visa which had since expired, told us:

“Only I worry a lot, that something will happened, that they [the police] will arrest me and deport me. I worry about it. I feel a bit guilty for doing something illegal. Of course there are a lot of illegal people here but I feel caged by that.”

And Marcelo, who said:

“I need to be legal in the country. To be here illegal is too bad. You walk in the street and see a police officer and you worry that they might stop you. You are in a bus and you get scared when a police officer gets into the bus. It feels like you have written in your forehead ‘Guilty’. And that is bad. In Brazil I never had that and when you come over in that situation, it is bad. It is very bad to be discriminated.”

Illegality has another impact on migrants’ lives: restricting any visits back home and hence the opportunity to see loved ones. This was perhaps put most forcefully by Roberto, who had previously been caught by British Police and deported to Brazil. The experience was so shameful that he did not want to associate with any of his friends or family and he described to us the sense that he “couldn’t feel myself as a Brazilian citizen.” To escape such feelings Roberto returned to London since when he has been:

“to Brazil only once...I don't have plans to go back in a near future because of my visa... I am scared of going there and when I return they do not let me get back in. I don't want to run this risk, so I will incarcerate myself here.”

Far from an experience of adventure or self-improvement, then, for Roberto migration meant something very different – a prison from which he could not escape.

### **Migrant men working for survival?**

If the experiences of migration themselves play a critical role in shaping the identities of migrant workers, so too do their experiences in the labour market and the workplace as migrants move beyond encountering London to negotiating it (see Ryan, 2003). Indeed, given that predominant constructions of men stress their role as providers and bread winners, paid work is a crucial factor in the construction of (hegemonic) masculine identities (Boehm, 2004; Herbert, 2008b; Lupton, 2000; Pessar and Mahler, 2003). Yet people like Aláro, Roberto, Darek, Akelo, Pavel and others have come to Britain at a very particular moment. A radical restructuring of the economies and labour markets of both the Global South and North have led to the creation of increasingly polarised labour markets with worsening

conditions at the bottom end. Yet it is in this labour market – characterised by poorly paid, insecure, routinised work in the service industries especially that many ethnic minority and migrant men as well as women now find themselves (Holgate, 2004; May *et al.*, 2007; McDowell, 2004). Requiring specific types of gendered workers, and attributes among which docility and deference dominate, such labour market opportunities demand that men “learn to serve” (McDowell, 2000a).

Such processes are further complicated by the racialised<sup>10</sup> nature of labour markets in global cities such as London. Ethnic segmentation has long been the result of stereotyping on the part of employers, the role of ethnic networks in employment searches, as well as institutional discrimination (Rydgren, 2004). Most obviously, when filling lower level positions, employers often prefer workers who are perceived as being subservient: and then ascribe this characteristic to specific migrant groups (Datta *et al.*, 2007a; McIlwaine *et al.*, 2006; McKay, 2007; Stiell and England, 1999; Waldinger and Lichter, 2003; Wills *et al.*, 2008). More important in the current context, however, is that as others have illustrated (see for example Yeoh and Willis, 2004) migrant men, and migrant ‘men of colour’ must now increasingly compete for jobs in female dominated low-paid sectors.

Taking the gendered and racialised nature of labour markets in turn, and examining their influence in shaping migrant identities, gendered stereotyping is clearly evidenced by the fact that jobs in the British labour market still tend to be defined as either ‘women’s’ or ‘men’s work’. For example, the Equal Opportunities Commission in the UK have noted that in 2002, just under half of women and just over half of men were in occupations where they outnumbered the opposite sex by at least two to one (Guerrier and Adib, 2004). Within our own study, and in keeping with gendered stereotypes those employed in construction, for example, repeatedly reinforced the notion that their work was ‘men’s work’, describing it as tough, hard and requiring physical strength with working conditions described in especially bleak terms. Many men spoke about the difficult nature of their jobs which involved

carrying heavy materials and working under arduous conditions which were exacerbated by the climate in England. As such, Paulo, from Brazil, said:

“Working all day in the snow, [it was] another winter. The snow burned me here [hand], it was 4 degrees below zero. Pure ice! Boots, helmet, it would all freeze up, and I’d slip and fall over .... Then I worked under the snow. That was the first winter with real snow that I lived through. [it was] Eight hours of snow on your face, snow, rain and cold. Every day. There was one day when the cement mix froze up, it must have frozen up at minus 5 or 10.”

Male labourers also spoke at length about their ‘uniforms’ which effectively embodied this masculinity. Hence, their steel capped boots and hard hats were seen as necessary because of the danger of their work, as Danilo, from Brazil, explained: “Just imagine one of those boards on the foot. You would loose half of your foot”. In such accounts, the building site itself emerged as an important space of male camaraderie, with respondents referring proudly to the fact that they had learnt to swear in many languages, for example, or had taught their co-workers to swear in their own language. Danilo continued that:

“There are always two to four Brazilians in the building site. There are some black men that are great fun! They try to speak Portuguese: ‘Thank you! What time is it?’ Speaking in Portuguese and trying to mix in with us! I have already taught many people, - Thank you and please! And because they had asked me to, I taught them swearing as well”.

Whilst such accounts reflect traditional notions of what was deemed to be men’s work, there were also some obvious subversion of these traditional stereotypes. This was most notable amongst those men who worked in cleaning and care who developed a range of compensatory strategies and rationales for coping with the challenges such work presented to their masculinity (see also Guerrier and Adib, 2004; Lupton, 2000; Simpson, 2004).

Most obviously, few of these men explicitly acknowledged that their work was traditionally associated with women (see Rouse (1992) research on Mexican migrants complaints about having to do ‘women’s work’). Instead, they spoke about the unfamiliar nature of these jobs which entailed learning new

skills. To this end, Carlos, a cleaner from Honduras noted: “It was very difficult for me because I had never held a vacuum cleaner in my life, a Hoover, never. And cleaning, I had never cleaned in my life. It’s true ... It was difficult, but you have to learn everything in this life”. In the same way, Abiodun, a tube cleaner from Nigeria said that his job was the worst thing he’s ever done in his life: “I’ve never done cleaning job in my life, never. It’s either a teacher, or the office managing this or, yeah, never done it before. It’s a new experience and it’s, one never, one never stop learning”.

A second strategy deployed by these respondents was to highlight the physically challenging nature of these jobs, even in relation to masculinized occupations like construction work. Thus, Paulo, a Brazilian construction worker, who had moved in and out of construction jobs, described his time washing up in a restaurant as, “worse than building work” and that, “When I left this washing up job they had to employ two men to replace me.... You’d wash about 2000 to 3000 plates per day, and 300 to 400 large pans.” Furthermore, he would not “advise any woman to do that, only if it is to pay for the ticket [back home].” As such, rather than dwelling solely on a loss of status through de-skilling and de-qualification, the men also dwelled upon the hard nature of this work which can be seen as a way of highlighting their manliness and also restoring some value to these jobs (see also Herbert, 2008a).

A third strategy was to justify their work in the service sector in terms of the roles they had performed in their home countries, however unfounded these claims might be in terms of gender roles and relations in those countries. For example, in the case of many African countries it is far from common for men to take the role of carer (see Datta, 2007; Datta *et al*, 2006). None-the-less, Joshua, a care worker from Ghana, justified his work as a carer in Britain in exactly these terms, pointing out: “For the care work, I had a passion, that passion is with them, because when I was back home I was looking for my granddad and the like, so I had a passion, that was fine”. Similarly, Eafeu, also a carer from Ghana spoke about the fact that caring for the elderly came naturally to him as it was the same as

looking after his own elderly relatives: “The work that you do for them is more greater than the reward that you get for such work. So you’ve got to be sympathetic, like maybe you helping your own old dad or your own old mum, to me that’s how I think of it”. Thus, though these men often stressed how difficult their work was in female-dominated sectors, their strategy was not only to reconstruct their jobs to highlight the more masculine elements of such work, as has been noted by others (Lupton, 2000; Simpson, 2004) but also to emphasise their previous experience of such roles – experience that they located in their own national traditions..

Another form of justification that all migrants used to explain their current (notably poor) employment circumstances – irrespective of whether those jobs were characterised as ‘men’ or ‘womens’ work, - was to reiterate, as Benedito noted above, that they had little choice but to take any kind of work on offer to them, as they had to support families either in the UK or at home. In other words, in order to fulfil their traditional role as the family provider, it was acceptable to do jobs that were both beneath them and associated with women - even if those same jobs would have been unacceptable at home. For example, Ryan - a tube cleaner from Nigeria - hated his job, saying that only uneducated ‘riff-raffs’ would do it in his country. Yet he did it to be able to return to Nigeria and to be a success: “Because my vision is to be a successful man, a chartered accountant. That’s why I’m here, that’s my aim”. Ryan’s account is important for two reasons: first it highlights the deskilling so often experienced by the migrants in our research (Datta *et al.*, 2007a; Evans *et al.*, 2005); and second because it illustrates the fact that class identities are being re-shaped alongside gender roles. As Ryan notes, transport cleaners in Nigeria were *not* women, but rather men from a different class position from himself.

It is important to understand that migrant men do not construct their identities as workers only in relation to female migrants, but also in relation to other marginalised masculinities. As noted above, there is clear evidence of ethnic clustering in London’s labour markets. This clustering is partly attributable to the fact that most migrants access work through personal networks (with 68% of those

interviewed having done just this); partly by the tendency of employers to hire those with particular ‘qualities’ attributed to specific ethnic and national groups, and partly by the tendency of supervisors and managers to hire co-nationals (see also Wills *et al*, 2008). This said, key parts of London’s low-paid economy also show considerable national diversity: the key distinction being that these sectors are dominated by migrant, rather than native, workers. Thus, as our respondents made plain, London’s construction sites, for example, were dominated by Brazilians, South Africans, Poles, Czechs, Albanians, and Armenians, whilst cleaning work was dominated by Nigerians and Ghanaians, but also included people from Sierra Leone, Angola, Colombia and so on. Overlaying these national distinctions, there were also discernable ethnic hierarchies within each sector. For example, within construction, while day labourers came mainly from a range of Eastern European and Latin American countries, supervisors, managers and business owners were predominantly English or (White) South Africans and Zimbabweans.

In the face of this diversity and these divisions, our respondents drew upon two main strategies in order to bolster their own position in the labour market hierarchy. First, a number drew upon negative stereotypes to denigrate other ethnic groups so as increase their own sense of self-worth while also compensating for the threats to their masculinities. Such sentiments were particularly articulated in relation to migrants from Eastern-Central Europe. As Jose, a Brazilian who worked in the construction sector, admitted: “It is awful to say that, but I am an anti-Polish person,” – a position he justified with his assertion that Poles were rude, disrespectful and wanted all the jobs for themselves and their friends. Indeed, competition from Eastern Europeans was noted repeatedly by many migrants while several Poles themselves stereotyped other migrant workers, especially on racial grounds. Mirek, a Polish construction worker, for example, argued that: “black people, who I consider, see us as a threat. We are white, usually better educated. English, who, I think are not officially racist, but are rather open, would prefer to employ Polish, who work harder then a black person.”<sup>11</sup> Indeed, this friction even crossed over ethnic boundaries with another Polish construction worker, Adam, noting the

conflict among Eastern Europeans, and especially with Lithuanians: “Also there is a sort of bitterness between Polish and Lithuanians. I think they are trying to prove that are as good as Poles”.

It was not only ‘race’ which distinguished Poles from their co-workers, of course. The fact that they were able to work in the UK legally was also crucial. Hence, Polish construction workers repeatedly highlighted their European/white status not only as a marker of race and ethnicity but as a legal status – a status which enabled them to work legally within the UK and which, in turn, gave them a marked superiority over other migrants. Thus, Mirek argued that: “I am coming here to work and I can work legally as a citizen of a member state of the European Union, while others often are here because of prosecution or had to escape war” (see also Colic-Peisker, 2005). As such, migrants from the enlarged EU, and particularly Poland, were constructing and presenting themselves as ‘ideal migrants’ in stark contrast with the others they found in London (Garapich).

A second, and related, strategy used by respondents to validate their own position in an increasingly competitive labour market was to stress how hard people in their own communities worked compared to other ethnic and national groups, thus seeking to emphasise their own value in relation to workers from other groups. Yet, these homogenous depictions of their own ethnic and national groups as hard working and particularly suited to the occupations that they did were disrupted somewhat by several migrants who noted that there were also divisions within ethnic and nationality groups primarily centred around class divisions (see also McIlwaine, 2005).

Interestingly, migrant men from a range of ethnic and national backgrounds did broadly agree that unlike migrant groups, the English had a poor work ethic, preferred to draw benefits, spent most of their time in pubs and most of their money on alcohol. This was reflected in Artur, a Polish construction worker’s comments: “in general English work less, and Polish work more, although they

may have the same position". This can be interpreted as a challenging of hegemonic masculine identities, and in particular, the (perceived) poor work ethic among English men.

Migrant men's labour market experiences highlight various aspects of male identities related to both differences between men and women, but also between men themselves. While often going to considerable length to invisibilise the 'feminized' nature of their occupations, many migrant men spoke at length of the hard work, and poor working conditions that they had to endure in order to make a living in London – and furthermore that it was particularly their own ethnic and national group of men who were capable of withstanding such arduous conditions.

#### **'Should I stay or should I go?'**

Broader research documents that male migrants often find it hard to adjust to their newly subordinate or marginalised status and are therefore more likely than female migrants to pursue transnational strategies which enable them to return to their home countries (Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Sacedo, 2005; McKay, 2007; Walton-Roberts and Pratt, 2005). Exactly such a tendency was evident here too, in the account of Jose, a construction worker from Brazil, whose memories of home were strongly structured around his family and friends:

"Sometimes I lie in my bed and I start imagining the time I will land at the airport, the time I will see Brazil again, the time I will see my children, my friends. When I left I was young. I don't want to grow old here."

Yet, migrant men also exhibit a strong desire to return home as successes (see also Boehm, 2004; Osella and Osella, 2000). Not surprisingly then, in trying to make sense of their migration, and evaluate its impact on their lives, our respondents often attempted to highlight the positive elements of their move, and present themselves as winners who despite great hardship and suffering had come out on top in the end. Exactly how they measured this success varied significantly. For some like Kofi, migration had enabled him to:

meet a whole lot of people from different countries and I've learned a lot from such people... You see Indians, their lifestyle is quite different, you see Chinese, their lifestyle is quite different, you see somebody from Russia, you know what I mean? So with this experience, I've learned a lot from such different, different, different people in this country.

For others, migration had been important because it had instilled a sense of responsibility in them, a view which was particularly evident in the case of the middle class Adalberto, who worked as a labourer in London. His life had:

“changed for the better in terms of responsibility. I wasn't a responsible person when I left Brazil. Just that. In terms of comfort, food and everything else, I am going through a bit of a hard time. Perhaps this is because I am a bit young, I am not very mature to do what I am doing.”

Indeed, migration to London had afforded Adalberto a “great life experience. I am enjoying it. I am going through difficulties but I am enjoying it.” In turn, these achievements were recognised by family back home. Nivaldo, also from Brazil, reported that while his grandmother and mother were upset that he was working as labourer in London, his father was very proud of him because he would learn to “value things” and was “growing as a person.”

Somewhat in contrast, Mamputo, a Congolese man who was working as a cleaner, viewed his migration as a success because it enabled him to support his family back home:

“I think I am better off here than in Africa. The money I earn here seems big compared to what I was earning in Africa. In Congo I was not independent but here I am. Now I am able to help financially those who helped me while I was in Congo. Here I get my wages and other benefits. That helps me to send money to my parents.”

Not-with-standing these tales of success, it was also notable how often the narratives of our respondents highlighted the theme of suffering – an emotion more normally associated with women's narrations of their mobility (Gardner, 2002; Herbert *et al.*, 2008a). Yet, this said, these narratives also point to a particular depiction of themselves as ‘heroic men’ who have achieved a lot despite the considerable hardships they had faced (see also Herbert, 2008b). As such, quite often whilst parts of

our respondents narratives highlighted the advantages that migration had brought, many also went to considerable lengths to stress that they had also suffered greatly - whether this be in terms of their personal relationships or in terms of their labour market experiences. Jose, a labourer from Brazil told us:

“Here I learned what it meant to be a man. I learned to suffer. In Brazil I had never suffered, I have always had a good life. Here I saw what suffering was and not having money. I saw what it means to go hungry. .. I can say that now I am a winner. I thank London for that too. Here I learned a lesson in life and I will pass that to my children.”

As others have noted (see, for example, McKay, 2007) part of the strategies to cope with this suffering and emasculation is to prioritise ‘delayed gratification’: whereby male migrants are able to put up with the restricted employment opportunities and ethnic and racial discrimination that they face in their host country, by drawing upon the validation that will come on their return home as successful migrants - valued over and above other family and community members. As such, it would seem that male migrants may operate a “double masculine consciousness” (McKay, 2007: 630): subordinated in one gender regime but hegemonic, indeed exhibiting hyper masculine characteristics, in another. Thus, marginalised and subordinate masculinities can potentially be transformed into hegemonic norms although this is done within the constraints of the broad processes which place them in particular places in the labour market and migratory project.

## **Conclusions**

This paper has highlighted various aspects of male mobility which have hitherto received little attention. In particular, it has focused upon the embodied nature of male migration, and related this to various stages of the migration process. In so doing, the paper has sought to visibilize aspects of male identities which have often been left unexplored in research on migrant men and to highlight how migrant men move through a variety of gendered positions in their migration to, and insertion into life in, London.

Furthermore, work is also central to the lives of migrant men given their traditionally ascribed gender roles as providers and bread-winners. As such, it is vitally important to not only consider how migration shapes male gendered identities but also labour markets. In turn, given that their labour market outcomes are not dissimilar from those of native and migrant women (especially for those who end up in feminized sectors of the economy), this presents particular challenges to masculine identities which men counter by formulating a range of compensatory strategies.

Our specific focus on migration to London also allows for a consideration of a more varied migrant population which comes from a vast range of national, ethnic, 'race', class and age positions. This in turn enables a more nuanced examination of differences between men which are not structured by singular, but rather, composite identities. As such, we are able to consider not only the importance of gender, but also class, ethnic, 'race' and national identities in shaping experiences of transnational migration while themselves being re-fashioned through it.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to acknowledge the importance of considering both men and women (migrants) in relation to each other which we do elsewhere (McIlwaine *et al.*, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> In turn, this reflects a more general marginalisation of emotional geographies even while the "human world is lived and constructed through the emotions" (Anderson and Smith, 2001: 7; also Davidson and Mulligan, 2004; Davidson, Bondi and Smith, 2005 for more recent reviews).

<sup>3</sup> One result of such processes is that those coming to London (as employers are well aware) assess the value of their pay through a 'dual frame' – comparing the money they can earn in London with its real value in their home countries (see, also Waldinger and Lichter, 2003; Wills *et al.*, forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup> This included migrants from Brazil who had acquired either Portuguese, Spanish or Italian citizenship due to their ancestry (Evans *et al.*, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> In turn, while tourist visas are of limited duration and include any period up to a maximum of 6 months (although proposals to reduce this to a maximum of 3 months are currently being considered) and explicitly

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prohibit employment, student visas allow migrants to work for a maximum of 20 hours a week during term time and full time in holidays for the period of the enrolment which can be extended (Evans *et al.*, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Our discussion on living and working illegally in London is dominated by the narratives of some Brazilian migrants who spoke to us about their irregular status.

<sup>7</sup> Alvaro is referring to the queue for non- EU citizens.

<sup>8</sup> A common reason for not renewing student visas is due to costs (school and visa fees) as well as constraints on time (see also Evans *et al.*; 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Many men working while on tourist visas had clearly contravened the terms of these visas.

<sup>10</sup> Ryan (2003) observes that the theorisation of 'race' has largely been constructed around the Black/White dichotomy with the result that the history of racialisation of white groups such as the Irish, and one could include migrants from East and Central Europe here, has been largely invisibilised.

<sup>11</sup> It is important to point out that several of our Polish respondents acknowledged the prevalence of racism in Polish society, a realisation which may be linked to migration (Howard, 2003).