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Working Paper

# **Masculinities, Maleness and (Illusive) Pleasure.**

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A consideration of the relationship between masculinities, maleness and pleasure (or lack thereof), reveals three things. First of all, in contexts where there is a large social power gap between males and females, such as where the levels of violence against women are high, the sexual pleasure of males, indeed their entire sexuality, is more likely to be influenced by the dominance motivation. In these contexts the use of violence against women and girls and sexual harassment to reaffirm aggressive heterosexual masculinity is and to assert control is widespread. For example studies have shown that in addition to situational factors such as local norms and beliefs, men who have a proclivity to sexually harass women cognitively link social dominance and sexuality (Pryor, LaVite & Stoller, 1993), that sexually aggressive men differ from nonaggressive men on the basis of underlying anger, underlying power, and disinhibition (Lisa & Roth, 1988), and that males who reported a high use of force in sexual experiences endorse of “the acceptability of using force in sexual encounters, the self-reported likelihood to rape if certain of not being detected, and the personality characteristics of aggression, social recognition, impulsivity, and dominance discriminated between the two groups” (McLeod Petty & Dawson, 1989). McLeod Petty and Dawson (1989) also showed that men who report high use force in sexual relationships were not, as far as personality deviance is concerned, statistically different from men who report low use. In such contexts and for such men the pleasure from sexual coupling is hard to disentangle from pleasure derived from sexual domination.

Secondly, in contexts where the ruling form of masculinity supports the idea of females being subjected to males, there is also support of female sexuality and pleasure to be subsumed to male sexual pleasure. In such societies a focus on the sexual pleasure of males will be inappropriate if it does not at the same focus on the rights of females, specifically the rights of women to their bodies and sexuality. Oriel (2005) has argued that while “sexual rights advocates recommend that sexual pleasure should be recognised as a human right...the construction of sexuality as gender-neutral in sexual rights literature conceals how men's demand for sexual pleasure often reinforces the subordination of women's sexual enjoyment.” Whenever female orgasm is seen as secondary to male sexual satisfaction because the dominant form of manhood depends on female sexuality being subordinate to male sexuality, there also tends to be evidence of sexual coercion and sexual objectification. It is by challenging the forms of sexuality and sexual pleasure that reinforce female sexual subjection and macho masculinity that it becomes possible to imagine sexual rights that are based on sexual equality. Jewkes, Penn-Kekana and Rose-Junius (2005) “in a study based on semi-structured in-depth interviews and small group discussions conducted with informants in Namibia and South Africa about their experiences and perceptions of child rape and child rearing argued that children are rendered vulnerable to abuse because of a series of ideas which create opportunities, the most important of which is the dominant patriarchal ideology. The authors

contend that the high status of men in these societies, with respect to particularly girl children, leads to vulnerability through reducing girls' ability to refuse sexual advances and generating expectations in men that they should control women and children." When working with males for sexual rights and health in such contexts the attention should then be less on genitally-focussed pleasure and more on intimacy happiness.

Lastly, it is important to see that sexual pleasure and intimacy happiness are related but are different outcomes of dyadic relations. However, a focus on intimacy happiness shows that exclusive attention on attaining sexual pleasure can be tyrannical. This is so especially where sexual pleasure tends to be defined as an motivation for, as an example, males to have bigger penises and stronger ejaculation (Ratele, 2004), females to have clitoral repositioning and labiaplasty (Braun, 2005,) and couples have more sex, to the exclusion of sexual outcomes such as more joy, knowing one another more deeply, or enhanced inner freedom.

Before teasing out these points, it is appropriate to first provide an overview of some of the recent thinking of masculinity, concentrating on the notion of ruling masculinity (Ratele, 2006a & b). The main idea in explicating the notion of ruling masculinity is that the character of the predominant model of masculinity in a society or a part of society has implications for both how to be a man as well as men's sexual desires and pleasure.

### **Masculinity needs society, not just testicles**

Contrary to what some researchers and popular opinion still holds, masculinity is not something individuals are *born with*. The facts of maleness are well-known, drilled into us from biology textbooks in grade school, repeated in the media, and in recent years supplemented by the work of the Human Genome Project. It is commonplace that whereas females have two X chromosomes, males have one X and one Y chromosome; that the Y chromosome is passed almost as is from father to son during conception; and that the Y chromosome is the smallest of the 24 distinct structures that bundle up human DNA and carries only 78 genes, a much smaller when compared with the thousands of genes on other chromosomes. One of these genes is the "master switch" - sex determining gene that makes a baby boy (Briggs, 2003).

But it shows a laziness of thought when the possession of Y chromosome is confused with masculinity (Noble, 2003). As opposed to maleness, masculinity is not encoded into their genes; neither is masculinity about evolution; nor is it about possessing a penis. These are part of the elements that go into making boys into men, but they are far from exhausting masculinity. If to be male one needs to possess the Y chromosome or testicles, to be a man a person needs ideas. In this way masculinity is a set of socially grounded ideas with material effects in that they come to shape how children gradually get to apprehend themselves, others and the world around them. Hence, as much as an individual

needs the Y chromosome, a penis, testicles, and maybe a beard, he also needs other people, that is to say, society, to learn how to be a man. Masculinity is thus more like a non-secret cult, a set of ideas we are bred into. Having said that, bodies and their parts – eyes, hair, skin tone, vaginas, breasts, ovaries, buttocks, penises and testicles – of course have a key place in drawings of the borders of masculinity. And naturally, these parts and the bodies on which they are to be found have undeniable roles in sexual pleasure. Nevertheless, as Kimmel (1994, 120) has said, “manhood does not bubble up to consciousness from our biological makeup; it is created in culture”.

### **Speaking like a man to be a man: sex talk in support of masculinity**

In this one sense masculinity is akin to group membership which a person is seduced or compelled to join. Group membership enables the person to exercise certain rights as well as puts certain obligations on him. Group psychology has argued that “one of the consequences of becoming a member of a group is a change in the way we see ourselves” (Brown, 1988, 20). When one believes he is a man it implies that one has gone through a process of self-redefinition which has had behavioural consequences. In this way, as in-group members, those who have gotten to support a certain form of masculinity have learned to express views congruent with that masculinity. Individuals’ acts, including their speech acts have as one of their aims to categorise people and the world.

Categorising the world into those members of the ingroup and others who of the outgroup is sometimes intentionally executed but at other times it is unintentional; for instance, categorising the young males into those who are *boys* from those who *non-boys* is often enough done intentionally but at other times it is an unintentional effect of other distinct yet, of course, related discourse. This categorising function of talk was suggested in a South African study of 14-16 year old schoolboys (Ratele, Fouten, Shefer, Strebels, Shabalala & Buikema, 2007, 117). One of the subjects said, “...the problem with abstinence is that you might go crazy, if you are a man”. This boy’s view, as well another by another boy in another school who said to be man is “when you have a girlfriend”, prompts us to wonder where do teenagers learn such ideas? It is not hard to figure out: boys learn that a man needs a girlfriend and that sexlessness drive a person crazy from the world of ideas around them, from other boys or older males (and girls and females). They learn that there is a connection between manhood and having a woman and sex. The authors of the study argued in this regard that when boys discuss masculinity they necessarily discuss sexuality and that in the same way grown-up men do, boys grow up to learn that males more than just *want* sex but rather that they *need* sex – otherwise they become mentally disturbed.

The notion of true manhood is indeed supported by a number of ideas (such as the notion that without sexual intercourse a man will go mad.) This is a patently wrong. But that did not stop the schoolboy from expressing it in public; and there are many such ideas which may be erroneous but which do not lose their force to

keep particular versions of masculinity in place. Research validates the observed relationship between masculine ideologies and male sexual predation and availability. "In the domain of sexuality", says Bowleg (2005), "traditional masculinity ideologies encourage men to be sexually assertive, be always ready to have sex, view sex primarily as pleasurable and recreational, perceive penetration as the goal of sex, control all aspects of sexual activity, and have multiple sex partners", with studies reporting that "adolescent males with more traditional masculine ideologies were more likely to have had more sexual partners in the past year, more negative attitudes toward condoms, less consistent condom use, and less belief in male responsibility for contraception" (169).

### **Power and meaning: investing in the available masculine positions**

Out of the last, two important coordinates show themselves to be vital to bear in mind when trying to understand masculinity: power and meaning. In order to better appreciate the development and reproduction of masculinity we ought to understand power attending to, contests around, and the proliferating meanings of sexuality. A discursive position from which the world is ruled, masculinity is position bolted into place by sexual power but also buffeted by struggle around sexuality.

Yet, however unmovable masculinity sometimes might appear, individuals or groups do unscrew masculinity from its place. Masculinity is thus at once a position which individuals inhabit but also constantly try to rearrange and work to contour to their lives so as to understand the world, including themselves and others. Wetherell and Edley (1999) have argued that achievement of masculinity involves distinct procedures by males for "imaginary positioning" and "the production of a self" in relation to what it means to be a man. The production of self in turn "involves investment where there is a coincidence between self and some masculine persona" (342). What is more interesting in this account about masculine self-identification is taken from the arguments of Roland Barthes and Jacques Lacan about discourse and subjectivity, that, rather than being original productions, men's expressions of a masculine self are "always ready made; always social first and personal second. It is a selection from the panoply of selves already available to be donned. An external voice from without is thus misrepresented as a voice from within (Wetherell and Edley, 1999, 343).

Because of the nature of such positions any person can theoretically occupy masculine positions (for example, when mothers admonish her son not to cry because it is girly). This also implies that the position of masculinity is hypothetically not closed to females; and like any male, any female can and some females do occupy the space of masculinity from which she can rule. It is of some significance to add the caveat that the openness of an open position, the openness of masculinity or of any other discursive position, is really only so theoretically and to a specifiable degree. No societal position, even in a well-established open society, can be completely open to everybody in society;

neither can any societal position be totally closed even if those in charge wish it to be so. Even in a society that projects itself as a democracy certain positions are only open to a certain class of people and not to all others. Consequently, the effect of lesson a mother who aims to make her boy-child more boyish by telling him not to cry because it is, effectively, unmasculine is likely to be mediated by her sex, among other factors. Some limitations as to whether one can occupy certain position or be something may be overtly stated, such as the fact that one has to be of a certain age to be officially permitted to purchase cigarettes or alcohol. Others may be unwritten, as where one has to be have a certain accent or body shape to be considered for a job as a telephonist or aeroplane cabin crew.

Similar to accent or culture or religion then, masculinity is a theoretically open position which rarely features overtly written regulations. It is a discursive position that is not altogether open but not entirely closed. With the help of masculinity society and its sub-groupings are managed by those in ruling positions. In other words, masculinities are about fluid, practices of power that constitute relations males, specifically, (but also, to an extent, females) have in and to the world.

Masculinity needs to be understood as characterised to a reasonable degree by some of the features that characterise something such as football fanaticism. Both football fanaticism and masculinity carry the meaning that there are a variety of things (for instance, in regard to football, teams, play formations and individual players and, in respect to masculinity toughness, grooming, wealth) that an individual can support. In most countries where football is one of the games that are supported, there tends to be a few teams which are dominant over the rest, a state of affairs that can reign for a shorter or longer period, from a few weeks to years; and ideas about masculinity which are supported by the power structures such as the state, media or corporations tend to garner more support about the population. The dominance of a football team over others is measured by winning games and trophies which in turn tends to influence the support fan-base a team has; and in most countries there tends to be a set of ideas of how to be a successful man that tends to overwhelm other sets of ideas. It is an interesting thing to observers of international football that the relationship of native football talent, money and winning trophies is a complex one; and it is an interesting thing to observers of men's lives that the relationship of ideas about what it means to be a man in a particular place and how men in that place live their lives rarely if ever correspond – for instance, the fact that a prevailing discourse suggests that men have to always be ready for sex does not necessarily mean most men are always ready (though they may pretend so).

Supporting a version of masculinity is then not entirely different from supporting a football team. However, unlike being a football team fan masculinity is something that most males (and females) do everyday, something that organises individual actions. For all but a small dedicated band of individuals football is not something that shapes their daily lives. Notwithstanding the differences, they are similar in that both are not naturally features of human lives but rather positions which

individuals, fans or males, take in respect to certain objects or ideas found in the worlds around them. It is important to stress that in the same way football teams are not endless, the number of masculinities available in a particular culture or whole world is not infinite. Quite the opposite: there is a limited quantity of positions an individual males can take in regard to the idea of being a man. Masculine positions are always ready made for individuals and one chooses from the available set.

There is, however, a troubling point about masculinities as positions that individual can occupy. This is that masculinities may start to look like the number of football team shirts worn by different fans during the football world cup, such that one can tell from counting the different kinds of shirts how many masculinities are represented amongst fans at the world cup. But “there are no ready criteria that allow one to identify distinct masculinities” (Clatterbaugh, 1998, 27). The answer to this criticism one must note that these positions are always tied to power and to meaning. To this Clatterbaugh (1998) has answered by saying that defining “masculinity as the possession of a certain power is uninformative and trivial” in that we end up defining a man as masculine because he possesses power (27). In reply one of the answers to is to never lose sight of men as living things’, as having sensations, thoughts, emotions, more or less relationships than other men, families of one kind or another, income or none, living specifiable neighbourhoods, So, while there is utility in talking of masculinities because it addresses the positionings and production of self in the world, we need always keep in mind the fact that the aims of studies of men and masculinities is to explain the lives and practices of males in relation to females and to other males.

In the final analysis masculinity means practices and relationships structured by gender power which males (and to a different extent, females) have to institutions, structures and space, over and above relations to bodies, behaviours and desires. When the elements of power and meaning of masculinity are factored into accounts of relations between males and the world, between males and females, as well as relations within the male group, we comprehend the organizing ability of the idea of gender of males. In particular, the appreciation of power and meaning as key parts of a prevailing masculinity enables us to perceive how ideas about gender are employed to inform other ideas in society – ideas such as those about sexual pleasure.

### **Why do some men get rewarded for bullying women? the complicated role of a male body in masculine domination**

The relationship of being male to masculine domination lies at the centre of the problematic of men’s gendered life. The problematic is how do physical dimensions, such as the fact that a particular male is bigger than most females in a given locale, relate to the fact that all males, including those who are smaller than many females, tend to accorded more power and rights than females. Consider here too the matter of penis and its size: how does the fact that females

do not have a penis, and that some males have bigger penises than others, related to the rights of males over males, or the power of some males over others? These questions show that that bodies, their parts, and their dimensions, have a complicated (and at times very little) direct association with how power is exercised. For instance, even while the use of physical violence to achieve goals may be discouraged and punished in a society, physicality may be part of the arguments circulated to support the subordination of females to males. At the same time, while a penis of relatively smaller proportions made be thought to be a “curse”, men do not generally show their penises to be voted into political offices or ascend the corporate ladder.

Since for critical periods of their lives, including in utero, during infancy and childhood individuals have little control over their physical development, the physique appears to be an odd ‘player’ in the domination of men over women. It is odd for the body to be important to masculine domination, because the body is a ‘given’, natural, an inert thing which one has no control over (control being one key characteristic of masculinity). It is odd for the fact that one is born male to be crucial in the calculus of gender domination because, what masculinity is meant to indicate on this score is the fact that a man is superior to others because he is, simply, bigger, faster, stronger, can withstand pain, etc.

At the same time, it makes sense that the subjugation of slower, smaller or weaker beings is so because that is exactly what the ideology of an unequal society where might is right and right is might produces: if I am bigger I must have more say about how our affairs are run. And so the ‘others’ over whom a male might demonstrate dominance in his grasp for masculinity are per definition those have been defeated or potentially defeated physically. Brawn therefore has a role in the definition of masculinity. In most cases, then, male superiority is gained by out-muscling them in physical contests. In this equation, masculinity is dependent on the existence of a hierarchy where stronger males dominate weaker males and females because the latter, specifically, from a certain age, which corresponds to teenage years, generally tend to be physically weaker than the former.

Here is a theoretically interesting qualification of the relation of size or speed or other biological ‘gifts’ to masculinity: insofar as size, strength and toughness are *assumed* to be part of manhood, beating those who are smaller or of a different sex does not always get rewarded. A person who lords it over younger ones and females is in fact sometimes looked down upon, regarded as a bully. The question is when is a bully not a bully; why in other words, do men get rewarded for bullying women?

In contrast to such ‘unfair’ contests, it seems that the more satisfying test a male needs to pass in order to show himself to be dominant is by beating others who are outwardly equally matched as oneself in physical dimensions, which is what weight-matching in boxing seeks to do. A middle-weight fights a middle weight, a

heavy-weight fights a heavy-weight, and only when there has been challenge by, for instance, by a boxing champion at the light-heavyweight level against a heavyweight champion, are boxing matches sanctioned for catch-weights.

In similar fashion, it seems it is when a gang member has thrashed another member who is thought to be on his level that he is elevated in the eyes of the gang. The same point obtains in other competitive sports and indeed in business. It seems that the individual will climb the masculinity pole faster if he rules among his age-mates, but that above all, it is when he takes on and conquers those who are older, bigger, or are in some calculation above oneself that one is assured of going right to the top or close to it.

Needless to say, a female also gain in the estimate of others when she shows herself to be a better athlete than her age-mates. But the main difference is that competitiveness appears to be more of a key element to male self-perception than it is to females.

It will become clear that sometimes (in fact much more often than otherwise) in democratic societies physical violence is not necessary to show that one is superior over others. All that an individual needs to show is the potential to hurt another, to suggest in body or voice or other way the potential to injure or kill. Body building is a great example inasmuch as it serves to render the body beautiful (which suggest a self-objectified, feminized consciousness about an individual) as well as warn others about the danger the body carries. Body building suggests that males are internally ambivalent about the demand of ruling masculinity to be straightforwardly tough and rough. Ironically, body building reveals a “weak point” in masculine armour, a point which is useful in making males see their bodies and themselves as *needing* intimacy, needing others to see them as sexually beautiful. The same holds for other forms of exercise which men engage in to make their bodies healthy or beautiful.

But hurting or threatening to hurt others does not have to involve the physical body. That is, a male does not have to actually hurt or murder another person with one’s bare hands; it can and is very often decided on substitutes or ‘extensions’ of the body. Cars, guns, knives are the most common substitutes or extensions of the body – for physical hardiness or speed or other masculine quality. Masculinity finds use for cars, guns, knives and other objects to show materialize itself, by out-speeding or spending more on the object than others, or by causing harm and death to others. Motion pictures made in Hollywood in which cars, guns, knives, and other vehicles, causes, instruments or stand-ins of pleasure, identity or domination are key to the story, which are plentiful, can be adduced here, starting with the old genre of western in which the “the fastest gun alive” emerged.

The body is thus an interesting and complex element when trying to understand masculine domination and the lives of males. As an element of masculinity and

gender power, physique, similar to the fact of how old a man is, must not be seen in isolation from other elements of masculinity and gender power. If research treats the body separate from other elements in trying to comprehend males (elements such as what kind of father or son he is, what makes him angry, what kind of friend, lover or spouse, what kind of employee or boss or politicians, what motivates an individual, what pleases him, and what are his fears) an incomplete picture is likely to be drawn of their lives. The fact is that there are many everyday exceptions, challenges and corollaries to brute force and size as crucial aspects of the gender of men and male domination of society. Such exceptions are observable where a stronger-looking older male is beaten by someone else he had believed would be easy target. In such instances, where an older or bigger male is thrashed by a female or younger male, it does not necessarily mean that one's manhood is forever lost and certain not that ruling masculinity is fundamentally undermined. In these cases it becomes obvious that there are available to males other strategies or avenues which are usable in the service of masculinities, which counteract feelings of being 'stuffed' in other areas. These other strategies, avenues or areas show that masculinities are composed of multiple interrelated factors, levers and aims, such as whether one is not well-employed or is not gainfully employed at all, or how much money one has, or if one finds oneself in a sub-cultural space that is supportive of one, or whether one's has a positive racial identity, or if one is proud, safe and queer. Ultimately, we are made to understand that the most effective aspects in the domination of young, feminine and feminized subjects is not conveyed by the body per se but is when it is implicitly or explicitly conveyed by the laws, regulations, policies, conventions and customs of society. In a circular way, society is constituted in such a way as to buttress the rights of older males to dominate society. And it is with society or its parts that the struggle for the right of sexual pleasure for all is waged, for it is society where pathways to female and male sexual pleasure begin and return.

### **Influence of domination motivation on male sexual pleasure**

It should be clear now that investigations of masculinity are principally studies of what it means to be a man in a particular place at a certain time. But it is also clear that if an examination of masculinity is also not at the same time a study of power, including the meaning of sexualised power and/or the lack of this form of power, it is likely to always fail to grasp the mechanics and manoeuvres of masculine domination in society and the lives of individuals.

Masculine power, we have seen, in the body of males. But we have also shown that the body is part of the elements that do into the domination of males over females, yet that the body cannot be seen in isolation. Masculinity is profitably searched for in suits in office chairs, that is to say, in structures and institutional arrangements; in the laws that run companies and societies; in regulations, policies, conventions and customs about sex and reproduction and violence and marriage. However there is power beyond the social, political and economic structures. Beyond the obvious trappings of power, masculine power thrusts out

of and invades the subjective elements of people's lives. Indeed, sexual pleasure is arena that always escapes regulation, that forever troubles convention, that the law is at loss to govern. Masculinity here then shows itself as both an objective fact of social life but at the same time a set of meanings individuals employ to make sense of their actions.

Now there are several effects of the fact that in society males as a group have more power over females. Some of these are unfavourable while others are favourable.

The unfavourable effects include the fact that in many countries the life expectancy for males tends to be shorter than for females and more males than females die from guns and knives. Regarding life expectancy, the African Union Commission (AU) (2006) on the state of the African population shows that on average the life expectancy at birth for males in Africa is two years shorter than for females; and there are countries where the difference between males and females life expectancy is more twice the average, for instance Egypt (5 years) and Seychelles (10 years). On violence, the World Health Report on Violence and Health found that globally, homicide rates among males were more than three times higher than those for females ((Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002). According to the South African National Injury Mortality Surveillance System, second to accidents the most common form of cause of death in South Africa is intentional injuries or violence, which accounted for 39.3% of fatal injuries in 2004. However, disaggregated for sex, while transport was a leading cause of deaths amongst females, violence is the leading cause of death amongst males (Matzopoulos, 2005).

The favourable side to being a man includes the fact that in most countries men have better jobs than women and get paid better salaries than females even for the same kind of work. Individual men can and do derive pleasure draw from the social domination of females by males; as it were, the pleasure of *not* being a woman. There is also the kick from having power over others. Implied here is that we believe a politician who claims he or she driven to serve the people at our own peril. The thrill of power, the arousal individuals get from sitting in high office, is almost universal. "Politicians and the people around them seek power mainly for its own sake. They have read biographies of great men and women. They have watched the West Wing. They want a piece of it" (Rachman, 2007: 6). Perhaps there are individual politicians who are immune to the attractions of power as many; perhaps Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela are two political leaders who were moved by the value of service to others. But like many citizens on this continent I still have to find out those men and women in politics who are motivated only or even mostly by the desire to be of service to others. Few if any escape the seductions of power.

The desire to feel powerful is therefore common to many. People are motivated to be first, winners, on top or in charge in competitive sports, in war, at school

and work, or within social organisations because being dominant over others is a psychological trip.

While these might be considered to be the universal aspects of power, there are also subjective elements to the pleasure of power, the individual differences in how each of us feel when we win an elections or make partner in our firm or out-run our competitors or get a bigger bonus than our co-workers. The subjectivity of this reward is due to the fact that it is difficult to measure the pleasure people get from power. If there are such individuals, it is not many who actually get an “erection” (Rachman, 2007: 6) from being elected to a high position in business or politics. Neither is the pleasure of positions similar to tasting delicious food or reaching orgasm.

There are other benefits to having power over others, no doubt. These include the fact that one gets to make decision on behalf of others, that one is in a position to write or change the rules, and that one can arrange the world to suit one’s wishes. But while sitting in the chair of the monarch, judge, politician or lead actor one may not lick one’s lips from the power coursing through one’s veins, in a manner of speech, there are feelings of joyful contentment persons derive from ascending to the throne of king, being called to the bench, getting elected to the presidents office, or becoming leading man in motion pictures of television shows. It is not important for this paper to pursue a finer distinction between pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, contentment, delight, and related concepts. They all ought to be taken to refer to positive feelings a person experienced from a specified activity.

The masculine imperative, for a male to be a particular type of man, which is the societally preferred image of a man, under-girds the fact that most males us will try to impress on others, consciously or unconsciously, that they are men. And the easiest, most direct route to respond to the demand for masculinity is for a man to show not that they are healthy, or principled, or well-employed, or happy in their lives, but that they tower over others, they rule over their families, they are in control of others’ lives. The clearest evidence that one rules is, of course, to physically beat another person or verbally abuse. These others in most others societies will be those who by definition are weaker physically and socio-verbally (who do not, relatively speaking, have a social voice), who will thus usually be younger in age than the aggressor or females.

Next to the physical and verbal coordinates of the domination of female by males, the easiest way to achieve successful masculinity is sexually. Sexual dominations refers to the fact that to demonstrate that he is a man all an individual needs is to dominate a female genitally (that is literally) or through sexual talk or gestures that expresses power. Blatant forms of sexual domination are sexual assault and sexual harassment. Sexual domination is therefore not isolated from physical and verbal domination. All of these forms of domination

arise from the same source: the socially sanctioned inequalities between males and females.

The individual who desires to dominate another individual sexually has two targets in mind. More precisely, he has a target and an opponent.

The target of the male who desires to sexually dominate another is the subject/object who is to be penetrated, therefore brought under control. Rape is the exemplar form of sexual domination. And outside of all-male environments, the subject/object is usually female. Using data collected in the rural Eastern Cape Province of South Africa in the course of a research project evaluating an HIV prevention intervention with a large group of young men, Jewkes et al (2006) described different aspects of rape perpetration. The study shows that while the majority of young did not rape, (1083, or 79.1%), a sizable number reported sexual violation. "Of the 1370 respondents, 223 men (16.3%) reported having raped a non-partner or participating in streamlining. Of these, 190 men (13.9%) only reported streamlining. 115 men reported having raped an intimate partner (8.4%). Fifty-one men raped both a partner and a non-partner" (2952-2953). The researchers argued that what underlies rape perpetration whether or an intimate partner or a stranger is the common desire "to seek power and control over women, rather than forming bonds of emotional intimacy with them". At the same time, the authors indicate that "there are also important areas of difference. Only men who raped non-partners were of higher social and socioeconomic status and more heavily influenced by peers. We suggest that having an exaggerated sense of sexual entitlement and enacting fantasies of power were particular important in these cases" (Jewkes, 2006: 2959). In short then, the target of the sexual aggressor is the female (her body and mind), who needs to be taught the lesson of gender power.

(Streamlining is a hyperbole of gang rape. The notion is commonly used when rape is perpetrated against the partner or ex-partner of one of the males. Streamlining is an instrument males use to punish and humiliate a wayward female while at the same time affirming "brotherly" bonds.)

It should be clear from the reference to Jewkes et al (2006) above that while I am talking of a male as sexual aggressor it is not to imply that all males dominate or want to dominate others sexually. I talk of male sexual aggression because that is my subject, firstly. And secondly, I talk of male sexual aggression because most sexual violence outside of male prison populations is indeed committed by males on females. However, by saying the target of the male aggressor is the female's mind and body does not mean that the desire to sexually dominate others is not unknown to females; and the sexual domination of one male by another is not as rare as might be thought, but perhaps difficult to study (Singh, 2004; Roos & Katz, 2003). Singh writes that "Whilst one would not expect the incidence of male rape to approach that of female rape in our society, the finding is that it is not so rare an event as would appear from the reported incidents. A

conspectus of the research yields the unequivocal conclusion that victims can be raped not only by penises but also, among other things, by objects, tongues and fingers. The act of rape may violate vaginas, anuses, mouths or any combination of the aforementioned. The matrix of possible combinations has become enormous, highlighting the folly of thinking that rape has single or always common causes (Singh, 2004). In their phenomenological study, Roos & Katz (2003) show how the “survivors described the behaviour forced on them as repulsive, humiliating and degrading, such that it defied description.” The male victims commented on how, because of the imperative of manhood which puts an extra-burden on male victims of rape, “words failed to describe aspects of their experience” (61) of being raped. “For survivor X, the feelings of dirt and repulsion he experienced when the perpetrator ejaculated on him were indescribable. For him, the semen assumed a toxic quality and it felt as if it was eating into his body. The relationship between shame and the body emerged through X’s description. In shame, a body cannot stand up to the eyes of another... He said he wished he could disappear or cease being in order to avoid the humiliation of having the semen on him. For survivor Y, his disgust at having to perform oral sex on the perpetrator manifested bodily as he was overcome with nausea and felt as if he were choking” (Roos & Katz, 2003: 61).

Feeling dirty, repulsed, as if one is nothing and not human, ashamed, dead, humiliated, disgusted, overcome, nauseated, and choking are precisely how the sexually violent male wishes the object/subject of his acts to feel. He gets pleasure from debasing and defiling the other. The pleasure is therefore not only from ejaculating but from the feeling that there other is at his mercy.

The opponent of the sexual aggressor is the other powerful figure in the gender imagination of the male – the other male. While there is clearly a problem in the way rape was defined traditionally in most legal systems in, there is contemporary feminist support that the sexual assault of a woman is, in addition to causing injuring to her, to emasculate or violate the rights of her father, or husband, or brothers, or village or race or nation. It has been noted by others that “historically, the crime of rape was not punished as a protection of the woman or her sexual integrity. Rather, the sanction was imposed to protect the economic interest of the patriarch under whose authority and domination the woman was held” (Singh, 2004: 129). Unfortunately, there are still parts of the world where the honour of the family or patriarch supersede the interests of the victim of sexual violence. There are be parts of the world where, as Anya, a character in *Diary of a bad year* says, “when a man rapes a woman it is the man’s dishonour”. But there also parts of humanity where still attaches to the body of the victim of rape, (Coetzee, 2007, p101). The striving for sexual rights and sexual health is of course an attempt to make Coetzee’s character’s words true, so that no dishonour will stick to a woman who is sexually violated.

Sexual domination has therefore goal of subjecting another person to the will of the aggressing male. At the same time the raped or harassed person is turned into an object.

While the above talks more to the psychological aspects of sexual domination, gender power is an undeniable element of socialised sexual arrangements between women and men. The male who desires to dominate sexually uses his penis to send a message to all women by showing one woman who is a man. More than a separate atom, the individual female stands for all females. The male seeks to reinstate the social domination of males over females by employing his penis or abusive language. Ultimately he is the instrument in an undeclared tussle between the sexes. That “war” of the sexes exceeds what is happening at the particular moment his penis, or stick, or a bottle, or hosepipe penetrates her vagina.

It is thus important to move away from viewing the drive to employ sex for domination as instantiated by rape or abusive language only. Consider a man who might have his eye on a particular woman for some time but believes she is out of her league, in manner of speech. This belief accretes other elements: he starts to imagine that she thinks too much of herself. He scolds her in his mind for the way she talks. She is with too many men, meaning to him she is a loose woman. He does not approve of the way she dresses. Her car shows her that she is uppity. Such a woman, he thinks, needs to be reminded of her place. But by some route he gets to speak to her and the two end up being couple. While going out may be enjoyable, approaching their first sexual encounter, the memory of the time before she met him is retched up. And the way to do this of course is to break off the relation, or show her (if the motive to dominate has not been clear already). Here then is a woman who agrees to have sex with a man not knowing that what motivates him privately is not intimacy but to teach a lesson. While she desires closeness he seeks to show her (and others) who is the man.

### **Is there is still a need for males to be recruited into feminist work?**

#### **Concerning the needs of men for intimacy happiness**

The goal that ties together the different investigations under the fledgling studies of African masculinities is to understand the gender of male realities. A significant number of studies by male and female researchers who employ the concepts of men’s gender and masculinity see their interventions as one end of a spectrum of activities within a loose global movement to equalize the sex world as well as to advance the full participation of females in male-dominated societies. As such these studies are conscious of and try to act in concert with issue-based activism on societal problems such as violence against women and children, sexual rights and health, and girls’ education. In that way, studies of men and masculinities, like studies of sexual health and sexual rights ought to be informed by and aligned with feminism and women’s movements.

In the wake of the explicit turn to men perceptible around the world increasingly since the 1980s (see, e.g., Brod, 1987; Connell, 1995; Hearn, 1987; Kimmel, 1987; Kimmel, Hearn & Connell, 2005; Mac an Ghail, 1996), Africanist and African scholars and activists in the last decade or thereabout have slowly also decided to turn their thoughts and tools on the problematics of males and masculinities (e.g., *Agenda*, 1998; Gibson & Hardan, 2005; *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 1998; Morrell, 2001; Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005; Shefer, Ratele, Strelbel, Shabalala & Buikema, 2007; Reid & Walker, 2005). The same world-wide receptivity to a focus on men and boys has also been seen in a number of national governments and international multilateral organisations who have thrown their weight behind interventions that seek to bring males on board of gender work platforms or that wish to focus on boys and men (see, e.g., Ruxton, 2004; Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2005; United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women/Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/Aids/ International Labour Organisation/United Nations Development Programme, 2004; United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), no date; United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA), 2005). Supporting the involvement of males in the promotion of gender equality and women's reproductive health, the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA) (2005) has, for instance, contended that "Because gender norms and stereotypes limit the possibilities of both women and men, gender equality can be a winning proposition for both — "double happiness" in the words of one campaign to encourage men to take on more domestic responsibility" (4-5).

The interest in males is justifiable on several grounds. One justification, along the lines followed by the UNPFA (2005), has been that work on gender equality and violence against women would benefit from the support and involvement of males since "men themselves are increasingly challenging notions of "masculinity" that restrict their humanity, limit their participation in the lives of their children, and put themselves and their partners at risk." Many men, argues the UNPFA, "want to become more supportive husbands and fathers, but need support to overcome deeply entrenched ideas about gender relations. Moreover, because they bear responsibility for many reproductive health problems, men play an indispensable role in their solution. ...Stronger efforts to involve men more fully in reproductive health, family life and gender equality are urgently needed" (2005, 4-5).

Another justification is that there is a crisis of masculinity that troubles contemporary societies. The challenges to masculinity by feminism-inspired men and women are part of the forces that have brought ideologies of masculinity to crisis. On the other hand, attempts to find lost masculinity, to restore a certain traditional idea of manhood, as a remedy to the crisis of manhood are linked to different, special forces which have little to do with feminism, and at times are ranged against it (see Bly, 1990).

It is my view that we need more feminists in the world, especially African boys and men, just as there is need to reinvigorate the attraction of feminism for girls and women. Feminist work and the making of gender-conscious societies is not betrayed by a focus on males. Feminism helps to transform the self-centredness of male sexual pleasure into a search for intimacy happiness. Addressing itself to gender-based violence and the involvement of men in such work, INSTRAW (nd, np) argues that insofar as “men are central to most acts of violence, and violence is central to being a man in many cultures,” in addition to the fact that “most political, cultural and religious leaders around the world – those in better positions to influence change – are also men” it is vital for organisations to “work with men to end gender-based violence”. Furthermore, “Gender is an element of all of our lives, of all men and women around the world. Men are gendered beings too, and men share the privileges and consequences of the gender politics with which we live. Finally, working toward stronger partnerships – among men and women, and the various actors working to end violence – will have related benefits of improved lives and relations for men, women, children, and communities, and will be the impetus for countless additional development gains. By recognizing that gender-based violence is related to the construction of masculinities (for example, how a group defines “what it means to be a man”) and that these are informed by belief systems, cultural norms and socialization processes – we help to identify and strengthen entry points for various violence prevention initiatives around the world that aim to work with men and boys as partners. By focusing on men's responsibilities we moved beyond seeing men as simply part of the problem, and begin to envision them as part of the solution by squarely placing men into prevention and intervention strategies. Without engaging men as partners, without enabling both men and women understand their roles and responsibilities in ending violence – we will be attempting to resolve this multi-dimensional problem from a very limited perspective (INSTRAW, nd, np.)

Whether or not there is indeed a universal crisis of manhood, or specific to different parts of the globe, or one characterizing specific nations, is another question altogether though. Nevertheless, there is no denying that there have in any event been efforts by various social actors, cultural commentators and religious leaders around the world who believe a crisis of masculinity lies behind the male violence against women, crime, HIV/Aids, and other social problems and as such their wish to restore masculinity. These efforts have to be distinguished from efforts to by feminist women and men to understand men's practices though the lens of gender power. These efforts can be utilised towards make female sexual pleasure the business of males, and male sexual pleasure less focussed on ejaculation and on intimacy happiness. When turned towards pleasure (without ignoring the fact of violence), the argument by organisation such as INSTRAW (and Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Development Programme, UNPFA, and other organisations, national governments, and researchers concerned with women's lot), is that heterosexual

men are clearly part of sexual relations with women, and sexuality is part being a man (as it is of being a woman) in all societies. Sexuality is an element of all male lives, and males lives are gendered. Male sexual pleasure participates in gender politics as much in private happiness. Working towards partnerships between men and women to enhance sexual health and rights cannot but be beneficial towards improved lives and relations for men, women, children, and indeed communities. Understanding that sexual pleasure specifically and sexuality generally are related to the making of masculinities helps to widen the scope of work of organisation that work with men and boys. By focusing on male pressures, joys and disappointments, experiences and lives we move beyond seeing them simply part of the problem that females have to overcome to enjoy their lives, and begin to envision them as part of the collective efforts to deepen relationships and make a caring society by seducing males into considering all aspects of sexual pleasure work. It is trite but I suspect needs underling that it there is no male political, cultural and religious leader around the world who is not a sexual being. Because they are well-positioned to influence change in other males to seek happiness in intimate relationships, in addition to keeping sure that their partners achieve orgasm, it is vital for us to convince public leaders to work with men to enhance sexual pleasure and, more than that, intimacy happiness.

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