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Versions of Masculinity

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Male Sexuality In The Context of Socio-Economic Change In Rural And Urban East Africa

Margrethe Silberschmidt

Hypothesis On The Origin Of Hegemonic Masculinity

C. Otutubikey Izugbara

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Feature

Versions of Masculinity

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Winning Letter

The letters page of the newest and biggest South African newspaper, the *Daily Sun*, of Friday 7 January 2005, carries a letter by Thembinkosi-ka-Mthwana from Dobsonville, Soweto. The letter is entitled, 'What is happening to South Africa?'; this part more likely to have been written not by ka-Mthwana but rather by one of the paper's editorial team.

Two reasons make the letter worthy of remark. The first is the big white lettering on a red-box background announcing: 'This letter of the day wins R100. WELL DONE!' Together with this, in bold letters at the bottom of the letter the editor writes:

*You certainly have raised some interesting points. What do other **Daily Sun** readers think? In the meantime please accept R100 for the winning letter of the day.*

Signal Views

Clearly, what this communicates is that in that letter are contained signal views about society. Leading from this is the second reason for the noteworthiness of the letter: the articulated views and assumptions of the letter. In other words, what is it that makes this a winning letter? Rather than summarise it, and for its brevity,

let me quote the letter in toto.

"Oh my lawless country! Allow me to express my views on my beloved country, South Africa. This country is lawless. Other countries enforce their laws whether the community is for or against them. In other countries everything is in order. The community knows what one may or may

not do. If you do something wrong, you will bear responsibility. Why is it not so in my country? Or is this democracy, the ruler of my beloved country, right or wrong?

"Abortion is legalised. Gay marriage is legalised. Children are allowed to lay charges against their parents. Men no longer rule over their families. What is up with this beautiful country of mine? It is getting totally out of the hand of God? Please God, save South Africa."

Version of Masculinity

It is important to note that the letter expresses a version of masculinity. Being a man is equated with being straight and imbued with God-given social power. Hence, in this man's view, the social order is near collapse, a great gender and sexual upheaval underway.

To be sure, this is correct. There is such distress. But in a country where there were over 50 000 reported cases of rape last year and a long history of persecution of homosexuals, it is *not* women, girls, transgendered, gay and lesbian subjects to whom the state should step up their protection efforts and legitimise. It is straight males who face wretchedness. South Africa is lawless because (straight) men no longer get the respect that's theirs, homosexuals can marry, women can decide about their bodies, and only prayer can help bring society back under control.

Given such troubles the continent faces as the government-sponsored ethnic-motivated destruction of Darfur, the deepening poverty, the recent crisis in Togo, and the mind-numbing rates of HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa, it is



Side by side with the struggles around women's gendered lives, there has also been a build-up of work around men and boys. Photo by Peter Frank



perhaps hard to think of much else than trying to deal with these problems. There seems to be little time to give thought to an insignificant ranting letter writing man. However, to leave unsurfaced the writing below this troubling picture of the continent would be error.

Such 'winning' assumptions about gender and sexuality as read in the newspaper are what lie beneath the visible cultural and political intolerance. Therefore, it needs to be made known that there are many organisations and individuals whose work seek to show that doing good toward females and homosexual citizens a society can do no better for all of itself.

Signposts of Advances

Some of these individuals and organisations have in the last year alone held dialogues on and been rewarded for showing the genderedness of different aspects of society, economics, politics and culture that would take up all the space given for this article.

I should still like to mention a few: (i) A conference was held at Fort Hare in July 2004 and aimed at providing a range of stakeholders an opportunity to exchange information on gender equality in health; (ii) Two conferences, one on Gender & Visuality in August 2004, hosted by University of Western Cape History Department and Women & Gender Studies, and the other the Writing African Women conference hosted at the same university.

Perhaps there is no better signpost of these advances and encouragement for their continuance than the efforts of Wangari Maathai who got the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize for leading the Green Belt Movement. The singularity of the award was not only for being given to the first African woman; it was also in highlighting the importance of seeing the interwoven nature of environmental concerns, peace, and gender struggles.

Men and Boys

Side by side with these struggles around women's gendered lives, there has also been a build-up of work around men and boys. These efforts are focussed on critiquing around ideas such as those contained in the letter above, and more generally around the production of masculinities, as well as how males can be mobilised into working towards gender and sexual justice. For example, since 1997 when scholars gathered together in Durban, South Africa, to talk about masculinities, there have been three other conferences on the same theme: one hosted by the Gender Education and Training Network in 2003, another at Wits University in 2004, and the last at Western Cape University in 2005.

To go with this, there has also been

Nevertheless, there does appear to be some consensus that there is a problematic that has to do with being a man. And the problematisation of manhood is visible in several spheres, from activism to the state and scholarship

developing a body of research and programmes on masculinities. In a context where sexual and gender based rights still raise the heckles of editors and letter-writers it is indeed crucial to stress the importance of this work showing the centrality of gendered and sexual politics and practices.

Crisis of Masculinities

The emergence of work around masculinities in Africa follows the attention around the world to the same. From different parts of the world that attention has been focused on what has been seen as a crisis of masculinities. The nature of the crisis has always been unclear though, with some men's movements and scholars of masculinities arguing for restoring traditional values of manhood while others posit a critical view.

There are thus varying motivations for the engagement with boys and men's genders. Nevertheless, there does appear to be some consensus that there is a problematic that has to do with being a man. And the problematisation of manhood is visible in several spheres, from activism to the state and scholarship. In scholarship the attention can be seen across many disciplines, from African studies to theology and history, and straddling concerns from the HIV/AIDS epidemic to sociological, psychological and historical concerns.

Critical Men's Studies

Now it is important to note that scholars within critical men's studies have noted that masculinities and men have never been absent from academic writing as they have not been from the centre of economy, culture and politics. They have pointed out that academics have traditionally had a habit of presenting the world from a male perspective and that gendered power has always been embedded in political and intellectual work.

How the current interest is different is in its focus on boys and men *as a gender*. In other words, the studies on men are distinguishable by an approach which seeks to point out that it was not simply *African* people who were oppressed under colonial rule but instead that it was African as *at the same time* subjects of gender and sexual power.

In addition to differentiating between the sexes, one of the key insights from critical men's studies is that each sex/gender is internally differentiated. What this points to is that any analysis of political or economic disadvantage gains immeasurably from a focussing on sexual and gender practices/subjectivities of males. The advantage in politicising men's practices/subjectivities, in looking closely at doing masculinity, is realising their tenuous hold on and struggles around the demands to be 'the' man.

But it's been clear to anyone who is interested that for example there have always been rich old gay men who are in different position to poor young bisexual men, and violent straight white urbanites in contrast to pacifist bisexual Muslim villagers. The politics and psychologies of men's gender thus reveal the instability of masculinities, the idea of there being vital distinctions amongst men.

In other words, when society is looked at through the view of men as transgendered, bisexual, straight, or HIV positive subjects, in addition to being poor/rich, African/American, it is enabled to understand that masculinities change with circumstance, history and culture, that in fact one can only talk about several masculinities within a society. Politicising masculinities offers society to see that at any point in time there is no single idea of how to be a man. Knowing that there are dominant masculinities, and alternative and subordinate ones, a challenge can then be mounted.



2

Issue in Focus

Male Sexuality in the Context of Socio-Economic Change in Rural and Urban East Africa

By Margrethe Silberschmidt, PhD, Associate Professor, the Institute of Public Health, Department of Women and Gender Research in Medicine, University of Copenhagen



A man changes his infant's diaper. Thanks to community education, men are now able to perform tasks once considered feminine. Credit: © 2003 RUINET, Courtesy of Photoshare

Introduction

The AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa has thrust sexuality, sexual practices and sexual behaviour into the spotlight as a major public health issue. However, although sexual and reproductive health behaviour in Sub-Saharan Africa is drawing increasing attention there is an inadequate understanding of the structures and processes influencing sexuality and sexual behaviour in general and male sexuality and male sexual behaviour in particular ¹

Research by this author in rural and urban East Africa suggests that HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns have missed the point by neglecting the above issues and concentrating their efforts on the promotion of ABC (Abstinence, Be faithful, Condom use), women's empowerment and women's ability to negotiate safe sex. The need for a much wider understanding of the dynamics of HIV/transmission, sexuality and sexual behaviour in a Sub Saharan context has become increasingly crucial as a direct consequence of the escalating HIV/AIDS epidemic [1].

Men Disempowered

Over the past three decades, it has been widely documented that socio-economic change and breakdown of traditional social institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa have left women in a disadvantaged and vulnerable situation

with increasing burdens and responsibilities [2]. In the development debate, though, and also in research, the situation of men and particularly the changes to which this situation has been subjected during the process of socio-economic development in the twentieth century has been seriously neglected - contrary to that of women.

Based on my research, this paper pursues the following arguments: Socio-economic change in rural and urban East Africa has increasingly disempowered men. This has resulted in men's lack of social value and self-esteem. With unemployment and incapable of fulfilling social roles and expectations, male identity and self-esteem have become increasingly linked to sexuality and sexual manifestations. Multi-partnered sexual relationships and sexually aggressive behaviour seem to have become essential to strengthen masculinity and self-esteem. Linked to this, this paper addresses the following issue: To what extent are men in East Africa who are faced with marginalisation, lack of social value and disempowerment at all motivated for responsible sexual behaviour and HIV/AIDS prevention?

Research

My research - mainly based on qualitative interviews with both men and women, case studies, life histories and focus group discussions - was



carried out, first, in rural and then in urban East Africa. Focus for the research was on changing gender roles and relations as well as sexual and reproductive health and behaviour by men and women.

Research in Kisii (Kenya) was carried out at different periods from the mid 1980's to the mid 1990s [3, 4, 5]. All interviewees belonged to the Gusii ethnic group in South-western Kenya. The vast majority had not completed primary education. The research in urban Tanzania took place during a one year field study (1996-97) in three low income squatter areas of Dar es Salaam: Mabibo, Tandale and Vingunguti/Buguruni. The majority of interviewees had a primary education.

Findings from Kisii.

Kisii is one of Kenya's most productive cash and food crop regions. HIV/AIDS infections are alarming with more women than men infected [6]. Unemployment is a serious problem, because land is not enough to secure survival. Before colonial rule men were warriors, cattle herders and took active part in political decisions. Cattle represented wealth and power, and constituted the major part of bride price. Through marriage a man controlled his wife's sexual and reproductive powers. Masculinity was closely linked to self-control and dignity.

Men as Breadwinners

Colonial rule introduced taxation, as men were recruited to construct railroads and urban centres and many women were left for years to manage the farms. After World War II, a shift towards production of industrial goods began. By the 1940's and 50's the household had become dependent on men's financial aid. Matching these changes, men got a new social and ideological role - that of a breadwinner. With time, the colonial power's introduction of migrant work initiated a shift from men's dominance and responsibility as head of household to a pattern of absent tax-paying men with responsibility towards

Multi-partnered sexual relationships and sexually aggressive behaviour seem to have become essential to strengthen masculinity and self-esteem.

the state rather than the household. The ideology of male breadwinner and household head survived, however.

New Values

Over the years new values were created - meshing with old ones. Men's difficulties in providing financial assistance to the household undermined their social roles and their social value. The disappearance of cattle camps had a negative effect on bride price payment. 'Unions' with no transfer of bride price increasingly substituted marriage. This made women's access to their means of production insecure. Therefore, women had to learn how to make ends meet - without any assistance from their husbands. And they did. Male control over women weakened.

In my interviews in Kisii, recurrent comments from the women were the following: 'a woman is better off without a husband'; 'if only he was dead'; 'men are so delicate; they break so easily'; 'our sons have nobody to take as a model'. Men interviewed would immediately emphasise their status as head of household and right to correct (= beat) an obstinate wife. However, typical comments by men (and also women) were that 'men drink to drown their problems - and they are many', 'men drink and are rude to women to forget that they cannot provide the family with blankets'.

New Social Roles

The intensification of their roles and responsibilities made women

increasingly aware of their important positions in the household. Thus, over the past several decades, Kisii has experienced an ongoing process of fundamental socio-economic transformation with escalating gender antagonism and domestic violence. Men's position as heads of household is challenged, and some women see men just as 'figureheads' of household. However, land is still owned by men, and most men consider themselves farmers [5].

Findings from Dar es Salaam

About thirty percent of the sexually active population is HIV positive [6]. In the 1980's large numbers of workers lost their jobs, and thus, only a small fraction is employed in the formal sector. Salaries, though, are far from enough to support a family. Thus, the informal sector has become overcrowded with myriads of market vendors - men and women. Like in Kisii, the ideology of men as breadwinners is forcefully alive. Stereotyped notions shared by both genders are that 'a man should be the head of his family'; 'he should provide a house (and land), pay school fees and clothes for wife and children'. Such a man has social value and respect.

However, a majority of men suffer the same fate as those in Kisii: they cannot fulfill expectations and withdraw from household responsibilities. Even if many men use enormous amounts of energy and ingenuity to get an income, it is well known that it can only feed a family for a few days.

Consequently, men cannot fulfill their breadwinning role, and men's status as head of household is seriously challenged. However, when asked about their 'status' in the household it was obvious to all 53 men interviewed that they were the 'born' head of households. That was a 'God given' fact. Just like 'women are like children and should be guided by men'. 'Men are the lions, and women are the sheep'. While most men, therefore,

According to men in Kisii 'a man needs at least three wives: one to bear his children, one to work and one for pleasure'.



had a negative attitude towards women's activities most men and women interviewed agreed families cannot survive unless women contribute income.

Male Sexual Behaviour

Recurrent observations by men as well as women interviewed were that 'a real man needs to demonstrate that he can handle more than one partner' – especially when a man needs to strengthen his self-esteem. According to men in Kisii 'a man needs at least three wives: one to bear his children, one to work and one for pleasure'. However, most men had not even been able to provide a bride price for their present 'wife'².

Hurt Pride

According to my male and female informants 'when husbands are crushed down economically they suffer from feelings of inferiority'; 'a man's ego is hurt'. As a result, 'men lose their vigour and women take over'. And 'when a man has lost control over his household and is humiliated by his wife his pride is hurt'. In this situation, there was general agreement among men interviewed that in order to 'build up our pride' and 'boost our ego', we men need to 'relax' and to be 'comforted'. Relaxation and comfort are provided by 'extra-marital' partners.

'Outside Partners'

Men as well as women also agreed that it is impossible for a man to stick to one partner, only. Men have a constant need for sex – contrary to women. 'Outside partners' can be more or less casual partners, more permanent partners or 'nyamba ndogos' (small houses) as they were referred to in Dar es Salaam. These latter partners are seen as serious threats by 'wives', as husbands tend to leave whatever little income they may have to the nyamba ndogos and not to their own household.

Safer Sex

Even if condoms are now more widely

To what extent are men willing to let go of 'hegemonic' masculinities? To what extent are disempowered men in East Africa motivated for responsible sexual behaviour...?

referred to and also used, in particular in the urban contexts, interviews also clearly demonstrate that when a man has had intercourse with a new partner a few times, that person is no longer a stranger, and condom use is stopped. It is a well-known fact that it is extremely difficult – not to say almost impossible – for women (married women in particular) to negotiate safer sex measures – even if women in many cases have the upper hand in the household. Women interviewed would all agree that to ask the husband to use a condom – when they know that he has been with other partners – would be to disclose their disrespect too openly. It was well-known that many nyamba ndogos gave comfort to more than one man because the financial assistance from one man was not enough to support her household. However, as relations with these 'outside' partners were considered permanent, condom use was not an issue.

Low Risk Assessment

Risk assessment in terms of contracting a STD or HIV infection is low among the men interviewed. A general attitude by men interviewed – who admitted having several partners at the same time, and who were well aware of the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS – was 'why should it hit me?' Other reasons given were that 'condoms hurt a man's ego'; 'semen is valuable and should not be thrown away'.

Data from my current research

underline a surprising discrepancy between 'say' and 'do'. Men in Dar es Salaam and particularly in Kampala are well aware of the HIV/AIDS threat and how to avoid it. Nevertheless, risk is seriously neglected and priority is given to pleasure and performance. Condoms, men complain, spoil the pleasure not only of men but also of women (and women agree). Moreover, condoms reduce performance and constrain a man's number of 'goals'. The number of goals that a man can score especially with an extramarital partner is very significant in order to show his strength – and reputation.

Authority Threatened

Although, the main axis of patriarchal power is still the overall subordination of women and dominance of men – my research from both Kisii and Dar es Salaam clearly indicate that the deteriorating material conditions have seriously undermined the normative order of patriarchy in both Kisii and Dar es Salaam. While men are in power structurally and in theory, men have become increasingly marginalised and disempowered in practice. While men do have a relative freedom, compared to women, particularly in sexual matters, lack of access to income earning opportunities has made men's role as heads of household and breadwinners a precarious one. Being reduced to 'figureheads' of households, men's authority has come under threat and so has their identity and sense of self-esteem.

Masculinities and Sexuality

While, on the one hand, masculinity – almost world-wide – has increasingly become constructed from men's wage-earning powers, on the other – and more fundamentally – notions of masculinity are also closely associated to male virility, sexuality and sexual performance [7, 8, 9]. Men (and also women) in both Kisii and Dar es Salaam would certainly agree.

Women interviewed would all agree that to ask the husband to use a condom – when they know that he has been with other partners – would be to disclose their disrespect too openly.



The same observations are made in many other parts of the world [10].

However, as has also been widely observed, whereas for men there is a strong correspondence between masculinity, sexual activity and status, this is the inverse for the female system [7, 8,11]. In fact, research findings from both Kisii and Dar es Salaam clearly indicate that while *sexual potency* gives social potency, value and self-esteem to men, *sexual modesty* gives social value to women - but certainly not to men [5, 12].

Men in Kisii as well as Dar es Salaam are clearly aware of their precarious position. While they might perhaps admit this to the researcher during in depth discussions - as was often the case - this was certainly not what they were prepared to admit or even discuss with their wives/partners. For men it was important to insist on their privileges, their position as head of household and to demonstrate their control over women. Many did so by using violence.

Consequently, with masculinity and the phallus being at stake, and with men benefiting from inherited definitions of femininity and masculinity the questions raised at the beginning of this article become relevant: To what extent are men willing to let go of 'hegemonic' masculinities? To what extent are disempowered men in East Africa motivated for responsible sexual behaviour and HIV/AIDS prevention?

Conclusions

In order to understand men, masculinity and sexuality in rural and urban East Africa it has been necessary to locate men and women within the complex and changing social, political and economic systems. Men in my research studies are perfectly aware that they are in a process of losing control over women. In this situation, and faced with increasing demands for women's empowerment and rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights,

most men do not welcome the traditional safe sex messages, including 'sticking to one partner'. Therefore, strategies to empower women and improve their deteriorating sexual and reproductive health are only meaningful if they are balanced against efforts to deal with men's increasingly frustrating situation. This, I have argued, is a major development issue that has so far remained unnoticed both on the development agenda and also in the existing efforts to 'involve men'.

Notes

1. Before the ICPD (International Conference on Population and Development) in Cairo, September 1994, men, their role as (responsible) partners and also their own sexual and reproductive health needs had not received much attention - in spite of men's prominent sexual and reproductive role. The final ICPD document (1994), as well as documents from follow-on meetings (Cairo + 5) clearly recognise the need to address and involve men, in order to improve women's reproductive health. Operational attempts, though, to reach men are very few, and have not yet been given high priority by local governments, donor agencies, NGO's, or by researchers.
2. In the 1970s, 33 percent of the households in Kisii were still polygamous (Population and Development in Kenya, 1980). Survey findings in 1986 by this author indicate that less than 10 percent lived in polygamous unions.

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3

Region Watch

It's Hard To Be A Boy, South Africa Survey Shows

From IRINNEWS.ORG - South Africa: Focus on the "Burden" of Manhood

Introduction

It is hard to be a boy in South Africa these days. A recent survey of 30 schools in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province found that, across all races, male students and teachers experience uncertainty about their role and status and a sense of displacement due to the loss of their privileged space in society.

White males feel threatened by the

advancement of blacks and women, embodied in affirmative action programmes. Among black males, women's new status, coupled with poverty and unemployment, reportedly fuels a sense of futility and hopelessness.

The Study

The study by Graham Lindegger and Pamela Atwell, from the School of Psychology at Natal University,

examined how masculinity is constructed and maintained in schools to better understand how deeply-held notions of masculinity lead to high-risk behaviour for HIV infection among men and women.

The findings were presented [recently] at a conference on men and AIDS, organised in Pretoria by the Regional AIDS Initiative of Southern Africa of Voluntary Services Overseas. Activists and researchers from Southern and East Africa discussed how to enlist men in the response to the pandemic.

Troubled Manhood

Twenty years into the AIDS pandemic, the bulk of studies and interventions have focused on women and girls. While a key theme has been "men drive the epidemic", little funding and effort has gone into working with men, especially young men.

Schools being institutions where "masculinities" are actively made, negotiated and regulated, the KZN study throws light on the troubled perception of manhood in the new South Africa.

"Men and boys carry a burden of anxiety about being a man," said Lindegger.

Conflicting Views

A key finding was that both



Boys in a classroom. Schools are institutions where "masculinities" are actively made, negotiated and regulated. Photo Credit: USAID Photo Gallery



The bulk of studies and interventions have focused on women and girls. While a key theme has been “men drive the epidemic”, little funding and effort has gone into working with men, especially young men.

teachers and students hold varied and conflicting views about masculinity. They are aware of changes in gender relations, but still hang on to old notions.

Among these, certain elements in the concept of masculinity appear to transcend racial, cultural and class boundaries. These include heterosexuality, an “uncontrollable” sex drive, multiple sexual conquests, danger and risk taking, success and responsibility, dominance and control.

“It is difficult for boys to look at girls as equals,” said a pupil quoted in the study. “Teenage boys are hot flesh,” said a principal. “To be a real man is to be a person who is not afraid to take risks,” said a teacher.

Among white students, risk taking centres on alcohol abuse, fast driving, heterosexual success and breaking rules. In black township schools, it includes sexual prowess, criminal activity and violence, the study said.

At the same time, conscious of changing patterns of masculinity, teachers speak of the need to be gentle and caring, to respect women and to accept gender equality as expressed in South Africa’s constitution.

Most white teachers said that the traditional macho stereotype is restricting and damaging, but at the same time they assume a biologically

rooted male sexuality and superiority.

Teachers at black township schools in KZN reported a conflict between traditional Zulu beliefs on masculinity and more Western notions in intellectual thought of sexual equality.

HIV/AIDS

Noting the conflicting discourses about gender, the findings suggested that the dominant form of masculinity was changing. However, the study found “a deep level of conservatism” in the notion of masculinity, which does not bode well for HIV/AIDS prevention.

On the positive side, the study found “some reassuring evidence” that both black and white girls act more assertively and refuse to comply with traditional stereotypes. But their assertive behaviour could provoke aggression from boys.

Overt sexual harassment of girls remains a problem, especially at township schools. Interviewees attributed this behaviour to the need for boys to prove themselves in front of their peers. “For boys, sex is still a huge conquest thing,” said one teacher.

Similar conclusions from other Southern African countries were presented at the conference.

In Malawi, a survey among 3,000 students in 50 secondary schools by Population Services International reported that the mean age for a first

sexual encounter among boys was under 15 and just over 15 for girls. Nearly half of the girls and three-quarters of the boys were sexually active. Risk perception, however, was low: 47 percent of girls and 43 percent of boys expressed no concern about becoming infected with HIV.

According to the Southern Africa HIV/AIDS Information Dissemination Service, boys in the region start experimenting with sex as early as aged 10 or 12, marry later than women and spend more time unmarried, experimenting with many sexual partners and becoming vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV.

Challenging Stereotypes

“We need to challenge this destructive concept of manhood that men make all decisions, men need many sex partners, men don’t feel comfortable discussing our sexuality,” said Regis Mtutu, of Zimbabwe’s Men Forum Padare/Enkudleni.

Padare seeks to change gender stereotypes, reaching boys and men in schools, pubs, sports clubs and churches, where they can debate, in a non-threatening space, issues of sexuality, masculinity and power.

Participants agreed that such efforts should be grounded in a culture of human rights that can bridge cultural differences and span the variety of situations men experience, for example, rural and urban, old and young, heterosexual and gay, single and married. The notions set out in the UN Declaration of Human Rights provide a common ground for the complex task of renegotiating gendered power relations, they said.

“Besides deep changes in structures of society, what we need is a deeply spiritual transformation in the identity of men,” concluded Lindegger.



4

Research
Notes

Masculinity And Aggression In South Africa

By Russell Luyt,
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Introduction

Mainstream (‘malestream’) academia has by and large neglected the critical examination of men. This is certainly true in the study of violence. Foster notes that men have been disproportionately exposed to its ill effects either as perpetrators or victims [1]. South African history paints a vivid portrait of the close association between men and violence.

Fortunately interest in the study of masculinity has blossomed over the last two-and-a-half decades. Feminist theoretical advances and the politics of the gay liberation movement have encouraged the development of Men’s Studies. The current study identified with this development. In doing so it attempted to problematise the

relationship between masculinities and violence. Gender theorising that stresses the importance of power proved useful – in this case Connell’s [2] often-cited concept of hegemonic masculinity. This concept:

“provides a way of explaining that though a number of masculinities coexist, a particular version of masculinity holds sway, bestowing power and privilege on men who espouse it and claim it as their own” [3:608].

Hegemonic masculinity serves to sustain male power both in relation to women and subordinate masculinities. All men therefore benefit within this gender order. As such most support it despite their frequent departure from the hegemonic ideal. That is to say every male incorporates elements that are both

consistent and contradictory with hegemonic masculinity. In particular differences emerge along social axes such as ‘race’, class, and sexuality. These differences act as the basis for contestation surrounding its definition [2]. Hegemony is therefore never total. Literature suggests that aggression and/or violence often accompanies such contestation, where the enactment of either, serves as a marker of a man’s masculinity[4].

This research sought to explore the variable endorsement of hegemonic masculinity by South African men and its relationship to aggression. It adopted a constructionist perspective. Male aggression is not considered essential. It finds perpetuation in society, in part, due to its close association with the social construct of masculinity. Literature also suggests that age [5] and education [6] are related to aggression. Accordingly this research explored the core hypothesis that: low age and education, together with strong hegemonic masculine approval, are predictive of high aggression whilst high age and education, together with weak hegemonic masculine endorsement are predictive of low aggression. Eight variables were initially included in the analysis: age, education, masculine toughness score, masculine control score, masculine sexuality score, total masculinity score, transformed frequency aggression score, and transformed duration aggression score.

Method

Stratified purposive sampling across



Young men at a local basketball pitch. Photo credit stock.xchng



age and education provided a means with which to isolate 432 suitable participants. Involvement was restricted to Afrikaans, English and Xhosa speaking male South Africans. Participant age ranged between 15 and 87 years old and averaged approximately 37. The Male Attitude Norms Inventory-II [MANI-II] [7] was utilised as a multi-dimensional measure of masculinity ideology. Its three sub-scales served to guide construction of a multi-dimensional model of masculinity. This model provided a blueprint for the construction of three similar sub-scales. Principal factor analytic procedures (Communalities Multiple R^2) rendered single-factor solutions in each case. Each also demonstrated firm overall [Total Scale ($\alpha = 0.90$)] and individual [Toughness Sub-Scale ($\alpha = 0.69$); Control Sub-Scale ($\alpha = 0.86$); Sexuality Sub-Scale ($\alpha = 0.74$)] internal reliability. An adaptation of the Buss Aggression procedure [8] was used to assess individual predisposition toward aggression. Buss's original experimental procedure guided the construction of an 'aggression machine'. Individuals were required to participate in a task in which they supposedly administered electric shocks to a research confederate. An individual's willingness to administer 'shock' treatment served as a measure of their aggression.

Results

Multiple correlation indicated significant relationships ($\alpha = 0.05$) between most of the variables and by-and-large confirmed theoretical assumptions. However the relationship between age and the four masculine variables was unexpected. That is to say age was significantly positively correlated to masculine toughness ($r = 0.19$), control ($r = 0.31$), sexuality ($r = 0.34$), and the total scale ($r = 0.34$). This suggested that as men got older they increasingly supported traditional masculinity.

Three predictor variables were found to contribute meaningfully to a regression model accounting for aggression using the transformed frequency aggression score. Both the masculine sexuality score (Beta = 0.12; $p < 0.05$) and education (Beta = -0.12; $p < 0.05$) made a significant contribution to the model. Age (Beta = -0.10; $p = 0.08$) failed to do so despite making a useful contribution to the model as a whole. The overall regression model accounted for 3.8 % of the

variance in aggression [$F(3,36) = 4.62$; $p < 0.001$]. Only main effects were considered in this analysis.

Two independent samples t-tests were conducted. The first explored the hypothesis that men diverging in age, education, and their support for traditional masculinity (total masculinity score) would differ significantly in aggressive response. Comparison between mean aggression scores revealed significant results ($t(56) = 2.40$; $p < 0.01$). Young, poorly educated men who strongly supported traditional masculinity ($M = 139.74$; Valid $N = 23$) were found to aggress more readily than older, well educated men who endorsed traditional masculinity to a lesser extent ($M = 110.17$; Valid $N = 35$). The second t-test was undertaken in order to explore the surprising finding that age was significantly positively correlated to the four masculine variables. Comparison between mean total masculinity scores also produced significant results ($t(253) = -6.49$; $p < 0.01$). Young Xhosa men ($M = 107.39$; Valid $N = 128$) were found to support hegemonic masculinity to a significantly lesser extent than older Xhosa men ($M = 119.20$; Valid $N = 127$). Post hoc comparisons were not conducted. An analysis of variance may prove interesting at a later stage.

Discussion

The research hypothesis was supported. Low education and high endorsement of traditional masculine sexuality was seen to be significantly predictive of aggression. Low age, although not uniquely contributory to aggression, was found to contribute meaningfully to the overall predictive model. This model only accounted for a small proportion of the variance in aggression. Klineberg usefully reminds us "it is impossible to find a single cause of all forms of violence. We are dealing here clearly with a multidimensional phenomenon, and our understanding of it demands that we keep many facets simultaneously in mind" [9:122]. Future studies should explore the contribution of additional variables in predicting aggression. Nevertheless the current findings are easily understood. Some studies suggest that aggression and/or violence plays a pivotal role in the lives of young disempowered males [10]. With few alternatives available, young males adopt these behaviours, and in so doing reinforce their status as 'true' men.

Further avenues for research emerged. The discovery that 'sexuality' surfaced as a significant predictor of aggression rather than masculine 'toughness' or 'control' holds particular interest. The traditional masculine norm of 'sexuality' arguably involves processes of social categorisation to a greater extent than either 'toughness' or 'control'. It is plausible that individual male violence may be encouraged through such processes. The relationship between social categorisation and the masculine norm of 'sexuality', in encouraging aggression, should be explored further. Social dominance theory [11] may be a worthwhile conceptual tool in an undertaking of this kind.

The correlation result, indicating that as men got older they increasingly supported traditional masculinity, also deserves further exploration. It could be argued that the highly traditionalist culture among older 'black'-African men [12], who comprised a substantial proportion of the entire sample (65.7%), may have contributed toward this finding. Even so a future study comparing traditional masculine endorsement across culture and age may prove insightful.

Acknowledgements

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5

Viewpoint

Hypothesis On The Origin Of Hegemonic Masculinity

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Introduction

Often a man is asleep and it is awake, and many times a man is awake and it is asleep. Many times a man wants to use it, and it does not want it, many times, it wants to, and man forbids it.

- Leonardo da Vinci (On the Penis)

The above exegesis underscores the historic fascination, which surrounds the penis and its activities. Critical reviews of history and mythology indicate that the human penis has occupied an interesting place in cultural history. David Friedman's book: *A Mind of its Own: A Cultural History of the Penis* [1], documents the penis as a contested organ, which has fascinated people of all ages and I hereby recommend

this interesting book to anybody who has the penis or knows someone who does. As this book shows, the discursive practices surrounding the penis have depicted it as having a mind of its own and often capable of controlling its owners. Such discursive systems however divorce the penis from its socio-cultural context and conceal the processes whereby the penis and its activities connect with the production and sustenance of mainstream masculinity. Consequently, questions about the historic role of the penis in the social construction of masculinity are currently difficult to answer.

Hypothesis

In this short formulation, I summarize my new hypothesis about the origins of hegemonic masculinity. My hypothesis centralizes the penis. I posit that it was in the primitive background that the penis emerged as a culturally invested and coded signficatory element and became grafted onto a semiotic category and content regarding how all those who possess it ought to behave. This hypothesis, which is fully elaborated in my forthcoming book; *Simulacral Sexuality; The Primitive Mind and the Human Penis*, suggests that masculinity is actually a referent, and thus merely simulacral; a product of

primitive construction of the form, content, and role of the penis.

In the main, I hypothesize that masculinity is a mentally created 'world' which men are expected to inhabit. Primitive mind identified the presence of the penis as the sign or symbol for including persons in this iconic world referent. This world of masculinity is thus only an extrapolation of the excision established by the logic of an equally iconic sign (the penis) onto the world of things (onto the phenomenological world of perception). It is a world seen and interpreted, first by our primitive relatives, through the sign -the penis.

The Primitive Gaze

The human penis evidently attracted the intense gaze and wonderment of the primitive mind. At the birth of a child, primitive people, like we currently do, carefully looked out for the presence or absence of the penis. The penis therefore entered primitive cultural imaginary as a powerful sign. The presence of the penis at birth helped primitive people to classify a newborn into a cultural category. Those without the penis, primitive man thought, must be the opposite of those with it. The penis or its absence in a given human body thus became a vital signifier of a certain value; and here must be where the





presence or absence of this biological organ called the penis began to assume critical cultural significance and meaning.

Sociologists agree that meaning is the making of man. The primitive site of the constitutive dialectic of the meaning of masculinity was the penis. Through it, primitive people framed the meaning of being a man. The meaning of the penis was itself actualised in the identical act of which schematising its constitutive features is essentially reflective. The penis thus became descriptive of certain values upon which primitive households based the socialization of their members who happened to possess the penis. The meanings the primitive mind attached to the penis derived from primitive understandings of (1) its 'expressive activities' and (2) its 'significant functions'.

Powerful Invader

In terms of expressive activity; that is how the penis behaves, primitive mind saw the penis as a powerful staff of office, which the gods bestowed on those they liked. The unabashed, protrusive appearance of the penis combined with its tendency to get hard, bolder, and stronger on stimulation suggested to the primitive mind that the penis has power! Primitive mind also thought the penis to be a powerful invader. The invasive nature of the penis derived from primitive understanding of the meaning of penetration. The liquid (semen), which it emits during ejaculation, was also viewed as a sort of venom, which weakened women. It registered as a tool with which to demobilize, invade, and disvalue women. In this sense, the penis was, to primitive man, a weapon, a sort of ancient tool of competition between the two sexes. Primitive man actually used it to invade and keep women in their place. Primitive women, like their 'modern' counterparts, were not expected to see the penis or openly talk about it. This socially reinforced practice of hiding the penis was actually part of the primitive politics of hiding and showing a powerful instrument of intrusion.

Power of Life, Death

The primitive view of the significant functions of the penis

i.e. the major outcomes associated with penile activity and penetration centred on loss of virginity and pregnancy thereby inscribing on the penis the power of life and death.

Origins of Hegemony

Primitive articulations constituted the penis and its possessors (men) as the powerful, respect-worthy, and preferred category. Persons born with the penis became important objects of huge social and emotional investment, who quite early on, were socialized to believe that they are worth more than, and are superior to those persons who do not possess the penis. This, to me, is the origin of hegemonic masculinity; the cultural ideology which inscribes superiority, power, vigour, strength, and brutality to men. Within this schema, male dominance, genital activity, penetrative heterosexual relation, sexual aggression, and indifference to the voices and concerns of those who do not possess the penis i.e. women, emerged as ideal male qualities. Primitive penis-centred constructions continue to dominate mainstream discourses of masculinity. Male children are not only globally preferred but also continue to constitute a highly valued social category.

A New Gaze

Hegemonic masculinity is dangerous. Empirical studies point to the role of the ideology of hegemonic masculinity in the development crisis and HIV/AIDS pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa. The ideology encourages sexual risk-taking and irresponsibility among men and prevents women from challenging men's sexual conduct and behaviour. Hegemonic masculinity is male-privileging and encourages men to rape women, beat them, and take decisions for them. It also explains why women conceal their sexual abuse and express shame about their bodies.

By depicting men's control and subordination of women as natural, this ideology makes it difficult to promote rights to choices, sexual freedom, and positive, healthy, and respectful sexuality. This ideology frustrates positive change in sexual behaviour and gender relations. To challenge the ideology of hegemonic masculinity, we need to strip the penis and divest it of its primitive

value. This involves adopting a new gaze at the penis; that is seeing it differently from the way our exotic ancestors gazed at it. This new gaze at the penis will aim at divesting it of the unmerited privileges which the primitive gaze had invested in it, and repositioning it as a mere part of the human body which can, nevertheless, be positively and effectively engaged as a transitional object in intimate, responsible and respectful relationships.

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Notes to Contributors

The editors welcome submissions on the thematic focus of future issues of the Magazine, as well as other areas of sexuality, sexual health and rights. Themes for upcoming 2005 issues include:

- Sexuality and Religion
- Sexuality and the Media, and
- Sexual Violence and HIV/AIDS

ARSRC seeks articles for submission which are objective, analytical and mirror current / contemporary issues and debates in the areas of Sexuality, Sexual Health and Rights in Africa. Articles should reflect a holistic /comprehensive approach to sexuality; taking sexuality discourse beyond health to incorporate broader issues of the expression of sexuality without guilt, fear or ill-health. While priority would be given articles

that have not been previously published, already published material may be considered depending on how relevant the subject area and focus is to ARSRC's work. However, for already published articles, full details of previous publication and where to seek permission for reprint must accompany the article.

We particularly welcome articles related to our thematic focus for the following sections :

Region Watch: Topical issues with a country or sub regional focus
Programme Feature: best practices from programme implementers

Research Notes: Focus on relevant research and methodologies

Viewpoint: Reactions to previous magazine issues or on a subject area that a reader wishes to express

very strong views or opinion.

Length

Feature articles : 1,000 -1,500 words

Research issues : 800-1,000 words

Opinion articles : 400-500 words

Photos

We welcome photos with or without articles and will give appropriate credit when photo is used.

Presentation

Please submit initially, an abstract with your name, contact address, phone number, email address and details about yourself as you would wish it to appear on the list of contributors

*****All contributors will receive a copy of the issue in which their contribution has been published.

About Contributors to this Edition

C. Otutubikey Izugbara is a widely published anthropologist with teaching and research interests in sexuality, health, gender and the environment. He lectures in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology, University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

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Margrethe Silberschmidt, PhD, is Associate Professor at the Institute of Public Health, Department of Women and Gender Research in Medicine, University of Copenhagen. She has carried out research on gender and sexual and reproductive health over the past 20 years in rural and urban East Africa. She is currently doing a comparative study in low income areas in Dar es Salaam and Kampala on the '*Construction of masculinities and how they interact with male sexual and reproductive behaviour*'. Quantitative (150 men, 50 women) and qualitative data (20 focus group discussions, 40 in-depth interviews) have already been collected and are now in the process of being analysed.

Russell Luyt now works in the Institute of Social Psychology at the London School of Economics. He has a longstanding interest in gender studies and, in particular, the critical exploration of masculinities. His published work includes exploration into masculinities and gang culture, rhetorical representations of masculinities, and the measurement of masculinity ideology. He is currently continuing to explore the reproduction of masculinities in South Africa.



Sexuality Resources

Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa

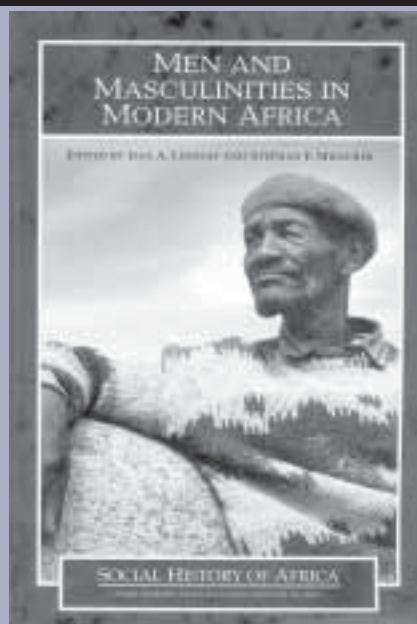
Editors : Lisa A. Lindsay and Stephan F. Miescher

Publisher: Heinemann, Portsmouth, 2003

ISBN: 0-325-00243-1 (Paperback)

Over the last twenty years, gender has become a major research focus in African Studies, resulting in a surge of rich material. Yet men have rarely been the subject of gender research in Africa, and Africanist scholars have yet to fully address how shifting meanings of gender have affected African men or how the understandings and practices of masculinity have been contested and transformed during the colonial and postcolonial eras.

The collection examines the concepts and issues involved in exploring African men and the constructions of masculinity in sub-Saharan Africa.



Changing Men in Southern Africa

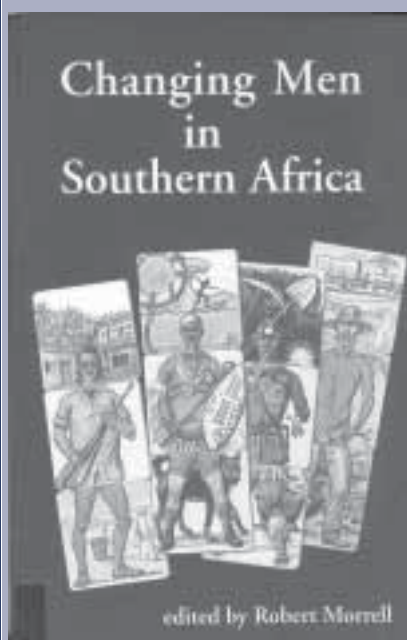
Editor: Robert Morrell

Publisher: University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 2001

ISBN: 0-86980 983 0 (Paperback)

Despite claims in some quarters that men are in crisis, in Southern Africa they still dominate the domestic and public realms. But the power of men is not fixed, nor is it the case that all men share the spoils of dominance.

Changing Men in South Africa looks at the different kinds of masculinity that exist in southern Africa. Distancing itself from biological explanations of male behaviour, *Changing Men* demonstrates that dominant interpretations of masculinity still sanction violence against women, gay people, younger men and those belonging to other racial and ethnic groups.



Recreating Men : Postmodern Masculinity Politics

Author : Bob Pease

Publisher: Sage Publications Ltd, London, 2000

ISBN: 0 7619 6206 5 (Paperback)

One of the most central issues for women's prospects for equality is whether men can and will change. Changing the social relations of gender will involve changing men's subjectivities as well as their daily practices. *Recreating Men* argues that it is possible.

Driven by practical as well as theoretical concerns, the book develops strategies that will promote the process of change towards equality in gender relations. Drawing on a critical postmodern theoretical framework, Bob Pease argues that it is possible for men to reposition themselves in patriarchal discourses and to reformulate their interests in challenging gender domination.

