

Wolpe 8 August 2011-08-13

Conversations on Masculinities, Gender-based Violence Prevention and Gender Equality in the Global South

QUESTIONS

Prof Diane Cooper: Thank you to all of the speakers for your wonderful and insightful presentations. I am reminded again that we really are 'one world'. I would like to summarise a few of the main points. The most important of which is that patriarchal concepts of masculinity whether it be in the form of modern concepts or what Mazibuko talked about, the 'retribalisation of men', are terribly damaging to men. It is damaging to men, women's and children's well being. The other thing that is important is that we can change - there are interventions that can be implemented. And I know when Dean gives talks to our students on gender based violence, he always says that much as he is horrified at the 4 in 10 men who acknowledge that they have abused a woman, think about the 6 who have not, and how do we build on that. Who are the men who are not violent? Our speakers have alluded to that, because we also need to look at the other side of the coin. Having said that, I would like to pass it on, we have about 20 minutes for questions.

Question 1:

I have 3 quick questions. First, what do you know of the prevalence of men raping men outside of the context of prison? Second, where do young South African or Brazilian men go when they have been raped – we have rape centres here but they are focused on women, so what happens to these men? Kopano, when you showed us the data that you did, it does not show the relationship of sexual orientation or being transsexual, as to who gets violated and how much etc? I am curious as to whether there is any data on that? In other words, does that make you less or more vulnerable to different kinds of things? Does the man's sexual orientation or gender expression make them more vulnerable?

Prof Kopano Ratele: there is very data on men raping men outside of prison. There is some anecdotal evidence about this from the Teddy Bear Clinic about boys and younger men who are sexually violated. As to your second question, Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Program, they do see some of the cases, but this is not necessarily systematic. You will not find any of the data around men's sexual orientation or gender expression in the police reports, so there is a large amount of scope for you to do research on a qualitative level with small groups of participants. Even in the police docket information, we have no information about this. You are asking something interesting about the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, and we actually have little information on the perpetrators themselves.

Question 2:

I have two questions. The issues for me are concerning the disciplining not only of men, but of masculinity. The use of violence between men and against women are not the only forms of disciplining masculinity. I am interested in the less obvious forms of discipline with groups that are less researched. What is the structure of disciplining masculinity outside of the 'typical' researched groups (young black men) particularly in the way the way that masculinity is

enforced. Kopano, I would like your thoughts on that. Mazibuko, you spoke about two legitimate forms of manhood – the one is the ‘modern man’, the citizen and the other one is the ‘cultural man’ or one built of a cultural identity. Some of your thoughts seemed to pit the two against each other. It appeared as if you were saying that the modern citizen is the preferred option, but that may not have been your intention. But my interest is how both of those forms compete and complement one another in different ways. So my question is how do we structure gender identities in different ways that do not reinforce relations of power, because ultimately, it is that that has led to the high rates of violence against women?

Question 3:

Kopano, you spoke about the rates of homicide in 2006, but you did not speak about those men who are surviving and what happens of them and what they become? Do they become perpetrators? Mazibuko, related to that, how government and government principles got distorted and then adopted as traditional customary law and now in post-apartheid SA with the rewriting of various laws, particular of the Black Authorities Act, and then compare that to Zuma’s embracing of Adam Kok yesterday, and the expansion of traditional leaders to include the leaders of the Khoi, what does this mean in terms of the re-tribalisation of South Africa. Because it is not only the rural areas - we are starting to see this in the urban areas too. I am interested in how this impacts on identity and men. Lastly, for the speaker from Brazil, around the *favelas*, how are the figures disaggregated in terms of race, colonial experience and identity - how does that work?

Mazibuko:

What societies have done is to have hybrid approaches to cultural phenomena and identities. It is a mistake to think of the ‘modern man’ and the ‘cultural man’ as things that are counter-posed and mutually exclusive because in practice, people have sought to bring them together. So if I was distinguishing between the two, perhaps it was the pressure of standing on the platform.

But at the same time, there is a reassertion of notions of culture in our society that seek to go back to some pure notion of culture that has not been made impure by colonialism and apartheid. What they represent is a recasting of things on the ground in ways that ultimately reinforce male power. Whatever Phathekile Holomisa writes, or other MPs, or chiefs in Parliament, when they talk about custom and culture, it is a particular notion of culture and custom that is not even prepared to think around the Constitution, that is not willing to think along finding new forms of gender or male identities. It is not prepared to do that at all, because [according to them] if you start to think about gender identities in an equitable way, then actually you are ‘doing away’ with notions of ‘culture’. We have not seen amongst those who assert cultural identity preparedness to dialogue. It would be interesting to find out what is happening on the ground. It is interesting to see a cultural authority on the ground in Msinga (KZN), where the traditional authority actually decided that it would grant allocations of land to single women because these men do not come back. So this is an interesting development

because this is a very conservative social structure, yet socio-economic changes on the ground have changed a number of things. This is exactly the kind of hybrid that we should be looking for because it is a mistake to want to counter pose 'modernity and culture' as things that are immutable and cannot work together.

What this means in my view is that it closes off the space for local contestations to take place. That is the most important space that we need to open up in rural areas. Because women do fight it out, and if the legal and institutional closes that space, then we are in trouble.

Gary:

It is hard to sum up a few hundred years of post colonial history in a phrase, but I will give you a couple of examples. About 40% of the Brazilian population has some African decent. Brazil was the last country in the hemisphere to abolish slavery, so it is definitely a country built on slaves. It is a country of immigrants but the national myth was that racism was something that happened in South Africa and the United States, but Brazil was a melting pot. Attention to racial identity and civil society groups working on race as a form of social exclusion has probably come about in the last 20years as there is a heightened awareness that inequality in Brazil passes through lots of lenses and one of those is race. And this is starting to be looked at more. For example, there is now a quota system at public universities to make more space for those of African descent. It is the first time that race was recognised as some kind of barrier to entry, which was less than 5 years ago.

Kopano:

Men who do not achieve a socially respected form of masculinity tend to employ violence to earn respect. If you can't get respect, you are going to force people to respect you. White men in this country, more than coloured or black men, have more ways to earn respect, particularly since it is tied to employment and income. When you see some of the data that is being produced in South Africa recently, the interesting bit of course is that nothing is mentioned about gender. If you cannot tie that with gender then one group of coloured and black men who cannot get respect through employment and income - they will try to gain respect elsewhere. To add to that, this is a debate about inequality and equality regarding discipline - so, heightened levels of inequality, leads to a sense of insecurity for people who don't have respect. And so, because their status is tied to very small things - how they walk, some turf stuff, if you tend to encroach on their turf, then they don't get respect. White men tend to earn the most critical kind of respect elsewhere which includes ties to property, income and family, because they have on average more access to resources as men, and so they don't need to earn respect through violence.

Question 4: I am Jule Richie, I am here as a concerned citizens. I am heartened and alarmed about these 3 Bills that are lurking out there. My question is to Sonke and to everyone - what is happening regarding these three scary bills?

Question 5: I am from the South African Faith and Family Institute. I want to talk about the faith issues and how it relates to gender that is violent. I want to ask the three of you to talk about religion and religious institutions in these debates around what we are talking about tonight, considering that 90% of South Africans sit week after week in some kind of faith community.

Mazibuko: I am not perhaps the best the best person to answer this question [of religion] as a Communist.

Two of these laws were already passed into law in 2003, but that framework actually allowed each province to pass its own law. So there are actually 8 other traditional leaders and governance laws throughout the provinces. The most controversial one is the Limpopo one which allows tribal levies, so you can imagine kind of potential it has to deny people's rights and so on. Last week, as Zuma said with the event with Adam Kok, government released the 'National Traditional Affairs Bill' which seeks to consolidate a whole range of laws regarding traditional authorities. Now this omnibus new bill is meant to address all of the problems, but whether it will address the issues that people from the rural areas have pointed out, is something else. We are still looking at the Bill as we only got it last Friday, but there is a very tight space for comment, only 3 months. I don't know how much space there is on the ground to do this. We do work with the Legal Resources Centre, we do work with rural communities and through that work, we were able to challenge the Communal Land Rights Act. Through our work with the LRC and several communities, we were able to get the law struck off the books in May last year through the Constitutional Court. However, the CC struck it off on procedural grounds because Parliament did not allow a space for provinces to comment on it. The biggest substantial issues were not discussed at all by the Court, so will government come back with a new Act? There were two substantial problems: a) the Land Administration Committee was prescribed by the Tribal Authority and b) the Act did not identify clear distinctions of rights holders for communal land which may be private land, so women may be negatively affected. These issues are still on the table but government has not come back with anything as yet.

The final law, which is the only one which is a Bill, the Tribal Courts Bill, was withdrawn after a huge uproar by us and many other organisations like Rural Voices and so on. It is not clear where this Bill will go. Earlier this year, in the Budget Vote Speech, the Minister said that this would be passed by the end of the year. Similarly, President Zuma said the same thing when he opened the House of Traditional Leaders for their session, also promised that this Bill would be passed. However, through our engagement with people in the Ministry, there is a lot of uncertainty because the unconstitutionality of this Bill is so patently clear, and now they have had their fingers burnt with the Communal Land Rights Act, so they do not want that possibility again.

Gary:

In Brazil about 90% of the population would call themselves Christian whether practising or not, about 2/3 Catholic and the other 1/3 other Christian groups. We have been able to engage them as allies in campaigns around violence against women and around

violence against children. We have not been able to agree on abortion rights and sexual diversity. We have had challenges to have agreements around gender equality because their understanding around gender roles harks back to patriarchal notions that we have been seeking to overcome (like 'men are the head of the household'). So it is a tense relationship but we recognise its importance, and in poor communities, it is the source of a large amount of support, both material and immaterial.

Kopano: the African Religious Health Program here at UCT and my colleagues at the Medical Research Council have been trying to look into protective factors against gender violence and elements that promote healthy masculinities. They have gone into 6 rural communities to map religious assets by looking at what assists men in promoting healthy masculinities, so this is some of the work that is being done.

One of the things that I take is this notion of connectedness. One of the things, and this applies whether you are a communist or not, is that if men are connected to something, to schools or whatever, they are less likely to be involved in violence, they are more likely to have people to go to and we need to use these community resources to mount campaigns against gender based violence.

Question 6: my question is around social class and identity. Since respected forms of masculinity are defined in terms of earning power, how does the Employment Equity Act impact on the workplace, where women are promoted above men?

Question 7: Is it violence against women when cigarette companies target women?

Gary: as women have more economic power and as men are dying off, as we look at the life expectancy of women who live for longer (women live for 5-6 years longer than men), and so it is a sad result of the capitalist system in which we live that women are looked at as a new group to target. They were long used as the bodies that men would get to consume if they smoke and now they are meant to be using the cigarettes themselves.

Question 8: We know that masculinities are shaped by men's interactions with each other across different levels of social power, but they are also impacted on by their interactions with women. In our efforts to create more positive masculinities, what can we do with women to get them to rethink their expectations that may put them at risk for violence?

Mazikbuko: I want to take the example of the Rural People's Movement, and what is interesting there is the dynamic that exists between the women in the leadership of the organisation and the male voices. What is interesting is how the women are beginning to say is that while we can do these things in various ways, how do we include the men so that they do not feel alienated. The situation in the RPM has turned around, typically, it would be the men who are leading, but now it is mainly the women after about 4 years of sustained community consciousness building.

Gary: we kept coming up with the same question, so we posed it to a group of young people that we work with in Brazil. And they came up with a project called 'Between Us' because they said 'you keep doing projects that focus on young men over here and women over here and actually we need to do projects together.' And they came up with

the name, and because they like soap operas, they created their own soap opera which was constructed by and around the issue of women and men. So this was a really clever response by this group of women and men. They told us that we cannot separate our work. The same educational methodology and the work that we are doing, we have to be focussing on both men and women together.

Kopano: next week at work, we are having something called 'Fashion Masculinity'; I went around the country to look at this issue. It has nothing to do with clothes, but it is all about men and how are affected by all of the things that they do – work, violence and the rest of it. I want men at that event. But of course, masculinity is not only fashioned by men, it is fashioned by mothers and their care work. So we know that the people at this event should be men. But you could also have exactly the same event but where 90% of the people attending are women because those women are working with men, because gender is a system, just like masculinity is a system. Thank you.