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“After all I’ve got the soul of a young girl”– A Psychosocial Perspective on the Impact of Heteronormative Images of Masculinity on Sexual Risk Behavior of Gay Men

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“After all I’ve got the soul of a young girl“ – A Psychosocial Perspective on the Impact of Heteronormative Images of Masculinity on Sexual Risk Behavior of Gay Men

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Abstract

The paper is aimed at contributing to an empirically grounded understanding of the psychosocial dynamics that underlie the relation between heteronormative images of masculinity, internalized heterosexism and health behavior of gay men in the global North. It is based on a qualitative interview study that focuses on the consequences of the internalization of dominant images of masculinity for the identity constructions of gay men and their HIV-related sexual risk behavior in Germany. In the paper it will be argued that 1) the tension between the authoritative image of masculinity that is determined by heteronormative discourses on the one hand and the gendered self-image that is shaped and threatened by connotations of a non-masculine homosexuality on the other constitutes a decisive issue of gay identity constructions, 2) a higher sexual risk behavior can be understood as a possible consequence of the internalization of masculine images and its impact on the self-esteem, if the self-image does not match the male ideal, and 3) this may include a paradoxical desire for the imagined masculinity that is experienced as violent with regard to one’s own psychodynamics. Finally, perspectives on gay masculinities that may transgress dominant heteronormative modes of subjectification are discussed.

Keywords: masculinity, heteronormativity, internalized heterosexism, HIV/Aids, Psychosocial Studies



"Después de todo tengo el alma de una joven" - Una Perspectiva Psicosocial sobre el Impacto de las Imágenes heteronormativas de la masculinidad en las Conductas de Riesgo Sexual de los Hombres Gay

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Resumen

El artículo tiene como objetivo contribuir a un entendimiento de las dinámicas psicosociales que subyacen en la relación entre las imágenes de la masculinidad heteronormativa, el heterosexismo internalizado y el comportamiento en salud de los hombres gay en el Norte globalizado. Para ello se basa en un estudio que a partir de entrevistas cualitativas realizadas en Alemania se centra en las consecuencias de la internalización de las imágenes dominantes de la masculinidad para las construcciones de la identidad de los hombres gay y sus comportamientos sexuales de riesgo relacionados con el VIH. En el documento se argumentará que 1) la tensión entre la imagen autoritaria de la masculinidad que se determina por los discursos heteronormativos por un lado, y la auto-imagen de género que se construye a partir de una homosexualidad no masculina constituye una cuestión decisiva en la construcción de la identidad gay, 2) un comportamiento sexual de riesgo más alto se puede entender como una posible consecuencia de la internalización de las imágenes masculinas y su impacto en la autoestima, si la propia imagen no coincide con el ideal masculino, y 3) lo que puede incluir el deseo paradójico de la masculinidad imaginado que se experimenta como violento con relación a las propias psicodinámicas. Por último, se discuten las perspectivas sobre las masculinidades homosexuales que pueden transgredir los modos dominantes de la heteronormatividad.

Palabras clave: masculinity, heteronormativity, internalized heterosexism, HIV/Aids, Psychosocial Studies



In the last decade a large body of literature has emphasized the importance of masculinity issues for the gender identity constructions of gay men. In this respect prevalent images of masculinity have been examined with regard to different national contexts like Spain (Guasch, 2011), Israel (Levon, 2012), Brazil (Parker, 2002), Japan (Eguchi, 2011), or the Philippines (Rubio & Green, 2009) and particular ethnic groups especially in North America and the Commonwealth like Latino (Ocampo, 2012), Puerto Rican (Asencio, 2011), African American (Hunter, 2010; LaSala & Frierson, 2012) gay man in the United States, or Asian gay men in Australia (Drummond, 2005). Based on Connell's theory of a hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) empirical studies have demonstrated the ongoing significance of heteronormative masculine images for negotiating gay identities in the Global North (e.g. Clarkson, 2006; Yeung, Stomblor & Wharton, 2006; Arxer, 2011; Wilson et al., 2010; see also Connell, 1992). From a social and health psychological perspective the implications of an internalization of heteronormative images on the psychological health outcomes of gay men have widely been discussed (e.g. Johnson et al., 2008; Kashubeck-West & Szymanski, 2008; Szymanski & Carr, 2008). Only few studies, however, have addressed the physical health implications of an internalized heterosexism (e.g. Halkitis, Green & Wilton, 2004; Hamilton & Mahalik, 2009). Referring to syndemics studies, which point at statistically evaluated concentrations of different epidemics (esp. of HIV infections, psychological problems, drug use) in gay men in the Global North that synergetically fuel each other (e.g. Stall et al., 2003; Singer & Scott, 2003; Singer et al., 2006), the assumption can be supported that experiences of stigmatization as gay men in a heteronormative social environment effect their health-related behavior. This paper is aimed at contributing to an empirically grounded understanding of the psychosocial dynamics that underlie the relation of heterosexist perceptions and experiences of gay men and their health behavior. It focuses on the consequences of the internalization of heteronormative images of masculinity for the identity constructions of gay men and their HIV-related sexual risk behavior in Germany.

Following Meyer and Dean (1998, p.162), internalized heterosexism can be understood as “the gay person's direction of negative social attitudes

toward the self, leading to a devaluation of the self and resultant internal conflicts and poor self-regard". In this respect the paper examines the complex dynamics of internalizing heteronormative discourses and externalizing their effects in social practices, thus translating social power relations in intra-psychic conflicts and physical harm. The paper is based on findings of the qualitative study "Positive Desire" that was conducted in order to examine the backgrounds and dynamics of HIV-related risk behavior among gay men in Germany (Langer, 2009). The general results of the study suggest that biographical experiences of being rejected social recognition as a gay men in a heteronormative environment are inscribed into the subject's identity construction, leading to a "spoiled identity" (to use a term coined by Goffman (1963) to denote stigma) and contributing to a particular vulnerability of gay men.

In the following second section of the paper a social psychological case vignette referring to a single interview of the study is presented that outlines the complex psychosocial dynamics that link the prevalence of heteronormative masculine images to sexual behavior. Since the interviews have been conducted in German it is necessary to note that any translation of the reported quotes from the study inevitably contain some semantic differences compared to the original texts. In the third section the psychosocial methodology of the study "Positive Desire" that was conducted in a peer research tradition is briefly outlined. The fourth section presents the results of the analyses the psychosocial dynamics, that was illustrated in the case vignette, in the context with further interviews of the study. In the final fifth section of the paper perspectives of a gay articulation and embodiment of non-heterosexist images of masculinity in heteronormative societies are discussed.

A case vignette

"For me (laughing), that is quite funny, I guess, but for me masculinity means a passive man, who, that, that is, that is kind of a preferred vision, such a, such a bodybuilder who can be passive for me. That is masculinity for me and I want to be so absolutely masculine at all times, but after all I've got the soul of a young girl. [...] And this is an experience that I, um, that I carry with me for,

for a couple of years now, that I am just, that I am just so TERRibly gay.” (Frank)

Within a few sentences the emotional range of Frank’s perception of masculinity becomes obvious. The sequence begins with his presentation of a preferred vision of an extreme masculinity, embodied in the image of a bodybuilder. This bodybuilder, however, does not represent a gender role model for Frank, but is someone he desires to be devoted to him and to penetrate for gaining a position of power. He imagines control over a masculinity that becomes a powerless object that he can possess. “[Q]uite funny” indeed – signaled also by the laughter at the very beginning of the sequence – is the reversal of conventional images of masculinity that are attributed with activity and power. The “passive man” is exactly the opposite. And yet for Frank the identification with the imaginatively penetrated other seems to be the only access to his own masculinity: through the possession of the other or, in Lacanian terminology, through his desire for the desire of the other (Lacan, 1979).

Nonetheless he recognizes in himself “the soul of a young girl”. Two different images of masculinity diverge in Frank’s account and produce an irritation that reflects his ambivalent exposure to his sexual identity. On the one hand the desired masculinity of the bodybuilder that he describes so affectively remains inaccessible: it is barely a function of the construction of his own male position. On the other hand a notion of masculinity is invoked that has a psychosocial dimension, correlating with Frank’s gay identity core that is pictured in the image of the “young girl”. His soul, understood as the “true” inner self in contrast to his outwardly manifested behavior that he describes as adjustable later in the interview, reveals Frank’s internalized self-image as multiple non-male: it is not a woman and not a girl, but explicitly a “young girl”. This self-image represents a burdened experience that Frank has to carry with him, as he metaphorically says. Although it is left open in his narrative what this soul is accounted for exactly, it is the clear opposition to a “man”, serving as a desirable reference-point that is significant here. In a social psychological perspective the desired extreme of the bodybuilder can be interpreted as a means for compensating a self-worth deficit as a gay man. The entire behavior he outlines in the interview shows a compulsive activity:

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Outwardly I try to... I now have this beard now and, um, and, yes, I would like to appear very masculine with a very deep voice, and I have worked on my walk, even as a teenager, that I walk very masculine and so on, and just in the sexual act I want to be the active, the real active part, this, this, this, I really like it.

The beard, the voice, the walk, the active position in sexual encounters: these characteristics, which symbolize masculinity for Frank, are all outwardnesses that are visible for an observer and can be interpreted within the dominant gender dichotomy without any difficulty. Stereotypical attributes of behavior invoke a traditional image of a heterosexual masculinity with societal normative functions. For Frank 'doing masculinity' means a life-long task that cannot be grounded in a natural 'being' and an unmarked position on the gender tableau.

The staging, however, is precarious, always on the edge of failing. He "wants" to appear "so absolutely masculine"; obviously he does not believe in that himself. Frank's voice becomes quieter as he talks about the experience of his gayness, he falters, as if he is frightened of the emerging insight. Only one syllable is highlighted clearly and loudly, when he noticed how "TERRibly gay" he is. Homosexuality spreads a terror for him that results from a kind of masculinity not accessible to him.

The identity fragments of masculinity and femininity that are inscribed in the sequence cannot be integrated into his self-image. The socially prefigured images of masculinity have action-guiding function for him. They constitute an incoherent 'I', pervaded by self-doubts. At the time of the interview Frank was 44 years old; he described himself as having a wide range of interests and being professionally successful in the arts sector. He was untested in terms of HIV, having been tested on HIV negative several years ago. Since then he has had always unprotected sex, he told, which had already led to two syphilis infections. He mentioned that he was "really scared" of HIV. The assumption that he might "not have coped with something" was addressed self-critically by Frank more than once in the interview. And yet the incorporated socially normative images of masculinity, which he desperately failed to fulfill again and again, constitute a binding ideal for him.

The image of the bodybuilder that Frank refers to in the interview is exemplary for a specific notion of masculinity in the gay community, at

least in the Global North (see e.g. [Lanzieri & Hildebrandt 2011](#); [Moskowitz & Hart 2011](#)). It serves as a signifier of masculinity, of a demarcation of the socially effective nexus of homosexuality and femininity, Connell (1995) emphasizes. Within the “heterosexual matrix” ([Butler, 1990](#)) being attracted to men signifies a kind of femininity – either of the body or the psyche – and leads to a unsettledness of gay men about their masculinity that may be experienced as a specific deficit:

“It is the relationship between identity and desire that is at stake here. While for heterosexuals the drive quasi-naturally follows from their identity – a stable gender identity guarantees the interest for the opposite sex –, for homosexuals the connection between identity and desire is reversely constructed within this logic. A misguided male identity is derived from the sexual interest in men. Whoever loves other men, cannot be a man himself. [...] With the assumption of a bound (or compulsive) heterosexual instinct, gays are denied their gender. ([Rehberg, 2005](#); translation from the German original by PCL; see also [Butler, 1997](#))

Therefore, one attempt to (re-)appropriate the denied gender is the adoption of (heterosexual) images of masculinity for gay purposes, a strategy that uses fragments of an unquestionable und positive connoted masculinity prevalent in the public discourse as a form to be filled with gay-specific contents. The ironic distance, which the adoption might reflexively be based on and which allows for a decontextualized functionalization in the first place, usually gets lost in the particular realization. Playing with these kinds of male roles may be successful in the context of the gay community, but with a change of the reference frame to the heterosexual mainstream society it tends to appear as an absurd parody.

Of course non-male images such as the ‘Drag Queen’ are also common in the gay culture and may be used for identification in a way that is aimed at a positive revaluation of gay stigma by affirming otherness and at a deconstruction of the prevailing gender order. However, as Connell (1995) notes:

“Not drag queens but ‘Castro Street clones’, equipped with jeans and T-shirts, moustaches and cropped hair, became the

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international leaders of style in gay communities in the later 1970s. The diversification of sexual scenes brought leather, SM and rough trade to a greater prominence. There may have been, as some argue, an element of parody in gay men's adoption of hyper-masculine styles. But there is little doubt about the cultural shift away from femininity..." (Connell 1995, p. 218)

Within the social organization of masculinity that Connell describes gays occupy the most prominent form of a subordinate masculinity, the lowest level of a rigid hierarchy, in which the other end is marked by the hegemonic masculinity "as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of the patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (*ibid.*, p. 77). Hegemonic masculinity is thus (theoretically) decoupled from empirically determinable social roles or social positions, but signifies the power to define the perception and interpretation of (gendered) social reality; it constitutes a discursive link between the cultural ideal and the institutional power. Undoubtedly the normative images of masculinity play a crucial role in the everyday social practices (not only) for gay men. They establish a conflicting dialectics for the subordinate masculinities by allowing for their acceptance through participation in social power at the cost of an internalized subordination. One might call it a dilemma: The orientation at (and taking over of) clichéd notions of hyper-masculinity signify the hope to occupy a socially legitimated position in the field of masculinities by rejecting any kind of (allocated) gay femininity and thus archiving a (putative) stable sexual identity that is disavowed in the first place by the existence of a hegemonic masculinity.

In this regard Pierre Bourdieu (2001) speaks of "symbolic violence": The governed (the gays) tend to take over imaginarily the dominant position (the hegemonic masculinity by Connell):

"Especially through the destiny effect produced by stigmatizing categorizations and in particular through real or potential insults, they can thus be led to apply to themselves and accept, under constraint, 'straight' categories of perception [...], and to feel ashamed of the sexual experience which, from the point of view of

the dominant categories, defines them...” (ibid., p. 119; accentuation by PB).

Gay life is thus inevitably shaped by experiences of (symbolic and/or real) violence – especially in its radical opposition to this dynamic. That does not mean of course that (at least symbolic) violence is always experienced consciously or becomes subject to an intentional reaction. Within the necessarily gendered socialization in a patriarchal and homosocial society (through family, peers, and media and others), heteronormative images of masculinity are internalized and pre-/unconsciously fixed and may never be embodied without problems by gay men.

As one of the latest images of masculinity the ‘gay skinhead’ has entered the stage in the last decade: “From the perspective of recent gay history the homosexual skinhead is the most popular ideal of masculinity in the post-AIDS era. You can place him in a logic of outdoing: masculine, more masculine, most masculine.” (Rehberg, 2005) Charged with notions of extreme aggression and violence and placed beyond a political and social acceptability by the connotation of the potential fascist neo-Nazi, the gay skinhead symbolized a kind of masculinity that socio-culturally contains a maximum of homophobia:

“The popularity of this character for gay men in a predominantly non-gay society is a sign that access to ‘masculinity’ is still denied to them and that assimilation for gay men is possible only under the sign of homophobia. The homosexual skinhead therefore marks a border. He is the figure of a gay anti-assimilation, a gay figure of protest.” (ibid, p.45)

It is not surprising at all that in this context that violent fantasies in the gay scene are being medially disseminated. An illustration of this can be seen in quite successful hardcore porn movies, picturing stories of brutal aggression such as rape and abuse as sexually desirable. Rape scenarios and notions of becoming a victim reflect a fascination with an imagined absolute ideal of masculinity that seems to promise a participation in it by identifying with the aggressor – or, paradoxically reversed, with the victims of this aggression.

The study “Positive Desire”

The social psychological case vignette presented above is taken from the study “Positive Desire” that was aimed at understanding the psychosocial dynamics underlying the significant rise in HIV diagnoses among gay men in Germany (as in most countries of the Global North) in the first decade of the 21st century. Its general approach is similar to the one developed in the context of the British Psychosocial Studies (see [Frosh, 2003](#); [Frosh & Baraitser, 2008](#); [Hook, 2008](#); [Lapping, 2011](#)) in its psychoanalytically informed concern with dynamics of subjectification in the complex “interplay between what are conventionally thought of as ‘external’ social and ‘internal’ psychic formations” ([Frosh & Baraitser, 2008](#), p. 347). This allows for “conceptualizing and researching a type of subject that is both social and psychological, which is constituted in and through its social formations, yet is still granted agency and internality” (*ibid.* p.349).

The study was designed in the tradition of participatory peer research (see e.g. [Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2007](#); [Kuehner & Langer, 2010](#); [Guta, Flicker & Roche, 2013](#)): A majority of the 58 in-depth interviews with primarily self-identified gay men who recently received a positive HIV diagnosis (or, as Frank, reported sexual risk behavior in the context of an unknown HIV status) were conducted in 2006 and 2007 in two German cities (Berlin, Munich) by a HIV-positive gay identified man. In order to allow for an open and trustful articulation of highly sensitive, intimate, and potentially stigmatized issues concerning biographical backgrounds, social experiences as gay men in a heteronormative environment, sexual fantasies and practices, the infection with the HI-virus and coping with the disease, a peer interview approach was developed that was based on Holstein’s and Gubrium’s (1995, 2004) conceptualization of the “active interview”. It was aimed at facilitating the creation of interactive communicative spaces in the research encounter in which the interviewee could, for instance, return the questions he had been asked or the interviewer could bring in own experiences, in which both, thus, could engage in the joint production of accounts based on the perception of a shared life world. Although a guideline was used that included important topics and particular questions that should be covered and asked within the interviews, the course of the

interview was merely structured, but complied with the topics the interviewee brought in.

The interview partners were addressed as “experts” and recruited through AIDS service organizations, medical practitioners and clinics specialized on HIV/Aids, gay community magazines and gay online platforms. The selection of the 58 interviewees, who were offered 50 Euro for the interviews, followed the principle of a theoretical sampling in terms of Straussian Grounded Theory methodology (Strauss, 1998).

The interviews, which lasted between 50 and 240 minutes, were transcribed, using a detailed transcription system that paid attention to communicative characteristics such as pauses, accents, stammerings, laughings etc. Different methods of interpretation – open coding according to Grounded Theory methodology, interaction and narration analysis, ethno-hermeneutic interpretative techniques – were applied to the data in order to answer different research questions that came up in the course of the research process (see Langer 2008, 2009; Langer, Drewes & Kuehner 2010; Langer 2013b; for methodological and ethical issues see Kuehner & Langer 2010; Langer 2013a, 2014). In this regard the role of images of masculinity that is subject of this article has emerged as an interesting issue. The findings presented in the next section refer to a psychoanalytically informed psycho-social-analysis (Roseneil, 2006, 2007, 2009).

Psychodynamics of internalized heterosexism in the context of HIV

The presented case vignette has demonstrated basic features of the complex psychosocial dynamics of HIV-related sexual risk behavior of gay men in the context of effective social notions of masculinity that can be seen in many of the other interviews of the study as well. Re-contextualized within the analyses of these interviews three findings are to be outlined in this section.

Firstly, the tension between the authoritative image of masculinity that is determined by heteronormative discourses on the one hand and the gendered self-image that is shaped and threatened by connotations of a non-masculine homosexuality on the other constitutes a decisive issue of gay identity constructions. Masculinity is, as another interviewee noted, “a topic for all gays. [...] I know only few gay men who have kind of an unbroken masculinity” (Simon). Taking up this formulation, homosexuality signifies

a broken – injured, wounded – manhood. The fracture lies in the discrepancy between the socially dominant – and for societies of the Global North that means: heteronormative – notions of masculinity, which are materialized through a variety of socialization processes and constitute a central point of reference for gay identity formations, and the individual experiences of a deeply problematic gendered ‘being a man’. Following Simon’s account he describes himself as “almost envious” to his heterosexual brother who “is married, has two children, and I think he regards himself as good and beautiful and attractive alright. And he is not more beautiful and attractive than I am, I think, and I, I do not have such an unbroken relation to [or rather: relationship with; the German word “Beziehung” that Simon used in the interview connotes both; PCL] my manhood.”

Simon presents two references of his masculine image in this account: the heterosexual marriage and family that suggest as a stable and secure framework for social identity articulations and physical characteristics of beauty and attractiveness that may grant or threaten self-esteem. Markings that can be observed on the body surface consequently play an important role for Simon’s representation of masculinity. In the interview he speaks of a “fitness craze” that he has in order to “look athletic at least or appear like a man” and clothes as obvious forms of gender representations in the public: “Or I wear carpenter pants or a training jacket or whatever. One wants to be perceived as a man.” The given examples are not oriented randomly to externals, but they are those references that make gender visible and interpretable in the everyday social practices. In the sense of “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman 1987) they are the easiest way of demonstrating gender: masculinity as masquerade.

The finding of an idealized patriarchal and heteronormative masculinity performance in the interviews is consistent with recent international research, as mentioned in the introduction (see also Simonsen, Blazina & Watkins, 2000; Halkitis, 2001, Johnson et al., 2008). Such performance focus on body attributes and sexual behavior; the following interview statements illustrate this: “tall, muscular” (Bernd), “little macho-like” (Ben), “three-day beard” (Ulrich, Wolfgang), “masculine appearance, meaty type ”(Dirk), “such a dark type and broad shoulder” (Volker), “my IMAGE what I adore so much, it’s these Turkish macho men who appear

really masculine and male from their very occurrence” (Ralf). The term “hunter” is mentioned several times as well; Frank, for instance, states: “A man is a hunter by nature. And he has to kill the game. That’s what I have realized about me once. And if you do not have that, you feel mean and bad”.

Secondly, a higher sexual risk behavior may therefore be understood as a possible consequence of the internalization of such heteronormative masculinity and its impact on the self-esteem, if the self-image does not match the male ideal. Given the outlined social representations of a heteronormative masculinity a discomfort regarding the perception of one’s own masculinity is manifest in many of the interviews, either in explicit accounts – such as Frank’s – or in implicit non-verbal expressions such as an embarrassed laughter to suggest an ironic distancing from the reported desired images, nevertheless hinting at feelings of inadequacy and a possible deficient self-worth. In this respect Axel sums up somewhat embarrassed: “So I kinda not feel masculine somehow, no idea, so I’m, uh, slightly had always got a complex somehow.” Max also reported that he felt “not very masculine” and that he was “just upset that some people come to me: You’re gay, aren’t you? And I think to myself: Damn! How come?! It’s not marked on my forehead! What’s going on?”

Two strategies of response to the articulated problem of not feeling or not being perceived masculine are presented in the interviews. One strategy the interviewees talk about refers to their attempts to (over-)compensate the perceived lack of masculinity by deliberately staging a socially acknowledged firm masculinity through surface performance (such as clothing or bodybuilding). However, since this strategy is dependent upon the recognition of the other to a high degree and is seen as non-authentic, its production is constantly threatened by failure. As a second remarkable strategy found in the interviews is a clear and vehement and often aggressive distancing from anything that might be interpreted as feminine gay stereotypes. Two interview statements may illustrate this:

“Well, I indeed have a problem with these, this campy gays, [...] Sometimes I just find it a bit disturbing that there are gays in the community that walk around with the feather boa or something during the day, that seems a bit disturbing to me, and that’s always

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something that I think to myself, no, I do not want to belong to them.” (Andreas)

“Speaking generally and frankly: I can’t stand this reaching for the cleavage and broken wrists thing. I find it quite terrible. EVERYONE shall do everything in his own way, but I also can’t stand those wearers of women’s clothes. That I hate them GUTS [the respective German phrase “auf den Tod” includes the word “death” instead of “guts”; PCL]. [...] That DISGUSTS me.” (Robert).

It is a femininity bashing, which runs through a large number of the interviews. The depreciation of an (imagined) femininity communicatively constructs a ‘more masculine’ position that seems to promise a higher degree of social recognition and self-worth in the gay scene as well as in the mainstream society. It refers to an internalized heterosexism, which not only covers a fragile self-image, but contributes to stigmatizing and discriminatory discourses and practices in the gay scene. What remains in many cases, however, is a vague awareness of the fragility of the own image, as individual attributes of the rejected femininity conform to the self-reported behavior of the interviewees.

Hence, sexual risk behavior appears as one possible consequence of a diminished self-esteem regarding to the sense of masculinity of the interviewees. The fact that the risk behavior specifically deals with sexuality may be interpreted against the background of the significance of sexuality for gay men’s gender identity constructions and the search for social recognition through sex (Langer, 2009). Since the social identity of gay men is attached to their sexuality, it is reasonable to suggest that experiences of being rejected social recognition for one’s identity construction are also acted out in the field of sexuality.

Thirdly, the analyses of the interviews hint at a paradoxical desire for the imagined masculinity that is experienced as violent with regard to one’s own psychodynamics. It seems paradoxical that despite far-reaching reflections of these fatal dynamics, nearly no resistance to the outlined masculinity norms seemed to be available in most of the interviews; on the contrary, in many cases a desire for precisely this kind of masculinity and

its actual physical violence is expressed. Again Simon gives a concise description of a quite exemplary scene:

I was at a sex party recently. And there was a guy who was super sexy and manly and attractive. And I've also done something unsafe with him, and I think, if he had not been so attractive and manly, then I probably wouldn't have done that. But that has somehow made me so uncontrollably, I was so intoxicated: Wow, this great guy wants me!

Simon is highly aware of the risk situation and he reflects, as indicated above, the compulsive character of his binding image of masculinity, which he tries to do fulfill through the enactment of appropriate symbols, at least outwardly. Within this evaluation framework the “guy” at the sex party embodies his ideal of masculinity that he can never match in his eyes. Despite his knowledge (and, as expressed later in the interview, his fear) of the risk situation due to the potential health consequences (such as an infection with hepatitis C in particular) he engaged in “something unsafe”. The desire of the other means recognition and results in an increase of self-esteem that can only be described as “intoxication”. The term intoxication, however, indicates not only a dangerous engagement but also the short-term nature of this added value, its illusory character. The temporary participation in the imagined masculinity that requires the other as a mirror of the self goes along with the acceptance of potentially permanent damage. The crucial factor here is the merging of masculinity idea and unprotected sex. Because safer sex has been constituted as an absolute standard of behavior in the gay community as a result of the AIDS pandemic, anonymous unsafe sex signifies a break of a taboo, which needs to be understood in relation to the present homosexual life world that has undergone rapid changes in the last two decades in Germany and many other countries of the Global North. Increasing social acceptance of homosexuality and a “mainstreaming” of the gay community allow only for few ways to gain identity meaning from the self-perception as ‘other’; unsafe sexual behavior is thus a potentially ‘positive’ point of reference of otherness in contrast to a perceived normalized gay life world, a means for staging a projected ‘raw’ masculinity.

Perspectives on gay masculinities beyond heteronormative subjectifications

The previous section has pointed at possible links between the latent internalization of heteronormative images of masculinity and manifest sexual risk behavior, based on the analysis of the 58 interviews of the study. The application of a psychosocial framework to the analysis of empirical material, however, always runs the risk of over-interpretation by either reassuring the premises of the psychoanalytical framework or suggesting latent psychosocial phenomena that may only partially be grounded in the data (Frosh & Emerson, 2005). In this regard the considerations of self-worth issues, for instance, pose only one possible reading of the interviews that need to take into account that it has not been derived from clinical, but research setting. It would therefore be interesting to read this interpretation against other interpretations of the material based on different methods of analysis. The expected criticism of contributing to an ongoing pathologization of gay men (a brief review is given by Meyer, 2003) by these considerations can be countered by pointing out that it is not the interviewees who are subject to pathologization, but it is the heteronormative social order that is addressed as spoiling the social identity formation of gay men in a Goffmanian sense (Goffman, 1963). Therefore, health prevention approaches with regard to HIV and Aids should not only (and may not even primarily) focus on 'risky' practices of gays, but need to fight the stigmatizing discourses and practices of the heteronormative mainstream society (Langer, 2009, Langer et al., 2010).

Two more notes of precaution need to be mentioned. The analysis shows further psychosocial dynamics that led to HIV infection in certain cases; lacks of knowledge about protection, for example, are still an issue, despite the claim of an overwhelming level of preventive knowledge in the general population and among men having sex with men in particular. And the emphasize of dynamics related to guiding images of a heteronormative masculinity is not to suggest that there are not non-discursive breaks in the interviews that are opposed to these fatal dynamics. In this respect three strategies can be identified from the study material. Firstly, some interviewees try to apply different concepts of masculinity that do not refer to any physical characteristics or behavior, but to the definition of values

that are beyond the conventional gender dichotomy. An example for this strategy is presented by Uwe who refers to masculinity “rather abstract” in terms of “silence”: “For me this condition of absolute ease is the realization of masculinity (laughing).” Against the background of his regular stays in a (purely male) monastery in which speaking is strictly forbidden his concept of masculinity is extremely individualized and removed from the usual gender-based rating scheme. The attempts of detaching oneself from a heteronormative masculinity in this kind appear, however, designed defensively and remain still under the spell of which they are to free. Secondly, various forms of a playful and ironic coping with notions of masculinity are thematized in some interviews. In this regard Jan talks about his conscious production and performance of gender and gender roles in the gay scene, in which he plays with the expectations of others to create new scopes of action: “With a baseball cap, when going out, great, yes. Not even my own mother would recognize me this way.” He seems to know exactly how he is perceived: “the straight number one here today”. Jonathan, another interviewee, also describes how he could “perform” a particular “male image”. In her queer approach of a performative gender parody, Judith Butler (1990) has theoretically and programmatically outlined this strategy of dealing with gender norms grounded in the “heterosexual matrix” in such ways. Based on the deconstructivist claim that each repetition always creates deviation, Butler envisage a shift of the power relations inscribed in gender. Following the respective narratives in the interviews, however, this seems to work only situationally in the sexual interaction. It requires a far-reaching reflection on these normative ideas that are at least partially internalized and have solidified as a habit; the scene descriptions in which unprotected sex are reported also suggest that this reflection and irony mode had been turned off as soon as the imagined ideal type had entered the stage: a sexual desire for exactly the image of masculinity that one was to ironize arose.

Thirdly, in very few interviews a search for ‘new’ gender attributions of masculinity was evident that ultimately – and paradoxically – leads to the conscious and intended search for HIV infection. In these interviews the infected body was presented as an object of masculine fascination. The following sequence illustrates the stimulus to consciously move in a risk

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situation and surrender oneself to the violence of the other, a known HIV-positive gay man:

PCL: Do you feel tempted to become a victim?

Tom: (7 second pause) Whether it is the victim, I do not know.
(5 second pause) But maybe being at someone's mercy or this, perhaps victim in the sense that the other determines, so to speak, or has the significant influence.

PCL: What is cool about it?

Tom: Because you gives up yourself completely. For the other you are only an object. Only, so to speak, expressed very scratchy, you are just there for use, for disposal.

Certainly this scene is not generalizable. However, it shows in extremis the significance of HIV in the gay community. Beyond common characteristics of male power an essentially new dimension comes into play through the known HIV infection of Tom's sexual partner: He does not only symbolically have the phallus, it also provides a very real (and yet imaginary, because invisible, time-shifted, merely potential) threat of death. In this sense the HIV positive man embodies the greatest power over the other. Tom surrenders to this power, demoting himself to a purely passive object of desire. Within the sexual game he participates in the imagined masculinity of the other, which in turn is dependent on his willing to surrender. Nevertheless, Tom is highly aware that he breaks the safe sex norm that still prevalent within the gay community with his intentional risk-taking behavior. For him the 'raw' sex that he desires and that the positive man signifies, is a mode of non-alienated gayness that has not been adjusted by social normalization and disciplining mechanisms. It is a sex beyond the fear of AIDS as a collective trauma of the gay community in the Global North that by means of physical violence exceeds the symbolic violence of the dichotomous gender order: in the simultaneity of traditional male and female attributes of power and powerlessness, activity and passivity, normality and subversion, life and death, a desire surfaces that locates the gay subject beyond the social attributions as man or woman.

Therefore, the question remains, how the fatal dynamics presented here on the basis of the interviews (which of course are not representative of 'the gays' in Germany due to the qualitative designs and the focus on HIV-

positive gay men) can be broken in order to allow for an autonomous gender identity construction? If it is fair to say that heteronormative images of masculinity have a significant impact on the health risk behavior of gay men, a promising – but anything but simple – approach will have to establish other images of a ‘successful’ masculinity within the gay community. In this regard Peters (2010) has examined postpunk queer youth culture and its emphasize of an ‘emo gay masculinity’. However, given the increasing integration of gay life into the heterosexual mainstream society and the consequent possibility of social recognition of previously constructed ‘others’, this is not to be expected in the near future. Just because gay lifestyles seem to gain greater acceptance, the probability increases that heteronormative perception and interpretation mechanisms will gain even more validity in the gay community. Thus practicing unsafe Sex (also) signifies a desire for differentiation and resistance, for an added value of an ‘other life’ (see Crossley 2004; Haig 2006; Tomso 2008). Whether the phenomenon of ‘slamming’, recently noticed in parts of the gay scene in major cities like New York, London, Berlin or Barcelona, that refers to injecting party drugs such as crystal meth or mephedrone in excessive sex sessions for days without limits and that goes along with the fetishization of the positive other and a fascination of (self-) annihilation can be interpreted in this sense is a question that needs further research to be answered. However, the imaginary position occupied by the positive body of the infected in parts of the gay scene, is also to be understood as a desperate cry: for a positively constructed and sovereign gay identity beyond a momentous internalized heterosexism.

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Masculinities in Cuba: Description and Analysis of a Case Study from a Gender Perspective

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Abstract

This study aims to deepen our discussion about Cuban men's current perception about hegemonic masculinity, based on an extensive literary review and a survey focusing on 125 males who attend a Mental Health Center in Havana. Using gender as a concept and category to unravel the relations between sexual difference and inequality, the authors present the results of their descriptive and transversal research, designed to address multiple cases, from a qualitative methodological perspective (QMP method) and compare them with other findings, especially from Latin America. The research techniques applied, expose how the patriarchal culture continues imposing a burden on the minds of many Cuban men, while they also exhibit the rise of a new generation which enjoys a less genitalist sexuality, willing to sharing their new outlook and beginning to manifest a liberating and positive distance from machismo.

Keywords: Gender, Masculinity in Cuba, Hegemonic Masculinity, Machismo, Types of masculinities.



Masculinidades en Cuba:

Descripción y Análisis de un Caso de Estudio desde una Perspectiva de Género

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Resumen

Con el objetivo de ahondar sobre la percepción que acerca de la masculinidad hegemónica poseen actualmente los hombres cubanos, luego de una extensa revisión bibliográfica se estudian 125 varones que acuden a un Centro de Salud Mental de La Habana. Haciendo uso del género como concepto y categoría para desentrañar las relaciones de diferencia y desigualdad sexual, las autoras presentan los resultados de su investigación, descriptiva y transversal, con un diseño de casos múltiples y una perspectiva metodológica cualitativa (Método IAP) y los comparan con otros hallazgos, en especial de Latinoamérica. Fueron aplicadas diferentes técnicas de indagación que exponen la carga que la cultura patriarcal sigue aplicando en las mentalidades de muchos hombres cubanos, pero también exhiben a una generación naciente, que disfruta de una sexualidad no tan genitalista, comparte la iniciativa y comienza a manifestar un liberador y positivo desprendimiento del machismo.

Palabras clave: Género, Masculinidad en Cuba, Masculinidad hegemónica, Machismo, Tipos de masculinidades.

“The struggle is not against the male, it is against ignorance”
(Castillo, 1885, p. 67)

We become men and women through a long process of learning which, although it begins at birth, carries with it expectations articulated since pregnancy, through expressions such as: “if it is a girl, I would like her to be like her mother: tender, gentle and intelligent. And if it is a boy, like the father and grandfather: strong, brave, enterprising and seductive”. This demonstrates the social nature of gender and the need to understand how differences related to sexuality are perceived, established and exercised, rather than treating males and females as sexed beings.

In this sense, gender prioritizes practices of what is interpreted as masculine or feminine, and culturally differentiates gender by specific ways of acting and thinking (Hernandez, 2000). This process of socialization teaches people – in this case, men - to respond to the demands of social conceptions and identities, expressing this through their behavior (Rivero, 2008, p.4). Furthermore, it poses an invitation to get back in touch with their childhood history, couple relationships and parental ties, and reflect about their social and cultural characteristics in order to understand the basis of misogyny and male double standards (Garda, 2005).

Hence, all individuals incorporate ways in which they can proceed more or less consistently according to the demands of their group, within a specific timeframe, context and space, showing that we are not dealing with a static construct (Hernández, 2006, p.12), but rather one where change is feasible. On the other hand, this also imposes the challenge of studying both males and females and without excluding either.

A glance at the study of masculinities from an International and Latin-American perspective

Since the 1980s, in the Anglo-Saxon world (USA, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom) the first studies on masculinity under the name of Men's Studies, were initiated. Michael Kimmel (1992, p.130), one of the most prominent authors on this issue, gives visibility to the ideology of masculinity as a condition of male liberation, and points out that: “If men have noticed that we are a gender, it is because women have been pressing

us for a long time to do so”. Meanwhile in 2002, Peter Beattie, PhD in Latin American History, examines various studies dedicated to this issue in Latin America, by discussing Gutman’s work—on men’s behavior in the working class, - Melhuus and Kristinstolen—about masculine gender roles in Latin American countries,—as well as work by Lumsden, Schaefer and Carrier, who focused on the treatment of homosexuality. Beattie concludes by making reference to how these studies provided a new way of thinking to understand dominant social identities and associated behaviors.

The proposed work supports, through examples taken from a qualitative study among Cuban men, the need—already established by other authors—to disseminate the differentiation and independence of masculinity in its various constructs, visualizing them by virtue of pre-existing socially defined differences (Figueroa, 2008, 2009; González & Fernández, 2010; González & Fernández, 2014).

Our proposal stems from a hegemonic definition that recognizes individual and collective identities in our continent (Cf Kaufman, 1994; Kimmel, 1994; Connell, 1995; Parrini, 2000, p.4). This model contemplates a series of mandates acknowledged in professional practice in association with social constructions: “being a man means being a provider, heterosexual, active, fearless, resolves conflict by means of violence, does not bow down, and maintains control, power and competence.” Such mandates legitimize the forming of dominant and culturally authorized groups with a given social order. Thus, male identity is built upon a differentiation from the feminine, as a reaction to, rather than as a result of, a process of identification. Masculine identity revolves around what characterizes patriarchal culture, with a predominance of power in economic, political and social arenas, in which the feminine is of a “lower nature”. The child learns to “be different” from the person with whom he has the closest contact: his mother (Badinter, 1993; Gilmore, 1994; Menjivar, 2004), or as is commonly assumed, he resists everything that is deemed feminine in order to mark a boundary that leaves homosexuality on the opposite side. This is because “hegemonic masculinity by definition, establishes the existence of a male otherness that does not meet the expectations and patterns required for being ‘male’ in a given socio-cultural and spatial context. [Therefore], power relationships not only involve looking toward another gender, but also toward intra-gender relationships,

that establish differential patterns” (Gonzalez & Macari, 2011, p. 81). Ultimately, masculinity would seem to be a reward which must be fought for.

Since all cultures develop patterns and meanings that define men and women’s actions (Rocha & Díaz-Loving, 2005), communities create their own exclusive image through cultural sanctions, rituals or tests of skill and strength (Riso, 1998; Meler, 2000; Menjívar, 2004). In Cuba, for example, the initiation process of men’s sex lives begins with masturbation, as well as frequent joking, that reaffirms their masculinity through seductive behavior, all of which tends to peak if they happen to be involved with multiple partners (Alvarez, 2002).

At the same time, the father figure is characterized by parameters such as law, authority and distance, which determine what the Canadian psychologist Corneau (1989) called “missing father,” a more complete concept than the one commonly used (“absent father”). The former, indicates that the father is physically present yet unable to provide the emotional and bodily contact that accompanies the lack of parental affection in the construction of the masculine identity in men in general (Corneau, 1991) and the associated physical distance, inexpressiveness and emotional restriction.

This does not exclude those men who have defied their social groups of reference by undertaking activities that are commonly carried out by women in the domestic sphere per se, such as child rearing, in which case they are frequently the object of repression by their peers. Encounters between men in everyday life tend to be driven by power, competitiveness and potential conflict; they can be partners, collaborators, be loyal and affectionate, but always under the command of control. This leads to what Connell (1997, p.39-42) called: “the four types of masculinity”, which from his perspective, does not refer to gender identities, but rather to historically developed behavior paradigms. These typologies “coexist with the hegemonic model, as a prototype of male behavior that dominates the power relations in the gender system and from which the rest of the types of masculinities are established and positioned” (quoted by Monzón, 2012, p.2).

Differences begin to be revealed between the identity-forming processes of men that involve multiple power relations of gender, which means that

there are different ways of being men. Connell (1997, p.39) adds the subordinate masculinity (where the most evident is the gay type of masculinity, although it is not the only one; it also includes heterosexuals who are expelled from the circle of legitimacy when there exists some symbolic confusion associated to femininity), the complicit masculinity (with related elements that include those who, associated with the hegemonic model, do not fit into the hegemonic masculinity type and their complicity resides in the way in which they carry out the family division of labor without the tensions or risks of occupying the front lines of the patriarchy). There is also the marginalized masculinity, which expresses “those relationships between masculinities in dominant and subordinate classes or in ethnic groups.” The marginalized-authoritative correspondence can also exist between subordinate masculinities, given that it is always relative to the dominant group’s authorization (Connell, 1997, p.42).

This degree of precision is important, because the concept of hegemonic masculinity overshadows the other forms of masculinity that coexist in everyday life without belonging to the hegemonic-subordinate criteria. In this sense, we must refer to machismo (term which coins its magnification as the center of power and places the male-man at its core) which, besides being a universal trend, is rooted in the Latin American continent. In the case of Cuba, since the 19th century, machismo is instilled from childhood as something natural, not only in males, but even in women who have attempted to transgress the male role, and are singled out as “tomboys”, perceived as someone who usurps something that should only belong to the male (Gonzalez, 2009, p.3).

However, historically this also implies great social pressure on males, preventing them from yielding to pain, asking for help under any circumstance, pressuring them to use alcohol, making it unacceptable for them to cry and instead encouraging them to be violent and aggressive whenever possible (Muñón, 2013, p.1). By not being able to express their feelings and emotions freely, men have also been deprived of fully enjoying their children’s affection, rendering them prone to distancing themselves from vital spaces such as the family (Rivero, 2005; Quaresma, Ulloa & Sperling, 2013). As it was well raised by Petersen (2003, p.56-57), it is necessary to overcome the essentialist and dichotomous perspectives that

influence the definition of the masculine in only one direction, reflect on the use of categories and, where necessary, rethink their strategic value.

What has happened in Cuba?

In interpersonal relationships established between Cuban males, the authors have observed discomfort in their clinical practice, due to reasoning process as those described in these models. In this regard, it is interesting to remember that this nation's history testifies to facts and characters where “manliness” is constantly reaffirmed by killing, fearlessness and by standing out due to their bellicose bravery. An example of this is the feat of Major Ignacio Agramonte who with a group of mambi volunteers rescued Manuel Sanguily with machete blows against a Spanish column that was carrying rifles; and the mambi General, Antonio Maceo, who expressed that “freedom is not something to be begged for, it must be conquered with the blade of the machete.” As González (2004, p.1) ratified: “In Cuba, wars have been one of the main sources for determining the masculinity of men [...]. One example would suffice to illustrate this in Cuba's history with José Martí, one of the main organizers of the 1895 war, a brilliant [intellectual] genius, who was very much questioned for his poor military skills and his non-participation in the battle field”. Combativeness, aggressiveness, strength, power, control, competition and authority are also reinforced as values that characterize great men.

Studies of masculinity on the island begin to take shape during the second half of the 1990s. Pioneers in this field were: Arés (1996) research addressed the cost of being male by using the category “expropriations of masculinity;” Rivero Pino (1998, 2000) assessed the social representations of the parental role and its psychological and socio-political implications; Álvarez (2002) conducted a socio-cultural exploration of masculinity as well as its transformations in relation to transsexual individuals; and González (2002) took up sociologist Luis Robledo's concept of masculinity as a product of almost one hundred years of history of hegemonic masculinity as a synonym for machismo, linked with concepts of manhood and virility “validated in Cuba as a form of culture [that], despite being subjected to much criticism in the last two decades, seems to enjoy deep roots in different social groups, both on the island and in the Cuban

diaspora” (González, 2004, p.1). Finally, Díaz (2012a, 2012b) raises the issue in the mass media, highlighting the importance of couples sharing the initiative and with regard to assuming more caring responsibilities of children during the postnatal period.

Another important distinction can be appreciated in the screening of the film “Strawberry and Chocolate” (1993) by directors Gutiérrez Alea and Carlos Tabío, which questions one of the most exclusive masculinities: that of homosexuals, given that homophobia persists in our society and, like the machismo, is internalized in our educational representations.

With the arrival of the new millennium there appear workshops that aim to promote the debate on this content, unpublished even at the social level, such as Masculinities and violence in young people (2002) by the Federation of Cuban women; Masculinities and the culture of peace (2000-2004) and those carried out by the National Centre for Sex Education (Cenesex by its Spanish initials), which focus on the analysis of violence as the basis of power relations between genders, male vulnerability to pain, sexuality and parenthood (Álvarez, 2002). In 2009 the scientific section “Masculinities” is formalized in the framework of the Multidisciplinary Cuban Society for the Study of Sexuality (Socumes by its Spanish initials), which belongs to the Academy of Sciences of Cuba. Integrated by professionals from different areas of knowledge and regions of the country, it has among its objectives to develop research projects on the issue of masculinity and its implications in Cuban reality, to promote the publication and dissemination of results that foster human development with a focus on gender and, to help train human resources regarding “masculinities” (Rivero, 2008).

In this unequal universe in constant evolution, not only is this a moment of transition, but one of true crisis (Hernández, 2000). In this context it is reasonable to make reference to Thompson when he says: “masculinity [...] might not exist. Masculinity as something monolithic (manliness) does not exist: there are only masculinities, many ways of being a man” (Thompson, 1993, p.11). So, in addition to the predominant model, “there are as many male ways to fail, as male forms of success” (Thompson, 1993, p.12).

Our Intervention Experience: From the Hegemonic Model to the New Masculinities

Even though the social changes brought by the Cuban revolution have attempted to deconstruct different stereotypes, and even when much of the work done has been aimed at adjusting the legal system against social exclusion, the prevailing concept is so ingrained, that many people, especially males, are reluctant to letting go, because they feel that it would make them lose control. Still, ever-increasing conflicts occur and a lack of knowledge about how to proceed persists, which explains that a high percentage of men have begun going to counseling with discomforts associated with their interrelationships. This very circumstance was the motivational basis of this work, whose aim was to study the perception of hegemonic masculinity in a group of men who attended a Havana Mental Health Center.

Methodology

Study group

Intentional sample composed of 125 Cuban men from a construction company of Havana, of ages between 21 and 60 years and a minimum education of 12th grade, during the period from January 2011 to January 2012.

Tools and techniques

1) The investigation

Through a semi-structured interview developed by the specialists of the study, data was collected for the preparation of clinical psychiatric histories, which included: age, marital status and educational level, a description of the subject's upbringing, relationships with both parents, affections, demands, distribution of domestic tasks, school history, educational achievement and sexist education. It also includes relationships with peers and among women, genital manifestations, sexual games, first ejaculatory experiences during adolescence, description of physical development, history of couple relationships (number of stable and unstable partners,

reasons for separation, duration of parallel relationships), among other aspects.

2) Group dynamics

- Presentation techniques: Participants wrote down their personal information, expressed their reason for attending, and listed their expectations as a result of this treatment.
- SWOT: On a flip chart everyone wrote the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats they face as males. In teams, they drew a man's figure and described it, stating what a male should be like.
- Chipping away at ideas: Each participant expressed his understanding of sexuality, sex, gender, and was asked to provide different denominations for the penis, its different functions in various countries and other related contents. These concepts were then defined among the group.
- Brain storm: Definitions were discussed and written on a blackboard debating each one as a group.
- Movie debate: The documentary "Sex-pleasure in Life" (spoken in Spanish) was projected for educational purposes allowing patients to identify different phases of female and male genital responses and reflect on myths related to these topics, and at the end, the group's impressions were discussed. The Cuban Cenesex documentary "Teresa's Portrait", about erotic massages between couples and the American movie "Kramer vs Kramer" were also projected and viewed by the group.
- Interactive conferences: Here, each of the issues was addressed in depth, allowing for discussion when participants so desired.
- Games about Myths and Beliefs: Cards expressing various myths and beliefs were distributed. Each participant had to read, discuss and analyze them with the group. The coordinator intervened with an explanation of masculinities as the debate for each card concluded.
- Identification of violence: The group was asked to consider a problem situation from their own experience that related to violence as well as its treatment by different institutions. Narrated cases were discussed.
- The Neighbor's House: The activity consisted of a dramatization technique in which conflicts between couples were worked out from the male perspective, emphasizing their preferences, virtues and defects.

3) Participant observation

The main observer remained active in the group in order to allow him to understand, by direct interaction, the meaning of each story and interpret the implicit speech symbols of each intervention, not only by what was expressed verbally, but also from the expression of the emotions, gestures and silences, all of which was recorded for later analysis of content of each work session.

Methodological perspective: Qualitative, designed for multiple cases. Type of research: descriptive and transversal. From a gender perspective, and using a methodology which supports greater openness for qualitative studies, addressing the broad complexity of this social construction.

Hence the use of Participatory Action-Research (PAR), which facilitated comprehension of the meaning and interpretation of what happened with each patient. This paradigm is radically different from the traditional social research in both methodological and epistemological terms, because it addresses the need to learn codes that are being expressed in the field by the participants in the study. Its application follows a spiral model of successive cycles, including diagnosis, planning, action, observation, and reflection-evaluation. So the goal is not only to identify the discomforts, experiences and feelings of the men as a means of exploration (the results of which are presented in this article), but also as a way to instill change by exposing their needs and hidden feelings through this experience (expressed in their personal stories), allowing them to understand each other as individuals, subject to social mandates that genuinely take over (Garda, 2004, 2007). In this regard, adopting a gender perspective offers the necessary tools to describe and analyze the power relations of men in the construction of their male identity, as well as achieving a reconsideration of the social learning it implies.

Procedure

The study began with the implementation of a semi-structured interview with each patient, based on informed consent. There were five sessions of four hours for each group, using participatory group techniques to promote reflection, analysis and dialogue. A total of 12 sessions were conducted. This helped maintain the interest of participants who were studying and

learning about their own experiences, allowing individual and collective participation and promoting respect for others' views. Each group was composed of 10 men. Different teaching formats were used: audiovisual media (videos, power point presentations), pencils, paper, music equipment, dramatizations, and other PAR techniques.

Each session began with reflections on the previous meetings and discussions of practical activities, thus creating a climate of awareness and commitment to the issue. The first session was designed for group integration, establishing objectives, expectations and a therapeutic contract, defining the contents and the methodology. Then the thematic plan was explained and, based on the group's reflections, the Coordinator integrated and elaborated the conclusions. At the end of each session an evaluation was conducted as summarized below.

Operational description of the sessions

During the first session a diagnostic survey was applied to identify knowledge about the topics. Participants were asked to add their expectations. Other forms of evaluation included rapporteurs during the workshops and attendance record and participatory techniques. The conceptual framework was centered on sexuality (including issues about sexually transmitted diseases, the use of the condoms and associated myths) as well as gender and the approximation to masculinities. Subsequently the concepts of violence, body image, self-esteem, self-care and couple situations in the current context were discussed. Evaluation was based on collecting the main ideas contributed by the group and encouraging communication about criteria and opinions shared throughout.

The second session was directed to the approximation to the masculinities. It included, among other topics, a reflection on traditional models, beliefs, patterns that govern male behavior, the cult of the "phallus" and current trends.

In the third session, once the new concepts, ideas and beliefs discussed had been reinforced, patients were asked to identify the definitions associated with gender and abuse in their respective relationships, as well as their social and individual costs. From a gender perspective, participants analyzed the barriers associated with the persistence of violence in different

social spheres, sexual rights as a containment framework for violence against males and they evaluated risks and damages inflicted upon women, other men and upon themselves. The aim is to internalize the importance of achieving equity (respect of intrinsic differences) and equal personal and social rights and opportunities, both for men and women throughout life and in all of its contexts. As a conclusion, each member was asked to express in a single phrase, how this activity was useful to them.

The fourth session addressed body image and self-worth issues. It provided tools to help reevaluate the body, starting with a warm-up activity involving having participants affectionately touch several of their own body parts (“do you know what a kiss is?” and “do you know what a hug is?”). Self-care and self-esteem techniques were taught, and participants were guided through breathing, concentration, hatha yoga, individual and couples massage as well as relaxation exercises. Visual images of erotic couples massage were projected on a screen for the purpose of stimulating the use of body therapies and encouraging participants to be affectionate partners, with more intimate and satisfying sexual relations, while at the same time helping them to reduce tensions and develop values such as privacy and communication. The session ended with an evaluation technique: PNI (highlighting the Positive, Negative, and the Interesting aspects of the session).

The theme of the fifth session was *The Couple in Today’s Context*, designed to provide tools and updated knowledge about the main conflicts that affect couples. The session was approached as a space for personal growth in relation to, and accepting responsibility for a real commitment in their individual relationships, using participatory techniques and knowledge obtained in previous sessions. At the end of the session, participants evaluated the psycho-dramatic technique and its effects on them, after having watched the film *Kramer vs. Kramer*.

The sixth session was dedicated to the assessment, unification and closure of the workshop. The purpose was to integrate all of the issues considered, learn about how the group felt during the different activities and assess their level of comprehension about the issues addressed. The methodology used to learn about the accomplishments and results of the workshop served to identify participants’ level and criteria of appreciation regarding group work, as well as any changes that might have been

produced in the participants as a result of the program. The group was asked to form teams and answer the question what appealed to you the most? while specifying the intervention strategies, including the issues covered during the various sessions. The Coordinator acted as moderator and at the end made observations and integrated the responses with the knowledge provided during the workshop. After a brain storming session, the program culminated with a final survey and a recreational activity.

Analysis of results

In all the techniques used, particularly the Games about Myths and Beliefs, it became evident how the power, domination, competition and control are essential to hegemonic masculinity. Vulnerability, feelings and emotions in men are signs of femininity and should be avoided, as well as intimacy with other men, because it either makes them vulnerable or puts them at a disadvantage in terms of the competition over women, or it might imply effeminacy and homosexuality. Self-control, control over others and their environment, are essential to make men feel safe. A man who asks for help or is leaning on others, shows signs of weakness and incompetence. Men's rational and logical thinking is the higher form of intelligence to face problems.

Various traditional patterns of hegemonic masculinity still survive, and the ones that stand out amongst them with greater force are the sexual schemes focused on performance: "In a relationship, the man is the one who has the resources", "the man knows everything and should address the situation", "I like women who are thin, delicate, passive and good mothers for my home", "and on the streets, I will look for those who are sexually aggressive", "a man is always ready to have sex", "women like us to be unfaithful because it shows that we are good lovers and that we are the stronger sex", "I am the one who brings money, food, support and who resolves whatever needs I and my children have", "the most important thing is penetration; never mind the fondling", "in sex, what matters is performance", "a large penis is important for a woman's gratification and pleasure", "the more bizarre the sexual positions, the more pleasurable sex is". All of this coincides with the previous observations made by Dr. Arrondo (2006, p.299).

Therefore, success with women is associated with their subordination in the relationship, sexuality being the principal means to test masculinity. But despite this, men do not assume the need to have knowledge about the subject which, in fact, tends to be poor. It was evident that myths and prejudices persist and are transmitted from generation to generation, limiting their enjoyment and sexual surrender and preventing them from being independent in their enjoyment according to their own needs: “a large penis gives a man more sexual power than a small penis”, “masturbation is only for adolescent males”, “good sex requires orgasm”, “orgasm should be simultaneous to achieve full sexual enjoyment”, “asexually functional man has an erection whenever he sees a woman”, “having power and control is essential to feeling manly”. Men rival and compete constantly: “I am better than him, since I can have more partners, and I also have sex several times a night”, “I have enough money to make my wife and my lovers happy”.

All of this contributes to lessen the enjoyment of affection when it comes to giving and receiving: “Don’t touch me, no kissing between us”, “I won’t have any man give me a massage”, “After finishing and ejaculating several times, I sleep and prepare for the next round”, “Demonstrations of affection in men are signs of femininity, and should be avoided”. In addition, these men present completely reckless behaviors regarding Sexually Transmitted Disease/HIV, since they do not accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions, and therefore do not take precautions for safe sex. They discard the use of contraceptive methods and more so, the use of condoms: “Condom? Preservative? No condom for me, women are responsible for taking care of themselves”.

Men’s masculinity is not only confirmed through sex. They must also feel powerful and economically successful in order to maintain high self-esteem (Cf [Fernández, 2001, p.154-155](#)). Therefore, professional and work related triumphs are indicators of masculinity, and self-esteem is based on achievements in the financial and working spheres. The males see themselves as providers, as the axis in a relationship, with the resulting costs. And in those situations in which the woman is the one playing this role, their testimonies confirm how this leads men to question their manhood and feel the need to seek advice in a state of diminished self-esteem and often, depression: “I’m not worthy; I’m a piece of shit, because she’s supporting me”. Society justifies these costs at any price, given that

financial success and leadership are perceived as social virtues of public life and that is, undoubtedly, considered to be a masculine domain, par excellence.

In the group subjected to this study there is a tendency to justify what it means to be male, particularly regarding the demands of: sexuality, erotic sex practices, the body, everyday life, power, force, violence and success associated with victory over another. Using concrete examples described in the sessions, this was expressed in phrases such as: “Men don't cry or complain”, “a man must take an active role in sexual relationships”, “I am seductive and have several women at the same time”, “I'm an athletic guy”, “no one is better than me”, “I solve whatever problems come my way”, “I decide what happens, because I'm the one who has the money”.

Reflections revolve around the inequities in power relations that were instilled as children and then reinforced by parents and the patriarchal culture: “That's how we are, period”, “We don't know any other way of being males and least of all, after all these years”, “I'd like to be different, but how would I be? And what would others think of me, if I were?”, “We have to struggle to eliminate those humiliations”, “We'd like to face reality and look at things differently”. They confront each other and vie with one another; they cannot allow themselves to have weaknesses. Even among friends they cannot display any degree of vulnerability. Affective manifestations such as hugging and kissing are not frequent, and corporal distance is observed even with their children: “As his father, I may hold his hand, but, no kissing”. Anything associated with situations that make them seem fragile must be avoided. In their subjectivity, there are still thoughts associated with different patterns of socialization, conditioning the norms of masculinity and influencing their behavior: “I was taught to be like this since I was in my mother's belly, and then my parents, my grandparents and even my teachers, how can I possibly change that?” Different cultural models that associate everything with masculinity and validate the use of violence in the face of conflict resolution are persistent.

Other enduring trends, formerly described by Arrondo (2006), include those in which macho men believe that today's ills are a result of women having gained so much ground due to men's lack of aggressive vigilance; or they are convinced that they have ceded ground, and therefore remain trapped in their eternal commitment as gifted males who dominate the

world. Another (non-minority) group, has taken on the responsibility of recovering the decadent essence of masculinity by refusing to be affectionate or faithful, or to forsake what they consider their innate initiative: “I do not clean, wash, or make my bed, I’m unique”, “women don’t understand how the male hormone works”, “those surges of hormones compel us to act manly all the time”, “always on top, ejaculate, and take off”.

However, the so-called “new men” were also discovered as a hopeful dawning, in almost half of the study subjects under 35 years of age. These men’s attributes and behaviors did not respond to the traditional model: “we like loving ourselves and being loved”, “we like to get to know our partner and have her know us”, “we like sharing the initiative”, “we respect women”; “we avoid risks: we do not drink and drive, we drive cautiously, open the door carefully, wear a seatbelt, avoid using the cell phone in the car while driving”, “we talk to our partner”, “we use condoms”, “we seek spirituality”, “we listen to our body”, “we carry out artistic activities, exploration and enjoy nature”.

Discussion

In the sample of Cuban men explored in this case study, and comparing other authors’ findings, we encountered that:

1. Traditional models of hegemonic masculinity continue to appear reflected in anti-social patterns, unequal power relations and negative attributes such as violence, repressed emotions and exposure to risks, coinciding with previous traits reported by González (2009), Serrano (2012), as well as by Quaresma & Ulloa (2013) in their research in different regions of Cuba. Myths, taboos and prejudices that influence behavior are observed and configured around the legitimization and disapproval of the body and related practices.

2. This pattern coincides with the observations in other Latin American societies, as described by Rocha-Sánchez & Díaz-Loving (2005) in Mexico, noting that, even though opportunities for women in many areas are changing with respect to men, the stereotyped vision appears not to be changing at the same speed as the social transformations. Meanwhile, in

Brazil, Nascimento & Segundo (2011, p.27) found that at present, housing and child care continue to be considered a priority job for women, who should “take care of their home and cook for the family,” while decision-making in the home continues to be, at least in half of the sample, the man’s prerogative, as the one “who should have the last word”.

3. In addition, the study highlighted how Cubans displayed restrictive conditioning and gaps in knowledge regarding sexuality issues, despite the fact that sexual education campaigns have been sponsored for many years throughout the country. Despite the feasibility of accessing contraception at a very low cost, Cubans have not yet found the proper means of communication to convey the relevance of adopting this practice, behaving irresponsibly against the risk of pregnancy and the transmission of STDs and HIV. This is consistent with what has happened in other countries such as Mexico (Cf Figueroa, 2000) and Argentina, where most of the men claimed, beyond any doubt, that they had greater sexual desire-need than women, although their justifications varied according to socioeconomic levels of the interviewees (Manzelli, 2006). Even when this situation was mirrored in the study conducted in Brazil, here at least, the interviewees recognized the importance of learning about their partner’s sexual preferences (Nascimento & Segundo, 2011).

4. Difficulties in developing a positive self-image that support their self-esteem were noted, as well as an inability to feel and express their affections: “I’m not feeling what I used to feel,” “I don’t feel macho enough”, “I can’t satisfy her like I did before”, “I’m worthless”, “I can’t love her as I did before”.

5. At the same time, there appear to be fractures in the traditional generic constructions of the Cuban male which reveal the presence of other masculinities beyond the hegemonic model and which respond to the huge questions that males have before them, in relation to things such as: an adequate bond with women, and defending significant personal and social victories without conflict of identification, among others. The presence of these positive models of masculinity was identified mainly among men less than 36 years of age, and brings hope of renewed values in the younger generations. The emergence of groups of young men who are finding new meanings within their daily lives regarding hegemonic masculinity and power represent coincides with what Doull, Oliffe, Knight & Shoveller

(2013, p.342) recently reported in Canada, arguing that the new generation is re-shaping the characteristics of ideal masculinity and incorporating characteristics that are closer to their own life experiences (equality and emotionality).

6. This new model is also consistent with findings by Dr. Figueroa in certain regions of Mexico in 2011, with respect to some men's engagement in activities formerly carried out by women in their role as caregivers (showing a radical change in their relationship as parents and couples) and in their personal and professional expectations, which, according to Figueroa, brings us closer to gradual changes that are already emerging (albeit slowly) in male identity.

7. We also find groups that were subjected to social pressure wielded upon them (and which they placed upon themselves), in order to belong and gain acceptance as well as social approval. The ways of being men, alert us regarding many men's impossibility of enjoyment according to their own needs. This is consistent with Ibarra's study on masculinities in Uruguay, who found that, in the face of emotional depression and frustrating situations, males felt that nobody could help them or that they could not ask for help, due to the omnipotence that characterized them as men (Ibarra, 2011, p.40).

Conclusions and recommendations

Groups of men who have begun to let go of the inherited machismo and are considering that it no longer represents them, are already being detected, not only in some isolated countries but they flourish in Cuba as well. They are trying to enjoy a new male sexuality beyond the fears and doubts, the traumas and impositions, the inhibitions and loneliness, of having to "comply" with violence, exploitation, silence and pretense. And, since we recognize that it is a long-term process which involves social transformations and re-learning, education emerges as a necessary tool to modify these inadequate criteria in both sexes from an early age, and build new ways of seeing and enjoying sexuality from the male perspective. This process of adopting new perspectives could lead to transforming outdated approaches in exchange for new and healthier ones on behalf of both men and women. Therefore, the so-called new men are groups of men who have

benefited from a sexual education that helps them abandon rigid positions and superficial emotional arguments which simplify the binary “are you male or not”, to achieve understanding and respond to their partner’s affection conquering equity, affection, non-violence, participation, negotiation and mental health.

In this regard, it becomes increasingly important to make sure that people who address these issues (in this case, in Cuba) are equipped with the essential knowledge and methodological skills for carrying it out with utmost professionalism and conviction that women and men are not enemies. Both have equal duties and rights within the society, among which are, the enjoyment of healthy, enriching lives, far from violence and disruption, and in the case of males, the creation of a new identity for themselves as men, that prevents them from continuing to feel like the aggressors or the aggrieved.

As it was well pointed out by Suárez, J.C. (2006, p.12), “despite living in a sexist culture that favors power of the male over the female, these stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, which constitute divisive patterns or paradigms, negatively affect both genders because they prevent discovery, development or expression of human qualities and values, without distinction of sex”. Ultimately, educating better human beings constitutes one of the fundamental strategic objectives of our society.

Notes

¹ Phrase taken from Aurelia Castillo, one of the leading edge feminists in Cuba, from a newspaper editorial of *El Fígaro*, on February 24, 1885 (67).

² The same happens to women and even between men and women within their own sex, (Cf Rivero 2008, p.4). In fact, as it has been expressed by Threadgold y Cranny-Francis (1990), Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994), and later highlighted by Petersen en el 2003 (58), the specific historical and social constructs of masculinity cannot be dissociated from those of femininity, making it difficult to speak about masculinity without somehow imposing a binary nature to the concept of gender.

³ In this sense, most males disregard the meaning of gender, seen as the building of manhood with its different variables (race, class, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and age) and they focus exclusively on the biological sex as the factor that imposes the expected behavior of the “human male”.

⁴ Such as Kaufman (1994); Gilmore (1994); Seidler (2000); Badinter (1993); Connell (1995); Gutmann (1997); Fuller (1997, 1998) and Viveros (1998), quoted by Jociles (2001).

⁵ Who supports the debate from a gender perspective based on feminist studies.

⁶ Antoinette Fouque, the distinguished feminist, hypothesized that, what is really at the bottom of misogyny is envy, not because of what women are, but because of what they do: their capacity to procreate. (Cf Fouque, 2008, p.194; Fernández, 2011, p.270).

⁷ Meanwhile, the Cuban Section of Masculinities (Cf Rivero, 2010) decided to denominate them operationally as traditional, in transition and ideal model of masculinity, as historical forms that can co-exist in time.

⁸ Where complexities and conflicts experienced with other men, due to this cultural unified masculinity, are ignored (Coles, 2009, p.30).

⁹ Described as the offensive attitudes and behaviors that discriminate and devalue women by considering them inferior with respect to men, in the the Royal Spanish Academy Dictionary (2011), which adds that this discrimination extends to both homosexual men and others who exhibit any trait associated with femininity.[links]

¹⁰ Gutmann, in 1997, describes his perception about this term in México, and in 2002 Beattie analyses and exemplifies how masculinity and machismo are complex and malleable concepts which invite further thought and reinterpretation of individuals and groups, highlighting their connection with gender identity. (Beattie, 2002, p.303).

¹¹ Considered a great example of masculinity, to the point of being the reason for coining the popular phrase, “he has more balls than Antonio Maceo”.

¹² It is true that homophobia has overcome the shameful Military Units for Aid to Production (Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción (UMAP)) which existed from 1965 to 1967, which various authors —such as Lumsden (1996) quoted by Beattie (2002, p.306)—, underscore when describing the treatment of homosexuals during this period in Cuba, a program about which it must be added, was the object of protests by the National Union of Cuban Writers and Artists (Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba), as well as by important international allies of the Revolution (Cf Cardenal, 1972; Hillson, 2001).

¹³ As expressed by Garda (2004).

¹⁴ *This change could happen due to the fact that people’s behaviors, motivations and knowledge will be more in line with their own self-definition than with their biological sex*, as Rocha observed in his work during 2004 and 2009. Or as Arrondo (2006, p.310) pointed out, because “this group has assumed, simultaneously with women’s liberation, the need of its own transformations; the urgency to liberate themselves at the same time as their traveling companions”.

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Phil's Story. An Ethnographic Drama Relating one Man's Experience of Australian Workplace Professional Age Discrimination

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Phil's Story. An Ethnographic Drama Relating one Man's Experience of Australian Workplace Professional Age Discrimination

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Abstract

Phil's story is based on one respondent's interview which is embedded within my autoethnographic PhD thesis on Australian workplace age-discrimination. In using ethnographic convention to amplify this real-life drama, the paper uses first-person voice to extract and highlight the damage that workplace age discrimination is doing to the older professional Australian man. The paper focuses on 'Phil', a 58 year old indigenous Australian, former high level Government employee whose high-flying executive career is traumatically cut short. The downward spiral of his life resulted in him becoming just another run-of-the-mill contract worker. This story relates Phil's anguish, shock, and disbelief at the treatment he received when he turned 50 and was made excess to current work requirements. His story is compelling and his voice essential to bring cognizance to the narrative of this ever present real-life workplace tragedy that has the potential to affect all Australians and all world inhabitants.

Keywords: Autoethnography, ethics, discrimination



La Historia de Phil. Un Relato Etnográfico sobre la Experiencia de Discriminación por Edad de un Trabajador Australiano

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Resumen

La historia de Phil se basa en las respuestas de un entrevistado que se articula en el marco de mi tesis doctoral que tiene un carácter autoetnográfico y que se concreta en un puesto de trabajo de Australia donde se manifestó una situación de discriminación por razón de edad. Usando el planteamiento etnográfico para ampliar esta situación en la vida real, el artículo utiliza la primera persona para subrayar el daño que está haciendo la discriminación por edad a los hombres trabajadores australianos con edad avanzada. El artículo se centra en Phil, un hombre indígena australiano de 58 años, antiguo trabajador de alta cualificación del Gobierno cuya trayectoria ejecutiva de éxito ha sido traumáticamente cortada. Este espiral descendente en su vida le supuso convertirse en un trabajador con un contrato precario. Esta historia relata la angustia, el shock y la incredulidad de Phil ante el tratamiento que recibió cuando cumplió 50 años y empezó a ver los excesos laborales que se cometían con él. Su historia es convincente y su voz esencial para dar a conocer la narrativa de esta tragedia real en el ámbito laboral que puede afectar a todos los australianos y todos los habitantes del mundo.

Palabras clave: Autoetnografía, ética, discriminación



Before leading into Phil's story, I will relate why I undertook my PhD research. My study was partly born out of my own frustration at not being able to locate work at any level commensurate with my qualifications, skills and experience and I perceived entrenched societal discrimination against the aged. My subsequent research presented me with the opportunity to interview Phil, an indigenous, former high ranking Australian government department executive. Phil related his story in my Brisbane hotel room and during the course of the interview, his voice cracked; he covered his face and fought back his tears.

Phil's story traces five-and-a-half years of his recent employment history. It started when in 2004 his government department was disbanded and reconvened under the umbrella of another government department. This new department threw open all the positions within his Indigenous Policy Division, declaring it a necessary policy to formally fill and reallocate the positions. Phil was told he needed only to reapply and that his re-employment was merely a formality. Shock, anger and disbelief hit "like a brick" when Phil was advised that other "younger applicants" were better skilled and better qualified and that as he was close to retirement he was no longer required and should accept a voluntary redundancy package.

Phil's work and financial future were seriously in jeopardy and his domestic life soon followed and flew into turmoil. His ego and self-esteem were destroyed and his ability to cope severely impeded. A subsequent marriage breakup, interstate move, unsuccessful suicide attempt and on-going counselling brought Phil to a position where he has needed to make many life re-evaluations and re-adjustments.

Introduction

This paper is essentially an analysis of an ethnographic narrative on the damaging effects of age-discrimination on both the individual and the family. It draws on both older research, which has stood the test of time, and contemporary studies which have duplicated and replicated the earlier work. This method broadens the scope of the study and thereby indicates that this is not just a contemporary issue but an issue which has attracted research attention over many years (Ozdowski 2002; Hassell and Perrewew

1993; Ryan in Raine, 2012). What is quite new and certainly under-utilised in relation to the age phenomenon, is the ethnographic research methodology, a relatively modern approach specific to narrative research (Atkinson, Coffey & Delamont, 2003; Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998; Chang, 2008; Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Phil's story is full of emotion and pain and demonstrates the case of a man at the top of his game and the height of his career who is suddenly propelled down the spiral of life when suddenly confronted with what appears to be age-discrimination. This paper looks at the male ego and the many associated aspects of the trauma, depression and loss of self-esteem that can occur in job loss with older Australian men and then looks at both the theoretical and real-life aspects of the impact on family.

The employment role

Meaningful and valued employment is important to the very being of man. It reflects his position in life, his manhood, brotherhood and worldly status and incorporates his values, psyche and self-esteem. To rationalise the importance of employment and the part employment plays on the psyche and self-identity of man, Peretti, Butcher and Cherry (1986) claimed that meaningful employment is essential for the welfare and well-being of the individual. They state that personal identity, self-image, and integrity are inextricably associated with a man's occupational role. In citing Berg (1979) they state that by virtue of playing these roles, people adopt the norms, values, means, and ends of such roles and through work develop a work personality relating to cognitions, motivations, affect and behaviours and that within the framework of one's workgroup, the individual is constantly being judged on occupational, promotional and social skills. This judgment is important to a person's self-regard and self-evaluation.

Peretti et al (1986, quoting Baskin 1975) also claim that people who cannot find suitable work feel useless and inadequate and suffer from increased physiological and psychological stress leading to increased psycho-physiological disorders. They add that hopes, desires, dreams, and personal ambitions are often destroyed by unemployment and the loss of affiliation with the workgroup damages the individual's personality displayed through the collective judgments of colleagues and associates.

The effects of job loss according to Shelton (1985 citing Amundson and Borgen) can be compared with the grieving process and may result in depression, withdrawal, retreat, suicide and homicide. Zawada (1980, in Shelton 1985) and Guindon and Smith (2002) claim that the stress reactions associated with job loss and the consequent emotional and psychological influences may directly impede the subsequent job search and inhibit one's ability to search and secure suitable future employment.

Phil had previously been very secure in his job, and very reassured in the belief that subsequent to his division's job spill, he would be reappointed to his previous executive level position. Along with his disqualification from interview came an array of emotions including disbelief and the sudden realisation that his life was entering a new uncertain phase with a new unmapped future that he had never before envisaged possible. In the space of an eye-blink Phil's world had dramatically changed. He said:

I couldn't believe I didn't get the job, let alone an interview. I rang the recruiting agency and they tried to fob me off, as if I wasn't worthy of any respect, let alone a proper answer. They told me that obviously there were people with more experience; so I related my history of managerial positions where I'd negotiated inter-government contracts and agreements on justice between the various state governments and a number of Commonwealth Federal governments. They flippantly said – 'Oh well perhaps they were better qualified?' Although my qualifications weren't exactly amazing, I did have a Bachelor of Business degree and told them so, but they weren't even listening and really weren't able to give me anything resembling a satisfactory answer - and all I was getting was silence, excuses and bullshit and so they came to a bumbling halt. I then realised that it was discrimination, because I looked at the names of the people who got the jobs, they were all people I knew and none had my skills or experience. Some of them were my previous subordinates - I'd trained them for heaven's sake, some were still wet behind the ears, inexperienced and unqualified. All were considerably younger than me - in their 30s maybe early 40s and some were quite new to indigenous affairs. As a manager and indigenous person I felt insulted and very much degraded.

Phil's fall in stature and consequent dilemma is highly visible in his own words and is possibly a desperate appeal for help. In telling his story he appeared to me, to be both outwardly reaching for support (in the flickering hope that some force will suddenly rescue him) and gaining solace in that there is someone who will listen and will share his story. This is significantly supported by the comment: "I don't know how to get out of this hole ... I don't know who to turn to for help?"

Phil claimed that the impact of this workplace dislocation was visible for a number of years and carried forward into his future employs. He continued:

Before, I feared nothing; I was full of confidence and approached all new projects positively and with a sense of adventure. I knew no-one else could do the job any better and I displayed this outward enthusiasm and positive approach to everyone ... But after all this happened, well, you can only take so much kicking and then you collapse. You feel empty inside and this emptiness is with you all the time. I now get anxious because I think I'm going to fail again and get sacked 'again'... My self-worth and self-esteem have been shot to pieces and I start to panic over little things. I feel as if I'm being watched over all the time, as if they are hoping that I'm going to fail. I feel useless and of no value or consequence to anyone. To top it all off my health has suffered quite seriously and I now have atrial fibrillation... and I think it's all related.

Masculinity, personal identity and self-esteem

It is important for this paper's existence to analyse the effects job loss and unemployment have on a man's masculinity and personal identity and why the effects to his manhood and his behaviour and interaction with others are so devastating. Sluss and Ashforth (2007) studied relational identity and the work relationship and looked at the impact of relationships on one's own development, performance and well-being. They claim there are three levels of identity: the individual (personal); interpersonal (group); and collective (social) and a person acts and reacts according to each varying setting, situation and environment.

Sluss and Ashforth (2007) citing others (Brickson, 2000; Brickson & Brewer, 2001; Lord, Brown & Freiberg, 1999; Sedikides & Brewer, 2001)

claim self-interest to be a basic motivation whereby the individual focuses on oneself as unique and where self-esteem derives from interpersonal comparisons of traits, abilities, goals and performance. They further claim that self-esteem actually derives from inter-group comparisons. Sluss and Ashforth (2007) further cite Brewer and Gardner (1996) and state that changes in the level of self-categorisation reflect not only differences in views of the self but also different world views including values, goals and norms. They generalise that we position ourselves in norms within society, whether it's a subordinate role, a supervisor role, or an unemployed role. A person learns from their surroundings and environment and develops an identity associated with role and position. Individuals are therefore implicitly implicated within the collective of these socially constructed roles.

This was certainly the case with Phil who as an educated man, an executive and husband had multiple responsibilities and roles. Specifically as a man, Phil's socially constructed male 'role' and pride is echoed in the following:

As a man and breadwinner I had the responsibility to look after my wife and family. It might be the traditional perspective but that is why I was put on this earth. And for 'heaven's sake' that is why I am a man. I couldn't have this taken away from me – no-one had the right to destroy my manhood. I believe in equal opportunity and the best person for the job etc, but what is all this bullshit about being a female, so they must have the job? Being young so they must have the job? Being an Aboriginal, so they must have the job etc? This is bullshit. I was the best and I'd proven it time and time again. So why didn't I get it? Not only were my abilities being questioned, so was my manhood. How could I have a beer at the pub with my mates and not feel shame and look for the closest rock to crawl under?

With job loss, "manhood" identity is under attack and is manifested in a wide range of unhealthy and health threatening behaviours. In analysing the range of traumas presented by our case-study, Phil's depression was very much due to his decline in status and the fear of the effects of this on his future employment and life prospects and his ability to support family.

Linn, Sandifer and Stein (1985) claim that not only does loss of work affect self-esteem, but not having work could also limit a person's chances for feelings of achievement, accomplishment and satisfaction and increase feelings of guilt relating to failure to support other family members. Linn et al. (1985) continue that some men have the ability to cope better than others and this is significantly related to self-esteem issues. In a cross-sectional, cross-longitudinal comparison of Israeli employed and unemployed adults, Shamir (1986) discovered that there were depressive effect, morale and anxiety issues which were affected by employment status; however these were moderated by self-esteem. Of significant relevance was the finding that the unemployed with low self-esteem were considerably more flexible when considering new job offers.

Although Phil, by his own admission, claimed that his self-esteem was 'shot to pieces' (quoted above), he didn't exactly fit into the above categorisation. Phil in fact reacted to his new situation by undertaking counselling and further study to improve his employment prospects and certainly wasn't going to take the first job that came along or a job that offered him little or no challenge and self-esteem.

Phil's stance is supported by a study on efficacy and resilience by Liam and Liam (1988), who indicated that workers do not simply experience the hardship imposed by unemployment, but actively contest their displacement and the conditions it creates. They claim that one doesn't just take injustice and the consequences that it creates without fighting back and that an important correlation to the level of unemployment depression, is the link to the level of reward one placed on their previous employ. This indicates that depression would be greater if one's job had been intrinsically rewarding rather than boring and monotonous. As a director of a variety of indigenous policy in four Australian States, Phil's employment history was certainly far from boring and monotonous.

Relevance of level

Guindon and Smith (2002) signify Phil's situation distinctively by stating that feeling of isolation, rejection and shame are common. When identity is strongly connected to the job, loss is even more painful because the person measures his sense of self by what he does for a living. If career is in crisis; then stress is high, self-esteem plummets and very often leads to

depression. The authors continue that a depressed victim may move further into stagnation, frustration and eventually into apathy and burnout. With involuntary job loss, a person's perceived stress may exceed their ability to cope with the demands of the environment and may be unable to muster the internal and personal resources necessary to mount an effective job search campaign. This is quite significant to Phil as he had suddenly been thrust down to a level that he'd never before experienced and regaining prestige, status and position were paramount. His desire to rapidly climb back up the executive ladder was quite intense. Phil stated: "I fell a long way in a very short space of time. I was devastated. What had I done that was so wrong, how could this be happening?"

Also of considerable relevance to Phil's case is the comparative level of his previous position to now. Peretti et al (1986) studied self-image, insecurity, attrition, withdrawal and inferiority on four categories of unemployed men, ranging from professional managerial executive (PME) to unskilled manual workers (UNS). They discovered severe effects of unemployment in all the groups however the most severely affected were those who, like Phil, were previously held in the highest esteem because of their professional standings. Significant was the self-blaming which resulted in depression, self-doubt, self-pity and guilt; they felt a sense of failure to family and friends, or anyone dependent on them for support. In contrast was the significant finding that the unemployed unskilled manual worker (UNS) who suffered chronic unemployment, freely self-perceived minimal negative psychological effect due to the fact that many had expectations of unemployment status. This was because many lacked skills, abilities, potential and opportunities and had been out of work for much of their lives. It was suggested that they had little understanding of the quality of life experienced by the other higher level groups, as per Phil, and that loss of income - with very little significant psychological effect - was the most notable stated effect on this group. These findings clearly indicate that the social status and level of social acceptance within society has a significant impact on the effects of chronic unemployment on displaced workers therefore indicating that the further one falls the harder the impact.

Of further relevance to Phil's case is the research of Sighthler, Tudor, Brush and Roebuck (1996) who tested self-esteem, anxiety, depression, irritation, aggression, social support, resentment, burden, and life

satisfaction in recently unemployed managers and professionals. They claim that while the psychological effects on blue collar workers are fairly well-established, relatively little is known about the effects of unemployment on professionals and middle managers. They claim that these managers and professionals, such as Phil, may differ from non-professionals and many non-managers in regard to education and training at an organisational level, therefore their psychological reactions may be different as well. It is further stated that their adjustment to unemployment might in turn negatively affect their subsequent job search behaviours, coping skills, family relationships and their felt stress.

A highly relevant study by Kessler, Turner and House (1988, in Creed, 2001) determined that unemployed workers did not suffer the same level of unemployment stress when the consequences of financial strain were removed. Further to this, psychological distress was not reported from countries which provided generous social security benefits to the unemployed, as in the case of the Netherlands, thereby suggesting that the financial loss and the uncertain financial future is a catalyst for depression. In this regard, financial stress was certainly an issue with Phil. He stated:

When I was first told that I had to accept a 'voluntary' redundancy package I dug my heels in. As an older Aboriginal I did have some health problems common to my people, such as diabetes. I thought that I should accrue as much retirement benefit as I could, so I told them I wasn't going. When it became obvious that they wouldn't take no for an answer, and that 'voluntary' wasn't really on the table, I weighed up my options and got out of there, it wasn't a healthy place to be; very depressing and very demoralizing. ... And the redundancy package didn't last long either. I spent it on booze and gambling and trying to work my way out of this position. But things only got worse. My marriage was stuffed and I lost my house and much of my superannuation. My future was stuffed.

Residual problems with re-employment

Of particular relevance to Phil's case is the manner in which he approached and achieved re-employment. Kessler, Turner and House (1989) studied the impact of distress after job-loss and the recovery associated with re-

employment. They claim that unemployment causes poor health and that re-employment reverses this effect.

However, this projected recovery scenario certainly didn't ring true as Phil continually felt marginalised and degraded in his new job, and the above findings in reality are a considerable over-simplification. The study sampled stable employed workers, currently unemployed workers and recently re-employed workers and found significant elevation of depressed mood, anxious mood, somatisation and self-reported physical illness for those unemployed. The study did also caution however, that we should not interpret the high distress of the unemployed as evidence that current unemployment causes emotional reactions which are totally resolved and reversed with re-employment. They furthered the theme from Guindon and Smith (2002), Sightler et al (1996) and Zawada (1980, in Shelton 1985), that it is plausible that poor emotional functioning subsequent to, or in the face of unemployment also interfered with job search activities.

Phil stated that the culture in his new employ disturbed him and made him even more aware of his practical workplace contribution.

The organisation culture isn't known until you get into the actual organisation itself and I should have thought twice when at interview they questioned my age. It's probably not just the organisation that's at fault but society as a whole. Society seems to think that once you've reached a certain age, you don't have anything more to contribute and this makes me so angry. I've always assessed my self-worth and what contribution I make to my organisation, and I certainly do now I'm in my new job, feel more on display and more obliged to question my value ... and of course try to raise my profile. However, more so now than ever before I'm not being noticed for my value and my contribution and guess I won't ever again because no-one my age gets promoted. It is obvious that there is no encouragement for promotion, which you'd normally see in a progressive, forward visioned organisation and you hear people say that if you haven't made it by now, then you never will. It doesn't matter a fig that I had made it, and it certainly wouldn't matter now whatever I did, or to whatever heights I scale, it doesn't count anymore, in the younger ones' eyes I'm old and useless."

New job problems

Phil's new employment certainly didn't resolve his dilemma or distress. The job was at a far lower level, with less pay and no security. He told me that he wanted to be relocated at the same level with the same respect as his previous positions, but could never see this happening.

Kessler et al (1989) study also examined job quality, therefore earnings and job security to determine whether re-employment into the first job that came along would provide satisfaction. This study found that the very high levels of distress amongst the unemployed were, if anything, an underestimate of the emotional damage created by job loss rather than the overestimated which they initially suspected. Not surprisingly this study did hypothesise that the function of those who found work improved more than those who remained unemployed. However they believed that there may have been other residual effects, one of these being that the re-employed may not have returned completely to their emotional state prior to their previous job loss. There was also significant evidence that many re-employed feared that they would involuntarily lose their new job within a year. This job insecurity was associated with the earlier depression and somatisation among the re-employed. It was also identified that these re-employed people who held these insecure jobs were significantly more depressed than the stably employed respondents, suggesting that re-employment does not fully relieve unemployed related distress if future unemployment is anticipated.

In support of these findings, Fineman (1983) found psychological and 'legacy' effects in approximately half of the re-employed people in his study. Feelings of personal failure and doubts about abilities to perform adequately in their new jobs were particularly common among the recently re-employed. Kaufman (1982) supported this by claiming that feelings of low self-esteem were particularly persistent after re-employment and even suggested that some of these emotional residuals may be permanent. This was supported by Fagin (1979) who suggested that the personality changes as a result of prolonged unemployment could be permanent although other researchers found that the extent of emotional recovery following re-employment varied, depending on the nature of the new job.

Also of particular relevance to Phil's case were findings by Shamir (1985) who found that emotional recovery after re-employment required that the new job be seen at least as favourably as the old one, and Fineman (1983) who reported that re-employed people who felt inadequate to the tasks of the new job were even more distressed than when they had been unemployed.

Phil made the following statement, which in itself is quite astounding given that in previous positions he'd been in control of 30 staff and a \$20 million budget:

I thought that my new job was going to fix my self-confidence; instead I felt that whatever I did wasn't good enough and constantly sought out feedback about how I was doing. I worried about things so much I was almost paralysed because I was too frightened to make a decision in case it was the wrong one and my contract would be terminated.

The above indicates the relevance in which the new job and the new environment are perceived and Phil certainly had concerns regarding the people in his new work environment. His comfort zone, status and esteem levels had all dramatically changed and his perception of and evaluation of both himself and others had undergone considerable transformation. He stated:

It never seemed to worry me before even though I knew it existed, but now in my new job it is really very noticeable. It is obvious that the young people deliberately exclude us oldies. We, in our 50s - and even 40s - aren't encouraged to mix with the 20-somethings, and it is as if we are singled out and certainly not part of the younger in-crowd. You really aren't made to feel like you have anything in common with them and certainly nothing to offer. The attitude of the young is that we've passed our 'use-by-date'. But, when you're sitting on the outside looking in you realise that the whole work psyche depends on a number of requirements being met, one of which is socialization ... and I think that is very absent from this place and has been absent for a while. I've really noticed it more and more since I reached 50.

Phil made another observation regarding his new employment, which related to the recruitment process and the younger workers' attitude to older employees.

I find it rather amazing that organisations aren't allowed to discriminate on age but at interview they always want to know how old you are ... Then when I got this job it became obvious that the young people viewed us oldies as idiots. I had always noticed that when young graduates come in to the workplace, that they had the academic knowledge but no real life experience to back up their degrees. It was commonly stated that the new ones can't hit the ground running.

Mental health and the relationship to work

The evidence that job-loss leads to despair and depression is undeniable. Phil's health and future are intertwined. He stated:

Now I'm still getting counselling once a fortnight, and I'm feeling a little better. It eases the anguish and my lack of self-worth. I realise though that I need to grow my self-esteem and I'm the only one that can do that. I'm constantly looking inside at my self-worth and my value to my workplace and I figure that if no-one's going to recognise me for what I've contributed, then why should I bother?...But I also have no doubt that this attitude would be to my own detriment so I fight it and keep doing my best regardless. I'm on a contract now until 2010 and after that I don't know. I'll be 58 then and don't like my prospects.

The journal - *American Family Physician* (2006, p.1395) presents evidence that mental depression is 'a medical illness'. It states

An individual with major depression has symptoms such as feeling sad or empty, crying easily, restlessness, and thoughts about death or suicide. Mental depression is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain that makes it hard for the cells to communicate with each other. It can be linked to events in life, such as death of a loved one, a divorce or job loss.

Thayer and Bruce (2006) studied major depressive disorder (MDD) and claim that it can be mistaken for, or masked by reactive sadness of a comorbid condition. Citing the Global Burden of Disease Study, they claim that depression is the fourth leading cause of global disease burden in the 1990s and is projected to be second by 2020. The effects of MDD can include job loss, personality advancement failure and decline in functions. Although it is also undeniable that one does not have to lose their job to become depressed, Dragano, He, Moebus, Jöckel and Siegrist (2008) claim evidence that suggests that an adverse psychosocial work environment also can significantly contribute to the explanation of depressive symptoms.

Coping behaviour

Phil indicated that he went through a range of behaviours in order to cope, and did attempt to deal with his dilemma head-on in a very positive manner by actively seeking to correct the possible labelling inadequacies bestowed upon him when he obtained feedback on why others were preferred for a position. Believing their claim that maybe he didn't have enough qualifications, he enrolled in a Master's degree at University. He told me that he considered that if he was not competitive in the labour market then he would make himself more competitive.

I only had a Bachelor's degree and so I thought, well maybe they are right, these young kids coming through with qualifications coming out of their ears. Maybe I did need to catch up. I enrolled in my MBA and finished in record time. I thought 'now you bastards try and tell me that I'm under-qualified' ... Didn't do me any good though, I'd expected doors to open and opportunities to come flying my way, but nothing happened. I won't be holding my breath in anticipation.

When all else fails

Regardless of the futile attempts to drag himself up from the depths of despair, Phil did reach a stage in his mental state that brought him to attempt suicide. Phil's words echoed this reflection.

I wasn't coping at all. I'd lost my job, my livelihood, my home, my wife. I didn't have any future, I was drinking myself to death and I was sinking in my own despair. I'd had enough, I didn't want to suffer any more of this pain and have these constant feelings of worthlessness! ... I was in a hotel room and was absolutely falling over drunk. I don't remember much only that I awoke in the morning with my belt around my neck and the broken curtain rod dangling over my head.

Brown, Vinocur and Amiram (2003) draw a correlation between suicide and the feelings of self-esteem whereby the victim descends to such a low level that they actually feel a burden on society. In bringing this life terminating action into its full perspective, a study by Platt (in Winton, 1986) established that men who are unemployed less than six months are six times more likely to attempt suicide than those in work, whilst those unemployed for over a year are 19 times more likely to try to kill themselves. Platt concludes that the loss of employment can be a blow to identity and create an imbalance of the proportions between love and work which has implications for the mental health of the community as a whole.

The value of support

Phil's marriage break-up and consequent interstate move in effect also meant that he no longer had the spousal social support necessary to enable him to cope with his new situation. Linn, Sandifer and Stein (1985) claim that social support is a potential mediator of stress, in citing Gore (1978) they found that the unsupported unemployed, as per Phil, demonstrated significantly higher elevations and more changes in cholesterol levels, illness symptoms and affective responses than did the supported unemployed. In citing Kasl (1982) they claim that a higher level of social support did produce a buffering influence when the unemployment status remained uncertain over a more prolonged time period and in citing Kasl and Cobb (1980) they also found that job loss increased the use of medical care. This is also supported by Kessler et al (1976, in Linn et al., 1985) who found a correlation between psychological distress and the use of primary health care services. Those depressed persons who viewed their health as poor sought medical advice and in this respect the medical practitioners and institutions

often fulfilled the social and emotional needs of the patients. As reported earlier Phil now suffers atrial fibrillation and believes it to be a consequence of his current stressful environment. He now also regularly attends a psychologist and believes the support offered in these sessions help him with life coping mechanisms.

The consequences of job-loss on wife and family

It is obvious that unemployment cannot be treated as a personal event as it affects all in the family unit. Subsequent partner stress following job loss is particularly relevant in Phil's instance as the job loss was very much the catalyst for the eventual marriage breakdown. Although all cases being individual are therefore different, it is interesting to note (although on a personal level and no-doubt totally unrepresentative of a full and comprehensive study), that three of the six cases, undertaken in my ethnography, have suffered severe and total loss of spouse support and subsequent marriage breakdown after job-loss. The breakdown factor has had a profound effect on Phil's post job-loss life, demise, recovery, health and day-to-day functioning.

Ferman and Blehar (1981) state that tradition has given special attention to the problem of job-loss for male heads of household. This was based on the assumption that men were responsible not just for themselves but also for dependents. They state that unemployment for a married man was not just a personal crisis; it was a family crisis as well. Kasl and Cobb (1982) present a similar rationale for including only men in their study claiming that men are, in the dominant US culture, presumed to be the primary breadwinners in the family hence job loss in men should have more of an impact than in women.

Although men and women certainly both suffer the indignity of age-discrimination and the consequences, they handle the situation through different eyes. Locked in the breadwinner tradition of having to provide for family, the effect on man was initially deemed to be far more serious than women. However this view has recently been contested by Vogt Yuan (2007) who claims that the consequences of age-discrimination are far greater for women than for men. This is supported by an earlier study by Targ (1983) who claims that women have been discounted as workers and

have been regarded as simply the people who have to deal with the effects of male unemployment. Additionally, Howe, Levy, and Caplan (2004) also claim that women are more likely to take on the burden of other family members and that when a man loses his job the associated stresses of unemployment and financial strain are taken on as a common burden by both partners, however when the female partner loses her job she is more likely to face this crisis on her own.

The level of stress on Phil's wife remain undetermined, however Phil's acceptance of the situation is reflected in the following: Phil stated:

Our marriage had been in trouble for a while. We lived together but most of what we had in the earlier years had long gone. My job-loss created a situation that brought the inevitable to the fore and to be honest I couldn't wait to get out of there. Not only was I terribly embarrassed at losing my job, but knowing that she really didn't care anyway was rubbing my face in it. I took off and just got out of there as quickly as I could.

Relational identity and the balance of family power

Liem and Liem (1988) claim that employment provides the infrastructure of the family system and determines that work is a primary source of material, social and psychological resources. They state that the family unit derives its routine and ordering of time and place within a social network, social status and material wellbeing from labour force participation.

Haslam (2001) and Pratt (1998) (both in Sluss et al., 2007) state that individuals define themselves in the collective by what the relationship means to the individual, for example an individual may identify with his or her role or relationship with a co-worker because of the appealing role based identity of mutual support and the co-worker's display of empathy and humour. This is person based identity. Putting this into perspective, the authors state that the greater one's relational identification the more empathy, understanding and loyalty one will have regarding one's partner and the more cooperation, support and altruism one will display towards one partner and the greater one's in-role performance will be providing other important role relationship are not denied support. This relates to the support that an

unemployed spouse (say husband), would get from the wife who empathises with his position.

Conclusion

This paper has aimed to place the life of a man affected and impacted by the trauma of perceived age discrimination into a broader context by analysing the effects on his personal survival, coping mechanisms, environment and future. The research initially focussed on masculinity, male identity, male ego, self-esteem, depression and mental health and ponders the very issues of life that can, given circumstance and situation, affect each and every one of us, but issues which, in a modern Western world, the majority of us usually avoid.

This paper has told the real life story of dislocation, deprivation and tragedy and has told it in part by using the subject's voice to demonstrate his own personal anguish and pain. The story has, by implication, asked questions about men and in particular has sought to determine where is a man when he has been stripped of his dignity, pride and values, his identity, his manhood, and the very essence of what makes him a man. Where is he now located in the diverse and complex matrix of life? Who is he and where can he go from here?

In the backdrop of a modern world of supposed workplace equality, participative practice and diversity; anomalies, prejudice, discrimination and malpractice still exist in all walks of everyday life. The need for individuals, organisations and Governments to stand up and voice their objections to these practices is long overdue. In the pre-paper abstract I highlighted a comedian's observation on the coward's practice of hiding behind screens of prejudice. It is clear from the anomalous workplace and employment practices outlined in this paper that many people still today fall behind these screens and anomalous agendas to cover for their own lack of honesty and integrity. The fact that they can excuse and legitimise their discriminatory and prejudicial behaviour to the detriment of others is a stain on all honest, forthright and fair minded people of this world. This paper has attempted to throw light on this behaviour and demonstrate the real-life impact and consequences of these actions and hope that one day all forms of prejudice and discrimination can and will be eliminated.

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Toward Complex and Inclusive Studies of Sex Scripts, College Students' Sexual Behaviors, and Hookup Cultures on U.S. Campuses

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Toward Complex and Inclusive Studies of Sex Scripts, College Students' Sexual Behaviors, and Hookup Cultures on U.S. Campuses

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Abstract

Much attention has been devoted in recent years to students “hooking up” on college and university campuses across the United States. Hookups broadly entail sexual behaviors that range from anal and vaginal intercourse to oral sex, masturbation, and other physically pleasurable activities. In this article, we synthesize the literature on college hookup cultures. Specifically, we use sexual scripting theory to analyze and critique existing peer-reviewed studies. Ultimately, we present five themes pertaining to the study of hookup phenomena at U.S. colleges and universities. This article concludes with several recommendations for making future hookup studies more inclusive of undergraduates from a range of racial/ethnic groups, sexual orientations, socioeconomic and religious backgrounds, and postsecondary institutional contexts, something previous scholars have largely neglected to do in their research.

Keywords: Hooking up, college, sexual behavior

Hacia Estudios Complejos e Inclusivos sobre Scripts Sexuales, Conductas Sexuales de los Estudiantes, y Culturas de los Encuentros en los Campus de EUA

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Resumen

En los últimos años se ha dedicado mucha atención a los “encuentros” que los estudiantes han establecido en los campus universitarios de Estados Unidos. Dichos encuentros implican comportamientos sexuales que van desde la relación sexual anal y vaginal al sexo oral, la masturbación y otras actividades físicas placenteras. En este artículo, se sintetiza la literatura sobre las culturas de “los encuentros” en la universidad. En concreto, utilizamos la teoría del scripting sexual para analizar y criticar los estudios previos sobre el tema. En última instancia, presentamos cinco temas relacionados con el estudio del fenómeno de los encuentros en las universidades de los Estados Unidos. Finalmente, este artículo concluye con varias recomendaciones para futuros estudios sobre encuentros más inclusivos de los estudiantes de grado considerando los diferentes grupos étnicos, las orientaciones sexuales, situaciones socioeconómicas y opciones religiosas, y teniendo en cuenta también el contexto institucional de la educación superior, algo que autores anteriores han descuidado en gran medida.

Palabras clave: Encuentros, universidades, comportamiento sexual

In *Unhooked: How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love and Lose at Both*, Laura Sessions Stepp, an American journalist, explored sexual behaviors among students at U.S. colleges and universities. The book ignited a firestorm of media attention that vilified undergraduates for what was characterized as promiscuous, irresponsible, and detrimental sexual behaviors (Kalish, 2007). Surprisingly, few readers questioned the generalizability of Stepp's claims, which were based on interviews with nine college women. Comparatively, Kathleen A. Bogle's (2008) book, *Hooking Up: Sex, Dating, and Relationships on Campus*, more deeply contextualizes the sexual behaviors of over 70 women and men. But like Stepp (2007), Bogle's findings are far from generalizable – her study is based on a 95% White, 96% heterosexual and majority middle to upper class sample. Citing the lack of diversity in her sample as a limitation, Bogle urged scholars to develop the “hookup” literature with intentional foci on unexamined groups, particularly non-White and non-heterosexual students.

Hence, the purpose of this article is to synthesize the extant literature on college hookup cultures and commission scholars to diversify their methodological approaches to this important work. In the next section, we present the theoretical lens that guided our interpretations of materials analyzed for this study. Next, we summarize our research methods and present five themes pertaining to the study of hookup phenomena on college campuses in the U.S. Finally, we conclude this article with several recommendations for complicating and making more inclusive future studies of hooking up in college.

Theoretical Framework

Sexual scripting theory suggests sexual behaviors are determined by “scripts” that organize sexual encounters into understandable conventions (Simon & Gagnon, 1986), effectively dictating who will do what and when in a particular context. Context is of utmost importance here, as this perspective embraces social constructionism, a set of sociological theories that acknowledge how, within context, objects of consciousness and social phenomena are constructed (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). A sociologist by training, Bogle (2008) not only cites classic sociologists Gagnon and

Simon's assertion that "sexual behavior is socially learned" and manifests in "sexual scripts", but she also specifies "the roles men and women play are shaped by cultural influences in the context of both a specific social setting, such as the college campus, as well as a specific historical time period" (p. 8). Simply, sexual scripts can be understood as outlines for appropriate behaviors in sexual encounters.

The most salient sexual scripts are heterosexist and sexist, assuming heterosexuality and disproportionately emphasizing the roles of men (Kim et al., 2007). Traditionally, as sex is central to male identity, men are portrayed as active sexual agents who prefer and pursue non-relational sex, while women are portrayed as passive, sexual objects that must act as gatekeepers (Kim et al., 2007). Also gendered, sexual scripts' underlying messages for women and men are often starkly different (Wiederman, 2005). Variety in sexual scripts is routinely interpreted as inconsistency. Consider the lyric "a lady in the street and freak in the bed," a prime example of the Madonna-whore dichotomy (Welldon, 1988). Messages that simultaneously call for a "lady" and a "freak" are inherently contradictory and make it difficult for women to navigate socially constructed sexual expectations (Stephens & Phillips, 2003). In addition, ambiguity regarding appropriate levels of casualness and emotional investments in hookups is a source of considerable conflict.

Though much research identifies media as the origin of gendered sexual scripts (Kim et al., 2007; Stephens & Phillips, 2003), few scholars are certain why. Saad (2007) suggests that consumer behavior is predicated on products like love and sex that are both most producible and most salient to human survival and reproduction. Garcia and Reiber (2008) describe media as a "reflection of our evolutionary penchants" magnified by popularity and conclude popular sexual scripts are "exaggerated examples of behaviors that are taken to an extreme for the purposes of media sensationalism and activation of core guttural interests" that are often problematic (p. 167). Media proliferations of these contradictory, inconsistent, and problematic gendered sexual scripts provide a backdrop with which to more deeply understand the roles sexual hookups play in undergraduate students' lives.

Method and data sources

This article synthesizes studies about hookup culture on college and university campuses in the U.S. Using electronic retrieval databases (e.g., Project Muse, SpringerLink, EBSCOhost Academic Search Premier, and Google Scholar), we searched the words “hookup”, “hook up”, “hooking up” and “hooked up.” As our aim was to locate scholarship on college hookups, our criteria for selecting the research were as follows: some version of the word hookup must appear in the title; the manuscript must be a peer-reviewed study; and finally, the research has to primarily engage young adults between the ages of 18 and 24. Only research-based journal articles (not magazines, newspapers, blogs, etc.) on college students were included. Documents not fitting our criteria (e.g., book chapters, movies, and non-scholarly books and articles) were occasionally consulted, but only for supplemental details. We ultimately found 33 peer-reviewed journal articles and one book. Of the journal articles, four were literature reviews, 25 were quantitative studies, three were based on qualitative research methods, and one used a combination of statistical and qualitative methods.

Five themes from the hookup literature

Presented in this section are five major themes from previous studies about students hooking up sexually on U.S. college campuses. Findings presented herein are not necessarily reflective of our beliefs, nor do we endorse them. In fact, the impetus for our writing this article was the lack of generalizable and widely applicable research on college hookups. Hence, we do not present the five themes as truth, per se, but merely as a synthesis of claims previous authors have made.

(Un)Common Definitions of “Hooking Up”

For both the students who engage in it and the scholars who investigate it, defining “hooking up” has not been an easy task (Armstrong et al., 2009; England et al., 2008; Flack et al., 2007; Paul & Hayes, 2002, Glenn & Marquardt, 2001; Paul et al., 2000). When Bogle (2008) asked students to define a hookup, she got a multitude of responses; the most salient difference among them was the range of the sexual acts committed. While

some students felt that a hookup entailed “having sex,” others believed that it did not involve vaginal or anal intercourse, but rather “just kissing” or “making out.” Because it is difficult to know exactly what another person meant when they said they hooked up with someone, the details of an encounter are often left up to the listener’s imagination, Bogle observed.

The best available definitions of hookups are comprehensive. Stinson (2010) defines a hookup as a “casual ‘no strings attached’ sexual encounter” (p. 98). While this definition does not seem to limit the scope of a hookup, the finding that many students engage in hookups with some sort of expectations contradicts the “no strings attached” caveat. Furthermore, most scholars have demystified this notion of no strings attached, finding that women and men tend to have expectations for hookups (Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Townsend & Wasserman, 2011), although expressing their expectations are taboo according to the dominant hookup script (Bogle, 2008). Epstein et al. (2009) cite three themes that are central to the definitional script: (1) the absence of a committed relationship, (2) a short-term encounter, and (3) the presence of a variety of sexual behaviors.

Bogle (2008) found that students could readily describe the dominant hookup script and provide great detail on what hookups typically entail. Hookups are usually initiated at a college party or social event, alongside alcohol consumption, and after two individuals have an exchange of verbal or non-verbal cues that connote mutual sexual interest. Depending on the desired level of privacy, the individuals involved can engage in varying forms of sexual contact either in the party or in a dorm room, off-campus apartment, etc. To avoid the “walk of shame” – returning home in the morning wearing the same disheveled clothing from the prior evening – the visitor (usually undergraduate women) rarely stays the night. If the encounter is not interrupted, the hookup ends when one person leaves, passes out, or climaxes (Paul & Hayes, 2002) and rarely results in a long-term monogamous relationship (Paul et al., 2000).

Hookups follow several scripts (Bogle, 2008; England et al., 2008; Flack et al., 2007; Paul et al. 2000). Manifestations of them include “random” one-time encounters, “regular” encounters that usually occur on the weekends, infrequent and sporadic sexual late night encounters known as “booty calls”, and regularly occurring sexual encounters with a friend without the structure of a relationship referred to as “friends with benefits”

or “fuck buddies”. Except for friends with benefits, a lack of regular communication is common among these archetypes (Bogle, 2008).

Dating and hooking up are not the same. Because college students do not mean the same thing when they use these terms, they cannot be used interchangeably (Stinson, 2010). When students describe dating, they know what the concept is, but they are explaining something in which they do not often engage (Bogle, 2008). According to them, it either refers to someone who attends an event, like a formal, with a date or to two people who are already in a monogamous relationship (Glenn & Marquardt, 2001). Presently, traditional dating is rarely the pathway through which college students get together. Hookup culture is the dominant pathway to intimacy and students engage in it quite regularly (Bogle, 2008; Glenn & Marquardt, 2001).

The rates and frequencies with which college students engage in hookup behavior are also of import, particularly when distinguishing between hooking up and a hookup culture (Heldman & Wade, 2010). Garcia and Reiber (2008) surveyed over 500 students at Binghamton University to assess the prevalence of and motivation for hooking up, finding approximately two thirds of students hooked up at some point during college. This figure appears to be on the lower side, as Armstrong et al. (2009), England et al. (2008), and Paul et al. (2000) all report about three quarters of their respondents engaged in a hookup during college. Armstrong et al. provide further insights into the frequency of hookups, reporting that of those who have hooked up in college, 40% did so three times or fewer, 40% did so four to nine times, and the other 20% hooked up at least ten or more times during their undergraduate years. England et al. also found that more than a quarter of students (28%) had hooked up at least 10 or more times during college. Additionally, Armstrong et al. inquired about participants’ last hookup partners, discovering that half were hooking up with their most recent partner for the first time, 18% hooked up with this person a couple times prior, 33% had hooked up with this person at least three times before, and 16% had hooked up with this person more than 10 times. Paul et al. (2000) found that only one third of women and one half of men on campus engage in intercourse during a hookup encounter. More specifically, England et al. (2008) explains that when asked about their most recent hookup, 38% of students reported only going

as far as kissing and touching, 16% and 15% went as far as masturbation and oral sex, respectively, in addition to kissing, and 38% of students reported engaging in penile-vaginal intercourse. Evidently, there exists a range of sexual activity that falls under hookup umbrella. Though several stories can be told using statistics presented in this section, the main takeaway here is that scholars agree that a majority of college students are participating in hookup culture (Heldman & Wade, 2010).

Dominant scripts help explain the prevalence of some sexual activity. England et al. (2008) identified a shift in heterosexual sex scripts occurring alongside the flourishing of hookup culture that is characterized by a decline in the rates of vaginal intercourse and an increase in the rates of oral and anal sex. Though the rates of oral sex have seemingly increased dramatically since the second half of the twenty-first century, the last decade has seen a significant decline in the rates of vaginal intercourse (Heldman & Wade, 2010). Further, adolescents report engaging in more oral sex more than vaginal sex, and not considering oral sex actual sex (Epstein et al., 2009). Noteworthy is the reported decline in men's rates of performing oral sex as the overall oral sex number grew, indicating the feminization of oral sex and the male domination of the hookup script (Backstrom et al., 2012). With these significant increases in oral and anal sex amongst these populations, Heldman and Wade (2010) assert that students are engaging in a wider variety of sexual behavior than prior generations, and when they do not engage in vaginal intercourse, they do engage in oral sex. With an understanding of the culture and its scripts, we temporally situate the emergence of hooking up.

Emergence of the Hookup Script on U.S. Campuses

Few scholars (e.g., Bogle, 2007, 2008; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Stinson, 2010) have offered explanations about the timing and emergence of hookup cultures at U.S. colleges and universities. Bogle (2008) argues that a number of sociohistorical trends, both cultural and demographic, during the mid-1960s have had the greatest influence on the emergence of the hookup era. The first is the Sexual Revolution, in which American society, particularly its youth, experienced fundamental, liberating changes in ideology about the traditional codes of behavior related to sexuality and relationships. These include the arrival and availability of contraception and

the birth control pill, the acceptance of premarital and nonrelationship sex, and the normalization of other forms of sexual behavior like oral sex, which grew increasingly prevalent among well-educated Whites during the latter half of the twentieth century. This revolution signaled the foundation of the expansion of sexual expression for many heterosexual Americans. Simultaneously, there was a second cultural change, the Women's Movement, which advocated for the liberation of women in their societal roles and behaviors. One important arena was sex and relationships, in which feminists argued that women should be free to pursue men as well as negotiate their own conditions for sex, within or outside the context of marriage. During this era of change, American youth began to express their individualism as well, exercising personal choice and departing from adult expectations, an example of this being the demands college students made to college administrators and the subsequent privileges they ascertained on campus. While college campuses had historically been sexually restrictive and segregated, students rallied for privacy and sexual freedom until administrators gave in and shifted resources from advocating for appropriate sexual behavior to advocating for safe sexual behaviors. Currently, unrestricted access to the opposite sex is a staple on most campuses (Bogle, 2008; 2007; Heldman & Wade, 2010; Stinson, 2010).

Beyond the cultural changes, Bogle (2008) contends that a confluence of demographic changes—an increase in median age at first marriage, the younger ages at which young women and men become sexually active, and the stark increase in women's college going rate—have also heavily contributed to the emergence of hookup cultures. Whereas the median age for first marriage in 1960 was 20 for women and 23 for men, it rose significantly to 25 for women and 27 for men by 2008. Considering that the average age which young women and men are sexually is 17, there is a long eight to ten year period between sexual activity and marriage. Thus, were one to subtract four of those years for exploring their options during college, women and men still have four to six years after college with which they can make finding a spouse a priority. Finally, the increased presence of women on college campuses seems to have reversed the sex-ratio imbalance, and thus, further shifted the balance of power in college men's favor. With women outnumbering men in higher education 100 to 80, men have more options of women to choose from, and thus greater

power to determine what the campus sexual scripts are. Consequently, women are often left with few options to access intimacy. In many cases, they can adapt and adhere to this male-oriented script or get left out of this aspect of campus social life.

Heldman and Wade (2010) contend it is necessary to delineate the difference between a culture that includes hooking up and a hookup culture to truly understand its advent. In contrast to Bogle's explanation of a "going steady" dating culture being normative on college campuses from the 1920s to the 1960s, today's campuses do not have a dating culture to balance hookup behaviors (England et al., 2008). Garcia and Reiber's (2008) finding that one third of students lose their virginity during a hookup corroborates the claims casual sex grows more normative and romance and relationships are not desired by many of them (England et al., 2008). The basis of Heldman and Wade's argument is that for a campus climate to be defined as a hookup culture, it may need to be characterized by a disinterest, rejection, and/or absence of a dating culture, characterized by emotionally meaningful, monogamous relationships. While they agree that the Women's Movement and Sexual Revolution may have been necessary for the emergence of hookup culture, Heldman and Wade (2010) argue that they alone are not enough. They call into question Bogle's (2008) claim that hookup culture emerged in 1980s, explaining that by then, the major societal shifts of the 1960s had already begun, and potentially declined. Instead, they suppose, depending on how you define culture, that hookup culture's emergence started in the 1990s, using the more traceable decline of sexual intercourse and the rise of oral and anal sex a temporal marker.

Stinson (2010) reframes Bogle's claims about hookup culture's emergence around social context, seeking to understand "the extent to which the social environment of university campuses is affecting the beliefs, norms, and behaviors of students" (p. 100). First, she argues that the social norms and scripts created and enforced by popular culture and peer groups contribute to the proliferation of hookup culture on college campuses (Bogle, 2008; Lambert et al., 2003; Stinson, 2010). As some believe navigating sexual intimacy is a developmental process and period of transition (Bogle, 2008), Stinson (2010) contends college is a space to experiment with and negotiate sexual boundaries. Therefore, it is conducive to hooking up.

Placing Hookup Cultures in Campus Contexts

There is something unique about campus life that makes hookup culture flourish there (Bogle, 2008; Fielder & Carey, 2010a; Lambert et al., 2003; Paul et al., 2000; Reiber & Garcia, 2008; Stinson, 2010). Emphasizing environment as a major influence on sexual and romantic decisions, Bogle describes a set of contemporary ideologies that may lead to the prominence of hookup culture on campus. First, she observed that students generally perceive college to be just as much social as it is academic, making it a time to party, let loose, and have fun. In contrast, many students see committed, exclusive relationships as inhibitors to enjoying their full college experience, limiting their ability to have fun and party. Subsequently, few display a sense of urgency for marriage, as many students today believe that there is plenty of time to find a future spouse post graduation. Of note, is the average 18-24 year old student is in a distinct period of their development, called “emerging adulthood,” where she or he is no longer an adolescent, but not quite an adult. Absent the adult responsibilities of children, mortgages, and a full-time employment, college students are afforded the freedom to experiment how they see fit. When these ideologies are compounded with the unique contemporary campus structure, hooking up is often the result.

There are also structural factors on campus that facilitate hookup culture (Bogle, 2008). The college admissions process, for example, creates an environment where similar and same-age students surround each other, providing a wealth of options for hookup partners. Moreover, their similarities as college students embellish an atmosphere of trust and familiarity amongst strangers who do not necessarily perceive themselves that way. In addition, the layout of a college campus puts these eligible candidates in extremely close proximity to one another, providing unparalleled access to the opposite sex in ways few other settings do. Not only do college students tend to assess themselves based on what their peers are doing, but also they report that watching and discussing others is a common pastime for them and their peers (Lambert et al., 2003; Reiber & Garcia, 2010; Stinson, 2010). For students who want to fit in, these contextual pressures may lead to conforming to the perceived social norms, even for those who may fundamentally oppose it (Bogle, 2008; Lambert et

al., 2003; Reiber & Garcia, 2010; Stinson, 2010). This concept is known as pluralistic ignorance.

Reiber and Garcia (2010) and Lambert et al. (2003) analyze the role of pluralistic ignorance in the context of a college campus. According to them, it exists when individuals within a group believe that their private attitudes, beliefs and judgments do not align with the perceived norms, or the behaviors publicly displayed by said group. Most regularly, students overestimate the frequency and level of sexual activity in hookups. Assuming that they are the only one in the group experiencing conflict between their private attitudes and public behaviors and that most others endorse and desire to act in the normative ways, individuals try to fit in by conforming to the norm. Lambert et al. (2003) hypothesized that students would perceive others as being more comfortable than themselves in hookup scenarios. Their findings revealed that this was in fact true and that pluralistic ignorance has a significant influence on students' decision-making processes when it came to hookups and hookup behavior. Reiber and Garcia's (2010) findings corroborate these claims. Because hooking up is the norm for heterosexual relationships on campus and majority of students are in fact engaging it, most students overestimated their peer's levels of comfort while performing various sexual acts during a hookup as well as the percentage of their peers that are actually hooking up. This problematic perception that "everyone's doing it" may encourage some students to hookup (Fielder & Carey, 2010a; Lambert et al., 2003; Reiber & Garcia, 2010).

Fielder and Carey (2010a) center much of their analysis on social norms, distinguishing between descriptive and injunctive norms. The former refers to an individual's perception of the prevalence of a certain behavior while the latter refers to perceptions of peer approval of behavior. Fielder and Carey (2010b) also believe that the consistent overestimation of both descriptive and injunctive norms lead to students conforming. Acknowledging modeling and vicarious learning as integral in behavior formation, they suggest that the college campus and the misperception of its social norms are possible determinants of sexual hookups.

Regularly described as a predictor, motivator, factor, cause, and/or social norm, alcohol has traditionally been strongly associated with casual, sexual activity and is contemporarily cited throughout the hookup literature

(Fielder & Carey, 2010a; Flack et al., 2007; Heldman & Wade, 2010). On many U.S. college campuses, it is available and abundant, and its use and abuse are commonplace (Bogle, 2008, 2007). Grello et al. (2006) found that 65% of his sample drank prior to their most recent casual sex encounter. More specifically, Paul et al. (2000) found that frequency of alcohol consumption was lowest among individuals who had never hooked up, higher among students who has a history of hookups with sexual intercourse, and was highest among those who had a history of hookups with sexual intercourse (p. 1106). Further, the students in Bogle's (2008) study reported that alcohol not only makes them want to hookup, but also leads to them going farther sexually during a hookup and hooking up with people they would otherwise reject (p. 64). Thus, scholars have reached a consensus that alcohol plays a significant role in campus climates and hookup cultures (Owen et al., 2010). With this understanding of the role of the college context, we offer additional reasons why American students might be hooking up.

Hookup Motives and Outcomes

To address the variance in hookup participation and sexual activity, researchers have investigated personal motivations (Armstrong et al., 2009; Bogle 2008; England et al., 2008; Garcia & Reiber, 2008; Heldman & Wade, 2010) as well as demographic variables and psychosocial factors (Garcia & Reiber, 2008; Owen et al., 2010; Paul et al., 2000). Nine of 10 students report physical pleasure as being one such personal motivation, but more startlingly, 54% of students reported emotional motivations, which inherently contradicts the "no strings attached" stigma (Garcia & Reiber, 2008). In fact, several studies contend (Armstrong et al., 2009; Bogle, 2008; England et al., 2008, Garcia & Reiber, 2008) that women only modestly desire a relationship more than men and the potential for relationship formation is a primary motivator in hookup culture. It seems students are using this "no strings attached" culture for relationship formation, considering only 13% of participants in Garcia and Reiber's study (2008) were completely uninterested in anything more than hooking up. In England et al.'s study (2008), 47% of women and 36% of men expressed interest in starting a relationship with their most recent hookup partner.

Still, students remain doubtful, only 6% expecting to be successful (Garcia & Reiber, 2008).

While not getting into a relationship is the most common outcome of a hookup (Bogle, 2008), the literature tends to focus on more startlingly ones. Hookup sex is often coercive and unpleasant, particularly for women (Armstrong et al., 2009; Eshbaugh & Gute, 2008; Flack et al., 2007; Paul & Hayes, 2002; Paul et al., 2000; Wade & Heldman, 2010). Despite the rise in non-traditional sexual behaviors, men have become less likely to perform oral sex for their partners, whereas women are more likely than ever to pleasure their partners in that way (Backstrom et al., 2012). Measuring sexual satisfaction by orgasm, Armstrong et al. (2009) uncovered that women only orgasm 49% as often as men when they hookup with repeat partners, and a mere 32% as often as men with first time partners. Inconsistencies between desired outcomes and actual outcomes may be the source of hookup culture's social and emotional tolls (Paul et al., 2000). The majority of students, women at slightly higher levels than men, report that hookup scenarios with no emotional connection and little to no chance at a future relationship may likely leave them feeling lonely and isolated (Paul, 2006; Townsend & Wasserman, 2011; Wade & Heldman, 2010). Further, the persistence of long standing double standards and gender roles places a great emotional toll on women, while for some men, social rewards are often the outcome. As they accrue more encounters and partners, women approach a socially unacceptable state of promiscuity while men approach a lauded plateau of masculinity (Armstrong et al., 2009; Bogle 2008, 2007).

Hookup culture also facilitates sexual assault and STI transmission (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2009; Littleton et al., 2009; Wade & Heldman, 2010). Women who attend college have a greater chance of being sexually assaulted than those who do not; women who partake in hookup culture are at greater risk for sexual assault than those who do not (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2009; Littleton et al., 2009). Surveying a representative sample of 178 students at a small liberal arts university in the first study of unwanted hookup experiences, Flack et al. (2007) contends that overall, 78% of coerced oral, vaginal, and anal sex on campus occurred during a hookup. According to Heldman and Wade (2010, p. 326), "hook-up culture carries a higher risk of contracting a STI than dating culture because the

former entails more sexual activity with ‘strangers’ and sexual contact with more partners.” Scholars overwhelmingly agree.

Recognizing the problematic outcomes of hooking up, scholars have begun investigating why these cultures persist. Bogle (2008) submits, “women may have had to adapt a script that is particularly beneficial to some college men (p.23). Central to hookup culture is the power college men derive from their lack of numbers (Bogle, 2008). Coinciding with Waller’s historic deduction (1937) that the party least interested in continuing a heterosexual relationship holds the most power, Bogle (2008, 2007) points to the sex-ratio imbalance in higher education that made men a scarce campus resource. Supply and demand dictates that because women on campus outnumber them 100 to 80, college men have greater power to determine what suits their needs when it comes to the opposite sex. Though clear exceptions to the rule exist, men generally pursue sex and women relationships. Above outcomes considered, there is great incentive for women commit to a monogamous relationship. In contrast though, the surplus of women provides little incentive for men to date exclusively. In *To Hookup or Date: Which Gender Benefits*, Bradshaw et al. (2010) presents a cost benefit analysis of hooking up and dating that reports men, in most situations, prefer hooking up to dating and the opposite is true for women. This disparity between motivations has historically and contemporarily shaped the interaction between the sexes on campus. Today, as college women recognize that a relationship is not a likely the outcome of a hookup, they report experiencing feelings of powerlessness. Perhaps, as Victor (2012) explains, hookup culture disallows women to strive for committed relationships and forces them to “adjust to college life, where their acceptance is contingent on learning how to hide hookup fears and appearing to enjoy hookup experiences” (p. 29). Bogle (2008) corroborates this claim, contending whether or not women are happy with the existing hookup script, it is the only one available, and they must come to terms with it. Still, others remain disadvantaged by typical hookup scripts.

Who is Hooking Up?

Most often referring to White, heterosexual college students from more affluent backgrounds, and only juxtaposing the experience of women and

men, the hookup literature, though abundant, rarely acknowledges those who represent expansive arrays of socioeconomic status, educational attainment levels, sexual orientations, and racial/ethnic backgrounds. While this substantial shortcoming leaves us with a dearth of perspectives from other populations, the literature does offer insights into which students are and are not hooking up among “traditional” undergraduates (Bogle, 2008; Brimeyer & Smith, 2012; Burdette et al., 2009; Downing-Matibag & Geisinger, 2009; Fielder & Carey, 2010a; Gute & Eshbaugh, 2008; Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009; Holman & Sillars, 2012; McClintock, 2010; Olmstead et al., 2012; Owen et al., 2010).

Though she asserts hookup culture is prominent and pervasive, Bogle (2008) acknowledges that not all students choose or are able to participate in it. In her sample of 76 students, the vast majority White, middle to upper class, and heterosexual, hookup culture transcended gender, institution type, and grade level, though some students reported hooking up being more prevalent freshman year. Bogle argues that at the center of hooking up is attraction, contending that personality and looks dictate students’ success with this script. While for men attraction starts at their looks and can be supplemented with desirable qualities like fraternity or athletic team membership, women are less privileged, their status being mainly confined to perceptions of physical attractiveness. Bogle also discovered that a student’s level of alcohol consumption and circle of friends were good predictors of how engaged in hooking up she or he was. Members of popular campus groups like fraternities, sororities, and athletic teams were more likely to be heavily involved in hooking up. Greek members specifically, often the host of parties where alcohol is available in excess, are at the center of campus social life and have incredible access to alcohol and the opposite sex. As such, they find themselves in the settings most conducive to hooking up. The amount of hooking up varied for students not in popular or Greek circles, but the availability of alcohol-driven social events presented them with ample opportunities to procure a hookup partner. In contrast though, the students who struggled to find hookup partners were those who seemed less involved with social events and alcohol consumption.

Bogle (2008) also discusses the students she found to have opted out of hookup culture. While students already in exclusive relationships had no

need to participate in hookup culture, others, like “the less privileged women”, actively sought out relationships to avoid it. As Bogle explains, students who are deemed more attractive can more easily ascertain hookups, Hamilton and Armstrong (2009) add less “privileged” women don’t find hooking up as appealing an alternative and are more inclined than privileged women to “build both relationships and career at the same time” (p. 606). For some students with strong religious beliefs, the hookup script did not coincide with their faith, though many others are able to compartmentalize obvious conflicts (Burdette et al., 2009). There are other students, Bogle (2008) suggests, that may not engage in hooking up for more practical reasons. Finding that White and minority students are not interested in hooking up with one another, Bogle states that minority students tend to socialize among themselves on campus and maintain ties with friends from home. Though they recognize hooking up as normative, they reported not participating in it, but engaging in a more courtship oriented process called “talking” to someone. Similarly, she reports homosexual students lack options on campus. Generally on their own to find potential partners, this group is more inclined to venture off-campus for alternatives. In summation, Bogle (2008) contends students who do not participate in hookup culture on campus are on the “margins” of the social scene. “For some, the hookup scene is not a viable option due to their minority status or sexual orientation. For others, avoiding hooking up is a choice” (Bogle, 2008).

Advancing a more inclusive study of hooking up in college

The hookup literature uses multiple research methods, but namely surveys and interviews. Samples have included students from co-educational and single sex institutions; various classifications from first-year undergraduates to senior; and varying levels of religiosity. Still, scholars identify several huge shortcomings in knowledge that continue to impede our understanding of hookup culture.

Finding fault with the minimal qualitative research, Bradshaw (2010) requests that some scholarship seeks to understand in more depth what motivates women and men to hookup or date. Olmstead et al. (2012) and LaBrie et al. (2012) contend future research should include longitudinal

assessments and multivariate approaches to examine factors that influence hookup trajectories over time, particularly the transitions from high school to college and from college to career and verify causality. Similarly, Heldman and Wade (2010) maintain more interviews as well as presently unemployed methods like focus groups and ethnographies that provide qualitative data across many disciplines are necessary. Longitudinal studies—examining students’ sexual behaviors from high school through the college years—will shed light on the long-term effects of participation in hook-up culture. Cross-college comparisons can help better determine to extent to which hookup cultures exist across U.S. institutions of higher education. Moreover, ethnographic studies could help provide far deeper, more textured qualitative insights into hookup phenomena.

There also is a need to complicate and be more inclusive of the identities of students who participate in hookup research. As most studies of hookup culture remain resolutely non-intersectional, Heldman and Wade (2010) explain we know very little about how sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, class, religious affiliation, (dis)ability, and other variables influence or interact with hooking up among individuals. Future scholarship, according to Downing-Matibag and Geisinger (2009) should address the issue of the limited samples, involving college students from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic groups, as well as undergraduates from a more expansive array of sexual orientations.

Despite routinely describing undergraduate men as “drunken, promiscuous, lovers of pornography, who rape women...” (Harper & Harris, 2010, p. 10), the field of higher education has yet to deem the pervasiveness of casual sex on campus worthy of study. Meanwhile, in their efforts to mitigate sexual shaming, regret, assault, and rape, the sociologists and health professionals who have conducted scholarly research on college hookup cultures place an inordinate amount of attention on the victims rather than on the perpetrators. Disproportionately focused on the harmful outcomes of hooking up for women, their reactionary approach has failed to sufficiently consider how men are socialized to think about sex in college.

In the seminal text, *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir (1949/2009) writes: “one is not born a woman, but becomes one” (p. 283). Similarly, one is not born a man, but becomes one (Butler 2008; Connell, 2005; Harper & Harris, 2010; Kimmel & Messner, 2004). As femininity and

masculinity are socially constructed, women and men learn how to perform according to expected gender behaviors from myriad societal influences, including their families, peers, communities, schools and the media (McGuire, Berhanu, Davis, & Harper, 2014). Seemingly most prominent among undergraduates, there is something about the postsecondary environment that makes hookup cultures pervasive on campus. Accordingly, how men learn (or are taught) to become men and be intimate with others during college warrants investigation.

Empirical studies regarding college men as “gendered” beings are, at best, marginally inclusive of men of color and men who are not heterosexual (Harper & Harris, 2010; Kimmel & Messner, 2004; McGuire et al., 2014). More research on undergraduate men’s gendered and sexual experiences can provide higher education stakeholders with the tools to assist them in developing healthy identities absent violence, sexism, racism, homophobia, and misogyny (Harper & Harris, 2010) and prevent problematic trends within hookup cultures and elsewhere on college and university campuses. Understanding why so many undergraduate men hook up with so many partners in college would be insightful. Also needed are more studies of how college men make sense of sex, hooking up, sexual health, romance, and their prospects for long-term sexual relationships after college.

The primary concern of hookup culture literature seems to be mitigating its problematic outcomes. LaBrie et al. (2012) emphasize the importance of assisting incoming students with making better informed decisions in enhancing their health and well being. This may be achieved through anecdotal and normative information about students’ post event evaluations of their hookup experiences and associated psychoemotional consequences; visible messaging targeted to naturalistic drinking contexts that provides salient cues, highlighting behavioral risks; creating and extending support structures for students (i.e., pre-first year hookup culture orientation) as they navigate collegiate hookup culture; and targeted interventions for hookup’s high-risk populations, like first-year and sorority women. Olmstead et al. (2012) also argue college administrators should take steps to provide education for their students regarding healthy and safer sex and relationship education targeting emerging adults should include discussions about the importance of making deliberate decisions regarding relationship

transitions and formation. Downing-Matibag and Geisinger (2009) recommend the development of mandatory and nationwide sexual risk-prevention programs that provide incoming students with accurate information regard STIs and how to protect themselves from them. These prevention programs and resources need to be available and promoted to students from their first to last days on campus through a variety of venues. Owen and Fincham (2011) suggest that educators recognize and initiate discussions with young adults about both the positive and negative aspects of hooking up, helping them balance their desires of instant sexual gratification and a lack of commitment with realistic understandings of the risks involved, the dominant message being enjoyment should not trump risk. As some of the students hooking up desire relationships, educators should assist them in navigating effective techniques for forming them.

Conclusion

Of the varied experiences and health risks young women and men will experience, perhaps none are as pervasive and widely experienced as engagement in and desire for romantic attachments and experiences with sexual activity (Garcia & Reiber, 2012). Understanding hookups during the critical stage of late adolescent development and young adulthood is paramount for protecting and promoting healthy sexuality and healthy decision-making among emerging adults. Donna Freitas (2013) states the following in the *End of Sex: How Hookup Culture is leaving a Generation Unhappy, Sexually Unfulfilled, and Confused about Intimacy*:

The cultural conversation surrounding hookup culture should be about what we want our young people to get out of sex. It should offer a wide range of models for good sex and romantic relationships, with hooking up as one option among many. (p. 10)

As Heldman and Wade (2010) posit, a research agenda examining hook-up culture will be necessarily multi-methodological with cross-disciplinary collaboration, including better communication across the various disciplines that investigate the subject. This manuscript not only commissions a diversification of the disciplines, fields, and methodologies engaged and employed in hookup research, but also cautions researchers and students to

critically assess both the anecdotal and scholastic information we receive about casual sex on U.S. college and university campuses.

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Los españoles y la sexualidad en el siglo XXI

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Reviews (I)

Ayuso Sánchez, L., & García Faroldi, L. (2014). *Los españoles y la sexualidad en el siglo XXI*. Madrid: CIS, Monografías, Num. 281. ISBN: 9788474766417

El libro *Los españoles y la sexualidad en el siglo XXI* es fruto de un estudio sociológico pionero en el panorama científico español. Es la primera vez en España que se propone estudiar un fenómeno social tan complejo como es el de la sexualidad utilizando unas técnicas de investigación cuantitativas. El estudio presentado en este libro se basa en la explotación científica de dos encuestas del CIS: *Actitudes y prácticas sexuales* (CIS, 2738) llevada a cabo en 2008, y la *Encuesta Nacional sobre Salud Sexual* (CIS, 2780) realizada entre el 2008-2009.

En España, la sexualidad ha sido un tema tabú dentro de la sociedad y ha predominado una cultura del silencio controlada por un cierto tipo de moralidad. Además también ha permanecido como un tema oculto ya que la sexualidad no se estudiaba desde la sociología sino desde otras ramas científicas y, de esta manera, era utilizado como un instrumento ideológico para legitimar los roles tradicionales de género. Para llenar ese vacío epistemológico los autores se proponen con este libro dar a conocer “las opiniones y los comportamientos sexuales de los españoles, ahondando en la forma que tienen de vivir su práctica sexual, el lugar que esta ocupa en su vida en pareja o en relación con su felicidad”. (p.10)

En el primer capítulo del libro, que es la Introducción, los autores hablan sobre dos fenómenos muy importantes que marcan en la actualidad la sexualidad de los españoles: “la revolución sexual” y “la transición sexual”. En los capítulos siguientes se contrastan las características de estos fenómenos con el estado actual de la cultura y la práctica sexual de los españoles.

El capítulo 2 es el primero de los cuatro pilares de la investigación y se titula *La sociedad española ante el sexo y la sexualidad*. Los puntos principales de este bloque son los análisis “macro” y “micro” de la sexualidad, la vida sexual y la identidad sexual y, por último, se analiza el

grado de felicidad con la salud general y la sexual de los españoles, y también su grado de felicidad y satisfacción personal.

El capítulo 3 trata sobre las Relaciones de pareja y la sexualidad. En este capítulo hay una explotación muy rica de los datos de las encuestas en relación con los tipos de parejas, la importancia de la sexualidad en la pareja y su relación con la felicidad, las relaciones esporádicas, la fidelidad y la aparición del Internet y los riesgos o posibilidades que éste ofrece a las parejas.

En el capítulo 4, *La vida sexual de los españoles*, se profundiza más en los aspectos relacionados con la práctica sexual. Si en el capítulo anterior el foco de atención estaba sobre la pareja, ahora el centro de análisis son los individuos. Aquí se estudian aspectos como el grado de conocimiento que se tiene en relación a la sexualidad, la primera relación sexual, la práctica sexual habitual, la ausencia de la práctica sexual, la virginidad, y, finalmente, los riesgos de la sexualidad como son las enfermedades de transmisión sexual y los abusos sexuales.

El último de los pilares de esta investigación lo representa el capítulo 5, *El sexo como negocio*. En este último bloque se analiza el sexo desde la perspectiva del consumo. Por lo tanto, aborda los temas del consumo de contenidos sexuales, el consumo de sustancias estimulantes y/o juguetes sexuales y, por último, se estudia el fenómeno de la prostitución en España. El libro incluye unas *Conclusiones* (cap 6) y termina con los Capítulos 7 y 8 que son la Bibliografía y los Anexos.

Este libro se basa en el análisis del proceso de “transición sexual” basada en las revoluciones sexuales y sociales originadas en la transición social y política hacia la democracia que se da en España a partir de la década de los 60. Esta época se caracteriza por unas transformaciones culturales profundas que ayudan a explicar este fenómeno. Además, este trabajo tiene el mérito de estudiar el fenómeno de la sexualidad en la sociedad española desde la perspectiva sociológica, y hacer una primera exploración en esta área. En más de una ocasión los autores no dejan respuestas definitivas sino que abren nuevas preguntas de investigación, contribuyendo así a ampliar el campo de estudio.

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Men and Masculinities around the World. Transforming Men's Practices

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Reviews (II)

Ruspini, E., Hearn, J., Pease, B., & Pringle, K. (Eds.). (2012). *Men and Masculinities around the World. Transforming Men's Practices*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN: 978-0-230-10715-1

Hay ocasiones en que la vida ofrece regalos inesperados... incluso en forma de libros. Este es uno de esos casos. La editorial neoyorquina Palgrave ha asumido la iniciativa de crear la colección Global Masculinities, en la que han visto la luz seis volúmenes en el plazo de dos años. La mayoría de ellos pueden encajar en el difuso ámbito de los cultural studies; en contraste, *Men and Masculinities Around the World* responde a una vocación de compromiso con los procesos de transformación social desde una perspectiva afín tanto al feminismo como a la teoría crítica. Si desde estos planteamientos la asunción del rol de varón hegemónico es un problema –o un fenómeno susceptible de problematización-, la compilación dirigida por Elisabetta Ruspini y sus colaboradores se centra en recoger el testimonio de iniciativas diversas que abordan las causas y efectos sociales de la masculinidad en el marco de una concepción práctica e intervencionista orientada a su transformación y neutralización.

Los propios editores reconocen un afán inconcluso de proveer al lector de los fundamentos para elaborar un proceso comparativo que permita inspirar el diseño, con base histórica y empírica, de modos mejores de participar en la modificación social de las relaciones entre género y poder, en otras palabras, revertir el ejercicio de la desigualdad que puede derivarse de ciertos modos de concebirse como varón. Se trata de una limitación tan llamativa como comprensible. Tras una introducción –que equivale a una diáfana declaración de intenciones-, siguen 17 capítulos, cada uno de ellos abordando problemáticas asociadas a la masculinidad en diferentes países. La muestra que brindan, sin embargo, dista en mucho de ser representativa. Predominan los casos europeos, cuando no occidentales o específicos de países desarrollados. Nigeria y Sudáfrica constituyen el conjunto de la aportación africana; Australia, China, Japón y Pakistán, Asia y el Pacífico; Estados Unidos, Colombia y México, aportan a la obra las políticas americanas. Con tales mimbres es complejo establecer comparaciones

sistemáticas, aún más en el marco de la importancia que los recopiladores atribuyen al proceso de globalización. Aun así, debe reconocerse, por un lado, que los estudios de género y en especial de masculinidad(es) responden a una tradición académica geopolíticamente definida, al margen de que las condiciones de accesibilidad al circuito de publicaciones de impacto en ciertos países se ve sitiada por factores de orden tanto económico, social o lingüístico. Aún así... ¿no habría sido de agradecer la inclusión de los casos de Rusia (esencial para comprender el caso finlandés, incluido), Alemania, España, India, Irán, Tailandia, Venezuela, Chile o Argentina? Si así fuera, al potencial de representatividad se añadiría el interés derivado de los diferentes contextos particulares. Ciertamente, hay constricciones de espacio, y otras fuentes a las que recurrir, como una visión panorámica de las políticas en América editadas por Francisco Aguayo y Michelle Sadler que complementa los desvelos de Ruspini y colaboradores.

Más allá de las intenciones y calidad de las contribuciones del libro, debe destacarse que éste constituye una fuente de información descomunal tanto para el lector avezado como para el neófito en el ámbito del estudio de la masculinidad. No faltan datos históricos, empíricos, aproximaciones cuantitativas, cualitativas y mixtas, e incluso deliciosos ejemplos de análisis de discurso (caso estadounidense o británico). Las aportaciones bibliográficas son exhaustivas, y muchas de ellas no sólo potencial y pluralmente útiles, sino intelectualmente tentadoras. Puede llamar la atención la discrepancia entre el título de la obra y mi reciente uso del singular. Encuentro particularmente llamativo que en el conjunto de las aportaciones, sólo el caso mexicano ofrezca tipologías, pautas de modelos de masculinidades mínimamente formalizados. En la mayoría de estudios incluidos, las masculinidades son más un supuesto –o un proyecto a construir– que una realidad constatable. En todo caso, no son. No son el modelo hegemónico-tradicional-patriarcal-impositivo-violento.

Si bien la referencia a masculinidades apunta más a una promesa que a una realidad, o a una reflexión teórica cimentada –idéntica carencia presenta en relación al concepto de identidad, que viene a ser, como ocurre con cultura, una especie de caja de Pandora a la que se refiere con regularidad pero no se osa abrir (¡a saber los problemas teóricos que ocasionaría!)-, *Men and Masculinities Around the World* ofrece elementos de gran valía para el estudioso del género y los varones. Acaso no facilita conclusiones derivadas de aplicar el método comparativo, pero brinda perspectivas para construir no

sólo comparaciones, sino opciones de análisis y deviene una fructífera sementera de ideas para diseñar investigaciones. Es el caso de las diferentes estrategias entre modos de intervención vertical –promulgación de leyes, declaraciones políticas- y horizontal. El papel de la educación se manifiesta relevante, aun cuando no puede desligarse en muchos casos de una selección estratégica de intervención en función de la variable edad (acaso innecesariamente excluyente). Asimismo, el papel de los grupos de apoyo, de la comunicación entre varones, o entre varones y mujeres, bien sea para compartir expectativas o delimitar problemas en el marco comunitario (desde la misma educación a la salud, la pobreza/desempleo o la violencia), es otro factor presente en las iniciativas orientadas a la igualdad que no debe desestimarse, aun cuando puede sorprender que tan sólo en el caso británico se haga referencia específica a procesos dialógicos.

Las propuestas transformativas presentes en la obra llevan a una diversidad de enfoques acerca de cuanto debería ser el “nuevo hombre” (por favor, no asociar al estalinismo o el nazismo) antes que considerar su diversidad. El rol masculino en relación a la violencia es un elemento abordado en la mayoría de los casos estudiados; una violencia que no sólo tiene como damnificada a la mujer, sino también a los niños y a los propios varones (casos colombiano y nigeriano en especial). Igual ámbito de aplicación es recurrente por cuanto se refiere a la familia y la paternidad. Motivo de preocupación, a mi modo de ver, es la ausencia de valoración de los efectos de la mayor parte de iniciativas propuestas. Rasgo que debe tenerse en cuenta en la evaluación de políticas que, diseñadas desde instancias oficiales o informales/voluntarias, implican un ejemplo de compromiso con procesos de cambio social.

Por supuesto, toda iniciativa orientada a generar el cambio social suscita reticencias, que en estos casos pueden provenir de estamentos religiosos (en el caso pakistaní presenta ambivalencias), estatales, o de segmentos de la sociedad civil. La dimensión ideológica se evidencia como relevante en estas posiciones inmovilistas o deslegitimadoras, bien bajo la forma de tradicionalismo, bien bajo una concepción de individualismo inspirado en valores neoliberales.

En definitiva, Ruspini y sus editores ofrecen una obra valiosa en diversidad y volumen de información, con potencial inspirador para avanzar en el ámbito de los estudios de masculinidad(es), y con una ambición de intervención que recupera las ciencias sociales como instrumento de

transformación y mejora social, en contraste con los razonables temores que albergaba en su momento Stanislav Andreski.

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