

Deconstructing masculinity: Dominant discourses on gender, sexuality and HIV and AIDS from the experience of the adolescent male orphan

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As a postfoundational practical theological study, this article is interested in the description of the co-researchers' experiences, as these are continually informed by various traditions of interpretations. It listens to and describes the current narratives of three co-researchers and deconstructs these narratives by looking at various concepts of masculinity and sexuality. It looks specifically at how these concepts are created and maintained through various socio-cultural dominant narratives related to gender, sexuality, and HIV and AIDS, and how these dominant narratives influence the creation of self- and alternative narratives of the co-researchers. This article employs research methods from the qualitative and case study research design and works from the theoretical viewpoints of a postfoundational practical theology and narrative therapy.

Research interest and question

Statistics South Africa states that by 2011 approximately 5.38 million people in South Africa were living with HIV and AIDS and that 16.6% of the population, aged between 15 and 49, is HIV positive (Statistics SA 2011:2). This report adds that 'the total number of persons living with HIV in South Africa increased from an estimated 4.21 million in 2001 to 5.38 million by 2011' and that 'approximately one-fifth of South African women in their reproductive ages are HIV positive' (Statistics SA 2011:5). The *Global report: UNAIDS report on the global AIDS epidemic* (UNAIDS 2010:2) states that in 2010 more women than men were living with HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa and that 'one half of people living with HIV globally are women and 76% of all HIV-positive women live in Sub-Saharan Africa' (UNAIDS 2010:130).

Statistics do not tell us much about the person and what he or she experiences; nevertheless, they indicate that women globally and specifically in sub-Saharan Africa are suffering from the effects and affects of HIV and AIDS. They also indicate that women's vulnerability of becoming infected still remains disproportionately high compared to men and raises the question of possible reasons.

The *Global report* (UNAIDS 2010:130) aims to explain this imbalance by stating that 'power imbalances, harmful social gender norms, gender-based violence and marginalisation clearly increase the vulnerability of both women and men to HIV infection.' Many factors contribute to the vulnerability of women and girls being infected, such as gender inequalities in terms of low socioeconomic and political status, unequal access to education, and fear of violence as well as their low capacity to negotiate safer sex, access the services they need, and utilise opportunities for empowerment.

The recent news of the brutal and horrific rape and murder of Anene Booysen (02 February 2013) made us strikingly aware of the prevalent use and abuse of women and young girls in South Africa. Munusamy (2013:n.p.) in the *Daily Maverick* states '... that something has gone horribly wrong in South Africa for its women to be subjected to such horror and violence.'

Professor Rachel Jewkes of the Medical Research Council (MRC) headed a study about rape and HIV (cf. Jewkes *et al.* 2009). Together with her colleagues she interviewed 1.738 men in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. They found through these interviews that 28% of the men had raped a woman or girl, whilst 3% stated that they had raped a man or boy. Half of the men who admitted to raping a woman said that they had done so more than once, whilst 73% of these men admitted that they assaulted a woman before they reached the age of 20 (cf. Smith 2009). Smith (2009) states that 'any woman raped by a man over the age of 25 has a one in four chance of her attacker being HIV-positive.' In a further study conducted by Jewkes *et al.* (2010:41–48) the association between violence and HIV infection was confirmed. It was found that '... power inequity in relationships

and intimate partner violence increased the incident risk of HIV infection among young South African women.' In an attempt to identify possible reasons behind this attitude of violence of South African men, Jewkes *et al.* (2010) states the following:

We have a very, very high prevalence of rape in South Africa. I think it is down to ideas about masculinity based on gender hierarchy and the sexual entitlement of men. It is rooted in an African ideal of manhood. (n.p.; cf. Smith 2009)

The fact is that these harmful norms, related to concepts of masculinity and femininity, are not only increasing the vulnerability of women, but also of men themselves. In confirmation of this the *Global report* has found:

... traditional roles and societal values related to masculinity might encourage boys and men to adopt risky behaviour, including excessive alcohol use and concurrent sexual relationships, so increasing their risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV. (UNAIDS 2010:130)

Therefore, it becomes clear that men play an immense role in oppressing and marginalising women by maintaining various socio-cultural gender-based norms and attitudes, thereby increasing their vulnerability. It is surprising that '... despite evidence of positive changes in mens' and boys' behaviour and attitudes when they participate in programmes that address HIV, sexual and reproductive health, and gender-based violence (cf. Barker *et al.* 2010: 539–553), few such programmes are in operation' (UNAIDS 2010:136–137). It is clear that both men and boys need to be included in innovative programmes and approaches so that we can more effectively combat and change harmful social and cultural practices and norms (cf. UNAIDS 2010:137).

It would seem then, that the consequences of specific gender constructs fuel the deterioration of this already dire context. The above statistics and information force us to be more aware of how gender norms and concepts of masculinity increase the inequalities between women and men in our society, and how these inequalities and positions of marginalisation in turn increase the number of HIV infections of both men and women. We cannot ignore or deny the correlation between these gender constructs and the destruction that this epidemic leaves in its wake.

This article postulates that by deconstructing the dominant discourses of this context in collaboration with the co-researchers of this study, their awareness of the role that these constructs play in the construction of their current and future narratives, and in turn the effects these narratives have on their relations with the opposite sex, can be increased. By increasing awareness, a sense of responsibility and accountability is fostered, thereby giving them an opportunity to actively make a decision on how they want to construct their life narratives.

Methodology

This research study has its departure from the qualitative research strategy.

Take note that data analysis was not the primary goal of the research process; instead, understanding (meaning-making) was the primary goal. This understanding was developed in collaboration with the co-researchers, as the researcher and the co-researchers deconstructed personal narratives and socio-cultural discourses, thereby developing alternative narratives.

Congruent with the case study design, participants were selected according to the non-probability sampling method (cf. Whitley 2002:394), and more specifically, according to the *purposive sampling method* (cf. Whitley 2002:395), which entails that final participants are selected according to the researcher's own judgement and specific criteria. Seven participants were selected. These participants were involved with two non-governmental, community-based and faith-based organisations that work specifically with orphaned and vulnerable children affected by HIV and AIDS.

As part of the data collection process and as part of coming to an in-depth understanding of these co-researchers' experiences, they were invited to a weekend breakaway on two separate occasions (Tree of Life Camp 2008 and a second Tree of Life Camp 2010, Magaliesburg, Sikelele Camp site), in order to discuss the items contained in the developed Tree of Life (2008, 10–12 Oct.), and David and Goliath booklet (2010, 26–28 Feb.).

Theoretical points of departure

The researcher did qualitative postmodern and postfoundational research, based on the models of the narrative approach and the seven movements of the postfoundational notion of practical theology. Accordingly, practical theology must always be locally contextual, socially constructed, directed by tradition, explorative of interdisciplinary meaning, and pointing beyond the local (cf. Müller 2005:78).

These requirements have been extended to seven movements. When conducted, these movements result in achieving the minimum requirements for a postfoundationalist practical theology (cf. Müller 2005:78). Additionally, specific methodological guidelines were developed for each movement (cf. Müller 2005:82) and were used to collect, describe and/or interpret the data of this study.

Deconstruction is an important concept used in narrative therapy and research, borrowed from the movement of postmodernism and developed from the acknowledgement that there is an indivisible connection between knowledge and power, and that this knowledge is latent in the discourses propagated by a specific society. Foucault (1976–1980) and other scholars recognised that the discourses in a society determine what knowledge is true, or valid, and what is not; hence, it is society that controls knowledge, and thus, holds the power. Narrative therapists postulate that these discourses are disseminated through various socio-cultural narratives, and that some of these narratives dominate, whilst

others marginalise (cf. Freedman & Combs 2002:13). The method of deconstruction is continually employed during this study, in order to investigate the dominant socio-cultural discourses that influence the writing of self-narratives.

Postfoundationalism emerged in response to the assertions of foundationalism, antifoundationalism and nonfoundationalism, as it became clear that an interposition is needed. Van Huyssteen (1999:33) states that postfoundationalism is a refigured *notion of rationality*, or a model of rationality which enables a better understanding of various epistemological and hermeneutical concerns with the use of the epistemic skills of responsible, critical judgement and discernment. In essence, postfoundationalism helps us to discover the value of a variety of resources from different domains of knowledge, in coming to a better interpretation and understanding of a phenomenon or event, which is embedded within a specific context and informed by various traditions (cf. van Huyssteen 1999:33).

This article, as a postfoundational practical theological study, became interested in the description of the co-researchers' experiences, as these are continually informed by various traditions of interpretations. In turn these interpretations may indicate various dominant discourses underlying the context, which serve as traditions of interpretations. In line with this, the study is particularly interested in dominant discourses regarding the concepts of masculinity and sexuality that influence the construction of the self-narrative in relation to future-related role expectancy and responsibilities, gender identity and sexuality, which might or might not influence the use or abuse of women and the spread of HIV and AIDS.

In describing experiences, it is imperative to consider the various traditions that inform and shape the interpretations made by the co-researchers, as Freedman and Combs (1996) state:

The metaphor of social construction leads us to consider the ways in which every person's social, interpersonal reality has been constructed through interaction with other human beings and human institutions and to focus on the influence of social realities on the meaning of people's lives. (p. 1)

As a postfoundational study, this article is obliged to acknowledge the way in which epistemes are also shaped by traditions. Throughout the description of experiences, the researcher guided the co-researchers to reflect on their experiences from the perspective of their religious and socio-cultural traditions (cf. Demasure & Müller 2006:418) with the use of open-ended questions and deconstructive questioning. It is only through honest dialogue between the researcher and co-researchers that these discourses could be identified and affirmed.

Masculinity and sexuality – two sides of the same coin?

Three of the ¹co-researchers' narratives were chosen in giving a description of their experiences, as these are informed by

1. The participants in this study gave their permission for their stories to be published. Pseudonyms were used.

various traditions and related socio-cultural discourses of sexuality and masculinity.

Masculinity and sexuality – traditions of interpretation

When it comes to sexuality and women, a tension appears to exist between the boys' sexual desires and lack of resistance, and the fact that they describe a good woman as someone who respects her body. They admit they want to marry a woman who respects her body, but on the other hand, they appreciate it when women give them sex (and inherently expect it from their girlfriends).

Kgotoso feels that 'a man gets respect for being a player – a man gets respect and feels good if they can have many girls, sometimes we just get bored with one girl.' He goes on by saying: 'Sometimes after sex I get irritated and annoyed with the girl', possibly indicating her use as a sex object.

Molimi states that in his community 'boys and girls do prove womanhood and boyhood' by having sex. He states that your friends expect you to have sex to be seen as a real man: 'Men can't respect and resist temptation – if they do it [*have sex*], they are manly.' The conversation turned in the direction of what a guy will think if a girl stops the heated intimacy session because she does not want to have sex. Molimi stated that he will respect the girl, but Kgotoso said: 'No I will be disappointed, upset, she turned me on, she led me into temptation.' Kgotoso's brother states that for him it depends on the type of relationship he has with the girl, but paradoxically he states: '... if she gives you sex, you still love her, but [*if*] you can get sex from others' [*shrugging his shoulders indicating that 'people will take the opportunity'*].

In reference to this both Kgotoso and his brothers stated that 'men can't resist temptation,' but on the other hand Kgotoso states that women should respect their bodies. In response to the question why only women should respect their bodies, he stated that 'it's different for men and boys [*because*] men can't disrespect their bodies, their bodies do not "wear" as women's do.'

Molimi was honest and stated that he had sex with different women; he does not love because he wants to satisfy his sexual desires. Kgotoso's brother states: 'I appreciate it when I receive sex from woman.'

It is ironic that in response to the question of what makes a woman a 'bad' woman, all the boys responded by stating that she is a woman who gives sex freely does not take care of her physical appearance – in other words, a 'loose' woman. Kgotoso stated once again that 'women should respect their bodies.'

When asked if they ever think of the possibility of getting infected with HIV and AIDS most boys responded that they never think of that. When asked if they always use a condom, they stated that it depends on the heat of the moment. One

co-researcher stated that he only uses brand name condoms, as he does not trust the free condoms distributed by the government. Another boy confirmed this and added that he does not like the 'feel' of the governmental condoms. In an informal discussion (Rametsi Eco Game Farm, Swartruggens, 26 June 2010) with two young adults, also orphaned early in life, they also stated that sometimes they do not think of using a condom. One of the young men stated that he would rather not use a condom at all, if he can't afford to buy a brand name. It is interesting to note the female participants' response to this question. Two of the female participants know that their parents died of AIDS, and state that they are very scared of getting infected, considering the way their parents died. They acknowledge that this is the sole reason why they have not had sex yet. Only two of the five boys have gone for an HIV test.

Interestingly, Manqoba was silent during the whole conversation. A reason for this might be that Manqoba has two sisters whom he respects very much. Later during the conversation one of the female participants posed this question: 'What if that woman is your sister?' and all the boys responded in outrage that they will 'kill' the boy who misuses their sisters in this way. However, neither Kgotoso nor Molimi have sisters, so this is not reality for them. In doing the activities in the workbook Manqoba stated that he feels it is wrong to have sex with many women, but 'from what I see these men just have sex with different woman for the fun of it.'

It would seem then that these boys feel they need sex and they cannot resist temptation nor control their own urges, as it is seen as a function of their biological make-up. Women on the other hand are seen as being able to resist temptation and being in control of their own urges; in fact, if she fails to do so, she is viewed as a 'bad' woman and men do not want such a woman for a wife, when and if they get married. Men then expect the impossible of women: they expect them to give them sex because men biologically need it, but at the same time when they are ready to commit, they want a sexually respectable woman. Therefore, they participate in the sexual use and abuse of women, and they expect when they are ready, when they have used enough women to satisfy their sexual desires, women must be open to their love and just accept sexual use and abuse as part of their manhood and masculinity.

On the issue of marriage and commitment, Denis and Ntsimane (2005:238) assert that the institution of marriage, specifically amongst the poor, does not predominantly regulate relations between men and women, at least not anymore. The rate of getting married has declined and caused the unsettling of family units, where most children, specifically in Africa, are raised by single parent mothers and seldom see their fathers, that is, if they are even aware of who their fathers are.

Various studies show that men are proud about their fertility and do not shy away from proving this fertility. However,

these fathers will not necessarily take responsibility for the children they reproduce. Glaser (1992) did a study on the subculture of the 'tsotsi' and found that it was an honour for a tsotsi to father children, so that he could prove his manhood. In urban slang of South Africa, 'tsotsi' loosely translated means 'thug', usually given to gangsters, thieves and liars that are either still young or still a minor. One of the participants of Glaser's study stated proudly that he had fathered a child with his 15 year old girlfriend, when he was at the mere age of 16. He stated that they would boast about their kids with their friends, although it was unusual for a tsotsi who fathered a child to support this child in any way. Glaser concluded that the tsotsi culture believed that the rearing of children is a woman's responsibility (cf. Denis & Ntsimane 2005:240).

It is interesting that the co-researchers reveal ambivalent feelings regarding marriage and fatherhood. On the one hand, they long for a strong family unit and to take part in the rearing of their children, because they are all double orphaned. On the other hand, many of the boys shy away from the commitment of marriage, but state that they will consider this when they find the 'right' girl.

It becomes clear that being sexually active is regarded as a sign of manhood and that many boys, as the participants of this study stated, need to prove their manhood by having sex with many girls, even though they feel and know that on a moral basis this is not acceptable behaviour. It also seems that the activity and decision of having sex does not move along the line of a rational decision-making process where the pros and cons are kept in mind, neither is the moral issue considered. What is worrying is that these boys never consider the implications of their sexual demands on the innocent girls and women who fall prey to their manipulation and deceit of apparent love. These boys acknowledge that their behaviour is unacceptable and that they are wrong in treating girls and women in this way. It is apparent that their ostensible feelings of guilt are not strong enough to regulate or even transform this behaviour. It must also be kept in mind that these boys are having sex at an age at which they have not yet developed into full mental and emotional maturity; therefore, they do not yet have the capability to understand the responsibility of fathering a child or the consequences of getting infected with HIV. This demonstrates the tendency of adolescents to participate in risk behaviour.

Masculinity and sexuality – reviewing dominant discourses

In considering reasons that can explain behaviour and thought patterns as displayed by the co-researchers, some insights from the psychology and sociology of gender and sexuality are warranted. This movement is also motivated by the concept of transversality which coincides with the postfoundational notion of rationality and explores understanding and interpretation beyond the specific and locally embedded context and discipline (in this case Practical Theology) by engaging in cross-cultural and interdisciplinary conversation. Van Huyssteen (1999) states that:

Transversal rationality thus emerges as a place in time and space where our multiple beliefs and practices, our habits of thought and attitudes, our prejudices and assessments, converge. The texture of this transversality, thus resides in the domain of our social, communal and institutional practices. (p. 136)

We have the imperative to move beyond our own discipline and explore other rationalities regarding the topic at hand. Subsequently, we turn to the insights given by several psychological and sociological models in explaining gender identity and subsequent sexual behaviour, specifically pertaining to men and adolescents. We are here interested in the social and cultural aspects, as we have an imperative as social constructionists and postfoundationalist practical theologians to search for traditions of understanding related to gender identity and sexual behaviour within the context in which this behaviour takes place.

It is important to list the statements given by the co-researchers, before we can investigate the roots or causes of such statements:

- Statement 1: 'It is accepted and even expected from society, for men to have multiple, frequent sexual partners.'
- Statement 2: 'Men do not have control over their desires and sexual urges and the acting on of it.'
- Statement 3: 'It is not accepted for women to have multiple sexual partners or to be sexually active before marriage, because a woman must have respect for her body and because women's bodies are destructible through the act of sex.'
- Statement 4: 'Men appreciate and expect sexual favours from women (girlfriend).'
- Statement 5: 'A man will get upset with a women tempting him during intercourse and then backing out.'
- Statement 6: 'My wife should not be a "loose" woman and should respect her body.'
- Statement 7: 'I don't think about HIV and AIDS at that moment.'

Anthropological theories

The first contribution to our understanding of sexual and thus gender-related behaviour is that from the anthropologist Margaret Mead (1935, 1949) who did studies on the operations of gender and the notion of masculinity and femininity within specific cultures. Mead found that the notion of being a man and being a woman differ markedly between different cultures, and therefore concluded that the notion of gender and gender-related responsibilities and roles are dependent on enculturation. Mead stated specifically that the rules, rituals and customs of a specific culture and subculture are infiltrated with specific expectancies and requirements for male and female behaviour and what it means to be male and female (cf. Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:40). Therefore, '... sex is determined by biology, whereas gender is a social construct ...' (Balk 1995:22).

Sociological theories

Sociologists, in turn, focus their attention on gender roles and how this influences the performative differences in men and women's behaviour. Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers

(2004:41) refer to Robert Brannon (1976) who postulates that men and women are provided with certain 'scripts' which they must internalise and which subsequently act as a guide for behaviour. Therefore, the concept of role is seen as '... socially encouraged patterns of behaviour that people are expected to perform in specific situations' (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:41).

Both of the above-stated theories reaffirm our notion that identity and subsequent thought and behaviour is grounded within a specific social context that creates certain epistemes which are in turn circulated, so that behaviour can be guided. As postfoundationalists and social constructionists, we further assume that these epistemes, according to Foucault (1976–1980), will contain a degree of power and control which is then implemented for someone's or something's own good (cf. Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:41). Therefore, the question arises as to why people blindly follow these 'scripts'. Surely, there must be some motivation behind gender-specific and sexual behaviour other than enculturation, since people are elevated above the notion of an animal and need motivation for behaviour and intelligently consider the consequences of their behaviour.

Structural functionalism

Talcott Parson (1964) answers this question by rejecting the notion that gender differences can be explained solely by biology. He proposes a view of '... gender differentiation as a product of structural functionalism' (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:42; Parsons & Bales 1953:101). He argues that social organisation is a product of evolution whereby social and cultural practices evolve or change so as to serve the purposes of social cohesion and productivity. Role acquisition is attained by the internalisation of a gender identity which is proposed by a specific community or society. Having said this, it is important that a person must have both competence in and commitment to the gender role, before the notion of gender roles comes into practice. Social functionalism states that the differentiation between role expectation for males and females serves complimentary functions, working together so that society can function more effectively (cf. Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:42). This theory, however, does not explain why deviant behaviour, such as sexual deviant behaviour, is widely accepted, even though it obviously does not serve the common good of the society.

It is evident, when looking at the responses of the co-researchers in this study, that a notion of masculinity and femininity, or what is accepted behaviour for men and women respectively, plays an immense role in the way that they act and more specifically in their sexual behaviour, although they do not acknowledge this but rather attribute it to biology. Therefore, gender identity and gender stereotyping as received from a specific culture or society, do indeed play a role in the choice of using women for sexual gratification, whilst at the same time ambivalently expecting that one's wife will not have been one of these women who was used,

as she must respect her body and herself, assuming that she actually has power in making such a decision. I postulate that a sexual act is preceded by a cognitive schema which entails a certain pattern of thinking as well as an internalised discourse from society related to gender, which ultimately determines the act of having sex or not, or of having *safe sex* or not.

The gender schema theory

The gender schema theory, proposes that people develop a complex, schematic cognitive category for gender which serves as a framework for gaining and maintaining gender-related knowledge (cf. Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:48). Bem (1985) states:

Gender schema theory proposes that sex typing derives in large measures from gender-schematic processing, from a generalized readiness on the part of the child to encode and organize information – including information about self – according to the culture’s definitions of maleness and femaleness. (p. 186)

The gender schema theory furthermore proposes that sex typing is mediated by a person’s own cognitive processing, whilst the processing itself is derived from the sex-differentiated practices of the socio-cultural context (cf. Bem 1985:186). Thus, the schema theory explains how the above cognitive statements are developed from the socio-cultural context, whilst the manner of processing depends on the individual. In this way individual differences are accounted for, as some men, despite their environment, do not take part in some of the sexually exploited practices. It also explains how these boys can participate in practices that they acknowledge are wrong. The question now is, ‘what is the specific motivator behind overt sexual behaviour, if these boys cognitively process the moral unacceptability of their behaviour?’ It is clear that this motivator, whatever it might be, prevails over moral awareness. This motivator also seems to be the primary factor behind their illogical line of thinking, such as the attitude of being a victim of one’s own sexual desires and having no control over them. Or the ambivalence of expecting a woman to satisfy their sexual desires, but when seen in the light of a future spouse, such a woman becomes dispensable and has to give way for a morally pious woman.

The social learning theory

The social learning theory, on the other hand, might give some insights with regard to role models and gender. This theory states that children acquire gender roles through imitation and modelling – an observation of adults’ behaviour in the same context, looking at the punishment or reward which follows certain behaviour – and then decide to imitate the same behaviour or not. It is crucial to realise that a child must identify with the adult person in some way. A strong identification factor is gender. Children tend to imitate the behaviour of the adult of the same gender. As children grow older, they learn to classify various behaviours as pertaining to a certain gender. Therefore, parents act as strong role models, because children are often more exposed to them than to other adults (cf. Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:48). In this case where most of the co-researchers

did not have a father, they had to imitate the behaviour of another male. Unfortunately, such an alternative role model might not be good model for gender behaviour, but children will not necessarily realise that. A good example of this is co-researcher Molimi who sees his brother as a role model, because he taught him how to drink and how to get drunk (seeing it as a positive trait), apparently unaware of the inappropriateness of teaching such behaviour to a child.

The gender stereotyping theory

The gender stereotyping theory connects closely with the social learning theory in stating that people obtain a rigid set of beliefs regarding the characteristics of men and women and what it means to be a ‘real’ man and a ‘real’ woman, which they attain from observation and modelling in their homes as children. It postulates that children are more likely to develop rigid gender stereotyping when their fathers model a very traditional role of what it means to be a man in the house, provided their father has a strong influence on them. Moreover, they argue that strong gender stereotyping usually develops in a context where the behavioural aspects of gender are emphasised more than the biological differences (cf. Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:58).

Although this theory seems plausible, in this context where most of the boys did not grow up with a father in the house, the question arises where their rigid notion of gender stereotyping comes from. The media, of course, also has an immense influence on the way children perceive masculinity and femininity, especially the music industry which our young people follow unquestioningly. Two of the co-researchers are indeed very much involved with the hip-hop culture, being hip-hop artists themselves. This culture is known for its exploitation of women as sexual objects.

The conflict theory on gender

The conflict theory on gender, on the other hand, states that different roles and positions of women and men in society come from a conflict of interest between patriarchal power and social positions (cf. Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:42). Here we are presented with various feminist theories based on the postmodern notion of power relations underlying certain discourses in society.

If we take a closer look at statement 5: ‘A man will get upset with a women tempting him during intercourse and then backing out’, we gain some insight into this also from the psychology of gender and sexuality, and more specifically from the insights offered by the second wave of feminism which emerged in the 1970s. Apparently this idea of a woman who turns a man on and then refuses to ‘go all the way’, is referred to as a ‘prick-tease’ and is many times used by men to taunt a woman. Brownmiller (1975:121) states that this is a huge grey area which takes on the form of sexual exploitation where a woman is coerced into intercourse because she does not possess the means to physically or psychologically resist, or she succumbs because she never realised that she might ‘... with effort repel the advance’. Brownmiller (1975:121)

explains that this is caused by a female paralysis of will and is not much different from a case of rape. Please take note that I am not implying that the co-researchers in this study are taking part in any sexually abusive or exploitative behaviour; however, this theory assists in shaping our understanding of the power relations which shape the patterns of reason for the co-researchers of this study.

Another feminist theory involves the notion of otherness. The theory of otherness is '... a dualistic mode which runs through western thinking in which things are defined in contrast with what they are not' (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:134). According to this theory women are viewed by patriarchal epistemologies as '... that-by-which-men-define-themselves-as-not-being' (*ibid*). According to Haste (1993:85), this idea of 'otherness' maintains the division between gender roles and subsequent sexual differences. Haste states that men define their notion of 'selves' on the basis of their (being of) otherness from women, and as such affirm their integrity and definition of the self. This idea might explain why the co-researchers reason in a very illogical manner, that men can have multiple sex partners, because their genitals do not 'wear' in the same way as women's do, as well as the notion that what counts for men, does not count for women: men can be promiscuous, women may not, based on this notion of otherness which simultaneously affirms and justifies their being and identity of self. According to this theory, we can conclude that this episteme is ultimately informed and shaped by traditions of patriarchal otherness and subsequent supremacy, and not a variable of the biological or cognitive.

In further reference to feminist explanations regarding men's sexual behaviour and their power of control through sexual behaviour, Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers (2004:231) suggest the concept of 'heteropatriarchy' which assists in giving men sexual access to women, but this time through a variety of manipulative strategies whereby women are 'seduced'. These strategies position women in such a way that they do not only accept sex from men, but that they actually feel they want to do so, because, for example, they are in love or, presumably, the man is in love with them. This might indicate some strategies employed by the co-researchers in convincing some women to have casual sex, by telling them that they are actually in love with them, whilst they know, as they state, that they will not marry a woman who gives sex this easily; hence, they are using the women for their momentarily sexual gratification, but convincing them otherwise.

These various theories are not given here only as a source from which we might gain understanding of behaviour, but also to demonstrate how certain theories can assist in the affirmation and maintenance of very illogical and oppressive justifications for the behaviour of people in powerful positions. For instance, if we look at statement 2 which states: 'Men do not have control over their desires and sexual urges and the acting on of it', it might seem a ridiculous statement and one might think, surely, this type of thinking cannot take

place or be justified in any manner, yet such thinking can be explained with the help of theory.

Sociobiology and evolutionary psychology

Certain theories of sexual behaviour, specifically the sociobiology and evolutionary psychology theories regarding sexual behaviour, can indeed provide a justification for exploitative and abusive sexual relations with women (cf. Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:239) and act as the motivating source for such behaviour. As an example, take a look at the extracts of the biology-based theory of Anne and Bill Moir (1998):

Men on average have 400 per cent more erotic fantasies than women, men dream of women, they daydream of women, they fantasize about women, and they do not fantasize about having cosy chats beside the fire. His fantasies are about sex ... [H]e is sexually aroused far more easily than she is, and, as in the rest of his life, he craves novelty. He often finds that novelty in artificial stimuli, which is why he likes pin-ups, pornography and peepshows. (p. 219)

The above statements are not posed as questions or possibilities; they are posed as facts, as reality, and even more, as a generalised, universal reality that applies to all men. Here men are fed with constructs and ideas of the inevitable, and even more than this, if men do not feel this way or act in this way, they are posed as abnormal. Therefore, here our narrative has been written, completed and judged fundamental and unflinching. If such corrupted knowledge is disseminated in a society with young adolescent boys who are very much in a stage of development during which their only concern is acceptance by a social group, what would the consequences be for their behaviour informed by such 'facts'? One can imagine what liberty such an episteme must pose to delinquent boys and men, who are already caught up in discourses of oppression and dominance over women. Here their behaviour is posed as 'norm' and they are given the freedom to do as they please in the name of 'supposed' nature.

Another example from these two scholars is the following extract from their book *Why men don't iron: The real science of gender studies*:

The sexual drive in both women and men is fuelled by testosterone; and men have 1,000 per cent more ... [T]estosterone and sexual aggression is also linked. Sexual assaults by males peak at 17-25 years, but decline thereafter as the testosterone declines with age. There are more sexual assaults in the autumn when the male's testosterone peaks. Violent rape is associated with higher T levels, though the non-violent rapists generally has an average level ... [W]hile there is no proof at this time, it may be expected that a significant proportion of date rapes must be from steroid self-medication. (Moir & Moir 1998:222-223)

It is quite easy, especially when simplifying scientific statements, to come to the conclusion that men rape women because they are '... suffering from a testosterone-fuelled, irresistible urge that cannot be controlled' (Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:239).

It becomes understandable how sociobiology and evolutionary psychology might provide a justification for exploitative or abusive sexual relations with women, as similar discourses most probably informed the co-researchers of this study that they are not in control of their own urges. Here they can also argue, which they do, that when a man exploits, abuses, or simply uses a woman for his own sexual gratification, it is because he suffers from a testosterone-fuelled, irresistible impulse that he cannot control. The woman can partially be blamed for the emergence of this urge, as her behaviour and physical appearance combine to send him 'misleading messages', which he cannot discern because of his biological deficiency to communicate with or understand women. As Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers (2004) state:

The propensity is just 'wired in' to some men, who, especially in their youth, or at certain times of the year, lurk around, souped-up on testosterone, waiting to pounce. This is hardly a flattering image of men. (p. 239)

The socialisation theory

The socialisation theory, on the other hand, such as proposed by Lees (1996) suggests that sexual abuse or exploitation of women is the product of severe masculine stereotyping. She states that certain learned stereotypes, such as the avoidance of feminine qualities; the increase of male status, success and respect; the emphasis on self-reliance, strength and confidence; and the idea of oppressing rather than being oppressed, is organised in a type of macho-masculinity, which result in abusive and exploitative behaviour. She states that such a paradigm can be highly rewarding as it is a way of gaining status and respect within one's social group (cf. Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:240). This theory, however, does not consider issues of power and human will, as Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers (2004) state:

... they portray men as victims either to their own base 'animal nature' or to their dysfunctional 'nurture', incapable of acting in anything but a sexually aggressive, exploitative macho manner. (p. 240)

Postmodern theories

Another consideration comes from the postmodernist scholar, Michael Foucault (1976–1980), and his ideas regarding sexuality and power. Foucault (in Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:176–177) adamantly states that in the western world, sexuality as a performative act is a socially and culturally constructed body of knowledge which is specific to its time and place and as such acts as a form of power in controlling people's behaviour. He affirms this notion by giving four strategies by which this power is exerted, namely the 'socialization' of procreative behaviour; the 'hystericization' of women's bodies; the 'pedagogization' of children's sexuality; and the 'psychiatrization' of perverse desire.

In looking at the 'hystericization' of women's bodies, which is of particular interest to the nature of this study, Foucault states that women's sexuality is equated with their identity; thus, women are treated as if their biology is their identity.

This allows society to control and regulate women's behaviour (cf. Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:177). During an informal discussion with two young adult men who were orphaned as teenagers (Rametsi Eco Game Farm, Swartruggens, 26 June 2010) they stated that they see women as sexual objects, although they acknowledged that it is not right to do so. From the statements made by the co-researchers of this study, we might also conclude that they see women as sexual objects, and define them to the degree that they could satisfy their sexual desires and urges. Therefore, Jewkes's argument might be plausible as an active discourse in some societies. What was of particular interest to the researcher during this study, was that all the boys and men stated that they have much respect for their mothers, more than they have for their fathers, and miss them dearly; but when asked why they have respect for their mothers, as women, but inadvertently objectify women who fall outside this personal realm as sexual objects of pleasure, they responded fiercely that they do not see their mothers as sexual objects and would be greatly offended if any man would view their mothers in this way. They could not give any explanations for this line of thought, and found the question interesting as well. One would think that if a boy or a man has much respect for his mother and maintains a close relationship with her, his behaviour towards other women in general would display this affection for his mother. One might cautiously state that it seems as if the social need to conformity outweigh the personal experiential construction of gender relations. Or that the socio-cultural influence on the construction of gender relations happens outside and independent of the personal experience of various familial gender relations and is never merged into one construct of gender and sex. Another possibility is that their mothers and sisters are not experienced and constructed as persons of gender and thus sexual as beings.

Nevertheless, Foucault viewed sexuality essentially as a domain of power and that it is used by those in positions of power to exert and maintain their control over society. He states that the opposite is also true: that people use sexuality as a powerful resistance to dominant and authoritative power (cf. Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:177). In this sense, sexuality can be seen as a form of domination by men, to exert their power when all else fails, especially in the light of a loss of social and political power of the 'new man' (e.g. sexuality as resistance to power). However, it can also be seen as society's way, still embedded in patriarchal South Africa, to control women, by stating that sexuality is the domain of the male, and he has power to do as he pleases (sexuality as a form of power).

A final consideration from the postmodern feminist theories is that of Jacques Lacan (1966; cf. Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:135), who drew on the work of De Saussure ([1916] 1959) about the symbolic nature of language. Lacan (1966) postulated that human behaviour and experience is not driven by biological forces, of the id, ego and superego (as postulated by Freud), but rather constituted from three orders of meaning, namely the symbolic, the imaginary

and the real order. He postulated that these three orders influence people's experience in terms of how they construct, experience, and act out both their identity and sexuality. In laying out his theory, he proposed that the symbolic order exists of the language-based social and intersubjective world of meaning, which we acquire through socialisation and enculturation. The imaginary order, in turn, exists of one's unconscious desires, motivations and significance, constructed through the discourse of dreaming, piecing together bits of meaning into something that makes sense to a person. The real order is where the psychic is felt instead of understood, as with trauma, and falls outside the domain of significance. Lacan finally suggests that these three orders are in a constant antagonistic flux, where the real order pressurises both the imaginary and symbolic order, as they compete with each other for meaning (cf. Stainton Rogers & Stainton Rogers 2004:135; Bowie 1991; Lacan 1966).

In applying this theory to the study at hand, it might suggest that the boys experience certain desires of meaning, such as love, security and stability (imaginary order), but that they are acculturated and engendered with specific sexual male behaviour of dominance and power signifying masculinity (symbolic order), expressed in the real order as a struggle of deciding which order will serve as an ultimate source for creating meaning. Until that decision is consciously made, that is, until the boys have completed their self-narrative, which entails ultimate meaning for guiding future behaviour, acculturation will almost always prevail. The other possibility is that they desire sexual gratification and polygamy (imaginary order), whilst their religious affiliation might encourage and enforce sexual purity, which is then expressed in the real order as a struggle between maintaining their own desires and their spiritual and moral obligations. Once again, the ultimate meaning-making-narrative has to be developed before this constant struggle and flux will come to an end. This however, is 'psycho-analytical', and constitutes as a 'thin descriptive' way of looking at what we understand as a socially constructed phenomenon. Nevertheless, this theory also serves as a possible discourse that influences traditional interpretations of understanding, which has to be considered in the deconstruction of the narratives of the co-researchers.

HIV and AIDS, sexuality and gender

HIV and AIDS is an undeniable challenge faced by many South Africans, and especially by our youth. One cannot speak of sexuality without implying the possibility of the presence of HIV and AIDS. Similarly, one cannot speak of gender without considering the agents of HIV and AIDS. Barolsky (2003:19) states that HIV and AIDS '... challenges conventional sexuality and implicates gender and generational hierarchies directly.' Therefore, as much as adolescents do not want to admit the reality of this disease, they need to become aware of this challenge. They cannot take part in sexual activities with the mind-set of a child,

especially whilst the consequences of these activities can be devastating to the future course of their lives. As Barolsky (2003) states:

[T]he epidemic has forced us to reappraise our ideas of adolescence and the restrictions which are placed on young people's sexual behaviour. HIV and AIDS have truly redefined our understanding of what it means to be an adult as opposed to being an adolescent in terms of our rights and our behaviour. (p. 19)

We cannot turn to biology alone to understand the causes of this disease. We have to consider the interaction between biology and gender to come to a better understanding of how people are at risk because of society's construction of the concept of gender (cf. Barolsky 2003:36). The fact of the matter is that this society encourages different norms for men and women, which places women more at risk. Some of these encouragements include multiple sex partners for men, male control over barrier methods and women's financial dependence on men (cf. *Household survey* 2002:20). Gender within a specific society refers to the specific expectations and norms of that society for male and female behaviour, characteristics and roles. The concept of gender is specific to a culture and society and greatly influences the way in which women and men interact with each other (cf. Rao Gupta 2000:1).

Barolsky (2003:36) states that social roles are being engendered, and that this 'gendering' of social roles determines the degree of access each gender has to power and resources. It is this access to power and various forms of resources that creates both delimitations and potentialities, which in turn determines the spreading of HIV and AIDS. Barolsky (2003) furthermore states:

Over the past ten years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, gender and sexuality have become recognised as critical to an understanding both of the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS within the South African context, and the way in which the disease has developed. (p. 36)

We cannot deny that the lack of power for most women in South Africa in negotiating safer sex practices inevitably plays a role in the spreading of HIV. It must also be stressed that sometimes, or rather many times, sexual intercourse is involuntary and many women are coerced into sex, be it during a case of 'date rape' or unexpected sexual assault from an unknown perpetrator. The rape and sexual statistics in South Africa are staggering and reflect how masculinity is asserted through sexual violence. Robertson (1998:n.p.) states that the roots of sexual violence in South Africa lie with our male dominated and patriarchal society. She states that '[w]omen hold limited power and authority and are frequently exploited' (*ibid*) and that incidences of sexual violence are more common in such societies. Robertson (*ibid*) furthermore states that certain 'rape myths' contribute to the prevalence of sexual violence, especially in societies where women are often blamed for encouraging or causing men to rape. Some of these 'rape myths' include beliefs, for example, that men have limited control over their sexual desires and lust, and therefore cannot help their urges to rape, or that

women actually enjoy being raped or that some women are in some way responsible for the rape, thereby freeing men from being held accountable.

As the victims in South Africa are mostly women whilst the perpetrator is mostly male, it has been suggested that sexual violence is caused by men feeling powerless and emasculated as a result of past political and criminal violence. Therefore, sexual violence might represent a displacement of past aggression whereby men feel that they can reassert their manhood and masculine power by abusing the 'weaker' of the society, which are women and children. Therefore the rapist, in essence, reasserts his masculinity through sexual violence (cf. Robertson 1998).

With regards to manhood, Cornell, Reid and Walker (2003:26) found that the masculine identity of men in South Africa seems to be largely defined by exercising control over women and engaging in coercive sex, although this cannot be generalised for all men in South Africa. Harvey and Kehler (2005:3) in turn argue that the concept of manhood in South Africa is largely defined by sexual promiscuity, whilst girls and women are expected to stay pure and be virgins. It reaffirms the idea that women are expected to be nonsexual, whilst men are defined by their sexuality and dominance of women, both sexually and socially. By placing such limitations on women, men are indeed in control of women, as they decide when women are allowed to have sex or not, never leaving an opportunity for the women to make the decision (cf. Harvey & Kehler 2005:3). This affirms the paradox of men's expectations, also found with the co-researchers of this study: whilst they feel that they are not in control of their sexual desires and that they deserve sexual gratification, they still want virgins as wives one day. However, the decision as to which woman stays a virgin and which woman must serve as the object of gratification, taking her out of the equation of being a desired wife, lies solely with men, or indeed, with boys.

Cornell *et al.* (2003:22) argue that sex is mostly about power because relationships between men and women are generally unequal. Therefore, non-consensual sex perpetrated by males is used to reinstate the source of power, that is, masculinity. In essence, masculinity is about power. What it means to be male and what it means to be female is based on social assumptions, generated by the gender in power. If male is the gender of power, resulting in patriarchy, it will also determine decisions regarding sex and sexuality (cf. Harvey & Kehler 2005:3).

Additionally, it was found that a wide variety of socio-cultural and economic factors influence men's expectations regarding their behaviour as partners, husbands and fathers in sub-Saharan Africa. The following are predominant factors which influence a man's future role expectation: a high proportion of a population living in rural areas, the influence

of poor health conditions, the impact of urbanisation and migration, low levels of education, and increase of poverty and rapid socio-cultural changes (cf. Bankole *et al.* 2004:22). Bankole *et al.* (2004:23) furthermore state that an erosion of prevailing cultural and community norms as a result of modernisation undermines men's traditional family roles as providers. Moreover, a strong link exists between cultural and economic disadvantages and the reckless behaviour of men. Bankole *et al.* (2004) affirm this by stating:

Pervasive poverty and diminished life prospects can foster violence, hopelessness and patterns of sexual promiscuity, and may offer little incentive for some people – especially young men – to take good care of themselves. (p. 23)

The discourse on masculinity and sexuality

The proposed theories discussed above give us valuable insights as to how knowledge regarding gender, masculinity and sexuality is distributed in society and its primary discourses. These discourses function neither as factual domains nor as historical domains but rather as systems of meaning used by various people in various embedded contexts to construct their self-narratives, in turn guiding their relations, thoughts and behaviour. The person living these narratives thus comes second; what comes first is the context and the discourses that function within that context, which the individual in society uses as a guiding metaphor.

The personal interviews held with the co-researchers affirm the above statement and tell us something about their personal experiences and perceptions related to their ideas, and experiences of gender, masculinity and their own sexuality.

It seems that for these boys the concept of masculinity is dependent on their overt sexuality, whilst their sexuality also defines their sense of masculinity. Oppositely, for them a girl's femininity must not influence their overt sexuality; instead, their sexuality is dependent on a man's sense and understanding of masculinity. In fact, to be feminine is to be sexually pure, whilst being masculine is to be sexually promiscuous, because their masculinity is dependent on their biology and sense of power; whilst a girl's femininity is dependent on her morality and the powerless position she maintains in the community. These ideas about masculinity – literally *versus* (and not alongside) femininity – are influenced by their community's understanding of what it means to be a good man and a good woman. These discourses have a long tradition rooted in the meeting of African culture with Western culture, and are also deeply rooted in many socio-economic and cultural challenges faced by the boys and many other young men in the same situation. They are literally faced with many ambivalent decisions regarding what it means to be a man versus what it means to be a *good* man. As one of the co-researchers stated in response to the question whether he thinks it is possible for a man to be a

good man, 'I think it is possible, however, the world makes it hard for one because it offers many temptations.'

Through these narratives many ambivalent ideas about masculinity, femininity, and the roles of men as fathers and partners came to the forefront, indicating the ambivalent messages these boys get from the dominant discourses in their communities. These narratives give us insights into the complex nature of how the concepts of masculinity and sexuality function in the daily lives of young boys. It is clear that these boys listen to and accept certain dominant discourses that are disseminated in their communities, create meaning from these discourses, thereby developing their own narratives from the meaning-making process and using these narratives as important resources in deciding how to act and how to justify their actions and behaviours. During these interviews the co-researchers, perhaps for the first time ever, were given the opportunity to think about their self-narratives, to deconstruct the dominant discourses which have served as a powerful resource centre in creating their narratives, and to evaluate these discourses in the light of their own narratives, and in light of the narratives of the 'other' – the innocent women who fall prey to these boys' charms and manipulation. It gave them the opportunity to reflect on the consequences of their behaviour and to actively take part in deciding how they will construct their future narratives in light of the new insights they gained.

This article makes one aware of the importance of creating awareness that knowledge creation and maintenance is not something we should take for granted. It makes us aware of the dangers inherent in the dissemination of certain bodies of knowledge.

It may be concluded from the various discourses and narratives that power is inherent in both gender and sexuality, and that these unequal power relations that exist in the societies of the poor and the vulnerable inevitably increase both women and men's chances of infection (cf. Rao Gupta 2000:1–2) – what is more, result in a vulnerable and lost society. HIV and AIDS are the result of these unequal power relations and men's denial of their own accountability towards the spreading and maintaining of infection, stigmatisation, ostracism and abandonment. This in turn is the result of society's unhealthy concept of what is masculine and what is feminine (cf. Barolsky 2003:37) and society's failure in directing their young boys into manhood in a manner where the acting out of their sexuality will not marginalise, ostracise and downright abuse the women in their lives. It seems that society has failed in creating discourses of equality, discourses of inclusiveness, discourses of liberty, and finally, discourses that maintain the dignity of all the parties involved in this grand narrative we call life.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) which may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

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