



Men Make a Difference: The Construction of Gendered Student Identities at the University of Botswana

Author(s): Rob Pattman

Source: *Agenda*, No. 53 (2002), pp. 33-42

Published by: [Agenda Feminist Media](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4548054>

Accessed: 29/01/2011 14:00

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Men make a difference: the construction of gendered student identities at the University of Botswana

ROB PATTMAN argues that sex/AIDS education programmes should be informed by qualitative research into the identities of young men and women

The high rate of infection among young people in the AIDS pandemic in Southern Africa has made the development of sex educational programmes for youth a matter of urgency. However, these should not be aimed only at school children but also at students in the tertiary sector. I contend that sex/AIDS education must be informed by qualitative research on student identities, and should encourage students to reflect upon themselves and the gendered identities they inhabit in their everyday lives - for these impact on sexual practices in ways which may promote the spread of HIV/AIDS. This *article* demonstrates the kind of qualitative research I propose by reporting on interview-based research I conducted on student culture at the University of Botswana. In the light of this research I conclude by discussing ways of addressing gender, which should inform sex/AIDS educational strategies.

'Men make a difference' has become a popular anti-HIV/AIDS slogan in Sub-Saharan Africa. That we need to be reminded of this shows how much women (and not men) are taken for granted as sexual and gendered beings, a problematic situation for both women and men, especially in the light of HIV/AIDS (Bujra, 2000). Taking up the challenge posed by this slogan, the focus of this *article* is primarily on men students and how they forge their gendered, heterosexual identities.

As well as making masculine identities visible, the *article* examines how these are produced in relation to versions of femininity. This way of conceptualising gendered identities is informed by discourse theory (Foucault, 1979), according to which identities like man and woman or black, white and coloured only exist in relation to each other and because we have words to

describe them. Interviewing men and women or boys and girls about themselves, researchers influenced by discourse theory (such as Wetherell and Edley, 1999; Frosh *et al*, 2002; Hollway, 1989) have adopted a social constructionist rather than a social realist epistemology (Burr, 1995), focusing on the interviewees' accounts as **producing** the social identities, relationships and emotions they appear merely to describe. Interviewees' accounts of themselves and the opposite sex, are taken not simply as descriptions of gender characteristics they and others already have, but as ways in which they forge their identities as particular men and women, boys and girls in relation to each other.

The *article* examines the kind of masculine and feminine identities commonly articulated by men and women students at the University of Botswana in interviews I conducted with them. Gender is examined not as something that shapes their thoughts and behaviour in passive and preordained ways, but as something they construct in interviews themselves, by inventing categories of masculinity and femininity and orienting themselves in relation to these. This - the attempt to link attitudes to processes of gender identity construction - helps us to understand not only why people hold particular views about sex and gender (which may precipitate the spread of HIV/AIDS), but also why they are so emotionally invested in these. Focusing on how the interviewees construct their identities, the *article* will pay attention not only to what they say, but how they say it - the emotions they express when talking about various kinds of men and women students.

In researching the ways my respondents construct their identities, I understand them not so much as authors

of what they say, but as taking up and negotiating certain positions made available to them by long-standing cultural discourses on gender. This is not to suggest they are cultural dupes, simply manipulated, like ventriloquist's puppets. Rather, the interviews illustrate the way in which subjects actively construct their identities, in interaction with existing gender discourses.

The interviews

The researchers referred to earlier, have developed unstructured and interviewee-centred methods precisely because they are committed to a research approach which puts the onus on the interviewee to determine the pace and direction of the interview.

Most students interviewed identified as modern

I tried to cover similar topics with all the interviewees, such as their relationships with and attitudes towards students of the same and the opposite sex, and of similar and different ethnic backgrounds, their definitions of different groups of students and their own identifications and affiliations, their reflections on being men and women students in institutions of higher education, their ambitions and aspirations. However, the interviews were interviewee-centred, with the interviewees being encouraged to raise issues and concerns and to talk about identities and relationships that were particularly pertinent to them.

Fourteen women and 18 men volunteered to be interviewed. With the exception of Ken (referred to later) who was interviewed individually, they were interviewed in small single-sex groups comprising two to four students. The *article* focuses on those interviewees who represented student identities that almost everyone alluded to. These identities appeared to be highly significant as markers or points of reference in relation to which other men and women negotiated their own identities.

Being one of the educated elite

We salute the student spirit and their drive to learn, to improve the nation and to make a difference. Students

are our biggest asset and we must treasure, and at the same time, nurture the intellect they possess.

The University of Botswana is one of the richest universities in Africa. It is the only university in Botswana, and the students who attend are idealised as key national assets, positioned as the elite in the making. The entitlement of all students to government grants means that the student population is not drawn exclusively from the upper-middle classes. Students from relatively affluent as well as lower class, urban and rural areas were interviewed in this study. Among the interviewees, all spoke in an oblique way about the prospect of acquiring status and affluence as a result of going to university. They spoke about their university education as a form of self-enhancement, and some envisaged going on to do postgraduate work in order to further better themselves. What was striking was the absence of any reference to enjoyment derived from studying as a reason for pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate education.

However, there were tensions and ambiguities around being one of the educated elite, in an institution symbolising 'modernity'. While students were praised, they were also criticised by outsiders - including local media, politicians and community leaders - for being over-privileged and taking their privileges for granted. Most students interviewed identified as 'modern', associating this mainly with being able to wear certain types of clothes, being able to mix freely with members of the opposite sex and to spend their leisure as they wished. Some students from rural backgrounds contrasted their university and home lives and identities, describing the latter as 'traditional' - associated with being less free and individualistic and having to adhere to strict codes of behaviour, mainly regarding dress, interacting with people of the opposite sex, drinking and smoking. Some students, in contrast, presented themselves as 'traditional', associating this positively with what they regarded as communal values. They were critical of what they saw as the tendency for many students to become egoistic and materialistic, to ape 'western' styles of behaviour and reject what were supposedly their 'African cultural roots'.

Reflecting the significance of the 'modern-traditional' axis in the lives and identities of students, all the interviewees characterised the different groups of male and female students they spoke about as 'traditional' or 'modern'. As illustrated later, these groups were also characterised crucially by their heterosexuality - by their attractiveness and sexual proclivity or lack thereof, by the kinds of heterosexual relations they had or did not have and with whom. Also, descriptions of modern and traditional students were highly gendered, with modern and traditional men being constructed quite differently from modern and traditional women.

Ugandans: constructions of traditional men

Much significance was attached to drinking as a marker of student masculinity, with the university bar a conspicuously masculine space. Most women I interviewed were afraid of even walking past that area of campus for fear of being insulted by men. Regular drinkers there were accorded a specific name and identity - the bar was known as 'Uganda' and its habitués 'Ugandans'. This, I was told, was partly because Uganda denoted Africaness, and the Ugandans identified as traditional men in touch with their African roots. But also, Uganda was connected with political rebellion, and the Ugandans commitment to drinking was characterised as rebellious for conflicting so acutely with the University's work ethic. A T-shirt had recently been produced by the Ugandans emblazoned with the word 'Uganda' and the names of Ugandans, forging not only a sense of identity, but of their own exclusivity. Only the committed drinkers had their names on it and were entitled to wear it.

All the men interviewed spoke about the Ugandans, even though only two identified themselves as such. The attention they received in spite of their size - there were less than 30 Ugandans in the University - suggests they were extremely influential as a symbolic category in relation to which many men constructed their identity. Other men spoke about them as naughty and wasters for spending much of their day at the bar, getting drunk, talking loudly, play-fighting amongst themselves, speaking

so openly about their heterosexual desires and commenting loudly on the bodies of women. But men also appreciated the Ugandans precisely for being so hedonistic. Most men expressed good-natured humour towards them for missing lessons and 'overindulging in male horseplay'. For example, in three different interviews with men, the same story about a Ugandan was told with a mixture of laughter and amazement, and was clearly a symbolic one. It was about a male law student, who regularly when drunk went to the women's hostels, sprayed the women with a fire extinguisher and then had to pay damages to the security guards. The story for the interviewees was not about his misogyny, but his perceived naughtiness and irresponsibility.

Though they did not identify with them, for these men the Ugandans were clearly significant in terms of how they positioned themselves as responsible students who were still 'real men'. It was not that they were anti-drinking - as almost all these men made clear. Some were highly critical of another group, the 'Christians', for their opposition to forms of student hedonism, namely drinking, smoking and extra-marital sex. The Christians were criticised for being hypocritical - a popular symbol of this being pregnant and single Christian women students. Paradoxically, Christian men were criticised for not having hetero-sexual relations and therefore, for not being proper men, but 'sack men', an insult commonly used among men, alluding to the large amount of sperm men without girlfriends were assumed to accumulate in their scrotums or sacks. In one interview, the men became almost hysterical with laughter describing the Ugandans as sack men for getting drunk on campus and prioritising drink over women. What was 'funny' to them was actually questioning the masculinity of Ugandans - supposedly the ultimate male hedonists and 'real' men. When questioned whether the Ugandans had heterosexual relations, the interviewees indicated they were not 'sack men' after all, but 'studs' who had sex with women and prostitutes they met in the bars and shebeens outside campus.

Christian men were criticised for not being proper men

The men spoke in a mildly critical but amused way about the Ugandans having unprotected sex with prostitutes, as if they themselves were revelling in this fantasy of male hedonism and irresponsibility. The majority of men also constructed themselves as 'irresponsible' in relation to women (though not as irresponsible as the Ugandans). For example, some said they talked about being responsible and using condoms only when women were present and not in exclusively male company. Some also indicated they could not talk freely about condoms in all-male student groups because they would be teased for being too responsible and feminine. When I asked some of the men whether they used condoms, all of them were ambivalent, indicating that it depended on whether the woman was someone they did not know very well, in which case they probably would, or whether it was their girlfriend, when they would be unlikely to do so.

"It is believed the girl who drinks doesn't take good care of herself"

The Ugandans interviewed constructed themselves as traditional. As illustrated in the following extract from an interview with a Ugandan, Mothusi, what, in part, characterised this version of traditional masculine behaviour was a striking adherence to sexual double standards - Ugandans made drinking not only a key and defining part of their male culture but also a contributing factor to women becoming 'loose' and immoral.

Rob: *So why don't women go along to the university bar?*

Mothusi: *Because traditionally women are not supposed to be drinkers; because once you see a woman drinking they are perceived to be loose or something. So mostly it's not that women don't drink. They buy [alcohol] and drink. Mostly they send guys to go buy for them and then they drink in their rooms because they don't want to be seen drinking...seen as loose, seen as I'd say bitches or something because it is believed that once a girl is drunk, you know they will sleep with anybody...like I wouldn't go out with a girl who drinks.*

Rob: *Wouldn't you?*

Mothusi: *No, no...I can't go out with a girl who goes to the bar, who drinks.*

Rob: *Could you go out with a girl who drinks in her room?*

Mothusi: *...[I]f I find out, that would be a problem*

Rob: *That would be a problem. Why's that?*

Mothusi: *Because it is believed the girl who drinks doesn't take good care of herself...it's a traditional belief; it's been going for a long time.*

Significantly Mothusi here uses the third person and passive tense. When he asserts: 'I wouldn't go out with a girl who drinks', he suddenly and surprisingly changes from explaining to me, 'a cultural outsider' (a white English man), values determined by and rooted in 'tradition', to expressing his feelings in the first person. It would seem that he was slightly embarrassed telling me how the women who drink are seen, as he could not say 'bitches' without the qualifiers 'I'd say' and 'or something'. It is noticeable that when making the association between girls who drink, are 'loose' or not taking 'good care of herself', he spoke as if this was not a view for which he is to be held responsible but a 'traditional belief' which, as if to emphasise its relative autonomy in relation to him, has 'been going for a long time'. As well as invoking tradition in a way that relieves him of responsibility for these views, he is identifying here, as a traditional man.

The girlfriend figure was constructed in opposition to the whore and situated firmly outside what were conceived as male drinking spaces. What was regarded as the constraining influence of girlfriends upon their men's drinking time, and hence their masculinity, became a source of humour among the men drinkers. For example, Tamuka, another Ugandan, who was interviewed with Mothusi, teased Mothusi about not going to the university bar as often since he met his girlfriend, the assumption being that he was not a 'real man' for allowing his girlfriend to influence him.

Identifying in opposition to cat men and modern women

Botswana attracts many professionals from abroad, and a significant minority of students at the University of Botswana are children of relatively affluent expatriates, mainly black students from other African countries, as well as Indians. The students I spoke to constructed the Indian students as quite different from them; they did

not see them as Africans, and only when asked did they elaborate on having little in common with them and not mixing with them. The other expatriate students were also presented as different. But they were spoken about at length, and in unsolicited ways by almost all the men I interviewed. They were spoken about as a homogenous grouping embodying different values relating to gender and sexuality, different cultural and social class identities, different expectations and ambitions and different relations to modernity and tradition from those which were seen, in contrast, as local or indigenous. Much significance was attached to these expatriate students as a group from which the male interviewees differentiated themselves.

In the interviewees' accounts, these students were lumped together with 'high class' Batswana who had attended expensive English medium schools, and were described as 'cats'. Their styles of dress, speech and walk, their sporting interests - basketball - their general orientation was said to be American and, more specifically, black American. While the focus in the men's accounts may have been on cat men, what was conspicuous about cats, apart from their baggy designer clothes, black American speech and bop walk, was that they were gender-mixed. The implication of this was that it was the norm not to socialise on campus in gender-mixed groups.

When the male interviewees elaborated upon the differences between them and the cats (for instance their different tastes in music or sport) it seemed, at times, that they were merely describing, in non-pejorative ways, two quite distinct categories of male students. At other times they appeared to be describing the cats as superior to themselves, as, for example, cleverer because of their privileged education and home background, or as having more money and better clothes, or as being confident and individualistic. Some of the men I interviewed, noticeably those from more affluent backgrounds, were clearly troubled by the high status they accorded the cats, and appeared to undermine this and (implicitly) bolster their own position by questioning the cats' authenticity. It was then that they came to associate themselves, in contrast, with

cultural authenticity and humility, turning their perceived inferiority into a virtue. When asked whether he ever mixed with the cats, one man said, 'I don't want to be artificial, I want to be real...I'm humble personally'. It appeared that urban affluent men felt in greater a competition with cats than students from poorer backgrounds, and were more likely to feel jealousy towards them.

A cat man

Ken, the cat man I interviewed individually, was a Ghanaian who had lived in the United States and appeared to possess all the characteristics of the hegemonic male (Connell, 1995). He was good looking, witty and sporty, wore designer labels, and clearly enjoyed talking about being the centre of attention with women students. He mimicked their praises of him and laughed as he did so.

When talking about his relations with Batswana men he was much more serious, and spoke about them as competitors who were less successful than he was and envied him. One of the striking themes in this interview was his distrust of and hostility towards Batswana men students.

It was the norm not to socialise on campus in gender-mixed groups

Ken: ...You know guys, there's this ego...they always have a reason to hate you, you know 'he thinks he knows all the girls', or 'he thinks he's got all the money'.

Rob: So some of the guys have that attitude to you?

Ken: Yeah. Yeah I know it...some of them tell me. I don't care. It doesn't matter to me.

Rob: So what do they tell you?

Ken: They can say anything from... 'where are you coming from'...or 'who do you think you are'?

Although Ken appeared to dismiss these men and their reactions to him as insignificant, he did not, as one might have expected, largely ignore them. On the contrary, he constantly referred to them in the interview, and this, and the defiant tone he adopted in the passage above, strongly suggests that paradoxically, he was extremely concerned about them and defusing the

anxiety they posed. The questions they asked of him - 'who do you think you are?' and 'where are you coming from?' were not only, as he later made clear, aimed at puncturing what they perceived was his elevated status, but also positioned him as an outsider, a foreigner.

When I asked him how he felt about this, he constructed himself as no different from his accusers - as an 'African', indicating that national demarcations in Africa were artificial and the product of colonialism. He was critical, then, of Batswana men for their xenophobic attitude towards him, a fellow black African, and he went on to attribute this to their 'inferiority complex'.

African women are idealised as repositories of 'culture'

If they see a black man who's made it they just hate you...You drive a BMW or a Benz, the kind of reaction you get is 'look at that amakwerekwere'² that's what they call us...can you imagine?

The complexities of class and 'race' and how they intersect are clearly articulated in this passage. Indeed, Ken criticises Batswana men for being xenophobic and more specifically for racialising class relations. He is construct-

ed as being of a different 'race', he thinks, because he is successful in relation to most Batswana. However, he asserted he formed friendships only with men with whom he felt on an equal footing - by this, he meant men who were as affluent as he was and also with other Ghanaians. He was contemptuous of the Ugandans, and in contrast to them, presented himself as someone who worked hard at business and sport, who invested his money soundly, who wore smart clothes and was more 'romantic' with girlfriends. He did not, however, construct his relationships with women as more equal. He enjoyed elaborating on his capacity to 'woo' many women, and said his reputation as a cat man partly depended on this. Indeed, while cat men who slept around could enhance their reputations, women who mixed with cats could be insulted and called 'bitches' if they were seen as not faithful to one man.

Relations with women: anxieties about cats

It was concerning relationships with women that other men expressed most anxiety about the cats. Mothusi indicated that girls 'aspired to guys from the cats because they are of a higher class'. When asked how he felt about this, he said, 'we know our... kind of girls'. These girls were commonly constructed as traditional as opposed to modern. Most Batswana men admired modern girls for their class and beauty, but condemned them for their materialism, and, in contrast, spoke positively about 'our girls' ie traditional girls as 'down to earth' and 'humble'. As one interviewee said: 'We have other girls who love us for who we are'. Implied here was that other women loved the cat men for their money and were 'prostituting' themselves.

These men were drawing on a longstanding discourse in which African women are idealised as repositories of 'culture', and demonised if influenced by modernity (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). Their investment in this discourse reflected anxieties, I suggest, about lacking power in relation to modern women and losing out to richer men in their quest for girlfriends. The construction of women as materialistic was a popular one and was captured in the term 'triple C', which had become a familiar part of the University lexicon. This referred to women who wanted boyfriends with cars, cash and cellphones. While most of the men interviewed were strongly opposed to triple C women, they still wanted heterosexual relations where they 'took her out' and paid, and bought presents - seen as behaving like 'real men'.

This was experienced by some of the men as contradictory: they positioned themselves as materially powerful, yet their girlfriends - who might leave them for wealthier men - benefited at a material cost to them. This was particularly clear when their girlfriends were fellow students receiving the same allowances. Some of the men I interviewed spoke, with anxiety, about their female contemporaries being more powerful

than them, but appeared to quell these anxieties by asserting that relationships based on money not 'love' would surely flounder, and that, anyway, they did not want girlfriends who were only interested in money. Ironically, some of these same men admitted reluctantly (presumably because they were themselves critical of 'sugar daddy affairs') that they had relationships with high school girls.

Men cheating and women blaming other women

Some women, such as Lorato and Wame, also accused other women of being 'materialistic' and motivated by their desire for money rather than love in relationships with men. It may be appropriate to conceptualise this kind of opposition to 'other' women as a response to anxieties about being exploited sexually by men. These anxieties were never far from the surface, as illustrated in an extract from an interview with Lorato and Wame on the topic of boyfriends.

Both women constructed themselves as women in very conventional ways, defining themselves and their aspirations in relation to their future male partners. Introducing themselves, they said they wanted to be 'married and happy', and described themselves as women who cared about their hair and make-up and who looked 'like ladies'. They spoke about boyfriends in highly romanticised ways. It was when I asked if there were 'any negative things about having a boyfriend' that they spoke at length about men 'cheating' on them. They presented this as something women had to tolerate, and as not particularly serious, turning what was obviously a familiar topic into comedy, caricaturing the men as 'stupid' for not being able to 'hide' their cheating. They constructed the men in non-threatening ways, not as nasty and deceitful. They also spoke in a relatively emotionally detached way about what they construed as the 'cultural' expectation for men to cheat. However, when I asked how they felt about their boyfriends cheating on them, despite maintaining they had to put up with it and this was what they had to

expect from men, they were not at all dispassionate, but extremely excited and agitated. This suggests, perhaps, a discrepancy between what they were saying - resigning themselves to men cheating on them - and what they really felt.

Rob: *How do you feel about that? [their boyfriends cheating on them].*

Lorato: *Because...the thing is (very excited tone, loud inaudible cross talking) I can't say don't I have to get his I have to get over the disappointment, I have to know that (.) he's (.) he's a he's a man.*

Wame: *He's a man.*

Lorato: *Yes...so I have to face the reality that he's a man and...he will cheat me.*

Rob: *So you expect him to cheat do you?*

Lorato: *I don't expect him to cheat and he knows that*

I know that he can cheat (.) I can only tell him (.) you know just cheat but don't.

Wame: *Don't let me know if he doesn't show you how are you going to know that he cheats...you won't know so.*

Lorato: *Because when I say don't cheat, I'll sound so naïve.*

Rob: *So you couldn't really imagine having a boyfriend who didn't cheat on you?*

Wame: *We'd love to.*

Lorato: *We'd love to (.) we'd love to.*

"I have to face the reality that he's a man and he will cheat on me"

The stress they placed on 'love' emphasises their discontent with relationships with men, which they appeared to play down by constructing the nature of such relationships as inevitable.

Like the men interviewed, Lorato and Wame were drawing on a cultural discourse, familiar to all the students interviewed, which applied much 'higher' moral standards to women than men. It may be that they derived from this a sense of superiority as women, which helped to compensate for the vulnerability they felt in relation to men. However, as illustrated in the conversation with Lorato and Wame, the idea that men were cheaters, irresponsible and stupid was a discursive construction that disempowered rather than

empowered women. Having higher moral expectations for women, meant their behaviour was subject to forms of regulation and control. This resulted in the formation of a specific category of women - not men - who were blamed for being 'loose' and immoral.

Women identifying as modern

One of the women most likely to be described as modern was Lebogang, a charismatic and well-known student and an extremely confident and fluent contributor in class. I interviewed her with a woman friend, Malebogo, another assertive and articulate speaker in class.

Lebogang characterised the 'majority' of students as coming from rural areas and as 'inflexible', in contrast to 'free' and 'adjustable' urban people, like herself and Malebogo. Both Lebogang and Malebogo indicated they had more equal relations with men. Lebogang was strongly opposed to accentuating or 'emphasising' femininity (Connell, 1995): 'I hate talking about my make-up, my hair, my boyfriend's this and that'. Interestingly, both described themselves as tomboys or as having been tomboys when they were younger. They spoke about their boyfriends as friends with common interests. These were interests generally constructed as masculine, such as sport, as well as ones constructed as feminine, such as soap operas. It appeared that they identified as modern, at least in part, by rendering gender differences less significant, in contrast to those women (and men) they viewed as traditional. At the same time, however, they spoke about being 'taken out' by men on campus - eg being taken to watch movies. Though their friendships with men may have drawn accusations of being based on triple Cs, they themselves were critical of triple C women, indicating their relationships with boyfriends were not mediated by power or money, but were equal, individualised and based on love.

Implications for sex/AIDS education

In conclusion, I look briefly at the significance of this research for developing ways of addressing student

gender identities and relations, which should inform an AIDS education programme aimed at students at the University of Botswana.³ Appropriate and effective sex/AIDS education needs to draw upon and encourage students to reflect critically upon their own sexual cultures (Epstein and Johnson, 1998). Sexual cultures refer not only to values, attitudes and behaviour regarding sex, but also, crucially, to the identities students construct; these are not just sexual but gendered, racialised and classed.

Addressing men

Only three of the men I interviewed were Ugandans or cats. Yet the positioning of men students both in relation to the cats as men symbolising modernity, as well as in relation to the Ugandans as 'real' men embodying male hedonism, were major themes in the interviews. Perhaps these can be seen as two competing versions of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995), which few men actually embodied, but which were extremely significant as cultural markers that men students used when constructing their own masculine identities. While all the men interviewed associated masculinity with hegemonic attributes - sexual power, economic power and physical power - most only partially identified with these. This has important implications for sex education: sex education should not reproduce men as a homogenous, powerful and unified group (in opposition to women), and should focus, instead, on the multiple and contradictory identities men inhabit.

The ambiguous relationship of many men to popular fantasies and discourses of masculinity has been raised by a number of contemporary theorists on masculinity (Segal, 1990; Connell, 1995), and was reflected in the contradictory responses men students gave when asked about girlfriends. They indicated that men wanted girlfriends for sex and who were not 'ready for commitment', were attractive, fun loving and younger. Yet, when describing their ideal girlfriend, all the men focused on personality characteristics - in particular, her capacity to love, accept and understand him. Perhaps these men were expressing dissatisfaction with hedonism, lack of commitment and the association of

Sex
education
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this with hegemonic masculinity. Perhaps instead they were idealising commitment, care and responsibility as features of a relationship they wanted and expected from their own girlfriends. However, the aim of sex/AIDS education should not be to replace the construction of men as hedonistic and strong, with men as romantic and emotional. Rather, it should encourage men to examine how they embody these as contradictions. This provides the opportunity to see how each construction feeds off the other, and how, for example, some men may construct themselves as romantic in relation to their girlfriends, but sexually 'free' and uncommitted in relation to women generally.

'Men make a difference' because heterosexual relations, by definition, involve men. But they also 'make a difference' in a more fundamental sense, as they are constructing their very identities as men partly in relation to the ways they understand, categorise and evaluate women. Particularly significant about the masculine identities, symbolised by the Ugandans and the cats, was how these were constructed as powerful in opposition to renderings of femininity. Sex/AIDS education should encourage men students to distance themselves from, rather than identify with, such hegemonic caricatures of masculinity. This should be done not by characterising men as oppressors of women (and thereby alienating them), but by examining the costs to men of constructing themselves as very different from women. Examples of these costs articulated by some of the men students interviewed included being expected to take the initiative in heterosexual relations, to give materially to women, to out-perform women academically, not being able to talk seriously with other men about their problems, and being teased by other men. Sex/AIDS education needs to address the sorts of anxieties most men expressed about being rejected by 'modern' women - not, however, by focusing on and problematising, as the men did, the kinds of women who rejected them, but their own fantasies of power in relation to women.

Addressing women

'Men make a difference' also because it is partly in relation to their versions of masculinity that women

forge their identities. It is important that sex/AIDS education, when addressing women students, should not focus exclusively on women, as the women interviewees did, criticising them either for being too 'modern' or too 'traditional'. It should address how these identities are negotiated in relation to powerful masculinities. Reluctantly putting up with their boyfriends' cheating and blaming 'other' women was clearly a position which made women who identified as traditional, vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. In developing HIV/AIDS education initiatives, it will be important not to treat these attitudes either as illogical or as the inevitable manifestations of a reified culture, but to address the sense of powerlessness in relation to men which underlies these constructions of 'other' women.

Sex/AIDS education should address the vulnerability of women students, constructed as modern, loose or triple C to richer, older and more powerful men, and should also examine women's investment in being modern, and how and why they differentiate themselves from traditional women. It would seem that women who identify as modern, such as Lebogang, are committed to less gender-polarised and more equal relationships with their male partners. Lebogang was the only interviewee who mentioned having an AIDS test with her sexual partner.

**Men make
a difference
because
hetero-
sexual
relations
involve
men**

Single-sex or mixed groups?

At the end of the interviews, interviewees were asked whether it would have 'made any difference' if students of the opposite sex had been present. All the students, men and women, replied that it would, indicating they would be less 'free' or 'open' about their sexual desires, their fears and anxieties and their hostility towards members of the opposite sex. This suggests that single-sex group work should be considered as an important teaching strategy in sex/AIDS education. However, the problem with this is that it precludes the possibility of men and women learning from each other about their concerns, desires, pleasures, and, more fundamentally,

reinforces the impression that masculinity and femininity are unitary, homogeneous and essentially different identities, rather than plural and constructed in relation to each other. Despite their reservations, most of the interviewees wanted to be interviewed again, in mixed groups, because they were curious to know about the responses of students of the opposite sex. I would argue that a combination of single-sex and mixed group work should form the basis of sex/AIDS education (Pattman, 1996).

Conclusion

Sex educational strategies aimed at young people and being developed in the light of the AIDS pandemic need to be informed by research on the identities and experiences of the young people as **they** experience and articulate them. Such research should address young people as active subjects - by this I mean as people who construct and negotiate their identities in relation to others, whether these be adults or contemporaries, people of the same or opposite sex. Crucially, such research should be gender-sensitive, which does not mean focusing exclusively upon young women, but rather men and women. In this *article* I have tried to demonstrate the importance of this kind of research for developing ways of addressing gender identities and relations in sex/AIDS educational strategies at the University of Botswana.

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Notes

1. From an advert in the *UB Post*, the University of Botswana's student magazine.
2. A derogatory term used by Botswana to refer to black African foreigners.
3. In spite of high infection in Botswana, there is currently no formal AIDS education programme at the University.

Rob Pattman lectured in sociology at the University of Botswana from 2000-2002. He currently works as a research consultant on a UNICEF-funded project on young people, gender, sexuality and life skills education in Southern and Eastern Africa