From Boys to Men: An Ethnographic Study among Adolescent Boys and the Intimate

Partners of Female Sex Workers in Northern Karnataka, South India

by

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ABSTRACT

In this paper-based thesis, I describe the findings of my ethnographic research conducted among the intimate partners of female sex workers and adolescent boys in Northern Karnataka. By highlighting the contradictory and relational nature of masculinity, my study aims to contribute to the larger scholarship on masculinity in South Asia, providing points of intervention for destabilizing gender hierarchies.

In the first manuscript, I examine the intimate partners' perceptions and practices to shed light on the common occurrence of intimate partner violence and how local ideologies of manhood—and the social and structural conditions that shape these ideologies—perpetuate intimate partner violence. Given the precarious labour conditions in this region, tensions erupted in the participants' relationships with female sex workers, as these men were unable to meet local ideals of manhood. Violence became a way that men attempted to re-secure a sense of control in their relationships with women, and to fulfil the imperatives of hegemonic masculinity.

In an attempt to destabilize hierarchical gender orders, the second manuscript builds on Connell's theory of "hegemonic masculinity" by developing the notion of incipient masculinity. Exploring the emerging dynamics of masculinity, this research reveals the ways in which adolescent boys negotiate their masculinities in relation to the inequities faced by girls with respect to education. Although adolescence might be characterized as a period of uncertainty in which manhood is 'incomplete' and continues to unfold, my findings suggest that it is a crucial period in which hegemonic masculinity is powerfully instantiated in the relationships between teenage boys and girls.

From a public health perspective, the findings of these studies are expected to inform the ongoing structural interventions in Northern Karnataka that aim to prevent violence against female sex workers. A deeper understanding of the links between local ideas of

manhood and the subordinate positions of girls and women may make a great deal of

difference to practice as well as to research in terms of promoting gender-equitable norms in

Northern Karnataka.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTRIBUTIONS OF AUTHORS

Because this is a paper-based thesis, I present two manuscripts, the first on the intimate partners of female sex workers and the second on adolescent boys. Although I have taken a lead in composing the manuscripts, conducting the ethnographic field research, and analysing the data, and performing the literature reviews, I include several co-authors who were instrumental in supporting the development of my study, coordinating my access to program participants, offering daily translation support, aiding my day-to-day ethnographic activities, providing a constant source of information and perspectives that enabled me to ultimately interpret the data.

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INTRODUCTION

In Northern Karnataka, South India, girls belonging to scheduled caste and scheduled tribes[1] are at higher risk for dropping out of school. In this region, a range of factors have contributed to girls dropping out of school from economic factors, such as poverty and unemployment, to cultural factors, such as the prioritisation of boys' education over girls within households (UNICEF, 2011; Herz & Sperling 2004). Most notably, the threat of sexual harassment by male classmates has been an important reason for families to remove girls from school (Mallika et al. 2012; Leach & Sitaram 2007). The SSA Karnataka report for 2010-2011 reported that 17% and 12% of all girls are lost from the schools between 7th and 8th standard in Bijapur and Bagalkot, respectively. This far exceeds the state average of 5%. Scheduled caste girls are at the highest risk with the dropout rate reported to be 9% among those girls at the state level.

Girls who have less education are more vulnerable to entry into sex work and, in turn, HIV infection. Within the context of women who have already entered the sex trade, the prevalence of HIV stands at 22% in northern Karnataka (KHPT 2013), which has one of the highest HIV infection rates in India (NACO 2016). Compared to clients, female sex workers in intimate partnerships are at a greater risk for violence and contracting HIV infection (Das et al. 2011; Karandikar & Prospero 2010; Panchanadeswaran et al. 2008; Ramanaik et al. 2014) . Given the existing norms around male dominance, fidelity and violence as a legitimate form of discipline, female sex workers have a difficult time negotiating and practicing safer sex with their intimate partners.

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[1] Scheduled caste and scheduled tribe are the lowest castes (among thousands of castes) in India in terms of wealth, education and social status. In the 2001 census, they represented 22.7% (16.1% and 6.6%, respectively) of the population of Karnataka state.

Funded by STRIVE[2], Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT), an NGO that implements projects related to HIV/AIDS and reproductive health in the Indian states, has initiated two interventions, *Samata* and *Samvedena* Plus respectively, to address the high rate of school dropout among adolescent school girls and female sex workers' vulnerability to intimate partner violence. In an effort to increase the rates of secondary school enrolment and completion, the five-year *Samata* programme launched in July 2012 aims to reduce vulnerability to HIV infection and improve quality of life among adolescent SC/ST girls in Bijapur and Bagalkot Districts. Project *Samata* covers 69 high schools and 605 teachers serving approximately 3600 adolescent girls and 1800 families in 119 villages in Bijapur and Bagalkot Districts. Launched in April 2014, the three-year *Samvedena* Plus programme plans to reduce intimate partner violence and promote condom use among the intimate partners of female sex workers. The intervention covers approximately 800 female sex workers and their intimate partners in 47 villages in two talukas of Bagalkot district in northern Karnataka.

As part of a multi-layered intervention, both *Samata* and *Samvedena* Plus involves the participation and engagement of various community stakeholders. In particular, STRIVE has recognized the attitudes and behaviours of boys and men as an important structural barrier impeding the quality of life of girls and women. In order to provoke critical reflections on gender-equitable norms and the ability to act upon such norms, the following activities with adolescent boys and intimate partners of female sex workers have taken place. Through *Samata's Parivartan* program, mentors from the boys' community are trained and selected to facilitate sport games and classroom discussions to adolescent boys every alternate week. Under the facilitation of male counsellors, intimate partners of female sex workers from *Samvedena* Plus engage in the following activities: individual and couple counselling; group

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[2] A research consortium that tackles the structural drivers of HIV at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

reflection discussions; training champions; linkages to health and social services; and events for couples.

Despite the considerable efforts of the local program team to challenge gender inequities, we must also highlight the implications of global health interventions on the social relations between men and women. This is in keeping with the critical dimensions of our research. Although funding from STRIVE may enhance KHPT-led initiatives' legitimacy and access to resources within ruling political and economic institutions, this places them in a central position within health policy networks to gain privileged access to decision-makers in governmental and inter-governmental bodies, enabling them to advance their interests, preferences, and ideas within the institutional system (Moran 2007). The interventions then may fail to capture the social and material contexts that shape and reproduce the hierarchical and unequal gender order in Indian society. As such, it is unclear how the reliance on global health intervention can truly transform the gender relations on the ground. I will return to this idea in the concluding chapter.

PURPOSE

In an effort to understand the broader cultural and social complexities that shape the myriad masculine subjectivities, the ethnographic study I conducted examined the experiences, attitudes, and perspectives of the *Samata* and *Samvedena* Plus male participants. Specifically, I explore the contours of masculinity that shape the gender relations at different life stages, particularly adolescence and adulthood, of adolescent boys and intimate partners of female sex workers. In doing so, the study attempts to fill the gap within the South Asian literature regarding the relational dynamics and norms of masculinity that perpetuate the subordinate positions of girls and female sex workers in the research area of Bagalkot.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before I draw on my ethnographic research, key concepts and most of the theoretical work I cite comes from thinking through empirical material which is specifically located in the developed Anglophone nations. This is important because it has provided an important framework for understanding masculinity in other non-Western contexts.

Sex Role Theory

The first important attempt to create a social science of masculinity centred on the idea of sex roles (Connell 2005; Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994). In the 1970s sex role research came into question with the growth of academic feminism (Connell 2005; Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994). In particular, feminist scholar Raeywn Connell (2005) notes that in sex role theory, "action (the role enactment) is linked to a structure defined by biological difference, the dichotomy of male and female—not to a structure defined by social relations." The 'sex role' concept was not only a way to exclude women from universities but was a means of fixing girls and women in a subordinate position. Given this categoricalism, the reduction of gender to two homogenous categories leads to a "misperception" of social reality, exaggerating differences between men and women, while obscuring the social structures around which these differences are constituted (Messner 2000; Connell 2005). In other words, sex role theory fails to account for the ways that relations of power constitute different social positions for men and women.

In response to sex role theory, scholars have contended that masculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts (Connell 2005). Masculinity and femininity are academic constructs that allows social scientist to explore how demarcations are drawn between different genders across time and geography. As an object of knowledge, masculinity is neither entirely fixed nor given by nature; rather, as a relational concept, it

continually evolves (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994). Therefore, as an object of social

scientific inquiry, we must be attentive to the complex ways that people construct notions of

manhood in and through social practices at particular moments in time. Masculinity is

historically and culturally contingent and its making and remaking is a political process

affecting the balance of interests in society and the direction of social change (Connell 2005:

44).

Colonial Masculinity

However, Western constructs of masculinity are often blindly projected onto non-

western cultural contexts (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994). Constructed as a gender binary,

colonial discourses either depict men as the problem (of gender inequality, subordination and

exploitation) or as the victim—as in current popular discourses on 'men in crisis' or 'troubled

masculinities' (Chant 2000; Cornwall 2000). Within such colonial discourses, American and

British masculinities were imagined to occupy the apex of civilization while Africans and

Asians were positioned as the opposite—as socially backward, peasants, savages, and simple

children (Chopra, Osella, Osella 2004). In the context of colonial masculinities, South Asian

men emerge in a lesser and often two-dimensional frame. Commonly they are householders;

sometimes priests or renouncers; workers—be they landlord-farmers or landless labourers;

patrons or clients; and almost always 'patriarchs'. Although colonial masculinities provide a

useful lens in uncovering processes of domination and stereotyping—and the ways in which

different hierarchies (race, sexuality, class, and gender) shape and are informed by each other

(Nandy 1980; Sinha 1995; Krishnaswamy 1998)—the concept is not without its analytic

challenges. Building upon the influential works of postcolonial scholars Frantz Fanon (1968)

and Edward Said (1978), a somewhat simplified view of "the colonized" has tended to

prevail, to the effect that Asians and Africans under empire were felt to be, and felt

themselves to be, unmanly and effeminate (Luhrmann 1996; Chopra, Osella, Osella 2004).

Little is known, however, about the ways in which models of masculinity emerge and are

reproduced over time, how ideals of masculinity direct men's behaviour in day-to-day

interactions, and how masculinities are implicated in the production of gender relations and

personhood.

Hegemonic Masculinity

By attending to the nuanced ways masculinity is enacted, Carrigan et al. (1985)

contends that it is analytically important to identify the ideologies that enable some men to

secure and maintain their privileged positions while placing other men in subordinate

positions. Despite the power conferred to men, Connell (1995) argued that not all men shared

this power equally or were perpetrators of exploitation. While men oppressed women, some

men also dominated and subordinated other men. Connell's analysis of power and

masculinity builds on the concept of 'hegemony' derived from Antonio Gramsci's analysis of

class relations. According to Gramsci (1996), hegemony refers to the cultural processes by

which social elites claim and maintain their positions of dominance in society. Although

violence often underpins or supports authority, the maintenance of social power by a certain

group is likely to be established through persuasion and consensus (Gramsci 1996). In other

words, the ruling-class worldview becomes the accepted cultural norm; the dominant

ideology, which justifies the social, political, and economic *status quo* as natural and

inevitable, and beneficial for everyone, rather than as artificial social constructs that benefit

only the ruling class. With respect to masculinity, any given time, one form of masculinity

rather than others is culturally exalted over other forms. As theorized by Connell (1995),

'hegemonic masculinity' defines successful ways of 'being a man' in particular places and a

specific time. In the process other masculine ways of being are rendered inadequate and

inferior, what Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994) term 'subordinate variants'. An immediate consequence of this is that the culturally exalted form of masculinity may only correspond to the actual characters of small number of men yet very large numbers of men are complicit in sustaining the hegemonic model (Carrigan et al. 1985; Cornwall & Lindisfarne 1994). From a Gramscian perspective, the so-called 'subordinate' men not only adopt but also internalize the value system of their oppressors.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted is underpinned by a critical ethnographic approach. This approach guides researchers to illustrate how different forms of power operate in society, and how individuals understand and make sense of them (Parker 2001; Connell 2005). A central methodological concern is to interpret and understand individual experiences within the context of the individual's broader social, political and cultural relations (Parker 2001). This type of research will help explore the local meanings and practices of masculinity in relation to girls and female sex workers while actively engaging the intimate partners in examining their own knowledge and understandings.

As part of an ethnographic approach, the question of reflexivity is worth noting. For researchers, reflexive practice involves the ability to critically interrogate their use of knowledge and to become aware of the interests they serve and reproduce as part of their working lives (Lupton 1995). The practices and knowledge of the researcher are not value-free or neutral, but rather are highly socially and politically contextual, changing across time and space.

Drawing my time on the field, I bring to bear my own subjectivity as an integral role in the fieldwork process in shaping the ways interaction and events unfolded on the ground and, in turn, the analytic and conceptual trajectory of my research. By recognizing that the

modes of interaction are closely bound up with the power relations between different stakeholders in the study, a reflexive approach helped me unsettle the ways in which social and power relations are negotiated and created on the field. Some of the questions I struggled with included: How do I give 'voice' to others or to present dialogue between the self and other, either textually or through an explanation of the fieldwork encounter? How do I mitigate power relations between myself as the researcher and participants? What is at stake when I am in the field actively participating and engaging in people's everyday lives? In an attempt to unsettle the boundaries between the self and other, I reflect on the political and social implications of my fieldwork in 2012 and 2015 in the following section.

Located in a small town in the region of Bagalkot, I spent six months in 2012 researching on the intimate partner violence of female sex workers. Seeing that I was a foreigner, based on my Indo-Chinese features, fairer complexion, comportment, and style of clothing, I would usually have the towns people approach me and ask me where I was from. I had young men and children touching my hands remarking how soft and nice if felt. Interestingly, my fair, light skin was a marker of desirable masculinity, which was attributed to my assumed class position and my status as a foreigner. Through these interactions, I also learned that tough skin and strength were important markers of masculinity among labourers and farmers. Therefore, given the context I was in, my subjectivity was also subject to change and re-evaluation such that my foreignness became marked and simultaneously a site of inquiry and learning about ideals of masculinity.

However, while spending time with the intimate partners of the female sex workers, I found myself negotiating my own personal politics. As a foreigner, they viewed me as less biased and more understanding and felt more comfortable confiding in me. Although this worked to my advantage in terms of them opening up, I found myself trying to negotiate between my political position as a queer, anti-colonial, Marxist feminist and the pressures to

engage in hegemonic masculinity, both in the long term and quotidian. In some of my interactions I found myself displaying a masculine bravado that would simultaneously engage men and protect me from possible sexual advances. This was particularly the case when one of the intimate partners disclosed that he had sexual desires for men and insisted I come to his hotel. While discussing with men about violence against their lovers and wives, I struggled whether or not to take action or call authorities who were known to be corrupt (e.g. taking bargains), which could further endanger the women and put them at risk for more violence from their partners. In such moments of frustration, I had to keep a non-judgemental approach not only for the confidentiality of the men but also for the personal safety of myself and the women; however, in doing so I was also complicit in reinforcing practices rooted in gender hierarchies.

In my interactions with the female sex workers, I became more cognizant of how I behaved and the cultural baggage I carried. The more time we spent together, the more they felt comfortable in my presence getting a good laugh out of my social awkwardness/western habits, such as trying to bite on the root of a sugar cane or lacking the proper etiquette required to eat with my hands. Alternatively, they would also express horrific experiences of violence from their partners and clients. Although emotionally jarring, the private view of another person's experiences, their suffering, and their joys, was a privilege. I would come out of discussion groups with feelings of gratitude and debt to these individuals who gave me the opportunity to listen to the many intimate details of their lives. However, a strong burden was also placed on me to ensure that their stories and experiences were disseminated in a way that avoided an imperialist mode of interpreting; particularly, any attempts that would, to borrow from Venuti (1995), "domesticate" the so-called 'foreign' into a familiar, Western framework.

During my recent stay in Bagalkot in 2015, my work on the field brought to bear my patriarchal privilege. The very fact that I had access to the different village spaces enabled me to record the nuances of a very specific kind of male-male relationships: the relation between boys. The streets as a zone of transition was the perfect space for young boys to articulate and capture a sense of autonomy. At the same time, the street was an exclusionary space, closed to women, but particularly to young girls and unmarried women. As Chopra (2004: 57) rightfully asserts "divisions of space are tropes that enable an understanding of those who inhabit these spaces or are on their margins."

In terms of my relationships with the boys, I was highly aware of the colonial power relationships I inadvertently represented as an Asian-Canadian national. Some of the boys with whom I interacted in the villages would commonly express to me that I thought they were poor or less civilized because of where they lived. In such encounters, I realized how much of my social location as a Western researcher had impacted the boys' sense of self and identity. Even if my stay in the villages partially disrupted racialized meanings, my ability to leave and conduct my research made me complicit in them.

Throughout this period of my research, I had to wrestle with the social and power relations that was created between people as well as myself and others. My fieldwork, then, was a negotiated experience shaped by my positionality, one which was continually shifting and dynamic. In turn, the knowledge I acquired was also a product of these complex social interactions generated by the fieldwork.

OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

By highlighting the contentious and relational nature of masculinity, my ethnographic study in Northern Karnataka attempts to contribute to the larger scholarship on masculinity in India and provide points of intervention for destabilizing gender hierarchies. In this paper-

based thesis, the following provides a brief overview of my research with intimate partners of female sex workers and adolescent boys.

In the first manuscript, I examine the intimate partners' perceptions and practices to shed light on the common occurrence of intimate partner violence and how local ideologies of manhood—and the social and structural conditions that shape these ideologies—perpetuate intimate partner violence. Given the precarious labour conditions in this region, tensions erupted in the participants' relationships with female sex workers, as these men were unable to meet local ideals of manhood. Violence became a way that men attempted to re-secure a sense of control in their relationships with women, and to fulfil the imperatives of hegemonic masculinity.

In an attempt to destabilize hierarchical gender orders, the second manuscript builds on Connell's theory of "hegemonic masculinity" by developing the notion of incipient masculinity. Exploring the emerging dynamics of masculinity, this research reveals the ways in which adolescent boys negotiate their masculinities in relation to the inequities faced by girls with respect to education. Although adolescence might be characterized as a period of uncertainty in which manhood is 'incomplete' and continues to unfold, my findings suggest that it is a crucial period in which hegemonic masculinity is powerfully instantiated in the relationships between teenage boys and girls.

From a public health perspective, the findings of the study would be used to inform the ongoing interventions in Northern Karnataka in preventing violence against female sex workers and early school drop out of girls. More specifically, a deeper understanding of the links between local ideas of manhood and the subordinate positions of girls and women may make a great deal of difference to practice, as well as to research in terms of promoting gender-equitable norms in Northern Karnataka.

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INTERVENING IN MASCULINITY: WORK, RELATIONSHIPS, AND VIOLENCE AMONG THE INTIMATE PARTNERS OF FEMALE SEX WORKERS IN SOUTH INDIA[3]

ABSTRACT

Although health researchers have begun to examine the forms of violence and power dynamics that play out in the intimate relationships of female sex workers in India, this knowledge has tended to focus on the perspectives of women, leaving men's motivations and attitudes relatively unexamined. Building on Connell's theoretical framework of hegemonic masculinity, this paper examines the many contours of masculinity and gender norms from the perspective of the intimate partners of female sex workers. Based on 6 months of ethnographic research in the district of Bagalkot in Northern Karnataka, the study employed two focus group discussions with *Devadasi* female sex workers (N=17), four focus group discussions with intimate partners (N=34) and 30 in-depth interviews with intimate partners. Given the precarious labour conditions in this region, tensions erupted in the participants' relationships with female sex workers, as these men were unable to meet local ideals of manhood. Violence became a way that men attempted to re-secure a sense of control in their relationships with women, and to fulfil the imperatives of hegemonic masculinity. We recommend that programs targeting men not only address intimate partner violence but also attend to the social and structural realities surrounding these men's daily lived experiences.

INTRODUCTION

India has the third largest number of people with HIV/AIDS in the world (about 2.27 million) (NIHFW and NACO 2011), after South Africa and Nigeria. In the past decade, India

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[3] Authors: Huynh, A., Khan, S., Nair, S., Chevrier, C., Isac, S., Bhattacharjee, P., and Lorway, R.

has made substantial progress in controlling the epidemic (NACO 2007a). More recently, public health scientists have begun to increasingly recognize the importance of addressing "the structural drivers" of HIV (NACO 2007b). The notion of structural drivers draws upon the work of social scientists who have attended to the broader social, cultural, political forces that shape contexts of HIV vulnerability (Parker 2001; Schoepf 2001). The role of gender inequality has been in the forefront of much of this literature, particularly in studies related to "developing nations." These scholars have emphasized the political economic conditions that make women susceptible to HIV infection in their sexual relationships with men.

In India, women practicing sex work have long been characterised in epidemiology as a "high-risk" group (NACO 2007b), given their high HIV prevalence and the myriad socio-political barriers that have historically occluded their access to health services (NACO 2007b). The state of Karnataka has been classified as a high prevalence state, and female sex workers in Karnataka have one of the highest HIV infection rate in the country (after Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra) (NACO 2016). In Northern Karnataka particularly, where the proposed study will be conducted, the prevalence of HIV in female sex workers stands at 22% (KHPT, 2013). Much of the research in this region related to female sex workers has focused on their mapping and size estimation, typologies, biological and behavioural surveillance, condom-use and other prevention technologies.

To date, however, there are number of studies that have focused on interpersonal relationships of female sex workers in India, namely the experiences of violence by their intimate partners and the implication for HIV infection (see O'Neil et al. 2004; Blanchard & O'Neil, 2005; Panchanadeswaran et al. 2010; Ramanaik et al. 2015). Within intimate partnerships, female sex workers who experience violence are more vulnerable to HIV infection as condom use is often severely compromised (Das et al. 2011; Karandikar and Prospero 2010; Panchanadeswaran et al. 2008). This is in part related to the existing norms

around male dominance, fidelity, and violence as legitimate forms of discipline that constrain women's agencies which is exploited by the men to increase their control and dominance over women.

Over the last decade, public health scientists have made considerable strides in addressing violence through "structural interventions" that focus on female sex workers in India (Gupta et al. 2008; Gielen, McDonnell and O'Campo 2002). In Karnataka, community mobilization programs (Reza-Paul et al. 2012; Blanchard et al. 2013; Beattie et al. 2015; KHPT 2008) have responded to the forms of violence that place female sex workers at an increased risk for HIV infection. Intimate partner violence, however, poses a particular challenge for HIV programs given its sensitive nature and confinement to the seemingly less visible domestic realm (Das and Addlakha 2001; Beattie et al. 2010). In response to this challenge, organized efforts[4] have been made to mitigate the effects of intimate partner violence, a problem that is prevalent among female sex workers and which has been linked to an elevated risk for HIV infection (Blanchard et al. 2007).

Although researchers have begun to examine the forms of violence and power dynamics that play out in the intimate relationships of female sex workers in India (Blanchard et al. 2013; Blanchard et al. 2016; Panchanadeswaran et al. 2010; Panchanadeswaran and Koverola 2005; Ramanaik et al. 2015), this knowledge has tended to focus on the perspectives of women, leaving men's motivations and attitudes relatively unexamined. Based on six months of ethnographic research in Northern Karnataka, South India, our study explored how manhood is conceived of and enacted in the everyday lives of the intimate partners of female sex workers. For the purpose of our study, we define intimate partners as the women's main lover who is initially a client and then becomes an intimate partner

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[4] STRIVE is a Department for International Development funded research consortium based at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, with partners in India, Tanzania, and South Africa. It focuses on understanding the structural forces - in particular stigma, gender-based violence, poverty and drinking norms - that combine in different ways to create vulnerability to HIV transmission and to undermine prevention.

particularly when there is higher material and emotional expectation from him. Building on Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, we analyse these men's perceptions and practices to shed light on the common occurrence of intimate partner violence and how local ideologies of manhood—and the social and structural conditions that shape these ideologies—perpetuate intimate partner violence.

In relation to the complex ways masculinity is enacted, Carrigan et al. (1985) contend that it is analytically important to identify the ideologies that enable some men to secure and maintain their privileged positions while placing other men in subordinate positions. As theorized by Connell (2005), 'hegemonic masculinity' defines the attitudes and practices that enforce certain men's dominance and power over women and other men. Rather than a fixed identity marker, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 836) note that hegemonic positions are "configurations of practices that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting".

As a set of patterned and collective social practices, intimate partner violence also emerges out of specific social interactions and power relations that make up particular masculine subject positons (Jackson 2004; Chopra, Osella and Osella 2004). In India, scholars have noted the impact of economic marginalization on hegemonic enactments of masculinity and the implication this can have on gender relations (Jackson 2004; Abraham 2004; Chopra, Osella and Osella 2004). For instance, impoverished Indian men of lower castes have a highly complex and contradictory relation with this dominant ideal given that their material conditions in the market economy rarely allow them to live up to common expectations. However, in order to compensate for this insecure gender identity, men who are denied full access to typical male privileges and status may adhere to more extreme conceptions of traditional masculinity (Jackson 2004; Abraham 2004; Chopra 2004). In particular, violence against women whether physical or sexual becomes an integral

component of describing a 'real man' and manliness (Verma and Mehendra 2004; Verma et al. 2006).

Within the context of female sex workers' vulnerability to intimate partner violence, the study explored the following questions: How do the social norms around masculinity influence the dynamics of intimate partner violence? Given the precarious labour market in the study region, how do intimate partners negotiate the shifting demands of work and their sexual relationships with sex workers? What happens when sex workers are caught in the "crisis of masculinity" encountered by these men? How has the rising legal discourse of women's rights affect men's position in relation to women? Understanding masculinity in this way—as fragile, tenuous, and relational—gestures towards the wider social structural context in which these men live out their lives (including their sexual relationships), and therefore avoids rather essentialist caricatures of south Asian men as inherently sexist or violent. Such an understanding also raises a number of implications for interventions focussing on intimate partner violence of sex workers in India. We recommend that programs targeting men are not only crucial to addressing intimate partner violence as a structural driver of gender inequalities but operationalizing masculinity in programs, we argue, must attend to the social and structural realities surrounding these men's daily lived experiences.

Political economic context

In the region where the study was conducted, agriculture was a major source of income occupation. According to the 2010 census, farmers and agricultural labourers formed 56% of the workforce of Karnataka (India. Planning, Programme Monitoring & Statistics Department 2013: 37). In the research area of Bagalkot, 65% of workers are engaged in agriculture related activities. However the share of agricultural employment in Karnataka and all-India has declined by 5% between 2005 and 2010 (India. Planning, Programme

Monitoring & Statistics Department 2013: 37). This is also reflected in the earlier national census figures. Between 1991 and 2001, over seven million people for whom cultivation was their main livelihood, quit farming (Sainath 2011).

Given the decline in agricultural employment, Karnataka has experienced an economic structural adjustment as labour shifts to the secondary and tertiary sectors (India. Planning, Programme Monitoring & Statistics Department 2013). The share of services in total employment has risen from 22.1% in 2004-05 to 25.9% in 2009-10. Of the total workforce, nearly 87% of the workers worked in the unorganised sector (India. Planning, Programme Monitoring & Statistics Department 2013). Compared to regular workers who were composed of 16% of the organized sector, the unorganized sector accounted mainly of the self-employed (51%) and casual workers (33%). Despite the increase in the share of the organized sector workforce, the rise in the share of unorganised employment has not necessarily entailed a qualitative shift in work conditions. More specifically, the rise of an informal economy has corresponded to higher concentrations of workers in very low-paid, irregular, casual jobs with no job security.

In such an environment of unequal growth and precarious labour conditions, attending to the political economic conditions helps us understand the complex gender relationships that shape how masculinities are organized and expressed by intimate partners.

METHODS

Study setting and ethnographic data collection

The study was conducted in three *talukas*[5] (sub-districts) known as Mudhol, Jamkhandi, and Rabkavi Banhatti in Bagalkot, Northern Karnataka, where an extensive HIV prevention program currently operates. Building upon previous ethnographic work, we have

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[5] Administrative subdivisions below the district level.

collaborated with members of Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT)—an intervention and research group who has maintained a long-term relationship with communities of sex workers in the region. More specifically, the study was undertaken in collaboration with the *Chaitanya AIDS Tadegattuva Mahila Sangha*—which is a community-based sex worker collective in Mudhol—funded and supported by KHPT.

In this study, the point of entry to the research participants (mainly the intimate partners) was gained through the *Chaitanya AIDS Tadegattuva Mahila Sangha*. In order to mitigate the risks to the female sex workers, we sought the consent of their partners before interviewing. The inclusion criteria for both intimate partners and female sex workers were aged 18 or above. Most of the men recruited were married, involved in manual labour, and lacked a secondary education. Given the high concentration of "traditional" female sex workers in Northern Karnataka, most of the women identified as *Devadasis*. Traditional sex work has a long history within Indian society, having acquired and retained a degree of social and cultural sanction (O'Neil et al. 2004; Orchard 2007a; Blanchard et al. 2005). The *Devadasi* cultural tradition involves a religious rite in which girls and women are dedicated, through marriage, to different gods and goddesses, after which they become the wives or servants of the deities and perform various temple duties (Orr 2000). Over time, these duties have come to include provision of sexual services to priests and patrons of the temples. Today, the *Devadasi* tradition is widespread in northern Karnataka, and the sex work associated with it is socially and culturally embedded in many communities (Orchard 2007a, Orchard 2007b).

Participant observation and ethnographic fieldnote writing was conducted over a six-month period in Mudhol, Jamkhandi, and Rabkavi Banhatti to develop rapport with intimate partners and cultivate a familiarity with their practices through an intensive engagement with people in their cultural context (Liamputtong 2013). In the villages, a significant number of

intimate partners were farmers who worked in the fields, whereas in the towns men's occupations included drivers, factory workers, tailors and carpenters. Immersion in the local context allowed us to interact with local men in the general community. These informal interactions yielded important insights with respect to understanding the local social context pertaining to masculinity. In particular, we frequented the following locales: villages, temples, market places, restaurants, agricultural fields, movie theatres, cultural events, and the neighbourhoods of the intimate partners and female sex workers. Additionally, we conducted two focus group discussions with female sex workers with the aim of understanding key concerns and challenges faced by them in the context of their relationships with their partners. The ideas they shared formed the basis for leading our group discussions and interviews with the intimate partners. Using purposeful and snowball sampling, intimate partners were invited to participate in focus group discussions, in Mudhol and Jamkhandi. The discussions among the intimate partners focused on issues of gender-based violence, masculinity, and work, both in general and in relation to the female sex workers. The ideas and insights provided by intimate partners during the focus groups formed the basis for the development of the interview guide employed with participants who identified as intimate partners. In-depth interviews were conducted with intimate partners, divided among men from rural and urban areas. Interview questions were semi-structured and new participants identified through purposive and snowball sampling (other than those who participated in the focus group discussion) also participated in interviews. Given the first author's lack of proficiency in Kannada[6], the interviews, group discussion, and fieldwork was facilitated by an interpreter.

The research assistants transcribed the Kannada recordings. Transcripts were composed and translated into English by local research assistants, and reviewed and analysed

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[6] The regional language spoken in Karnataka.

by the first author. NVivo was used to store, manage and organize the analysis of the interview transcripts. As subsequent interviews were reviewed, inductive thematic analysis helped identify and code emergent themes (Liamputtong 2013). Finally, the findings were validated by a process of peer checking and a validation workshop with the participants, which provided a means for triangulation.

The study was approved by the University of Manitoba Ethics Review Board and the Institutional Ethical Review Board of St. John's Medical College and Hospital in Karnataka. Research assistants administered consent forms (available in English and Kannada) at the study site. As part of the consenting procedure, participants were assured of anonymity and of the voluntary nature of their participation. Written consent was sought before audio-recording interviews, which were later transcribed verbatim from spoken Kannada to written Kannada, with quotes translated into written English. All names appearing in this article are pseudonyms and minor alternations to their biographies have been made in order to protect respondents' identities.

Demographics of intimate partners

In total, the study employed two focus group discussions with *Devadasi* female sex workers (N= 17), four focus group discussions with intimate partners (N= 34), and 30 in-depth interviews with intimate partners, 15 each in rural and urban areas.

The age of the male participants in the in-depth interviews ranged between 23 and 52 years, with the mean being at 34 years. More than half (58%) had received formal education, ranging between those with one and nine years of school education; 32% reported that they had continued their education after Middle School (one had a university degree) while 10% were illiterate. The vast majority of the participants (28 out of 31). All of the men reported to be involved in an intimate partnership with only one female sex worker. Equal

numbers of the male participants were from Scheduled Castes (castes identified by the government to be "socially and economically backward") and Lingayat (adherents of a particular Hindu faith centred on Shiva; also, educationally and financially better off) (42% each). Thirteen percent were Muslim and only one participant was from a Scheduled Tribe (another group of historically disadvantaged people recognised in the constitution). Most of the participants could be identified as working class as their main occupations ranged broadly from being drivers (29%), construction workers (22.5%), services industry workers (16%), farmers (10%), electricians, tailors, factory workers, security guards to handloom weavers (22.5%).

Four focus group discussions were conducted with a total of 34 intimate partners. The ages ranged from 20 to 50 with the mean age being 30. Almost half of the participants (47%) belonged to the Scheduled Caste and 32% were Lingayats. Three of the men were from Schedule Tribes and 4 belonged to other "backward" castes. The vast majority of the men were married (31 out of 34). Almost equal numbers of the men received formal education and post-middle school education (38% and 41% respectively) while 20% of the men were illiterate.

Two focus group discussions were also conducted with female sex workers with a total of 17 women. All of the women except one identified as a *Devadasi*. The women's age ranged from 25 to 38 with the mean age being 31 years old. All of women were from the Scheduled Caste. The majority of the women (15 out of 17) received a formal education ranging from 5 to 10 years while two women were illiterate.

FINDINGS

This section highlights some of the conflicts that occur in the relationships between female sex workers and their intimate partners. Within these relationships, we explore the

interrelated social and economic conditions that underpin the eruption of intimate partner violence.

Fleeting relationships

> "Girlfriends are like Medicine: They have Expiry Dates"
> —*popular t-shirt slogan worn by local men living in Mudhol*

Within intimate partnerships, men generally claimed that their relationships with the female sex workers[7], who they commonly referred to as 'lovers', provided intimacy and erotic satisfaction that they did not experience at home with their wives.

> I will expect sexual pleasure from her…She sleeps with me whenever I want (and) that gives me so much joy. She speaks to me nicely. I can share my feelings with her and she also shares her feelings with me. *(Omkara, 26 years old, construction worker)*

> We watch porn clips on my mobile and then we practice them. I cannot do that with my wife. My lover [a sex worker] … satisfies me and gives me the pleasures that I desire and want...I can't ask my wife to lick my penis and practice different sexual acts, like bending over and spreading out her legs. *(Mallapa, 28 years old, driver)*

At the same time, participants viewed their relationships with their lovers as 'fleeting', and expressed little emotional obligation towards them. Because men did not have the same familial obligation to their lovers as their wives, they viewed their relationships with them as unencumbered by commitment and, as a result, more replaceable.

> If my wife goes against me, there are many choices to resolve the conflict. Elders, members from both the families, neighbours and relatives will gather and find out the reason for the conflict and later, the spouses will come to a consensus. But it is different for lovers [sex workers]. Our relationship is hidden and like a flower, we can remove it any time when we don't want it. I got married to my wife in front of society. I have the right to make any demands from my wife but I don't have that right with my lover. *(Omkara, 26 years old, construction worker)*

> We feel free to have sex with our lovers. Even if she is very close to me, she is still an outsider. We can stop talking to them anytime but we can't stop talking to our wives. We both have to interact because we are a family. We can give

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[7] Given that the men were not comfortable referring to the women as *Devadasis* or sex workers, they would use the term lovers.

up our lovers, but we can't give up our wives. *(Sadanand, 33 years old, farmer)*

As indicated by other scholars, significant social status as a man comes through marriage in South Asia (Vera-Sanso 2000; Abraham 2004). But while men felt entitled to enact forms of masculine domination in their marriages, by expecting unconditional support and obedience from their wives, they could not expect the same from their lovers as these relationships were not socially sanctioned.

> I must expect everything from my wife. I cannot expect from my lover that which I expect from my wife because my wife is the ultimate and everything. My wife takes care of me and will help me when I am in trouble. If I am suffering from financial problems, she will get money from her parents and support me, but I cannot expect this from my lover. *(Gajanan, 33 years old, driver)*

> The wife is the ultimate. If I die tomorrow, my wife will cry and she has the right but a *Devadasi* [sex worker] will just find another person. The wife does not care about money; she has only love for us. It is a formal relationship bound in the presence of many people. *(Lakhan, 28 years old, driver)*

However, the lovers who participated in the study expressed a different perspective on the relationships with their intimate partners. For instance, during an informal conversation with Oditi, a *Devadasi* sex worker and volunteer at Chaitanya Mahila Sangha, she described the emotionally one-sided relationship between female sex workers and intimate partners. According to her, the sex workers tended to have more genuine and serious feelings towards their partners whereas the men would easily replace them for someone younger or more attractive. Sneh, a 29 year old *Devadasi* sex worker echoed this sentiment: "If he finds some other attractive woman, he will leave us. We love him, we won't leave him (Sneh, 29, peer educator/sex worker)."

Under the shadow of hegemonic masculinity, sex workers were aware that their partners regarded them with less respect than their wives; for their intimate partnerships existed outside the realm of formalized marriage, a system that (re)secured social status for men.

He will scold us by saying 'you are a bitch, you sleep with other people'. If we speak about his wife, he will beat us. He will get angry and ask us "how dare you compare yourself to my wife?" *(Puja, 30 years old, peer educator/Devadasi sex worker)*

We treat him like more than a husband. We give him sexual satisfaction and do as he pleases, but he never speaks with us when he is with his family members. *(Nada, 25, peer educator/Devadasi sex worker)*

Violence in the market economy

Although the relationship with their lovers provided men a sense of emotional and sexual satisfaction, it also added to their existing financial burden. As noted by Sadanand, a 33 year-old intimate partner who worked as a farmer, taxi driver, and land labourer: "Life runs on money. For everything we need money: school fees, family maintenance, food." For most intimate partners, the financial pressure to uphold the social responsibilities within their relationships with their lovers and wives was a constant theme that emerged across formal and informal discussions.

In order to understand the economic challenges of intimate partners, we must contextualize the structures that give rise to men's economic instability. In particular, such precariousness was reflected in the multiple casual jobs that men in the villages occupied amid a transforming market economy, as the following fieldnote excerpt illustrates:

Among the lower class and rural families, the women tended to work inside the homes taking care of their children while the men would work as wage labourers in fields or in towns. Unlike the landlords who owned large tracts of land, small landholders do not make enough to support their families. As a result, these men would seek work outside their villages. It was not uncommon to work simultaneously as an agricultural labourer, auto-rickshaw driver, land cutter, bus driver, courier, and so on.

Along with the pressures of work, the financial strain of providing for both their lover and wife contributed to the stress and violence in intimate partners' relationships with their lovers. The intimate partners would often describe the female sex workers as a reason for their precarious economic state making excessive claims over their economic resources,

My lover always waits for money; she makes plans to get money from me. She asks me for money …like two thousand for rations and other expenses. I will ask her to manage it from her family members but she does not listen. I lost most of my money to her. *(Quamar, 30 years old, band master/painter)*

Likewise, Lakhan, a 28 year-old driver, notes: "She is always in need of money. She asks me to get money when I go to her house. She never stops demanding." Rahul, a 25 year-old construction worker, similarly said: "She enquires with my boss how much I earn. If she comes to know I am spending money, she will ask me."

Between managing their work and their wives' family, the intimate partners often had difficulty providing the adequate time with their lovers, which often led to fights. As noted by Connell (2005: 117), hegemonic masculinity is constantly negated by cultural and economic weakness. Given the increasing casualization of labour, the inability of intimate partners to meet the economic and social needs of their lovers was not only an affront to their masculinity but a source of tension within their relationships with their lovers.

Sometimes we will be very busy with our family and work so we cannot go to the lover's house. If we go to the lover's house after 8 or 15 days, she starts shouting and she says I never care about her. Even if I reason with her she still yells at me, and that makes me angry and will lead me to hit her. *(Prasham, 36 years old, factory labourer)*

Violence: a form of control

As noted above, precarious work conditions undermined men's role as providers and thus troubled their position of power in relationships with women. Intimate relationships therefore became vivid sites where men's frustrations played out, where they attempted to regain a sense of power 'given' by society, through violence. Among the intimate partners, violence was a common tool to correct their lover's lack of obedience. In particular, intimate partners often described their partners by employing animal metaphors, which further justified their control over their partners.

Our ancestors have a saying: "we have to hit an ox for every corner of the field it moves." When we beat an ox, it will go in the right line. The same goes for

> woman. We must beat her sometimes, then she will stay under our control and listen to us. Otherwise she will do whatever comes to her mind. She will go the wrong way. *(Neeraf, 45 years old, farmer)*

> We treat her like an animal because animals eat whatever they want. If we do not beat her when she strays she will do whatever she wants. She must have at least some fear of us *(Dharamveer, 25 years old, tractor driver)*

As noted in these narratives, fear and violence were important tactics used to keep women in line and relegating them to their acceptable roles. Although some men suggested that they had no authority over their lovers because they were not married to them, the financial support and gifts men provided them licensed their sense of expectation and entitlement over their lovers, which further limited women's ability to negotiate the power dynamics in their relationships.

> She has to obey me. She should not sleep with other men when I take care of her need. She should be mine. She should wait for me. She should have sex in all the ways that I want. *(Fareed, 32 years old, coolie)*

> If she is found standing and chatting with any other person, then we can beat her. *(Gagan, 48 years old, motor mechanic)*

Similarly, the female sex workers expressed feeling constantly monitored and restricted in their daily interactions. "He beats me if I go anywhere without his permission. He says "if you go out without my permission, I will see you" (Veda, 28, peer educator/sex worker)". In focus group discussions, female sex workers said that men were highly controlling and suspicious of them—monitoring their mobile phones, text messages, choice of attire, and whereabouts. However, the material and emotional support provided by intimate partners increased women's sense of obligation and loyalty towards their partners. Prana, a 38-year old *Devaadasi* sex workers says,

> They ask about and meet needs of ours and our children. We are like family to them, like their wife and children. Their caring attitudes enhance more love on them and start to believe this person will protect and secure us.

Arthi, a 28 year-old *Devadasi* sex worker, recounts: "My boyfriend stabbed me on the thigh when he suspected me of cheating but I'm still with him because he takes care of me." Like

the other women in the group, she had chosen to stay with her intimate partner even after pressing charges against him. Unlike client-based relationships, intimate partnerships are often entangled in new forms of emotional and material reciprocity, which are marked by mutual, albeit uneven, obligations that extend over time (Walle 2004; Abraham 2004).

Integral to the subordination of female sex workers to men was the larger gendered division of labour that constrained what men and women could do in public and private spaces. As sex workers and lovers of their intimate partners, women had to negotiate between what was considered 'acceptable' work and their relationships. Through physical force, surveillance and a sense of obligation imposed by their intimate partners, these women were sometimes limited in practicing sex work in secret, under the persistent threat of their intimate partner's discovery and punishment.

Violence: a contested act of intimacy

Given the emotional bond that developed between intimate partners and lovers, the relationship that a man had with his lover was also highly conflicted. Although the majority of the participants viewed their relationships with their lovers as temporary, they still expressed a deep affection for them, which they used to justify violence.

> I treat my lover as my wife, and I will beat her when she takes the wrong path or makes me angry. *(Gajanan, 33 years old, driver)*

> We have the right to beat them if we become very close to them and we have the right to do so. *(Gagan, 48 years old, motor mechanic)*

The deep attachment towards their lovers was also fraught with the paternalistic belief that violence was for the good of the women. For 33 year-old driver, Jagathi, the deep sense of attachment he had towards his lover mitigated the feelings of guilt he had about beating her: "Because I love her I must hit her when she is not behaving well."

Similarly, in a focus group discussion conducted with female sex workers, some of the women came to believe that their partner's act of violence was an act of intimacy: "he hits me because he loves me". Another woman compared violence to getting "showered with flowers". Such statements suggest that intimate partner violence is pervasive to the extent that has become normalized in the everyday lives of these men and women, colouring the very intimate attachments held between sex workers and intimate partners.

Reactions to law

Instead of viewing the law as protecting the social rights and entitlements of their lovers, most of the men believed such political reformations were an affront to their masculinity. Some of the participants described the legal system as providing preferential treatment towards women at the expense of men's voice and decision-making power in the household. Frustrated about the strict legal regulations on his behaviour, 33-year old handloom weaver Akash states "Women have more value than men because one wrong action against them can lead us into jail." Based on this perceived inequality, some of the men often expressed a sense of fear and outrage towards the law, which they viewed as unfairly targeting them.

> We cannot use our power on women because we are scared of the law. The law should treat both men and women and women equally. *(Ratan, 27 years old, carpenter)*

In response to such legal recourses, lovers were often the targets of blame for the violence that transpired in their relationships. According to the men, it was the lovers' responsibility to ensure that men's needs were met and compromises were made without involving the authorities. The majority of men attributed the eruption of violence to the women's inability to conform to the traditional ideals of womanhood.

> Women must have the quality of tolerance. This is very important. They must listen to men. If she is bothered by us, she should not let that give her tension. *(Neeraf, 45 years old, farmer)*

> Women must hardened themselves so men don't tease her. She must wear decent dresses like sarees and churidar. If she wear dresses that reveals her body and exposes her breast, men will get tense and want to rape her. *(Nadir, 30 years old, security)*

As a method of disciplinary control, men's insistence that their lovers develop tolerance towards violence was not only a means to assert their superiority over them but also redirect blame from men who engaged in such acts. Perceiving violence as the lovers' responsibility, the law then appeared to have little effect on shifting the attitudes and behaviours of these men.

DISCUSSION

Within the context of economic marginalization and patriarchal relations, the highly contested nature of men's relationships with their lovers demonstrates the relational and tenuous construction of masculinity. In particular, we cannot understand masculinity without recognizing that it is laden with tensions that derive from masculinities themselves (Connell and Messershmidt 2005; Chopra, Osella and Osella 2004). Although the relationships with their lovers provided men with a sense of emotional and erotic satisfaction they did not receive from their wives, men would tend to reinforce gender stereotypes (splitting of female subjects into wife and lover) in order to question the moral evaluation of and exert domination over their lovers (Walle 2004). On the other hand, the participants' sense of manhood was continually thrown into jeopardy by the economic demands that prevented them from being able to financially manage multiple partnerships. As objects of sexualized aggression, violence became a way they attempted to re-secure a sense of control in their relationships with women, and to fulfil the imperatives of hegemonic masculinity (Verma and Mehendra 2004; Matjasko et al. 2012; Gabriel 2004; Chopra 2004).

Not only was violence fundamental to men's sense of masculinity, it was also ensconced in layers of intimacy. Although the men frequently described the relationships with their lovers as 'fleeting', the emotional and material exchanges developed overtime increased both the level of bonding and expectation men and women had for each other. However, within the ethos of patriarchal gender relations, the expectation that women must defer to male authority supported practices that made women vulnerable to violence and coercive sexual relations (Walle 2004; Verma et al. 2006). In particular, the regulation of women's bodies and sexualities whether through monitoring or the use or threat of violence was a way for men to ensure their control over women (Abraham 2004; Verma et al 2006).

Despite laws enforcing the protection of women, men viewed such measures as only disrupting the power relations within their relationships. As noted by other masculinity-studies scholars (Messner1997; Dworkin 2015), the shift in the direction of more gender equality can be met by men with feelings of a decline in masculine status and a destabilized sense of what it means to be a man. In response, the intimate partners were actively involved in the construction and maintenance of patriarchal ideology embodied in the moral depiction of women, attributing the eruption of violence to their lovers who failed to subscribe to traditional ideals of womanhood. In concert with other scholarships (Wood and Jewkes 2001; Govender 2011; Abraham 2004; Chopra 2004), male insecurities regarding an inability to control women provided the basis for male dominance and legitimised a subordinate view of women.

The findings from this study with respect to masculinity underscore that it is crucial to involve men in gender-related programs. Over the last decade, HIV-related program focussing on sex workers communities primarily emphasize the individual behaviours, empowerment and mobilization of women who sell sex, and tend to ignore their intimate partnerships. This narrow focus, however, fails to address the roots of sex workers

vulnerability—that is, the forms of gender power inequalities enacted and reinforced by men's attitudes and social practices. As a set of social and collective practices, any changes in gender relations must incorporate both men and women into their programming (Buston 2002, Connell 2005, Ricardo et al. 2005). This can facilitate change by having women and men work together to question idealised norms around manhood (particularly within their peer group) and, for women, to question norms that make them subservient. With this said however, curriculum-based programs to fundamentally shift gender-related behaviours and norms should not be overstated. Without attending to the wider social and structural terrain that shape the range and availability of masculinities that men select among and enact (Hunter 2010; Connell 2005), interventions may inadvertently limit the analysis of violence to the individual, cultural and interpersonal realms.

LIMITATIONS

There were several limitations of this research, beginning with the issue of language competency. The first author's reliance on translators for the in-depth interviews was somewhat hindered because he was not able to immediately understand the interview content and to spontaneously probe participant narratives. In order to ensure the overall quality of the research process, we were particularly diligent in double-checking information in order to ensure methodological thoroughness and systematic crosschecking of interpretations. Secondly, the transcripts translated into English did not represent an exact copy of the conversation between the respondent and the interviewer. However, a quality check by a separate translator helped ensure the accuracy of the translation. Lastly, this study is focused in the peri-urban areas of Bagalkot, where HIV and social support networks are well established for female sex workers, and may not be representative of smaller cities or rural areas in India. However, the lessons learned from the study raise important questions about

the limitation of programs that focus solely on female sex workers more broadly across India and beyond. In particular, future work must not only focus on the democratisation of gender order, but also how hierarchies of masculinities can be taken into account. This will involve looking at how certain men's social and structural marginalization contributes to them not only increasing their likelihood of being victims of violence at the hands of other men but also perpetrating violence against other men as well as women.

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INCIPIENT MASCULINITIES: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF ADOLESCENT SCHOOLBOYS' PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER RELATIONS IN NORTHERN KARNATAKA, INDIA[8]

ABSTRACT

In Northern Karnataka, South India, adolescent girls are at a high risk of dropping out of secondary school, which is especially the case among girls from "scheduled castes and scheduled tribes" in rural communities. In particular, boys' behaviours and attitudes towards girls are regarded as one of the many important proximate structural barriers impeding girls' access to education and academic performance in South India. While important intervention efforts with adolescent boys are underway in this region, less is still known about the wider patterns of masculinity that shape adolescent boys' perspectives on gender relationships and practices that subjugate adolescent girls. Drawing on Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, this article develops the notion of *incipient masculinity* to understand the emerging dynamics of masculinity among adolescent boys. Based on four months of ethnographic research among adolescent boys in Northern Karnataka, this research reveals the ways in which adolescent boys negotiate their masculinities in relation to the inequities faced by girls with respect to education. Although adolescence might be characterized as a period of uncertainty in which a manhood is 'incomplete' and continues to unfold, our findings suggest that it is a crucial period in which hegemonic masculinity is powerfully instantiated in the relationships between teenage boys and girls. By examining the emerging dynamics of masculinity that might unsettle hegemonic masculinity, we consider how to transform the existing patterns of gender relations that perpetuate the subordinate positions of girls within society.

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INTRODUCTION

In an effort to achieve sustainable development in 'developing countries', gender equality has been recognized as an important social development goal by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). According to the UNDP (2016:4), "Gender equality envisions a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity and a world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed." Although tremendous inroads have been made in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, gender inequalities persist throughout the world. Within the context of education, serious implications on a country's economic growth arise from the low participation of girls in school. In 2008, it was estimated that the failure to educate girls on par with boys costs low and middle income and transitional countries US$92 billion each year (Plan 2008). Just over a third of this cost—$33 billion—that is borne by India alone. In terms of the consequences for girls' quality of life and standard of living, girls who have less education are more vulnerable to HIV infection and other health problems; have larger, less healthy families; and earn less than better educated girls (Warner, Mahotra, & McGonagle 2012; Herz & Sperling 2012).

In Northern Karnataka, South India, adolescent girls are at a high risk of dropping out of school, which is especially the case among girls from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes[9] (SC/ST) in rural communities (U-DISE, 2015; Government of Karnataka 2006). In this region, a range of factors have contributed to girls dropping out of school from economic factors, such as poverty and unemployment, to social norms, such as the prioritisation of boys' education over girls within households (UNICEF, 2011; Herz & Sperling 2004). Most notably, the threat and fear of sexual harassment by male classmates has been an important

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[9] Scheduled castes and tribes are identified by the government to be "socially and economically backward".

reason for families to remove girls from school (Bhagavatheeswaran et al. 2016, Mallika et al. 2012; Leach & Sitaram 2007). As a result, girls who have their education shortened tend to transition early into adult roles via marriage or entry into sex work (KHPT 2012).

Entry into sex work in Northern Karnataka is in part related to the *Devadasi* tradition, a cultural practice that dedicates young girls, through marriage, to the temple Goddess "Yellamma" (Orr 2000). Historically, dedicated girls performed various temple duties and provided sexual services to the priests and temple attendants (O'Neil et al. 2004; Orchard 2007; Blanchard et al 2005). Although prohibited in Karnataka in 1982[10], dedicated girls often practice commercial sex work as the Devadasi system remains a culturally and economically valued form of sex work (Orchard 2007). According to Silverman et al. entry into the sex trade not only increases girls' HIV risk but also shortens their education. This however must be located in a web of social relations through which inequalities are shaped and reproduced (Khan et al. n.d). Given these historical and structural factors, dropping out of school and entering into sex work, including entry into the *Devadasi* system, marks a point of intersection where adolescent girls become susceptible to HIV infection.

In response, public health specialists have begun to implement social interventions that seek to increase the number and retention of girls in secondary schools in regions of Northern Karnataka where Devadasi dedications are widely practiced and where HIV prevalence is still quite high (Raghavendra and Anderson 2013; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2008). However, less is known about the wider patterns of masculinity that shape adolescents boys' perceptions and practices on gender relationships and the implication this has on the advancement of girls within secondary schools. As such, this qualitative study explores two interrelated foci: 1) how adolescent boys understand girls' disproportionate school dropout through the lens of local social norms pertaining to gender difference; and 2)

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[10] The Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act, 1982.

how adolescent boys participate in the perpetuation of gender inequalities and divisions by attempting to enact local ideas of manhood in their interactions with girls. Based on four months of ethnographic research among adolescent boys in Northern Karnataka, this research reveals the ways in which adolescent boys negotiate their masculinities in relation to the inequities faced by girls with respect to education. Although adolescence might be characterized as a period of uncertainty in which 'manhood' is incomplete and continues to unfold, our findings suggest that it is a crucial period in which hegemonic masculinity is powerfully instantiated in the relationships between teenage boys and girls. Thus, a concern for girls' premature school drop-outs also warrants that attention be placed on the perspectives of boys as the subjects of practical and theoretical interventions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Over the past couple of decades, a substantial body of research has demonstrated that adherence to "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell 2005: 77) – patterns of practices that promote the certain ways of 'being male' through the subordination of alternative masculine and feminine subject positions – underlies a range of negative behaviors for both men and women (Vance 1984; Amuchastegui 1998; Liguori & Lamas 2003). However, in light of research (Witherell & Edley 1999; Whitehead 1998) that explores the layering and potential internal contradictions within all practices that construct masculinities, Connell (2005) has expanded the concept of hegemonic masculinity to highlight the compromised formations between contradictory desires and emotions. Viewing gender as relational, dynamic, and multiple, Butler (1990) contends that gender is continually created through a series of performances and repetitive acts. With that said, Connell (1995) highlights the complexities that lie beneath the surface of apparently stable, settled and coherent masculinities. Although in each society some forms of masculine behaviour dominate others (for example, white

heterosexual versus black gay masculinity), there are always multiple ideals being recognised and embodied to varying extents by different men. Connell's (1995:37) deconstruction of masculinity into multiple 'masculinities' thus allows us to recognizes that "there is a gender politics within masculinity.". The construction of masculinity is a political process, embedded in the maintenance of gender, power and patriarchal relationships.

Within the context of identity formation among adolescent[11] boys, puberty marks a formative period through which gender identities are increasingly constructed and negotiated through a complex web of social and structural interactions (Ricardo et al. 2005). While the family is usually the primary or most proximal social institution within which gender norms and social behaviours are learned and reinforced, scholars also highlight the impact of economic marginalization on traditional enactments of masculinity and the implication this can have on the development of gender relations (Silberschmidt 2001; Hunter 2010; Sommer, Likindikoki, & Kaaya 2013). Adolescence, then, is a time not only in which gender divide often intensifies (Mensch et al., 1998; UNFPA, 2005), but also when attitudes, behaviours and hierarchies of power in intimate and sexual relationships become enacted (Barker et al., 2004). Among low-income, college-going, urban youth in Mumbai, Abraham (2001) contends that adolescence is a formative period in which the gender asymmetric sexual experiences of girls and boys become most pronounced. Similarly, other scholars (Das 1988; Dube 1998; Verma et al. 2006) have shown sexual segregation and internalization of what constitutes feminine and masculine behaviour begins early in childhood. Around the time of puberty, however, individuals also acquire more complex cognitive abilities, including the capacity to reflect on the potential to act in ways counter to prevailing gender norms (Mensch et al., 1998). From a feminist pedagogical perspective, this process of reflecting critically on the history of cultural conditions and class structures that support and frame experiences of

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[11] According to Sawyer, adolescence encompasses most individuals who are going through the biological changes and social-role transitions.

gender inequality can help to promote personal growth, political awareness and activism that can create the conditions to change gender role prescriptions (Shrewsbury 1987).

Drawing on Connell's concept of layering, this article develops the concept of *incipient masculinity* to understand the emerging dynamics of masculinity among adolescent boys during a period in which increasing divergence in gendered experiences is taking shape. As such, the paper explores the processes by which adolescent boys: 1) manage and negotiate the tensions between a social and structural reality of hegemonic masculinity that restrains the educational advancement and achievement of girls and 2) recognize their potential to participate in a democratised gender order that would be more liberatory for girls. In particular, the following themes are examined: perceptions of family, child marriage, and secondary school dropouts; understandings of gendered division of labour; practices of teasing and harassment; and socio-cultural and moral expectations with respect to girls. We also pay attention to attitudes that run counter to hegemonic masculinity. By examining the emerging dynamics of masculinity that might unsettle hegemonic masculinity, we consider how to transform the existing patterns of gender relations that perpetuate the subordinate positions of girls within society.

METHODS

Study context

The state of Karnataka has been classified as a high prevalence state, and female sex workers in Karnataka have one of the highest HIV infection rate in the country (after Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra) (India. NIHFW & NACO 2011). In response to this social vulnerability, an international NGO known as Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT) developed the *Samata* project in the rural areas of Bagalkot and Bijapur district of Northern Karnataka (Raghavendra & Anderson 2013). As part of a multi-layered intervention aimed to

reduce SC/ST girls' vulnerability to HIV infection and sexual debut, *Samata* intervenes at the levels of schools, girls and boys, families, the community, and officials from the department of education and media. In particular, boys' behaviours and attitudes towards girls are regarded as one of the many important proximate structural barriers impeding girls' access to education and academic performance (Ramesh et al., 2008; Silverman 2011). Through *Samata's Parivartan* program, mentors from the boys' community are selected to facilitate sport games and classroom discussions to adolescent boys in order to provoke critical reflections on gender equitable norms and the ability to act upon such norms. In an effort to support the program development for adolescent boys, the study was conducted in rural communities of Bijapur and Bagalkot in order to explore the attitudes and behaviours of boys that perpetuate the disproportionate secondary school dropout of girls.

With regards to the political economy of the study area, agriculture is the primary source of employment and livelihood for many rural residents in northern Karnataka. According to the 2011 Karnataka District Census, farmers and agricultural labourers formed 56% of the workforce of Karnataka. In the research area of Bagalkot and Bijapur respectively, 65% and 60% of workers are engaged in agriculture-related activities. Many who depend upon agriculture for their livelihood are landless because ownership of farmland is highly concentrated. In the 2008 Karnataka Agriculture Profile, 40% and 55% of farmers from the middle and landlord class in Bagalkot and Bijapur respectively owned 72% and 81% of agricultural land. Land ownership, which is the main determinant of economic position in rural areas, influences school enrolment, as can be seen by higher enrolment among children from families with larger land holdings (Azim Premji Foundation 2004; Kanbargi & Kulkarni 1991).

Given the highly uneven distribution of wealth within agricultural communities, agricultural landless labourers and marginal farmers often discontinue their children's

schooling in order to have them help the family earn an income [Reddy & Reddy 1992]. In particular, the gender imbalance in educational level is most evident in girls' literacy status. The 2011 Karnataka District Census reported that the literacy rate in Bijapur District was 70% for men and 43% for women; while in Bagalkot district the literacy rate is 57% for men and 43% for women. Due to the high concentration of poverty in the northern Karnataka districts, children, especially girls, from rural and impoverished backgrounds are commonly deprived of access to higher education and employment (Ritambhara & Acharya 2003).

Sampling and ethnographic data collection

This ethnographic study employed in-depth interviews, participant observation and fieldnote writing. The study was conducted in the villages that were previously selected for an exploratory qualitative interview with adolescent girls in Bagalkot and Bijapura district. From each of the districts, five villages, belonging to the intervention arm, were chosen based on the geographic location, distance from the district/taluka headquarter, and the village size. All together 10 villages were selected from these two districts. Within each village two adolescent boys belonging to the SC/ST community between the ages of 13 and 18 were selected using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods. The first respondent from each village was purposively selected for the interview with the help of a local panchayat member (village- or small town-level political leader) or youth leader and the second respondent from the same village were identified and interviewed with the help of the first respondent. This method was adopted in all the 10 villages until a sample of 20 adolescent boys were recruited in the study.

The in-depth interviews were semi-structured with open-ended interviews. The areas of inquiry focused on boys' perceptions of gender norms especially relating to education and the marriage of girls in their families and neighbourhoods, and the role taken up in the girl's

lives. The interviews were conducted by two locally-trained qualitative researchers. The interviews were carried out in the places that were convenient for participants as well as conducive for an uninterrupted and private interview. At the time of the interviews, some of the boys had ongoing interactions with programs that forced them to question and reflect upon the nature of gender and power relations in their communities.

All of the participants came from SC backgrounds and had never been married. The ages of the boys in the in-depth interviews ranged between 14 and 18 years, with the mean being at 16 years. The education boys received ranged from the level of standard 8 to 12; less than half (40%) completed standard 10.

With the daily support of an interpreter, the first author was involved in participant observation and ethnographic fieldnote writing over a four-month period in Bagalkot district in the villages where the intervention was conducted. Immersion in the local context, such as spending time with the boys in classroom discussions, sport-related activities, and community functions not only helped to destabilise the adult-centrism embedded in many research projects with young people but also helped build trust and rapport during the research process. These informal interactions yielded important insights on the influence of gender norms on the education, marriage, and division of labour of girls and boys.

Data analysis

NVivo was used to store, manage and organize the data and create analytical codes (Liamputtong 2013: 375). The analysis focused on representing adolescent boys' views and experiences through their accounts, and on identifying patterns in the data. Given the respondents were below the age of 18, written consent in the local language was required from a parent or guardian followed by the consent of the respondent. With written consent from the participants, the research assistants tape recorded and transcribed the interviews. A

translator translated the transcripts into English for analysis by the first author. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Manitoba and St. John's Medical College ethics board. Pseudonyms are used throughout this paper to protect confidentiality and anonymity.

FINDINGS

The family household economy and the risk of child marriage

For poor rural families in Bagalkot and Bijapur, the social and structural context informed the age of marriage and the educational value of girls. According to the participants, girls' entry into higher education was strongly contingent upon their parents' economic standing. For those from poorer backgrounds, early marriage was an attempt to achieve financial stability. Explaining how parents believed that performing their daughter's marriage early would spare her of a life of poverty and suffering, 15 year-old Manjunath says, "The parents are poor and must work outside. They do not want that for their daughter. They want her to be happy in her husband's house so they perform her marriage early."

Given the patrilocal and patrilineal arrangement of the family, girls are often viewed as an economic burden on the household economy (Sipahimalani 1996; Sinha 1998). Some of the participants believed that because a girl could not financially support her parents once she was married, her education was less of a priority and investment compared to her brothers. According to some of the boys, girls in their villages married as early as the age of 12 with only an educational level of standard 6. As noted by 17 year-old Vijay,

> Parents will not provide much support for girls' educations but they will support boys in whatever they study. Some believe that boys will live with them forever whereas girls will leave them once she is married. Even if she is educated, the salary she earns will only go towards her husband's family.

A similar response was echoed by 15 year-old Jatin who described how girls' education was viewed as a "waste of money" for parents who could not earn a potential "profit."

Family members don't see any value in the education of girls. It is waste of money. They think that once the girl goes to the husband's house, they will not make any profit from her education.

Perceived morality and the education of girls

Girls want to study but parents stop their education because of the teasing from schoolboys. If anyone comes to know that their daughter was teased, her reputation will be ruined. *(Prashant, 17 years old, standard 11)*

As illustrated by Prashant, a girl's perceived morality weighed heavily on their parent's decision to put her through school. During interviews and informal discussions, participants claimed that parents were more inclined to drop her out of school and marry her early when she becomes the object of school-place harassment. This was especially true for girls who reached puberty or "maturity" as they were viewed as an easy target for harassment. Explaining the anxiety parent's had around girls' morality, 15 year-old Harish said "When girls' bodies start changing, boys will treat them differently. Parents worry that the boys will make the girls love them and then spoil her life." From the perspective of boys, the onset of puberty among adolescent girls marked the female body as a signifier of morality and sexual precarity.

For parents, the maintenance of their daughter's sexuality was not only intended to safeguard her reputation but also the family honour (Ganesh 1989; Vishwanath 1997). In particular, the loss of family prestige was an important factor that warranted them to force their daughter to drop out of school. According to Manjunath, "Parents think that girls will fall in love with any boys. They worry about what society thinks of them so they perform the girl's marriage early." Similarly, 17 year-old Suresh described an incident in his village where a girl was forced to leave school after her parents suspected she was romantically involved with another boy. Explaining why she was removed: "Family members think that she may leave them in the name of love…. They do not want to risk their prestige." As a

means to ensure that the family reputation remained intact, the course of action parents'

usually chose came at the expense of their daughters' educational advancement.

Gendered division of labour

In such an environment of patriarchal social relations, the hierarchical gendered

division of labour tended to reinforce the social worlds boys and girls would come to inhabit

in adult life. As noted by some of our participants, the division of labour between boys and

girls tended to mirror the responsibilities of their fathers and mothers, respectively. That is,

the work done by boys was intended to groom them into becoming the head of the household

whereas work for girls served to reproduce the domestic duties. Fifteen year-old Raj remarks,

> Girls work in the shadows either doing housework or weeding the plants like
> their mothers whereas boys help out their fathers with agricultural work, such
> as supplying water, fertilizing the crops or feeding the cattle.

During the first author's visit to the villages, boys were often seen playing

outside amongst each other or assisting their fathers on the fields while girls were

usually indoors tending to the household chores. Girls were rarely outside alone

without the accompaniment of older family members. The differentially occupied

gender arrangement of social location and responsibility is shrewdly captured by

Chopra (2004). In her ethnographic piece on the role of work on the formation of

masculinity among the Punjabi Jat Sikh boys in the village of Punjab, Chopra

highlights the division of labour that separates the "male world" and "female world"

in terms of spatial location (field: home), work (ploughing: weeding), and even

products (cash crop: subsistence crop) through a series of practices that reify these

binaries.

Because the financial hardship most families faced in villages, the hierarchical

gendered division of labour only compounded the low value placed on girls' education. Some

of the boys noted that girls were expected to stay at home and maintain the household duties, such as cleaning, cooking and tending to their siblings or sick relatives. Describing the reasons why parents would remove their daughters from school, 14 year-old Kumar explains, "Some parents are too busy on the farm. They need the help of girls to manage the house so they drop her out of school."

Not only was a girl's education viewed as expendable but her work within the domestic sphere was intended to safeguard her reputation. As explained by 18 year-old Avinash, "People will have a cheap opinion of girls who go out to work. This is the reason why we don't send girls in our family to work outside." In an effort to control their moral presentation, a few of the boys also noted how girls were usually kept as closely as possible under the surveillance of parents and brothers within the house where much of their time was occupied with household chores. As such, the patriarchal conceptions of gender, which defined the division of labour within the home, played an integral role not only on the value of a girl's education but also on the type of work deemed socially acceptable.

Patriarchal norms and the privileging of boys in education

Although boys from poor rural families were also expected to work, the prioritisation of boys' education over girls increased their likelihood to stay in school (Dreze 2003; Sinha 1998). Unlike their female counterparts, the education of boys was viewed as an investment to the family that usually delayed their age of marriage. In particular, boys were often given preferential treatment from parents with the expectation that they support them at old age. According to Prashant, "Parents give their sons whatever he wants. They will provide him with all the education he needs [because] they believe their son will take care of them".

On the other hand, participants noted that boys were afforded a level of autonomy that allowed them to move in or out of school. Manjunath explains: "Boys don't need the support

of their parents because they can lead their own lives. No one will question whether we study or drop out of school". Regarding the educational trajectory of boys, some of them believed that they had relatively more options to explore other than continuing school. As noted by Prashant, "Boys can study whatever they want. They can drop whenever they want. We are free to lead our own lives." A few other boys also agreed that the same patriarchal norms that benefitted boys also enabled them to freely choose between higher education and manual labour without facing serious consequences from their families.

Despite these attitudes, most of the boys expressed the importance of higher education in terms of securing steady employment. Throughout the interviews, work was the chief basis of their identity and the main cultural and personal requisite for achieving 'manhood.' Unlike girls who were viewed as reaping the benefits from her husband's earnings, education for boys was perceived as an investment towards gainful employment that signalled entry into the provider role. As the next head of his household, Prashant described the pressures felt from his parents and society to secure a well-paying job that would support his family.

> Although my parents say that I can study whatever I want, I need to know when to stop studying. As the man, I need to provide for my family. They invest a lot in us boys so we need to find a job.

As noted by Jatin and Dhruv, respectively, the large investment on a son's education, even at the expense of entering into debt for some parents, created a simultaneous sense of obligation and gratitude that compelled boys to fulfil their filial duties as sons.

> Parents put a lot of trust in sons. They send him to the city for a better education so that they would work hard. Parents give their sons whatever he asks. They believe that their son will take care of them so they need to meet their expectations. *(Jatin, 15 years old, standard 10)*

> Our parents provide for our basic needs and education. It is our duty to take care of them…so we must find a good job by studying well. *(Dhruv, 16 years old, standard 10)*

While the role of 'provider' appeared not as an actual figure but an idealized type in the boys' narratives, the life project of becoming a householder was still an important part of dominant discourses on masculinity that informed local ideals of manhood.

A brother's filial duty

> I have to protect my sisters otherwise how they will be safe. *(Prashant, 17 years old, standard 11)*

As part of this householder figure, the sense of filial responsibility boys had towards their parents extended to relationships with their sisters. For most respondents, this not only meant assuming the financial and social responsibilities of their sisters' education and marriage arrangements but also taking on the role of 'protector.' Given the possible threat to their reputation, boys often expressed feelings of responsibility for their sisters' safety. Manjunath proclaims,

> When they go to school or college someone may tease them. At that point, they will need my help. I must assure they are safe and protect them from any problems.

In the case of 17 years old Aditya, the fear of his parents finding out that his sister was teased and possibly removing her from school motivated him to deal with the matter himself.

> It is our duty to protect our sister. If parents come to know she was teased, they might drop her education because they think she is up to no good. This is why we have to solve the problem without telling our parents.

For some of the respondents, 'resolving' teasing ranged from mild recourses such as confronting the perpetrator or seeking support from adults to more violent actions that entailed physical violence.

> I feel so much anger when anyone teases my sister. Because she's my family, I must protect her and fight anyone who bothers her. *(Krishna, 17 years old, standard 11)*

> If warning the boy against teasing doesn't work, we should report him to his parents. [But] if he continues I will have to use force. *(Aditya, 17 years old, standard 12)*

In the process of 'protecting' their sisters, girls were under the strict surveillance and disciplinary control of their brothers who decided on what characteristics and behaviours of girls were socially acceptable. As noted by 15 year-old Ajeet, the disciplinary actions of brothers toward their sisters were premised on the assumption of protection: "If we don't control them, others will tease them." These paternalistic sentiments usually meant enforcing boundaries on their sisters' everyday routine in terms of what they wore, how they behaved, where they frequented, and who they met.

> If they wear a vulgar dress, I will tell them not to wear such a dress. A dress should look decent to the people who see us. I will teach them what is correct and what is wrong. *(Avinash, 18 years old, standard 11)*

> We need to teach our sisters good behaviours and how to behave in society. We can't let her go outside and wander the streets. *(Aditya, 17 years old, standard 12)*

> Because sisters are our family, I will not let them fall in love or speak to boys. They should study well and get a good job. *(Monaj, 17 years old, standard 12)*

Based on the above narratives, being well-mannered, well-behaved and well-dressed was frequently used to describe sisters in a positive way—or negatively, if these attributes are believed to be lacking. Controlling a girl's sexuality then was crucial in maintaining her 'decency' as well as relevant to her reputation and respectability.

The ideal women

In describing the ideal women, boys expressed similar sentiments that aligned with the expectations they had for their sisters. Although boys saw the merits of higher learning in terms of granting girls prestige and respect, education was also a vehicle through which

women learned to become more domesticated. Based on the following narratives, an educated woman was someone who was able to "adjust to" and "behave" in their husband's home.

> A girl who marries too young cannot adjust to her husband's family. She will just want to stay with her parents. She will not understand the traditions and thoughts of those family members. (*Manjunath, 15 years old, standard 10*)

> After girls finish school, they should get married. They will know how to behave and handle the responsibilities at home. *(Arun, 14 years old, standard 9)*

> When I am out for work, she needs to take care of my children. She should help them with their homework and make them study. *(Ajeet, 15 years old, standard 9)*

The skills that women learned in school were not only necessary to run a family but also to cope with domestic violence they might face at home. According to Harish "Education will give girls the strength to develop a mature and strong mind. If their husbands beat them they can put up with it. They won't cry or stop doing the household work."

Conversely, girls who were viewed as overly educated were a threat to boys' sense of manhood. During informal interactions with a group of boys from the *Parivartan* program, a couple of them expressed how higher education would not only make boys feel inferior but also make girls "arrogant" and "demanding." Explaining the reasons why boys were reluctant to support girls' education, Vijay and Ajeet says:

> If girls become too educated, boys think that they will have to work under them. They will feel jealous that girls will have a better position than them. Society might insult him because he is dependent on a woman's money. (*Vijay, 17 years old, standard 12*)

> Boys feel that girls should not get ahead of them in life. If they support girls' education they may become arrogant. *(Ajeet, 15 years old, standard 9)*

Not only were girls in high ranking positions viewed as a threat to boys' reputation, they were also viewed as shifting the power and gender dynamics within the family. Based on the following narratives, women who were financially self-sufficient were seen as less subservient, which, in turn, made them less likely to fulfil domestic obligations. In other

words, their independence posed a threat to masculinity and the patriarchal order of familial responsibilities.

> If a woman makes the decisions in the family, men will not like that behaviour. If she is more educated than her husband, he will feel inferior. *(Ajeet, 15 years old, standard 9)*

> If a husband doesn't have a job, he gets upset when his wife has one instead. He will want her to stay home and cook food for him. People will think he's less of a man because his wife is working and leading the family. *(Prashant, 17 years old, standard 11)*

> Educated girls will not know how to take care of her husband's family whereas an uneducated girl will stay quiet and do as she is told. *(Kunal, 15 years old, standard 10)*

In line with this domestic archetype of appropriate femininity, some of the boys also noted a preference for girls who embodied the 'traditional' values of humility and self-restraint. Suresh states: "A girl should have self-discipline. They should not speak to or make friends with any boys. People in the society should not speak negatively about them." On the other hand, girls who were viewed as socially wayward were met with social disdain as well as blame for their transgressions. As noted by Aditya: "In our Indian tradition, women should wear saris. When they expose too much skin, boys will have bad thoughts and cause problems for her."

Teasing: a mechanism of social control and dominance

Given the prevailing patriarchal norms that informed socially sanctioned gender relations within society, girls who failed to meet the ideals of femininity created a sense of anxiety and insecurity among boys that made them vulnerable to physical and social harassment. In the case of girls who were viewed as 'too educated' or 'stylish', boys commonly employed teasing as a method of discipline for girls they claimed were acting out of "arrogance" or "character."

If any girl is too educated, the boy's parents will use her as an example to scold him. Because they do not want to be compared to girls, boys will tease them. *(Aditya, 17 years old, standard 12)*

When we can't answer a question a teacher asks us and girls answer instead, we will tease her for behaving arrogantly. *(Ajeet, 15 years old, standard 9)*

Boys will not tease girls who are dressed traditionally and well-mannered. They tease girls who wear stylish clothes and roam around. (*Manjunath, 15 years old, standard 10)*

Girls who engage in odd fashions and behaviours like wearing jeans will not have good character. If a girl is good boys will not tease her. *(Pratik, 16 years old, standard 10)*

As illustrated in the above narratives, girls perceived as 'good' would adhere to traditional beliefs of how women 'should' behave and dress. Gender practices that challenged the status quo, however, opened girls up for teasing, which was an important social mechanism of control that boys employed.

(Mis)Conception of equality within the education system

The family allows their daughter to study as much as she wants but if she is not interested then they will perform her marriage. *(Avinash, 18 years old, standard 11)*

As an alternative means of disciplining and regulating a girl's already fragile social positioning, the view that girls received the same level of support as boys for their education led some boys to adopt a moralizing discourse on girls who failed to complete secondary school. For Dhruv and Avinash, the removal of girls from school was attributed to a character fault.

The character of girls is very important in our community. If girls have good qualities boys will also learn good qualities. [However] If they take the wrong path parents will drop them out of school and perform their marriage. *(Dhruv, 16 years old, standard 10)*

Some girls will not study and only roam around. In that situation, parents will make them drop out of school. *(Avinash, 18 years old, standard 11)*

Predicated on the perception of gender equality within the education system, girls who were not in school were viewed as either lacking 'character' or 'discipline.' The good/bad moral dichotomy was thus commonly evoked among boys to justify and condone the removal of girls from school. In the case of sisters who failed to meet the moral standards of society, a few of the boys expressed a sense of moral authority to insist upon their marriage. For instance, Suresh comments: "If they are disciplined, they can study whatever they want. If they don't heed our words until 12th standard, we will perform their marriage."

Contested masculinities: sites of change

Countering the patriarchal norms that perpetuate gender difference and inequality, some of the boys also emphasised the need to support the education of girls. In the following narratives, Dhruv and Ajeet expressed the conscious effort of rallying their parents to support the education of their sisters.

> We should understand why girls do not show interest in education and what their problem is so we can support them. *(Dhruv, 16 years old, standard 10)*

> If they tell us that they want to continue their studies I will convince my parents to continue her studies [as] it will be good for her future. *(Ajeet, 15 years old, standard 9)*

Similar sentiments were also expressed by boys who viewed education as a means to mitigate the power relations within the home and help liberate girls from the chains of patriarchy.

> If a girl gets an education she can lead her life without any restrictions from her husbands and others. *(Aditya, 17 years old, standard 12)*

> If they get educated, they will get a good job. Even if they have any problem in their husband's house she can lead her life with her salary. *(Arun, 14 years old, standard 9)*

As illustrated in the above narratives, perspectives that run counter to hegemonic masculinity are worth noting. The same respondents who regarded female sexuality as a behaviour that needed to be regulated and controlled also believed in raising the autonomy and quality of

life of girls, and advancing gender equality within and outside the home. A few of them even expressed an effort to understand the difficulties that girls faced. This is likely due to some of the exposure they received from the *Parivartan* program.

Local effort to bring to bear ideas that challenge hegemonic masculinity became evident during a *Parivartan* classroom discussion that the first author attended. Under the facilitation of a mentor, the space provided boys with the opportunity to explore the traditional norms of masculinity and simultaneously question the norms that stubbornly stood against efforts to transform local asymmetrical gender relations. During a discussion about the treatment of girls in society, some boys expressed the desire to mitigate the division of labour at home, such as helping out in the household chores; however, the resistance from mothers and fathers alike posed a significant challenge. According to 15 year-old Ajay, "They scold me for doing women's work." Using this as an opportunity for critical reflection, the mentor asked the group to question what it meant to be a man, such as the 'roles' expected of them, and in the process to develop alternative ways of being men, which did not have to come at the expense of girls. As the discussion unfolded, 14 year-old Ramesh indignantly stated: "Boys can help out in the kitchen. Girls were not only born to cook!"

Similarly, sports were an integral component of the intervention that engaged boys to adopt the lessons they learned in class. In particular, mentors would intervene when boys demonstrated acts of violence, aggression, or sexist behaviours on the field, which was followed up with a discussion. The impact of the intervention became most evident during the first author's visits to the boys' *kho kho*[12] practices, during which they displayed genuine camaraderie and concern for each other on the field even without the surveillance of their mentors. In one particular instance, a group of boys would rally together to support one of the younger players when he fell and scraped his knee. As the sessions progressed, more boys

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[12] A tag sport commonly played in India. It is played by teams of twelve players, of which nine enter the field, who try to avoid being touched by members of the opposing team.

also expressed helping out in household duties as the skills and knowledge boys learned appeared to gain traction among family and community members alike. The changes in behaviour then seemed to be attributed to the new supportive peer groups, often based on shared sense of values, and the commitment of mentors to engage with boys even after classroom discussion and sport activities. It is precisely these moments of rupture in hegemonic masculinity that can offer entry points for reforming and destabilising norms that reinforce the subordination of girls.

DISCUSSION

Our findings illustrate the influence of the family and social environment on the emerging dynamics of masculinity among adolescent boys and the implication this has on the gender relations and educational attainment of adolescent girls within the secondary school setting. Within a context of patriarchal relations and economic marginalization, parents had a profound influence on the formation of gender relations, particularly the differential treatment of boys and girls, and the gendered division of labour, which often came at the cost of the girls' education (Verma and Mahendra 2004). Given the belief that girls belonged to another family after marriage), the education of girls was regarded as an economic burden to parents (Azim Premji Foundation 2004; Bhatty 1998; Jha and Jingran 2002). In addition, the high regulation and surveillance of girls' sexuality from their parents was also a practice boys came to adopt (Verma and Mahendra 2004). Any sign of moral indecency was a risk to their character, which justified the early marriage and school drop out of girls by parents and brothers as well as teasing from boys. Consistent with other scholarship in India (Verma & Mahendra 2004; Pelto, Joshi & Verma 1999), participants' sense of masculinity as male dominance was usually inculcated in the home, an idea which translated into the idea of control over females in general, often in the name of protecting their honour.

Furthermore, participants' perspectives on the empowerment of girls were fraught with patriarchal and paternalistic conceptions of equality. On the one hand, boys believed girls could achieve the same level of success and education, and on the other, girls who were too educated were viewed as a threat to the family household dynamic. Instead of disrupting the patriarchal family unit, education served only to reinforce the subservient positions of women within the home. As noted by Govender (2011:898), "fantasies of hegemonic power relates to the broader context of masculinities feeling threatened…where women are becoming increasingly prominent in the 'public' domain, and thus, impinging on a traditionally male space."

Although the boys in our study often subscribed to dominant conceptions of masculinity, they were also at times critical of the gender inequality around them. Some of the boys went beyond simply criticising the unfair treatment of girls and openly advocated for gender equity within the education system and household environment. This in-depth exploration of boys' perceptions and experiences revealed a complex reality that has been observed by other scholars (Sommer et al. 2013; Barker et al. 2004; Jewkes et al 2006), that of boys and young men's simultaneous harbouring of increased support for gender equality and more traditional gendered norms about a man and a woman's ascribed roles within the society.

These contradictions offer possibilities for theoretical as well as practical interventions with respect to adolescent boys. Through the theoretical lens of incipient masculinity, the boys in our study can be viewed as actively engaged in the construction, undoing and remaking of hegemonic masculinity. We have attempted to trace out the reigning cultural ideologies and practices that perpetuate the asymmetric gender experiences of boys and girls during a period in which hegemonic masculinities are powerfully articulated in the gender relations. At the same time, by attending to the contradictions that arise in local

perceptions of manhood when participants critically reflect on emerging discourses of female empowerment, we begin to see possibilities for developing alternative and more egalitarian forms of gender relations and practices. Conceptualising adolescence as a formative stage of gender development as continually becoming, multiple, shifting and contradictory, not only increases our understanding regarding the extent to which hegemonic masculinities exist as a terrain of competing discourses, but it also offers practical routes through which public health program planners and policy-makers can intervene—at critical moments in which boys transition into becoming men. With this said however, once the program ends, it is not clear how sustainable these changes are, given the deeply rooted and inequitable patriarchal norms that exist to counteract any progress made. Thus in order to maintain these changes, it is important that the program be institutionalized within existing structures of the government and civil society through policies and programming and the messages be reinforced through other channels of communication used by adolescent boys and their mentors.

At a more practical level, as highlighted by other scholars (Buston 2002, Connell 2005, Ricardo et al. 2005), any gender-inclusive curriculum must involve both boys and girls simultaneously as the definition of masculinity in peer group's life, and the creation of hierarchies of masculinities, is a process that involves girls as well as boys. From a feminist pedagogical perspective, the development of safe social spaces in which they can openly discuss and explore these complex issues would be necessary not only in questioning dominant gender norms but also provide a space from which collective action for social change can take place.

Above all, however, future work must tap into and foster the voices of resistance and change that exist in different settings– those boys and girls who demonstrate and advocate for more equitable and more empowered ways of living together. Ultimately, it will be these voices that will promote the necessary individual, community and social changes.

LIMITATION

Despite the contributions of our research to advancing knowledge about the emerging dynamics among adolescent boys and implications for educational advancement of girls, this study has a few limitations. Among them are that the sampling and qualitative methods that we used do not allow generalisation beyond the study's sample; nevertheless, we believe the key themes may offer transferable starting points across rural settings. Additionally, while our data provides important information on the emerging dynamics of masculinity, some areas may have been under explored as the short duration of our study did not allow us to fully describe the diverse experiences and realities of adolescent school boys. Thus, future work should consider the impact on the following: hegemonic masculinity on the education of boys who fail to subscribe to hegemonic forms of masculinity; and the media and educational system on boys' ideals of masculinities and relationships with girls and women within their communities.

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CONCLUSION

As illustrated in this research, violence and the subordination of girls and women were intimately tied to local meanings and assertions of manhood. Within the context of economic and social marginalization, the types of masculinities that men and boys adopted had important implications on the social relationships with women and girls. Among the intimate partners I interviewed, the fraught relationships with female sex workers highlight the contentious nature of masculinity. The participants' sense of manhood was continually thrown into jeopardy by the economic demands that prevented them from being able to financially manage multiple partnerships and to live up the ideal of 'breadwinner.' As objects of sexualized aggression, violence became a way the male participants attempted to re-secure a sense of control in their relationships with women, and to fulfil the imperatives of hegemonic masculinity. Similarly, boys' sense of masculinity as male dominance was usually inculcated in the home, an idea which translated into the idea of control over females in general, often in the name of protecting the girl's and more importantly family honour. In particular, teasing was a method of discipline for girls who transgressed the boundaries of appropriate femininity. Both boys and men viewed gender equitable norms, whether in the form of legal reforms or educational rights, as an affront to the patriarchal gender order in society. However, the boys' highly contradictory view on gender relations through the concept of incipient masculinity can provide an important starting point from which to interrogate and intervene in hegemonic forms of masculinity.

IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBAL HEALTH INTERVENTIONS

To more broadly contextualize the findings within the KHPT-initiated, STRIVE funded intervention, where my study was situated, we must also critically examine the implications of public health programs in relation to the social and material conditions boys

and men inhabit. More specifically what are the types of discourses around masculinity that are reproduced and privileged through such interventions? I provide a couple of ethnographic cases from my fieldwork to highlight the implications of my research findings for global health interventions.

While intervening in masculinity and gender inequality is based on STRIVE's recognition of addressing the structural drivers of HIV, the discourses and practices that ultimately frame the interventions of intimate partner violence of female sex workers remain very much tethered to the de-contextualized notions of sociality. To some extent, 'intimate partner' as a category itself is problematic, as it takes both men and women out of the realm of their political and economic realities and projects onto them western, bourgeois notions of morality, affect and 'healthy sexuality' – which is rather ironic within the context of precarious and uncertain labour conditions that define the lives of most of these men and women.

An important case that demonstrates this point is the recent introduction of a Valentine's Day[13] celebration by the program organizers as an intervention that brings together female sex workers and their intimate partners in order to celebrate their relationship and to create a ground where elements of 'love' and sexuality could be discussed. Here is an excerpt from my fieldnotes that describes one such event in Bagalkot:

> An air of excitement and anticipation fills the room. One of the research assistants has his phone connected to the speakers playing techno music in the background. On one side of the wall, different coloured streamers neatly come together into a shape of a heart surrounded by ribbons that dangle at the edges of its side. Just at the centre of the heart is a sign in Kannada, the regional language spoken in Karnataka, that reads: Valentine`s day Celebration February 14, 2013. Men and women are busily chatting, some even bringing along their babies to the event. The women are dressed in vibrant bright sari gowns and the men in casual shirts and pants. The event

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[13] Interestingly, around the same time when this event was organized, the state of Karnataka had a right-wing ruled government, known as the Bharatiya Janata Party, whose party members made headlines for vandalizing pubs and night clubs, attacking Valentine's Day celebrations, seeking ban on cow slaughter and sale of beef – all in the name of protecting the purity of the "Hindu nation."

proceeds with a ritual of puja (a form of worship)…. The puja is later followed by a series of activities. The first involves couples drinking the soft drink *Pepsi* out of a straw from the same cup. Unbeknownst to the couples, some of the straws were poked with holes, which made completing the task for some couples both a spectacle and challenge. In the second activity, couples were blindfolded, spun around and the first partner to eat the grapes hanging from the ceiling would win the challenge. Other activities included a game of musical chairs and a trivia game that tested how well couples knew each other.[14] The event ended with a ceremony where couples would come on stage to profess their love for each other while handing over a balloon to their partner, which symbolized their love for each other."

From an Althusserian perspective, the men and women are interpellated into discourses and practices that represent Western bourgeois ideologies of relationships. In so doing, economically and socially marginalized men and women come to engage in and inhabit practices that are very much informed by the value system of their oppressors. The Valentines event, in other words, elides the everyday material realities of these men and women, realities that are underpinned by a wider political economy that patterns the unequal relations between men and women. As noted in the first manuscript, the men and women who participated in the study entered into relationships structured by forms of reciprocity that produced forms of gendered inequalities. Although these transactions often involve the exchange of sex and money, this does not mean that they were necessarily devoid of affection; these relationships often entangle affection and eroticism, with sex, money and sometimes, with violence. Therefore, future interventions must take more seriously the way people often understand their lives as simultaneously material and emotional despite, or perhaps precisely because of, the existence of profound inequalities.

With regards to the intervention with adolescent boys, the efforts to transform the gender relations through sports-oriented interventions tend to subscribe to dominant ideologies of masculinities; particularly that of a strong, physically active, able male body. Popular among the villages in India, *kho kho*, a game similar to tag, is played by teams of

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[14] Questions form the game included: how long have you've been together? What was the first gift you gave your partner? What is their favourite food? When was your first kiss? What's their favourite colour? What your favourite characteristic about your lover?

twelve players, of which nine enter the field, who try to avoid being touched by members of the opposing team. During my field visits to Kaladagi village in Bagalkot, boys were in the midst of preparing for the district level *kho kho* tournament, an event where schoolboys from different villages competed against each other. The boys would wake up early in the morning and stay up late in the night to practice for the competition. They displayed a strength, discipline, and stamina in their training that appeared to be a central process whereby their identities and selves were crafted. During informal conversations in between practice breaks, boys would often express to me the importance of a 'pure' mind and body in their training, which are ideals historic of Hindu nationalist discourses of moral, physical and spiritual strength particularly in the wake of British rule (Banerjee 2005). Despite considerable efforts of the program managers to engage boys in equitable gender practices and beliefs, local ideals of masculinity still remained intact often at the exclusion of alternative masculinities perceived as 'non-masculine' and 'feminine'. Crucial questions related to subjugated masculinities to consider for future intervention efforts include: Which individuals and bodies are seen as masculine? What kind of standards are used to define what is seen as proper masculine behaviour? And which embodied individuals are seen as the Other?

In both interventions with boys and men, the failure to attend to the diverse realities and experiences that shape the experiences of men and boys may inadvertently reproduce a hierarchical gender order that may alienate boys and men who are disqualified from mainstream figures of masculinity, a problem that the intervention seeks to prevent. Without a more nuanced and expanded understanding of masculinity, it remains unclear how valuations of hegemonic masculinity will be dislodged among men who are part of the intervention at the local level.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE WORK

To conclude, I return to the political economic context that shapes and reproduces social relations between man and women. In particular the division of labour is worth noting with respect to the global colonial-capitalist order that reproduces the subordinate positions of women in Indian society. Although colonial and neo-colonial economies have tended to reproduce a male wage-worker/ female domestic-worker dichotomy, 'man-the-breadwinner' ideological figure is empirically disappearing and the understanding of housewife in the Western suburban sense has taken on a new form (Connell 2005). For instance, where the wage work required male migration to fields or cities, the result might be more economic responsibility for women not less. Especially in the Third World, but not infrequently even in the First (and Second), working-class women are systematically excluded from the 'productive' sectors of the economy (heavy industry and higher administrative work) and pushed out into less paid, higher-intensity and more irregular work in 'informal' sectors i.e. handicraft production from home, selling food in the market and so forth (Mies 1986). In agricultural societies in India, it is overwhelmingly women who bear the burden of the heavy labour in addition to the housework, healthcare work, childcare and so forth that revolves on them. By universalizing the 'housewife' ideology and the model of the nuclear family as signs of progress, it is possible to define all women's work in the informal sector as supplementary work, her income as supplementary income to that of the so-called main 'breadwinner', the husband. Here, I am not suggesting that an economic shift alone would change the gender relations within society but for expanded and more egalitarian conceptions of gender to take place, any reforms, movements or interventions that attempt to effect change at the discursive level must take into account the structural conditions that contribute to the exploitation of men and particularly women. This could possibly take on the form of a worker's movement that not only fights against the divisions of labour at home but also

within the workplace. At a structural level, the mitigation of workplace exploitation would necessarily entail safe working conditions, fair equitable pay among men and women, reasonable working hours and job security. For women and sex workers, in particular, a safe work environment must result in their protection against violence, rape, and sexual abuse and harassment.

Although important work with men are currently underway, very few science-based global health gender-transformative interventions for men exist that attempt to shift the structural context in which masculinities are constituted (Dworkin 2015). Given that men are active participants in the construction of gender, intervention must not only target men but also consider that the ability to change gender norms is influenced by the social and economic contexts that both constrain and enable men's individual and group-based choices (Hunter 2005). Without structural approach that shifts the range of available masculinities and their social valuations, men and boys across settings may feel that they are being asked to bear individual responsibility (e.g. changing gender norms) for massive social problems that influence masculinities and gender relations (e.g. unemployment, poverty, violence). For any long-term, sustainable change to take place, then, community level interventions must also accompany broader social and structural changes through political mobilization efforts and the implementations of policies and programming that are synergistic with the changes sought by these interventions.

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