



Saved from hegemonic masculinity? Charismatic Christianity and men's responsabilization in South Africa

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Abstract

In this article, the author explores the role of religion in social constructions of heterosexual masculinity in South Africa in the context of civil society driven programs to fight sexual and gender-based violence and the spread of HIV. Critically engaging with the concept of hegemonic masculinity and the sociological literature on gender relations in conservative Christian communities, the author examines how Charismatic Christian and Pentecostal communities in the townships of Cape Town negotiate their model of masculinity and gender authority in the context of the prevailing hegemonies of 'traditional' and 'liberal' masculinity. Based on ethnographic observations and qualitative interviews with Pentecostal men, the author specifies the concrete mechanisms whereby Pentecostalism both contributes to transform but also to reproduce rather than undermine hegemonic masculinity. He finds that Pentecostalism responsabilizes men not because men adopt its sexual ideology but because they adopt its model of personhood.

Keywords

Gender, masculinity, Pentecostalism, religion, South Africa

Introduction

In this article, I explore the role of religion in social constructions of heterosexual masculinity in South Africa. Thus far, most sociological studies on masculinities and gender relations in contemporary South Africa, but also in other parts of the postcolonial world,

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assume that male gender ideologies, practices and performances are clustered around two poles, or placed on a continuum between these poles: on the one end, the notion of men as dominant, oppressive of women and emphasizing their headship construed as 'traditional masculinity'; on the other end, versions of masculinity that are based on human rights and gender equality and viewed as 'liberal' (Walker, 2005).¹ This type of masculinity is construed as an outcome of processes of transformations of masculinity geared towards men's responsabilization that are currently promoted through the programs of powerful and progressive civil society organizations such as the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and Sonke Gender Justice (Colvin et al., 2010). These programs were launched in response to a rising awareness of the role of masculinity as a driver of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, extremely high levels of sexual, domestic and inter-partner violence, the erosion of fatherhood and male involvement in gangsterism, all of which were conjoined in the diagnosis of a 'crisis of masculinity' (Walker, 2005). However, while sociologists and anthropologists have examined the ways in which religion mediates particular understandings of romance, dating and marriage and shapes sexual practices (Garner, 2000; Trinitapoli and Weinreb, 2012; van Dijk, 2013) and have demonstrated how religious communities have influenced the fight against HIV and AIDS (Patterson, 2013), they are only beginning to explore the role of religion in negotiations of masculinity.

Against this backdrop, this article draws on the case of Pentecostal Christianity to explore how religious communities engage with, adopt or reject public discourses around masculinity. Within South Africa's highly diverse religious field, Pentecostalism is one of the most dynamic traditions and has grown dramatically over the last 25 years. Viewed as one pole within a tripartite classification that also includes mainline (i.e. Anglican, Catholic, Dutch Reformed) churches and African initiated churches (see Garner, 2000), Pentecostals have been able to appeal to all social groups in South African society, not least by denouncing the failures of the post-apartheid state and promising to improve people's lives (Burchardt, 2016).

I begin with the observation that South African men are indeed confronted with 'traditional masculinity' and 'liberal masculinity' as two relatively monolithic public discourses. However, these discourses tend to obscure the variety of social and economic conditions, cultural orientations and everyday life situations that shape men's gendered practices and ideologies and it is this set of conditions on the basis of which people rework these public discourses in their everyday lives. Thus, we need to ask: What is the significance of religion as a set of beliefs, cultural practices and forms of belonging in shaping masculinity? How do conversion to Pentecostalism and membership in a Pentecostal community mediate understandings of masculinity and how do they shape the ways men engage with civil society driven programs geared towards gender equality and responsabilization?

In this article, I offer responses to these questions by drawing on ethnographic field research with a group of small Pentecostal congregations carried out, intermittently, between 2006 and 2016, in Cape Town's township of Khayelitsha as well as 25 in-depth interviews with pastors and male members of these congregations conducted in June 2014 and May 2016. All interviews were fully transcribed and coded. I start out from three conceptual possibilities: first, I explore the extent and the ways in which Pentecostals take up elements from the repertoire of liberal masculinity. Second, I look at how they align with and in fact endorse parts of what is called 'traditional', or 'traditionalist'

masculinity. While this dual research perspective accounts for the diverging influences Pentecostalism has on the politics around masculinity, it suggests that Pentecostalism only contributes to the reproduction and social power of either of these ideologies while not forming a regime of masculinity of its own. Contrary to that, I include a third perspective in my analysis through which I suggest that Pentecostalism also forges its own type of masculinity that is discursively constructed and authorized, publicly performed and enacted (see also van Klinken, 2012). It is through these performances and enactments that Pentecostal masculinity is differentiated as a cultural style.

Pentecostalism, gender and masculinity: The missing link

In South Africa, what is termed the 'crisis of masculinity' needs to be placed in the specific historical context of centuries of racial oppression of the African majority population, the displacement of large populations as a result of the migrant labor system in the mining industry (Marks, 2002), the resulting destabilization of family life, fatherhood and conjugality (Hunter, 2010), the massive violence and increasing militarization of everyday life in the townships that were part of the apartheid regime's fight against the liberation struggle as well as processes of deindustrialization and increasing impoverishment. Already during the 1980s, Bozzoli (1983) described the gendered expression of the apartheid system as a 'patchwork of patriarchies'.

While apartheid further entrenched patriarchy, its policies of forced migration also contributed to the weakening of marriage and changing patterns of sexual relationships and practices. According to Hunter (2002: 113), in South Africa post-apartheid modernization processes have increased the salience of transactional sex, understood as the exchange of sex for material goods, with three major consequences. First, they have reduced the relevance of marriage for setting the boundaries of legitimate manly behavior. Second, they have provided (some) women with strategic positions from which they can allocate their sexual capital to achieve higher status positions. Third, they have rendered sexualities and related concepts of masculinity and femininity unstable. One crucial point is, unlike poor men, less endowed women can use sex as a bargaining chip in interactions with men who can enable them to fulfill their consumerist aspirations.

As Hunter (2010) perceptively shows, marriage turned into an institution achievable only for those Africans who have managed to enter permanent professional positions, have moved to formerly white areas, now send their kids to high level schools and form part of a multiracial middle class that has developed its own encompassing cultural codes that indexes class distinctions in the manner of Bourdieu. In this context, masculinities are situated and uneasily shift between the model of the hedonistic sugar daddy, who bases his grand, mafia-like lifestyle on illicit businesses, and that of bourgeois middle-class respectability. Both, of course, imply radically different ideas about marriage and sexuality and both are linked in radically different ways with religion and practices such as church-going, praying and so on.

Simultaneously, the emergence of post-apartheid media culture has contributed to the promotion of lifestyle models for which the acquisition of consumer goods such as cell-phones, cars and brand clothes is indispensable. Especially in metropolitan areas, such models blur the lines between bourgeois respectability and sugar daddies.

Sociological research on masculinity has been hugely influenced by the concept of hegemonic masculinity developed and elaborated by Connell. Initially directed against the formerly dominant notion of sex roles and schematic theories of patriarchy and inspired by Gramsci's theory of hegemony, hegemonic masculinity posited that there are multiple masculinities ordered within a hierarchy in positions of domination and subordination (Connell, 1995). Morrell et al. applied the concept to South Africa, suggested that there were in the 1990s at least three (white, rural 'African' and urban 'Black') hegemonic masculinities and argued for the 'recognition of multiple levels (or contexts) on which masculinities can be hegemonic, in terms of expressing cultural ideals, as well as disjunction between these and the exercise of particular types of power' (Morrell et al., 2012: 18). Since the rise of social movements around HIV and AIDS and organizations such as the Treatment Action Campaign, Equal Education and Sonke Gender Justice starting in the late 1990s, one such context is certainly the world of NGOs and secular civil society. From the point of view of Africans living in metropolitan townships, liberal masculinity and 'traditional masculinity' appear as two competing forms of hegemonic masculinity. Simultaneously, there are many masculinities situated between and drawing on both of these models. Given that hegemony is about 'cultural domination' (Morrell, 1998: 607–608), the power of liberal masculinity becomes visible for instance in the premium put on performatively distancing oneself from 'traditional' masculinity for African men when trying to access formal jobs. Talbot and Quayle (2010) have criticized that much of the literature on hegemonic masculinities neglects the agency of women in constructing masculinity.

Being aware of these criticisms, in this article I take up and expand on the idea of hegemonic masculinity by asking how religion, in particular Pentecostalism, offers symbolic resources for men to navigate the complex terrain of township masculinities, to negotiate the boundaries between the different models and to possibly carve out Pentecostal masculinity as a way of both resisting and reshaping hegemonic masculinities. Following Bourdieu (2001) I recognize that both gender and religion are related to the field of power. However, contrary to widespread views of religion as supplying symbolic capital for dominant masculinity and thus being functional for the maintenance of social order, I suggest that the case of Pentecostalism allows for appreciating the contradictory effects of religion on the nexus of power and masculinity.

Existing studies on the gender ideologies and arrangements within African Pentecostalism suggest different, partially competing dynamics. In general, while often excluded from formal church hierarchies the theological emphasis on spiritual and charismatic gifts allows Pentecostal women to access positions of religious authority they were formerly denied. At the same time, Pentecostal gender arrangements are organized around the paramount value of male headship, male domination and nuclear family norms, and – according to van Klinken (2013) – undergirded by an emphasis on the difference, complementarity and equality of genders as well as heterosexuality. Pentecostal sexual morality is organized around the core values of premarital abstinence and marital fidelity leading to an ideal of masculinity that is in stark contrast to the lived reality of most South Africans (Garner, 2000).

Significantly, an emergent scholarship in anthropology and religious studies has explored official discourses of African Pentecostals on Christian masculinities, and the ways in which men engage with them, especially in the context of conversion (Lindhardt, 2015). Chitando (2007) found Pentecostal masculinity still to be rooted in 'traditional'

masculinity despite its rhetoric of radical change. Van Klinken (2012: 229), by contrast, suggests that changes may also occur *within* patriarchal paradigms and sees conversion as entailing breaks with popular understandings of masculinity and associated behaviors such as drinking, sexual aggressiveness and violence. These studies have destabilized the presumed binary of conservative versus liberal masculinities.

On a theoretical level, scholars such as Brusco (1995) and Martin (2001) have argued that Pentecostalism is characterized by a 'gender paradox' in that formal arrangements mask Pentecostalism's egalitarian impulse and an underlying social reality in which women exercise authority over family and domestic matters and create new religious expressions. By emphasizing women's agency in religious contexts, they concurred with other studies, primarily from the US, that questioned the assumption that women in conservative religious communities generally lack autonomy and power. Generally, these studies argue that women renegotiate their position within gendered hierarchies, navigate the constraints they impose on them and achieve new forms of empowerment without explicitly questioning the religious narratives that justify their inferior roles (Griffith, 1997; Ingersoll, 2003). Similarly, in their studies on Ghanaian (Soothill, 2007) and Mozambican (van de Kamp, 2016) Pentecostalism, scholars stress the split between the private and public roles of women.

In addition, with regard to Pentecostalism Martin (2001: 55) finds that the practical effect of this religion is 'a new start in gender and family relationships through a transformation of the moral order that sustains and legitimates them' and that it enables the possibility of experiencing the gendered self as a '*good woman*' and a '*good man*' (Martin, 2001: 55, italics in original). The social mechanism through which male headship is thought to improve women's situation is Pentecostalism's disciplinary effect on men's sexual and economic lives, and their domestication. Famously termed 'the reformation of machismo' by Brusco (1995), this mechanism also suggests that the channeling of resources into the household had rationalizing and modernizing consequences leading to upward social mobility in ways reminiscent of Max Weber's (1927) classic study of ascetic Protestantism. While scholars working in Africa (Cole, 2012) have refuted this concept they have mainly looked for alternative explanations of Pentecostalism's attraction for women (van de Kamp, 2016) and rarely engaged with its engagement with masculinity.

This article suggests an inversion of this understanding of the Pentecostal 'gender paradox' in two different and contradictory ways: first, rather than emerging from religiously driven disciplinary effects, transformations of Pentecostal masculinities are born from the production of subjective dispositions that positively valorize the notion of radical personal change and the (selective) appropriation of elements from liberal discourse on masculinity that such dispositions make possible. In other words, Pentecostalism responsabilizes men not because men adopt its sexual ideology but because they adopt its model of personhood. Second, rather than leading to men's domestication and subjection to the values of faithful heterosexuality and family life Pentecostal notions of male headship are often practically expressed and linked to the (non-monogamous) eroticization and sexualization of Pentecostal masculinities and male gender performances, especially those of pastors. This way, Pentecostal masculinity contributes to reproduce rather than undermine hegemonic masculinity and its imagery of sexualized gendered selves driven by media-oriented consumer culture while simultaneously destabilizing the opposition between traditional masculinity and Christianity.

In the following sections I illustrate these contradictory tendencies through ethnographic and interview data focusing on the case of one informant while expanding on the lessons learnt from his story through data from other interviews. Importantly, the gender norms informants articulate are closely related to the historical experiences of isiXhosa speakers, most of whom are from the Eastern Cape region and migrated to Cape Town over the last decades for socio-economic reasons. Constructions of masculinity are situated within this translocal space. Being a white male European sociologist sometimes motivated informants to position me in the field of NGOs. Simultaneously, however, my long-term research engagement with local churches and a wide network of contacts in the Pentecostal field balanced out such perceptions.

Can Pentecostal masculinity be liberal?

In March 2016, I visited the offices of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in the center of Cape Town in order to interview the program manager responsible for the masculinity programs in the region. At the time, the HSRC was the only organization to provide HIV services specifically for men who have sex with men and LGBTI communities. In the entrance hall, employees were busy discussing recent work experiences skillfully deploying the elaborate vocabulary of human rights, global health and gender equity that discursively carries what Moyer has described as the global ‘gender equality assemblage’.² They talked about the formation of new organizational partnerships, instances of men becoming involved in their programs as activists, and evaluated the extent to which the male participants in their programs had become responsabilized. The entrance room was adorned with several racks displaying pedagogical materials for male responsabilization campaigns, flyers and information brochures about other programs as well as research reports. This was clearly a temple of the kind of secular progressive gender activism that shaped not only the politicization of sexuality in the post-apartheid period (Posel, 2005) but also defined gender and sexuality as a field of rights, i.e. what Walker (2005) called ‘Constitutional sexuality’. When asked about the contribution of religion during the interview, the program manager told me the following: ‘The religious sector has failed. Completely. They still teach people not to use condoms and don’t accept ARVs [antiretroviral treatment for HIV/AIDS]. We’ve tried but it has been impossible.’ She thus drew a sharp boundary between liberal and secular masculinity as underpinned by rights and health promotion, and religious leaders’ views as ignorant, steeped in backwardness and patriarchy. As a consequence, the HSRC offices appeared as an ideal-typical production site of monolithic discourse on liberal masculinity.

Yet, during a meeting with a small group of Pentecostals belonging to the local Pentecostal umbrella body ‘The Great Commission’ in the township of Khayelitsha on the same day things appeared quite different. They discussed their participation in an NGO meeting that was to be held later in the day in a nearby community hall in which all local NGOs involved in issues of gender, sexuality and domestic violence were to present themselves to the local population. Despite the undeniable reluctance of the majority of Pentecostal pastors to become involved with civil society driven masculinity activism and their outright rejection of homosexuality, same-sex rights and women’s reproductive rights (Burchardt, 2013a), this group had embarked on the project of trying

to draw Pentecostal communities into male responsabilization campaigns. In doing so, they drew on earlier experiences with HIV and AIDS and treatment activism through which they had fashioned themselves as spearheads of a new emerging Pentecostal civil society (Burchardt, 2015) whose politics and mobilizations strongly resonated with Casanova's notion of 'public religion' (Casanova, 1994).

Importantly, however, later on at the NGO meeting I noticed that the pastors did not present themselves distinctly as a Christian group, or as a faith-based organization, as they had done during their activities around HIV and AIDS. Instead they were directly involved with the NGOs present at the meeting. When they introduced me to other NGOs staff or activists it became clear that they were known to be Pentecostal pastors or congregationists but did not draw symbolic or religious boundaries between their own activist practices and notions of masculinity and those of other NGOs. However, the question is: What enabled this group of Pentecostals to occupy this seemingly marginal social position as Pentecostal activists? In the following section I explore this question by tracing the story of an informant I call Matthew, whom I had known since 2006.³

'As a man, I was in that box': Pentecostal conversion and gender transformation

Matthew was born in Cape Town in 1985 but then lived with different members of his extended family in a small village in the Eastern Cape province for several years. His family returned him to Cape Town during the early 1990s just to send him back to live in the countryside again in 2000 for another three years. These movements were motivated by security concerns as during these decades Cape Town's townships experienced several waves of spiraling and escalating violence, steered by the secret forces of the waning apartheid regime and linked to the crime economy. However, in Matthew's perception his shifts in residence were primarily linked to his parents' Christian ethos and desire to keep their sons away from predominant norms of adolescent masculinity. 'If you have friends', he said, 'you have the peer pressure. If you didn't have sex at the age of 18 you would be named. And so it was difficult to be in a church because you do want to become a man. But to become a man you must have girlfriends, you must fight, and you need to do silly stuff, like you must drink alcohol and smoke dagga [marihuana] and so on.' Matthew's time as an adolescent in the Eastern Cape, by contrast, was characterized by the need to shoulder family responsibilities, which corresponded with generally held norms but simultaneously initiated him into a sense of heightened responsibility playing out in issues of economic self-reliance and respectability:

If you do silly things you are embarrassing yourself and your family. And so you have to make sure that your reputation is well kept and so I started doing things differently there. I was working for a manufacturing company where I was earning 200 rand. And I had to provide for the smaller kids of the family. And if you wanted to wear shoes you had to work. And if you wanted not only one shirt you had to work or you wash it and iron it for the school tomorrow.

Around 2005 a friend introduced Matthew to the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and took him to one of their rallies. He became a volunteer and activist, but in the interview he emphasized that his pathway was not straightforward. His sister was already a TAC activist

at the time and tried to persuade him to join. However, he refused because, noting that the overwhelming majority of members were women, TAC appeared as a specifically female space. It took several attempts to slowly convince him because, as he put, 'at the time I was blindfolded with lies and with myths about AIDS as well as I was in the box. As a man I was in that box.' He thus marked his own position as a gendered position, explaining his backwardness through his adherence to traditional norms of masculinity. Such statements resonate with public health messages to which South Africans have been exposed for at least a decade and through which they have learnt to see masculinity as a social problem and which some scholars have criticized as pathologizing (Decoteau, 2013).

Matthew then described a scene in which another man at the rally came to him because he had observed and seen a charisma in him that destined him to become a 'transformed man'. In civil society discourse, the notion of a 'transformed man' signals one's engagement in a series of practices such as doing an HIV test, using condoms during sexual intercourse, dialogical sexual decision-making and promoting caring relationships, as well as the commitment to respect women and taking responsibility. Significantly, however, describing this scene Matthew drew on the same vocabulary and narrative genre that Pentecostals use when describing their becoming aware of their spiritual calling and their experiences of conversion, being 'born again' and becoming 'saved'. Pentecostals usually emphasize the mystery of moments when others, usually pastors, discover their spiritual gifts, through expressions such as 'He saw a spiritual force in me', 'He saw a light in my eyes' and so on. And so here as well Matthew told me: 'This guys saw something special in me, he saw my spirit!' In addition, central to Pentecostal discourse is the trope of the initial inner resistance that reflects the forces of the past and backwardness, and the notion that the real struggle only begins when one has found and accepted the truth as evil forces will invariably try to pull one back, and that people routinely 'fall behind' and become 'backsliders' but must always renew their efforts. This narrative figure as well is reflected in his resistance to join TAC upon his sister's invitation mentioned above.

My point here is that the description of his trajectory towards becoming a 'transformed man' employs the same narrative structure that Pentecostals use to encode and communicate their experiences of salvation. In other words, what enabled Matthew to create an overlapping space between being a born-again Christian and being a masculinity and AIDS activist is the fact that processes of Pentecostal conversion and the process of transformed, activist manhood operate in homologous terms, namely as processes of radical personal change. My hypothesis is that Pentecostalism positively influences the capacities for gender transformations not so much by developing a religious ideology of gender equality but by creating individual dispositions – in Bourdieu's sense (1977) – that enable men to selectively appropriate elements from discourse on liberal masculinity and to transplant the notion of radical personal change from the religious into the gender domain. As I show in the following sections, the same narrative also undergirded his work as an AIDS and gender activist.

In 2006, Matthew joined TAC, and similar to processes of religious conversion the ritualized entrance into this new cultural world of NGOs and civil society was less the endpoint than the beginning of a process of transformation. Joining TAC, he was initiated into learning about AIDS, doing counseling, learning to be a peer mentor, and learning to become a different kind of man. He did so by participating in TAC meetings, training workshops,

working as a counselor in the clinic and becoming a team member in the treatment literacy program. In his work on Pentecostal marriage and sexuality counseling in Botswana, anthropologist van Dijk (2013) shows how the very practice of counseling as a form of communication premised on dialogue, negotiation and persuasion provides a stark contrast to notions of women's obedience, submission to their husbands' commands and male headship that Pentecostals otherwise routinely endorse. In many parts of Africa the concept of counseling acquired greater currency and began to circulate through the organizational landscapes of public health institutions and secular civil society during the 2000s (Simbaya and Moyer, 2013) and was subsequently adopted in the religious domain. Similarly, in the field of masculinity religious activists adopted from secular civil society not so much the express values but particular pedagogical practices and narrative forms.

In 2011, Matthew's contract with TAC ended but since he had already been committed to issues around reforming masculinities there and established contacts with other organizations, he quickly found a new job in the 'One Man Can' campaign organized by the NGO Sonke Gender Justice and quickly became the leader of a 'men's sector'. In a workshop in Khayelitsha in which I participated and that was part of the campaign, he said to a group of young men: 'We grew up learning that a man has to be the head of the house, a man doesn't cook, doesn't wash clothes and doesn't even do groceries, a man carries children, a man beats up the wife, a man doesn't cry.'⁴ While his intention was to mark the difference between these notions as belonging to older generations of a bygone past and themselves as a new generation of the democratic South Africa, the young men responded by emphasizing that this was their 'culture' and urging Matthew to express his commitment to his culture as well. The entire session became steeped in 'culture talk' reflecting how in South Africa discussions about masculinity had been politicized and inflected through cultural nationalisms, especially since the rape allegations against President Jacob Zuma and his subsequent pronouncements on Zulu masculinity (Decoteau, 2013; Robins, 2008). According to Morrell et al. (2012: 18), 'Zuma epitomized a rejection of more thoughtful, egalitarian masculinities, rather asserting in the name of "tradition," a masculinity that was heterosexist, patriarchal, implicitly violent and that glorified ideas of male sexual entitlement, notably polygamy, and conspicuous sexual success with women'. In activism around transformed masculinity just as in media discourse, 'culture talk' thus encodes 'traditional masculinity'.

At some point, during the NGO meeting in Khayelitsha mentioned above a mixed choir from the neighborhood was singing traditional Xhosa songs for the audience. During the song, Matthew suddenly began to join in from our position in the audience by shrieking in very high voice and in a call-and-response manner that is deeply rooted in Xhosa tradition yet usually performed by women. In doing so, he performed his recognition of Xhosa culture while through gender inversion he also transgressed this culture. I suggest that in this instance Matthew was able to perform what Bridges and Pascoe (2014) have called 'hybrid masculinity' from his (known) positionality as a Pentecostal pastor. Being a Pentecostal freed him, in the eyes of the audiences, from the suspicion that this queering of a cultural practice revealed his homosexuality.

Reflecting on his experiences of working with men as a 'One Man Can' campaigner, Matthew told me, 'As a man, you don't listen to anyone, you are ignorant. I was also ignorant and didn't want to listen. If you want to convince a man you have to go and talk

to him many times ... but sometimes they chase you out and don't want to listen to you. Men will always remind of your culture, they always say "you must go back to culture" they actually call you a spy [*mpimpi* in Xhosa].⁵ As mentioned above, he thus construed his activist practice through the same narrative through which he and other Pentecostals I worked with also conceptualized evangelism: as the discursive work on a subject that is capable of being 'saved' but held back by the forces of the past. In the same way, another pastor from the Pentecostal group told me: 'There is only one way that people can change: listen, listen, listen.'⁵ While for Pentecostals this means chiefly listening to the word of God as pronounced through the pastors, again, it also resonates with the communicative practice of counseling as a language-based social therapy.

Interestingly, Pentecostals frequently also use the notion of a 'transformed man' to index 'saved man' or 'man in salvation', which is to say, a man that has accepted Jesus Christ as his personal savior and has become born again. When asked in interviews or other research conversations what characterizes a 'transformed man' and how one could distinguish them from other men, Pentecostals would often struggle to immediately answer, and respond by saying 'You can see it.' Later, they would elaborate by referring to his words and language, his actions and behavior. By this they would mean respectfulness towards women and children, good manners and the expression of self-control.

As many social scientists found, in their efforts to win adherents Pentecostals routinely draw on ideas about the world being in a state of deep cultural crisis, moral decay and social disarray (see for instance Dilger, 2007). Describing this crisis, they typically employ Manichean images of the world as divided between the zones of light and the zones of darkness and the need to move into the zone of light through healing, being delivered from evil spirits, and salvation. Often using apocalyptic discourse, Manichean dualism opposes the realm of salvation to that of politics, parties and electoral competition that they view as essentially corrupt, as well as crime, violence and the dissolution of social order more generally. And while for Pentecostals discourses about gender rights, sexual rights and homosexuality are symptoms of such social disorder they also criticize and demonize the sexualization of gender relations, transactional sex and the 'sugar daddy complex' (Hunter, 2002).

Yet interestingly, sociologists have rarely engaged with the fact that many symptoms of this presumed state of social disorder are similar, if not identical, to the 'crisis of masculinity' (Walker, 2005): unemployment and economic failure, irresponsible sexual behavior, defunct or deficient fatherhood, alcohol and drug abuse, and involvement in crime and gangsterism. Pentecostals thus share the diagnosis of much civil society-driven efforts to reform masculinity even though they are at pains to differentiate themselves from them. What is more, men's conversion to Pentecostalism and their processes of religious subject formation are in fact partly premised on the idea of hegemonic masculinities being defunct and manifesting the work of the devil. As a consequence, they also fashion a 'Pentecostal masculinity' that they perform and display as outward signs of salvation, moral superiority and individual success. The problematization of masculinity is central to conversion processes as it is to much secular civil society driven campaigns such as those of Sonke Gender Justice. Both Pentecostals and liberal masculinity activists share in the idea that the restoration of fatherhood is central to men's transformation.⁶ As Matthew lamented, 'You find children that say, my father doesn't really talk

to me. We as men are running away from our responsibility. If you impregnate a woman here in Khayelitsha you run not to take responsibility. But men actually like to say, hey look this, is my child, but men are not involved in the growing of the children.'

In addition, both liberal and Pentecostal constructions of problematic masculinity motivate men to imagine and desire radical personal change and both require symbolic resources they can offer to men in order to justify the social ruptures connected to transforming their masculinities. Pentecostals are able to offer states of 'salvation' and the promise that with the help of Jesus young men will be able to prosper and draw on the religious authority of images as of God's creation. In this way, Matthew once asked the young men in his audience: 'Look at reality. If you say that a man doesn't cry, so why did God create tears in men? Why do men feel pain when they are not supposed to feel pain? Why are you able to cook for yourself but you are not supposed to do it? In this generation we have to make things different.'⁷

The campaigns of Sonke Gender Justice, by contrast, have to rely on identity discourses and the notion that transformed men are spearheads of enlightened, post-apartheid modernity. In addition, however, they also rely on contrasts between 'violent masculinity' and transformed masculinity in which the former represents failed understanding of male strength and power and the latter 'good' strength. Because they do not question strength and power as natural male qualities, such campaigns have been criticized as contributing to reproduce rather than undermine hegemonic masculinity (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014: 251).

While in the preceding sections I have analyzed the mechanisms through which Pentecostals engage with and selectively appropriate discourses on liberal masculinity, in the rest of the article I explore opposing tendencies, namely the ways in which Pentecostal masculinity is being enmeshed with sexualization despite the fact that Pentecostals typically describe sexual conquest as pertaining to 'traditional masculinity'.

The sexualization of Pentecostal masculinity

In most of my interviews, Pentecostals described traditional masculinity as constituted through a series of practices: traditionalists participate in ritual sorghum beer drinking, engage in ancestor worship, visit graves in order to communicate with the dead, and acquire prestige and their sense of worth through sexual conquest. While they described Pentecostal masculinity, in opposition to traditional masculinity, as guided by nuclear family values and sexual monogamy, such descriptions seem to overstate the contrast as the following example illustrates.

On 31 May 2014, Pentecostal pastor of the Living Word Tabernacle Church Themba Dumisani Mathibela had to appear in the Khayelitsha Magistrate Court because of rape charges brought up by two women from his own congregation. One of the victims claimed that the pastor raped her for the first time in 2012, that she fell pregnant and actually delivered the child but was forced by Mathibela to give it up for adoption.⁸ One of the victims told the media: 'I did not want to give the child away. He made me sign the papers. He arranged for all this to happen and acted as my pastor and not the father of the child. Yes he raped me. He had asked me to abort the child but I refused.'⁹ In addition, both women claimed that the pastor had threatened to use his spiritual powers against them after one of them refused to have sex with him, and especially if they spoke out on the case. Mathibela,

on the contrary, denied having threatened them, claimed that the sexual intercourse was consensual, and pleaded innocent and to be released on bail as he was the breadwinner of his family. At the time, he had five children including a four-month-old baby.

From the beginning, this case attracted huge public attention in Khayelitsha, one of Cape Town's largest and fastest growing townships, and beyond and was highly media-tized. During the first hearings the Magistrate Court was so crowded and the atmosphere so charged that the judge decided to call in the police to vacate the room. However, people were divided between human rights groups who supported the victims and those who supported the pastor. Simultaneously, other Christians were outraged about the pastor's behavior. As informants told me, some protesters were wearing TAC T-shirts, which points to the ways that protests against infidelity, violence and rape were haunted by fears and memories of AIDS suffering and also HIV risk.

As the process continued, a group of four other women appeared before the court building, and later in the audience, who all claimed also to entertain sexual relationships with the pastor emphasizing that these were not only consensual but also legitimate. This is why they had come to support 'their pastor'. In one of the hearings, the pastor's wife, who was also present in the courtroom, was apparently taken by surprise about her husband's extended sexual circles and broke down in the middle of the hearing. Initially, the judge opposed the bail arguing that the pastor's presence could have a negative impact on the local community and that his safety might be at risk. They also feared he might interfere with the proceeding after he had told journalists that he knew influential lawyers and magistrates and would make it impossible for the victims to prove their story.

This incident is remarkable in several ways. On the one hand, it resembles earlier confrontations between human rights and gender activists and traditionalists as for instance in the mobilization around the rape charges against Zuma mentioned above (Robins, 2008). On the other hand, however, this time human rights activists opposed a Christian pastor who seemed to be able to rally public support for his case despite the fact that he did not and could not act and speak in the name of an ethnic sexual culture as Zuma did.

In fact, Mathibela had clearly violated Christian moral principles of monogamy and marital faithfulness. Over the last two decades, especially Pentecostal groups but also other faith-based organizations of all kinds have fashioned these principles as HIV-prevention messages and had turned the imperatives of faith into an health asset. They had thus come to occupy a much more central place in public discourses around gender and sexuality than before. Many of my female informants, however, had long suspected that some men used their participation in church life as a way of getting to know and having sex with women and that pastors were no exception to this. In fact, historical ethnographies (Mayer, 1971) show that accusations against Christian pastors presumably using their prestige to receive sexual favors from female congregants were leveled by non-Christians since the beginning of the 20th century (Mayer, 1971). Yet usually pastors would deny such charges so as to uphold unchangeable Christian laws. Mathibela, by contrast, did not show any sign of repentance to the public, making his actions appear as expressions of a legitimate form of masculinity. I suggest that this raises broader questions about Pentecostal masculinity and its relationship to the kind of traditionalist masculinity that 'culture talk' authorizes and in whose name it speaks.

In their path-breaking book on power and authority in African society, Chabal and Daloz (1999: 40) have suggested that the power of chiefs, business men, politicians and other 'big men' rests on their ability to act as patrons and on their ability to incarnate the aspirations and desires of their clients who identify with them. This also explains the acceptability of their shameless display of luxury in contexts characterized by poverty. 'Wealth thus revealed', Chabal and Daloz argue (1999: 42), 'appears, indirectly, to be a symbol of their *collective prominence*, according to a process which we identify as "vertical symbolic redistribution"' (italics in original). In order to understand Pentecostal pastors' performances of masculinity it is extremely useful to construe them as a specific type of 'big men' who acts as a patron (McCauley, 2013).

Significantly, as a pastor of the Living Word Tabernacle Church, Mathibela had already risen to prominence and acquired some level of wealth. While Mathibela has not exactly ostentatiously boasted about his sexual success with women, surrounding oneself with beautiful women has indeed become a common practice for pastors in bigger Pentecostal churches and sexual success with women is often construed as a core ingredient of wealth that needs to be displayed. Seen from this perspective, it becomes clear that for parts of the local community who would not share the commitment to liberal masculinity, what in media constructions appeared as Mathibela's 'sexual scandal' did not so much diminish but foster his prestige, his violation of Christian tenets notwithstanding. As long as the mechanism of 'vertical symbolic redistribution' involves the aggrandizing of prestige through successful sexual conquest, the figure of the pastor is prone to eroticization and sexualization not only because of women's sexual desires or their identification with the pastors but because of the rise of prestige this affords them in the eyes of other men from the congregation or the neighborhood. In such cases, Pentecostal masculinity is therefore likely to transmute into a religious version of 'traditional masculinity' and to reproduce rather than undermine hegemonic manhood. This argument is also in line with Agadjanian and Yabiku (2015), who found women's agency in Mozambiquan Pentecostalism to be limited compared to mainline Christian traditions. In addition, within the broader discursive field Pentecostal performances of heterosexual virility are almost always also symbolizations of 'straightness' and directed against secular civil society and liberal masculinity that for Pentecostal often merely pivots on the promotion of homosexuality (see also Obadare, 2015).

Matthew felt that sexual scandals reflected badly on them in public perception: 'Our reputation is very very bad. ... You read these things in the newspaper, that pastors rape women and so on. You still find pastors having affairs with young children at the church. But these are pastors that are made, not born to be pastors. Many many people distrust us, they say, uuh pastors do all those evil things.' It is worth noting, and perhaps ironic, that female informants reported to me that some 'transformed men' would similarly try to use their image as 'modern guys' to initiate relationships with women, for instance when speaking about their projects and men's support groups on public occasions.

Conclusions

In this article, I have suggested that existing sociological studies on gender and religion, while highly advanced and nuanced on issues of women and femininity, suffer from a lack of attention to masculinities. This is especially relevant for African contexts in which the

figure of pastors as religious leaders and ‘big men’ is particularly central to gender arrangements. Focusing on how Pentecostals engage with civil society driven campaigns to promote gender transformations as well as their relationships to ‘traditional masculinities’, I have pointed to the need to go beyond a narrow focus on how women bring about some change from within conservative religious communities by mobilizing spiritual resources.

My central argument is that Pentecostalism impacts on masculinity but that these impacts are fundamentally contradictory. On the one hand, through its ritual structure Pentecostalism produces subjective dispositions towards radical personal change that may foster gender transformations in line with ‘liberal masculinity’. On the other hand, Pentecostalism operates within a field of power relations, which continues to put premiums on performances of ‘traditional masculinity’. As a consequence, Pentecostal masculinity may in other instances be transformed in a more Christian version of the former. While Pentecostal men insist on the fundamental difference of their concept of masculinity from both liberal and traditional versions, Pentecostal masculinity thus remains an essentially unstable configuration of gendered practices, imaginaries and performances.

According to Connell (1995), hegemonic masculinity should be understood as fluid, dynamic and contested. From this perspective, it is also possible, and perhaps theoretically useful to assume, that Pentecostal masculinity may rise to become a new hegemony rather than offering ways to escape, or reproducing hegemonic masculinity. As hegemonic masculinity is fundamentally aspirational, such possible future changes are likely linked to the ways in which Pentecostalism is increasingly seen as the religion of ‘success’ (Burchardt, 2013b). Moreover, there is a sense in which the Pentecostal concept of the self as pliable, molded and as a product of ritual effort (Hackman, 2016) also renders its conceptions of masculinity relatively open to new influences and materials to be worked into the masculine self thereby contributing to new contestations around hegemonic masculinity. Focusing on religion may thus also help to re-pluralize and re-localize the concept of hegemonic masculinity as Beasley (2008) famously demanded.

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Notes

1. In South Africa, the experiences of men belonging to different ethnic and racial groups and to different categories of sexual orientation differ vastly (Morrell, 1998). In this article, the discussion is limited to African, mostly Xhosa-speaking men living in the townships of Cape Town, which corresponds to the fact that most of the discourse on male responsabilization that I explore targets these groups. Simultaneously, I emphasize that White, Black, Colored and other masculinities are differentially treated and differently associated in public and NGO discourse with ‘social pathologies’ such as crime, violence and drug abuse, and that they are fundamentally entwined.

2. Moyer (2015), unpublished manuscript.
3. This is a pseudonym used to protect the identity of the informant. All quotes are taken from a personal interview carried out on 5 May 2016.
4. The quote is taken from a transcribed recording of the meeting.
5. Personal interview, 7 May 2016.
6. On the crisis of fatherhood, see Richter and Morrell (2006).
7. Taken from the transcript mentioned above.
8. See www.groundup.org.za/article/scuffles-bail-hearing-khayelitsha-pastor-accused-rape/ (accessed 28 November 2016).
9. See www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/Local/City-Vision/Rape-victims-cry-out-for-justice-20150716 (accessed 28 November 2016).

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Résumé

Dans cet article, j'examine le rôle de la religion dans la construction sociale de la masculinité hétérosexuelle en Afrique du Sud dans le cadre de programmes de la société civile visant à lutter contre les violences sexuelles et sexospécifiques et la propagation du VIH. Adoptant une approche critique de l'hégémonie masculine et de la littérature sociologique consacrée aux relations de genre au sein des communautés chrétiennes, j'examine comment les communautés pentecôtistes et du renouveau charismatique des ghettos noirs de la ville du Cap négocient leur modèle de masculinité et d'autorité sexospécifique dans le contexte de l'hégémonie des masculinités « traditionnelle » et « libérale ». À partir d'observations ethnographiques et d'entretiens qualitatifs avec des fidèles pentecôtistes, je mets en évidence les mécanismes concrets par lesquels le pentecôtisme contribue à transformer et à reproduire l'hégémonie masculine plutôt que de la remettre en question. Finalement, je montre que le pentecôtisme rend les hommes responsables pour l'adoption non pas de son idéologie sexuelle, mais de son modèle de personnalité.

Mots-clés

Religion, genre, masculinité, pentecôtisme, Afrique du Sud

Resumen

En este artículo exploro el papel de la religión en las construcciones sociales de la masculinidad heterosexual en Sudáfrica, en el contexto de programas impulsados por la sociedad civil para combatir la violencia sexual y de género y la propagación del VIH. Comprometiéndome críticamente con el concepto de masculinidad hegemónica

y la literatura sociológica sobre las relaciones de género en las comunidades cristianas conservadoras, examino cómo las comunidades carismáticas cristianas y pentecostales en los municipios de Ciudad del Cabo negocian su modelo de masculinidad y autoridad de género en el contexto de las hegemonías dominantes de Masculinidad “tradicional” y “liberal”. Sobre la base de observaciones etnográficas y entrevistas cualitativas con hombres pentecostales, especifico los mecanismos concretos por los cuales el pentecostalismo contribuye a transformar, pero también a reproducir en lugar de socavar la masculinidad hegemónica. Me parece que el pentecostalismo responsabiliza a los hombres no porque los hombres adopten su ideología sexual, sino porque adoptan su modelo de persona.

Palabras clave

Religión, género, masculinidad, pentecostalismo, Sudáfrica