Violence: The Measure of a Man?

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Aim of this learning lab

- Explore links between masculinities and violence at both the structural and interpersonal level

  - With reference to some of the key theories and concepts of masculinities.

  - Exemplify these links with some results from an ethnographic study conducted with young men from a deprived setting in Lima, Peru.
A growing number of researchers, program staff [...] and government officials are coming to see boys and men as complex gendered subjects, [...] men and boys are simultaneously made vulnerable by rigid social norms of masculinity, while also making women and girls vulnerable. (Barker and Ricardo 2005b, p.2)
Young men are the main perpetrators and victims of violence.

Studies on violence and men have shown that engagement in violent behaviours is related to the construction of masculinities.

Higher rates of violence among young from emerging economies.

Young people from highly deprived urban settings are more likely to engage in violent behaviours.
Background

Gender

• It has been said that violence is part of an exaggerated version of masculinity, but the link is not clear.

• Does this mean that violence is inherent to men?

• If so there is nothing we can do to change it!

• Are men ‘time bombs’ ready to explode into violence at any point?

Social/Structural

• How do structural/societal factors impact on men’s violence?
I will suggest that...

• In a setting which limits men's potential to become men in ‘traditional’ ways, the relationship between interpersonal violence and masculinity is an instrumental one.

• Men **learn** to use different manifestations of interpersonal violence as a 'shortcut' to achieving the key social expectations/gender norms upon which masculinities are constructed.
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
Structural Violence

- Poverty
- Racism
- Soc-eco inequalities

Area stigma

Constructions of masculinity

Interpersonal Violence
Key concepts 1: Structural Violence

Structural Violence
(Farmer, Sheper Hughes)
- Result of macro-forces of oppression and discrimination.
- Social suffering and the violence deriving from poverty and social exclusion.
- It is in the everyday practices and interactions of individuals that structural violence is actualised.

Symbolic Violence
(Bourdieu)
- Focuses on the way structural violence operates upon individuals.
- Used to understand the interaction between structure and individual.
- Is the violence exercised upon a social agent with his or her “complicity”.
- Occurs when the dominated ascribe to the views of the dominant position and in this way the dominant position is perpetuated.

Misrecognition
(Bourdieu)
- The dominated ‘misrecognise’ the structural violence they are immersed in and blame themselves for their structural subordination in society’s hierarchies and injustices.
- Young women can contribute to their own domination by adhering to gender norms which perpetuate gender imbalances.
Key concepts 2: Masculinities

Hegemonic gender relations

- What is it?
- “Hegemonic masculinities’’ most used theory. Term coined by Connell.
- Schippers proposes that hegemony can be identified not by describing a particular kind of man but by finding characteristics or strategies used by men (women) that serve to perpetuate the unequal relation between men and women in a particular context.

Homosociality

- Who is their audience?
- There are powerful links between homosociality and masculinity.
- Men’s lives are heavily influenced by relations with other men.
- Displays of masculinity are primarily directed at other men.

The masculine stage

- Where are masculinities constructed?
- Normally in the public sphere.
- These spaces are informally restricted to men, with women not having much access to them.
THE STUDY
The study setting

PERU

- Middle-income country.
- Big income inequalities, racism and poverty + terrorism 1980’s.
- 54% of the population is poor and 21.7% live in extreme poverty (N=27 million).

El AGUSTINO

- Located to the east of Lima (capital)
- Among the top three poorest districts in Lima.
- Big impact of political violence during the Shining Path era.
- Strong grass-roots organisations.
Some pictures of El Agustino...
Methods

Design

• Cross-sectional, ethnographic design using in-depth interviews conducted with members of the community at different levels. I also analysed song lyrics, used participant observation and analysis of newspapers articles.

Sampling

• Purposive sampling using key informants’ contacts and snowball techniques.

• Criteria to choose participants:
  – Age
  – Gender
  – Sector where they lived within El Agustino
FINDINGS
Violence in El Agustino

**Interviewer:** If I mention the word ‘violence’ what is the first thing you think about?

**Participant:** El Agustino

- Violence in different forms (verbal, psychological and physical) was pervasive experimented across social layers— and to some extent normalised: they experience violence in the family, on the street, at the school.

- Violence exerted by different actors: local authorities, police, educational system, parents, family members, peers...

- Violence was fluid and interconnected: actors shifted positions in relation to violence. Hence a victim of one type of violence in one context became the agent of another type of violence in another context.

- Violence seemed to be reproduced across generations. Many of the interviewers justified their parents violence towards them because they were raised like that by their own parents.

- Revenge, anger and envy were emotions commonly associated with violence. Revenge in particular played a key role in the interpersonal violence among young men (‘tit for that’ logic).
Impact of structural violence on interpersonal violence

I’ve sent my CV to loads of places and they don’t call me. You spend more on transport, you know what I mean? You go to a factory, you spend on transport and you need to have breakfast or you have to use your credit to call about an advert. If you don’t call, you have to walk here or there or take taxi or a mototaxi, right? You can spend 15 soles or 20 soles in a day(...) that’s why I don’t go out to look for a job because I don’t have money right now... So I’m thinking more and more about robbing people again.
(Mario, age 21)
Hegemonic gender relations

“‘Why me?’ ‘Am I my brothers’ maid?’ She says that. ‘But honey, you need to learn because some day, you’ll have a career, a partner, and you’ll have a man and you won’t know how to cook, or clean and he’s going to hit you then,’ I tell her, I talk to her. ‘You need to learn because you’re a girl.’ (Elena, Age 38)

P: I think parents expect more from their sons than from their daughters
I: And does that generate any kind of pressure?
P: Yes, because when they get to an age where they can’t... they don’t respond [financially], they start insulting them, abusing them, telling them to go away, because they do end up kicking them out, which is completely different to how they treat their daughters. (Psychologist)
Social expectations/gender norms and masculinities

“I don’t want to have a girlfriend yet... because to have a girlfriend you need to have money and I don’t have any money” (Jaime, Age 19)

“...sometimes some girls would ask me to fight to show them if I am really interested. They would tell me something like ‘there is this guy that has been bothering me and I want you to beat him up’. And I would say, ‘no, why would I hit him if he hasn’t done anything to me?’ and then she’d say ‘OK then’ and then she would not talk to me because she wanted me to fight the guy.” (Pedro, Age 19)
Masculinities and its performance

• Masculinities are directed to other men: homosociality

• Barrio had a key role in the construction of masculinities, it is the “stage” were masculinities are performed.

• In el Barrio they negotiate the meaning of being a man, bonding with other men, displaying and testing their versions of masculinities. It also serves as a social capital facilitator: network and alliances are formed here.

• Looks are very important: trainers, have a symbolic meaning of self-completion masking their poverty and their race in this context.
# Constructions of masculinities and violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social expectations</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Formal ways</th>
<th>Violence as “a short cut”</th>
<th>Social context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breadwinner</td>
<td>• Woman cannot earn a living. Need men to provide</td>
<td>• Work and education enable a man to be main provider</td>
<td>• Robbery</td>
<td>House Street/ neighbourhood</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Illegal activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protector</td>
<td>• Women are weak and need protection. Men are strong and offer protection</td>
<td>• Head of the family takes care of women in the house</td>
<td>• Street fighting</td>
<td>House Street/ neighbourhood</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Fatherhood</td>
<td>• Protecting neighbourhood</td>
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<td>• Fighting for football team</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Girlfriend abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toughness</td>
<td>• Women are emotional, irrational. Men are ‘hard’ and rational</td>
<td>• Presentation to others, does not cry,</td>
<td>• Street fighting</td>
<td>Street /neighbourhood School</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Emotionally detached,</td>
<td>• Carrying knives and guns</td>
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<td>• Clothing codes also important here</td>
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<td>“Stud”</td>
<td>• Women have a ‘low’ sexual drive, hence they find it easy to be faithful to one man</td>
<td>• Sexually active</td>
<td>• Girlfriend abuse</td>
<td>House Street/ neighbourhood</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Having a girlfriend</td>
<td>• Challenging guys that are ‘hanging out’ with ‘their’ girls</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Having lots of girlfriends</td>
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Violence as compensation

“I don’t care what your profession is, now I have a fire gun, very heavy armament to bring down your facade, so you will have to respect me” (The gun on my waist)
Is violence the measure of a man?

• Interpersonal violence constitutes a *short-cut* to fulfil the social expectations of masculinities.

• Men in these contexts use violence as an efficient strategy to fulfil their social expectations as men.

• Gendered social expectations are constructed upon assumptions of an unequal relation between men and women.

• Violence serves ultimately to perpetuate men hegemony.

• There is an element of agency and a conscious decision in resorting to violence, rather than merely behaving as ‘men do’. 
Implications for interventions

• We need to move towards/continue working on gendered and relational interventions.

• Community based interventions that do not exclude the most vulnerable (not only school based interventions, excluding young men that are not part of the educational system).

• Interventions should include different age ranges. Intergenerational violence shows that abused children have higher probabilities of becoming abusive adults.
References

For more on structural, symbolic, everyday violence:

For more on gender hegemony:

Other work on young men and masculinities in excluded settings:
Thank you!

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