

“The Truth about Men, Boys and Sex”

Contemporary discourses of men’s social reproductive roles in the development literature

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1. Introduction

1.1 Aims and hypotheses

Women give birth and men do not. In the part of development theory and practice which concerns itself with reproduction, this biological fact been fronted as the rationale for the almost solitary focus on women and the near exclusion of men (Kabeer 1994).

Yet, according to Foucault (1987) a “pure” representation of biological facts cannot exist. The biological fact of women’s ability and men’s inability to bear children has to be socially *understood*, and it is this *understanding*, rather than the fact itself, which structures our cognition and our actions, and hence the way in which women and men are differently conceptualised in development theory and practice. Moreover, Foucault argues that these understandings are not arbitrary, but dependent on power: the power to tie social knowledge to biological phenomena, and the power to make the knowledge and the phenomena so intrinsically tied that the understandings are not regarded as a particular way of viewing the world, but rather as natural and unquestionable (Foucault 1979). These “natural” and “unquestionable” understandings, in Foucault’s vocabulary, are known as *discourses*. In formulating a working definition of discourses, (Long 2004:27) conceptualises them as “set[s] of meanings embodied in metaphors, representations, images, narratives and statements that advance a particular notion of ‘the truth’ about objects, persons, events and the relations between them.”

Women give birth and men do not – within development theory and practice, the discourse that dictates the social understandings of this biological fact have affected thought patterns, language, research practices and academic disciplines, which in turn have very material effects: the establishment of institutions and the implementation of

projects, programmes and policies, to mention a few. In short, discourses affect the cognitive and material realities of people's lives. For this very reason, it is important to challenge the discourses of women and men's reproductive role in development, question their naturalness, and look for alternatives (Foucault 1979).

This essay will take up this challenge by countering the overwhelming focus on women and studying *men's* reproductive roles in a development context. It will focus on the ways the power and knowledge regimes involved in processes of social understandings of biological facts have framed *men's social reproductive roles* in the context of development theory and practice. These roles are understood as men's cognitive and behavioural relations to pregnancy-related health issues as well as with sexual and reproductive health and human rights issues affecting physical, mental and social well-being (UN 2004).

As such, this essay will consider, first, *what* the dominant contemporary discourses of men's social reproductive roles are within the development literature, and secondly, *why* these discourses are narrated in this way.

Regarding the *first* question, the essay will use a literature review and a case study of an advocacy publication to investigate (a) which narratives are told about current male reproductive roles, (b) which male reproductive roles are narrated as desirable goals of development interventions, and (c) how a transformation between the two is argued to be achieved. Regarding the *second* question, the essay will hypothesise that a possible answer might be found in investigating the historical socio-political context of the narrative formations. As such, it will draw on one micro and one macro approach to

discourse analysis, in discussing the disciplinary background, the literature review and the case study.

1.2 Structure

Firstly, this essay will elaborate on its theoretical starting point, and present the main conceptual tools to be drawn upon in the following discussion of the background, literature and case study.

Secondly, it will provide a brief outline of the historical emergence of the development industry's interest in reproduction, focusing mainly on the historical development of the study of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). It will locate this area of study within the broader development framework, outline its theoretical foundations and main debates, and discuss the dichotomies and continuities between its main terms. This section will be essential to undertaking a Foucauldian discourse analysis, as it will set the discursive backdrop describing the relations between power and knowledge involved in the narrative formation.

Thirdly, the following literature review will proceed to discuss the historical changes and main debates in the SRHR's preoccupation with gendered social reproductive roles, aiming to contextualise the literature about men's reproductive roles in terms of *topics* and of *themes*.

Fourthly, considering in more detail the contemporary narratives of men's social reproductive roles, it will employ Van Dijk's (2004) method of Critical Discourse Analysis to review one seminal SRHR policy publication; International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)'s "The Truth about Men, Boys and Sex" (2009).

Finally, it will draw on the outlined theories of discourse, and with reference to the background, the literature review and the case study, provide a tentative conclusion to the questions of *what* the contemporary narratives of men's social reproductive roles are, and *why* they are narrated as such.

2. Theoretical background

Due to its deployment in several disciplines and scientific traditions, the concept of discourse has undergone significant transformations and continues to harbour a vast array of meanings. It is therefore problematic to unambiguously define it, and misleading to speak of it as a single unitary entity. To outline and explain this essay's approach to discourse theory, a brief historical outline of the concept is essential.

Having originated in disciplines such as linguistics and semiotics, the concept and method of discourse has in recent decades been widely taken up within disciplines such as sociology, social anthropology, cultural studies, communications studies, organisation studies and politics (Tonkiss 1998). Two main epistemological approaches to discourse may be identified. The first approach is that of the *structuralists*, such as Saussure and Levi-Strauss, who understood discourses as products of systems of signs. These systems, pre-existing "deep structures", could according to them be uncovered and used to understand the function of apparently unrelated events in maintaining the order of societies. The later approach is *hermeneutics*, where discourse is an attempt to interpret understandings of acts and self-understandings of actors by relating them to broader historical and structural contexts, rather than understanding their structural functions. Belonging to this later tradition are, amongst others, Derrida, Laclau & Mouffe, and Foucault. (Howarth 2000)

This essay will position itself within a hermeneutical tradition, drawing on the discourse concept as used by Foucault. However, Foucault's understanding of discourse has undergone shifts indicative of the transition between structuralism and hermeneutics, and I will draw on his later writings and use a genealogical (Foucault 1979) rather than an archaeological (Foucault 1970, 1972) approach. While an archaeological approach focuses on the rules of formation that structure discourses, a genealogical approach aims to examine the historical processes of discursive formation. As such, a genealogical discourse analysis involves not merely the analysis of a text or a speech act, but also a consideration of the contexts, the speakers, the science regimes, the hegemonic ideas; both the discursive/lingual and non-discursive/material factors. (Foucault 1979)

In taking a Foucauldian approach to discourse, I will draw on the key concepts of *power/knowledge*, *governmentality* and *hegemony*. As previously stated, Foucault argues that discourses consist of interplay between *power* and *knowledge*; modern power is legitimised by knowledge, and power enables knowledge in turn (Sending 2003). Hence, for Foucault, the concept of *power/knowledge* is tied with the concept of *governmentality*. *Governmentality* implies a form of governance based not on the exercise of direct power, such as sanctions, incarceration or censorship, but on covert processes of self-disciplining internalised in the subject Foucault (1979). This self-disciplining takes place in response to discourses, which do not only serve to control the range of actions that subjects understand as acceptable, but also the range of actions that they personally desire (Foucault 1990). However, in order for this form of governmentality to have a disciplining effect, discourse must achieve *hegemonic* status (Gramsci 1992); the legitimacy, acceptance and consensus of dominance (Herman & Chomsky 1988). As

explained by Howarth (2000) “[p]rojects of hegemony will attempt to weave together several strands of discourse in an effort to dominate or structure a field of meaning, thus fixing the identities of objects and practices in a particular way”. As their final goal, Foucault (1979:140) argues, these projects attempt to achieve *biopower*; “subjugation of bodies and (...) control of populations”

In order to operationalise these concepts into an analysis of men’s social reproductive roles in the development literature, I will draw on Sending’s (2003) concept of “policy stories”. A policy story, as applied by Sending, denotes the concrete means through which power draws on knowledge, striving to achieve hegemony. He defines a policy story as

a set of factual, causal claims, normative principles and a desired objective, all of which are constructed as a more or less coherent argument – a story – which points to a problem to be addressed and the desirability and adequacy of adopting a specific policy to resolve it (Sending 2003:58)

According to Sending, framing and promoting policy stories are the methods through which social actors justify, legitimise and gather support for certain courses of action. These policy stories consist of three aspects: a *problem definition*, a *problem cause*, and a *problem solution* (Sending 2003). These three aspects will be drawn upon later in understanding the contemporary narratives of men’s social reproductive roles in the development literature.

3. Historical background & terminology

In the first 150 years after Thomas Malthus published his “Essay on the Principle of Population” in 1798, population studies were marginal and mainly associated with eugenics (Hogson 1983). However, in the 1940s the field came to fill a central development policy space (Szreter 1993). Notenstein’s (1945) and Davies’ (1945) now canonical Demographic Transition Theory (DTT) gained enormous influence when reversing the causality of its original claim that fertility decline is a consequence of economic growth, framing and promoting population limitation as a central determinant of economic development (Szreter 1993). According to Szreter, the fact that remarkably similar theories had been launched previously with very few policy implications indicates that the timing of Notenstein’s and Davies’ publications were critical to their successes. In the US in particular, the 1940s Keynesian focus on social planning coupled with the emergence of the development doctrine (Kothari 2005) meant that

[f]aced with a confusing array of problems involved in feeding the populations and in alleviating grave economic and political stresses in a disparate collection of colonial countries, the theory of demographic transition appeared to be something of a philosopher’s stone” (Szreter 1993:666).

As such, in USA in particular, the promotion of this theory served to fund demographic research institutes while tying them closer to foreign policy institutions. *Family planning* became the method of population control, launching a variety of contraceptive programmes, voluntary or coercive. Thus a sizeable infrastructure of population control initiatives has been organised in low-income countries, termed by Demeny (1988:466) “the family planning industry”. This “industry” gained further in political importance

during the Cold War, where the economic growth allegedly caused by population reduction was seen as an essential component of democratisation and the containment of communism (Szreter 1993). By the 1980s, the institutional, financial and human resource ties between the academic population study institutions and the development industry were so strong that Hodgson (1983), amongst others, came to question the academic freedom of the research institutions. This overlap was coupled with an overlap in the theoretical bodies drawn upon, in particular modernisation theory (Ryder 1959). In recent times, mass media has increasingly framed both the development and the population agenda within the language of high-income country security: linking development to the threat of terrorism, and population growth to the threat of climate change.

Feminist movements have had ambiguous relationships to family planning. While some feminist movements understand contraceptives as part of a patriarchal agenda of controlling women's sexual availability and reproductive capacity (e.g. Mies 1989), the majority of feminists from high-income countries have embraced contraceptive technologies as a necessary means for women to control their own bodies (Freedman 2002). As such, population policies targeting women in low-income countries have been celebrated and promoted by some feminists. However, as stories of forced sterilisations, coercive incentive systems and the neglect of broader mother-child health issues started reaching the media, feminist from high-income and low-income countries have been at the forefront of a human rights approach to population policies in low-income countries (Kabeer 1994, Wangari 2002). Yet, while such feminist critiques of population control programme ethics have indeed been supplemented with comprehensive questioning of the validity of DTT's theoretical assumptions (Coale and Watkins 1986, Cleland & Wilson

1987, van der Walle 1992) the language of DTT, population control and overpopulation has enjoyed significant theoretical and institutional longevity. As this paper will argue, the concepts and assumptions of DTT linger in the contemporary field of study, despite a significant change in rhetoric.

The changing rhetoric resulted from a drawn-out historical process. Already at the 1974 World Population Conference in Bucharest, the population control paradigm was under strain. Increasingly, a discrediting of the population control agenda (Bandarage 1997, Dixon-Mueller 1993), a feminist emphasis on sexual and reproductive rights (Corrêa & Reichmann 1994, Petchesky 2000), and the major increase in the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Mbizvo 1996, Parker et al 2000) had spurred a shift from *family planning* to the language of *sexual and reproductive health and rights* (SRHR) (Dudgeon & Inhorn 2004). The much broader SRHR concept denoted an inter-relationship of social, psychological and physiological factors, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs), sexual violence, infertility and broader health issues such as maternal mortality and genital cancers (UN 1995). This shift in emphasis, language and targets became institutionalised and theoretically more credential through its centrality in the International Conference for Population and Development in Cairo 1994 (henceforth Cairo 1994). Cairo 1994 has been commonly conceptualised as a “watershed” in international population policy, and as “one of the most significant achievements of contemporary feminism” (Correa and Reichmann 1994). The conference laid the conceptual and institutional groundwork for much of the following activity in the population/family planning/SRHR field, and is as such still of paramount importance in the study of SRHR.

In some aspects, Cairo 1994 did indeed mark a watershed, notably in terms of its holistic conceptualisation of SRHR, and in its focus on *rights*, making governments responsible for enabling individual reproductive decision-making. Yet the “watershed” concept is discarded by critics who claim that the language difference merely camouflages the substantial continuity between the family planning and the SRHR discourse. Sending (2003) argues that the SRHR agenda, as advocated by women’s groups and rights activists, could only gain credence in the population control framework by aligning itself with its hegemonic assumptions, that remained those of population control. This, he suggests, was done through the introduction of the policy stories of *unmet need* and *women’s empowerment*. Unmet need was argued to represent the gap between reproductive intentions and reproductive behaviours. According to authors such as Bongaarts & Bruce (1995), Casterline & Sinding (2000) and Westoff (2001), the concept reflected willingness but lacking ability to achieve fertility reduction on the part of women in low-income countries. *Women’s empowerment*, in the form of increased education, income and decision-making power, was said to meet this unmet need by reducing women’s desire for children, while increasing their ability to limit childbearing (Dyson and Moore 1993, Kabeer 1994). *Women’s empowerment* hence spoke “rights” to women’s groups and “legitimacy” and “efficiency” to institutions concerned with population limitation (Sending 2003). Feminist activists and scholars have echoed the claim that the shift from the *family planning* language to the *reproductive health and rights language* has remained a rhetoric far removed from the programmatic and institutional realities, and expressed disappointment in the unfulfilled promises of the Cairo 1994 agenda (Chant & MacIlwaine 2009).

As population studies, family planning and later SRHR have arguably been the main arena in which reproduction has been discussed within the framework of development, this will be the main focus of this essay. For reasons of brevity I will henceforth use the latest concept of SRHR to denote this field of study.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Background

According to Sternberg and Hubley (2004:390), men were initially predominantly narrated within the SRHR literature as “uncaring, unconcerned victimizers”, hindering women’s empowerment and female contraceptive agency. Dudgeon & Inhorn (2004:1381) elaborates upon this point when asserting that

[m]en have traditionally been portrayed, either explicitly or implicitly, as relatively unconcerned and unknowledgeable about reproductive health. They have been seen primarily as impregnators of women, or as the cause of women's poor reproductive health outcomes through STI exposure, sexual violence, and physical abuse. In addition, they have been regarded (often rightly so) as formidable barriers to women's decision-making about fertility, contraceptive use, and health-care utilization.

Hence, many of the early family planning/reproductive health programmes aimed to circumvent men altogether, by directly addressing women’s empowerment alone. Thus male absence from reproductive programmes was in many cases encouraged, a strategy supported by many feminists (Hodgson & Watkins 1997). However, as women’s groups pushed for increasing men’s share of the reproductive health burden and new and more qualitative models and theories were adopted into SRHR research, feminist activists and

scholars were also vital to shifting the agenda towards a consideration on men and gender norms (Greene & Biddlecom 2000). As such, Dudgeon & Inhorn (2004) argue that the recognition of men's importance was fuelled theoretically by the shift from Women in Development to Gender and Development in the broader development theory (see Kabeer 1994, Chant & MacIlwaine 2009) and the subsequent acknowledgement of the relational nature of women's birth giving and contraceptive behaviour (Drennan 1998, Cleaver 2002). According to Presser (1997), feminism was thus imperative in shifting the "blame" of overpopulation from women, to the structures that controlled women's decision-making power, and as such onto men.

As such, from near exclusion, the 1980s saw a gradual recognition of men's importance in the health of women and children (Sternberg and Hubley 2004). Moreover, programmatic initiatives for including men in family planning and SRHR services have existed in selected countries, albeit frequently ad-hoc and poorly integrated, for more than thirty years (Wegner et al 1998).

Cairo 1994 marked a crucial moment in the gender agenda, as it called for the full incorporation of men in SRHR programmes. It focused on three rationales: promoting men's use of contraceptives through increased education and distribution; involving men in supportive roles of women's sexual and reproductive decisions, especially contraception; and encouraging men's responsible sexual and reproductive practices to prevent and control STIs, especially HIV/AIDS (DeJong 2000, UN 1995) Although celebrated by many feminists and rights activists, male incorporation into SRHR has also been criticized from several standpoints. Some have argued that the rhetoric of male incorporation follows stereotypical images of femininity and masculinity and cannot seek

to be transformative (Berer 1996, Helzner 1996, Basu 1996), and some feminists have been reluctant to compromise gains in the women's emancipation agenda (Chant & Gutmann 2005)

While the extent to which men were included represented a novel feature of Cairo 1994, Greene & Biddlecom (2000:82) argue that there is still, compared to the vast amounts of research on women "[a] relative lack of knowledge about men's roles in fertility and family planning" arguably as "(...) a feature of theoretical, methodological, and even ideological aspects of demographic research". Regarding the *theoretical* aspects, Greenhalgh (1995) suggests that the heavy reliance on modernisation theory has made the SRHR field blind to other theoretical currents. She further suggests that the field has been historically more preoccupied with documenting and ameliorating than with explaining and understanding. Furthermore, SRHR programmes have arguably been modelled after western norms about women's primary responsibility for childbearing, and male and female agreement on reproductive issues (Greene 2000). This is evidenced by the majority of contraceptive methods being designed for women's bodies. Regarding *methodological* aspects, according to Greene & Biddlecom (2000), the alleged ill-defined span of men's reproductive lives, their assumed relative inability to accurately report on their children, the practice of maternal child custody, polygamy and extramarital partnerships, have deterred research. Concerning the *ideological aspects* of this continuity, Greenhalgh (1995) claims that population studies has primarily been preoccupied with the proximate determinants of fertility and contraceptive use, and as such "gender" has historically been conflated with "sex", and the focus has remained on women's bodies.

In sum, despite an increasing importance attributed to men's social reproductive roles within the SRHR literature, a continued relative dearth of research indicates a lacking interest. Hence, as Wegner (1998:41) expressed: "There is no model for men's reproductive health services comparable to the existing, well-defined (...) services for women. In fact, no one has defined what constitutes men's reproductive health care". This limitation has been justified by biological explanations. As stated by O'Brien (1994:102) "men will probably never reach the same understanding of contraception and sexuality that women have", due to, as elaborated by Mundigo et al (2000:333); "Just the fact that men are different physical entities than females, and are somewhat more distant of the biological processes involved in child birth".

Greene & Biddlecom (2000) describe the approaches taken to men's incorporation by the SRHR literature as frequently falling into one of three categories: *involvement* into more gender-aware programmes, men taking *responsibility* for themselves and their partners, and male *inclusion* into unaltered programmes. These categories are important as they will be drawn upon later in the essay. The authors further conclude that studies of men in SRHR have historically been limited and conglomerated around a few topics and certain stereotypes. In the section to follow, I aim to investigate, in the contemporary literature, *which topics* and *which stereotypes*. Firstly, the literature review will synthesise, analyse and discuss the topics of the contemporary literature, compared to the topics in the Cairo 1994 rationales for men's incorporation. Secondly, I wish to understand which policy stories are told about men's social reproductive role; in terms of Sending's (2003) three main aspects of a policy story framing: *problem understanding*, *problem cause* and *problem solution*.

4.2 Methods

To obtain an overview of the contemporary thematic context of the male social reproductive role literature in the field of SRHR, and hence answer the question on *which topics*, I searched the last five years' worth of publications in the world's largest database on population, family planning and SRHR, POPLINE¹. Searching all entries with "male-related" tags² and "men/male" in the title, I got 975 results. Excluding medical publications, I sorted the remaining relevant 711 results into categories based on their main topics, synthesised from their titles, abstracts and conclusions.

As one of the most comprehensive sources on SRHR, Popline search results might be indicative of the larger body of literature in this area. However, my methodology suffers several limitations. It excludes articles referring to men as a secondary theme. The five year perspective offers a historically truncated picture of the body of literature. My categories have dichotomous boundaries when they are clearly marked by continuities. Overlaps, duplicates and misunderstandings cannot be fully controlled for. Only available and free texts are included. Further, the necessary superficiality of the text reading is clearly insufficient to draw conclusions on the nuances of an academic paper. Hence, I will not claim my sample to be statistically representative of the scientific publications concerning men's social reproductive role in the SRHR literature – only indicative.

¹ Popline, (POPulation information online) is the world's largest database on population, family planning and reproductive health, containing nearly 3700,000 records with 10,000 added annually, including published and unpublished scientific articles, reports and books. Sponsored by USAID, the majority of texts are written in English, with some translated into English, notably from Spanish, French and Chinese (www.popline.org)

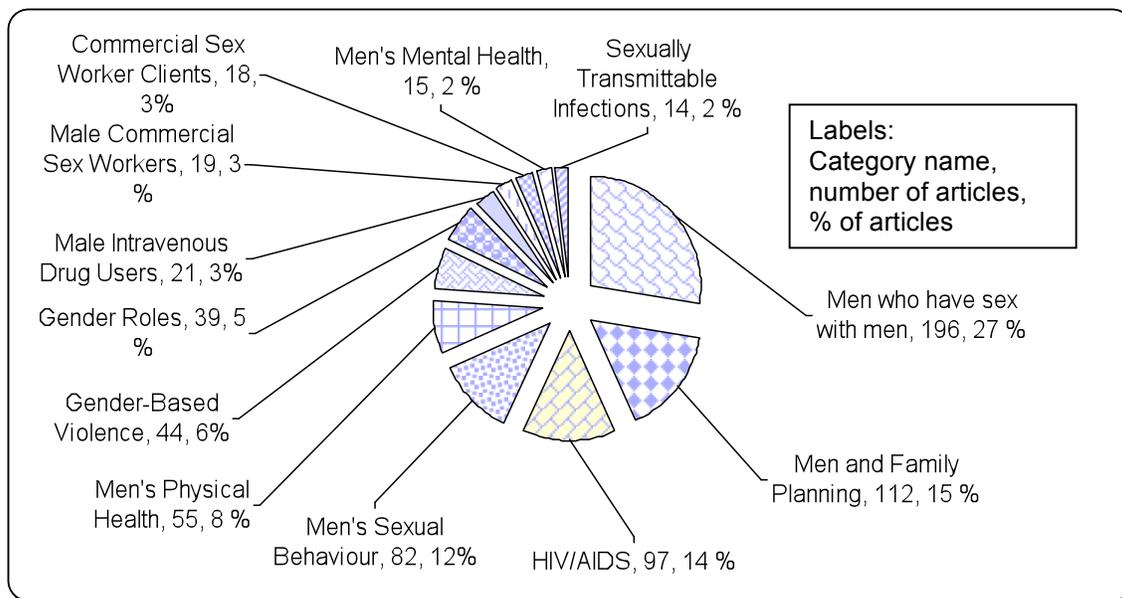
² "Men" (8287 entries), "Men Who Have Sex With Men" (431 entries), "Men's Health" (18 entries), "Men as Partners" (90 entries)

Further, to target the focus towards the social narratives of men's and women's different biological roles, and hence answer the question of *which stereotypes*, I extricated the parts of the POPLINE sample literature where the biological difference and social relationships between women and men presumably would play the most important role: "Men in Family Planning" and "Gender Norms". However, while its size and vast coverage makes POPLINE a frequently used starting point in literature reviews on population, family planning and SRHR issues, it suffers some limitations. Those include a narrow focus on demographic and socio-medical disciplines, at the expense of publications made from a broader developmental, social policy, economic, anthropological or feminist perspective. Ameliorating that shortcoming, I supplemented the indicated sample with a CrossSearcher search of some of the major social science journals³, thus casting a broader disciplinary net. The use of the search terms "men" + "family" + "planning", however, does unavoidably suffer similar limitations to the POPLINE search. In the following section, I discuss and present a selection of the POPLINE and the CrossSearcher texts, drawing on Sending's (2003) operationalisation of discourses, *policy stories*, as consisting of *problem definition*, *problem causes*, and *problem solutions*.

4.3 Which topics?

The distribution of texts within my given categories may be visually presented as follows:

³ Including publication sites such as Jstor, IngentaWorld, IBBS, informaconnect, Wiley InterScience Journals etc



As seen in this distribution, the bulk of the publications (27%) have “Men who have sex with men” (MSM) as their main theme, followed by the category “Men and Family Planning” (15%). The third largest group is “HIV/AIDS” (14%). In reality, MSM could have been presented as a sub-category of “HIV/AIDS”, as the latter, with extremely few exceptions, was the sole topic within the MSM category. It is also important to note that a focus on the HIV/AIDS epidemic plays an important role in all of the categories, especially “Sexually Transmittable Infections” (2%), “Male Commercial Sex Workers” (3%) and “Commercial Sex Worker Clients” (3%). It is interesting to note that, while limited in number, these latter two categories are similarly sized, reflecting an increased visibility of and academic interest in men’s engagement in commercial sex work. The category “Men’s Sexual Behaviour” (12%) relates to commercial sex work and HIV/AIDS in particular. “Men’s Physical Health” (8%) seems to be a more significant focus than “Men’s Mental Health” (2%), and a specific focus on “Gender Based

Violence” (6%) seems to be slightly more prevalent than a broader focus on “Gender Norms” (5%).

The previously outlined Cairo 1994 rationales for the incorporation of men promoted increased contraceptive use, male support of women’s SRHR decisions, and safer sexual practices in response to HIV/AIDS. Comparing the literature sample with these rationales, a tentative conclusion may be that the third rationale’s focus on the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the associated high-risk groups associated represent the majority of literature. This is in concordance with the massive increase in HIV/AIDS research, funding and programming since the 1980s, an agenda which has received a massive intellectual backing but has also been criticised for diverting attention from other SRHR goals (e.g. England 2007). The increasing focus on HIV/AIDS high-risk groups stems from Asia in particular, and reflects the feared role of MSM, intravenous drug users, male commercial sex workers and commercial sex workers clients as “bridge populations” between the high-HIV/AIDS prevalence population pockets, and the larger population (Wang 2007). The narratives of men’s social reproductive roles, hence, seem most commonly framed within the HIV/AIDS theme.

However, literature concerning the second Cairo 1994 rationale of involving men in women’s SRHR decisions is also prominent, albeit on a much smaller scale. This is encompassed by literature on “Men and Family Planning”, “Men’s Sexual Behaviour” and “Gender Norms”. Within the family planning category, the development of a male contraceptive is a primary focus, indicative of a sociomedical recognition of the possibilities for further inclusion of men in hitherto female-only SRHR decisions. Note also that within the “Sexual Behaviour” and “Gender Norms” literature, “Gender-Based

Violence” receives about as much attention as all the other gender issues, strengthening the claim that men’s reproductive roles continue to be negatively framed in relation to women. The relative dearth of publications on these topics underline that the relations between women and men is a novel and seemingly still underrepresented area of inquiry in the SRHR field.

Having outlined the *themes* which men are discussed in relation to, the next section will outline the stereotypes: *how men are talked about* in selected parts of this literature.

4.3 Which stereotypes?

Regarding the *problem definition* of men’s reproductive roles, my sample of the contemporary SRHR literature is first of all united in three formative claims: that men *should* be involved in family planning and SRHR issues; that family planning processes are affected by gender relations; and that the decision-making power of men is superior to that of women. Two main reasons are given for involving men in SRHR programmes. Men are frequently framed as either gatekeepers of women’s choice (e.g. Bradley et al 2009, Nwokocha 2007) or gatekeepers of overall acceptability rates (e.g. Olawepo 2006, Wambui et al 2009, Islam et al 2006). However, as almost every available text assumes that women desire a lower birth number and a higher uptake of contraceptives than men, in practice, the two rationales frequently conflate. The problem, hence, is framed as that of men *inhibiting* women’s autonomy and birth reduction. Investigating the claim that men are contraceptive inhibitors, several studies discuss men’s unmet need for family planning in their own right (e.g. Lawoyin et al 2002, Dahal et al 2008, Khatun et al 2007), concluding that men’s unmet need is significant but less than women’s. Furthermore,

some texts are concerned with alleviating the reproduction burden put on women, promoting men's roles in shouldering sexual and reproductive health responsibility (e.g. Lavoie et al 2008). Another small number of studies frame men as community resources in reproductive processes (e.g. Beksinska et al 2008), questioning the dominant paradigm of males being less "progressive" than females. However, by far the largest bulk of literature is concerned with men as *problematic inhibitors of female empowerment and/or/thus contraceptive targets*.

Regarding the *problem causes*, the literature differs starkly between those who frame this *male problem* as originating in the tradition male exclusion from family planning programmes (e.g. Pollock et al 2002, Wambui 2009), and those who claim that it originates in the men's disinterest (e.g. Lundgren 2005), traditional societies (e.g. Akafuah & Sossou 2008) or patriarchal structures (e.g. Nwokocha 2007). The difference between these policy stories is significant, as it concerns the possible consequences of the discourses of men's social reproductive roles. Framing "culture" as the "cause" of the male problem implies that population programmes have adapted to a pre-existing, "natural" gender divide in reproductive roles, and that altering the gender norms will be a project of modernisation. In contrast, attributing the causality to previous male "exclusion", the problematic male is produced rather than represented by the development process. In this framework, the causality of the uninvolved male subject is reversed, and the blame for his absence is shifted from "nature" to "discourse".

Regarding *problem solutions*, applying Greene & Biddlecom's (2000) typology, it is possible to distinguish between involvement, responsibility and inclusion. As previously outlined, the former category recommends a transformation of existing

programmes to accommodate for men, the middle stresses the need for men to shoulder a hitherto avoided reproductive responsibility, and the latter dictates the inclusion of men in already existing, unaltered programmes. The lion's share of literature stressed men's *involvement* in somehow altered SRHR programmes as the most important goal (e.g. Kaida et al 2005, Mesfin 2004, Akafuah & Sossou 2008) where the alteration in most cases was recommended to consist of information campaigns (Tuloro et al 2006, Char 2009) and/or education programmes for men (Duze & Mohammeda 2006, Odimegwu et al 2005). A smaller share of literature suggested the *inclusion* of men into unaltered programmes (e.g. Islam et al 2006, Lavoie et al 2008). I found very few texts conforming to the third category, *responsibility*, perhaps due to the difficulty of targeting policy intervention to this abstract concept.

In conclusion, the policy stories about male social reproductive roles are narrated within a relatively narrowly defined framework. Despite disagreement on whether men inhibit women's choices and/or population reduction, there is very little disagreement that they are inhibitors. It is also a relative agreement that men can be taught or trained to break out of this role, through relatively simple measures such as education, information and communication programmes. Alternative policy stories and narrative frameworks are extremely poorly represented. This might be attributed to the previously outlined sample errors; nevertheless, it is in accordance with the historical focus of the SRHR agenda.

5. Case Study: "The truth about Men, Boys and Sex"

5.1 Introduction

This essay has argued that discourse reflects and affects social realities. In this section, it will argue that a concrete means through which this takes place is *communication*.

According to Hall (1980:129) communication resembles a circuit rather than a one-way process: it is “a structure produced and sustained through the articulation of linked but distinctive moments – production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction”. In this framework, material and social structures of information production and dissemination must *code* information at each communicative stage, and communicate it to a target audience, whose *decoded understanding* will “‘have an effect’, influence, entertain, instruct or persuade” (Hall 1992:130). However, in a meaningful act of “coding”, each constituent element must first of all conform to its own specific modality and conditions of existence- its *genre*. Secondly, each element must “draw topics, treatments, agendas, events, personnel, images of the audience, 'definitions of the situation' from other sources and other discursive formations within the wider socio-cultural and political structure of which they are a differentiated part” (Hall 1980:129). In short, the meaning of each constituent circle is dependent on the possibilities and limitations demarcated by *discourse*. Hence, the study of a communicative event, such as a speech, a legal statute, a policy paper, a historical document, an interview or a publication (Tonkiss 1998) constitutes a study of the discourses which have enabled and dictated its meaning. As such, to understand at a deeper level the contemporary narratives of men’s social reproductive roles and their causes, I conducted a case study of an advocacy publication considered to be representative of the research, policy formation and programme implementation components of the SRHR field: International Planned Parenthood Federation’s (IPPF) “The Truth About Men, Boys and Sex” (Appendix 1)

5.2 Methodology

Epistemologically and methodologically, hermeneutical discourse analysis has been heavily criticised. Realist, Marxist and positivist critiques have asserted that discourse reduces social systems to ideas and language, neglecting the material conditions, institutions and natural constraints on the production and transformation of social meanings (Howarth 2000). By posing that truth and falsity of statements only make sense within the criteria of discursive orders, discourse analysis has been accused of relativism (ibid). As outlined by Burman & Parker (1993), discourse analysis is prone to errors of subjectivity, complicity, reductionism, ahistoricism and methodological anarchy. Furthermore, the particular approach taken by Foucault has been criticised for internal contradictions and lack of conceptual clarity (Howarth 2000).

On some accounts, the applicability of this critique must be acknowledged, and its role in limiting the validity and reliability of my research project must be considered. The lacking space to explore issues of theoretical inconsistencies is certainly a limitation, combined with the fact that, as stressed by Foucault and formulated by Howarth (2000:133): "there are no purely algorithmic methods and procedures of social science investigation (...) in each instance of concrete research, discourse theorists have to modulate and articulate their concepts to suit the particular problems they are addressing". However, this critique, to some extent, misunderstands the stated purpose of a hermeneutical, as opposed to a structuralist, discourse analysis; to describe, understand and explain particular historical events and processes, rather than establish empirical generalisations or test universal hypotheses.

In the following case study, I aim to uncover what the contemporary narratives of male social reproductive roles are and why they are narrated as such. I will discuss first the *interpretive context* and secondly the *rhetorical organisation* of the case study (Tonkiss 1998). To do this, I have adapted the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis as outlined by Van Dijk (2004:308). In line with his approach, I have considered, to understand the interpretive context, the setting, access, participant positions and roles, communicative acts and social meanings, genre and style. In understanding the rhetorical organisation of the publication, I have considered the topics, local meaning and coherence, text schemata, and rhetoric.

5.3 Interpretive context

The publication is *set* in the midst of the SRHR institutional infrastructure. Formed in 1952 as an umbrella organisation for national family planning associations worldwide, IPPF is key to the SRHR field in terms of advocacy, research and programming. Several institutions and individual have had *access* to the production process; in addition to IPPF and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs it contains contributions from organisations such as UNFPA and Global Network of People Living with HIV, in addition to several IPPF member organisations.⁴ As such, I will argue that this publication represents the currents in the SRHR literature and is located within several prominent institutional frameworks.

“The truth about Men, Boys and Sex” (TMBS), published by IPPF in June 2009, aims to “inspire and assist programme developers, project managers and reproductive health service providers to create comprehensive gender-transformative programmes,

⁴ The full list also includes Naz Foundation International, AIDS Foundation East-West and Paolo Longo Research Initiative.

with a key focus on men and boys.” (IPPF 2010) The content is split between two forewords (one by the Director General of IPPF and one by the Japanese ODA), three chapters where no author is cited (“Men and gender transformation: setting the scene”, “Working with men and boys: reasons and rationale” and “Meeting men’s needs: services and supplies”) and a third section. This final section presents “the Truth about Men, Boys and Sex” by outlining the realities, needs and recommended development interventions for men, divided into subgroups: young men and boys, married men, men who have sex with men, men who inject drugs, men and transgender sex workers, and men and boys living with HIV. These target groups corresponds roughly with the subgroups indicated in the categorisation of the literature review. This section includes an introductory page, an externally written case study of successful interventions, and an interview with a selected representative for each subgroup.

The claim to authority in the publication’s colloquial title; “The truth about Men, Boys and Sex” is frequently repeated throughout through four main techniques. Firstly, the chosen *genre* of TMBS invokes the authority of previous policy publications, and conforms to the expected coding that makes it recognisable and meaningful (Hall 1992). Secondly, and similarly, the *lexical and syntactical style* draws on a pre-existing scientific language tradition which gives the message authority. The lexical style employed in this publication reasserts its location within the scientific tradition of SRHR, by using an intellectual and borderline technical language. The style of writing in assertions underlies the truth claim. Thirdly, the text uses frequent references to authoritative sources of knowledge: statistics, publications, conferences, and individual representatives from developing countries. It makes a point of referring to a variety of

complicit actors; “governments, international organizations, private sector, academia, non-governmental organizations and civil society” (p3) stressing that its content is compiled by “experts in the field” (p2). Lastly, through implicitly promoting a shared set of values, the hegemony of those values is drawn upon and enforced (van Dijk 2004). Concepts such as “development”, “women’s empowerment” and “gender norms” and the necessity of their transformation, do not need explanation or justification for the reader to effectively decode them. The self-explanatory nature of these concepts “reveals not the ‘transparency’ and ‘naturalness’ of language but the depth, the habituation and the near-universality of the codes in use (Hall 1992). TMBS draws on these shared values in sentences such as “we can work towards a world where gender has little or no effect on the course of this most human of epidemics” (p2)

The latter sentence is indicative of TMBS’ *communicative acts and social meanings*. While TMBS does not explicitly target an audience in high-income countries, the direction of the gaze is revealed in the use of images (all which portray non-white men), the case studies and the interviews (all from low-income countries) and the frequent appeal to a “we” who share an interest in promulgating the ideals promoted in the publication as being non-indigenous to the geographical areas discussed. What precisely these are is unclear, but through frequent formulations such as “in many societies” and “often” (p3) TMBS indicates that their descriptions are applicable to large numbers of low-income countries, if not all.

Taken together, these techniques are means through which the publications gain legitimacy by locating itself within systems of knowledge and power, drawing on the authority of forms and language, and aligning itself with dominant paradigms (van Dijk

2004). TMBS has as such demonstrated the need for truth claims to be made within the confines of discourse, and the difficulty of locating truth claims outside it, if they are to be decoded in ways corresponding with the original meaning.

The next section will discuss the message that the publication thus communicates.

5.4 Rhetorical organisation

Similar to the categorisation employed in the literature review, this essay will investigate and discuss the *problem definition*, *problem cause* and *problem solution* of men's contemporary social reproductive roles. I will argue that, in this publication, the main *topic* is a repeated emphasis on "gender transformation". This is coupled with a contradiction between the main text's stated features of traditional masculinity and the characteristics of the selected, "modern" individuals interviewed. Together, this juxtaposes "the old man" as the problem with the "new man" as the solution. The introductory quote sets the stage for this interpretation:

I talk to my customers and give them condoms. When they ask 'What for?', I tell them 'Don't you know this is the style of the New Man? Real men use condoms. They keep you safe and make you last longer.' Taxi driver, 26, Can Tho district, Vietnam (p1)

5.4.1 Problem definition: "The Old Man"

The "old man" is discussed explicitly throughout the publication, and his characteristics are also revealed implicitly through TMBS' use of *local meaning and coherence*, framing the "new man" as oppositional to the old.

In its three first chapters, TMBS' *text scheme* is structured such that men are mentioned almost exclusively in connection to words with negative connotations. Initially, the publication asserts that "(i)n many societies, (...) 'being a man' often means acting tough, taking risks, having multiple partners, and consuming alcohol or other substances." (p7) Furthermore, young men and boys are peer pressured to "prove their manhood" (p15), which impacts on "sex, relationships, alcohol and recreational drugs, which in turn can increase their involvement in high risk behaviour" (p15). It follows that "[m]en and boys should be assisted to understand the impact of their attitudes and behaviour, and the benefits of a more equal society that is based on non-discrimination" (p7). This will affect women and girls "[b]ecause of the social, political and cultural constructs of many societies, men often have significant 'control' over the lives of women and girls, including their access to health care, and their sexual and reproductive behaviour" (p7). Together, these statements assert that this established, conventional masculinity is negative for both men and women, and the cross-cutting focus implied in TMBS geographical vagueness suggests that this masculinity is prevalent in most low-income countries.

TMBS further asserts that this "old" masculinity negatively affect men's *health seeking behaviour, sexual behaviour, and gender relations*. Regarding the former, "(...) norms about masculinity – that dictate what is appropriate or expected male behaviour – often stress the idea that men should be independent and invulnerable, which contributes to an unwillingness to seek help, information or treatment" (p7). Regarding sexual behaviour, for men, "extra-marital relationships are not uncommon, either with men, women or both. Women are generally considered to have fewer extramarital

relationships” (p19). Furthermore, TMBS argues that many men regularly visit sex workers, and that some engage in “[c]hild marriage, usually involving coercion by an older man” (p19). Also, through the stress on the non-violent post-transformation nature of male-female relationships, policy stories about men’s inclination to (domestic) violence are frequently repeated. In terms of *gender relations*, the following quote is indicative:

[Services] should encourage men to be more caring, equitable and involved in the sexual and reproductive health of their partners and families. To achieve this, services should provide men with opportunities to reflect on and challenge gender and sexuality norms, and support and encourage them to develop relevant skills related to communication, condom use, parenting and caring. (p11)

Again, the quote is important in its implicitness, covertly arguing that “the old man” is not adequately caring, equitable and involved, not self-reflecting nor challenging of the (currently undesirable) gender and sexuality norms, and not skilled at communication, condom use, parenting and caring.

In sum, TMBS represents “the old man”, his family and his community as suffering from the “old masculinity” which he embodies. Moreover, the publication implicitly draws on the concept of “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005) in claiming that the men in the hegemonic groups suffer from their own masculinity, whereas men in the non-hegemonic subgroups are suffering the masculinity of the hegemonic masculinity. The latter point is deducted through the publication’s stress on combating discrimination as the main desirable policy towards these subgroups

of men. The next section will discuss the publication's representation of why this "old man" has come into being, and the following will concern the "solution"- a new masculinity.

5.4.2 Problem cause

While noting that historically, the SRHR agenda has insufficiently addressed men in their own right or as women's partners, TMBS does not express this as a reason for "the old man's" lacking involvement. On the contrary, and in line with several examples from the literature review, it stresses that "the old masculinity" should be blamed for the inadequacies of the "old man". Through claims similar to: "a deep conservatism pervades gender norms, especially in rural areas" (p16) the publication frames culture and indigenous traditions as the cause of "the hegemonic old man" in low-income countries.

5.4.3 Problem solution: "The New Man"

Corresponding to the narratives of "the old man", "the new man" is presented through being the end point of the aforementioned gender transformation, and in the interviews with the male subgroups' representatives. "The new man" and "the old man" contrast in each of the previously discussed themes: masculinity, health seeking behaviour, sexual behaviour and gender norms. In addition, when presenting "the old man" the publication introduces the novel theme *community involvement*.

Firstly, the *rhetorical* tool of interviews humanises and personalises the abstract categories of "the new man", but "the old man" has no such representative – no opinions previously prescribed to him are being expressed by the interviewees. This omission might be a deliberate tool to focus more on the desired behaviour, and to reject by

exclusion the undesired behaviour. The use of interviews also indicates that the respondents represent forms of masculinity not traditionally associated with people from low-income countries. Whether these responses are genuine, or indeed whether the respondents represent real people, the selection of these men and these answers indicates their suitability for TMBS goals, and will be analysed as such.

Regarding “the new man’s” approach to *masculinity*, the responses to the initial questions of the interviews, “How would you describe yourself?”, contrast sharply with the previously outlined alleged characteristics of “the old man”. “The new man” is, for example “friendly, good-intentioned, caring and good mannered”, “good, honest, respectful, religious and hardworking”, “hardworking and friendly person and a big football fan. I like playing pool, but hate people who despise, stigmatize and discriminate others”. Furthermore, family plays a key role in the replies of most respondents, as well as being successful in professions and involved in communities.

Regarding men’s *health-seeking* behaviour, the publication has chosen to promote one man’s negative HIV testing as the last time he laughed out loud, one man’s conquering of his drug addiction as his greatest victory, and one man’s HIV status management as his primary feature. Effectively, this communicates that “the new man” seeks and accepts help, deals with his alignments in a mature and rational manner, and that health-seeking behaviour is compatible with the male characteristic of achievement.

Regarding men’s *sexual behaviour*, one of the respondents cites as a life-defining moment his denial of a friend’s offer to buy him sex, as a “rite of passage into manhood” (p17). The language of “rite of passage” draws on anthropological images of traditionalism, thus his refusal implies his status as a “modern”, “new man”. This is

further emphasised by his friend being “no longer alive” (p17), information which, in the context, implicitly relates his death to his behaviour. Furthermore, all respondents are either single or cite their wives or partners as central to their lives, and the infidelity and abuse attributed to “the Old Man” are omitted.

Furthermore, “The new man” subscribes to *gender norms* different from those of “the old man”. All respondents agree that female heads of state are as able as male. Confronted with a statement juxtaposing the heroic status of male condom carriers with the sexual promiscuity of female equivalents, all respondents treat the question as laughable in its inaccuracy and backwardness. In this, the respondents are represented as removed from stereotypes affecting the rest of their communities. By subscribing to gender norms generally associated with Western ideals and explicitly dismissing the alternative representations as “traditional”, these respondents are represented as modernised men.

Lastly, the “new man” is presented as being preoccupied with *community development work*. Two of the respondents are looking for HIV/AIDS organisations to volunteer for, while two others seem involved in respectively community development and HIV/AIDS outreach activities. The respondents’ focus on community development work underlines the fact that the publication communicates about the people in low-income countries and solidifies the interconnections between community development and SRHR.

Thus, the interviewees’ responses correspond with TMBS’ post-transformation ideal type: “the new man” is involved, health-seeking, egalitarian, faithful, and work for development. Furthermore, by juxtaposing narratives of masculinities commonly

associated with low-income countries with those of high-income countries, the difference between “the old man” and “the new man” is narratives as both temporal and dependent on processes of *modernisation*. This theoretical starting point is evident in the focus on education, on information and edutainment, all involving deliberate efforts on the part of development programmes.

In conclusion, in the case study “the new men” – the desirable outcomes of development intervention targeting men’s reproductive roles – seem to indeed exist and have a positive influence on themselves, on their partner and on their communities. Yet, as narrated by the publication, they seem to be exceptions in the large parts of the world dominated by the traditional “the old man”- inhibiting the sexual and reproductive health of himself and his partner, discriminating against non-hegemonic masculinities, and therefore compromising the welfare of his community at large.

6. Analysis

6.1 Question 1: The contemporary narratives of men’s social reproductive roles

This essay set out with a double agenda: to investigate what the dominant contemporary discourses of men’s social reproductive roles are in the context of development, and why men’s social reproductive roles are narrated in this way.

The literature review and the case study have provided some possible answers to the first question. Aiming to understand the *policy stories* of male reproductive roles within the SRHR literature, it asked *which topics* men were discussed in relation to, and *which stereotypes* were narrated about them. The latter question was operationalised in terms of *problem definitions*, *problem causes* and *problem solutions*. The following

analysis concluded that while increasingly discussed in the SRHR literature, the male inclusion agenda is limited by theoretical, methodological, and ideological aspects of the SRHR field. When men and gender norms are explicitly discussed, it is frequently in connection with HIV/AIDS and MSM. Literature connecting men with the “classical” reproductive issues of cognitive and behavioural aspects of family planning and child birth is even sparser, and focused around the necessity of a transformation of men’s allegedly negative gendered behaviour. In sum, the policy stories stress the *problem definition* as one of male inhibition of women’s reproductive choice and/or population reduction, the *problem cause* as previous SRHR programme exclusion or cultural patriarchal norms, and the *problem solutions* as making men more involved, for the main part through programmes to inform and educate them.

Having indicated *what* the contemporary discourses of men’s social reproductive roles are, the question remains of how discourse analysis can illuminate *why* they are narrated as such. In answering this question, I will *first* continue to draw on Critical Discourse Analysis to uncover the case study’s overt and covert rationale for its narration of male reproductive roles, and *secondly*, draw on the broader Foucauldian framework to discuss the role of knowledge and power in determining narrative content.

6.2 Question 2: The causes of the contemporary narratives of men’s social reproductive roles

6.2.1 Question 2 and Critical Discourse Analysis

The case study’s stated aims for the inclusion of men are (1) to improve men’s sexual and reproductive health and rights; (2) to improve the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls; and (3) to challenge harmful gender norms and strengthen

gender equality (p6). In line with TMBS' frequent assertion that men should be included in their own right, it promotes this as aim number one. However a critical discourse analysis of the two forewords and the three introductory chapters defies this assertion, suggesting instead the favouring of the two latter aims, and their instrumentality in a broader agenda. This is indicated through the expressed rationales for male inclusion, the *context* within which men are discussed, the *syntactic style* with which male inclusion is communicated, and the use of certain *term, silences, metaphors and rhetoric* (Van Dijk 2004).

Despite its title and stated aims, TMBS' first introduction stresses repeatedly that a focus on men is warranted for the ultimate benefit of women and girls: Men and boys are called upon to “transform gender norms”, “transform their lives” and be “equal partners [in the dialogue about the rights of women and girls]” (p6-7). Meanwhile, women and girls are discussed in terms of “empowerment”, “rights” and “safeguarding health” (p6-7). This message is communicated through the article's syntactic style: Women and girls feature before men and boys in all but one of the sentences. Yet, an even broader agenda seems to underlie the focus on women and girls: “(...) programmes should be gender-transformative. Men and boys should be assisted to understand the impact of their attitudes and behaviour, and the benefits of a more equal society that is based on non-discrimination. *This is essential to address the underlying causes of the HIV epidemic and achieving greater impact from interventions*”. (p7, my italics). Here, the focus takes us one step further- from men to women to HIV prevention, and to making programmes effective and sustainable (p8). Indeed, albeit claiming to be more general and exhaustive in its focus, the focus on HIV/AIDS is of paramount importance

in this publication. Paying attention to the silences points to the peculiarity of the strong HIV/AIDS focus. The section on married men and young men has no emphasis on, for instance, unmet need, abortion care or child mortality. In discussing the needs of male commercial sex workers and MSM, no mention is made of the significant psychological stress that both categories of men frequently suffer or the possibility of involuntary, coercive and abusive conditions for the former. The focus on HIV/AIDS seems to overshadow the diversity of the SRHR definition employed at Cairo 1994.

The second foreword, by a representative of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, points to the content of the underlying focus. In this foreword (p3), neither women nor men are mentioned. Instead the author stresses the connection between SRHR, African development and global health governance. These are unified through the concept of “human security”. The presented aim is to “tackle HIV/AIDS challenges as well as to address developing countries’ population issues from the perspective of reproductive health”. In employing the concepts “human security” and “population issues”, he draws on powerful connotations: the concept of human security bears the post 9/11 connotations of large-scale control of global threats from the poorer to the richer world. “Population issues” draws on similar and older notions of a poor country population bomb. The focus on these issues makes it clear that the incorporation of men in a SRHR agenda is a means, not an end, to a focus on the large-scale population issues marking the pre-Cairo 1994 agenda.

This critical discourse analysis will, as such, conclude that despite the rhetoric of TMBS, the underlying rationale for the inclusion of men, and hence for the production and dissemination of the publication itself, might extend beyond merely transforming

men's social reproductive roles for their own sake. Rather, it feeds into the agenda preceding the "male involvement" language of Cairo 1994: that of women's empowerment in SRHR and rights matter, for the ultimate benefit of large scale-population control. In this section, a Critical Discourse Analysis has uncovered the DTT terminology lingering in the SRHR discourse. The next section attempts to explain it.

6.2.2 Question 2 and Power/Knowledge

According to Foucault, "*power and knowledge* directly imply one another, such that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (1977:27). This connection is evident throughout the history on population studies, on SRHR, of *women's empowerment*, and finally of men's inclusion in SRHR. As the preceding historical outline has argued, the DTT only became influential in its second birth, when recognised as useful for US foreign policy interests and the development agenda of the Western countries. The *women's empowerment* agenda arguably became influential through its offers of increasing efficiency through the *unmet need* concept. Similarly, the inclusion of men in the agenda seems, as indicated by this paper's case study, a response to an increasing recognition of the role of men in women's lives. This admittedly extremely simplified historical description underlines Foucault's claim in two ways. The first is that, albeit different in rhetoric, the "new" agendas have always been compatible with the central paradigms of the old. The second is that these central paradigms have always favoured the perceived interests of power structures, in the form of Western expert systems and their perspective on population questions.

A Foucauldian discourse analysis can illuminate the mechanisms of this continuity. As discussed, the exercise of communication sets demands on the *form* and *content* that each communicate act in a mutually reinforcing circle must take for its message to be understood and have an influence. As such, hegemonic discourses dictate *who* is able to talk, using *what language* and *which concepts*, from *which standpoint*, using *which genres*, and drawing on *which theoretical frameworks*. The current hegemonic discourses, argues Foucault, have been carefully historically chosen, constructed and promoted to serve the interests of the governing systems of power. Messages that go against them will not need to be discarded by overt forces of power; they will simply be rendered meaningless. Hence, “new ideas” that enter into a framework of power and knowledge will be impossible to understand and promote if they are not meaningful within the discourse – if they are not working to reinforce it.

As such, the outlined history of the knowledge framework will have enabled and limited what is possible to meaningfully say about men’s social reproductive roles, and which meanings will be adapted and promoted into the existing institutional structures. However, not only this knowledge backdrop has bearings on the meaningfulness of these narratives: the policy stories about men’s social reproductive roles must be told within the demarcations of several broader discourses. To draw on an example, in this final part of the discussion I will refer to the original claim of the introduction and note that the social cognition regarding *sex* and *gender* will have a determining effect on the possible narratives.

The literature review and the case study both mentioned the possibility of a transformation between “the old man” and “the new man”. The language of

transformation highlights the boundaries of gender in the discussion of these “present” and “altered” masculinities: The “old man” and “the new man”, despite being presented as juxtapositions, both fall into recognisable frameworks of masculinity that are successfully decoded by the reader. A transformation from one type of hegemonic masculinity, associated with pre-modern societies, to a “modern” hegemonic masculinity, never challenges the binary between femininity and masculinity that gives the term “masculinity” its very meaning.

Women give birth and men do not – this binary framing of the genders is arguably one of the most influential discourses that structures societies. Transcending the body of social interpretations of this biological binary will render the gender narratives incomprehensible within the framework of development. Yet, the language of transformation between one form of masculinity to another implies that, even if tightly tied to the biological units, the elements of the binaries can be altered; *gender* is not determined by *sex*. On the contrary, the terms with which transformation is discussed implies that versions of masculinity are closely associated with levels of modernity. The desirability of a gender transformation that seeks to alter the power balance of the gender binary suggests that femininity, in its current form, is unproblematic and even sought after as a goal. It seems that gender transformation involves a modernisation of the man, and an empowerment, as opposed to an alteration, of the woman. As such, despite challenging the relative terms of the constituent elements of the gender binary, these ideas do not challenge the division between masculinity and femininity. Hence, and as seen, men’s social reproductive roles need to be narrated within the framework of

masculinity, and draw upon thousands of years' worth of human interpretations of the biological reproductive difference.

Taken together, the historical framework in which the emergence of the narratives of men's reproductive roles has taken place, and the social cognition surrounding binary gender norms, are two of the factors which have determined the content of the contemporary narratives of men's social reproductive roles within the development literature. As demonstrated, a discourse analysis, as outlined by Foucault, can enable us to contextualise the possibility of certain narratives, question their naturalness, and look for alternatives.

7. Conclusions

In analysing *what* the contemporary SRHR narratives of men's social reproductive roles are and *why* they are narrated as such, this essay started by outlining Foucault's genealogical discourse theories and main concepts, to be used in the remainder of the essay. It moved on to outlining the historical background within which the contemporary narratives have been formed. Following this, it raised and provided possible answers to two questions in its literature review – which topics and which stereotypes constitute the context of discussions of men's reproductive roles? It then moved on to a case study of IPPF's "The Truth about Men, Boys and Sex". These two parts together suggested a possible conclusion to the first question, while the next part, a close reading of the case study combined with a broad interpretation of historical and lingual contexts, attempted to answer the second.

This analysis has made four main arguments. The first is that the contemporary narratives of men's social reproductive roles do not follow naturally from their biological

roles, but are rather results of historical processes of power and knowledge. Because of this, these narratives could conceivably be different. The second is that the contemporary narratives of men's social reproductive roles in a development context describe women positively and men negatively; as secondary to women, and as problematic inhibitors of women's contraceptive choice. The third is that the contemporary division into "the old man" and "the new man" ties these narratives to a discourse of modernisation, framing a transformation from the former to the latter as the responsibility of a Western knowledge system. The fourth and final argument is that this transformation is framed as taking place through an internalisation of the norms of the "new masculinity", and that this is a prime example how modern *governmentality* is made more efficient by instilling in its subjects a *desire* to act in accordance with the interests of power.

Lastly, I wish to point towards an area of further research in the elaboration of the *consequences* of the contemporary narratives of men's social reproductive roles.

There is a vast conceivable range of responses to these narratives of men's reproductive role in the development context. Just as some of the literature argued that the absent male was a consequence of the SRHR programmatic assumption of his absence, a possible outcome of the contemporary narratives of men's social reproductive role is the production of more "new men" in development contexts. As research, policy and programming adapt to the promulgated need to alter gender norms, the structures created by these responses might facilitate for novel inputs into the subject formation of the male in low-income countries. As such, these narratives may act as self-fulfilling prophecies.

However, in Foucault's writings (Foucault 2003), neither *power* nor *discourse* is monolithic. Power is always coupled with *resistance*. Power and resistance are not to be regarded as opposites, but as mutually constitutive units which together constitute the discourses that organise societies. These discourses, in turn, can be as volatile as the power/resistance structures that form them. Foucault argues that "We must see discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable" (Foucault 1979:100). In the context of men's social reproductive roles, the consequences of this may be alternative decodings of the narratives: whereas the outlined policy stories may guide development experts, field workers, social entrepreneurs, programmers etc in their efforts to change "the old man" into "the new man", their efforts may feasibly be met with resistance from men, and women, in low-income countries. A reinforcement of "old man's" characteristics and behaviour is a possible form of this resistance, as is a negotiation between "the old man", "the new man", and other aspects of identity which have been regarded as secondary by much of the contemporary SRHR literature.

Hence, this essay calls for future research to investigate the ways in which, in particular contexts of time and space, the contemporary discourses of men's social reproductive roles contribute to calling certain subjects (men, women, children) into being, be they aligned with the contemporary discourses, resisting them, or negotiating a space outside or in between.

Electronic version: Case study accessible at <http://www.ippf.org/en/Resources/Guides-toolkits/The+truth+about+men+boys+and+sex.htm>

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