

Force and Temptation: contrasting South African men's accounts of coercion into sex by men and women

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Introduction

- Men's experience of coercion is rarely the subject of research
- But it is commonly reported in all settings and increasingly evidence from South Africa points to the health risks associated with sexual coercion of men by men
- The sexually coercive experiences of men have mostly been described in prisons (Achmat 1993; Gear 2005; Steinberg 2006)
- In prison some of the rapes are very violent, other men are tricked or manipulated into sex after incurring a debt (of food, drugs etc.) that they may not realise will be repaid sexually

Intro cont.

- The stigma of rape in prison reflects that seen outside, with rape victims blamed, seen as weak and turned into a woman or proven to be a woman, by the act of sexual penetration
- There are few accounts of men being coerced into sex by women (Simpson 2007)
- whilst sometimes these are unambiguous rapes, other instances emerge from the more muddled area of strong desire and the shaded boundary between heavy persuasion and non-violent coercion
- Given the general neglect of men's experiences of coercion, a study conducted in 2003–2004 in the rural Eastern Cape was unusual when it asked young men (n=1371) about this

Intro cont.

- Indeed, 3.4% of respondents disclosed being forced by a man and 9.7% by a woman. Unwanted sexual touching was reported by 7.8% of men and 2.3% reported being threatened or forced to have sex with someone who wasn't a girlfriend (Jewkes, Dunkle, Nduna et al. 2006)
- Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of understanding same-sex sexual coercion as a cause of men's ill health as men who had been coerced by men were at greater risk of alcohol abuse and having HIV (Jewkes, Dunkle, Nduna et al. 2006)
- The prevalence of sexual coercion of men by men from the Eastern Cape was similar to that reported in most of the studies cited in the chapter on sexual violence in the World Report on Violence and Health (Jewkes, Sen, and Garcia-Moreno 2002) from a range of global regions

Intro cont.

- Sexual practices and research methods differ between countries and studies
- Recent research in South African schools with 126,696 male learners aged 10–19 years reported that 44% had been forced into sex at least once with 32% of the perpetrators male and 41% female and 27% had been coerced by both men and women (Andersson and Ho-Foster 2008)
- The large differences seen between the South African studies raises substantial questions about what we are measuring when we ask men about coercion into sex; what is being reported; and to what extent are men's experiences of coercion by men and by women comparable?
- It highlights a need for a deeper understanding of meanings of different forms of coercion
- Research data need to be rigorously generated and interpreted

Intro cont.

- It is important from a public health perspective, that we understand, as Andersson and Ho-Foster (2008) suggest, whether we are faced with a massive unrecognised burden of male rape by women or whether there are alternative explanations.

Aim of presentation

- To contribute to these debates, this presentation presents a small qualitative study that was undertaken to explore meanings of sexual coercion of young men and boys by men and women in rural South Africa

Methods

- Informants were purposely selected from a cohort of males enrolled in the Stepping Stones Study (SSS)
- Age group at the initiation of SSS was 15-26 years
- Total of 31 in-depth-interviews were conducted,
- Study was framed rather broadly, but men were asked for narratives of sexual coercion in their lives
- Interviews were tape recorded, transcribed and translated into English
- Analysis done with the help of Atlas ti 5.0 using content analysis
- Study participants had access to psychological support & HIV counselling from nurses employed in the Stepping Stones Study
- Ethics clearance granted by the University of Pretoria Ethics committee

Being coerced by another men

- men gave different accounts of forced sex, either happening to them or peers; others were explicit in terming such acts as rape
- Four of the men interviewed spoke of their own rapes by men or boys, a further five men spoke of a friend's rape by another man and one of coerced sex in jail
- There were a further ten accounts of attempted sexual coercion by men, which were resisted in one way or another
- Three of the rapes of boys had occurred in this rural, cattle herding setting and several other informants indicated that this was a recognised context of risk among young boys. One men explained:

“When I was still a little boy, we were swimming and there was another guy who was a bit older than us. There were two of us; he wanted to have sex with us in the anus. We were scared of him [sasimoyika] and we agreed and he did it [savuma, wayenza]”

Being coerced by another men cont.

- The boys were vulnerable in this setting because it was quite isolated, but also because there were older boys and men around who were both generally trusted and physically more powerful
- As well Communal sleeping arrangements created the potential for sexual advances or rape, as the next extract shows:

“There is another guy when I was still very young. He was a bit older than us and he use to rape us and sleep with us, penetrating us in the anus [wayedla ngokusidlwengula, esilala ezimpundu] . . . You would just see him on top of you, and other guys would tell me that ‘this guy is hurting us [uyasilimaza]’,

Being coerced by another men cont.

- The Eastern Cape Province, specifically the black communities are organised hierarchically by age (and gender), with the greatest authority vested in older men
- Younger people are strongly expected to respect their elders and obey them. This increases the vulnerability of boys to rape by elders, as it does girls (Jewkes et al.2005), as does a general expectation that young people should respect people in positions of authority
- . . . he was around 13 years old, he says this father called him, he was coming out of the mielie[maize] fields and he called him to come inside the mielie field, because of age he went in and that is when he jumped at him and grabbed him, undressing him showing him a knife and he raped him.
- Some men had coerced young men and boys into sex by using the lure of toys or material gain and created a perception of obligation to reciprocate with sex

Being coerced by another men cont.

- One informant spoke of his brother's and friend's rape, and his attempted rape, by a man who made toy cars
- “It was in 1998, we were driving toy cars made of wire . . . These other boys did not tell what they did in order to get a car from him. All the boys had nice cars from him. This man was having anal sex [elalana nabo ezimpundu] with them but they did not tell us about that.”
- The material lure did not work in isolation, but was backed up by a threat and physical violence when resisted
- This is similar to the situations described by Gear (2005) by which ‘wives’ might be secured in jail.

Reactions to rape by men

- The reactions to the unwanted sexual contact and rape by men were varied
- At least one rape was reported to the police and one of the boys raped in the veld was taken to a clinic because of his anal injuries
- However men and boys probably could discuss what had happened to them
- Four boys had told family about what happened to them
- Particularly striking, however, was the lingering anger in several of the boys after the rapes

“Inside me I had this thing that this guy has done this terrible thing and I do not like it.

- Two boys described taking cathartic physical revenge when they were older. The following accounts describe this:
 - I grabbed him by his legs and forced him down. As he was trying to free himself, I firmly held him down and my friend was beating him in the face and I was also beating him all over...So I thought that was a fine way of avenging what he did to me, and I felt at peace after we did that [ndaye ndaxola]

Coercion through desire: the power of temptation

- Temptation in this study used as meaning to lure or entice someone into something (sex)
- Of the 31 men interviewed, 17 men spoke of situations where women pressurised them to have sex
- These accounts were all framed as having happened when older women made sexual advances towards them when they were young teenage boys
- Men perceived temptation as ‘pressure’ to have sex and usually for some reason they felt accepting would be against their better judgment
- In notable contrast to the accounts of force by men, pressure from women was something that made most of the men ‘feel good’,
- When they did not feel good, it was usually the age gap between the man and the woman that was the source of unease, as men in this community were not supposed to have sex with older women

Coercion through desire: the power of temptation

- Some of the accounts of temptation happened in the men's homes. One informant spoke of seduction by a domestic worker looking after his younger siblings. He explained:

. . . one day I came home late and my room was locked, I went to her room and asked to sleep there. She said I must sleep in the opposite side in the bed. In the night I saw her touching me saying I must come up to her side to sleep . . . I was still young and not thinking rationally, but I got tempted into it because we all think about sex in our minds . . . when I saw her private parts I got tempted [ndalingeka]

Coercion through desire: the power of temptation

- Another sixteen-year-old boy was seduced by a teacher who was trusted in his home and she would often ask him to sleep over in her room, on the floor. He explained:

“ It was raining heavily that day, and she said she won’t sleep alone while there is another person in the room. I did not see anything wrong with that, I took off my clothes and went to bed, she said I would sleep facing the opposite direction, but she changed and said I won’t sleep in the opposite direction. When I was about to sleep she put her hand inside my underwear and played with my private parts. I asked her what she was doing. She said she wants to teach me how to make a baby [ufuna ukundifundisa ukwenza umntwana], that is how she put it. She undressed herself and undressed me and put me on top of her, you see. By then my penis was erect (laughing) she inserted my penis into her vagina. I mean it’s not that I didn’t want to do it, but I respected her [ndandimhlonipha]”

Coercion through desire: the power of temptation

- The youngest to be seduced said he was 10 years old and the woman was 17
- Although on one level it's clear from the narrative that he agreed to sex with her, given their ages, in South African law what happened would now unambiguously constitute rape
- The men recognised that they were interested in sex at the time they were seduced, but although tempted, they thought they had been taken advantage of by women much older
- They thought they should not have engaged sexually with them and this experience made them feel uncomfortable
- Other accounts of pressure involved very blatant and persistent attempts by women to entice men into sex in bars
- This persistence was described as a form of coercion as it continued despite the men expressing their discomfort

Coercion through desire: the power of temptation

- Yet the men showed that it was immanently resistible, clearly involved communication rather than force and might otherwise be seen as overt propositioning rather than coercion
- Pressure from trusted older female relatives and family friends was not resisted as the younger men were obliged to show respect
- In other situations men did successfully resist temptation. Two reasons were given for this, neither of which indicated that the men thought they were being violated
 - Because of age, their sexual performance would be inadequate
 - Fear of contracting sexual diseases from older women as they were seen as sexually experienced and therefore risky

Discussion

- Acts which men report as pressurised or forced sex by men and women were quite different in nature
- Most striking was the use of aggression by men and temptation by women
- In some cases, men and women drew on power from their position in the age hierarchy, and the ensuing obligations, to assist them
- The meanings of the acts clearly differed, with coercion by men resulting in anger and resentment
- When seduced by an older woman, notwithstanding feelings of misgiving, or even disgust, was often accompanied by a sense of pride that an older woman whom they respected found them desirable

Discussion cont.

- Some of these Whilst some men managed to resist coercion by men, they spoke of this as being an escape from a situation in which they risked being violated
- This contrasted with the reasons given for resisting pressure from women, which related to sexual performance and risk of infection
- A key question is whether men's accounts of coercion by women should at all be regarded as coercion in the way the term is used when thinking of men's and women's accounts of being coerced by men?
- It is recognised that coercion is experienced as occurring on a spectrum and so many forms of pressure can be seen as coercive
- However, the construction of coercion as 'temptation' really suggests that it is not equivalent as it is generally accepted that temptation can be resisted
- We acknowledge that some situations would have met the definition of rape in the new South African Sexual Offences Act (Criminal Law [Sexual Offences and related matters] Amendment Act 2007) because the men were under 16 and the women older.

Conclusion

- We found men's experiences of sexual coercion by men and women were not directly comparable, in that their contexts, meanings and consequences differed
- Men's experiences of coercion by other men strongly resembled the situations of rape of women
- Men's experiences of coercion by women were not of the same nature
- Clearly acts of rape of men by men require a more developed response from statutory services
- Our findings do not support the view that all acts described as 'coerced' by men in research settings have equivalent meaning
- Research on sexual abuse of men needs to explore and adapt to the nuances of meaning in local settings, particularly the meanings associated with coercion by men and by women
- This is essential for determining the validity of research findings and guiding public health responses

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