

**'Love is a dangerous thing': micro-dynamics of violence
in sexual relationships of young people in Umtata**

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April 1998

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ISBN: 1-874826-74-9



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and methods

Violence within youth sexual relationships, in the form of physical assault and forced sex, has been identified by several authors. This report presents the findings of a study, funded as part of the National Crime Prevention Strategy, the aim of which was to gain an understanding of the circumstances and contexts of violence in young people's sexual relationships. Set in Umtata, a total of 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with youth aged between 16 and 26 years, and in addition 12 mothers and 3 policemen were interviewed.

Key findings

- physical assault and rape or coercive sex was reported and discussed by many of the informants. Violence was used by boys as a way of imposing the 'rules' of the relationship and particularly associated with girl's rejections of 'proposals of love', their attempts to end relationships, their refusals of sex, their attempts to check up on their boyfriend's fidelity, their attempts to undermine their boyfriend's success with other women and their actual or suspected infidelity.
- violence in dating-relationships must be understood in the broader context of life in Ngangelizwe where beating was used in a whole variety of contexts as a strategy for punishment and a way of gaining ascendancy and control over others. Thus girls fought with other girls, neighbours with neighbours, boys with other boys, husbands beat wives, parents beat children, and teachers and circumcision school leaders beat their pupils. In this way the use of violence was 'normal'.
- Gaining and keeping girlfriends or boyfriends were overwhelming preoccupations of the youth. Their male and female identities were substantially constructed in terms of success in sexual relationships and this was deployed in struggles for position and status within peer groups. With evaluations of self-worth and power so critically dependent on the actions of others, boys and girls were rendered inherently vulnerable. Thus boys used physical coercion against girls in order to maintain their fantasies of power. Girls were restricted in their ability to resist violent men for fear of losing a relationship of 'status' and, whilst characterising men as 'irresponsible' and 'deceitful', were eager

accomplices in acts of 'deceit' against other women when these increased their power and position within the female peer group.

- Mothers were well aware of violence in their children's relationships. They did not, however, interfere with their sons' activities. Communication with daughters about sexual relationships was found here, as elsewhere, to be very limited and focused their attention on stopping daughters having boyfriends. Opportunities to promote safe dating were entirely missed. The police were reluctant to encourage pressing charges in cases of gender violence, preferring to promote reconciliation. Teachers were regarded by girls as distant and hard to talk to and several girls spoke of sexual exploitation by school teachers which had been ignored by authorities and colleagues of the offending teacher.
- The most important attempt to provide boys with alternative ideas of masculinity from those prevalent on the streets came from instruction associated with circumcision. Discussion of the timing of circumcision (in late teenage) and teachings associated with it suggests that in this community decisions were informed by a lay psychological model of child development in which it was seen to be essential for boys to pass through a stage of experimentation, freedom and licence in order to have such behaviours successfully curbed in adulthood. Many actions taken by boys in this age group were thus not regarded as seriously as those of older men and a sense of powerlessness in mothers arose from a perception that it was inevitable that 'boys would be boys'. Girls were clearly introduced to social responsibilities in early childhood and although they had more freedom as teenagers, they did not use it to indulge in anti-social behaviour.
- It was hard to escape the conclusion that boys beat girls because the actions and inactions of a variety of players in different contexts allowed them to.

Recommendations

- there needs to be a change in attitudes amongst all members in the community towards the 'normality' and inevitability of male use of force in relationships involving people of all ages. Assault of women and forced sex need to be recognised as 'crimes' and police have a key role in this process.

- Basic self-defense and escape strategies training for women and more visible street policing are needed.
- Recreational and skills development activities for girls which develop self-reliance and self-esteem are needed, these must also encourage female trust and team-building. Similar activities are also needed for boys.
- Job creation for both sexes is important in tackling crime from a grassroots level.
- Debate in communities is needed about attitudes towards and responses to relationships of daughters, differences in processes and outcomes of socialisation of boys and girls from childhood.
- The Departments of Education and the teaching unions must take the abuse of school girls by teachers extremely seriously and offenders should be sacked.
- Lifeskills curriculae must include gender violence and non-violent conflict resolution.

‘Love is a dangerous thing’

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‘Love is a dangerous thing’: micro-dynamics of violence in sexual relationships of young people in Umtata

1.0 Background

In South Africa violence within youth sexual relationships, in the form of physical assault and forced sex, is an important area of concern. Recent research has contributed towards understanding the nature and extent of male violent practices among youth. In epidemiological research, 60% of teenagers reported physical assault by male partners (Maforah F *et al*: unpublished) and 28 to 30% of forced sexual initiation (Maforah F *et al*: unpublished; Buga *et al* 1996 in rural Eastern Cape; Richter 1996 on urban youth). A qualitative study conducted among pregnant teenagers in Khayelitsha, Cape Town (Wood *et al*, in press) showed violence to be a consistent feature of teenage sexual relationships and the primary means by which pervasive male control over female partners was enforced. In particular, the researchers found that conditions and timing of sex were defined by men through the circulation of certain constructions of love and sexual entitlement, which were enforced through assault and coercion. Of great concern in the Khayelitsha study was the perception expressed by the young people that the abuse, whilst being highly unpleasant, was ‘normal’.

‘Normal’ violence by men against women is of great concern from criminal and public health perspectives. From the criminal perspective it is of great concern that acts which in other circumstances would constitute assault and rape are regarded as ‘normal’ by communities if perpetrated by a sexual partner. An appreciable (but uncounted) number of women are murdered by their husbands and boyfriends each year; many others are severely physically and mentally scarred as a consequence. From a public health perspective, such violence and coercion limit young women's capacity to protect themselves against unwanted sexual intercourse, pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including HIV/AIDS. The mental health effects of abuse of women are recognised but have been poorly documented in Africa. They include loss of self-esteem, depression, anxiety disorders and suicide.

This report presents the findings of a Medical Research Council study conducted among Xhosa youth in the Eastern Cape, and funded by the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology as part of the National Crime Prevention Strategy. The aim of the study was to gain an understanding of the circumstances and contexts of violence in young people’s sexual relationships.

2.0 Research methods and context

Ethnographic methods were used. The research was conducted in Umtata, Eastern Cape (mostly in Ngangelizwe township) between October and December 1997 by the first author. A total of 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with youth aged between 16 and 26 years, of which 22 were with girls and 8 with boys. In addition 12 mothers who had children in this age group and 3 township policemen were interviewed, mostly in small groups. All the interviews with boys and parents, and 7 of those with girls, were conducted in English by the first author, and the remaining 15 interviews with girls were conducted in Xhosa by Asandiswa Nkohla. Interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and where necessary translated, then analysed using standard ethnographic techniques.

The objectives of the study were to develop in-depth understandings, from the perspectives of male and female youth and parents (especially mothers), of: the nature of violent and coercive practices within youth sexual partnerships with a focus on the circumstances in which they occur, how they are perceived and how legitimised; their location within broader community violence; the strategies employed by youth to gain sexual access, the extent to which these can be resisted, and the methods and consequences of female resistance; the extent to which youth relationship violence is reported; and the roles of others, including elders, teachers, peers and parents. The scope of inquiry of the interviews was framed around these questions.

The first author spent a total of six weeks in the field and during this period lived in a suburb adjacent to Ngangelizwe with a Xhosa-speaking family whose 18-year-old niece was employed as fieldworker. As a result she was able to collect additional data through participant observation, primarily by visiting shebeens and nightclubs with her informants which provided further opportunity for informal conversation and observation, in the course of one evening witnessing a violent incident between partners in this group. This arrangement facilitated access to the youth who were recruited using snowball sampling, mostly from two schools in the township. It is likely that the first author's age (25 years) and her familiarity with the subject matter from previous research also contributed to the willingness of informants to discuss very sensitive issues.

Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Ethical Committee of the Medical Research Council.

3.0 Findings

3.1 Introduction: Constructions of love and sex among youth

Guys don't offer us good love, we love them too much and offer up to the last point, boys use us, they need sex then after tasting you, leave you for other girls

Sexual relationships and the conflicts they bring were a significant source of emotional stress and disappointment for girls and boys alike. Sexual infidelity, 'abandonment', excessive male control, forced sex and violence were the main sources of unhappiness in relationships for girls, whilst the most visible preoccupation among the boys was the threat or reality of their girlfriends having other sexual partners. In the interviews persistent reference was made to love as a 'dangerous' game, and epic-romantic notions of revenge, betrayal, pain and deceit were often evoked to illustrate this. Stories of girls in particular who had been assaulted, stabbed, shot or otherwise injured by their partners, as well as anecdotes of attempted suicides, 'heart attacks', knife fights and mental breakdown caused by relationships, were mentioned throughout the interviews. One female informant described her own hospital admission at the age of 16 after a suicide attempt by overdose, which she had taken when her partner had told others that he had more beautiful girlfriends than her, and only wanted her for sex: 'I was so frustrated and disappointed. I loved him so much and I wanted to die immediately. I was desperate, I couldn't imagine my life without him'. Students at one school related the case of a 16 year old who had shot herself with her father's gun because her father had forbidden her from ever seeing her boyfriend again, and she 'felt she couldn't live without him'; this case was used to illustrate the damage which could be done by a 'first love' which was thwarted. One of the boys described how a street friend of his had been stabbed to death by his girlfriend. Beyond such examples of 'tragic' outcomes of relationships, there were other ways in which this type of romanticised language was employed: one boy for example commented that if his girlfriend were to have sex with someone else, 'a part of me would die, nothing would make sense any more'.

Such discourse of the pain and passion of love, clearly the stuff of Mills and Boon and American television soaps (particularly *The Bold and the Beautiful* and *Days of Our Lives* which teenagers avidly follow), was accompanied by observations about the importance of self-protection from the potentially dangerous outcomes of relationships by avoiding 'falling in

love'. As one boy said, 'I must keep my heart from falling for this girl, I must study my books, fight for my own future, just because love is a dangerous thing to us. I could kill myself about my girlfriend because the girls are beautiful, you want to try to have her for the rest of your life, but after that they disappoint you by having sex with another guy'. At times, love was perceived to act as a disease, which would "work into" a heart and destroy it¹: as one girl whose boyfriend had another partner said, 'I don't want that thing to work into my heart because it will spoil my future by breaking my heart'. Relatedly, another boy explained how his heart 'sickness' (described in terms of the heart not 'pumping the blood well'), for which he had needed several operations, had been caused by 'problems' with his long-term girlfriend, and specifically by his inability to avoid 'keeping them' on his mind.

While the terms sex and love were often used as interchangeable expressions, it was clear that mostly (exceptions probably being young sexually uninitiated girls) 'love' was perceived to necessarily involve sex, but not sex to involve 'love'. Among boys love often seemed to be defined by reference to notions of possession and ownership of a girlfriend and to expectations of her continuous sexual availability. Consequently, jealousy as an emotional expression of wanting to have sole physical access to a partner was perceived by some to be indicative of 'love'. Among some girls, 'love' and the general quality of a relationship was judged by the absence of the negative, such as by having a sexually faithful or non-violent partner, and this is exemplified by the comment that: 'when he loves you... you just surprise him by coming to his house and you find him alone there'.

Sex was discussed in many ways: as an inexorable physical need, occasionally illustrated by reference to food metaphors such as 'tasting', 'chowing' [literally: eating] and 'cherry' [slang for girl]; as a strategy to get 'position' and prove sexual desirability among same-gender peers; as a weapon of revenge; and as a resource exchanged (legitimately, in the eyes of many) by girls with much older men or 'sugar-daddies' (including teachers) for money, clothes, high exam marks or status. References to sex as an expression of 'love' or romantic feelings were rare, though clearly not absent in the interviews.

Of all the informants only one had never had sex. She gave several reasons for this; her father's strictness; her reluctance to 'sacrifice the things which you have to sacrifice in a relationship'; and her Catholic school background. Anecdotally, religion was a strong influence on some girls: another described how the students she shared her hostel room with were

'saved' and 'preach that they want Jesus' and would 'shout' at boys who came proposing to them.

3.2 Physical assault in youth sexual relationships

Of the 22 girls interviewed 16 reported that they had been assaulted by at least one male partner, and of the 8 boys 6 admitted to having beaten their girlfriends on one or more occasions. In most cases violence appeared to be a means of enforcing discipline and control over female partners when they were perceived to have broken certain (usually implicit) rules underlying the relationship or resisted male attempts to enforce these 'rules' or control them. Thus most reported violence was associated with the following circumstances: girls' rejection of a male 'proposal', their actual or suspected sexual infidelity, their attempts to end relationships, their refusals of sex, and their acts of resistance to male attempts to control them and dictate the terms of the relationship.

Normal procedure for establishing a new affair was for the boy to 'propose' love to the girl by telling her that he loves her; girls proposing to boys was so rare that one boy commented that if it were to happen to him he would be suspicious that the girl wanted to 'pass on a disease' to him. This procedure and the assumption of passive female acceptance implicit in it could have serious repercussions for girls: one girl, for example, described her treatment by a boy whose proposal she had rejected in town: 'he said: look guys, here is my bitch....they beat me, saying that it was because I didn't want him and had silly excuses'. Many similar anecdotes were told which indicated female refusal of a 'proposal' was a common cause of assault.

Of all reported causes of violence within relationships, the most prominent was female sexual infidelity, and this was related to the perception that girls who have other sexual partners are breaking a rigid social 'rule'. One boy, for example, explained that his girlfriend had another partner but had lied to him about it and although he had tried to 'investigate' this dispassionately, he had had 'problems due to anger' and had beaten her 'very hard' because he thought she was 'playing' with him (in his next sentence he tried to downplay the incident: 'I wasn't beating her as such, I was grabbing her by the arms, she had no scratch or anything'). In some cases, the girl was said to be badly beaten by both boys she was involved with, who had 'made a plan' to punish her on discovering the deception. Boys perceived the rules to be different for themselves and their partners: while they disciplined sexually

unfaithful partners, often by violent means, many resented their girlfriends interfering in or asking questions 'too persistently' about their own affairs. Incidents described by two boys involved them beating up ex- or current girlfriends for interfering with new partners in ways that threatened their masculinity: one informant said that he had beaten up his girlfriend because she had told her friends 'lies' that he was 'bad kisser and not good in bed'; another hit his partner three times because she had told his new partner 'out of jealousy' that he was 'ugly and not the right stuff for girls'.

Actual proof of infidelity on the part of a girlfriend was not needed for violence to take place. In many cases female informants explained that their boyfriends were extremely jealous and this jealousy (often worsened by alcohol) led to them beating the girl if she was seen even talking to, or walking with, another boy in the street. Another boy said that he beat up his partner because he encountered her drunk at a party despite the fact that he had previously told her not to use alcohol on the grounds that 'she forgets that she's mine' and dances with other men. One girl who strongly suspected her boyfriend of having another partner said: 'boyfriends have the problem of jealousy. They don't want you to be happy, they want to torture you. Yes, I think so. They don't want a girlfriend to be happy, they are so jealous. They don't want you to be happy with another, whereas you don't even have other boyfriends, just friends'.

Girls' attempts to end relationships often resulted in assault as boys expected to control both the start and end of relationships, as one boy explained: 'maybe she's tired and wants out, then he'll start beating her, saying: you can't do that to me, I'm the one who went to you to propose so you can't end it'. One girl described how she was beaten 'severely' until she had 'injuries' on her arm 'because he didn't want me to reject him'. In the words of another: 'he beat me for some time because every time I was sent to the shop, once he saw me he would beat the hell out of me even though I had already broken off the relationship. He used to cause scenes and the shopping I was carrying would fall on the ground and scatter all over. He would push me and force me to pick them up'. Another informant who related this sort of violence to male notions of possession explained: 'the guys will hit you if you want to dump them because they are so obsessed with you. They'll hit you and threaten you, and you feel that you have to stick with this guy otherwise you are going to die, because we have a friend who was stabbed by her guy'. Girls' fears about the consequences of ending a relationship often led them to take a second boyfriend, hoping that the first one would lose interest. This strategy-as well as other

more explicit acts of resistance to male control- often backfired as it brought the added risk of being beaten for infidelity.

3.3 Violence as forced or coerced sex

Most of the female informants said that they had experienced coercive or physically forced sex. Underlying it was the male understanding that if a girl accepted his 'proposal' to love, she would be expected to have sex whenever he wanted it, in return for a combination of presents, money, being visited frequently and taken out. Thus sexual refusal on the part of girls, which contradicted this 'contract', as well as challenging norms about male sexual entitlement and female sexual availability to their partners, was an important catalyst for assault.

Many narratives described actual forced sex, which some girls counted as rape (though not all, 'because it is your boyfriend'): 'it was against my will. He hit me first because I was trying to open the door. He was using a stick to hit me and then he forced me to take off my uniform when I refused. He grabbed me and took it off by force so that it was torn in the process'; 'one day I was on my way home from school and I stopped at my boyfriend's place. We talked and talked and then he suddenly said to me that we had to have sex. I refused and he forced himself onto me until I couldn't overpower him. I hated him from that day; a person must talk to you if he wants something'. One 16-year-old informant who became pregnant after her first sexual encounter and was left by her partner said: 'he forced himself onto me. He came to the house and forced himself into my bed, and I said no and he threatened to hit me and I kept quiet'. Alcohol was mentioned as an important factor in forced sex by both male and female informants; one boy explained how 'when you are using liquor you like it at that moment, and if you don't have it you force it', adding that he had done it and it was 'not nice'. One girl said: 'it is much worse when he is drunk, that love [lust] he feels is more, he is being pushed by that liquor, and I'll tell him 'no, I'm tired', then he forces me'.

In many narratives of coercive sex, the girl had agreed to sex because her partner had threatened to beat her, had actually done so or had told her that 'I couldn't just accept his proposal and then refuse to have sex'. Male 'pressure' took other more subtle forms too, summed up by one girl: 'when they say you have to show them you love them just by sleeping with them, that's pressure. Or if you have told your boyfriend at the beginning of the relationship that you have never slept with a man, they'll say you don't want to sleep with them because you're sleeping with other men and you're afraid they'll find out that you're not

a virgin. Of course you want to prove that you're not lying so you sleep with them'. In addition the men were said to resort to a plea that sex was a male 'need' that could not be ignored. Sexual involvement per se was thus often linked by girls from the outset of relationships to obligation and male expectation, as well on some level to a desire for intimacy.

Male informants confirmed that female refusal to have sex was a common cause of violence, pointing out that if girls did not want sex they should not have accepted the proposal at the outset; this indicates that as well as not being able to conceive of a relationship without sex, some men do not distinguish between a girl not wanting to have sex ever, and not wanting to have it sometimes. The two boys who said they had beaten partners for this perceived their girlfriends to have been 'making excuses' because they were having sex with someone else and didn't want them to find out: 'you think 'why not with me', then the forcing starts'. Relatedly, another boy remarked that 'having sex is a moment of truth: if you are honest enough to share everything with your boyfriend you must have sex or he'll get suspicious that you are having an affair'. This assumption that refusal implied that the girl had another sexual partner was not surprising, given a context of extreme suspicion around partners' activities with others, in addition to the fact that multiple partners at any one time was a common practice. The suspicion was so acute that some men reportedly checked up on the validity of female excuses: 'sometimes you say to your boyfriend that you can't sleep with him because you are menstruating, and he will demand to see the blood'.

When the boys were asked why they thought girls refused sex, they mentioned them having another boyfriend as the primary reason. Other suggestions were that 'girls are afraid to be made one-night stands', and 'to test you, to see if that's the only thing you want from them' (one male informant admitted that though this may be 'right', he felt 'uncomfortable' when it was applied to him). One boy indicated his own vulnerability when he suggested that maybe he didn't 'satisfy' his girlfriend. Similarly, another who said that his girlfriend did not like penetrative sex commented that 'it's not easy for a girl to have sex...and arousing a girl is not the easiest task'. Boys clearly differed in their efforts to arouse girls: one boy commented that 'most guys just think that sex is a process of moving up and down. They don't consider that sex is a fantasy to a girl if you do it in a good manner, but it's torture if you do sex to a girl who doesn't want it.' Although female informants did not talk much about their own feelings about sex, their reasons for refusing it included anticipation of pain, tiredness, and hot weather. However girls were said to complain to each other about how men made love to

them, complaints which could not be shared with their boyfriends: 'either they can do it or they fail. Some of the guys don't know how to sex really or else I can say they don't know how to satisfy you, but there are those who really do what you want as a girl'. Sexual dissatisfaction was even said to justify taking a second boyfriend.

While many girls experienced forced sex as a brutal and undermining process which often involved actual physical assault, the boys interviewed perceived 'forcing' to be played out in a range of different ways, and attached different meanings to different contexts. Some of the male informants indicated that they perceived the need to 'force' sex to be related to some degree to cultural notions of the unacceptability of women demonstrating sexual desire or initiating sex. One argued that girls 'pretend' not to want sex but 'do really', the indication of this being that 'they get wet'. Thus he perceived arousal to indicate willingness, since it is 'controlled' by the girl. Accordingly, women who have bodily signs of arousal cannot be raped: 'if you are raped, you can't get aroused'. He perceived that girls initially refuse to have sex in order to 'see what you will do, but for sure she is expecting you to force her'. His procedure to 'force' her would be to 'lie' to her and say that he wanted to collect a jersey from his room and invite her in under some pretence, and then to take off her trousers, 'and then she may even take off her underwear herself', though added that 'you take it easy'. There was no parallel discussion in the interviews with the girls about cultural notions of desire and forced sex, but discussions with other Xhosa women outside an interview setting have suggested that sometimes it may be a factor.

Female virginity was clearly invested with different meanings by boys and girls. Girls often perceived its loss to be an event of emotional significance for which they had to be 'ready'. Boys on the other hand could often not accept female discourse about 'readiness', and this led one female informant to make the comment that: 'I think that if a girl is not raped to make sex, then the guy forces her. I think if we're in love and I'm not ready for sex but sometimes we go to your place and romance and romance, and then when it comes to making sex, you say 'no, I'm not ready', then the guy doesn't believe that, he says 'you can't not be ready', then the guy physically forces you to make sex'. Thus men seemed to have double standards, in that although they had notions of female sexual 'purity' which came in degrees (such that one boy commented that a major male objection to a girl having many sexual partners was that each time she had another one it was 'as if' she were losing her virginity by one step), when it came to their own partner, they had expectations that she should submit to their sexual demands at

the earliest opportunity. In other words, it was seen that girls could (and should) be sexually available, but only to them.

The mothers who were interviewed recognised forced sex to be a risk for their daughters. One described 'cultural' rules governing dating relationships which on the one hand legitimised a sexual component to these but on the other imposed an expected period of delay after the start of the relationship during which girls may be at risk of being raped. One explained: 'you will see that this date rape occurs if this girl has met this boy for the first time. According to our culture you do not just go with a boy and make love the first time..you have to avoid this boy...then after the third day you can agree...girls inside always have that doubt that they are not very sure whether they love this boy or not, and if she allows him to make love with her it means he will look down on her, that's what she thinks, she needs to be sure'. Rape occurred, 'to show her', if the boy felt 'fooled'.

Some mothers particularly perceived a risk that their daughters could become 'victims' of 'corrupt' and 'delinquent' men. Whilst some perceived these to be gang members or tsotsis, another explained that she advised her daughter 'not to be involved with old men and boys who have dropped out of school..or who is working and older than her...and never with taxi drivers'. Taxi-drivers were perceived to be particular trouble-makers by mothers, as well as by some of the girls.

3.4 Broader context of violence in the community

The social environment within which youth relationships occurred was extremely violent, and beating was commonly used as a strategy for punishment, and as a way of gaining ascendancy and control over others. Many boys and girls had witnessed violence between their parents in their home and between male and female adults in their neighbourhoods; they had experienced the use of force against them by parents, teachers, and (among the boys) by elders at circumcision school; they had witnessed violent bullying from tsotsis on the streets; and they had observed or participated in physical fights between same-gender peers.

Physical violence between same-gender peers

Intense competition for sexual partners often resulted in physical violence. Some fights occurred between girls interested in the same boy and operated under established 'rules' which dictated that the winner would 'get the man'. The procedure was described as follows: 'nobody

judges the fights, you see when you are beaten. It's a pact between the girls: they say 'if I beat you, I win that guy and you will go to him and tell him that you no longer want him''. Another girl added: 'they fight, sometimes people come and separate them but then they will hate each other and give [each other] looks and call each other names. If no-one comes to separate them, you can have a winner. Sometimes if you happen to bleed then the other one is the winner'. On other occasions fights involving 'hitting with fists', clothes-ripping and insults would occur when a girl went to visit her partner at his home and found him with another girlfriend (then 'all hell will break loose'), or at a party where a boyfriend danced with another girl and everybody was drunk.

In most cases the men (if present) were said to stand aside and watch. Some regarded such physical fights as a legitimate way of resolving disputes about whom he should have sexual involvement with and would take the winner. This is possibly because some men perceived such fights to 'boost their ego', as one explained: 'you think 'I'm the man' when they start to fight'. Others would choose whichever girl they wanted, and one boy said that 'some leave them to fight and go with a third so they can both see how stupid they are'. These latter two reactions were related to boys' perceptions that they had a 'right' to propose to whomever they wanted and that girls should not interfere with these processes.

Among boys, fights often involved knives (and among tsotsis, guns), becoming group or gang events. The mothers interviewed confirmed that such street fights, usually exacerbated by alcohol, were common, and pointed out that in their own youth boys had fought with knives and sticks, rather than knives and unlicensed guns as they did now. Such fights, in which elders in the community were said to intervene rarely on the grounds that 'they have no solution', were usually described as happening on the streets at night. Boys explained that most fights were over girls, either in the form of struggle for possession or 'revenge' for a 'stolen' girlfriend. One informant (described by his peers as a tsotsi) who had been a school drop-out 'hanging around' on the streets for five years in his teens showed the researcher extensive knife scars in his back and described how: 'it's because there are two groups and these girls are liquors and started sleeping with me and then with another guy in a different group, and we start fighting just because other guys provoke us, and then we in my group provoke them, we start fighting, we start killing each other. They all have knives, we open our knives and each one goes to each one in pairs, and then we stab each other'. Fighting back was also on some level perceived to be about honour: 'I am not a coward. You see I can't shut up when a person

tries to kill me or shoot at me'. This informant had since gone back to school and said that he now only defended himself with his knife when someone was 'coming to kill' him. He added that 'here we must control ourselves with friends because if you go to the magistrate's and look in the files, you will see that most guys who kill another guy do it over a girlfriend.' In some cases, the friends of the main protagonists were said to stay out of the fight but their role was to 'keep ridiculing each other'. Informal protection networks operated; one boy said that he was 'okay' when it came to knife fights, because as soon as he whistled other men would come to help him in return for his recognition and protection in the future (he had a black belt in karate and was obviously seen to be useful friend to have); he described how some boys would even pick up his belongings while he was fighting and then remind him on the streets later that they had done him this favour.

Given this context of intense competition it is hardly surprising that every youth informant, without exception, said that friends (described by one girl as 'snakes') could never be trusted. Essentially two reasons were given for this: that friends routinely 'stole' partners and so could not be trusted with any information about them from the outset; and that they could not be told private matters or 'secrets' because they would inevitably 'gossip' and laugh about them with others. Although there were many examples of situations where friends acted as negotiators, mediators and message-relayers between fighting couples, they were frequently perceived to interfere in relationships, contribute to break-ups through excessive jealousy and spread rumours with malicious intention.

Sexual threat and bullying on the streets

The streets of Ngangelizwe are characterised by threat from gangs of tsotsis, described as unemployed school drop-outs who smoke dagga and drank alcohol, committing crime and generally intimidating residents; most are armed with knives and some with guns. Of particular concern for many young women in the township streets was the sexual threat they posed. Several female informants explained how tsotsi would often propose to girls at knife- or gun-point. The words of one girl echo those of others: 'the tsotsis threaten you, and if he wants you, he wants you, and you are not the one to decide'. Another added that 'even if you don't die, he will put a mark to be sure you never forget him, a physical mark on the face', and so suggested that it was better to accept his proposal. One informant who had herself been sexually threatened by a tsotsi told the story of a friend which indicated the degree to which women live in fear in their neighbourhood: 'she had a boyfriend but this guy kept coming...he

took her with his car and then they left for where he stays, and there he took of his belt and beat her and took out a gun and said: 'I told you I love you, I don't know why I can't make love to you'.

Apart from the threat of rape or gang-rape (a nurse interviewed described how her neighbour had been gang-raped by five tsotsis on her way home from work), tsotsis were also said to assault and insult schoolgirls randomly on the streets; 'the boys will walk in groups smoking dagga and when they come across you they will drag you forcefully and insult you if you refuse, calling you an ugly bitch, saying you are too traditional'. Another said: 'one day he said to me that I must buy him a cigarette. I refused and he said I looked like a girl who was sleeping with older men. He pushed and pulled me. I said that he must stop. He hit me severely'. The researcher herself witnessed an incident of bullying of this type.

The mothers were concerned about the threat posed by tsotsis to their daughters. Most explanations given for why boys became involved in street gangs related to the poverty of their circumstances: in the words of one nurse, 'the gangs come from school drop-outs....Ngangelizwe is very bad, it's better now but it was dirty, full of running water, full of plastic, the gutters are open, and it is congested. You have seen the housing, full of overcrowding, dagga smoking, people there don't have the money to pay the rent sometimes. They want a TV, so they go and steal and buy dagga and smoke in gangs, they go about in the streets and if they see a girl they catch her and rape her'. Apart from poverty, coming from a 'broken home', social mobility (which means that youth go to the cities and 'look and listen', then 'integrate' what they see there) and peer pressure were said to be other causes of street gang membership: 'maybe a boy is at school and the others call him and say: hey, do you think you're better, come and have a smoke. Maybe this was a straightforward scholar but then with dagga-smoking the behaviour starts to be distorted and he enjoys the group'. One group of mothers attributed delinquency to political disillusionment: 'others had great expectations of liberation, that it would come with something for them, but unfortunately there's nothing fruitful for them, so they are angry with this frustration. People are very frustrated. There's no work for the young ones'. The two township policemen reiterated this when they attributed much domestic violence to recent retrenchments: 'they take it out on their families back home...liquor abuse causes violence in the streets and the home; they say it is for cooling down, cooling the nerves'.

Violence in the home

Among the youth, reports of violence in the home were virtually universal. Youth said that they had been beaten frequently by their parents, particularly when they were children, though it seems that at a certain age (usually said to be 16 or 18), this sort of discipline-enforcing violence was stopped in favour of verbal chastisement. Several informants had experienced more random violence from their fathers (in most cases attributed to alcohol), in addition to having witnessed their mothers being beaten. Although none of the informants reported it as their own experience, sexual abuse from fathers and mother's boyfriends was described as common, and several cases of this among their peers, acquaintances and neighbours were described to the researcher. That it could be men 'who are well-known to you who rape you' was acknowledged by many female informants. Strikingly, child sexual abuse committed by male relatives (as well as by teenage boys 'hungry for sex' and under the influence of dagga and alcohol) was described by groups of mothers and by police informants as a very common and 'taboo' problem in the community. One mother who was a teacher commented that abused children could easily be seen in the classroom by the way they walked, although teachers were perceived to be elders and so were rarely approached for help.

Beating at circumcision school and in schools

Boys reported that beating with sticks was the usual method for elders to enforce discipline at circumcision school, usually in cases where an initiate had failed to remember the previous day's lessons, was caught speaking Xhosa rather than the 'bush language' taught there or was seen to be not working hard enough. Although they described how they were 'treated like dogs' by sometimes 'cruel' elders, the boys accepted physical punishment as part of the process of their transition to manhood. In ordinary schools too, although corporal punishment was outlawed post-1994, beating with sticks on the hands or buttocks clearly continues to be used to discipline school children who are late for school, fail to do their homework, exhibit rudeness towards teachers and play truant.

All these examples of adults using violence to discipline children or as a means of resolving their own conflicts must act to reinforce for young men the message that physical force is an acceptable strategy to use against others. As a learnt practice, violence is thus recycled generation after generation. Some informants recognised this: 'violence is within you but it may depend on the neighbourhood you have grown up in, how you were brought up'. Describing Mdantsane (East London) where he was brought up as a child, one young man said:

'location life is very different, there's a lot of violence, even your neighbours fight and you watch over the fence, and you take sides..if someone's being beaten, maybe a thief..everyone goes and beats him. So those are the things which motivate violence within a person... I think it's quite a disadvantage growing up there, you never progress with anything...you know every weekend there's going to be a fight between gangs...and because of the atmosphere of the place..it's difficult for you to turn an eye and see the other way around'.

3.5 Why do boys beat their girlfriends?

Constructions of masculinity: the importance of choosing and controlling sexual partners

Masculinity was in part constructed through sexual relationships with girls and deployed in struggles for position and status within the male peer group. In particular, masculinity was defined in terms of number of sexual partners, choice of main partner (and relatedly, sexual desirability of partners to other men) and ability to control girlfriends. It was universally seen to be unthinkable not to have a girlfriend, a perception usually linked to the demands of male libido ('I have male organs'; 'I had to have someone for physical needs') and peer group pressures: one boy explained that others would assume a celibate male to be 'scared' of women or unable to get one, or expect him to cause trouble by wanting to dance with other men's girlfriends at parties. So unthinkable was celibacy that acquiring other girlfriends to offset the possibility of their main relationship ending was said to be common practice.

Multiple sexual partners, by all accounts virtually universal among boys, seemed to be an important defining feature of 'being a man': usual male practice was said to be to have a '5-60' (five-sixty), 'named after the Mercedes-Benz...the top range of cars', and explained as 'the one you really love and want to be with all the time', and in addition to this, several partners 'just for sex' (often referred to as 'cherries' or one-night stands). Although several of the boys said that they felt 'bad' about 'cheating' their 5-60 and lying to her, they showed no remorse about the 'cherries' whom they 'chowed' (literally: eat) and then left, on the grounds that 'other men do the same'. The majority of girls confirmed that their boyfriends had other girlfriends while in a relationship with them; these affairs were sometimes carried out publicly (which one girl said indicated her partner had 'no respect' for her) and sometimes secretly, though in the latter case girls explained they would know about the affair because of signs that their partner had changed towards them (such as becoming bored, impatient or aggressive with them). Although disliking the situation intensely, girls felt unable to 'challenge' it through fear of losing their partner; in addition, challenges could result in violence: 'I cannot change him, and another part

of it is that I wouldn't have the chance to go out with him; I hate it but there's nothing I can do about it'. Only one of the female informants perceived her partner having other girlfriends in a positive light: 'I accept it because I need to compete to prove my love to him'.

The existence of different sexual standards for girls and boys and the unfairness of these were explicitly recognised by the female informants: 'men get disgusted with girls who have a string of males, but I don't understand it because they have strings of females'. To a lesser extent the boys also acknowledged it: 'I have a problem because I don't like her to have other boyfriends, whereas me, I like to have other girlfriends'. One boy thoughtfully perceived that 'it's bullying, treating someone as if you are the boss, controlling her life while you don't want to be controlled by her...it's not right, you have to control each other'. Several boys however simply made excuses for their own behaviour while refusing to condone that of girls who did the same: one, for example, perceived that his having sex with others did not count as infidelity to his 5-60 because 'it means nothing'; another justified it on the grounds that the girls with whom he had sex proposed to him (he was a DJ and supposedly much in demand sexually) rather than vice versa. On an abstract level, the most common argument (also visible in the interviews with parents) against a girl having multiple partners was that if she were to become pregnant, she would not know who the father was (this was the usual male excuse for denying responsibility for a pregnancy), although the fact that 'promiscuous' girls are called insulting names by peers indicates a moral dimension too.

For the boys, actual numbers of partners are also used in the process of positioning within the peer group. Thus two boys described how they had previously involved themselves in 'competitions' with brothers and male cousins 'to compare how many sexual partners we could have in a year'. Counting was clearly significant for some who told the researcher specifically how many partners they had: '38 girls in six months'; 22 during the previous year; 26 in total - though clearly these could have been statements of machismo designed to impress. Others explained that having many girlfriends brought 'recognition' from other men that they were a 'playboy' and a 'real' man: 'it's to show my status to men...they start respecting you...we say it's the difference between boys and men: I'm a big boy, I can do all those things, I have a way with women'. Another made the point that: 'sometimes it's peer pressure. I think with us guys it's like boosting your ego among men, like how many girlfriends you can have. You want to maintain that balance and that reputation.'

Male competition was also a powerful motivation for choice of 5-60; the words of one boy seemed to suggest that access to desirable partners was to some extent defining of masculinity when he said, 'she was so beautiful.. I thought 'let me protect this'. I always felt we should be close together because I wanted to portray that image...most of the other guys wanted her but they couldn't get her, so I had to show the boys that I'm the man here. Basically I think that relationship was power'. This sort of sexual competition was not limited to the boys: one boy explained that his choice of 5-60 had caused female competition which allowed him easy access to other girls, who wanted to have sex with him in order to 'prove a point' to his 5-60.

'Taking' the partner of another boy (an expression which explicitly denies female agency) involved acquiring a girl who by definition was desirable to other men, and so asserting superiority over rivals and in some cases friends. There were clearly 'rules' about whose girlfriend it was acceptable to 'take'. One boy pointed out that the '5-60s' of men in rival groups were seen to be a fair target 'to tamper with' 'just for sex', often simply to 'prove' superiority. Thus rivalry within the male peer group was so strong that it could become the driving force for having an affair with a particular girl: 'this kind of relationship is not love-oriented. He just wants to prove it to the other guy: I'm a lot better than you....there are no feelings there'. In contrast an affair with a friend's 5-60 would cause him 'to hate you and fight with you', adding that although this would not necessarily stop such an affair, 'there are lines you don't cross if you know how he feels about someone - you cannot tell him, you tell him it was another girl'.

Masculinity was also defined in terms of control over women, which was in turn closely connected to male notions of ownership of partners. Some girls explicitly recognised violence to be related to male control. As one girl explained: 'they feel they should be in control of the whole thing', explaining that boys would often hit their partner in the course of an argument simply to demonstrate that control. Although male attempts at control were usually related to controlling female sexuality, at other times it appeared to be gratuitous: control for control's sake, presumably to assert superiority and hierarchy in the relationship. One girl, for example, who had a strict step-father explained how her boyfriend beat her sometimes when she failed to meet him because she had not been allowed out of the house. In terms of sexual control of their partners, boys focused their efforts on their 5-60s (not 'cherries') and frequently enforced it through threats of or actual assault. The girls perceived the efforts to control their sexuality as jealousy, which they overwhelmingly perceived negatively as it was a common cause of

assault. Despite male attempts to control them, having more than one sexual partner was common practice among the girls, and motives for this included: unwillingness to end one relationship out of fear of violence; taking on boyfriends in the township and in rural areas at the same time; 'revenge' for their boyfriend's infidelities; out of a continuation of their search for their 'real lover'; sexual dissatisfaction with their main partner; the need 'to explore'; for 'fun'; for financial or material benefit; to offset the possibility of being without a partner if another left; and competition with other girls to prove beauty through sexual desirability.

Male attempts at control took other forms: several girls explained that jealousy led their partners to try to control their physical movements around the township. One girl, who was having an affair with a taxi-driver, said: 'he always wants me to go and report to him at the rank about where I am going next'. An example of this which is representative of many other narratives was given by a girl who described how on one occasion her boyfriend met her as she returned from an errand her mother had sent her on and beat her; 'the problem with him is that he listens too much to his friends; if one of his friends sees me talking to another boy they simply assume that I am in love with him. On that day I apologised because I wanted him to release me. I went home and my mother asked me to go to the shop. I met him again in the street and he said to me: look, I can see that you are involved with somebody, don't complain because from now on I am going to have a lot of girlfriends but if I find you in the company of another man I will fight him and beat you'.

From the narratives it is clear that many men had expectations that their girlfriend should wait in her home for them to visit, and not finding her there would lead them to conclude that she was seeing another man. One informant, for example, explained how her partner beat her in such a situation: 'he beats me with sticks as if he doesn't have feelings for me'. An important source of unhappiness for many girls in their relationships was that they were not 'allowed' to seek out their boyfriends; many described how their boyfriends became angry if they went to their room 'uninvited'. Several told stories of how when they did go uninvited, they found their boyfriend with another girl, a situation which was often said to lead to female violence, as well as assault by the boyfriend. One boy described how he had beaten his girlfriend because she had come uninvited to her room when he had told her not to and then refused to leave because she found another girlfriend there: 'it's not bad for her, she must stay in her place waiting for me to come'. His implication was that beating was justified because he had explained his girlfriend's 'wrong' behaviour to her but she had continued to do it. However,

the words of male informants suggested that on some level they regarded their girlfriends' jealousy and associated *attempts* (though clearly not actual successes) to 'possess' them positively as it gave them status through making them feel desired.

Male need to control where and who their girlfriends were with extended to attempting to dictate which friends they associated with. In the words of one girl: 'one day he saw me in the company of my friends and he said to me that I must stop going with them because they are a bad influence on me. I told him that he mustn't dictate to me how I must live my life. When we arrived at his place he took a small iron rod and hit me on the head with it. I lost my mind and passed out'. Some men were threatened by their girlfriends having women friends and would accuse them of thinking their friends to be more important than they were.

In the words of informants, machismo was often associated with 'cultural' factors. One girl for example echoed others when she gave a 'cultural' explanation of violence: 'I think it has something to do with our African roots, males in charge, though there has been a lot of improvement. I think females are taking a stand, that if males beat them they leave them: that's what I've seen at my school'. Similarly, boys attributed the male practice of multiple partners to the ancestral practice of polygamy, their cultural upbringing dictating that men are household heads and the fact that boys observed their own fathers to have babies 'around every corner'. Assumptions of male superiority were similarly attributed to 'culture': 'they say that a man is a god to women, so you feel you are superior to women, you are the image of god'. Relatedly there was a perception that male control was justified on the grounds that women somehow lacked 'control' to such a degree that 'regret is a woman's natural food'-apparently a statement that men control women for their own good.

Male vulnerability

The very fact that masculinity is partially constructed through men's ability to control others weakens their position and makes them dependent on women submissively following the 'rules' or being effectively coerced by their strategies of control. Not surprisingly then, underlying the men's discourse of machismo and control was a strong sense of vulnerability. Boys repeatedly cited examples from their relationships which indicated that they were acutely aware of their vulnerable position, and in so doing used their vulnerability to justify their behaviour. One justified his affairs with reference to female infidelity: 'you see that this girl is playing with you, you must do your own things with your own life and your own body... I expect to

have many girlfriends just because a girl can disappoint you by proposing to another guy, and she can leave you for that'. Similarly another, expressing his own vulnerability from past disappointments, said: 'when I'm alone I think: no man, I've been trying to give my heart for nothing, I've wasted my time. Then I think: let me just hit and run'.

Acquiring girlfriends in the first place was obviously a preoccupying issue for the boys. In particular, male informants who came from much poorer backgrounds as well as those who were still at school expressed their vulnerability over girls preferring wealthy partners with cars, who were said to enable them to 'boast' and compete with other girls. Thus one of the poorer boys complained that since he came from a home that was 'hungry' and 'full of damp', he had 'no status' among women; another commented that it made him 'feel bad' that girls were interested in rich men, adding 'I know that one day they will realise that that's not love because love is what you feel on the inside'. One boy who came from a wealthy background and had access to his father's car described the process of getting a girl as 'survival of the fittest', while recognising that poorer men 'take it as exploitation...you're not giving them a chance'.

Vulnerability to others' opinions was an important reason for why boys felt female sexual infidelity to be unacceptable: 'I mean, what would other people start thinking about me? That she's bullying you, you have no control over her'. Several boys, however, observed that the category of girlfriend who was unfaithful was significant: if it was the 5-60, 'it starts to demote you completely, and that's where you start to hit her because she's making me a fool in front of everybody. Frustration starts, some go and drink, full of rage'. Thus one related explanation for the acceptability of violence was peer pressure: 'if your friends hit their girlfriends and you don't, they question why you let her control you, so you want to show that you are a man and hit her'. In their own relationships, boys' vulnerability about their girlfriends having sex with others, exemplified by the comment that it made men 'feel small', was evident. One boy who was very bitter on account of having 'lost six girls to other men', perceived girls to be 'lying', 'not truthful' and sexually un-satisfiable: 'we have got no virgins here. They are already used and you know it's not just one person, they change boyfriends, it's like a food chain you see'. Another male informant echoed this, commenting on the willingness with which girls accepted invitations for sex at parties, even though they had boyfriends (adding that 'when they're sober it doesn't seem like they are capable of such things').

At other times boys' vulnerability was intensified by their own attempts to present themselves as macho, such as by boasting to peers about their ability to control their girlfriends, only to find that the girl involved wanted to leave. As one girl explained 'guys just tell their friends that they have you so wrapped around their fingers, you won't see anyone else, so when you really want out, they'll start threatening you. He has been projecting you as his, so you are his possession, there is no way out'. Boys clearly tried to counteract their vulnerability and retaliate in such cases, using strategies including: physical assault; attempts to humiliate the girl by telling others that she was not 'good in bed'; emotional manipulation (described by one boy as follows: 'some girls who want to leave believe the guy when he tells her that she would be nothing, lead a miserable life, without him; she thinks he's right and that she should nurse the relationship'); and continuing to 'use' the girl for sex, as one girl described, 'as in just sleep with you, no feelings involved.... he'll continue having a relationship for the physical pleasure, not because he still loves you, because now he knows you have other guys, you are sharing with other males and he doesn't like it. It's some sort of revenge.'

Boys perceived themselves to be vulnerable in one other important way: as targets of sorcery, which was said to constitute one form of female retaliation for their boyfriends' infidelity and attempts to control them. Several boys explained how girls used *muti* acquired from sangomas to make a chosen man love her, to maintain that love through 'controlling his mind' and ensuring his obedience, sexual fidelity and financial generosity, and to revenge her partner for ill-treating her. The effects of such 'Xhosa medicine', which was described as commonly used by teenage and married women (sometimes in conspiracy with their mothers), were said to include STDs (especially *drop* and lice), madness and in some cases death, when 'it doesn't go with the bloodstream, it becomes poisonous'. The primary sign of bewitchment was said to be excessive male devotion to a girlfriend.

Boys' explanations for their own violence: anger, loss of control and regret

The narratives of some of the boys who admitted to having beaten their partners were contradictory in some respects, as they alternated between expressions of remorse and justifications for assault. Generally however, they rationalised that violence against their partners was 'wrong' because men were more 'powerful'; one boy explained that he didn't really like to beat girls because he knew he could. Thus the one-sidedness of physical violence was recognised: 'she can't contest what you are saying, but I for one don't think that's fair, we must tell each other if we don't like something'. However good their intentions at the outset

of a confrontation, men sometimes resorted to violence out of anger and frustration. The words of some boys, both those who had and had not been violent themselves, suggested that they perceived violence to be an indication of depth of feeling; 'you beat her to try to stop her concentrating on the other guy because you're serious about her, so you grab her to make her scared and to make her tell you the truth'. This reasoning, which was said to be shared by many girls, was based on the perception that intense male jealousy-the primary cause of violence within relationships- was an explicit sign of love. One male informant described how a partner whose affection he did not return persisted in telling him that other men had proposed to her to 'test' whether he would beat her, which she told him would indicate that he loved her. Others described similar experiences.

Violence was rarely explicitly justified except by one male informant who perceived it to be 'good to beat' in certain circumstances, giving as an example a situation where your partner jeopardised your friend's chances with her friend by telling her that he was a 'tsotsi, and not disciplined'. You would then beat your partner, he explained, to 'punish' her. Loyalty to male friends seems to be paramount here. However this informant contradicted himself on several occasions in the narrative, in particular around the issue of whether it was appropriate to beat a girl for wanting to end a relationship, on the one hand giving this as an example of where beating was 'good', on the other rationalising that there was 'no use' in beating if she had told you that she no longer loved you (only if she were still your partner and 'playing' around). This is a good example of the sorts of contradictions visible in these narratives. Much in the same way, another informant shifted from extreme bitterness about female behaviour (in particular multiple partners) to moments of clarity that this was 'natural' and that after all he too had multiple affairs so he shouldn't 'worry' about it.

While violence was rarely explicitly justified by the boys, it was usually explained away by reference to loss of control because of anger or 'mood changes' exacerbated by alcohol and dagga. In all the cases of violence described by male informants, anger (described as 'high' or 'rising' temper) was clearly the primary force behind the beatings. This had implications, in particular that boys almost always went to apologise the next day when their anger had subsided. Expressions of remorse were common in the narratives and were described in detail which suggested they were not simply being said for the sake of the researcher. Thus one boy who recounted a violent episode in which the girl's grandmother intervened and chastised him said: 'I felt sorry for her and I asked myself why did you do this wrong. I didn't think I would

grab her like that, I thought I would just leave her. Here were the parents and neighbours and I feel for that, I feel guilty. I don't think it's right to beat a girl, that's why I feel guilty, and even grabbing her...(trails off)...if she's doing wrong I must sit and talk to her. The words of her grandmother are affecting my heart. She said I'm a rascal, and I've got no discipline, that I could kill somebody if I see it as important to kill somebody...and those words make me sad'. This informant also recognised that beating did not always achieve the control he intended to; he explained that alcohol made you violent and 'you beat your girlfriend for no reason and she leaves you because she sees her friends not having blue [black] eyes'.

3.6 Why do girls stay in violent relationships?

Although most of the girls said that beating was never justified and wanted their partners to talk to them 'as adults', a small minority qualified this by saying that a partner did have the 'right' to use violence if the couple was married and he had paid lobola. Several others suggested that beating was justified in certain situations, particularly if he 'found you in the act with another man' or if he had explained that your behaviour was 'wrong' but you continued to do it. Love, combined with the fact that boys were almost always said to apologise afterwards (or send a friend to apologise on their behalf), and the perception that violence was normal, were clearly the primary reasons why most girls stayed with violent boyfriends: 'sometimes I told myself that I had to stop seeing him and then I stayed here at home. Then he comes and says 'I'm sorry, I was drunk' or whatever, and I take him back. You know it was like hide-and-seek! I take him, I left him, I take him, I left him....I loved that one'. Dependency was another reason: one 26-year-old female informant whose previous 10 year relationship had been violent explained that she had been caught in a cycle of financial and residential dependency because of 'problems' with her father and step-mother. Believing that her partner would change, she added that 'I used to cry in my heart, I used to be grieved, but my character is calm, I am forgiving, so it used to be like that: on and off'. Some of the boys, however, perceived that increasingly girls would not stand for 'ill-treatment' and ended relationships because of violence.

Despite overall pessimism, girls did discuss the positive aspects of their relationships, in particular being taken out by their boyfriends to the cinema and other places, being visited, being given presents of money and clothes, and laughing and talking together. Some of their observations indicate that girls would be easily satisfied by their partners: one girl, for example, said she was unhappy about the fact that her boyfriend forced her to have sex and had

another partner, but apart from that perceived that 'with him 95% is good', and that at least he conducted his other affair secretly.

3.7 Strategies for avoiding violence

Importantly, both male and female informants reported strategies they employed for avoiding violent confrontations. On the girls' side these included: not visiting their boyfriends at his home, in order to avoid forced sex or assault for refusing to have sex; accepting male proposals when they did not mean it until they reached a safer space such as within sight of their home ('he grabbed me and delayed me as I was walking from school. Then I had to pretend to accept his proposal but when I saw that I was near home I said to him that I didn't mean that I wanted him. He ran after me and grabbed me by my school bag, and beat me and kicked me while I was on the ground'); and reporting potentially dangerous situations where assault or threat of it had already taken place to their elder brothers who would 'confront' or threaten the individual concerned. One informant said that she had been threatened by a tsotsi recently, and she had told him that she would tell her brother and her father would shoot him when he learned of the intimidation; this particular threat had not gone away. Some girls were thus protected by networks of men they were associated with around the township, and were especially safe if their elder brother or boyfriend was known at the taxi-ranks or on the streets. One male informant, for example, who was clearly well-known around the streets said that his girlfriend was safe because he was trained in karate and was given great respect by other young men. Another girl was protected because her brother was a well-established tsotsi who apart from smoking mandrax, being rude to their mother, stealing from his own family and bullying girls by forcing them to take off their jerseys, was feared by other young men ('there's that horror once you see him').

On the male side, the main strategy to avoid beating girlfriends was to physically walk out of the situation; one boy who said he had never beaten a partner explained how although 'sometimes I have felt that, when I am so angry I could beat, and sometimes I grab her by the neck', he consistently leaves the scene of the conflict in order to avoid violence. Another boy described how he had once beaten his partner because his 'temper was too high'; she had believed stories from 'outside' that he had another partner whereas they had agreed at the outset that if such suspicions arose, she would 'ask him for the truth'; now, he explained he didn't want to 'involve' himself in beating because he could badly injure someone through anger and so always walked out of arguments. Another informant who had never beaten a

partner but watched his friends do it all the time perceived it to be no use to 'force matters' in this way, if the relationship was not going to 'work out' anyway. He also perceived not allowing himself to get 'frustrated' over a woman to be matter of pride, and there were suggestions that this was related to a disappointment in the past; his strategy too was to wait until anger had subsided before resuming discussion with his partner.

3.8 Response of others to relationship violence

Peers

Consensus was that in most cases, girls who were beaten by their partners hid this fact from their peers, often explaining away 'red marks' and bruises with excuses that they had 'knocked over something' or had been caught in a fight between their parents. Physical scars were said to be a 'disgrace', one boy commenting that men could even leave women because of scars. As one informant who had several scars on her arms where she had been stabbed by her boyfriend explained, "you know when I'm wearing a dress, maybe someone will ask me what happened here and there, and I will say 'it was a fence'. Yes, it's a disgrace, I can't tell other people because maybe they are going to say: you were rude, or drunk or whatever". As this quote indicates, blame for violence is often ascribed to women, such as by reference to their drinking habits. Two informants attributed the wish to hide violence from peers to female competition which made girls want to portray themselves to be very happy in their relationship. Others said that peers would laugh at such experiences, as one girl suggested because 'they don't know how to deal with it' and they would be worried to advise her to end the relationship in case she became suspicious of their motives for saying this and tell her partner, who could then beat them up. However a minority of girls were said to tell others about violent incidents because they perceived them to be a 'sign of being loved'.

Parents

The primary reason for girls' unwillingness to tell their parents about episodes of violence was that they did not ostensibly 'allow' their children to be in relationships at all: a situation which boys were said to 'take advantage of'. In addition, there was evidence that some elder women acted to entrench the acceptability of male violence, illustrated by the following quote; 'during this recent violence my mother was in Jo'burg, and when she came I told her about it. She said that I must try to understand that he is a jealous person...she usually says there's no better person than him, that everybody has his own weaknesses in his own way, and you must understand and compromise sometimes'. This girl's elder sister also told her that she must

'give him a chance, maybe he'll come round'.

Many informants came from single parent families, usually because of divorce or the early death of a parent (mostly the father), though in some cases their mothers had re-married. There was clearly a great deal of inter-generational tension over youth relationships, especially over female sexual activity. Most girls said that they had to hide their relationships from their parents, a situation which was often ascribed to 'culture', parental demand for 'respect' and their young age. A few girls had introduced their parents to the main boyfriend, and perceived that this was 'safer' as it could help prevent male denial of responsibility for pregnancy. Sons were not subject to similar parental pressure, since after circumcision many are given outside rooms, which are considered to be private space and out of bounds to parents.

Fathers were said to be particularly 'strict', one girl explaining that if you were seen publicly kissing or walking hand in hand with your boyfriend, you would be 'attended to properly'; 'they feel it's not good for the image of the family'. Discipline over such matters was enforced by various measures, including curfews and beating. This meant that girls had to make up excuses and 'plans' in order to get to see their boyfriends, although some simply accepted the consequences of not 'sleeping at home'. In some cases girls described their mothers as 'cruel', restricting their freedom, insulting them about their desire to 'go to boys', and 'punishing' them if they did; in the words of one, 'if I have done something wrong, my mother accuses me of liking boys and other big insults. One day I came home late from school and she said to me that I was a prostitute and a bitch and I must leave her alone in the house'. Relatedly, one informant described how her first boyfriend, in the company of two of his friends, had tried to rape her: 'I never told my mother because she always says that we go to these boys.' Another comment indicated that one mother wanted to benefit materially from her daughter's affairs: 'my mother usually quarrels with me if I didn't sleep at home, she says I go to these men but don't come back with anything'.

The mothers' narratives were characterised by frustration and incomprehension about their children's behaviour. They often compared young people now and practices when they were young; in particular, mothers asserted that while they had 'just kissed and said goodbye', conducted their affairs secretly with letters, or had sex between the thighs, youth now had penetrative sex early and with multiple partners. The comments of some, however, for example in describing 'cultural' rules governing relationships (see above) suggested that this

may not have been the whole story and indeed Pauw (1963) found early penetrative sex the norm in relationships in his 1950s fieldwork in East London. The mothers were highly aware of the existence of violence within youth relationships and the circumstances in which it occurred (infidelity, female sexual refusal, alcohol abuse and affairs with older men were all mentioned), but generally did not seem to perceive it to be problematic. Several described how when they were young, boys had beaten their partners for the same reasons, though there were conflicting opinions about whether this sort of violence had increased or not.

Maternal concerns revolved around the consequences of early unprotected sex, in particular HIV infection and unwanted pregnancies. One mother explained that the sexual bargaining power of young girls was particularly limited: 'sometimes they cannot control these boys, even if she wants him to use a condom....she is very young to say: no, I am not going to do this unless you give me the condom. They must be mature enough, so they can defend themselves'. Interestingly another mother connected this to broader female sexual experience: 'teenagers can't protect themselves because we can't ourselves'. The main objection to multiple partners not being a moral one but the fact that girls may not know which partner had made them pregnant and so would not be able to claim damages, as is the custom.

All the mothers expressed substantial frustration and anger that their children failed to 'respect' them as they had respected their elders, and were 'inconsiderate', 'abusive', out of control and undisciplined. The severity of this disrespect was said to make mothers 'so sick and full of pressure', causing a range of symptoms including headaches, 'high blood', palpitations, dizziness and an 'unstable mind'. One girl echoed this when she said that she thought it 'not wise' to tell her mother directly about her boyfriends out of respect, as well as to avoid her 'suffering' from 'heart attacks'. In particular, youth were said to walk openly with their partners in the streets, freely bring them home and not follow rules about curfews. Consequently many mothers said that they would prefer their children to hide their sexual relationships from them (as they had done when they were young): 'you see a boy can go to the girl and take her by force in front of me, and not respect me. He should hide the affair. They use force as if they have a right to come to your home and fetch this girl'. Lack of respect was said to derive from social change, bringing loss of 'traditional values', greater social mixing with other ethnic groups and 'cultural' gaps between the generations which led to children perceiving their elders to be 'backward'. Several mothers described how some young men, especially those brought up by a single mother, used violence against their parent,

'taking advantage' of the absence of a father.

Police

Reporting cases of relationship violence to the police was said to be uncommon, and often only 'if the girl is injured'; the boys explained that sometimes the girl's parents would report the incident, but the girl would refuse to open a case. One girl who had a violent partner explained that 'I think it's love you know, because if one day I made a case and they would take him to prison, I would be frustrated because I love him', although she mentioned that one female strategy to threaten violent partners was to tell them that a police case had been opened when it had not and then wait for the inevitable apology. One boy explained in detail that according to the law courts beating a girlfriend when she had indicated that she did not love you, would cause problems for the man, whereas 'if you beat her and she's still your girlfriend you can simply tell the jury that's it's such-and-such a problem in your relationship'. Strikingly, policemen informants said that in cases of domestic violence, their strategy was to encourage reconciliation: 'we try to convince them to reconcile, and say that their marriage will break down if it gets to court. Some cases are solved this way: we try to maintain their love'.

Male elders in the community: circumcision schools and sugar-daddies

Some of the teachings, described as 'words of manhood' and 'rules of the elders', which are delivered to initiates at circumcision school are of particular significance to this study. In particular, a 'main part' of the traditional education received in the bush teaches that a defining characteristic of masculinity is respect for others and non-violence. All the boys emphasised the 'rule' that beating female partners and using violence against other men was unacceptable, that 'if you are a man, you must keep on talking, you must not force things, you must not fight, use guns and all that'. This is based on the understanding that circumcised men should take on greater social responsibility in their communities, acting as negotiators in family disputes, 'weighing decisions' more carefully and 'cooperating' with elders. Secondly, initiates were said to be told that having particularly large numbers of partners was 'what boys do', and were encouraged to have one partner and think of marrying her. One boy explained that 'going out with 30 girls is what boys do, though men still have girlfriends...you won't use them just for sex, won't chow and then leave them, because you are responsible'. Most of the boys claimed to have reduced their numbers of partners since circumcision, and to have thought 'seriously' about a long-term stable relationship. One informant described how post-initiation he had told his girlfriend that 'the things I had done to her which were wrong, I would not do

now because I am a human: beating her, smoking [dagga], drinking alcohol'. However the only item he seemed to have successfully curbed was the alcohol, and this reflects the fact that despite boys' evident respect for initiation teachings, many lapse back into pre-circumcision patterns of behaviour. This was explained in terms of boys going for circumcision too early for the 'wrong' reasons, namely to 'compete' with their peers, rather than to 'change'; 'you see for some guys they make becoming a man into a fashion or something...they take circumcision like an excuse to behave badly'. One boy suggested that 30% are not changed by initiation, and ascribed this to their 'natural' violence and the bad example set by others; one mother also commented that 'the circumcised ones are advised not to use knives but some of the elders even then [during her own youth] were using knives'. Importantly however, peer-enforced mechanisms operate on the streets to ensure some degree of conformity to initiation teachings; a male informant explaining how older boys checked up on those newly circumcised said: 'we ask him: are you still doing what was said to you there, do you have a knife or whatever....we tell him: you must not do this...not with a knife, you must use a stick at least. But if you do that, open a knife or stab another person, what can happen is all those people of your age or..who attended the school with you, they come to you and say 'what's your problem', and they try and trace what happened'.

While young men's education in the bush involves important teachings about respect and non-violence, circumcision school is short-lived and without follow-up many boys clearly disregard what they learn there. In theory older men in the community could provide positive role models for adolescent boys, reminding them about the importance of non-violence and intervening in assault situations (there was only one example of the latter in the data). In practice however, some elder men are themselves sexually involved with teenage girls and are known to deploy violence to coerce them sexually. All the informants said that affairs with sugar-daddies in which girls exchanged sex for money, presents and trips to Wimpy and Steers were very common, and most of the female informants reported having been regularly propositioned by elder men in their neighbourhood while walking in the streets. One example of such an incident was told as follows: 'an old man told me that he loved me. I went straight to his wife and told her. Instead of apologising to his wife or me he beat her when she confronted him. But he told me that if I accepted his proposal he would treat me well and that even if I became pregnant he would take care of the child'. (This is an important though very unusual example of female solidarity). Alternatively some girls were said to go to shebeens without transport, in the words of one girl, 'only to be picked up by some over-grown grown-

up man with a house'. The man would buy her alcohol and drive around for the evening, expecting sex in return; one informant described how if a girl were to refuse sex in such circumstances she would be 'beaten or left naked by the bridge...to humiliate her, especially if the man is well-known'.

Both male and female peers perceived such girls, whom they often recognised by their 'beautiful clothes', to be 'bitches' and 'cruel' because they were contributing to the break-down of a family. Although many perceived them to be 'hopeless' and 'desperate', it was recognised that poverty was a strong motivating factor for some of these girls. Others called them names, though they were said not to care, and one boy said that 'they are abandoned by guys of the same age'. Comments by male informants indicated that male peers did not 'respect' such girls and would not propose love to them because they perceived them to be 'whores' who 'have no love at all' and are 'just playing around with guys', and because the girls had become used to the older man's 'style' and 'handling', in particular the expensive lifestyle which could not be afforded by their peers. Although reference was made to such girls being 'whores', one boy differentiated this type of exchange with sugar-daddies from prostitutes, although 'the services are the same: sex for money', pointing out that a small minority of such affairs developed into longer-term relationships. However some girls were said to have sex with sugar-daddies while in a relationship with a peer and give the presents to their boyfriend; one informant said that when the boyfriend 'realises that those men are not her father's friends', he would be 'shocked' and 'look for another girl who will love him'.

Mothers interviewed were concerned about these affairs, which they attributed to 'mid-life crises' on the part of the men and 'greed' for money and 'glittering cars' on that of the girls. They explained that during their youth they too had been propositioned by older men, although they described the phenomenon as having worsened since the 70s because of 'social change'. A group of domestic workers pointed out that 'sugar' (done 'ceremoniously') was part of their tradition, in that young widows were 'cared for' by an older man who had his own wife and family: 'he would come to her family and introduce himself and explain that he wanted to take care of her family, so that he was known as a father figure. This was accepted...he would plough the field and take the sons to initiation and bring food'. Mothers were anxious for their own daughters, as well as pointing out the pain caused to married women by such affairs: 'marriages are grossly affected, some wives know but there is nothing they can do because the men are bullying them, the man will trash you, saying 'haven't I given you a car and a

house'... not realising that you are not married to his money'. Two women said they warned their daughters not to get involved with old men, although one admitted to breaching the topic only indirectly, by discussing it with another mother in front of her daughter. Another described how she checked up on the source of any new clothes her daughter wore, promising to buy her new jeans every two or three months: 'to avoid her....falling in love with old men, she must be self-sufficient'.

Teachers

In addition, sexual relationships between girls and teachers are common. This was corroborated by three mothers who were themselves teachers and explained that schoolgirls were 'victimised' sexually by male teachers, though they added that 'kids seduce the teachers' for 'pocket money and status', and that occasionally male peers and teachers would complain about the provocative way a girl was sitting in class. Several informants had themselves been propositioned: 'I was called by teacher x, and he asked me if I could keep a secret. He then told me that he loved me. I said no, you are a teacher, I can't fall in love with a teacher. He said I must lower my voice otherwise other pupils would hear. I said no, I couldn't do that at all. What happens now is that when I'm in the classroom he gives me dirty looks and if I have failed the test he hits me'. Such vindictive practices on the part of a teacher whose proposal had been rejected, including being caned, sent out of the classroom and receiving low grades, were described by others. Although some girls clearly have sex with teachers to obtain exam passes, money or possibly some sort of status, some cases clearly involve serious coercion: one girl described how a teacher had given her the answers to an exam paper and then asked her to be his 'baby'; 'later he said that he was promoting me to a higher level, to being his girlfriend, and that now I had to visit him at his home. When I was there he fondled me and said that we must make love. I refused, telling him he was older than me and I wasn't preventing [using contraception]. He tried to force me but I fought with him and he beat me'. The only informant who admitted to having had a sexual relationship with her teacher described how at the age of 16 she had been forced to have sex by a teacher after he had invited her to his home for 'song practice' and shown her pornographic pictures; she became pregnant and ended up having a very late backstreet abortion; and subsequently had an affair with him until he was unfaithful to her with other schoolgirls. Although she ended up as a willing participant, her vulnerability was extreme: 'this is hurting and I regret everything....I'm alone now and this thing is coming back after me....I believe that nobody will want me now because he ruined my life. So I can say this man abused me in a way, killed

my self-esteem and abused me mentally'. From the narratives it seemed that school principals and staff generally turn a blind eye to such events, and thus act to protect the male teachers.

This implication of some male teachers in sexual coercion (and female teachers in its cover-up) is one factor underlying many girls' inability to trust their teachers with personal problems. In addition, teachers are usually perceived by youth to be elders and so inaccessible, almost by definition. In situations of serious sexual threat from boys at school or in the streets, girls said that asking teachers for help was no use, since teachers would not intervene out of fear of being assaulted (or worse) themselves. Relatedly, the presence of boys described as tsotsis on the SRC meant that teachers, as one girl put it, 'would not compromise, so that everything will be arranged as the students want it - especially if he is an older tsotsi, the principal has to comply because he is afraid for his life'. These accounts appear to not have been exaggerated: several anecdotes were told about teachers being badly beaten. Once again, these situations can only act to entrench the status of violence as unchallengeable, and so on some level acceptable, behaviour among young men.

4.0 Discussion

Summary

As expected from previous research, violence in the forms of physical assault and rape or coercive sex had been experienced in 'love' relationships by many of the informants, both male and female. In most cases violence was used by boys as a way of trying to control their girls when they tried to resist their attempts to dictate the terms of the relationship or to punish them when they broke the (male imposed) 'rules' of the relationship. Thus violence was particularly associated with girl's rejections of 'proposals of love', their attempts to end relationships, their refusals of sex, their attempts to check up on their boyfriend's fidelity, their attempts to undermine their boyfriend's success with other women and their actual or suspected infidelity. In many situations it was reported to be exacerbated by alcohol abuse. Men perceived that girls should be sexually available for them and that sex was their 'right' in a relationship; thus the 'taking' of sex which was not freely offered, by force if necessary, was legitimised.

The study findings suggest that the use of violence in dating-relationships should be understood in the broader context of life in Ngangelizwe where beating was used in a whole variety of contexts as a strategy for punishment, a way of gaining ascendancy and control over others. Thus girls fought with other girls, neighbours with neighbours, boys with other boys, husbands

beat wives, parents beat children, and teachers and circumcision school leaders beat their pupils. In this way the use of violence was 'normalised' and this in part explains the finding that parents were well aware of violence in their children's dating relationships and essentially unconcerned about it. This study has also highlighted that in addition to dating violence women experience considerable physical abuse and rape from 'strangers' in the form of tsotsis who hang out on the streets and bully passing women. The findings suggest that abuse from such people was much more feared and abhorred than similar actions from boyfriends.

For the girls and boys of this study, gaining and keeping girlfriends or boyfriends were overwhelming preoccupations. Notions of masculinity prevailing on the streets were in part constructed through sexual relationships with girls (both acquiring (at times through poaching) desirable partners and controlling them) and deployed in struggles for position and status within the male peer group. Similarly notions of femininity were in part constructed in terms of 'beauty' which was defined in terms of desirability to the opposite sex. This was also deployed in positioning within female peer groups. With evaluations of self-worth and power so critically dependent on the actions of others, boys and girls were rendered inherently vulnerable. Thus boys felt forced to use strategies of control which often included physical coercion, at times using their vulnerability to justify their behaviour. Girls were restricted in their ability to resist violent men for fear of losing a relationship of 'status' and, whilst characterising men as 'irresponsible' and 'deceitful', were eager accomplices in acts of 'deceit' against other women as these increased their power and position within the female peer group.

Violence against women *per se* was not perceived by men as an essential aspect of masculinity and they rarely explicitly justified it and often seemed genuinely sorry, however the leverage which it gave men in controlling women was. Ironically men explained violence on their part as loss of control as a result of "anger" or "mood changes" exacerbated by alcohol or dagga, and used this to provide space for an apology afterwards, which was usually accepted by the girl. The narratives clearly indicated that many violent relationships were continued because they were not unremittingly awful. As well as peer group status, girls enjoyed interludes of attention, going out, being bought presents and generally having fun. However, present receiving in turn often made girls reluctant to leave abusive relationships and the desire for gifts often led them into relationships with sugar daddies in which age differences and ensuing dependancy on economic benefits rendered power inequalities particularly manifest.

Of great concern from this study, like the Khayelitsha work (Wood *et al* 1996), was the finding that forced sex and physical assault were regarded by both adults and young people, as 'normal' parts of young people's 'love' relationships to the extent that they were perceived to be very common and women perceived that little could be done to stop or avoid them. Although there was no suggestion that violence was regarded positively (except perhaps by tsotsis), it was accepted by girls when they failed to leave or stigmatise abusive men, by boys who continued to employ it as part of their behaviour, by parents in not protecting or advising their daughters or correcting their sons, by community elders in their descriptions of 'boyish' behaviour, by the police who failed to prosecute, and by teachers who participated and educational authorities who ignored these actions. Although some suggested that this view was beginning to change and, in particular, girls were increasingly leaving abusive boyfriends, the commonness of abuse and sexual coercion described here suggests that this is still rare. It is hard to escape from the conclusion that boys beat girls because a variety of different players and contexts allowed them to.

Role of others

The findings have shown that a variety of other players were instrumental in framing identities, and in influencing attitudes towards and responses to violence in youth 'love' relationships. Although the research suggests that the experience of violence is shared by many girls, their ability and willingness constructively to assist each other was severely restricted by the climate of immense competition and lack of trust. Girls hid their scars and bruises, perceiving that evidence of abuse would be used against them, as proof that either they were 'bad' and had deserved to be hit or were unsuccessful as their relationship was unhappy (their partner did not respect them). Their ability to take or give advice to each other to leave violent partners was restricted by suspicion that the advice giver might be after the man herself. Being known to be a 'girlfriend-beater' was apparently not an impediment to future relationships, and if such a label were to be used (which it probably was not) it was clearly not stigmatised.

Although mothers expressed shock and frustration at the sexual activities of their daughters, some suggested that had been through very similar experiences when they were young, and certainly accounts of youth sexual relationships in East London from the late 1950s (see Pauw 1963) describe many features of present day relationships (including universal sexual activity from the age of about 16, early pregnancy, sugar daddies, commonly forced sex and beatings) so it is likely that they were familiar with these. Many of the parents tried to protect their

daughters from sexual relationships by restricting their activities, however, the study findings indicate that these attempts were manifestly unsuccessful as the attempts of their own parents to control their activities in their youth almost certainly were too. Cultural taboos on intergenerational communication about relationships, coupled with judgmental attitudes, prevented mothers from being able effectively to protect their daughters. In particular mothers could have been able to give advice to their daughters to leave abusive boyfriends as they would not have been regarded as potential competitors. Girls might also have been much safer if they had met with their boyfriends in their own homes rather than their boyfriends' rooms, but rules of 'respect' disallowed this. Attitudes towards sons markedly differed. Although some mothers complained that they could not control their sons and there were reports of some sons being abusive towards their mothers, it was apparent that no attempt was made to interfere with their sexual relationships. In particular the practice of giving boys outside rooms provided a setting and licence for many of their activities. One ironic consequence of outside rooms is that they enable boys to conduct their sexual relationships in their homes but not girls, whereas girls would have benefitted more from potential protection which this might have offered.

The rape and physical assault (often with weapons) of girls by their boyfriends was usually not regarded as 'crime' either by the girls or the police who, by their own admission, discouraged prosecution. Reporting of cases to the police as rare and, if done by others, was often rendered ineffective when the girl refused to pursue the matter. It was notable that rather than seeking to separate the assailant and victim and ensure that the victim was protected from further abuse, they advised 'reconciliation', i.e. that the victim grant forgiveness. In this way they also failed to convey a message that assault of girls by boyfriends was an offence or a serious breach of the law.

Teachers were another group of older men in the community whose behaviour should have provided positive examples. Instead some of the teachers preyed sexually on their female students, sleeping with those who were willing and victimising those who refused. Also disturbing, this study has shown that corporal punishment is still part of the routine in some schools despite its having been banned several years ago. The informants indicated that fellow staff members and school principals, as well as the students, are often aware of predatory practices by teachers and collude in these. Sexual exploitation of female pupils by teachers is very widely reported in South Africa and yet it is shrouded in a conspiracy of silence. This suggests that at some level there is a severe crisis of ethical leadership within the teaching

profession. The failure of teachers' unions and Departments of Education to highlight the problem, take steps to prevent it and to take swift and effective action to identify and punish offenders is most disturbing. Until this is done the message on the streets is that for older men, even in positions of authority, young girls are fair game.

The male informants suggested that elders in the circumcision school actively spoke against the physical abuse of women as being 'unmanly'. Thus here boys were provided with alternative constructions of masculinity to those prevalent in the streets, ones which were said to emphasise respect for others and non-violence. Initiates were told that beating women, using violence to force respect, fighting with knives, drinking excessively and having large numbers of partners were among the behaviours of 'boys' and not men. This was the only context in which male youth described being presented with such images of manliness and some perceived that these (and the associated peer support/coercion) had some effect on practices, but in the longer term most reverted to pre-circumcision ways. The extent to which reversion occurred varied between individuals but it likely that peer support mechanisms were more effective in reinforcing changes in 'public' practices, such as drinking or fighting with knives, than 'private' ones, including relations with women.

Ironically this image of masculinity is constructed through apposition to a notion of 'normal boyish behaviour' which, whilst not necessarily conveying full approval, may lend legitimacy to actions abusive to women when undertaken by uncircumcised males. Although labelling of elders of behaviours as 'boyish' in some cases may have been used purely to indicate disapproval rather than seriously implying that boys are expected to behave in such ways, in other cases there is a strong suggestion that that is the meaning. The discussions of circumcision timing and teaching suggest that these are strongly influenced by a prevailing lay psychology of male child development in which it was seen as essential for boys to pass through a stage of experimentation, freedom and licence in order to have these behaviours effectively curbed in adulthood. Thus it was argued that if boys go to be circumcised too young it will not have a long term impact on their behaviours and they were not 'ready' to change, they were not ready to be responsible because they had not had enough time without responsibility. A corollary of this is that actions taken by boys in this age group are not regarded as seriously as similar actions taken by older men would be even if they are not liked.

Unfortunately in the present period it is impossible to escape from some of the serious

consequences of 'boyish' behaviour. In an era of HIV, having multiple partners carries with it potentially lethal implications; with the weaponry which is currently available in the streets, the actions of tsotsis are an increasing threat to township residents; and, in an era in which women's rights are increasingly being recognised, the broader political implications of tolerating patterns of behaviour which are manifestly at the expense of women must be considered. Within communities there is considerable debate about young men who commit crime and powerlessness is often expressed. The findings of this study suggest that one long term approach to breaking the impasse between parents and children would be to socialise boys into some of the values of 'manhood' at a younger age, particularly respect for the rights of women and the need to be responsible for one's actions. There are interesting differences in the lay psychological models of development applied to boy and girl children and the outcomes. Girls are expected to demonstrate social responsibility from a young age with care for siblings and help in the home. Although there is evidence that girls have more freedom in adolescence, for the most part they do not use it to indulge in anti-social behaviour. The findings of this study suggest that there may be lessons for communities in the different ways in which girls and boys are raised and in the different social orientation in adolescence.

Conclusions

The findings suggest that a variety of areas of intervention are needed in order to substantially reduce violence in youth sexual relationships. Most importantly there needs to be a change in attitudes amongst all players in the community towards the 'normality' and implied inevitability of male use of force in relationships involving people of all ages. Assault of women and forced sex need to be recognised as 'crimes'. This process will require information campaigns amongst children, parents, teachers and, importantly, the police. Information needs to be backed up by services which support victims of this crime, in particular counselling services, places of safety, disciplinary action against exploitative teachers and swift and effective action by the police. As part of the process gender training of police officers is essential and they should be drawn into schools to convey the message that abuse of girls is crime.

Women need to be equipped to protect themselves physically, both from partners and tsotsis on the streets. Self-defence training could be useful and should be encouraged in schools, particularly focusing on temporarily disabling assailants and escaping from grips and situations. The police or army might be drawn upon as resources for such training. Better protection on the streets for women could also be provided by increasing the visibility of police

on the streets particularly in areas favoured by tsotsis.

Women need to be better equipped to protect themselves psychologically and economically from engagement with abusive men. There is a need for more recreational and skills development activities for girls in which they might be able to develop their potential, self-reliance and self-esteem, particularly through parameters other than 'beauty'. Activities which encourage female team building and development of trust would have the benefits of reducing competition. Churches may play a role in this but it is important that resources are available for other types of activities so that more choice for teenagers is available. Skills development activities would have the effect of reducing economic dependence on men which would assist women from leaving abusers. They may also provide space for girls to share experiences and to plan action together, which one would hope would include collective decisions to isolate boys who beat women.

There is also a need for skills development and self-esteem building recreational activities for boys. The role of male unemployment in abuse of women must also be recognised. It is likely that the lack of jobs and realisable aspirations amongst the young men also contribute towards abuse of women through displacement of frustrations onto vulnerable partners, they also encourage higher drug and alcohol use. The government needs to prioritise job creation in areas such as the Eastern Cape as part of the process of tackling crime from a grass roots level.

The study findings suggest that there needs to be a renewed process of debate within communities about intergenerational communication on sexual matters, attitudes towards sexual relationships of daughters and processes of socialisation of boys and girls from childhood.

Senior management within the SAPS needs to prioritise crime against women and monitor the activities of staff in police stations in order to ensure that they are not acting in manners which were inconsistent with the seriousness of the offences.

The abuse of school girls by teachers needs to be more widely investigated in all provinces by the Departments of Education nationally and provincially and the teaching unions. Policy should be developed regarding disciplinary action and teachers who abuse their position to extract sexual favours from school girls should be sacked.

Lifeskills curriculae are currently being developed for schools. This study has highlighted the importance of these addressing questions of gender violence. The generally high prevalence of violence in communities also suggests that non-violent conflict resolution skills should be included as part of the curriculae.

5.0 Recommendations

As part of primary crime prevention, we recommend that:

The South African Police Services:

1. Provide gender training and training around gender violence legislation for all police officers
2. Monitor actions of police officers with regard discouragement to pursue prosecution in cases of gender violence
3. Participate in initiatives in schools to raise awareness amongst the community that gender violence is a criminal offence
4. Increase visible policing on the streets to increase protection of women from tsotsis
5. Participate, possibly with the army, in providing self-defence training to school girls and women in townships

The Departments of Education and Teachers Unions:

1. Undertake research to gather information on the scope, scale and nature of sexual exploitation of female students by male teachers
2. Review mechanisms for identifying cases of such exploitation and procedures for handling disciplinary actions against accused teachers
3. Send clear messages to all teachers that such behaviour is unethical and that school principals and teaching colleagues who fail to draw cases of abuse to the attention of employing authorities are also guilty of ethical misconduct.
4. Ensure that lifeskills education addresses questions of gender violence and includes non-violence conflict resolution skills

The health sector:

1. Fund appropriate health education campaigns encouraging intergenerational

communication and directed at changing parental attitudes towards ones which encourage safe teenage sexual activity

The private sector:

1. Be encouraged to prioritise job creation in the Eastern Cape and other neglected areas
2. Private sector community development funds be encouraged to fund more NGOs providing recreational activities for young people

NGOs experienced in matters related to violence against women be funded to:

3. Provide community education campaigns directed at children and adults which challenge the notion that physical assault of women and forced sex is 'normal'
4. Provide support facilities for counselling and assisting women who are abused
5. Set up groups for adolescent girls to explore ideas for community action to reduce abuse

Community-based organisations be funded to:

1. Establish recreational and skills development activities for teenage girls which emphasise personal development, building self-reliance and self-esteem.
2. Establish recreational and skills development activities for teenage boys which emphasise building self-reliance and self-esteem.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was funded by the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology through the National Crime Prevention Strategy. For the data we are indebted to the many informants who gave their time to be interviewed and were prepared to ‘hang out’ with Katharine Wood and so provide insights into their lives. Special thanks and acknowledgment are due to Asandiswa Nkohla who acted as interviewer, key informant and interpreter; Nokwanda Ntshukumbana who was Katharine’s host during the field work; Sister Albertina Makalima for her help and support with the research; Tozi Nongawuza for assistance with transcription and Xhosa translation; and, to Engela Ackerman and Engela Gerber for assistance with English transcription and copy typing.

ENDNOTES

1. This is described in the same terms as an indigenous model of disease causation in which the illness “works” on a particular part of the body and spoils it. See *Jewkes R & Wood K (1998- forthcoming)*.