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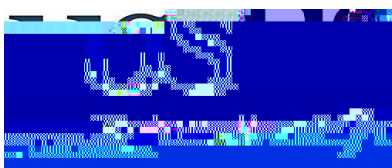
**A Masculinist Perspective on Gendered Relations of Power:
Rwandan Migrant Men in the UK**

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Abstract

This paper explores the complex gendered dynamics of identity, power and personal relations that migration to the UK entails for Rwandan migrant men. In its analysis of eight qualitative interviews, it combines theory on 'hegemonic masculinities' with the application of the 'gendered geographies of power' framework to provide a nuanced and intersectional approach to how migration affects gender across and between three geographical and social scales. The paper argues that three corresponding configurations of gendered practice were dominant in *provider*

Rwandan genocide.² Since, according to McSpadden, refugees experience 'challenges to masculine identity' (1999: 258) characterised by 'a forced and rapid desocialisation requiring 'rebuilding one's cognitive map in order to make effective sense of an unfamiliar social and cultural context' (1999: 245), modes of reformulating gendered identities may be more pronounced than in other migrant populations. Finally, focusing on Rwandan men is vital to expanding masculinity theory which has been largely constructed around white, western men. Although I will make reference to dominant masculinities in the host population, I will focus mainly on the shifting masculinities of Rwandan migrants in order to bring structurally marginalised groups into the overall academic discourse on masculinity.

This paper seeks firstly to probe the question of whether Rwandan men's positions within gendered relations of power have changed as a result of migration. As such, it pays careful attention to existing literature on the dynamics of masculinity that has developed since Connell's (1995) seminal work on hegemonic masculinity. What are the dominant ideals of masculinity that Rwandan migrants hold? Is the performance of these ideals inhibited in Britain? Are respondents able to reassert dominant ideals of masculinity? Do new reconfigurations of gendered practice emerge? And how are masculinities related to patriarchy? Secondly, it endeavours to understand how and why these processes take place by utilising Mahler and Pessar's (2001) Gendered Geographies of Power (GGOP) framework and applying it to masculinities. Where are participants situated within intersectional and shifting social and spatial scales? Are they able to exercise agency given their social locations? And how are processes at each scale related to processes at other scales?

The paper begins with a discussion of the existing literature on gender, masculinities and migration in order to situate my study within current discourses, reveal gaps within them, and demonstrate that my research will contribute to their development. I then move to a discussion on methodology to show that my research design, attention to positionality and to ethics are congruous with the aims of the paper. Research findings are divided into three sections to examine gendered dynamics that operate across three distinctive geographical and social scales: the workplace, the household, and diasporic space. At each scale, I argue that a particular, hegemonic ideal of masculinity was articulated, but that migration entailed dramatic shifts in social locations within these scales that made performance of ideas difficult or impossible for many participants. In each section, I will show that through the utilisation of varying degrees and types of agency, some men reaffirmed hegemonies despite their social locations, but that new and often innovative responses to new migratory contexts simultaneously gave rise to reconfigured masculinities that rendered alternative ways of 'being a man' possible. Together, my findings demonstrate the complex, multi-scalar and shifting nature of Rwandan migrant masculinities which

all human relationships and all human activities (Donato et al. 2006: 21) gender is recognised as 'fluid and not polar, relational and performative, and therefore not merely ascribed' (2006: 5). This recognition allows us to interrogate relations of power that present themselves in dominant narratives as 'natural' or objective. Second, gender intersects and 'articulates with other axes of differentiation' such as 'race, class, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, and age' (Mahler and Pessar 2006: 29). Adhering to this principle has enabled the study of complex and specific configurations of power while avoiding cultural essentialism (Bürkner 2012: 181). Third, feminist theory has emphasised the socio-political nature of scale, place and space as meanings of space and place are 'tied up with 'particular social constructions of gender relations' (Massey 1994: 2). This 'spatial politics', argues McDowell, is vital to 'uncovering the ways in which identities and places are being transformed and reconnected, positioning people within new patterns, or geometries, of inclusion and exclusion' (1999: 214). When applied to case studies, these concepts provide foundations not only to document the central role of gender in migration, but to investigate *how* gender operates across multiple terrains.

Gendered geographies of power

Mahler and Pessar's GGOP is 'a strong conceptual framework for integrating theories of gender into studies of transnational migration' (Silvey 2004: 500), bringing together space, time, structure and agency to map the dynamics of gendered relationships across the migratory journey. Consisting of three central tenets, gender is first argued to 'operate simultaneously on multiple *spatial and social scales*' (Mahler and Pessar 2001: 445). Second, gendered migrants are situated at various intersectional yet fluid '*social locations*' based on multiple axes of differentiation within these scales, which show that migrants are positioned 'within power hierarchies that they have not constructed' (2001: 446). Third, utilising Massey's notion of 'power geometry' (1994: 149), Mahler and Pessar emphasise the importance of documenting 'the types and degrees of [corporeal and cognitive] agency people exhibit given their social locations' (2001: 446). In subsequent work, the authors have identified special social scales for analysis that include the workplace, the household, and community networks (Mahler and Pessar 2006: 33, 46).³ Furthermore, Silvey has emphasised that processes operating at one scale must be understood 'in dynamic relation to, not in isolation from, the gender relations formed at other scales' (2004: 494). In order to apply the framework comprehensively, therefore, my analysis will take each of these scales in turn while documenting connections between each terrain.

GGOP also represents an important attempt to merge the study of transnationalism 'from above', conceived as the homogenising, macro-level structures of globalisation (Mahler 1998: 66) with transnationalism 'from below', defined as 'the everyday practices of ordinary people' across terrains (1998: 67). Although Mahler has argued that the latter process may disrupt the former to produce 'counter hegemonic powers among non-elites' (1998: 66), Guarnizo and Smith have highlighted that transnational practices are situated within dominant narratives and may reinforce hegemonies (1998: 6). By combining structure and agency, therefore, GGOP leads us to consider the interplay between the hegemonic and the counter-hegemonic and, as McIlwaine has pointed out, helps us to move beyond 'stereotyped notions of how migration entails shifts from traditional gender regimes to so-called modern ones to emphasise a more nuanced picture' (2010: 282).

³ Mahler and

Individual biographical interviews were undertaken because ‘there may be no equal to the life story interview for revealing more about the inner life of a person’ (Atkinson 2012: 120). I combined this method with a semi-structured approach through the use of a flexible interview guide that asked unambiguous and open-ended questions about gender at various scales. Interviews were recorded in audio format, transcribed, and coded following Jackson’s general principles for interpreting qualitative data (2001). This ensured a systematic analysis that, as Jackson argues, ‘avoids the temptation of jumping to premature conclusions’ (2001: 202). Working with previous literature in mind, coding enabled me to approach the transcripts in an inductive manner, carefully selecting themes and making interpretations from the data.

I conducted interviews with eight male participants. Although this number is appropriate for qualitative case study research (Beitin 2012: 244), female voices were absent and as such I present a male perspective only. However, since I do not lay claim to universal truths and sought only to understand my respondents, my post-positivist methodology allows the presence of this bias. Although, as we shall see, it was not possible to investigate all axes of differentiation, I selected my sample based on diversity of age, marital status, religion, occupation, number of children, citizenship, education level, countries of residence, and immigration status. Participants’

ómany different readings can coexistô (Jackson 2001: 210), I thus recognise that knowledge is produced in dialogue and that the findings presented below are not free from my own biases. However, my familiarity with Rwandan migrants, careful methodology and attention to ethics enabled my interpretations to be well informed while helping to redress the imbalances of power that research may create.

Throughout the research process, I followed five key ethical principles as set out by the Social Research Association (2003: 25-40). First, I *avoided undue intrusion* by being sensitive in my choice of questions. In particular, I did not ask participants to reveal their ethnicity because there is a considerable amount of post-conflict fear and suspicion surrounding ethnic categorisation among UK Rwandans (McLean-Hilker 2011: 3). Although it is recognised that this is a weakness of my research, protecting participants took precedence over my interests, and, as we shall see below, ethnicity was explored indirectly. Second, I *obtained informed consent* by providing clear information to participants and ensuring that a consent form was signed. Third, I *protected the interest* of my participants by presenting findings truthfully while treating sensitive information, such as that about ethnicity or politics, carefully. Fourth, I *enabled participation* by travelling across the UK to locations of participantsô choice. Finally, I *maintained confidentiality of records* and *prevented disclosure of identities* by deleting recordings after transcription, using pseudonyms, and excluding details from the paper that may compromise anonymity.

Findings and analysis

The workplace

Hegemonic masculinity

Recent work on African migrant masculinities has emphasised the importance that men and women attach to the idea of masculinity centring upon providing for the immediate and extended family (Mungai and Pease 2009: 105). For Rwandan migrant men, the workplace was strongly associated with *provider masculinity* by participants. As Erl8u2/F6 1aTJi.65 i54e/F6 1au(g)10(l

Shifting social locations

The ability of many participants to perform this dominant version of masculinity was inhibited by the subordination that some men faced in their attempts to find and keep jobs. This migration-induced outcome supports Koser's observation that, through racism and exclusion from public domains, 'African migrants can be triple disadvantaged' if they are migrants, they are black and they are from Africa (2003: 11). For those who claimed asylum in the UK, their immigration status prevented them from working for sustained periods of time. For Vincent, this period lasted a staggering eight years, throughout which he 'lived a very harsh life', finding it difficult to work and send support to family in Rwanda. While most participants had experienced overt racism outside of work, Vincent argued that racism at work took a more covert form, exclaiming that 'racism takes place on a daily basis at work. You're not given equal opportunities if you're black and you're from Africa'. This mirrors Mungai and Pease's observations in Australia, where African men 'experienced discrimination in work environments but often in a subtle rather than violent manner' (2009: 111). Similarly, Eric claimed that

If you go for the same position, you have the same skills, and one person is English and another person is from Rwanda, you are sure that the English person will be selected.

For Joseph, the one participant of working age who had migrated directly from Rwanda to the UK without time in other countries, his initial inability to speak English prevented him from being able to get a job for eight months after arrival, a situation that Pascal claimed was common for Rwandans who had been in the UK for less than three years and that because of this 'the only job you'll get is a cleaning job because no one wants to do it'.

McIlwaine's study of Latino men in London found that hegemonic masculinities 'gave way to marginalised masculinities closely linked with downward social mobility' (2010: 295). This trend was also found among Rwandan men, most of whom previously inhabited middle-class social locations before migration. Joseph, who had been a teacher in Rwanda, and Pascal, a qualified graphic designer, expressed frustration at being unable to get a job in their areas of expertise. Instead, they were forced to work in low-skilled jobs to earn a wage, reflecting Samuel's assertion that 'the [material] conditions we had in Rwanda were better than what we have here'. This loss of social and occupational status, explained Pascal, often resulted in men being unable to perform their gendered role as providers through the sending of remittances back to Rwanda:

In Rwanda they think you're minted. You're expected to support the extended family in Rwanda but when you tell them I can't afford it they don't believe you. They think, oh you're in the western world, you can do that. It's totally different, you sweat to get that pound in your pocket.

Men who did not regularly send remittances, argued Eric, could not 'prove' they were working and since 'the person who is sending money to his family is a man', they were viewed by Rwandans at home and in the UK as 'selfish', embracing individualist western

As it says in Kinyarwanda,⁵ you can't have everything. You can't have honey and milk. So I think that actually, [the pressures of work] replace é all these un comforts that you had in Africa which you tried to escape.

Reaffirmation

Mungai and Pease have stressed that, despite the disempowerment that men from Africa experience, ówe must be careful not to essentialise black men and fix them in a subordinate positionô (2009: 100). Indeed, not all provider masculinities were subordinated, and some respondents were able to perform the dominant ideal despite their disempowered positions. For example, Samuel, a self-employed business owner, found working life in the UK far easier than in France:

In France é they say you are black first and then you are French é .When you are in business there is a level where you reach but then itô's very difficult. And here itô's opposite. The more you are different, the more they respect you.

Similarly, those who had lived in English-speaking countries such as Kenya and Uganda believed that their mastery of English language and culture enabled them to find work relatively easily and provide for their families. For example, Vincent pitched his ability to express himself clearly in English at interviews against other Rwandan men who exhibited óweaknessô because they were ónot used toô selling themselves to employers.

[unmarried men] are discriminated against. I still have people from my family telling me to get married and have children é otherwise you are not considered a man, even by people here.

Although participants' sexuality was not discussed for ethical reasons, it is probable that non-heterosexual men would struggle to be accepted as adult men. Furthermore, no participants who were single when they migrated had subsequently married, and it became evident that for some, migration made it difficult to do so. David and Vincent envisaged a 'traditional wedding' with a Rwandan partner only. For Vincent, this prerequisite made it difficult to form relationships because there were relatively few Rwandan women in the UK and he was perceived as 'too Rwandese'⁶ for those who he met, which gave rise to a state of 'gendered melancholia' (Ahmad 2009: 321):

For some of us it's very difficult to get women here because you are behaving like a Rwandese man. The women are much more influenced by western culture é .She's looking to you being a more modernised person. é It makes me feel less of a man when I cannot connect with the opposite sex.

Some men, therefore, had been unable to respond to the pressure they faced to be regarded as adult men in the UK, and this was compounded by the effects of migration which restricted the number of potential partners. Like tribal men in Delhi, Rwandan men could be perceived by their compatriots as 'unromantic, boring and provincial in contrast to the urbane tastes of women' (Alcade 2012: 120), making the performance of family-head masculinity highly problematic.

Some married respondents saw migration as threatening their authority within the family and hence reducing their ability to be decision makers. This loss of control was most evident in relationships with spouses which caused a widespread sense of disempowerment. Like Ghanaian men in Toronto, the shift in gendered relations was seen as emanating from the state and as a 'complete reversal of roles' (Manuh 2003: 157). Joseph believed that, according to UK law, women had more power than men, which affected household relations and caused humiliation:

There, the power is for men. Here, the power is for woman and we as men don't want to listen to that é .Here, if you know a man who is under power of his wife, we feel embarrassed about him. But it is the law we have to follow.

This points towards the feeling shared by many respondents that, in the case of a family breakdown, the law would protect wives who could 'leave and take anything'. Gilbert said that women could take advantage of this power:

[Women can] say OK I will take this opportunity because I am in the UK and I know my rights and sometimes the

a reversal of male dominance which caused tension and embarrassment in participants' efforts to perform family-head masculinity.

Reaffirmation

Thankfully, there were no signs that any participants sought to reconcile loss of patriarchal relations through violence in the household, as was the case with Alcade's machismo masculinities in the US (2011: 451). However, two cognitive strategies emerged which support McIlwaine's claim that 'deep seated transformations in gender ideologies' may not come easily (2010: 282). Firstly, in response to his difficulties in developing romantic relationships with women in the UK who were 'Rwandese Europeanised', 'changed faster' than men and 'talk back', Vincent hoped that finding a wife in Rwanda to bring back to the UK would enable him to perform all aspects of family head masculinity:

You are looking for more of a culture woman who I can talk to and listens to me é .That's why people like me are now travelling over to Rwanda. We all believe that those girls are more original, they still have more of the Rwandese culture and they know how to understand the gap that we are missing here.

For Vincent, the solution to him being seen as *too Rwandese*, was to exercise cognitive agency which rendered his family-head masculinity safe in an imagined return to *Rwanda*. Second, Joseph responded to his loss of power in the household by casting men as responsible preservers of culture who would eventually triumph over those women who were quick to adopt western values:

Women adapt quick in the decision which is favoured to them. But the men think first

them than my life. Furthermore, by stressing the importance of the family ties integral to Rwandan life alongside their new ability to be attentive fathers in Britain, some participants pitched parental masculinity against men in the host population, who they perceived as not caring enough for their children. In contrast to British parents who sever ties to their children at the age of 18, David claimed, Rwandan men's parenting continued 'even after 50 years if possible. So family is more important'. The story that Joseph told demonstrated this cognitive reordering:

My friend at work has a daughter in Glasgow but it has been six years without seeing her. I can't believe that. That is incredible to our culture. If your daughter lives away, you have to see her at least twice a month.

As well as enabling a new gendered configuration of practice that emphasised care, rather than control, parental masculinity thus created a sense of empowerment compared to host masculinities. Like Latino men in the US who pitched their ethos of hard work against the host population (Alcade 2011: 457), Rwandan migrant men articulated a narrative of fatherhood that rendered new, emancipatory performativities possible and showed that 'a dominant pattern of masculinity was open to challenge' from men as bearers of alternative masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 848).

At the household scale, then, family-head masculinity emerged as a dominant and often dominating form of masculinity. Gender intersected with marital status to the effect that non-married men were excluded from male adulthood, and migration compounded this by decreasing the perceived availability of potential partners. Migration also threatened men's role as decision makers over spouses, who were viewed as having more power than men after migration. By imagining marriages with women from the homeland, and by presenting men as responsible preservers of culture, some men were able to, at least cognitively, reaffirm their commitment to family-head masculinity. However, shifts in gendered working patterns led to pragmatic equality masculinities which, eased by changes in Rwanda, caused men to participate in domestic duties and allow partners a greater say in decision making. Crucially, participants deployed corporal and cognitive agency to facilitate a new, less patriarchal parental masculinity which empowered men while demonstrating 'the fluidity of masculinity even among a group where masculine norms appear rigidly defined' (McDuffie-Ra 2012: 128). The interplay of rigidity and fluidity was hyper-visible at the third and final scale for analysis, to which I now turn my attention.

Diasporic space

Hegemonic masculinity

Mungai and Pease have argued that 'modern African manhood bestows on the man specific responsibilities to the wider community - family, clan, tribe and nation' (2009: 97). Indeed, at the diasporic scale, defined by Brah as 'the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of "staying put"' (1996: 181), the dominant conception of masculinity for Rwandan men was that a man was somebody who participated in, and upheld responsibility for, the community. As Eric explained, when Rwandan men talked about responsibility for the family, they were actually describing something much larger than immediate relations:

The family in Rwanda is not really the biological family. For us the family is the community, it is the friends, the friends of the friends, friends of grandparents.

Most participants agreed that *community masculinity* was integral to their identities, illustrated by Gilbert's comment:

Community means who I am *é* it's my roots so that's who I am, where I came from, my background. That community, that's where I belong.

Like Latino communities in the US who exerted peer pressure to prevent deviation from hegemonic masculinities (Alcade 2011: 464), Rwandan participants stressed that being recognised as a man depended on authorisation from the wider community, demonstrating strong links between community, provider and family-head masculinities. Eric stressed the shame and consequent emasculation that Rwandan men face from other Rwandans if their wife becomes the sole breadwinner:

It's really bad to be seen in a relationship as a man and not working *é* because you are not a man *é* .People talk you know, they say the

You have a very big situation and you won't be able to resolve it with your woman and there is no family here. If you talk to your neighbour who is an English or In

which, as well as supporting the concept of multiple hegemonies, showed that gains at one scale could potentially compensate for shortfalls at others.

Some respondents were able to employ corporal agency to build formal community groups, and hence strengthen community masculinity in the UK. Pascal, who was a leader of a Rwandan community organisation, explained that his responsible role was a source of empowerment:

I love anything to do with the community é because I miss home a lot so it keeps me connected é .I feel Iôve got a commitment and I feel very, very happy to lead my people.

Likewise, Joseph, another community leader, stressed the role that his organisation played in public peace-building events which generated a strong sense of purpose:

As a people who suffered in genocide, we have big experience than other people é .Thatô why we go to speak out in different events é to show different people who donôt know or donôt care about discrimination and racism.

This statement reflected sentiments expressed by many men in my professional work with Rwandan communities, suggesting that engagement with the politics of home, as with McDuie-Raôs respondents, ôhelps to affirm identity and masculinityô (2012: 123). Moreover, in some situations, the social support that community groups were able to offer members counteracted loss of family ties. For example, Joseph explained that senior community members assumed reconciliatory, familial roles when couples experienced conflict, and that the process of ôsitting down and talking as we do in my countryô helped to keep marriages intact. Reaffirmation of community support at the diasporic scale, then, also helped to maintain practices that family-based masculinity was predicated upon. Furthermore, women assumed more powerful positions in these reaffirmed community practices. Whereas in Rwanda, men maintain control of the house and children during disputes, and male community members had the final say in the reconciliation process, in Britain it became normal for women to retain control, and, as Joseph emphasised, women had a growing role in community decision making. Participation in community groups, therefore, helped men to move beyond a preoccupation with masculine dominance, and allow more room for equality masculinities while keeping notions of community masculinity intact.

However, not all respondents felt able to access community organisations. Membership of the main diaspora organisations in the UK is predominantly Tutsi, and they have strong links with the Tutsi-led Rwandan government (McLean-Hilker 2011). As Samuel explained, ôthe embassy is involved massively in the community, itô like the tutor who gives you the platform but shows you where you want to goopoo r o ! ¾d n

David's views demonstrate how gender intersected with family and migratory backgrounds, politics and possibly ethnicity to produce exclusion from community masculinity. These sentiments also mirror the situation of McDuié-Ra's respondents (2012: 123), suggesting that the narrowing of communal ways of being a man may be a common experience for migrants who have fled ethnic conflict. Those who felt excluded from diaspora groups tended to emphasise that they 'bog you down', and put more emphasis on work and family-based masculinities where politics did not matter. In Vincent's words, 'me going there or not going there I lose nothing. I have my job nine to five. I have family to look after'. There was, however, a more innovative gender response to migration at the diasporic scale that was open to all respondents.

Reconfiguration

In his commentary on the 'Black Atlantic' diaspora, Gilroy has argued that a 'double consciousness', characterised by the coexistence of loyalties to heritage and destination cultures, became a dominant mechanism to cope with migration (1993: 188). In a similar yet more specific process, a new configuration of *diasporic-cosmopolitan masculinity* was the most prevalent gendered transformation that took place across all three scales. This ideal,

Although this configuration of practice was not perceived as historically dominant by any participants, the fact that all expressed it, combined with recent authorisation from the homeland,⁸ hints that this gendered reconfiguration may be on the verge of becoming a new hegemonic masculine ideal for Rwandan migrant men. As other hegemonies are threatened, reaffirmed, and reconfigured, diasporic-cosmopolitan masculinity may mean that performing manhood is increasingly predicated on the ability to combine indicators such as adaptability, travelling, the ability to 'catch' and blend cultural practices and loyalty to Rwanda. It is unclear what the implications of this growing hegemony might be for gender relations. Although perhaps more inclusive and less linked to the consolidation of multi-scalar masculine control than traditional community masculinity, holding hope that this

Through the uneven application of corporal and cognitive agency which was also related to these intersections, men reaffirmed and reconfigured hegemonic masculinities. At the workplace scale, dual provider and achievement masculinities emerged as novel gendered

director, staff and volunteers at Rwandan Youth Information Community Organisation, I thank you for providing me with a fascinating opportunity to work with UK Rwandan communities and for accepting me as an 'honorary Rwandan'! Last, but by no means least, I thank my family, my partner and my friends for their love, patience and support over the course of my Master's degree, of which this paper, based on my MA Dissertation, is a part.

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