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

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Abstract

Men's experiences of sexual coercion is seldom the subject of research, yet it is commonly reported in all settings and increasingly evidence from South Africa points to the health risks associated with sexual coercion of men by men. Thirty-one in-depth interviews were conducted with heterosexual men aged 18-25 years who were volunteers in a HIV prevention behavioural intervention evaluation in the Eastern Cape. Men chosen included some who had reported coercion by men and women in their baseline structure interviews and some who had not. Sexual coercion by men involved abuse of trust and age-related power, temptation through material goods, as well as use of aggression. The narratives were notable for the anger that was caused by these assaults. In contrast, coercion by women was framed as 'temptation'. In some cases young men were tempted by much older women and those in a position of trust and the experience did not make them feel good. There are very substantial differences in the circumstances of coercion of young men by men and women. This needs to be taken into account in the growing trend to research coercion of men and present findings in a way that equates these two experiences.

Keywords

masculinity; rape; male sexuality; South Africa

Introduction

Rape of women and girls in South Africa has received much attention. The prevalence is particularly high, rapes notably violent and unusually often involve very young victims (Jewkes and Abrahams 2002; Jewkes, Christofides N et al. in press). In the year 2005-6, 54,926 rapes were reported to the police (South African Police Service (SAPS) 2006) and, even using a very narrow definition of rape (coercion with physical force), at most one in nine acts are thus reported (Jewkes and Abrahams 2002). Physical force is often used. One third of rapes reported to police involve weapons and gang rape is very common (Jewkes, Dunkle K et al. under review), but coercion occurs on a spectrum which also includes threats, abuse of power, authority and position, blackmail, trickery, and undermining resistance with drink and drugs (Jewkes and Abrahams N 2002). In December 2007, South Africa adopted a new sexual offences law (the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, No 32 of 2007) (Republic of South Africa 2007) which included all of these acts in a new gender neutral definition of rape.

With some exceptions (Niehaus 2002), the sexually coercive experiences of men have mostly been described in prisons (Gear 2005; Steinberg 2006; Achmat 1993). Here rape is common,

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as are male prison 'marriages', which often start with coercion. A chosen man is identified as a future 'wife' (*wyfie*), a position of being the sexual property and servant of the older man, who in return 'provides' (Gear 2005). Some of these rapes are very violent, other men are tricked or manipulated into sex after incurring a debt (of food, drugs etc) that they may not realise will be repaid sexually. The stigma of rape in prison reflects that seen outside, with rape victims blamed, seen as weak and turned into a woman, or proven to be a woman, by the act of sexual penetration. This silences them for fear of fellow inmates and family outside learning of what happened. On the surface there are strong structural parallels between the 'marriages' of jail and mine marriages, which have been described in some detail by historians as a feature of the organisation of sexual relations and social life in South African mining compounds from the 1900s (Moodie, Ndatshe and Sibuyi B 1994; Breckenridge 1998; Harries 1994). Although on the mines coercion is not emphasised in accounts of initiation of 'marriages', hierarchical age relations are described as a key feature of these and in South African society, this would have greatly constrained a potential 'wife's' ability to refuse the role (Breckenridge 1998).

There are few accounts of men being coerced into sex by women (Simpson 2007), whilst sometimes these are unambiguous rapes, other instances emerge from the more muddled area of strong desire and the shaded boundary between heavy persuasion and non-violent coercion. Whilst the South African sexuality literature emphasises how little scope women have for determining the timing and circumstances of sex (Wood, Maforah and Jewkes R 1998), there is also a positive discourse of female sexual agency and desire (O'Sullivan et al. 2006). These two perspectives on female agency, and their associated contexts, may appear conflicting, but in reality they substantially overlap. Many of the contexts of marked female sexual agency are also ones where women are abused. For example, in women who frequent bars, drink and sell sex either for cash or alcohol are very vulnerable to rape and abuse (Campbell 2000; Wojcicki 2002). Also older women, known as *grizas* who have sex with younger men and often keep them, are frequently abused physically and emotionally by them (Dunkle et al. 2007).

Given the general neglect of men's experiences of coercion, a study conducted in 2003-4 in the rural Eastern Cape was unusual when it asked young men (n=1371) about this. Indeed, 3.4% of respondents disclosed being forced by a man, and 9.7% by a woman. Unwanted sexual touching was reported by 7.8% of men and 2.3% reported being threatened or forced to have sex with someone who wasn't a girlfriend (Jewkes, R: personal communication; Jewkes, Dunkle K et al. 2006). Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of understanding same sex sexual coercion as a cause of men's ill health as men who had been coerced by men were at greater risk of alcohol abuse and having HIV (Jewkes, Dunkle K et al. 2006; Jewkes, R: personal communication) These findings were unsurprising given the evidence of the harmful effects of rape of girls and women (Turner, Finkelhor and Ormrod 2006; Felitti et al. 1998).

The prevalence of sexual coercion of men by men from the Eastern Cape was similar to that reported in most of the studies cited in the chapter on sexual violence in the World Report on Violence and Health (Jewkes, Sen and Garcia-Moreno 2002) from a range of global regions. This was much lower, however, from the frequency of men reporting coerced first sex (presumably by women) in Cameroon (29.9%) and the Caribbean (31.9%) (Rwenge 2000; Halcón et al. 2003). Whilst sexual practices and research methods differ between countries and studies, recent research in South African schools with 126 696 male learners aged 10-19 years reported that 44% had been forced into sex at least once with 32% of the perpetrators male and 41% female, and 27% had been coerced by both men and women (Andersson and Ho-Foster 2008). The large differences seen between the South African studies raises substantial questions about what we are measuring when we ask men about coercion into sex; what is being reported; and to what extent are men's experiences of coercion by men and by women comparable? It highlights a need for a deeper understanding of meanings of different forms of coercion.

Research data need to be rigorously generated and interpreted. It is important from a public health perspective, that we understand, as Andersson and Ho-Foster (2008) suggest, whether we are faced with a massive unrecognised burden of male rape by women, or whether there are alternative explanations. To contribute to these debates, this paper presents a small qualitative study that was undertaken to explore meanings of sexual coercion of young men and boys by men and women in rural South Africa.

Methods

This study was nested within a randomised controlled trial that was conducted in the rural Eastern Cape province to evaluate the HIV prevention programme *Stepping Stones*. The larger study had 2801 participants (1371 men) aged 15-26 years from 70 sites, mainly recruited through schools. Most of the volunteer participants were schooling. Because the area was poor, there was little school completion and very high school drop out before the age of 18, but youth who dropped out earlier in their teens often re-entered schools some years later, which accounts for the large numbers of adult learners. The study setting was within a radius of 1.5 hours drive from the town of Mthatha and the full methods and results are described elsewhere (Jewkes, Nduna et al. 2006; Jewkes et al. 2008). The trial followed up participants for two years and so kept full contact details.

At baseline, men were interviewed with a structured questionnaire which asked two similar questions: 'Did a man (a woman) ever persuade or force you to have sex when you did not want to?' We wanted to understand what this meant and so undertook a small qualitative study to explore this. The principal investigator (RJ) drew up a list of 40 participants from the main study after looking at their baseline questionnaires. Some had disclosed coercion by men, others by women and some reported no coercion. The first author (YS) contacted the men for interview, but did not know their coercion history prior to the interview. He explained that the purpose of the study was to talk about their childhood and teenage experiences, with particular focus on potential traumatic things that happened in those years. They were told we were interviewing them to better understand what they had reported in the questionnaire interview. An information sheet was given to them and they were invited to ask questions and told participation was voluntary and there would be no adverse consequences of non-participation. They were invited to reflect and given a telephone number to contact (free of charge) if they were interested. Thirty one men expressed interest, and consented to participate in the study and have taped interviews. They were all heterosexual, Xhosa-speaking men of ages 18-25 years.

The interviews were conducted in Xhosa and were tape recorded, transcribed and translated into English. We framed the study somewhat broadly and inquired about the lives of these young men. Our scope of inquiry thus included questions about men's background, sexual relationships, their use and experience of physical and sexual violence in their communities and in intimate relationships. We also asked men about forcing women and girls into sex. Men were asked to give narratives of sexual coercion in their lives, with probing to clarify these accounts. Some spontaneously spoke of the coercion of friends, although this was not specifically asked for. The interviews were conducted by the first author, who also translated the tapes and was primarily responsible for the data analysis. The analysis used simple content analysis and was undertaken by both authors. Ethics approval was given by the University of Pretoria ethics review committee. Study participants had access to general psychological support and HIV counseling from two nurses employed in *Stepping Stones*. This service was well used in general but we are not aware of any participants from the qualitative research consulting the nurses.

Men's accounts of coercion to sex

Being coerced by other men

The rural Eastern Cape is an area of vast rolling, communal grasslands, which has been historically a cattle rearing area. During the 1980s and early 90s, when our interviewees were young, boys (from about 7-8 years) had responsibilities for herding cattle together in groups. Cattle herding would take them away from their homes for much of the day and they would play and swim naked in the dams that were built in the veld to water the cattle. At night they would often sleep together in the house of a relative rather than going home. The boys would combine cattle herding with play, and often the forms of play would involve sexual exploration, just as at this age sex often forms part of the play of girls and boys (Jewkes, Penn-Kekana and Rose-Junius 2005; Mager 1999).

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

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

“there was this guy... I use to play at his home, we used to herd cattle, and do many things together. So one day we went to collect cattle, this guy, it's like its someone I could trust (*endandimthemba*), I was not suspicious about anything... and when we reached down hill, he said ‘let's relieve ourselves (defecate)’ and we did, but he said I must be just below him, and I did not get suspicious because I was still very young then. Then as I was below him, I was still relieving myself not even having finished. I just saw him grabbing me and was asking ‘what are you doing?’ I saw him penetrating me with his penis on my anus, at first I put up with it as he was doing it, but it was very painful (*yayibuhlungu kakhulu*) and I said ‘No get off me’. But he said ‘No hang on, I will finish soon’ but the pain was too much (*intlungu yayinganyamezeleki*). I tried to pull myself away from him, and he let me free. I thought inside that I want to tell my parents about this, but then how am I going to be able to go and play [at his home]? ..So I thought no I won't tell my parents, and we rounded the cattle and took them home. ...Then one day, we were from swimming in the dam, and we rested under the shadow, and he said ‘Hey my friend let's do what we did the other day’. I said ‘No man I can't do that again, it is still sore even now’. Really I had a lump in the anus. So this time he physically forced me (*Kweli lixa wandinyanzelisa esebenzisa amandla*)”

The boys were vulnerable in this setting because it was quite isolated, but also because there were older boys and men around who were both generally trusted and physically more powerful. In some cases the rapes were perpetrated by older men and men reported that they were “scared of the older men and would submit to sex with them”. Communal sleeping arrangements created the potential for sexual advances or rape, as the next extract shows:

“There is another guy when I was still very young. He was a bit older than us and he use to rape us and sleep with us, penetrating us in the anus (*wayedla*)”

ngokusidlwengula, esilala ezimpundu)... You would just see him on top of you, and other guys would tell me that 'this guy is hurting us (*uyasilimaza*)', because this thing is very painful (*ngoba lento ibuhlungu*). You would just see him on top of you having sex with you, when you cry he would close your mouth with his hand, so it was really a rape (*Nyhani yeyiludlwengulo*). This used to happen as there were many boys staying at home... He was a cousin but a distant one, it's this thing of collectively herding our parents' cattle, so we would stay together because of that."

The study area was generally impoverished. The normal practice in homes was for children to share beds or mattresses, either with each other or with adults. They sometimes would also share beds when lodging whilst at school. This provided an opportunity for sexual assault (and propositioning) to occur. One informant described being touched sexually on repeated occasions by another student, as well as twice by male teachers. Another informant mentioned that this was sometimes resisted:

"it started when he put his hand on top of me, I was sleeping in the edge of the bed and he was sleeping close to the wall. You know, when you are sharing a bed it's good to give each other space... He was moving towards me and I moved away a bit. I then stood up and slept next to the wall and that is when he got his chance, as I was sleep, it was around 3 o'clock in the morning and we were alone in the mission house, he put his hand on my private parts and I was thinking 'is that by mistake?' then he put his knee on top of me, and I pushed him away and I faced the other side giving him my back and that is when he came strongly on me, he would then touch me and I then asked him 'what are you doing man?' he said he always loved me (*kudala endithanda*) and I told him 'that is bullshit', I stood up in bed and he tried to hold me, pleading and that is when I beat him (*kulapho ndambetha khona*)"

The Eastern Cape Province, specifically the black communities are organised hierarchically by age (and gender), with the greatest authority vested in older men. Essentially, younger people are strongly expected to respect their elders, and obey them. This increases the vulnerability of boys to rape by elders, as it does girls (Jewkes et al 2005), as does a general expectation that young people should respect people in positions of authority. In one case that actually resulted in a report to the police, a prominent village church leader asked a young man to look after his house in town to protect it from thieves. Although he was expected to be away over night, the leader returned at 9 pm and insisted that he and the young man share a bed and then he forced the young man into sex. As a respected church leader, the young man felt he could not refuse the unusual request to share a bed.

In another example, a boy had met a man in a village who asked him to help him find his stolen television. Although a stranger, he felt obliged to assist him. He became suspicious only when he realised they were walking out of town towards a forest, he explained:

"...After that we got into the forest, this man said to me, 'Hey what I want is just for us to have sex, after that I will give you money'...and he drew up a knife and raped me...(*wakhupa imela waze wandidlwengula*)"

Another boy was raped at knife point, and again his initial vulnerability rested on his obedience to an older man. This account was given by an interviewee who was the first to see the young boy after the rape, and clearly suggests that he saw the boy's obligation to obey due to his age:

"... he was around 13 years old, he says this father called him, he was coming out of the *mielie* [maize] fields and he called him to come inside the *mielie* field, because of age he went in and that is when he jumped at him and grabbed him, undressing him showing him a knife and he raped him"

Some men had coerced young men and boys into sex by using the lure of toys or material gain, and create a perception of obligation to reciprocate with sex. One informant spoke of his brother's and friend's rape, and his attempted rape, by a man who made toy cars. He used these to attract young boys, then forced them into sex and gave them cars afterwards.

"It was in 1998, we were driving toy cars made of wire... These other boys did not tell what they did in order to get a car from him. All the boys had nice cars from him. This man was having anal sex (*elalana nabo ezimpundu*) with them but they did not tell us about that."

The material lure did not work in isolation, but was backed up by a threat and physical violence when resisted. This is similar to the situations described by Gear (2005) by which 'wives' might be secured in jail. An informant who had been in jail, when he described the powerful hold older men had over young boys, starting by giving them food or cigarettes, and later demand sex, to which the young boys felt obliged to submit. He explained:

"he will be asking you, 'are you not hungry?' and a young inmate would say 'Yes I am'. 'Here is some bread and meat' and he says, 'at night there is something I would like to tell you, so you must come to that place, I sleep there'. One would go there late and they will be smoking tobacco or dagga. Then he say 'my boy this is how it goes here', and by that time he is not pleading with you but telling you what would happen (*akasukucengi, uyakuxelela into ezakukwenzeka*), and you would be thinking that I have used many things that belong to him and you end up giving in to that for that night. But with some it would be a continuous thing".

Reactions to rape by men

The reactions to the unwanted sexual contact and rape by men were varied. At least one rape was reported to the police and one of the boys raped in the veld was taken to a clinic because of his anal injuries. The fact that so many of the accounts provided were said to have happened to other men was probably a sign that men and boys could discuss what had happened to them with their peers, although we can not rule out the possibility that some of these had actually been personal experiences. Four boys had told their families after the rape and in at least one case the boy who had coerced sex was beaten by older relatives. Whilst male rape is often concealed by victims (Gear 2005), the degree of communication described or implied on our data points to an interesting degree of openness in rural African society that allows boys 'to tell'.

Particularly striking, however, was the lingering anger in several of the boys after the rapes. Two boys described taking cathartic physical revenge when they were older. The following accounts describe this:

"Inside me I had this thing that this guy has done this terrible thing and I do not like it. There was another school friend of mine...then one day, we saw [the rapist] watching over his father's cattle. My friend said I must shout at him and say 'Hey my boy, you rapist'. I did as told. So he responded saying what are you saying 'my boy'. I repeated it saying 'I am saying come here you rapist'. He came over to us, and my friend said we must not run. So when he got to us he asked what was I saying. I told him 'you rapist, you go around raping us, you boy'. He complained that, 'am I a boy to you, old as I am?' I said 'yes you are, you rapist'. He said 'I will slap you, boy' and I said 'go ahead'. He kicked me...my friend grabbed him from the back...I grabbed him by his legs and forced him down. As he was trying to free himself, I firmly held him down and my friend was beating him in the face and I was also beating him all over. But after sometime we realised that he would overpower us. So my friend started to jump and run and I followed suit. We reached the tar road and he was

shouting that he would get me. And when I got to see him again, he had a scratch in his face apparently my friend was beating him with a stone. So I thought that was a fine way of avenging what he did to me, and I felt at peace after we did that (*ndaye ndaxola*)... I really was at peace after that, because I always had a grudge against him (*ndandimzonda*), because I thought this guy forced himself into me and I got hurt (*ndalimala*)."

In Xhosa culture, manhood is highly prized and achieved through initiation rituals that include circumcision and ritual seclusion, therefore the reference to the rapist as a 'boy' here, as his indignant reaction suggests, was a strong insult. Just as the reference to skin colour being extremely dark (*mnyama kakhulu*) is in the following account of another reprisal:

"I hate it (*Ndiyayicaphukela*), when I see him I have that grudge inside me, that angry feeling even though we were still young then. When we talk about it with the guys I grew up with, we become very angry about it, we just don't like it (*Asiyithandi*). Just recently I beat him as we were in a soccer field, we were watching a soccer match, so another guy teased him saying 'you are black as Castle milk stout'. I laughed out loud and he picked on me and I just thought that we would fight all because of what he did to me. So that grudge does come out sometimes, though I'm trying to fight it. Then when he came to beat me I apologised, and when he turned his back I just beat him down with a stick, beating him and kicking him hating what he did to me when I was young."

Coercion through desire: the power of temptation

Temptation as a term has been used in key religious texts and normally carries religious and moral connotations. This was not how it was used by participants in this study, rather they used the term as meaning to lure or entice someone into something (sex). In the interviews, men more commonly described having been coerced into sex by women. Of the 31 men interviewed, 17 men spoke of situations where women pressurised them to have sex. These accounts were all framed as having happened when older women made sexual advances towards them when they were young teenage boys. They were 'tempted' to have sex, although sometimes, despite temptation they declined the offer. Men perceived temptation as 'pressure' to have sex, and usually for some reason they felt accepting would be against their better judgment. In notable contrast to the accounts of force by men, pressure from women was something that made most of the men "feel good", as one explained "that sister really made me to be proud of being me, I just told myself I must be really good". When they did not feel good, it was usually the age gap between the man and the woman that was the source of unease, as men in this community were not supposed to have sex with older women. The age difference was often 10-20 years, with the men young teenagers (10-17 years old) at the time. Although it was framed as 'coercion', when the circumstances were examined more carefully, the accounts more closely reflected a form of negotiated sex that was characterised by marked female agency, essentially overt seduction.

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

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

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

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

The youngest to be seduced said he was 10 years old and the woman was 17. Although on one level it's clear from the narrative that he agreed to sex with her, given their ages, in South African law what happened would now unambiguously constitute rape:

“...I saw this big sister from the neighbourhood, I knew her from church. I met her and asked ‘Hey sister have you seen my father's goats?’ She said ‘Yes I saw them they are this side, I'm walking towards’. But in my mind I had a question why would she say they are this side she is walking towards, when she is still going to that direction, but I ignored it. I was suspicious that something would happen....we had sex and later she said that ‘look do not tell anyone about this (*jonga ungaxeleli mntu ngalento*)’. What I noticed was that she already had pubic hair, so why was she giving me this? I was asking myself before I had sex with her, but when doing it I did not mind that. So after I finished she said ‘look never tell anyone about this, it must remain between the two of us and if you don't tell I will give it to you again (*uba awuxelelanga mntu, ndizakupha kwakhona*)’. I promised her that I won't, but I knew that I would not do it again because she was old”

The men recognised that they were interested in sex at the time they were seduced, but although tempted, there was a strong suggestion in the narratives that they had been taken advantage of by women who were much older, should not have engaged sexually with them and it did not make them feel very good. The man who slept with his family's domestic worker explained:

“It was difficult to look at each other as she was much older than me and I was very young and I respected her (*ndandimhlonipha*), seeing her as a big sister. Even after we had done it [sex] several times, it became a usual thing because we would do it constantly when there were no people around, like when I'm coming back from school... For it to end I told her that, it was you who started this thing, and this thing is embarrassing (*iluhlazo lento*) as you are almost my mothers' age”

In many accounts the pressure to have sex surprised them, but that in other respects was not unwanted. Perhaps the women were older, or the relationship deemed inappropriate in some way, and thus generating misgivings. In several accounts the men were surprised to find a woman at home naked, or bathing, and were then pressurised into having sex. For example, one man visited the house of an older female neighbour and when he got there she saw him through the window. He explained:

“I asked ‘Should I come in?’ She said ‘Come in’. When I got in I found that she was naked, and I was reluctant to go in, but she said come in. She closed the door and talked, she was taking a bath. After she had finished, she came and stood before me asking me do I know this (pointed to her vagina)? I laughed because I thought she was just kidding me. I said ‘Yes’ laughing, thinking that she was just joking..... but then I started touching her and I was feeling that I could not control myself (*ndandiziva ukuba andikwazi ukuzibamba*)”.

One teenager had met three older and respected women known in the community, one was a teacher, and they were carrying beer and invited him to join them at their place. He got drunk, and the women started touching him and persuaded him to have sex with all of them. He was young and acutely embarrassed when he discovered they had told others in the community about what had happened (and, he added, how good he had been). Other accounts of pressure involved very blatant and persistent attempts by women to entice men into sex in bars. This persistence was described as a form of coercion as it continued despite the men expressing their discomfort. Yet the men showed that it was immanently resistible, clearly involved communication rather than force, and might otherwise be seen as overt propositioning rather than coercion.

Pressure from trusted older female relatives and family friends was not resisted as the younger men were obliged to show respect. In other situations men did successfully resist temptation. Two reasons were given for this, neither of which indicated that the men thought they were being violated. Some men were worried that because they were young their sexual performance would be inadequate. The second reason was fear of contracting sexually transmitted infections from older women, who were seen as very sexually experienced and therefore risky.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that acts which men report as pressurised or forced sex by men and women were quite different in nature. The most striking was the use of force by male perpetrators and temptation by women. In some instances, both men and women drew on power from their position in the age hierarchy, and the ensuing obligations, to assist them. The meanings of the acts clearly differed, with coercion by men resulting in anger and resentment. Whereas being seduced by an older woman, not with standing feelings of misgiving, or even disgust, was often accompanied by a sense of pride that an older woman whom they respected found them desirable. Whilst some men managed to resist coercion by men, they spoke of this as being an escape from a situation in which they risked being violated, this contrasted with the reasons given for resisting pressure from women, which related to sexual performance and risk of infection.

The construction of coercion by women as temptation is very similar to the accounts of pressure from Mexican women for men to have sex that has been described by Marston (2005). She has argued that coercion of men by women is a phenomenon that needs to be better understood and taken more seriously. Young men in Mexico, as with the men in this study, perceived their experiences of very strong female sexual agency as in some respects coercive. In our study the men clearly felt a discomfort in the face of overt female sexual agency. This was complex and stemmed from a sense of embarrassment for the women because their behaviour was inappropriate, as well as an acknowledgement of their own desire (for an older woman) which often they also felt would be viewed by others as inappropriate. This was a recognition that the scenario being acted out breached local conventions that men should control sexual relationships, for example by determining the timing and circumstances of sex and not have older sexual partners (Wood, Maforah and Jewkes 1998; Wood and Jewkes 2001). There was also an acknowledgement that in the face of such an invitation a heterosexual man would be expected to have sex, both to meet a woman's sexual needs and, having been aroused, to satisfy personal desire.

Heterosexual performance is an important constituent of masculinity for many young men, particularly in the experimental phase of adolescent. The temptation to prove virility (and manhood) was clearly strong, even in culturally and socially inappropriate settings, such as when older women (or any women) initiate sex. On the other hand, the sexual experience of the women involved presented the threat that performance might be judged as inadequate, or

even more seriously the long term debilitation that might follow from acquiring a sexually transmitted infection. In most of the cases, a desire for pleasure and opportunity prevailed, and the potential of threat to manhood by being in a sexual situation controlled by a woman was resolved by interpreting the circumstances as a sign of overwhelming desirability.

Hegemonic masculinity in South Africa is framed around heterosexuality and is inherently homophobic. However masculinity takes, and has taken, many forms and Moodie et al. (1994) and Harries (1994) have all argued that mine marriages between younger and older men on the mining compounds were ways of reinforcing the ideology of heterosexual marriages. Yet, in the rural Eastern Cape context for boys who self-identified as heterosexual, the homosexual element of the sex coerced by men compounded their sense of violation. In their accounts, successful flight, beating up men who raped, or embarrassing them by 'reporting' them to family members was seen as indicative of exercise of forms of power in the face of the violation (or threat of this) and this was implicitly seen as restorative of manhood.

A key question is whether men's accounts of coercion by women should at all be regarded as coercion in the way the term is used when thinking of men's and women's accounts of being coerced by men? It is recognised that coercion is experienced as occurring on a spectrum and so many forms of pressure can be seen as coercive (Jewkes and Abrahams 2002). However, the construction of coercion as 'temptation' really suggests that it is not equivalent as it is generally accepted that temptation can be resisted. In some of the encounters described, where the men were much younger than the women and where the women were seen as close to the family, this may have been harder for men, just as it is for women in encounters with older men. Nevertheless it is important to note that when female family members or friends were involved, men spoke of a great sense of embarrassment and guilt. Where sex was repeated, it caused great anxiety and a sense of limited power to resist and an inability to disclose to others because of shame and self blame. Some of these situations would have met the definition of rape in the new South African Sexual Offences Act (Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and related matters) Amendment Act 2007) because the men were under 16 and the women older. What is not known is whether there are longer term implications for men of coercion by older women. There was no indication from this data that there were mental health considerations, of the type that are very often found with coercion of women by men (Wang and Rowley 2008), but these experiences may impact on men's emerging sexuality and this should be subject of future research.

Conclusion

We found men's experiences of sexual coercion by men and women were not directly comparable, in that their contexts, meanings and consequences differed. Men's experiences of coercion by other men strongly resembled the situations of rape of women that are commonly reported to the police and described by women in research and service settings. Men's experiences of coercion by women were not of the same nature. Clearly acts of rape of men by men require a more developed response from statutory services, with police and health services developing the capacity to treat the rape of boys with the same attention given to that of women and girls. Our findings do not support the view of Andersson and Ho-Foster (2008) that all acts described as 'coerced' by men in research settings have equivalent meaning. There was no indication that a statutory response would be appropriate for the acts of coercion of men by women. Research on sexual abuse of men needs to explore and adapt to the nuances of meaning in local settings, particularly the meanings associated with coercion by men and by women. This is essential for determining the validity of research findings and guiding public health responses.

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