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**Atty. Analyn Q. Villaroman,
Ph.D.**
University of Southeastern
Philippines, Tagum-Mabini
Campus, Apokon, Tagum City,
Davao del Norte, Philippines.

Constructions and Reconstructions of Masculinity Among Men in Gender Advocacy Groups in Davao City, Philippines

Atty. Analyn Q. Villaroman, Ph.D.

Abstract

The study examined the Men Opposed to Violence Everywhere (MOVE) Davao and Men's Responsibilities in Gender and Development (MR GAD) in Davao City, Philippines. Qualitative approach was used where 16 participants were interviewed. It utilized the perspective of social constructivism in analyzing men's constructions and reconstructions of masculinity. In examining notions of masculinity which centered on men's familial relationship and their engagement with the state's policy and programs, it surfaced that there are contradictions in men's constructions and reconstructions. Yet, they are in the strategic positions of espousing new meanings of masculinity as their positions of power are capitalized to form egalitarian relationships. MOVE-Davao and MR GAD were able to provide a nurturing environment where men can become gender advocates. They do not just create programs, plans and activities but more importantly they had raised a level of consciousness on gender and development that are translated towards their day-to-day activities, at home where they empower their wives and engage with their children and at their workplace where they are guided by working on with one's basic human rights.

Keywords: Social Science, constructions and reconstructions, gender equality, qualitative method, Philippines.

Introduction

For the past years, gender equality has become a precondition for advancing development and reducing poverty. Thus, women were empowered to address their development concerns. However, the attainment of gender equality is not yet fulfilled (United Nation's Population Fund, 2015). According to Connell (2003), men must be involved in gender equality reform as gender inequalities are embedded in the relationships of men and women. By examining men's notions of masculinities, this will provide the contexts of their constructs and models for promoting positive constructions of masculinity rather than with hegemonic masculinity as espoused by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) which privileges some people. For example, in Pingol's (2001) study entitled *Remaking Masculinities*, concepts of hegemonic masculinity in the context of the Ilocano men in Paduros, Ilocos Sur are associated with being good providers, virile sexual partners and responsible fathers. However, as a consequence of migration of the wives, husbands become housekeepers, chaste spouse and maternal fathers. Migration has resulted to role reversals leading the husbands redefining the concept of being men. Husbands rethink and reconstruct their concepts of masculinity. They moved away from the hegemonic concept of masculinity as their new constructions will make them adequate and worthy of their own sense of respect and of others.

In Davao City, Philippines, there are two gender advocacy groups made up of men, MOVE-Davao (Men Opposed to Violence Everywhere) and MR GAD (Men's Responsibility in Gender and Development) which espoused empowering constructions and reconstructions of masculinity. Discoursing through these gender advocacy groups, it invites the entry point of understanding masculinity and renders the visibility of the process by which these men construct and reconstruct masculinity in relation to gender equality.

Correspondence:
**Atty. Analyn Q. Villaroman,
Ph.D.**
University of Southeastern
Philippines, Tagum-Mabini
Campus, Apokon, Tagum City,
Davao del Norte, Philippines

Framework

Notions of masculinity emerge not through a biologically determined structure of reality (Bhasin, 2004; Cornwall, 2007; Kilmartin, 2000; Kimmel & Messner, 2000). Rather, in constructing masculinity, as constructivist would put it, the mind is active. Knowing is not passive-a simple imprinting of sense of data on mind-but active; mind does something with these impressions, at the very least forms abstractions or concepts. In this sense, constructivism means that human beings invent concepts, models and schemes to make sense of experience and, further continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). This construction is viewed not to be static and fixed. It can be negotiated and contested. From the point of view of Giddens, as cited by Heward (1996), "men and women involved in actively constructing alternative forms of family and other institutions. Life histories are reflexive processes in which individuals connect the self, the personal with social change. They actively construct their identities-the self-as part of an active involvement with social change in their social relations at all levels, in their family, education and work."

Objectives

In the words of Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994, p. 46), "there is no single account of social life, only a multiplicity of interested perspectives." It is along this line that I hope to proceed with. In this research, the main objective is to determine how do men in gender advocacy groups construct and reconstruct notions of masculinity in relation to gender equality I will answer this by looking also into this objective: identify the notions of masculinity that the members draw from their experiences in gender advocacy groups and have led them to shape their activities, behavior and orientations as male advocates.

Methodology

Research Design

This research had adopted a qualitative approach specifically the social phenomenology which looks into the experiences of people of their culture. Since there is no way to be fully aware of another person's experiences, Bruner (1997) answered this, through the interpretation of Wilhem Dilthey 's idea, by interpreting people's expressions. 'Expressions are encapsulations of the experiences of others (Bruner, 1997, p.5).' For Victor Turner (1982, p.17 as cited in Bruner, 1997, p.5), expressions are considered as the 'crytallized secretions of one's living human experience.' An understanding of experience can be done by interpreting expressions through theater, narratives, hunting stories, etc. The social phenomenology turns the attention to the basic units of analysis that are established by the people. Bruner (1997) reminds that, in interpreting people's expressions, it operates on two levels: the people whom we study interpret their own experiences and in turn the researcher interprets such interpretations.

Research Site

Davao City, which is situated in the southern part of the Philippines, had become the research site of this research because of the availability of its enabling environment that created the gender advocacy groups composed of men. Prior to the establishment of MR GAD and MOVE-Davao (composed of men committed to work on

the attainment of gender and development), women advocates had long been the forefront of gender mainstreaming. In fact, Davao City had pioneered the passage of the landmark legislation, Women Development Code, in the Philippines.

Participants

Given the goal of the study which is to capture men's construction and reconstructions of masculinity, a small number of participants are inevitable. By having few participants, it allowed me to engage with the participants and gather data with depth. A total of 12 participants were involved in the study in which six participants came from MR GAD and the last six from MOVE-Davao. MR GAD participants came from the three barangays of Davao City, Daliao, Calinan and Sasa. MOVE-Davao participants were dispersed from various sectors of the City of Davao.

Ethics of Research

This research followed the ethics protocol, in which prior to data gathering, the necessary permits were obtained from the City Government as well as from its three barangays, Calinan, Daliao and Sasa. Personal consent was also given by each participant. And upon their requests, they were given pseudonyms so as to protect their identity since there were confidential information shared.

Data Collection

The data was collected through the use of in-depth interview. In this way, participants were able to share with depth of their constructions and reconstructions of masculinity by initially starting with their notions of masculinity and moving through the process that they went through in their constructions and reconstructions. Data from the interview were also supplemented with secondary data.

Results and Discussion

Notions of Masculinity

Men are considered as the head or the foundation, the one leading and doing decisions for the family. These responses emanate from Daniel, Teddy and Pit. Daniel expressed, "The way I look at it, men are the foundation. He is the base in the family. The woman is the same time the support system. To Teddy, "Of course, the man, number one is that he will lead the family. And then he is the better half of his wife. He is not a burden to his wife. That is a man. The man especially a father knows the feelings and the works of the father." In a similar note, Pit remarked, "He's the head of the family. He does the decision. He looks for way but this is not true to all."

Husband's Relations with Wife and Children

Teddy's concept of masculinity is being a husband who is not a burden to his wife. Ironically, in reality, Teddy struggled for his wife's acceptance. His wife is not appreciative of his meager contribution to the family income. He works as a volunteer in the barangay. Evident in their set up still is the general or traditional expectation that the husband must act as the main income provider of the family. Being a meager contributor in the family's income led to arguments and non-appreciation of Teddy's wife.

For Crispin, a barangay captain, not being a burden to the wife is expressed through the support mechanism that

can be afforded especially during wife's prenatal and postnatal care. Crispin had pointed out that the husband can provide a crucial role vis-a-vis the reproductive role performed by the wife. There must be that sensitivity on the part of the man to feel the delicate situation of a woman.

Daniel, representing the mass media, in a similar tone with Crispin, presents his notion of masculinity is equated with gender sensitivity in terms of men's dealing with their wives. Earlier, another participant named Pit has informed us the hint that there are also men, as heads of the family that are not responsible of their roles in the family. This is supported by Pit's experience as barangay councilor in which he is a witness to reported cases of domestic violence where men become the doers of violence. According to Daniel, he hates husbands who beat their wives. His orientation is more influenced by his mother since he grew up with her. Being an illegitimate son, he had never experienced father's care. The case of Daniel had shown that his notion of masculinity is not just guided by his experiences with MOVE-Davao but also with his childhood socialization.

Being Responsible and Respectful

Another theme which came out is that masculinity is being responsible. Coco, a medical doctor, is highlighting being a responsible father as his association of masculinity. This can further be understood by looking into his advocacy of responsible parenthood through the no scalpel vasectomy. This new paradigm of involving men in the broader reproductive health agenda had also been the concern of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo.

For Andy, a practicing lawyer, being responsible pertains to one's obligations and it is about respect for human rights and dignity. "It's not measured by the man with the idea that is based on the number of women partners he had. It's measured by how responsible you are in your obligations, how far do you know about respecting the rights of your fellow, be it a man, a woman, gay, or lesbian. So it's really anchored on the respect for human rights and dignity." At this point, Andy is moving on from the assumed and essentialized homogeneity on men and masculinity. According to Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994) as cited in Roberson and Suzuki (2003), differences and divisions among men and masculinities may also reflexively act to dislocate the hegemonic versions of masculinity which privilege some people over others. Andy had also forwarded, that in his personal level, notions of masculinity are created and re-created and can be experienced or lived with. However, it does not necessarily conform to the so-called hegemonic masculinity. It is a kind of masculinity that recognizes and respects one's rights regardless of differences in sexual orientations.

Masculinity being Shaped by State Policy and Programs

Recognizing that there can be controlling and harmful constructions of masculinity, Michael defined masculinity in relation with the existence of Republic Act (RA) 9262. According to him, this had been the case because most men are doers of violence to women. In the Philippines, most of the documented cases of violence were committed by men (National Statistical Coordination Board, 2005; Social Development Center De la Salle University, 2000; UP Center for Women's Studies, 1998). Michael explained such

notion of masculinity in relation with RA 9262 because in the seminars and trainings that he had attended he learned much on RA 9262 or the Anti-VAWC Law. This was supported by Peter who mentioned that he had liked the idea of being with MR GAD because it had provided him with a conscious awareness on the different issues and concerns of men and of the existence of RA 9262.

For Peter, given that men's attitude and behavior are related to violence, he calls for gender transformation. The critical part of this gender transformation had been challenging the rigid gender roles and questioning the influence of socio-cultural, community and institutional factors (Baker, 2013). Meo a representative from government and a board of director of MR GAD discussed lengthily and analyzed how masculinity and patriarchy had been translated in the barangay level. He cited the experiences of courtship, marriage and peers where men can be socialized with destructive masculinity. Meo recognized the need to support men for positive changes. MR GAD had designed programmes that will provide positive role imaging of men. A series of trainings and seminars had been given to its participants that will reduce rigid codes adherence on the aspect of reproductive health, gender-based violence and risky lifestyles. Using the lens of power relations, men being in the position of power had been capitalized in order to transform patriarchal relations. The men of MR GAD, for instance had exemplified that being key leaders and direct service providers in their communities they can support for new meanings of masculinity. The next responses come from Gemjo and Slater. Their responses will show that notions of masculinity are in a constant flux or are fluid in character. For Gemjo and Slater, they are redefining masculinities so as to include concern for others.

Interconnectedness of Family and Community

Another theme which came out is the definition of masculinity as associated with the interconnectedness of family and community in general. Gemjo's case had exemplified that being a man means extending one's care not just to the members of the family but also to the community. His concept of care is the commitment to help not just with his own children but also of helping others towards the right path. He is one of those gender advocates and he had been oriented through MR GAD the destructive display of pressures, power and violence in the family and in the community. Thus, as a changed man, he advocates to help others in order to end oppressive practices. His invitation to MR GAD provided the opportunity in making a difference in his family and his community.

Towards Open-mindedness and Empathy

For Slater, masculinity had been defined as the ability to recognize the values of open-mindedness and empathy. Open-mindedness means looking into things with maturity, and empathy is learning to feel the other side of the person. This concept of masculinity is viewed to be applicable in three levels: the personal self, family and workplace. Slater even added that these values can also lead one to become gender sensitive and of becoming a gender advocate. The case of Slater is an exemplification that MOVE-Davao can nurture on existing values and re-align it with gender and development perspective. There was an admission from Slater that previously he had a different understanding of empathy and open-mindedness. We now

turn our attention to the strategies employed that had made the players construct or reconstruct their notions of masculinity.

Constructing Masculinities and Interventions

Slater's notion of masculinity as the valuing of open-mindedness and empathy is different before he joined MOVE-Davao. According to him, what made him change was because of the lectures that he is doing and the reading materials that had allowed him to learn about the ideal man. In the case of Andy, he had shared that as part of his socialization there was some gender stereotyping which he had learned. This is consistent with the discussion made by Paechter (2007) and Connell (1996) that the multiple forms of masculinity are constructed within institutional and cultural contexts. However, in these forms of masculinity there can be that hegemonic version which privilege some people (Connell, 2005; Cornwall, 2007). It is on this hegemonic masculinity which Andy is referring to because there is gender stereotyping which can affect people of different sexes.

Andy is pinpointing on cases of domestic gender-based violence in which he is seeing the inappropriateness of putting or trapping the man and woman together. Both must be given the right to determine their direction in life especially in living with dignity and protecting the children from further violence. After being involved in MOVE-Davao and the realization that he can do things on his own, he had learned to become gender sensitive and look at things or experiences from a human rights approach.

In the case of Matthew and Crispin, there was the same theme which emerged. Their notions of masculinity had been influenced mostly by external conditioning through participation in trainings and seminars related to gender and development as organized by MOVE-Davao. For Matthew, masculinity is associating it with the rights of children from the abuse and is concerned with the RA 9262's dissemination. According to Crispin, his previous notion of masculinity revolved around man being the one who governs the family. He is the dominant one. Crispin had pointed out that his learning in MOVE-Davao is to instill with men that equal rights of women. Men will have the responsibility towards their relationship with their wives. They will become gender sensitive.

For the participants, Peter, Pit and Gemjo, there were confirmations that the condition of the series of trainings related to gender and development, risky lifestyle, reproductive health and counseling had helped them change in the personal level and their relations with family and in the workplace. Gemjo had specifically mentioned that videos were shown during their seminars and trainings about the maltreatment of women and of children. It was also shown there how women and children can be protected. Because of the series of trainings and seminars related to gender and development, it had led to an increasing awareness of what is appropriate and the recognition of one's want to change and its effect on others.

Foundations for Constructing and Reconstructing Masculinities

For participants like Daniel, Coco, Teddy, Gerard and Michael, definitions or notions of masculinity had been influenced by their previous background or by their

foundation. Daniel's case will bring us back to his experience of father's abandonment in his childhood. According to Heward (1996), "constructing masculine identity is not necessarily identifying with the father and rejecting the mother." During the 70's, Daniel's mother had filed a case asking for financial support but then after hearing unfavorable comments (i.e. they are after the wealth) from Daniel's father, they did not continue. His mother strove hard to raise him. In Daniel's case, his masculinity had been built within the complex relations of his own family. Through that, he was able to formulate definitions of masculinity that is also consistent with his experience of MOVE-Davao in which he would always highlight the need for respect and for protection of women.

According to Coco, prior to MOVE-Davao, he had already been exposed to gender and development through gender trainings and seminars in his previous work in the medico-legal. Way back in 1997, he started his training in gender and development while still at the medico-legal. Coco reasoned that it was in the medico legal where all rape cases and acts of lasciviousness were all brought in for determination. In Coco's case, gender mainstreaming must also be true in the health sector not just because their reports and findings will form part of the evidence and decision of the judge but they are also in direct contact with the victims of the abuse.

According to Teddy, his advocacy is not just influenced by MR GAD's training but also by his previous background being schooled in a catholic school and its engagement in voluntary works. Working on with the existing value system played an important role in taking men to be involved in gender and development. Teddy was drawn to the advocacy of gender and development because it is aligned with his values system. He had been oriented with the value of respect and its applicability to real life situations in his former school so the paradigm of gender and development was consistently aligned with the previously learned values.

Two participants, Gerard and Michael, similar with Teddy, had also shared that prior to MR GAD they had been applying most of its advocacy. Gerard had experienced in his family the separation of his mother and father when he was young. His father got a woman and brought her to Cagayan de Oro. He, however, stayed with his mother until her death. Eventually, his father got him and four of his siblings from Manila to Cagayan de Oro City. He finished his high school in Cagayan de Oro City. However, he had a distant relationship with his father. They never had an affectionate relationship because the stepmother is a jealous woman. So with his own family now, he was showing his affection and display of love to his four daughters. In the study of Ishii-Kuntz (2003), he found in Japan that there are fathers who grew up in a traditional home environment with an authoritative father. That had in a way contributed to their redefinition of masculinity since they countervail their experiences with their fathers. It is in the same manner that Gerard had countervailed the kind of relationship afforded to him by his father and he had instead created a loving and nurturing relationship with his own family.

In Michael's case, he mentioned that MR GAD's training has not brought drastic changes in himself because ever since he has not inflicted any pain to his wife. But he saw that with MR GAD training, it is an opportunity for men to know about VAWC. For the cases of Gerald and Michael, being able to share one's experiences of family in MR GAD as loving, nurturing and healthy is seen here as another way

of attracting men to commit themselves in the gender and development advocacy. Highlighting the benefits of participation or its usage from men participants of loving family proved to be beneficial as this can encourage men and provide them with tangible opportunities to participate. Their experiences can be shared with other men and can serve as model for other families in order to show how positive family relationship can be achieved.

In the contexts of Daniel, Coco, Teddy, Gerald and Michael, there is a reaffirmation on most literatures that men's constructs of masculinity are not fixed. It is fluid and subject to the influence of the on-going social interactions. Continuous experiences of mainstreaming gender and development is not just passively accepted but had been subjected to interpretations and re-interpretations. This coincided with Giddens (1984) idea that people have a sense of human agency. This is despite the fact that social interactions over time can institutionalize or structure certain roles as forwarded by Berger & Luckmann (1966.) One of the ways for men's engagement is to nurture previous or existing beliefs, values and behavior and align it along gender and development. In that way, it motivates men to join and generates new understanding and responsibility to support gender equality.

Reconstructing Masculinities

Most notions of masculinity have centered on its relation with family-the wife and the children. Consistently this has also shaped the participants' behavior, activities and orientations. For Slater, Crispin, Gerard, Andy, Gemjo, Matthew, Coco, Peter, Daniel, being gender advocates are translated in their good relationship with the family, with their respective wife and with the children. For Slater that good relationship with family is translated through empowering one's wife inside the home. For Crispin, a barangay captain maintaining a good relationship with the family has been translated with his sensitivity in relating with his wife and the giving of quality time to family:

Andy, on the other hand, has shared that he had learned through MOVE-Davao to go through the process of introspection in dealing with his wife. Previously, he seemed not to understand why his wife would react in his relation with other girls. He came to realize where his wife is coming from and the experience of his wife with her father. From there, he learned to see his wife from a different perspective and reflect on his actions. He became conscious and assured her that he hasn't crossed any boundaries. In learning to examine his relationship, he made sure that this is consistent with his belief and advocacy anchored on being responsible of one's obligation and respect for human rights and dignity.

Engaging with the Children

Apart from looking into men's relationship with their respective wives, their dealings with their children would reveal more about the changes and adjustment that men make at home. For example, Gemjo's participation is life changing. He admitted that prior to MR GAD, he is not an image of an ideal father and husband. He used to spend nights drinking at bars. With MR GAD, there is a realization that he is going nowhere and he had been destroying his physical health.

For Matthew, Peter and Coco, good relationship with the family would mean becoming responsible fathers by supporting their children's education. Barker & Verani

(2008) in his critical literature review on men's participation as fathers in Latin America and the Caribbean affirmed that a father's presence is generally positive for children. The children benefit in terms of social and emotional development. Barker & Verani also pointed out that engaged fatherhood is good for men because it offers the most important sources of well-being and happiness.

Another aspect which also showed being a responsible father pertains to the father's capacity of displaying openly with their affection and love to children. This is one of the changes in Slater's behavior. Compared to his parents, Slater shared that he is more open in expressing his love.

For Gerard, the one who had a distant relationship with his father, is openly showing his affection and display of love to his four daughters. Gerard was able to draw from his previous personal experience the negative effect of men as incapable of demonstrating love and affection to become one of the gender advocates. Being a man does not necessarily mean playing that rigid gender roles. Being a man would also mean showing or displaying one's affection and love.

Being an engaged father for Andy would mean teaching or socializing his daughter of the appropriate words related to anatomy. Andy then elaborated that, with his wife, as much as possible in the early years he de-synthesized the training in anatomy. There was no sugar coating. As her daughter is now moving towards teenage years, parental guidance is still present, as they explained to her about bodily changes and how she would relate with boys. As parents, they also established that they will maintain an open line of communication with their daughter about everything.

Dealing with Gender-Based Violence

Another theme associated with the responses made on the notion of masculinity and have led them to shape their activities, orientations and behavior had been on men's position on the issue of violence and the support system that must be provided to the wife. For Daniel, instead of husband's continued violence on the wife, he advised them to separate yet the husband must provide economic support to the children.

For Andy, since his notion of masculinity is anchored on human rights, his tendency really is to legally advise his male clients to provide economic support to children despite being in conflict with the wife. In the course of our conversation, Andy had made it clear that his position or orientation is not just influenced by his legal orientation being a lawyer but his being gender sensitive is primordial.

To MR GAD participants-Peter, Pit Teddy, Gerard and Michael, those seminars and trainings allowed them to be oriented about RA 9262, helped them design GAD plans and activities in their respective barangays and had created listening rooms. In the barangay where Pit and Peter are serving as councilors, there is an evident mechanism for referral system in cases of domestic violence. Couples go through the necessary counseling. Apart from that, in their barangay organizational chart, MR GAD had been integrated and they had a separate GAD plan and activities as supervised by Peter who is the GAD Focal Point. In the barangays represented by Teddy, Gerard and Michael, warring couples also go through counseling and there is also referral system for cases of domestic violence. Crispin, a barangay captain, explained the need of involving

men in addressing violence against women. “If we can instill with men about VAWC, there is a high possibility that in domestic level we can resolve violence against women because the husband is well-oriented and well-informed. A well-oriented husband most of the time will not be doing violence against his wife and his children. So he himself knows of his parameters and knows the consequences. One can be charged with VAWC at any moment.”

Conclusion

Studying men’s masculinity proved to be important as this provides space for men to speak and share their experiences in an effort to help towards gender advocacy work. The case of MOVE-Davao and MR GAD had shown that their notions of masculinity centered on men’s familial relationship and their engagement with the state’s policy and programs. It surfaced that they had traditional notions, yet, they had also discoursed that tends to do away with the daily occurrences of day-to-day living. It provides a platform for the interpretative mechanisms by which they become conscious of their behavior. Men’s exposure to trainings and seminars of MOVE-Davao and MR GAD had become a decisive factor in carrying out such new consciousness. The men of MOVE-Davao and MR GAD had placed in strategic positions of espousing new meanings of masculinity as their positions of power are capitalized to form egalitarian relationships. MOVE-Davao and MR GAD were able to provide a nurturing environment where men can become gender advocates. Greater than this working of gender and development along the formal structures where members are situated is the confirmation that they were able to affect the level of consciousness among its members, who in turn, translate in their everyday relations in the informal level, for instance, in family where power relations also thrived.

Implications

This study implies that there must be a gendering of the GAD Approach as this will challenge various instrumentalities in the public and private sectors to review and evaluate their GAD plans and activities whether it provided for the inclusion of men in the quest for gender equality. As the case of MR GAD and MOVE-Davao, it exemplifies that patriarchy can be capitalized to promote egalitarian relationship. For most men advocates, they are in the positions of power. It is through that where MOVE-Davao and MR GAD was able to navigate with and promote new emerging notions of masculinity toward individual consciousness and work on egalitarian, loving and peaceful relationship with family members, colleagues and neighbors.

In becoming a bricoleur in these interwoven set of meanings for masculinity, I have shown emerging new meanings of masculinity, which inform those who are engaged in the development work, the women’s advocacy groups and local government units. The new meanings contribute to the rethinking of the imaging of men and the reconsideration of the capacity of men as able participants in the attainment of gender and development of the

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