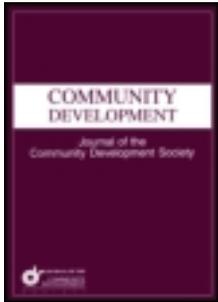


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Chimaraoke Izugbara<sup>abcd</sup>, Ronny Tikkanen<sup>b</sup> & Karin Barron<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> African Population and Health Research Center, Nairobi, Kenya

<sup>b</sup> Department of Social Work, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden

<sup>c</sup> Department of Sociology & Anthropology, University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria

<sup>d</sup> School of Public Health, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

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## Men, masculinity, and community development in Kenyan slums

Chimaraoke Izugbara<sup>a,b,c,d\*</sup>, Ronny Tikkanen<sup>b</sup> and Karin Barron<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>African Population and Health Research Center, Nairobi, Kenya; <sup>b</sup>Department of Social Work, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden; <sup>c</sup>Department of Sociology & Anthropology, University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria; <sup>d</sup>School of Public Health, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

There is limited research on masculinity in relation to community development. Using ethnographic and interview data from two slums in Kenya and building on one of the more well-known definitions of community development, we explore men's narratives of themselves in relation to community development. We highlight how men's cognizance of the structural and contextual constraints to the development of their communities intersected with both a feeling that they have helped to hamper community development and an adamant sense of their own criticality and centrality in ensuring it. While repudiating the idea that they have to change in order for their community to progress, men also generally hinged community development on their tenacious pursuit of traditional masculinity scripts. The rejection of mainstream masculinity norms as the basis for community progress will not resonate consistently among men. Social and community development work with men that fails to acknowledge them as gendered people may not succeed.

**Keywords:** marginalized communities; Kenya; qualitative research methodology; urban poverty; masculinity

### Introduction

The field of men's studies has been remarkably productive in generating new conversations and insights in relation to community development. But the bulk of existing research has ignored men's direct views of manliness in relation to community development. In this article, we address masculinity in relation to community development using data from men in two poor neighborhoods in Nairobi, Kenya. We probe men's narratives of community development, exploring their beliefs about community transformation as well as understandings of manhood. In particular, we pose two key questions: How do men frame the constraints to progress in their communities, and what community development roles do they ascribe themselves? We define community development as "the transformation of communities into progressive, thriving, and secure neighborhoods to live and work" (Huie, 1976). Of course, other conceptualizations of community development that emphasize measurable characteristics exist (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). But Huie's definition allows us to broadly and clearly relate the question of community development to both individual-level capacities and neighborhood conditions.

Put simply, we address slum men's construction of their place and role as men in the transformation of their communities into better places to live and work, into progressive, thriving, and secure neighborhoods. Among the men we studied, there was the

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\*Corresponding author. Email: [cizugbara@aphrc.org](mailto:cizugbara@aphrc.org)

coexistence of both a strong cognizance of the structural and contextual constraints to the development of their communities and a formidable resistance to the notion that men have to change in order for their communities to make progress. In sum, men predicated community development on their tenacious performance and enactment of themselves by the same codes of masculinity that frustrate community inclusiveness, progress, and gender egalitarianism. These are all important findings with critical implications for both the practice and theory of community development and the continuing focus on community leadership, development from below, gender equality, and inclusive development.

### **Masculinity and community development**

Interest in masculinity and community development emerged in the 80s, in the heels of the failure of different women's empowerment programs to deliver their expected impacts. Welsh (2010) suggests that the inability of the women in development approach to community development – the major women's development paradigm of the pre-80s era – to sufficiently address the question of gender inequity inspired the need to transform the oppressive and unfair structures, dynamics, and relationships that characterize patriarchal societies. It was within this context that the Gender and Development (GAD) approach burst upon the development scene to offer a framework for delineating and responding to some of the gendered inequities that underlie imbalances in access to resources and power and hinder progress in many communities. The emphasis of the GAD approach on power and social relations at community, among other levels, maintained Welsh (2010), inspired the subsequent growth of a body of research on masculinities and development.

In their recent book, *Men and Development*, Cornwall, Edström, and Greig (2011) argue that the turn toward masculinity and development created space for much deeper exploration of the relationship between gender in general, and masculinity in particular, and development. Specifically, interest in men and development focused attention on the extent to which norms of manliness privilege men and impact community life and well-being. A fast growing body of research has thus emerged to seek more in-depth analysis of masculine attitudes, sensitivities, and behaviors as well as the dynamics of power and privileges and their implications both for efforts to address the structural basis of gender inequalities and for championing progress and change at community levels. Interestingly however, men's views of masculinity and themselves as men in relationship to community development remain inadequately studied. The community development implications of masculinity have been largely inferred from studies on men's violence against women, fatherhood practices, influences on women's socioeconomic activities, household-level decision-making practices, sexual and political behaviors, etc. These studies generally hold that men need to reject the privileges of normative masculinities for community development to be realized (Connell, 2005; Cornwall et al., 2011; Welsh, 2010).

Extant research (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Yuan et al., 2008) associates men's enactment of themselves through violence with poor participation in community activities, insecurity, and fear, as well as disempowerment of community members. Male violence negatively affects women's sexual and reproductive health, wellbeing, the welfare of households, and the economic and social fabric of communities (Ellsberg, Jansen, Heise, Watts, & Garcia-Moreno, 2008). Men's use of violence to perform themselves stifles productivity and participation in communities, erodes the confidence and health of community members, and inspires fear and insecurity in communities (Heise, Raikes,

Watts, & Zwi, 1994). Male violence poses significant costs for household and communities. It reduces productivity and incomes, lowers rates of community accumulation of human and social capital, and generates further violence. Abused people also often experience negative behavioral outcomes, such as alcohol and drug abuse, sexual risk-taking, and a higher risk of subsequent victimization, which negatively impact community progress and development (Dunkle et al., 2004; Jewkes, 2002). Male violence saps household resources, stresses family ties, and depresses community members (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2006; Heise et al., 1994).

Negative fathering practices, including distant, absent, passive, violent, and abusive fathering, can derive from cultural scripts of manliness (Bartkowski & Xu, 2005; Wall & Arnold, 2007). These practices cause insecurity, child abuse, violence, and juvenile delinquency in the community. Research shows that children, particularly sons of abusive and absentee fathers, tend to, in turn become abusive and unsupportive to their own children (Richter, Chikovore, & Makusha, 2010; Richter & Morrell, 2006). Abused children tend to engage in violence, crimes, drug use, risky sex etc., which threaten the stability, security, and wellbeing of families and communities (Bornovalova, Gwadz, Kahler, Aklin, & Lejuez, 2008; Mimiaga et al., 2009). Men's cultural domination of women is a practice that has been associated with poor associational life, weak participation in economic activities, and low incomes among women. In Nigeria, Izugbara (2004) contends that men's control of household and community decision-making contributes to the inability of micro-credit schemes to support women's exit from poverty. Men's dominance in household decision-making has been linked to poor health status among women and children (Blanc, 2003; Kim et al., 2007).

Practices of manliness that emphasize sexual prowess and conquest, frequent sexual release, multiple sexual partnerships, and risk-taking spread diseases, cause poor health, frustrate community cohesion and harmony, and destroy the social fabric of communities (UNAIDS, 1999). The popular framing of heterosexuality as a core constituent of ideal male-hood increases insecurity for men and women who engage in alternative sexual practices. It prevents homosexual men and women from reaching services and participating dynamically and securely in community life, exposes them to mistreatment and exclusion, and increases suspicion and fear in the community, all of which hinder progress and development (UNAIDS, 1999). Valuable as the existing research is, it has ignored men's self-identities in relation to community development. In this study, we extend debate on masculinity in relation to community development and progress.

## Materials and method

### *Study settings*

The study was conducted among men in Korogocho (Koch) and Viwandani (Viwa) slums in Nairobi, Kenya. These were largely men subordinated in hierarchies of masculinity due largely to their poor livelihoods resulting from years of national economic mismanagement and political crises. Founded in the late 60s by rural migrants to Nairobi, Koch began on undeveloped government-owned land. However, it has since expanded, and almost half of it is now on privately owned land. Koch slum currently covers an area of roughly 1 km<sup>2</sup>, where more than 100,000 people live. It is a very congested community, with over 250 dwelling units per hectare. Flanked in the east and southeast by the notorious Nairobi Refuse Dump, Koch is 12 km from the Nairobi city center. Viwa, on the other hand, is a mere 7 km from the Nairobi city center. Located

close to the Nairobi's self-styled industrial area, Viwa was founded in the 70s by migrants on reserve land of the Nairobi city council. It has, however, also expanded unrestrainedly along the banks of the Ngong River. Viwa is currently 3 km in length and 1 km in width and is home to over 80 thousand persons. The heavily polluted Ngong River borders Viwa in the south, and to the north are industries of varying sizes that thrive mainly on the cheap manual labor of desperate and unskilled Kenyans.

While heterogeneity characterizes the populations of Koch and Viwa, both settlements are characterized by severe poverty; visible lack of basic infrastructure, such as roads, sanitation, and clean and potable water; dearth of socioeconomic opportunities; excessive overcrowding; extreme deprivation; and enduring marginalization. The settlements are also largely populated by persons of low educational attainment, school drop-outs, and people who survive at the fringes of a ruthless economy: poorly paid casual laborers, poor informal and low-capacity retailers, sex workers, miscreants, and petty criminals. Few men and women in the slums have steady employment. In 2008, among Koch men aged 18 years and above, only 11% were in salaried employment and 10% in established trading. For Viwa, these figures stood at 20% for salaried men and 7% for men in established trading. Half of the women in the two slums were not involved in any type of income-generating activities in 2008. Daily expenditure in a representative sample of households in both slums was less than a dollar in 2008 (African Population and Health Research Center [APHRC], 2009). Only 28% of men and 19% of women in the two communities had up to secondary-level education in 2008. Health status is also generally poor in Koch and Viwa. For instance, while Kenya's HIV prevalence stands at 7.4%, it averages 11.5% in the two settlements (Kyobutungi, Ziraba, Ezeh, & Ye, 2008). The two settlements also experience disproportionately high morbidity and mortality levels (APHRC, 2002). According to Izugbara (2011), the rampancy of crime and violence in Koch and Viwa is worsened by the substantial presence of gangs who use both settlements as hideouts and base.

### ***Data collection***

Ethnographic and interview data gathered from Koch and Viwa between 2009 and 2012 are used in this study. As part of the ethnographic research, the lead author lived near both slums for over three years, and spent several days in them, attending many community events, frequenting key social spaces including restaurants, pubs, sporting events, and bars in both settings, and volunteering in several local organizations, including gender-focused and violence prevention outfits. The lead author's participation in different events and spaces in the slums facilitated his access to local gossips, bringing him face-to-face with day-to-day events, processes, and experiences in the slums. Ethnographic and other qualitative research methods are critical for understanding development processes and challenges and promoting inclusive participation in community development activities and work (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2006; Macaulay et al., 1999).

In both study sites, the APHRC operates the Nairobi Urban Health and Demographic Surveillance System (NUDHSS). This decade-old longitudinal research platform currently covers several Koch and Viwa villages and collects routine socio-demographic and health data on roughly 70,000 individuals in about 25,000 households. Focus group and in-depth individual interviews were specifically held with a sample of men in Koch and Viwa villages covered by the NUDHSS platform. The men who participated in the focus group and in-depth individual interviews were recruited through a multistage sampling process. The first stage involved the identification of all households in the two

settlements in which lived a man, aged 25 and above. APHRC's NUDHSS provided the sampling frame of households in Koch and Viwa. The second stage involved the random selection of 162 men (81 from each settlement) from the listing of men in the sampled households. Random selection is not usually required for qualitative interviewing and could, in fact, be counterproductive. However, we opted for it to achieve maximum variation sampling, which ensures representation of diverse dimensions of explored phenomenon. The small size of the sample was motivated largely by our concern with analytical convenience.

Fifty (25 per settlement) of these men were further randomly selected for in-depth individual interviewing (IDI), while the remaining 112 (56 per settlement) men were requested to participate in all-male focus group discussions (FGD). In each settlement, eight FGDs, comprising an average of seven men, were held. Both IDI and FGD questions sought respondents' understanding of the challenges of living in the communities, their ideas about how their communities can be transformed into better places to live and work, the barriers to this transformation, how real men behave in the community, what qualifies men in the community as real men, the expectations about men in the community, and the implications of the ways the communities' men express and perform themselves as men for the transformation of their communities into better places to live and work. IDIs were held in the homes of the men. But when respondents' homes were not ideal, alternative places were used. Individual interviews lasted an average of one hour and were all audio-recorded. FGDs were also held in settings that minimized interference by non-participants. Group discussions lasted an average of one and half hours.

### ***Data analyses***

Ethnographic notes and transcribed interviews, which were later translated into English, form the study data. Two professionals translated the interviews. Initially, one translator transcribed all the taped interviews from Swahili into English. The transcripts were then carefully compared with the taped interviews by the second translator. Both of the translators agreed on the final version of the transcripts. The interview data were first concurrently but independently coded by the author, two research assistants, and a professional qualitative data coder, relying on Creswell's (1997) version of Strauss and Corbin's (1990) grounded theory. Later, the lead author met with the coder to appraise the coding outcomes, ensure inter-coder concordance, and agree on a codebook that reflected the thematic categories of the responses and key issues emerging from data. Using a jointly developed codebook, transcribed interviews were then finally coded with Nvivo. We adopted a qualitative inductive approach involving thematic assessment of the narratives to understand the data. Higgins, Hirsch, and Trussell (2008) and Thomas (2003) contend that this approach promotes the detection of overriding themes in qualitative data as well as the understanding of the meanings and messages of themes through the continual investigation of narrative data for categories, linkages and properties. Verbatim quotations are occasionally used to show responses on significant issues and themes.

## **Findings**

### ***The participants***

The men we interviewed for this study were diverse in their characteristics. They were from different Kenyan ethnic groups and ranged in age from 25 to 64 years. Their median age stood roughly at 40 years. The majority of participants had primary or

secondary level education and were married. A substantial number of men in the sample were also not literate. In all, mean years of completed formal schooling among the men stood roughly at 10 years. Most of the men were unemployed or in petty-trading and casual employments as informal artisans [*jua kali*]. Participating men's duration of residence in the study sites ranged from two to forty years. Incomes were generally low among the men, averaging less than 8000 Kenyan shillings (\$100) monthly. The sample included both Muslims and Christians.

Participating men generally self-reported as economically insecure and poor, deeming life in their community to be both difficult and wretched. "*Maisha ni magumu hapa*" (life is difficult here), they would say with little prompting. The hardship in both settlements manifests in a variety of ways: households that could not send their children to school, had no means of livelihood, and have had children who suffered and died from physical abuse, malnutrition, and other avertable conditions; homeless men, women, and children; men and women who had no jobs, etc. In Viwa, one respondent put it thus: "Most families in this community don't have enough to eat. They sleep hungry and there is real misery. Here people even starve to death ... If you walk around you will see starving and sick people."

The men commonly shared an interest in the transformation of their community into safer and healthier settlements, expressing awareness of the lack of development, insecurity, and neglect in their neighborhoods. Men in one Koch FGD put it thus: "This is not the Koch we want to see. We want Koch to be a place where people come to live peacefully and do business without fear and where you can proudly call home ... and raise your children." In Viwa, similar sentiments were expressed: "Viwa is not the best place to live in ... It is insecure and dirty here and only poor people live here. We do not have opportunities ... Viwa can be improved so that we can be proud to live and work here." The improvements needed in Koch and Viwa reportedly included creating job opportunities, planning the communities, reducing crime, and building social amenities and infrastructure, such as health facilities, housing, schools, and roads. Both neighborhoods were also very unsanitary. Toilets, potable water, and other amenities were not available. Rape, crime, and violence were common in both slums and added to the insecurity of lives and property in the neighborhoods. One Koch man said: "We want our community to change. Most of us are tired of living here ... we have no choice. I share a room with my family of five; there is no food and no security." Men in Viwa also echoed the same view: "We want progress here ... this place is not good. That's why only poor people live here and it is not safe."

### ***Constraints to community development***

Recognitions of the potential of Koch and Viwa to become qualitatively better places dominated the narratives. Reportedly, residents of the two settlements want better life, understand what progress means, and were committed to their community's advancement. However, the transformation of the communities was reportedly not happening speedily. Long-time dwellers seized every opportunity to explain that their aspirations for a better community have failed to materialize. Their communities have remained impoverished, insecure, and marginalized. "I have lived here for over 12 years. Little has changed in terms of the quality of life in Koch," a Koch man asserted. "Viwa has been my home for 15 years now and I can tell you that life here has not improved. When I came here to live, there was no water. It is not different today," remarked Viwa resident, Ogolla. In the sections that follow, we describe responding men's views of the

key constraints to progress and development in their communities. We show that while underscoring the structural and contextual barriers to community development, men largely blamed inadequate masculinity for the lack of progress in their community.

Decline in true manliness was frequently mentioned as a major contributor to the lack of progress in Koch and Viwa. Evidence of decline in masculinity reportedly included men's increasing inability to provide for their household, marry and maintain stable families, and control their family, wives, and girlfriends; their growing involvement in homosexuality; and growing descent into alcoholism and laziness. "We are to blame for the poor state of affairs in this community. We do not act like real men here," admitted men in a Viwa FGD. Similar sentiments were expressed in Koch, where in both the FGDs and IDIs, men reported that things would have been different in the community had they (men) taken their roles more seriously. As we were told, Koch and Viwa have remained socially and economically backward because men had neglected their role as leaders, guardians, providers, and protectors. "Things are like this in Koch because men here behave like women. Men here are not really men. We do not act like real men." Men, reportedly, can foster progress, but only when they unleash themselves as real men. Responding men frequently asserted that they had failed in their responsibilities as community and household heads and leaders. Several slum men reportedly were not gainfully employed, did not work very hard, and were alcoholics. Men had also allowed women to take over their responsibility. It was considered natural for men to lead communities and provide for families and households. Responding men described themselves as leaders who should stand up in defense of what is right, good, and progressive for their communities. However, as many of them noted, they have failed to provide this leadership in different spheres.

Overall, the men accepted responsibility for the deprived state of their communities; they had not lived up to their natural bidding as men, had not worked hard enough, were fearful, and had not provided adequate guidance and leadership to their households and families. Put simply, they had failed as men. Narratives suggested that few true men lived in the communities. The bulk of slum men were considered failures, unable to deliver on their roles as men or help their communities thrive. Men in the slum were not disciplined and did not exercise self-restraint and control. By not performing themselves in truly masculine ways, men reportedly contributed to the lack of progress in Koch and Viwa. For instance, homosexual men, repeatedly cited to drive home the unmanliness that reportedly characterized Koch and Viwa, were blamed for HIV infections, rape of young people, lack of progress, and moral decadence in the community. They were also considered bad role models for community members, particularly young people.

Men expressed awareness of the structural and contextual constraints to the transformation of their communities, citing government's neglect and poverty as constraints to progress and development in Koch and Viwa. Responding men argued that successive governments in Kenya have not paid mind to the needs of the two communities: "Viwa would have improved if government showed concern for their plight. Viwa cannot develop without government's support." This view parallels the information we elicited from Koch men during an FGD: "The key barrier to progress and transformation in Koch is government's neglect. Just look at the community and you will see that government has neglected us." Lack of quality infrastructure and social services, insecurity of lives and property in the communities, and poor economic opportunities for dwellers were among the reported indicators of government mistreatment. Responding men noted that the idea of slum upgrading has been discussed for many years by successive

governments in Kenya, without anything to show for it. Narratives blamed corrupt politicians for frustrating efforts to upgrade and transform their neighborhoods.

Poverty was also reported by men as a major constraint to development and progress in Koch and Viwa. Explanations of poverty in relation to community development emphasized the impact of poor livelihoods on men's ability to provide effectively for their families. Few men in the communities reportedly had good jobs, marketable skills, or even the social networks to secure profitable jobs. Households were thus generally poor, often without food, quality housing, and savings. Heightened poverty was blamed for the high-level crime, moral decadence, and violence that contributed to insecurity in Koch and Viwa. "There is no way this community can transform easily into a better place with the level of poverty of here," noted one Koch man. "We don't have enough to eat, can't send our children to good schools, or even pay for treatment. This prevents development here," offered a Viwa man.

### ***Men, masculinity, and community development***

While they largely blamed themselves for the lack of progress in their community, men also generally considered themselves as key to community development. Without men, we were told, communities will not grow or transform into more livable and progressive neighborhoods. Of course, the men we studied recognized the importance of women and children in community development, but they indicated their own (men's) primary criticality to the process. "Only men can lead the development of communities." One man asserted. Another maintained: "You know that men are leaders...you cannot expect women and children to lead transformation or change in any community. It is men who do such things." Men reportedly knew what was good for their communities better than women. They could thus better lead and oversee community development and progress. Besides, community leadership was frequently considered as real men's natural role and responsibility. They could not abdicate this role to women. In the passages that follow, we discuss men's views of themselves in relation to community development.

Traditional patriarchal masculinity practices – breadwinnerhood, heterosexuality, dominance of women (including sexism and homophobia) – were at the core of men's construction of masculinity and indeed their role in community development. Responding men suggested that "properly masculine" men provided and catered for their families. "Real men cater and provide adequately for his family," men in both slums repeatedly said. In both communities, generally, breadwinnerhood defined hierarchies of manliness. Indications of the supremacy of breadwinnerhood as a masculine norm characterize everyday life in Koch and Viwa. For instance, men unable to provide for their families or who relied on women for their sustenance were common targets of degrading banter and, sometimes, violence. They were not considered true men.

The centrality of men's breadwinning and provisioning role for community well-being and progress was a central feature of the narratives we collected. As we were told in one FGD, communities develop or progress when men are able to meet their breadwinner roles, provide adequately for their families, and guide their families. By providing for their families, men guaranteed community progress, protected their children and women, and ensured the next generation of responsible people. Mwangi, a 38-year-old man, puts it thus: "The progress of this community depends on men. When we cannot provide, our children will not go to school and will not grow into responsible people, our wives will be sick, and nothing good will happen in the community." He further

asserted that communities fail to progress when men are unable to provide adequately for their families. Moral decay, juvenile delinquency, sex work, and crime in the communities were all said to follow men's failure to provide for their families, discipline their wards, and offer guidance to the community. Thirty-year old Mutua also noted: "If you look around in this community you will see that fatherless boys become criminals and make this community insecure." A similar argument was made about girls and women; the absence of capable fathers and husbands push them into sex work, exposing them to sicknesses and preventing community advancement.

Narratives underscored the centrality of male heterosexuality in community development. Without heterosexual men, children will not be born, and women will not have husbands. Communities would become dysfunctional, failing to progress and change. "Without husbands and fathers, communities will stagnate and suffer," a Koch man said. Men in one Viwa FGD agreed that: "Men father the children that keep this community alive ... we are the husbands to the women of this community, without us there will be no children born and no women getting married ... there will be no Viwandani without men to father children and marry women." It was generally believed that children and women would suffer and sink into depravity without the support of fathers and husbands. Women reportedly had low capacity for provisioning. They could not effectively replace men as breadwinners or providers. Rumors of male homosexuality circulated widely in both communities. In many instances, gay men were considered sick and deficient; they needed medical and spiritual help. They were also generally considered dangerous to communities. 'Imagine that all men were all homosexuals, how do you think children would be born or how will women here marry? This community will just die off,' remarked a 47-year-old Koch man.

Men also contributed to community development by being fully masculine, generally defined in terms of toughness, hardiness, and rejection of femininity. "We help our community by being real men, not women. People can come in here and destroy this community if we don't show them that we are men, not women," noted one Viwa man. Men's control of women was also reportedly key to community development. Without proper control, women could destroy communities. They were reportedly frivolous, weak, and easy, needing strong control and vigilance. Men's use of force or the threat of it to control women reportedly resulted in occasional harm to women, but it was, nonetheless, critical to the discipline of women and the progress and wellbeing of communities.

Men's narratives equated cowardly men with women; they easily give up in the face of difficulties. True men were resolute and tough and did not relent easily. Their toughness enabled them to protect their families and households and safeguard their communities and neighborhoods. The slums were considered unsafe and insecure places. They were not places for timid and faint-hearted persons. By keeping their families safe from the vicissitudes and insecurities of slum life, men said they advanced community progress. Men generally admitted that masculine violence negatively affected community progress. It made communities unsafe, causing fear, and stifling advancement. One Viwa man said: "Violence harms the community. It causes conflict and insecurity and frustrates progress." However, masculine violence was also constituted as protective of communities. For 32-year-old Joney, people fear coming to Koch to harass community members because they knew that men in the community are tough and will fight back. "No community can develop without men who can fight and defend and keep their community safe," he said.

## Discussion and conclusion

The direct views of men on manliness and community development are poorly explored. In this work, we have highlighted views regarding masculinity in relation to community development among men in slum settlements in Kenya. Participating men acknowledged that they are (or play a role in) the problem and also suggested they (more than women) are the solution to the socioeconomic backwardness in their communities. Previous research shows a tendency among masculinity-threatened men to simultaneously claim they have failed in their responsibilities and to reinforce the patriarchal ideal of self-sufficient, individualistic men by also claiming they were the only ones capable of solving the resulting problems (Messner, 1997; Poling & Kirkley, 2000; van Leeuwe, 1997).

Slum men's emphasis on local masculinity practices and norms in relation to community development reflects, to a large extent, the consequences of "crisis of masculinity" and declining sense of self-reliance and importance among poor urban Kenyan men (Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis, 2006; Musila, 2009; Van Stapele, 2007). Traditionally, male power in Kenya derived from and was reinforced through rites of passage, bride-wealth payments, patrilocal residence, and men's control of livelihoods (Chiuri, 2008; Karega, 2010). But currently, urbanization, rising poverty, increasing unemployment, migration, the erosion of traditional livelihood systems, neo-localism, women's increasing participation in household provisioning, men's emergent incapacity to pay bride wealth, and the rise of marital relationships in which men have diminished control of women, have initiated fundamental changes in gender roles and relations (Meth, 2009; Silberschmidt, 1999, 2001, 2004; Thomas, 2003). These processes have resulted in widespread uncertainties among poor urban Kenyan men about how to "be" men and the meanings of manhood, resulting in gender role tension or "discrepancy strain" (Levant, 1997; Mahalik, 1999; Pleck, 1995; Silberschmidt, 1999, 2004). In their work, Amuyunzu-Nyamongo and Francis (2006) argue that the hegemony of provider and breadwinner masculinity in a context of extreme poverty has produced a large number of men subordinated in the hierarchies of masculinity, resulting in the loss of male ego, shaky sense of worth, feelings of gender anxiety, sense of irrelevance and powerlessness as well as growing tendency among men resort to violent and over-compensatory masculine behaviors, including extreme sexism and homophobia.

Interestingly, in describing their role in community development, the men we studied underscored the importance of narrowly defined expectations of masculinity. They mapped themselves into community development as key actors, emphasizing conventional norms of masculinity in their valuation of their responsibility and role in community development. Theorists and practitioners have continued to hail the rejection of conventional masculinity norms and gender inequality as key to community development. Hearn, Pringle, Pease, and Ruspini (2011) noted that the transformation of communities requires that human relations become more gender just and equitable. Cornwall et al. (2011) argued that men's denunciation of the patriarchy is key to the transformation of societies. Holter (2011) noted that Norway, as a whole, witnessed important socioeconomic progress by encouraging men to adopt more gender equitable practices. Similar arguments have been made about other several other societies and contexts (Bannon & Correia, 2006; Dworkin, Hatcher, Colvin, & Peacock, 2013; Welsh, 2010).

The data presented in this article indicate that men are willing to support their communities to change. But while they see themselves as key to this process of change and are willing to support it, they may not necessarily conceive of gender equity and justice

as important for community development and process. The slum men we studied predicated community development and progress on their tenacious performance and enactment of themselves in terms of traditional norms of manliness, most of which are not supportive of gender equality. For them, the single most important role for men in community development was to act their “true” gender, to enact themselves according to local norms of masculinity, to be real men in the traditional patriarchal sense. This has critical implications for the current emphasis of community development theory and practice on inclusive communities, change from below, community leadership as well as the integration of local perspectives and key groups in community development work (Gilchrist, 2009; Kirk & Shutte, 2004; Shortall, 2008). However, as we show in this study, the idea that the men have to change in order for community development to materialize will not resonate universally. For some men, the future of their communities lies in their continued capacity to perform themselves in fully patriarchal ways, rather than in more gender equitable ways. Judging by our findings, while community development workers and practitioners have to do more to “meet men where they are,” they also urgently need innovative strategies for “changing men where they are.”

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