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*Smith College*

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Sarah Elspeth Coughtry  
Patriarchy and the Trap of  
Masculinity: A Post-Colonial  
Analysis of Violence against  
Sexual Minorities in Uganda

## ABSTRACT

This theoretical study examines the causes and socio-historical factors behind male-perpetrated violence against sexual minorities in Uganda. Violence against sexual minorities is a widely overlooked societal problem in Uganda, as it is in many areas of the world where homosexual acts are criminalized. As sexual minorities gain visibility and seek basic human rights in their country, they are met with a violent backlash fueled by homophobia and heterosexist ideology. Most of these acts of violence are committed by males, and many go unreported. While various theorists have explored how homophobia, heterosexism and patriarchy play a role in violence against sexual minorities, I believe there is much more to the picture, especially in a country like Uganda with a complicated colonial past. In this study I examine factors that may cause this homophobic violence through two theoretical lenses: studies of masculinity, and studies of violence. Through both lenses I analyze why males are conditioned in patriarchal societies to commit acts of violence, why these acts of violence are often directed at sexual minorities, and how the long history of colonialism and the continued influences of neo-colonialism and international power dynamics continue to shape the situation in Uganda today.

**PATRIARCHY AND THE TRAP OF MASCULINITY:  
A POST-COLONIAL ANALYSIS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST SEXUAL MINORITIES  
IN UGANDA**

A project based upon an independent investigation,  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Masters of Social Work.

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Northampton, Massachusetts, 01063

2011

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*Aluta Continua.*

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Violence against sexual minorities is a critical issue faced by our contemporary global society. In recent years countries around the world have witnessed an increased momentum in the struggle for sexual minority rights as well as an increased backlash against them. All too often, this backlash takes the form of violence.

This violence is especially prevalent in countries where sexual minorities (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, intersex, queer, and fluid, among others, also referred to as LGBTI; Holmes, 2003) remain culturally unaccepted and stigmatized. Those who identify as LGBTI – and even those who are heterosexual but are mistaken for LGBTI – suffer from violence that ranges from verbal abuse and harassment to emotional abuse, threats, sexual harassment, “corrective” rape (used as a means to forcibly “correct” ones sexual orientation; Haiku, 2010), physical assaults, public humiliation, and death (Harper & Schneider, 2003; Tamale, 2007). The number of documented hate crimes committed against individuals based on sexual orientation in the U.S. in 2007 was reported between 1,265 and 1,460 (Johnson, n.d.; Political Research Associates, 2010) – and this only reflects one country in which such violence takes place. Most often, this violence is perpetrated by men (Comstock, 1991; Ehrlich, 1992; Harry, 1992; Mason, 1997; Messerschmidt, 1993; Tomsen & Mason, 2001).

The country of Uganda, where strict gender norms are imbedded in the culture, is no exception. Uganda has received a great deal of international attention over the past several years due to its heated internal debate regarding homosexuality. Sexual minorities in Uganda face

oppression, violence, and general threat to their safety and diminished quality of life. Those that are suspected of being homosexual or gender variant suffer from harassment, discrimination in jobs and housing, arbitrary eviction from schools, exclusion from churches and their families, and lack of access to proper medical care (conversations with sexual minority activists, November 10<sup>th</sup> 2010). Many live in constant fear of being beaten, assaulted, raped, or killed, and too often this is the reality (Hollander, 2009). Unfortunately there are no official statistics of the discrimination and violence faced by sexual minorities in Uganda due to lack of research and the country's institutionalized condemnation of homosexuality.

This theoretical study seeks to provide an in-depth exploration of an area where little literature currently exists. While Uganda has received a great deal of international attention for its anti-homosexuality rhetoric in the past few years, little attention has been paid to the factors – especially the international and historical factors – that have led to current situation. As a developing country, Uganda is often at the whim of the western press and media to define how its story will be disseminated to the worldwide public and, in this process, many details risk being lost. A one-dimensional story emerges that speaks of African homophobia and threatens to miss important realities of the dynamics at play. In order to make visible these dynamics, and to give needed attention to the men who perpetrate such violence, I will describe and critically examine the phenomenon of male-perpetrated violence against sexual minorities in Uganda and the socio-historical factors that contribute to this violence.

An important aspect in this study is its focus on masculinities in Uganda. Few studies have explored the values, perspectives, beliefs, and experiences of male perpetrators of violence, and instead these men are often seen in one-dimensional ways (Lehmann & Simmons, 2009; Speizer, 2010; Walker, Neighbors, Mbilinyi, O'Rourke, Zegree, & Roffman, 2010). By not

accounting for the full range of experiences of men who commit acts of violence, and not exploring in depth the possible reasons for these acts of violence, we are missing vital aspects of the picture. In the past few decades researchers have begun to closely examine male gender roles and how men, like women, are gendered to behave in patriarchal societies, often limiting their perceived choices of expression (Connell, 2005; Karner, 1998; Pollack, 1998; Robinson, 2000). Researchers have explored how all genders can suffer as a result of rigid processes of genderization (Connell, 2005; Karner, 1998; Pollack, 1998; Robinson, 2000); however it must be noted that these engendering processes vary greatly from culture to culture, and cannot be summarized in oversimplified discussions (Kersten, 1996). Cultures undergoing transitions in traditional gender roles, like Uganda, experience increased tension and conflict as a result of clashing values and ideals, thereby leaving all genders in need of increased support through such transitional periods. Ugandan men, and particularly men who are violent, represent a population that is neglected by research in the examination of the root causes of violence. As a result, the victims of such violence – in this case, sexual minorities – continue to be victims so long as the phenomenon is not fully understood.

Violence inflicted against sexual minorities in Uganda involves many complex factors, each one contributing its spice to the sauce, so to speak. As sexual minorities gain visibility and advocate for rights both locally and worldwide, Uganda's patriarchal norms of masculinity are challenged. Additionally there are co-existing factors that include high levels of militarization and societal violence; shifting gender roles and a global enhancement of women's rights; religious influence both nationally and internationally; and the pervasive effects of colonialism, all of which add to an already complex situation. Uganda not only represents a microcosm of the interaction between patriarchal masculinity, violence, homophobia, and shifting cultural values



that is occurring in many areas of the world today, but the country is also facing a great deal of international attention due to its heated internal debate regarding homosexuality. Using Uganda as the focal point for this theoretical exploration, I will explicate the need to take a closer look at the causes of male-perpetrated violence against sexual minorities.

### **Research Questions**

This study seeks to explore the roots of such violence. In order to explore this phenomenon in detail, I will look at both masculinity and violence as separate but intersecting elements. I will examine the reasons why a person – and specifically a Ugandan male person raised in a patriarchal, post-colonial society – is compelled to commit a violent act against another human being – particularly someone that identifies as, or is suspected to be, LGBTI. Specifically I ask: What are the societal and historical factors that contribute to and promote the use of violence by Ugandan males? What makes sexual minorities the specific targets of this violence? How do the interacting elements of masculinity, religion, and colonialism shape this violence, and how are the forces of globalization and neo-colonialism continuing to influence this violence today?

### **Methodology**

I attempt to answer these questions in a theoretical manner by examining and analyzing the phenomenon through two lenses. First, I provide a historical backdrop by describing the setting of Uganda and examining the historical evolution of same-sex practices in pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial times. I pay special attention to the role of religion and its connection to homophobia and violence against sexual minorities. I then go on to explore separately the two most notable factors of the equation: masculinity and violence. Each of these factors serves as a lens with which to view the phenomenon, taking into account the full historical evolution of each

factor from pre-colonial times to current day. I then integrate these lenses into the final discussion.

While there are many factors that influence violence against sexual minorities in Uganda, such as politics, the media, and the widening generational gap, among others (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003; Tamale, 2007), it is beyond the scope and time limitations of this research to examine them all. For the purpose of brevity, I have therefore limited my study to examining male-perpetrated physical violence against the LGBTI community, with specific emphasis on the elements of masculinity and violence. I do this for two reasons: (1) because the majority of violent crimes are perpetrated by males (Comstock, 1991; Ehrlich, 1992; Harry, 1992; Mason, 1997; Messerschmidt, 1993; Tomsen & Mason, 2001), and (2) because there appears to be an association among masculinity, patriarchy, homophobia, and the promotion of violence that is much in need of examination. In chapter III I give additional attention to the role of religion; however I am unable to give this topic the full attention it deserves as an integral factor in violence against sexual minorities. While sexual minorities also suffer a great deal of emotional and mental violence, I further limit the scope of the study to physical violence; however I believe that many of the findings of this study could be extended to other types of violence as well.

Situating these perspectives within their historical contexts while emphasizing the continued effects of colonialism, I elucidate the intersectionalities between colonialism, patriarchal masculinity, the threat posed by gender non-conformity, and how violence is used as a means of keeping a system in check. I further emphasize how we cannot look at such a phenomenon as simply a result of individual factors, such as mental ill-health, or a result of faulty societal values. Violence against sexual minorities stems from complex and tangled roots and in order to fully address such a phenomenon, we must be willing to fully understand the

complex nature of its origins. From a theoretically grounded standpoint, I offer suggestions for ways forward in prevention and intervention.

### **Theoretical Orientation**

Many theories suggest reasons for the existence and intensity of homophobia, including queer, feminist, structural, and socio-historical theories, among others (Adam, 1998). As early as the 1980's, researchers were investigating the motivations behind homophobic violence (Bohn, 1983-1984). Tomsen and Mason (2001) explored the ways in which violence against sexual minorities can be used by male perpetrators as a method of “attainment and protection of a masculine identity” (Tomsen & Mason, 2001, p. 257). Stotzer (2006) expanded upon research that suggests homophobic hate crimes are a way for men to assert their masculinity in the face of gender non-conformity. Other researchers have explored how these theories of patriarchy and masculinity might apply to homophobia as seen in Africa today, and assert that such theories cannot be used without paying attention to the influences of colonialism (Epprecht, 2005).

This study is located within two perspectives – one of masculinity and one of violence – each providing a lens from which to analyze the phenomenon in a more critical way. While each perspective focuses on its historical development, it also relies to a varying extent on related theoretical literature.

### **Masculinities**

From the perspective of masculinities, I explore the theory that violence against sexual minorities is a means of maintaining patriarchal power, and that men in this system are taught by society that this is a reasonable way of handling potential threat (Bohn, 1983-1984; Connell, 2005; Kimmel, 1997; Stotzer, 2006; Tomsen and Mason, 2001). In patriarchal systems that enforce strict gender roles, those that do not conform to such roles (such as sexual minorities) are

seen as threatening to those that hold power – namely, heterosexual men. As men in many societies are taught to embrace and utilize violence, inflicting violence against anyone who threatens these gender norms is a likely way to keep the system in place and maintain power and authority. However, few researchers have examined how this particular tendency can be applied to homophobia in Africa, where the males dominating the patriarchal system are disempowered themselves through long histories of colonialism and global inequality (Adam, 1998). Uganda's complex history of colonialism adds density to the situation in ways that cannot be ignored, and for this reason I use a historical lens to shed light on the influence of colonialism and post-colonial governments on expressions of masculinity in Uganda.

### **Violence**

From the perspective of violence I use a particular theory presented by James Gilligan (2001) on the social causes of violence. Gilligan's theory emphasizes how inequality and shame contribute to the use of violence by males in patriarchal societies. According to his theory, inequality (such as socioeconomic disparity) creates an internal feeling of shame; this shame is then projected onto other objects or people; and violence against them becomes a means of coping with or eliminating this shame (Gilligan, 2001). When combined with the lens of Ugandan masculinities, this theory offers a helpful framework for understanding the violence against sexual minorities occurring in Uganda today.

### **Chapter Sequence**

This theoretical study consists of six chapters. In this first chapter I give an overview and rationale for the study and I describe the methodology to be used. The second chapter contains definitions of the important terms and concepts that will be used throughout the study, followed by a brief historical overview of Uganda so that the reader is well-situated in the context. In

chapter III I provide an overview of the phenomenon of violence against sexual minorities in Uganda, beginning with the history of same-sex practices from pre-colonial through post-colonial times and ending with a description of the present-day situation.

In the fourth chapter I use the lens of masculinities to describe the historical evolution of masculinities in Uganda and how these have intersected with violence and homophobia at various points. I include a brief overview of theories linking patriarchal masculinity to homophobia. In the fifth chapter I present the historical evolution of violence in Uganda and then discuss Gilligan's social theory of violence (Gilligan, 2001). In the sixth and final chapter I offer a discussion in which all of the intersecting factors contributing to violence against sexual minorities are analyzed through these two lenses. I conclude this discussion with suggestions for prevention and intervention and suggestions for future research.

### **Methodology and Approach**

For a theoretical study, data collection and analysis consisted of an extensive review and exploration of literature and theory. While collecting this data I used the two aforementioned lenses as focal points from which to analyze and expand upon the previous research and literature. I used an inductive method of theory-building in which I began with observations of the phenomenon and existing literature, sought out patterns, and made conclusions based on these patterns. As my research is grounded solely on theory and no first-hand data was collected, all conclusions are tentative and speculative. My methods were flexible over the course of data collection and analysis: as information drove my research, I allowed for approaches to evolve as needed.

## **Contributions to the Field**

Findings from this study will contribute to the field of social work in many ways. By conducting a more thorough investigation of male-perpetrated violence against sexual minorities in Uganda, I hope to add to the existing literature so that health professionals, human rights advocates, and policy-makers can more effectively attend to methods of prevention and intervention. On a clinical level, it is essential that social workers and other mental health professionals understand the motives behind any kind of violence, whether we are working with victims, perpetrators, or bystanders. On a social change level, any type of policy work requires a thorough understanding of the problem at hand and the causes of this problem. Without an in-depth problem analysis, we cannot hope to find lasting solutions. As researchers have shown, many of the current interventions only serve to perpetuate a culture of violence, however unintentional this may be (Gilligan, 2001). It is my hope that this research will lend itself to more thoughtful and effective approaches to intervention, while benefiting the greater movement for sexual minority rights and freedoms.

## **Study Strengths, Limitations, and Biases**

I have chosen a theoretical approach toward this research for several reasons, although it is certainly not without its limitations. Firstly and most importantly, the current climate around homosexuality in Uganda is quite heated and often outright hostile. To approach such a research topic from a qualitative or quantitative angle would have required a great deal of direct interaction with people around a very sensitive and often volatile topic. In order to ensure the safety and respect the well-being of the population in question, I chose to keep my initial research in this area theoretical.

Another benefit of theoretical research is that it allows me to closely examine, make meaning of, and identify patterns within existing information. Reviewing the literature from a removed angle gives me the opportunity to see things that original researchers may not have seen, and identify patterns or ideas that were missed in original work. Combining multiple perspectives and utilizing theories in a new way can lead to new discoveries and insights, and offer a deep exploration of the phenomenon.

Theoretical research has its limitations, however, the most obvious of which is the distance it creates between researcher and subject matter. As I have not collected data through qualitative interviews and am going entirely by an analysis of literature, I am subject to the biases of this literature itself and the shortcomings inherent when there is such a dearth of information to begin with. Undertaking a qualitative research study of the same phenomenon could potentially yield a much richer analysis of the experiences of the population in question, namely male perpetrators of violence; however such an approach would be difficult in a non-conducive environment, especially when administered by a foreign white female.

Another limitation is that theoretical research relies heavily on analysis of historical literature, and much of this particular research depends on information from pre-colonial times. Uganda's pre-colonial history is based on oral traditions and lacks the written records so valued by historians today. Bakare-Yusuf (2003, p.7) states, referring specifically to pre-colonial gender roles in Africa:

These external impositions and internal historical processes have combined to distort, modify and transform African gender relations in a way that makes it difficult to speak in absolute terms about the meaning and experience of gendered existence, without retrospectively projecting our present ideals and anxieties onto the past.

I will attempt to describe the existence and presentation of same-sex practices, masculinity, and violence in pre-colonial times, with the awareness that such information is very often documented through the eyes of colonizing forces and is therefore subject to distortion and misrepresentation (Briggs, 2007; Murray, 2004; Murray & Roscoe, 1998).

Lastly, it is important to keep in mind the tribal and ethnic diversity within Uganda throughout the focus of this study (Ekwe-Ekwe, 1993; Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005). Uganda is not one unified, homogenous culture but consists of many diverse tribal groups, and these cultures are not static in nature. Although most tribes share certain values and often appear similar, there are always differences. While it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the intricacies and differences among each of the different tribes of Uganda, such scholarship is important and would greatly advance the studies of gender and violence in Uganda today. I acknowledge that this study threatens to oversimplify the phenomenon by speaking about “Ugandans” as a general term. Therefore, while considering the influence of history and culture on current-day homophobia and masculinity, I ask that the reader keep in mind the diversity of the people of Uganda as well as the fluid and dynamic nature of culture.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I provided an introduction to the phenomenon of male-perpetrated violence against sexual minorities in Uganda, and explained why investigating the roots of this violence is important in addressing such violence effectively. I introduced the research question and described the methodology that will be used to examine this question throughout the next five chapters. I then discussed the contributions I hope to make to the field with this research, as well as the biases and limitations inherent in such research. In the following chapter, I will



elaborate on terms and concepts that will be used throughout the study and provide the reader with a brief historical backdrop of the study's location.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **DEFINITION OF TERMS AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Many social workers and mental health professionals from the west do not have a knowledgeable background in the subjects addressed in this research. In order for the reader to feel situated in the subject, I have dedicated the following two chapters to painting the backdrop of the study and describing the phenomenon that will be researched. In this chapter I provide an overview of terms and concepts that will be used throughout the study so the reader feels comfortable linguistically. I also introduce an alternative conceptualization of *gender-based violence* that focuses on violence against sexual minorities. I then provide a brief topography and history of the country of Uganda so the reader will be better able to grasp the context and historical analyses of same-sex practices, masculinity, and violence that follow in chapters III, IV and V.

#### **Definition of Terms**

The discourse of this research includes the use of many terms that call for the reader's familiarity with their concepts. I begin by defining the terms related to sexuality and gender identity, and then shift to definitions of patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, homophobia and heterosexism, and gender-based violence. I will then conclude with an expanded definition of gender-based violence that is inclusive of violence against sexual minorities.

#### **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

It is important that the reader first be familiar with terms commonly used when discussing sexual minorities. The following terms and definitions were compiled by Holmes

(2003) from a variety of sources. *Sex* refers to the biological, physical, and anatomical make-up of a person: the physical and genetic features that make someone male or female (p. 16).

*Gender*, on the other hand, is a social construct that determines at birth the non-biological characteristics of a boy/man or a girl/woman (p. 4-5). As Connell (2005) says in her research on masculinities, “Gender exists precisely to the extent that biology does *not* determine the social” (p. 71). Gender is how a person sees themselves, and how society perceives them, on a spectrum from masculine to feminine traits. Upon birth, the majority of females are assigned the gender of girl/woman, while the majority of males are assigned the gender of boy/man. Gender also dictates behavior, expression, and to whom one should be attracted. That is, males are men, should behave in masculine ways, and should be attracted to females; and females are women, should behave in feminine ways, and should be attracted to males. In most traditional societies, gender is seen as binary with men on one side and women on the other, and no room for variation in between (Holmes, 2003, p. 5). As will be described below, gender is now increasingly perceived as existing along a continuum or spectrum, with a wide variety of possible genders and gender expressions (p. 8)

*Sexual orientation* refers to whom an individual is attracted (Holmes, 2003).

*Heterosexual* implies opposite-sex attractions, while *homosexual*, including lesbian and gay, refers to same-sex attractions. *Bisexual* and *pansexual* include those that are attracted to either gender or all genders, respectively, and *asexual* refers to someone who has no sexual attractions.

*Gender identity* is separate from sexual orientation and is concerned with how a person identifies as masculine or feminine (Holmes, 2003). *Transgender* refers to someone who identifies as the opposite gender of their biological sex at birth; *transsexual* is someone who also identifies in this way and has gone through surgical or hormonal procedures to transition to the

gender with which they identify. *Intersex* describes someone who is born – biologically, anatomically or chromosomally – with characteristics of both male and female sexes. *Gender queer* is a term more recently used to define someone who identifies their gender in a fluid way - either somewhere between the male/female spectrum, somewhere outside of the gender construct altogether, or changing from day to day.

*Gender roles*, which I will also refer to as *gender norms*, are the rules a society creates that dictate how men and women are expected to behave based on their gender (Holmes, 2003). For instance women in many societies are expected to raise children, cook, and be more compassionate, while men are expected to earn money, protect their families, and be more aggressive. *Gender conformity* refers to how someone conforms, given their biological sex, to the socially constructed gender and gender roles that accompany this biology. Those that are *gender-variant*, or *gender non-conforming*, are seen as violating the dominant expectations of how a person of their biological sex should behave, dress, appear, or interact. It is important to keep in mind that such perceptions of conformity are heavily influenced by culture.

The acronym *LGBT* is used to encompass a range of non-heterosexual identities (Holmes, 2003). Standing for *lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender*, this term addresses both sexual orientation and gender identity. In many communities the acronym includes additional letters, such as *I* for *intersex*, *Q* for *queer* or *questioning*, and/or *F* for *fluid*. In recent years the term *queer* – formerly used as a derogatory insult against non-heterosexual people – has been reclaimed by the LGBT community in much of the world and used as a proud marker of identity. Queer also implies a fluidity that counters some of the identity boxes created by the other letters, implying that one can identify in many categories simultaneously or outside of these categories altogether. For the purposes of this paper I will refer to the community in question as LGBTI, as

that is the term most widely used by non-heterosexual and gender non-conforming Ugandans themselves. Another term I will use interchangeably with this acronym is *sexual minority*, referring to anyone who is not in the majority position of being heterosexual and gender conforming (Holmes, 2003).

## **Patriarchy**

*Patriarchy* is a societal system whereby men hold a disproportionate amount of power over women, who are subsequently made inferior and subjugated to discrimination based on their sex (Patriarchy, 2011). More traditional patriarchal societies place power specifically in the hands of the father or head male of the family or clan, with younger males coming next in the hierarchy and women and children falling toward the bottom. The majority of societies around the world are patriarchal in nature, with no known matriarchal societies in existence, though some are closer to egalitarian and may be matrilineal (Lerner, 1986; Matriarchy, 2011).

While the origins of patriarchy are not well known, some scholars date the existence of institutional patriarchy to 500-600 B.C. in the ancient Middle East (Lerner, 1986). In patriarchal societies women are commonly seen as property of men, and their reproduction and sexuality is controlled by men as a commodity. Their participation in greater societal decision-making and operation is limited if not entirely excluded. Women in patriarchal cultures are viewed as inherently inferior to men physically, intellectually, and/or morally, and thereby their limited rights are justified. Christianity and other monotheistic religions serve to perpetuate and justify patriarchy through the belief in an all-powerful male God. Stories such as that of Adam and Eve, which describes how man was made in the original image of God and that woman was then created from man, give the male sex a kind of spiritual superiority over females.

Modern theorists understand patriarchy to be a social construction that is not based in any kind of biological fact (Lerner, 1986). While traditional societies may appear more patriarchal, developed countries continue to reinforce the belief of male superiority through both institutionalized and family practices.

### **Hegemonic Masculinity**

*Hegemonic masculinity* refers to the form of masculinity within a given culture that is seen as the most powerful or dominant (Connell, 2005). It tends to be the masculinity to which males are taught to aspire and respect, and all other forms of masculinity (as well as femininity) are seen as inferior to this ideal standard. Whether the majority of males actually resemble the ideal form of hegemonic masculinity does little to detract from its powerful image in most societies. As Connell describes:

Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell, 2005, p. 77).

Hegemonic masculinity is not a static or unchanging concept, as various researchers have explored in their studies on masculinities (Connell, 2005; Morrell, 2001; Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005), and it can be challenged by alternative masculinities. As much of this paper will focus on studies of masculinities, and specifically masculinities in Uganda, I will often refer to Connell's and Morrell's work in my exploration of the existence and presentation of hegemonic masculinity within Uganda.

## **Homophobia and Heterosexism**

*Homophobia* was first defined in the 1960's to refer to the "irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality or homosexuals" (Herek, 1997-2010; Homophobia, 2011, no page number). Another term used in conjunction is *heterosexism*, which holds the assumption that to be heterosexual is normal, natural, and superior, and to be homosexual is to be deviant, evil, disturbed, or otherwise inferior (Herek, 1997-2010; Holmes, 2003). It also assumes that all people are indeed heterosexual, except the few minority that are visibly other. There exists some disagreement about the accuracy and use of these terms in describing anti-LGBTI sentiments (Herek, 1997-2010; Plummer, 2001). The term *homophobia* can be problematic because of its use of the word *phobia*, which implies an irrational fear residing within the individual. Many people who exhibit anti-LGBTI attitudes do not fit the clinical picture of having such a phobia. Further, *homophobia* places its focus on the perceived homosexual victim in a way that can manifest discursively as blaming the victim (Plummer, 2001). The term *heterosexism* is thought by some to be a more appropriate description for the discrimination against sexual minorities because of its linguistic similarity to other forms of prejudice, such as sexism and racism. However, like its cousin phrase *sexual prejudice*, it does not effectively encompass prejudice based on gender identity. For the purposes of this paper I will use the terms *homophobia* and *heterosexism* interchangeably when referring to the discrimination and prejudice faced by sexual minorities, while noting their limitations here.

*Institutional oppression* results from the way a society or culture is set up to privilege one group of people over another (Holmes, 2003). Avenues such as politics, the media, educational systems, economic opportunities, religion, and dominant discourses all intersect to perpetuate the discrimination of some for the benefit of others, based on group inclusion and exclusion.

Because it exists in aspects of everyday life that are often taken for granted and not questioned, institutional oppression is a challenging barrier to overcome for those that are seeking equal rights. *Internalized oppression*, on the other hand, is when a person who is a member of an oppressed group comes to believe the discriminatory discourse about them, thereby believing that they are inherently inferior (Holmes, 2003). This type of oppression is a common side effect of homophobia and an all too common occurrence in the LGBTI community. Both institutional and internalized oppression is widespread in almost every country throughout the world, and results in discrimination against LGBTI individuals that ranges from subtle to deadly. Because of this discrimination, many LGBTI individuals remain *in the closet*, keeping their sexuality or gender identity hidden from the public. Those that do not hide themselves are referred to as being *out of the closet*, or simply “out” (Holmes, 2003).

### **Hate Crimes and Other Violence**

Violence against sexual minorities can include emotional, verbal, and physical violence, as described in chapter I. A *hate crime* is a term used to describe a crime whose assailant was motivated by the gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, race, national origin, or other defining feature of the victim (Holmes, 2003). Other areas of discrimination against LGBTI individuals include housing, employment, medical attention, political activity, childcare and family rights, to name a few (Harper & Schneider, 2003). In each of these areas individuals are denied equal access to benefits and basic human rights that are freely given to other members of society, based merely on their sexual orientation or gender identity. If we take a broad definition of violence to include the mental and emotional suffering inflicted upon a person, we must also include these forms of discrimination in our discussion of violence against sexual minorities. However for the purposes of this paper, I will be focusing specifically on the physical violence



inflicted upon sexual minorities, such as hate crimes. At times I will substitute the term *homophobic violence* for *violence against sexual minorities*, while acknowledging the limitations of this term as discussed above.

### **Gender-Based Violence**

*Gender-Based Violence* (GBV), sometimes referred to as *Sexual and Gender-Based Violence* (SGBV), does not have single definition that is universally agreed upon. The phrase has been used to describe many forms of violence, including *intimate partner violence* (IPV) and *domestic violence* (DV). GBV includes physical, sexual, or emotional violence inflicted onto a person, and it can also be interpreted as violence perpetrated against someone because of their gender. For this reason it is often used interchangeably with *violence against women* (VAW). Women are most commonly seen as the victims of GBV because of the gender-specific violence they suffer, such as rape and sexual assault. The United Nations offered an official definition of gender-based violence, using it synonymously with violence against women, in their 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, describing it as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty” (United Nations, 1993, Article 1). *Sexual violence* has been defined by the World Health Organization as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic women’s sexuality, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force...” (Population Council Inc, 2008, p. 9). This definition limits the scope to women only, and does not include the sexual violence perpetrated against men and children. The United Nations Population Fund additionally emphasizes that while men and boys can and do suffer from GBV, women are the most common victims (United Nations, 1993). While statistically

this tends to be true around the world, it often goes unrecognized how all genders suffer from sexual, emotional and physical violence based on their gender or gender expression.

### **A Little-Explored Angle on GBV**

While GBV is often used synonymously with violence against women, researchers have recently focused more on violence directed at men based on their gender, especially sexual violence against men (Neumann, Chang, & Patrick, 2009). However the phrase *gender-based violence* is rarely used to refer to those outside of the male-female gender dichotomy. Those that fall elsewhere on the gender continuum, those that are transgendered, and those that exist outside of the gender spectrum altogether are very often the targets of violence. By definition those that identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual are also gender non-conforming, as their sexual attractions deviate from the gender norms dictated by patriarchal society. By this logic, violence against sexual minorities can be considered violence inflicted upon a person based on their “deviant” gender expression and gender behavior, including sexual activity. For the purposes of this research, therefore, I propose that the term *gender-based violence* be expanded to include violence against sexual minorities, thereby encapsulating *all* people that suffer from violence due to their gender, their gender expression, or their gender-related sexual behavior.

Now that the reader has been familiarized with commonly-used terms, I wish to turn my attention to the physical and cultural locality of the study: namely the country of Uganda. I will begin by giving a topographical overview of the country and follow by providing a brief history of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial times.

### **Uganda: A Brief History**

Uganda has a long and complex history that includes pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras. Much of Uganda’s pre-colonial history is unknown and disputed by those

historians who rely on written records. Pre-colonial tribal history is made up of traditions, customs, and cultural beliefs passed down orally by the people of East Africa. Subsequently Ugandan *written* history begins with western influence, leaving a distorted perception that can be difficult to untangle. Decades of colonial influence, violence, and oppression greatly impacted the culture and people of Uganda. The following post-colonial decades of independence, also fraught with war and violence, also had a direct effect on the indigenous Ugandans of today (Briggs, 2007; Murray, 2004). To help situate the reader I will give a brief overview of facts that are relevant to the progression of homophobic violence in Uganda; anyone wishing to learn more is encouraged to research the rich history of the country.

### **Topography**

The Republic of Uganda is situated in sub-Saharan East Africa, landlocked and bordered by the countries of Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Lying on the equator, it is often referred to as the “Pearl of Africa” due to its lush and fertile land and plethora of natural resources (Remigio, 2010, p. 2). Roughly the size of Great Britain or the state of Oregon, its landscape consists of mostly flat plateau with some mountainous terrain, and is home to the source of the Nile River. The majority of its population (estimated to be 28.2 million in 2006) live in rural areas, with about 1.2 million people living in the capital city of Kampala as of 2002. Today there are 17 tribes living throughout Uganda, all of which are from Nilotic and Bantu origin. While more than 30 indigenous languages are spoken throughout the country, the official language is English, with perhaps the most commonly spoken language being that of the Baganda tribe in the central region, Luganda. Christianity makes up 85% of the religious composition and Islam 11%, while the remainder of the population includes Hindu, Jewish, and traditional tribal spiritualities (Briggs, 2007; Remigio, 2010; Wyrod, 2008).

## **Pre-Colonial Uganda**

The region of present-day Uganda was ethnically divided between many tribal groups, consisting of Bantu, Nilotic, and Sudanic-speaking languages (Wyrod, 2008). Because of the vast diversity among these tribes it is impossible to encompass them all within this short overview, and unfortunately this overview threatens to create an image of pre-colonial Uganda that is overly simplistic. With this in mind I will provide a brief description of some important commonalities among tribal life in the East African region. More detail around pre-colonial same-sex practices and gender roles, specifically, will be provided in chapters III and IV.

Tribal cultures were highly collective and emphasized community above and beyond the individual (Remigio, 2010). The family unit was the basic unit of the social structure: families came together to form villages, which then formed clans, which then formed entire tribes. Societies were agricultural, based on subsistence farming. Tribal life was communal in nature and was highly influenced by spirituality that informed almost all areas of life, from customs and traditions to beliefs about life and death (Mbiti, 1990; Vilanculo, 2009). Many tribes, such as the Acholi of Northern Uganda, focused on the interconnectedness of all things in life and their spirituality was highly based in worship and valuing of land and environment (Finnstrom, 2008; Remigio, 2010). Prayer, sacrificial practices, and numerous spiritually-infused ceremonies and rituals were offered to the gods and spirits to increase good fortune or eliminate evils. Ancestors played an important role among many ethnic groups, as they were believed to continue to exert influence on the living after passing away; therefore prayers and offering respect to ancestors was a fundamental part of life.

## **The Colonial Era**

Uganda's history of colonization falls during the time when Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, and Belgium were dividing the continent of Africa into various regions and countries (Watkins, 2005). Europeans justified the process of conquering the land and taking over rule of the tribes and peoples for their own use of resources under the idea of enlightening and saving a backward and inferior land (Reddy, 2010). The entrance of whites to the land of Africa was at times met with interest by local tribes, and other times met with rejection and rebellion, especially when exploitation of Africans by whites became evident (Klima, 2010).

The area that was to become Uganda piqued the interest of foreigners because of its richness in land and cash crops such as sugar, coffee, tea, and cotton (Kasozi, 1994). In 1894 arbitrary boundaries were drawn, disregarding existing tribal boundaries, and Uganda became an official protectorate of the British, bringing many tribes under one rule. In 1902 legislation was signed stating that "African traditional laws and customs were allowed to operate provided they were not repugnant to justice and morality and written law" (Kasozi, 1994, p.22); this emphasis on western morality will be important in this study's exploration of same-sex practices in chapter III. Customary law among the region was integrated into British common law, with the Baganda tribe specifically singled out to be the indirect rulers of the region (Wyrod, 2008). Uganda remained under British rule throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, until a greater continental movement began shifting international dynamics and African colonies struggled for independence and self-government. Uganda's shift toward independence was a relatively peaceful process in which power was handed over in 1962 (Briggs, 2007; Kasozi, 1994). The following year the country transitioned to a republic, and in 1967 a new constitution was drafted (Briggs, 2007).

## **Post-Colonial Years**

The year 1971 marked the beginning of a reign of conflict when Idi Amin staged a coup and overthrew then President Obote's government. Becoming increasingly violent and dictatorial in his rule of the country, Amin became responsible for the deaths of more than 300,000 civilians. Vast corruption and the forced expulsion of Asians from the country led to a severe downturn in Uganda's economy, before he was overthrown by the Uganda National Liberation Front in 1978. After several interim leaders, including a brief period in which Obote was president again, Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) took power in a violent process in 1986 (Briggs, 2007). Museveni remains in power until this day.

Museveni's entrance into power marked the beginning of what would become a 20-year armed conflict in Northern Uganda between Museveni's government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony (Vinci, 2007). Kony was originally motivated by political anti-Museveni intentions, but this soon turned into a violent war in which the Acholi civilians of the North were the primary victims of both LRA and government brutality. The LRA abducted and forcefully integrated children into their army as a method of keeping their numbers high, abducting between 25,000 and 30,000 children over the course of the conflict (Corbin, 2008). During the 1990's between 80-90% of the Acholi were forced by the government into Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, a process that destroyed communities, homes, and social systems while greatly exacerbating poverty (Corbin & Miller, 2009; Remigio, 2010). Faltering peace talks between the LRA and the Ugandan government began in 2004, and relative peace reached the region of Northern Uganda beginning in 2006 (Vinci, 2007). The LRA has since withdrawn from the region; however permanent peace agreements have not been signed and the

LRA continues to abduct children and perpetuate violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, and southern Sudan.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have begun to paint the backdrop that the reader will use throughout the rest of the study. I began by providing definitions of terms and concepts related to the subject, and ended with an overview of the topography and history of the country of Uganda. In the following chapter I will expand upon the reader's understanding of the research subject by describing in depth the history and present-day manifestations of same-sex practices and discrimination against sexual minorities in Uganda.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **AN UNAFRICAN SIN?**

#### **A SOCIO-HISTORICAL LOOK AT SAME-SEX PRACTICES IN UGANDA**

Violence against sexual minorities is not new to Uganda, although it appears to be on the rise as homosexuality and gender variance become more visible (Tamale, 2007; conversations with LGBTI individuals and activists, January 2011). In order to explore the societal and historical factors contributing to male-perpetrated homophobic violence in Uganda today, we must first have an understanding of the historical background of same-sex practices in the region. In this chapter I will seek to provide as much of this background as possible, while acknowledging the dearth of information on the subject. I will begin with a historical analysis of same-sex practices beginning with pre-colonial times, and then move through colonialism and post-colonial times to the current-day existence of same-sex sexualities and gender-variant expressions. Homophobia in its various forms will also be explored throughout these time periods. Special attention will be given to the role of Christianity in its influence on homophobia and heterosexism. I will then give an illustration of the violence currently faced by sexual minorities, including the recently proposed Anti-Homosexuality Bill and the role of U.S. religious evangelicals, and end with a description of the current LGBTI rights movement.

#### **Same-Sex Practices in Pre-Colonial Africa**

The difficulty with presenting the history of same-sex sexualities in Uganda is the lack of written records before western colonial influence. As mentioned in chapter I, before the first colonists and travelers entered what is now the country of Uganda, tribal history and traditions



were passed down orally through the generations. The subsequent arrival of foreigners and their practice of recording outside observations and turning them into the prominent discoursed reality of the regions, created a situation where pre-colonial Ugandan history was and continues to be widely contested and not well understood, especially in the realm of sexuality (Murray, 2004; Murray & Roscoe, 1998). While research into same-sex practices in Africa is growing, there is still a significant dearth of information. In this section I present what information is available, beginning with a greater overview of same-sex practices throughout pre-colonial Africa and then narrowing my focus to the region of Uganda.

### **Research across Africa**

Same-sex relationships and gender-variant expressions are not new to Africa, despite claims of current politicians and religious leaders. Researchers in sexuality and gender have explored traditional same-sex interactions and relationships among African tribes that existed prior to colonial influence. Murray and Roscoe (1998) looked extensively at many sexualities throughout sub-Saharan Africa in their book *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands*. More than fifty societies throughout the entire continent are documented to have had some form of same-sex practice. For example, Zande men in Sudan and Thonga men in South Africa were known to take boys as lovers either if women were not available or simply out of choice. Zande women were also known to engage in same-sex practices. Gender variant expressions, such as men dressing and behaving as women, were recognized among many tribes in Sudan. In the Ethiopian Maale culture, *ashtime* males would identify with a “third gender”: they would dress as women, take on traditional female roles, and become lovers to other men. The *mashoga* in Kenya were “passive homosexuals” (Murray & Roscoe, 1998, p. 67), while among the Fon in current-day Benin, boys would engage in sexual activity with other boys that would sometimes

be temporary but at other times become a life-long practice, known as *gaglgo*. *Soregus* among the Naman of southern Africa was considered to be an intimate friendship between two people that were often of the same sex, and would at times engage in sexual activity. Female same-sex practices, while less researched, also existed in many cultures, the most well-documented being among girls and women in Lusetho, South Africa. Other areas where same-sex or gender variant practices were historically seen were among the Nyakyusa, the Tswana, and the Ila of southern Africa, and the Ovimbunda in Angola. Each of these cultures differed greatly in the dominant perceptions and level of acceptance or tolerance of such practices, which should not be simplified as any kind of unified African same-sex sexuality (Murray & Roscoe, 1998).

### **Same-Sex Practices in the Uganda Region**

It is clear that same-sex relationships and gender-variant expressions are not new to Africa, and existed long before colonial influence. However, little is known about the history of same-sex practices specifically in the area currently known as Uganda. Some suggest that same-sex sexuality was condemned by many Ugandan tribes even before colonial rule, while others believe they were more tolerated and even accepted (Hollander, 2009). Either way it is reasonable to assume that same-sex practices existed, though perhaps on the margins of society. For example, the Baganda tribe in the central region of Uganda has long acknowledged the existence of gender variant people in their communities. As children these individuals were considered to have the spirit of an ancestor who may have been of a different sex than the child, and subsequent homosexual or gender variant behavior is understood for that reason. It is notable that the Bagandan culture had its own way of understanding behavior that varied from the typical hetero-patriarchal structure (African Same-Sex Sexualities & Gender Diversity, 2005-2010).

There is also information suggesting the involvement of homosexuality in the incident of the Christian Martyrs of Uganda in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Martyrs of Uganda consisted of 45 Anglican and Roman Catholic pages, or young men in training in the court, that were executed by the *kabaka* (king) of the Baganda, Mwanga, between 1885 and 1887. Most historical references describe the killings to be an attempt by Mwanga to maintain power over his people, many of whom were converting to Christianity and dividing their loyalties elsewhere. However other sources suggest that the pages' resistance to Mwanga's homosexual advances was the real impetus for the killings, as to refuse the wishes of the king was a grave insult. While this incident does not imply that the Baganda were accepting of homosexuality, it does imply the existence of homosexuality long before African tribal cultures were heavily influenced by western colonialists and missionaries (Hoad, 2007; Hollander, 2009; Martyrs of Uganda, 2011; Ssemakula, 2011).

Aside from the Baganda, the Langi, Iteso, Banyoro, and Bahima tribes are also thought to have recognized same-sex practices and gender-variant expressions in some way, usually falling somewhere in the grey area between cultural acceptance and repression (Tamale, 2007). However many historians subsequently considered same-sex practices to be products of Arab trade influence, thereby perpetuating a belief that homosexuality is inherently unAfrican (Hoad, 2007).

### **Sexuality as Social Control: The Colonial Importation of Homophobia**

With colonialism came the introduction of European patriarchy, which will be explored in more depth in chapter IV's discussion on masculinity and gender roles (Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005). The shift from traditional African gender relations to European patriarchy not only influenced gender roles and women's subordination in society, but it undoubtedly influenced

perceptions of same-sex sexualities as well. During the process of colonialism stricter rules and practices regarding sexuality were introduced as both a means of social control over the colonized people, and a method of maintaining patriarchal power (Waylen, 1996). As Smith (2006) describes, the act of implementing patriarchy is instrumental in establishing a hierarchy among colonized people, thereby making the social control of them easier to establish:

... in order to colonize peoples whose societies are not based on social hierarchy, colonizers must first naturalize hierarchy through instituting patriarchy. In turn, patriarchy rests on a gender binary system in which only two genders exist, one dominating the other... the colonial world order depends on heteronormativity. Just as the patriarchs rule the family, the elites of the nation-state rule their citizens” (Smith, 2006, p. 72).

In the 1920's and 1930's, an interesting backlash occurred against women in several British colonies in Africa when it was perceived that social control over women was loosening and leading to sexual immorality. During this backlash, strict adultery and marriage laws were introduced to control women's bodies and reproduction, limiting their movements and sexual freedoms and further subjugating them under a European patriarchal system. This control of sexuality not only served to subjugate women, but also served to control Africans as a whole. Relationships between men and women were dictated through the ascribed morality and immorality of certain behaviors or acts. Further, social control of sexuality was a means for maintaining the constructed division between the colonizing whites and the natives, thereby maintaining the racial superiority of the colonizers. For example, it is interesting and disturbing to note that while sexual morality of European women and colonized Africans was highly controlled, European men were able to sexually abuse African women without it being

considered rape or falling under the same standards of sexual immorality. As Waylen (1996, p. 46-69) describes:

Categories of ‘white’ and ‘native’ therefore had to be constructed... and the boundaries between them maintained through various mechanisms... This required ‘regulating the sexual, conjugal and domestic life of both Europeans in the colonies and their colonized subjects’ (Stoler, 1989: 635).

The colonial project was therefore implemented and regulated at least in part through the control of sexual morality.

Patriarchy itself was regulated and maintained through the control of sexuality. The primary goal of patriarchy is to ensure male dominance over females in a hierarchy of gender (Tamale, 2007). One of the ways patriarchy does this is through control and silencing of sexualities other than what is deemed heteronormative. As illustrated above, many laws are constructed to condemn acts of prostitution, adultery, and abortion, and keep society – and women in particular – sexually repressed. These laws serve to subordinate not only women, but also sexual minorities and people who are gender non-conforming.

The incident of King Mwanga and the martyrs of Uganda in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century provides insight into the European use of sexuality as a means of establishing control over the region of Uganda (Hoad, 2007). King Mwanga’s homosexual advances toward his Christian pages were deemed “unnatural” (p.4) and his subsequent execution of them was used as justification for British intervention and the establishment of the Ugandan protectorate in 1894. Some historical sources would later assert that this “foul practice” (p.4) was imported by the Arabs, an argument that would be used as evidence that homosexuality is inherently foreign to Africa. Hoad (2007) theorized that the British used the incident to prove that Africans needed the moral guidance of

the British to keep them from succumbing to immoral Arab influence. While the presence of so-called immoral sexual practices was far from the primary reason for colonization, it served as justification for other reasons such as expanding the ivory trade, contending with Germans and Arabs for land and resources, and the spread of Christianity. Even the language used in the later recounting of the story – the innocent pages refusing the unnatural advances of the sexually deviant King and their subsequent martyrdom – is a telling illustration of how homophobia can be used to justify political and economic intervention and the assertion of power through colonial rule. Hoard (2007) also explored the theory that, through racial and sexuality discourses, Africans became the *other* in which European fears and desires could be projected, and therefore a way in which Europeans could distance themselves from their own homosexual desires. This notion falls in line with Foucault's (1978) theory of the history of sexual repression in Europe, and theories that homophobia is itself a projection of the fear of one's own same-sex desires (Fone, 2000).

### **The Role of Christianity**

With colonialism came the introduction of Christianity and the permanent altering of pre-colonial spiritualities. The arrival of Christianity in Uganda is also closely linked with many of the aforementioned rigid codes of sexuality, and much of today's homophobia can be traced back to this point in history. While Islam was also introduced through foreign colonizing forces, Christianity is and has been the dominant religion of the country since colonial times consisting of 85% of the population (Briggs, 2007; Remigio, 2010) and remains so intertwined with present-day life that it is difficult to separate. For the purposes of this study, I will focus specifically on the effect Christianity had, and continues to have, on sexuality in Uganda.

Spirituality has always been an important and fundamental aspect infused in all areas of tribal life in Uganda, and today the dominant religion of Christianity continues to carry on this tradition of importance. Christianity introduced the belief in one omnipresent and all-powerful God that differed from the polytheistic beliefs of many tribes,, but this does not mean there were not areas of commonality between the new and the old (Harlacher, Okot, Obonyo, Balthazard, & Atkinson, 2006; p'Bitek, 1984). Most important was the way in which spirituality and religion were embraced as a fundamental and unifying force of all areas of life, be it Christianity or traditional tribal beliefs. As tribal cultures were highly collective and emphasized community above and beyond the individual, religion and spirituality were also seen this way, and participation in the dominant spiritual belief system was not optional if one wanted to continue to belong to the community (Finnstrom, 2008; Remigio, 2010).

Upon the arrival of the first missionaries in Uganda, tribal spiritual beliefs became co-opted and were slowly integrated into Christianity in a way that has all but eliminated many traditional practices (Crutchley, 2003; Pinkman, 2010). Christian missionaries saw it as their obligation to convert the natives to Christianity through a process of evangelization and civilization. While originally operating separately from European colonial politics, and even met with some acceptance by various tribes, Christian missionaries eventually became coupled with the larger process of colonization (Karugire, 1978). Competition within missionary factions themselves transformed the original aim of missionary work from spreading the word of Christ to the exploitation and subjugation of natives, specifically around issues of land. Religious leaders later used physical force to subvert the authority of traditional chiefs and clan leaders and assert their own power in much the same way political colonial forces were doing (Kasozi, 1994). What can be seen in Uganda today is mostly western-based Christianity with an

integration of some few adapted traditions; in fact many youth today have little to no knowledge of traditional spiritual customs (Remigio, 2010).

### **Christianity and Patriarchy**

Christianity and patriarchy have been strongly linked for centuries (Fone, 2000; Jung, 2010; Lerner, 1986; Stelbourn, 1999). The fundamental bases on which Judeo-Christian religions are founded are patriarchal in nature, and have resulted in philosophies and worldviews being constructed and promulgated through the eyes of men. As Christianity and missionary teachings flooded Uganda in the process of colonialism, their strong roots in patriarchal values served to shift gender dynamics within the tribes of Uganda. For example, there is evidence that prior to colonialism women played an important role in various tribal religions and at times even held a great deal of power and authority, which historically has not been the case in Christianity (Bakare-Yusuf, 2003).

### **Religious-Based Homophobia**

Christianity and homophobia also share a long and intimate history (Fone, 2000; Herek, 1984; Okyne, 2009). The introduction of Christianity to Uganda brought with it the introduction of religious and moral-based homophobia, having repercussions on African same-sex practices that still exist today. European missionaries throughout Africa condemned same-sex practices in a way that was new to the African continent (Akumu, 2009; Epprecht, 2005; Okyne, 2009; Wax, 2005). While it is unclear how accepting varying ethnic tribes were around issues of same-sex sexuality prior to western influence, the introduction of Christianity solidified a dominant perception that such deviant sexualities were immoral, evil, and sinful. As Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant missionaries became increasingly linked with political colonial forces, they eventually monopolized the education system and thereby spread a dominant religious rhetoric



that encompassed all areas of life. Over time, the idea that same-sex practices were not only immoral but inherently unAfrican became mainstreamed and normalized as Uganda was turned into a Christian state.

I have earlier explored how homophobia in the incident of the Ugandan martyrs was used as a tool to establish colonial rule. Here, I will expand upon how this incident was also a tool for proliferating Christianity. As Hoad explored in *African Intimacies* (2007), pages were selected by early Christian missionaries as a method of spreading Christianity. As these pages were able to influence various sectors of Bagandan culture, including the *kabaka* Mwanga himself, they served as crucial tools for the conversion of the Baganda to Christianity. Their subsequent rejection of the homosexual advances of Mwanga and martyrdom was then used as an avenue for the missionaries to further subvert the power of Mwanga, with homosexuality serving as a crux for justifying religious imperialism.

The view shared by European colonial forces that homosexuality was imported by the Arab traders was used to justify the need for Christian missionaries to save Africans from the external “immoral” influence of Islam (Hoad, 2007). This view became reflected in the paternalistic approach of Christian missionaries toward their native subjects, in a way that perpetuated inherently patriarchal power dynamics. Hoad (2007) argued that the fear that was being perpetuated on the African continent of sexual immorality or denigration was merely a projection of the same fear occurring in England at the time (see also Fone, 2000). The control of sexuality and the use of homophobia as a means of controlling the Baganda, as it was after the incident of the Martyrs, became a tool of colonial rule that protected and asserted not only the economic and political interests of Britain during the European race for control over Africa, but

the religious interests of Christianity as well in its battle against Islam. Deviant sexualities and the need for their control became a justification of Christian colonialism.

It is interesting to note that while homosexuality was adopted as sinful by the native cultural majority, the anti-Christian sexual practice of polygamy was not, and in fact still continues to exist today. This is suggestive of the strong influence of patriarchy (Hoad, 2007), and indicative, I believe, of the strength of the hegemonic masculinity at the time of colonization. While homosexuality challenges the traditional gender roles that are so vital to the perpetuation of the domination of men in patriarchy, male polygamy does the opposite in enhancing masculine sexuality and leaving women further disempowered.

### **The Anti-Sodomy Laws**

Laws and rules prohibiting and condemning same-sex practices have an extensive history dating back to the Christian Church in the Middle Ages. During this time the term “sodomy” was invented to describe “nonprocreative sexual acts” that were seen as an offense against God and nature itself (Fone, 2000, p. 179). Beginning with penitentials, or rules, that forbid sexual relations between monastic communities within the Christian Church (which were inherently same-sex), same-sex sexuality was deemed deviant and sinful by the religious forces of Europe. The Renaissance further imbedded homophobic beliefs into European society by viewing the sodomite as not only sinful, but criminal, and laws punishing sodomy as a crime were put into effect as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Fone, 2000). Homophobia, therefore, was well-rooted in European – and particularly British – culture long before the time of colonial influence in Africa. It is no surprise then that such anti-sodomy laws were carried to colonized lands in a process of civilizing a so-called unenlightened people. Laws against sodomy were established early on in the protectorate of Uganda and solidified in the Penal Code Act of 1950, which has

lasted beyond the country's independence in 1962 and continues to dictate Ugandan laws today (Hollander, 2009).

### **From Independence to Current Day**

According to the current law in Uganda, engaging in homosexual activity is punishable by up to 14 years or life in prison. Section 145 of the Penal Code states that “Any person who (a) has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature... or (c) permits a male person to have carnal knowledge with him or her against the order of nature commits an offence and is liable to imprisonment for life” (Hollander, 2009, p.220). Additionally, Section 146 criminalizes the attempt of such an act as punishable by seven years in prison, and Section 148 goes on to describe that “Any person who, whether in public or in private, commits any act of gross indecency with another person or procures another person to commit any act of gross indecency with him or her or attempts to procure the commission of any such act by any person with himself or herself or with another person, whether in public or in private, commits an offense and is liable to imprisonment for seven years” (Hollander, 2009, pp. 220-221). While the language in these sections is rather vague and does not include direct reference to homosexuality, it has been interpreted by legal, political, and religious leaders to refer to all homosexual acts. It is widely misinterpreted beyond this to include *homosexuality* itself, although the laws do not criminalize one who merely admits being homosexual. With these interpretations, the laws have been used to criminalize homosexuality throughout the country, leading to arbitrary arrests and intimidation, harassment of and violence against suspected sexual minorities (Amnesty International, 2010; Hollander, 2009).

## **Colonialism Ends, Christianity Remains**

As Uganda gained independence and separated from British rule, religion did not experience the same separation. Indeed, Christianity has remained an important and influential part of Ugandan culture. Christianity is part of and shapes everyday life for the vast majority of the country. Such separation of church and state as in the United States does not exist in Uganda. Many political, economic, and non-governmental organizations are religious-based, with prayer serving as a regular practice both at home and at work. It is commonly observed that political leaders rely heavily on the bible as a method of connecting with the communities they serve. With the continuing influence of Christianity comes also the persistence of homophobia, and today the Christian church is one of the most vocal opponents to homosexuality in Uganda. However the roots of such homophobic sentiments are more complicated than outward appearances allow, and stem in large part from United States religious extremism, which will be explored later in this chapter.

## **An “UnAfrican” Sin**

Although homosexuality clearly exists in Uganda today and has existed in some form throughout tribal history, there is the perception that it is largely an import from the west – a practice of a privileged bourgeois that is inherently unnatural to Africans – and therefore against African culture itself. The belief that “homosexuality is unAfrican” is repeated throughout the continent by those who target and fight against LGBTI movements (Dolan, 2007; Morgan & Wieringa, 2005; Murray, 2004; Tamale, 2007). Many prominent members of society that fight to eradicate homosexuality, such as Member of Parliament David Bahati, Pastor Martin Ssempe, and Minister of Ethics and Integrity Nsaba Buturo, use an anti-colonial argument in their reasoning against homosexuality, saying that it is a western vice that is corrupting traditional

African values. This argument holds considerable weight for those that are tired of being oppressed by the impositions of international powers and seek freedom from a long history of subjugation from the west, especially in an era when neocolonialist theory and thought are becoming more prevalent. Unfortunately, this argument does little to address the evidence that same-sex sexualities existed in Africa long before western influence, and it is Christian morals themselves that are in fact not native to African culture.

There is also the belief that sexual minorities are heavily funded by the west, and therefore live in luxury while other Ugandans struggle in poverty (Tamale, 2007). This is far from the truth, as sexual minorities suffer discrimination and are subject to increased unemployment, housing eviction, and difficulty accessing proper medical care that leaves them economically disadvantaged compared to their peers (conversation with LGBTI activists, January 5<sup>th</sup> 2011). However it is easy to imagine how such a misguided stereotype as “all homosexuals are rich” can lead to further bigotry and homophobic sentiments in an economically stratified country such as Uganda.

### **An Increase in Homophobic Legislation**

In the past two years the climate for sexual minorities in Uganda has taken a turn for the worse. On October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009 Member of Parliament David Bahati introduced a bill that became known as the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. This bill seeks to clarify gaps in the existing laws, which do not directly name homosexuality, to further criminalize same-sex practices, and thereby strengthen and protect heterosexual marriage and traditional family values. Bahati’s bill refers to same sex attractions as mental disorders that are “damaging the social fabric of our nation at an alarming rate” (Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law, 2010, p. 27). The bill defines the act of “aggravated homosexuality” as being perpetrated against someone

under the age of 18, by someone with HIV, or by a “serial offender” (p. 29), and proposes the death penalty for anyone convicted of these acts. It further proposes seven years imprisonment for attempted homosexual acts or for “aiding and abetting” homosexuality (p. 30), and a fine and up to seven years imprisonment for promoting homosexuality. Further, any citizen failing to report any of these offences is liable to a fine and up to three years imprisonment, and Ugandan citizens living internationally and found to be committing any of these offences are subject to forced return to Uganda for trial (Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law, 2010; Spectrum Uganda Initiatives Inc., 2011).

Bahati’s Bill was immediately met with an international public outcry from human rights organizations, foreign governments and activist groups. Amnesty International and other human rights defenders argue that these laws – both the existing codes and the proposed bill – are inherently a violation of human rights, including the “rights to equality and non-discrimination, privacy, liberty and security of the person, freedom of expression, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion” (Amnesty International, 2010, p. 19). These laws have the effect of further stigmatizing and oppressing sexual minorities, leaving them at risk for violence. In addition the bill would violate Uganda’s own 1995 Constitution, which claims that citizens have inherent freedoms and rights (Kollach, 2009). While the proposed bill was temporarily shelved due to the international outcry, it has re-appeared multiple times on the Parliamentary table and Bahati continues to express his determination that the bill be passed.

### **U.S. Religious Influence – The Family**

As discussed earlier, the current anti-homosexual climate cannot be separated from international influence, and specifically the influence of U.S. evangelicals. In March of 2009, only seven months before David Bahati proposed the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, several members

of the U.S. based religious group, The Family, travelled to Kampala where they conducted a three-day long workshop (Domi, 2011). The workshop was conducted by Scott Lively, a well-known U.S. evangelical leader, and was titled “Exposing the Truth behind Homosexuality and the Homosexual Agenda.” Following the workshop, homophobic sentiments in Uganda greatly increased.

The Family, also known as The Fellowship, is a fundamentalist evangelical Christian group in the United States that includes many prominent U.S. congressmen and senators, as well as international leaders (Sharlet, 2008). President Museveni of Uganda was introduced to The Family by Bob Hunter, a longtime member who has done a great deal of work in Uganda. The group has spent a great deal of money promoting an extreme anti-homosexual stance, along with anti-abortion and pro-free market sentiments, both within the U.S. and internationally. (While perhaps the most well-known, it is far from the only religious group that has increased their international influence in recent decades. Over the past few decades, Mormons as well as Roman Catholic missionaries have also been seeking to influence converts throughout the African continent, especially around issues of homosexuality; Domi, 2010.) According to Sharlet (2008), Uganda has its own group modeled after The Family that holds similar annual events and works closely with prominent members such as Scott Lively, Rick Warren, and Bob Hunter.

Bob Hunter and other members of The Family have since distanced themselves from Bahati’s Anti-Homosexuality Bill, stating that they never supported such harshness or extreme measures (Sharlet, 2010). However the end goal of eliminating homosexuality and preserving the traditional family remains the same, and it is hard to deny the influence that such a workshop as the one held in 2009 has on the creation of a bill to further criminalize and eliminate sexual

minorities from society. One can critically question the United State's Christian Right's interest in preserving the traditional family in third world countries, especially as theorists have argued how the western neo-colonial empire is maintained through the production of heteronormative patriarchy (Smith, 2006). Patriarchy, which relies on the gender binary, was essential in implementing colonial rule in the first place, and continues to underlie the imperialist model of marginalization of one group by another (Smith, 2006, p. 72). When examining the socio-historical roots of homophobic violence in Uganda, it is impossible to separate the global – and specifically U.S. – influence on the current climate of homophobia in the country today.

### **Discrimination, Violence, and Hate Crimes**

Throughout African, sexual minorities face discrimination, ostracism, and violence in many forms (Wax, 2005). Researchers found that 80% of homosexuals in Namibia have to live double lives, marrying the opposite sex to present a heteronormative lifestyle while hiding their true sexuality. In many countries sexual minorities face expulsion from school if their sexuality is discovered, or they may drop out if they are being harassed by their peers. Many face violence, beatings and rejection by their families, or are forced to undergo traumatic rites or ceremonies to “cure” them of their sexual deviance (Wax, 2005, no page number). Lesbians are raped in an effort to correct their sexuality or “persuade” them into heterosexual lifestyles (Haiku, 2010; Wax, 2005).

While there are few statistics on the discrimination and violence faced by sexual minorities in Uganda, their situation is no better than what can be seen in the rest of Africa. Sexual and gender minorities exist very much on the margins of society and face institutionalized discrimination and condemnation by political, religious, and cultural leaders. Much of this discrimination stems from widely held misunderstandings about same-sex sexualities that



compare them to such offences as child abuse and rape. Those that are suspected of being homosexual or gender variant face harassment in public spaces such as bars or on the streets. They suffer discrimination when they apply for jobs or look for housing. They may face arbitrary eviction from rental homes or be sent away from their family homes because of their sexuality, and then have trouble obtaining new housing for the same reason, leaving many LGBTI individuals homeless (conversation with LGBTI activist, January 5<sup>th</sup> 2011). Open sexual minorities can be banned from their churches or religious groups and even sent away from their schools. Services guaranteed to all citizens of Uganda are frequently denied to sexual minorities. Organizations fear catering to specific LGBTI needs because they can be punished or fined for spreading or advocating for homosexuality. Beatings, assaults, rapes, and murders are a constant threat and all-too-often reality (Hollander, 2009; Tamale, 2007).

An example of discrimination and hate speech occurred recently on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 when a local tabloid newspaper under the name of the Rolling Stone (unrelated to the American magazine of the same name) published the names, pictures, and addresses of several individuals they said were gay. Along with an article inciting hatred and bigotry was the caption “HANG THEM; THEY ARE AFTER OUR KIDS!!!!” (The Rolling Stone Investigation Team, 2010). After this publication of hate speech, several individuals whose pictures had been published experienced attacks and harassment. Three prominent LGBTI activists then took the newspaper to court, suing for violation of privacy. In a landmark decision they won the case in January 2011 with the judge ruling that the publication violated the applicants’ right to life, privacy, and human dignity. This court ruling called for an injunction restraining the Rolling Stone and any other media source from similar publications in the future, and ordered that the applicants be compensated financially. The court also differentiated for the first time between the illegality of

an *act* of homosexuality as stated in the Penal Codes, and the fact that simply *being* homosexual is not illegal in Uganda (*Kasha Jacqueline, David Kato Kisuule & Onziema Patience v. Rolling Stone Ltd. & Giles Muhame*, 2010).

Several weeks after the court ruling, one of the activists who had won the lawsuit, David Kato, was brutally murdered in his home. The murder raised international attention and sparked an immediate debate about whether the act was a hate crime based on Kato's sexual orientation, or an unrelated "robbery gone wrong" (Walsh, 2011, no page number). Currently the prime suspect is imprisoned and awaiting trial, although many fear it will not be a fair trial. Whether the murder was fueled by homophobia or not, there is potential for this case to either strengthen the LGBTI movement for human rights, or fuel the anti-homosexuality stance against them.

### **The LGBTI Rights Movement**

For sexual minorities, Uganda remains a place where they cannot live freely as who they are. Despite the hostile climate however there is a growing movement of individuals and organizations that are fighting, both actively and subtly, against patriarchal norms of sexuality and gender. In spite of derogatory terms and insults used against them, for example, sexual minorities in Uganda have claimed an identity of self-empowerment that they refer to as *kuchu* (Piehl & Serrander, 2008; Tamale, 2007). The word *kuchu* originated as an invented word but is also known to mean "same" in Mombasa, and it has been fittingly appropriated to refer to same-sex relationships. As in other areas of the world, sexual minorities in Uganda are challenging dominant gender expectations by dressing or acting in ways counter to their prescribed gender.

There are currently several LGBTI organizations and a number of activists working underground in Uganda to advocate for basic human rights. While these organizations cannot officially register as NGOs, as such an act could be interpreted as against the law, they continue

to work toward advancing LGBTI rights, protections and safety with the support they are able to receive internationally (conversation with LGBTI activists, November 10, 2010). In 2004 the organization Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) was founded to serve as an umbrella organization over the movement. Other LGBTI organizations include Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG), Icebreakers, Transgender Intersex and Transexual Uganda, and Spectrum, to name a few. Other community-based organizations (CBOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) have recently combined to form the Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights & Constitutional Law, whose aim is to advocate for those rights provided and protected by the country's 1995 constitution (Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law, 2010). This coalition and the organizational members of the coalition have been instrumental in supporting and advancing the rights of the LGBTI community in Uganda. Some LGBTI activists are out in all spheres of life, others are out in selective spaces, and others remain entirely closeted. As the movement progresses and more individuals come out in public as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, the cultural and religious backlash against them also increases.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have provided a background of same-sex practices in Uganda, from pre-colonial times to present day. I began with an overview of pre-colonial same-sex practices and moved through history to describe the evolution of these practices, along with increasing homophobia and the influence of colonialism and Christianity. I concluded with a discussion of present-day legislation and discrimination of sexual minorities, violence and hate crimes, and the LGBTI rights movement that exists in spite of these challenges and threats. In the following two chapters I will now explore the two primary interacting elements of this research: that of masculinity, and that of violence. The next chapter provides an in-depth exploration of

masculinities in Uganda, examining their historical evolution as well as various theories linking patriarchal masculinity to homophobia.

## CHAPTER IV

### EXAMINING UGANDAN MASCULINITIES

This chapter examines the evolution of dominant and alternative masculinities in the area now known as Uganda. Starting with pre-colonial gender roles and concepts of masculinity, I will explore the colonial influences of western patriarchy and the influence of post-colonial regimes, ending with current concepts of Ugandan masculinities. Special attention will be given to the intersectionalities of racism, economic disempowerment, the women's movement, and shifting gender roles. The chapter will end with an exploration of theories linking hegemonic masculinity to homophobia

#### The Study of Masculinities

Before beginning a historical analysis of masculinities in Uganda, I wish to provide a brief history of the studies of masculinities and their major concepts. Connell (2005) was one of the first researchers to provide rich and groundbreaking work in the study of masculinities, starting in the 1970's when masculinity was beginning to be recognized as multi-dimensional and diverse. She popularized the term *hegemonic masculinity* while exploring the variety and fluid nature of masculinities in various cultures, bringing to light the inherent contradiction of having one dominant form of masculinity that the majority of males are unable to live up to (in her words, "What is 'normative' about a norm hardly anyone meets?"; Connell, 2005, p. 70). Over the past several decades researchers have challenged the stereotypes created through one-dimensional descriptions of various masculinities, such as "black" or "working class" masculinities, arguing that such overly simplistic categorizations serve to reinforce hegemony

and subjugate alternative forms of masculinity (Connell, 2005; Morrell, 2001; Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005).

Researchers in the field of masculinity studies also link the importance of studying various forms and practices of masculinity to such issues as international politics, power relations, violence, education, health, family relations, cultural imperialism, race relations, armed conflict, and peace-building. For example, the state can be seen as a masculine institution, which therefore suggests the importance of understanding hegemonic and alternative masculinities when addressing issues of the state or inter-state relations (see Connell, 2005, p. 73). It is only recently that the importance of global dimensions on the understanding of specific cultural masculinities is being recognized, including the effects of nations on the creation of masculinities and vice versa (Connell, 2005). I attempt to keep these concepts in mind when examining the historical evolution of masculinities in Uganda, which is far too rich a subject to encompass in such a study but one which I nevertheless endeavor to illuminate.

### **Pre-Colonial Gender Roles**

In most, if not all, Ugandan tribes, gender roles were clearly defined between men and women before colonial influence, with men holding the dominant status in society. While colonialism would further shape gender relations, the gendered system in pre-colonial Uganda was already fairly patriarchal (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003; Harlacher et al., 2006; Remigio, 2010). Men were bestowed with more power and authority both within and outside of the home, and held traditional positions of leadership such as clan leaders. Some women would occasionally hold positions of power or respect, but these were few and in general women did not receive the same benefits of authority as that of men (Wyrod, 2008). Women had fewer economic and legal rights; for example, they could not own land. A man's high status was shown by the number of

cattle and wives he had as well as the number of children he fathered, while a woman's value was earned through producing many children. Women traditionally showed respect to men through various customs and practices, such as kneeling down while greeting and serving food to men first. Female circumcision, a practice argued to be a form of patriarchal control over women's bodies and sexuality (Tamale, 2007), was common among some tribes such as the Karamajong in the east. Among the Acholi of Northern Uganda, foods such as chicken and eggs were considered delicacies and therefore reserved for men. To this day, the taboo of women eating chicken is still remembered. It is interesting to note that even within a language, terms for positions of leadership are often masculine: for example *elders (ludito)* and *head of family (won paen)* in the Acholi language of Luo (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003, p. 3).

Gendered power differences were seen in relationships between men and women as well. It was common practice (and continues to be today) for men to pay a *brideprice* for a woman upon marriage, giving cattle and other gifts to her family in exchange for taking her to his home. Women therefore were seen as property of their husbands, essentially being bought or traded and then living under their husband's authority. Polygamy was a common practice for many tribes, with men gaining more status with more wives. However a woman having more than one male partner would have been considered taboo. The children that women produced were considered property of their husbands, and male children were often favored over female children because it was known that girls would eventually leave their family to join the family of their husbands. The family unit, which prior to capitalism was the central means of production and livelihood, was patrilineal. Gender roles were clearly delineated with men being the protectors and providers of the households as well as leaders of the greater community, and women being responsible for reproduction and the domestic sphere (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003; Gordon, 1996;

Harlacher et al., 2006; Remigio, 2010). It is important to note that many of these traditional practices and beliefs continue to exist today.

Despite the evidence of unequal distribution of power between the sexes, ethnic groups in pre-colonial Uganda should not be interpreted as a one-dimensional oppressive patriarchy. While they did not enjoy as many rights and privileges as men, women did have a degree of autonomy and freedom which they could use to influence their communities (Waylen, 1996). Women, given their many responsibilities, played vital roles in the functioning of society and were valued for these roles – a view that differentiates African women’s experiences from women in the western world. Much of the division of labor between men and women can be seen as pragmatic and adaptive to meeting basic survival needs. In collective societies the community must be able to work together smoothly in order to thrive, and delineating roles between men and women (as well as other social roles, such as age for example) can be useful in maintaining such smooth operations. For example, while women were seen as primarily responsible for reproduction, they were also highly valued in their roles as mothers. Scholars disagree on the extent of true inequality between the sexes in traditional African tribes, with some saying that while they fulfilled different roles, men and women were equally valued within the community (Nzegwu, 2001; Oyewumi, 1997; Steady, 1987). Further, these scholars see the strict differentiation of public and private sphere as a western feminist concept, whereas many traditional African cultures perceived much more overlap, fluidity, and equality of status between these spheres. In subsistence economies such as pre-colonial Africa, the value placed on public versus private spheres of life is seen much differently than in the capitalist economies of the west, with a greater degree of equality and interdependence. Seen through this lens, these scholars view patriarchy as a largely imported western concept.



## **Shifting Masculinities – The Gendered Impacts of Colonialism**

As with all areas of life, traditional gender roles were greatly influenced through the process of colonialism (Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005; Waylen, 1996). Although men tended to dominate society among Ugandan tribes prior to colonial rule, the introduction of western patriarchy shifted the gender dynamics between men and women that had existed in pre-colonial Uganda. It is argued that under this new system of western patriarchy women became even more subordinate and gender roles became more stringent (Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005).

### **Changing Gender Roles**

During colonial rule, the dual aim of the British was to control the means of production and maintain social order in their protectorate. Researchers have explored how these attempts at control have very gendered impacts on colonized societies (Waylen, 1996). Gender division of labor was often altered during the process of colonialism to increase production and minimize cost, shifting traditional roles of men and women. Economic production for sale became more valued, with men receiving benefits and status for producing more. Meanwhile women were sidelined and their access to resources was restricted. As men who had traditionally done their share of subsistence agricultural work left home to enter the burgeoning capitalist work force, women were faced with increased workloads in the homes. Men received skills training, while women did not. The interdependence that had existed between men or women in pre-colonial subsistence agriculture shifted, extending a system in which women became unpaid domestic workers within a male-dominated system. Women's labor continued to be essential in the functioning of society, but became more intensely exploited under colonial rule (Waylen, 1996).

Gender roles were influenced through the British educational system as well, where boys received skills training and girls were educated in the domestic sphere (Waylen, 1996). The

British education system emphasized male education over that of females and reinforced the view that men are inherently more intelligent. This trend can still be seen today when comparing the low number of girls attending primary and secondary schools compared to boys. Combined with the tradition of girls being married off to the households of their husbands, the education of females came to be seen as “a waste of family resources” (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003, p. 2).

### **Racism, Power Dynamics and Gender**

Colonization was a coercive, forceful, and exploitive period that served to reinforce those same values in the cultures over which power was imposed. It has been argued for this reason that imperialism itself contains a “dimension of masculinity” (Connell, 2005, p. xvi). The practice of indirect rule was instituted by the colonial forces in Uganda, as local leaders were used by British officials to maintain social order in their absence. Local male chiefs were chosen and given more power. Women were largely ignored, thereby increasing the system of patriarchal male power-over females (Waylen, 1996). Silberschmidt (2005) summarizes how European colonial forces created a construct of an African masculinity that served to reinforce the domination of European masculinity and patriarchal supremacy, through the subjugation of white men over black men and the subjugation of all men over women.

The racist ideology that accompanied the imposition of British rule has had profound effects on African men and masculinities (Connell, 2005; Dolan & Cleaver, 2003; Goldsmith, 2005; Morrell, 2001). While simultaneously being forced to absorb and live up to western standards of patriarchal and capitalist masculinity, African men were constantly reminded of their inferior racial status. From appearance and skin color to intelligence and innate ability, men from Africa were taught through colonialism that they are inherently second-rate citizens of the world but nevertheless must strive to achieve the universal standards of hegemonic

masculinity, a contradiction which I will later explore in its effects on African patriarchy and male violence. The male role as provider of the household was simultaneously reinforced through western patriarchal expectations yet challenged in practice, as men entering the labor force struggled to make ends meet on meager wages (Waylen, 1996). Men within the world of wage labor jobs were stratified between those who were able to receive (western) training and education and thereby get higher-status jobs, and uneducated manual laborers. While traditional hierarchies among men already existed before the arrival of the British, this job stratification created a new hierarchy among men in Uganda. Frantz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) explores how racism essentially emasculates the black male and leaves him disempowered in the patriarchal system, creating a double-standard of simultaneous power over women conflicting with significant disempowerment among the hierarchy of males. Because of this emasculation, many black men attempt to achieve a sense of empowerment through the acting out of white hegemonic masculinity, often carried to extremes that are aggressively patriarchal.

### **Patriarchy after Colonialism**

Colonialism fundamentally shifted gender roles among the tribes of Uganda in a permanent way that can still be felt today. Dominant concepts of masculinity evolved after independence in ways that served to reinforce a hegemonic masculinity that today is highly militarized. After independence was established in 1962, the British-established system of patriarchy remained imbedded within the culture and legal systems (Wyrod, 2008). A progression of authoritarian leaders, from Obote to Amin to the current President Museveni, further reinforced a one-dimensional model of masculinity that is associated with power,

strength, and domination by force, leaving little room for alternate masculinities (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003; Dolan, 2007).

The patriarchy seen in Uganda today manifests itself along a continuum, ranging from rural areas with very traditional patriarchal customs to more westernized urban areas where male dominance is slightly less. In Uganda today, one's role and way of participating in family and community life continues to be highly designated by one's sex. Men hold more power and status in both family and community spheres and are considered responsible for productive labor outside of the home, although this is changing as more women become involved in small business and income-generating activities (Tripp & Kwesiga, 2002). Women, especially in rural areas which maintain more traditional customs, continue to be responsible for the unpaid domestic labor of the home. Dress codes dictate gender presentation, and religion also influences what is considered to be acceptable behavior for both males and females. Women as a whole are subjugated, with fewer privileges and rights than their male counterparts and less access to positions of leadership (Madanda, 2003; Mbire-Barungi, 1999; Miguda, 1999).

### **Economic Disempowerment**

Colonialism economically disempowered the people of Uganda through heavy taxation and a forced imposition of capitalist economics on previously trade- and sustenance farming-based economics (Silberschmidt, 2005). While the economy of the country initially looked hopeful in the early years of independence, Amin's dictatorship in the 1970's successfully destroyed any economic growth and left the country in a very weak state (Uganda, Economy, 1993-2003). Under President Museveni the economy has rebounded somewhat, but Uganda still remains a developing third world country heavily influenced and disempowered by international industry and economic policies. As globalization and development sweep through nations of the

third world, countries such as Uganda undergo structural and cultural shifts. Global economic practices have the effect of making poor countries even poorer as developed countries increase in wealth (Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005). This effect can clearly be seen in Uganda: out of 177 countries, Uganda was ranked 155<sup>th</sup> by the UNDP on the Human Development Report in 2005, with thirty-eight percent of the total population living in conditions of poverty (Wyrod, 2008).

Despite rampant poverty and unemployment in both urban and rural areas of Uganda, the mentality of males as breadwinners continues to dominate gender norms, resulting in a contradiction most men in Uganda cannot resolve (Wyrod, 2008). Chris Dolan, Director of Refugee Law Project in Kampala, Uganda, explained men's predicament in patriarchal societies:

A hegemonic masculinity is established, with a hierarchy of lesser masculinities below it, and it is to this that men are taught to aspire, despite the impossibility of most of them ever actually realising it in their personal lives in a context of widespread violence, displacement and impoverishment. (Dolan, 2007, p. 1)

When men are unable to live up to the ideals set forth to them under the standards of masculinity due to conditions that are outside of their control, it has implications that have only been minimally explored in the plethora of gender research. Silberschmidt (2005) explored the effects of such economic disempowerment on men, with a controversial assertion that men suffer from disempowerment in an equally important, albeit different, way as women. Silberschmidt proposes that this disempowerment is often overlooked in the interest of focusing on women's rights and women's empowerment. When faced with poverty, many men find themselves unable to fulfill their role as primary breadwinner and provider for the family. Their masculine identity and authority is therefore threatened as well as their self-esteem, as women have more opportunities to take on roles of leadership and financially provide for the family. In the

industrialized world, this economic disempowerment and shifting of masculine roles has led to depression, decreased self-respect, vilification and stigmatization by society, and even suicide. An all-too-common reaction to this threat to masculine identity and authority is violence, as men in the western world are conditioned to channel depression through aggression and seek to assert power and control when otherwise feeling disempowered. This link to violence will be further explored in the following chapter.

### **Women's Empowerment and the Backlash of Hegemonic Masculinity**

Throughout the colonial period, African women met and organized in various forms to resist male domination and use whatever agency they had to their advantage (Waylen, 1996). This continued after independence and has in recent years been influenced by the larger global women's movement, which has worked to advance the rights of women throughout the world in areas from healthcare and violence against women to economic empowerment and political involvement (Tripp & Kwesiga, 2002; Wyrod, 2008). This global movement has had far-reaching influence in both developed and developing countries, introducing the language of human rights in its wake. The women's movement of Uganda has made great strides in the past several decades toward advancing the rights and opportunities of women throughout the country (Mbire-Barungi, 1999; Tripp & Kwesiga, 2002). Through expanding economic opportunities, establishing small businesses, increasing agricultural participation, advancing educational opportunities, and increasing women's involvement in politics, women in Uganda have more resources today and are taking on a greater role in society (Oregede, 2010; Tripp & Kwesiga, 2002). These efforts give rise to a general shift in traditional gender roles, and such shifts inherently challenge patriarchy. These challenges do not come without consequences, which are

typically seen in an increase in hegemonic masculinity and the assertion of male power (Wyrod, 2008).

### **Male Views on Gender Equality – What Does This Mean for Men?**

As the term gender equality becomes integrated into present-day language in Uganda, traditional male authority is challenged. While women gain power in spheres where they have previously been powerless, the perceived naturalness of male superiority over women is threatened (Connell, 2005; Wyrod, 2008). As Connell (2005, p. xx) describes, male authority “is defended by ‘backlash’ politics, and perhaps reinstated by military confrontations.” More on the connection to violence and militarism will be explored in the following chapter, but it is important to introduce the idea of a gender backlash here. Wyrod (2008) conducted a study within a suburb of Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, in which he explored male perspectives on the current women’s movement toward gender equality. He found that some men reacted strongly against gender equality in a way that traditionally supported male dominance; other men fell somewhere in the middle of supporting a level of gender equity but maintained men’s (perceived) natural authority; and still others (though the minority of men) held progressive views of true gender equality and called into question the idea of natural male authority. While Wyrod’s study focuses on a small segment of the population of Uganda, the findings illustrate the diversity of responses among men toward shifting gender relations and subsequent ideas of masculinity.

### **Masculinity and Homophobia: A Look at Theory**

Early psychoanalytic theories of homophobia reference Freud’s theory of sexual development, linking homosexuality to unresolved same-sex desires during the Oedipal complex in childhood. Homophobia, or the intense fear of homosexuals, is believed through these

theories to stem from one's own denial, fear, and projection of his or her own homosexual desires (Herek, 1984).

Over time sociologically-based theories have followed these psychological theories and examined how the socio-cultural variables of gender norms and patriarchy contribute to discrimination of sexual minorities. According to these theories, homophobia and heterosexism are seen as a means of maintaining the patriarchal system (Bohn, 1983-1984; Stotzer, 2006; Tomsen & Mason, 2001). Patriarchy – and the power of men over women and some categories of men over other categories of men – is upheld through the maintenance and protection of strict gender norms. Sexual minorities threaten to undermine these gender norms, as they by essence do not conform to heteronormative gender expectations. Discrimination against sexual minorities can therefore be seen as an attempt at maintaining a system that provides – at least in theory – heterosexual males with the highest privilege of society. This power and privilege is of course further stratified along racial and other lines.

Other theories, including queer theory and gender panic theory, combine an emphasis on social factors with a psychological focus of the homophobic individual (Adam, 1998). Kimmel (1997) defines homophobia not as fear of homosexuals or fear of one's own sexuality, but as “men's fear of other men” (p. 237). Kimmel (1997) describes how men in the United States are brought up in a way that leaves them constantly feeling inferior and unable to meet society's expectations of masculinity. Because of this inner sense of inferiority, men are continuously putting on an act and trying to gain other men's approval, while simultaneously fearing that at any moment they will be “unmasked” and proven to be “not real men” (Kimmel, 1997 p. 234-235). Homosexuality (for males) represents the ultimate example of not living up to hegemonic masculinity, and to be perceived as gay would be the ultimate “unmasking.” This fear of being



seen as gay is so strong that men will often act in exaggerated, stereotypical ways to prove their masculinity, such as belittling or sexually harassing women, or inciting hate speech against gays. In this way, homosexuality becomes the target for projection of one's own sense of inferiority, and discrimination against sexual minorities can be conceptualized as a phenomenon stemming from "intragender division" among men, between those who measure up to the perceived standards of masculinity and those that don't (Plummer, 2001, p. 75). Kimmel in fact proposes that homophobia is a central organizing factor of masculinity in America:

Homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. (Kimmel, 1997 p. 233).

While Kimmel focuses his research on American masculinities and homophobia in the United States, he links hegemonic masculinity and homophobia to racism and discrimination of non-white males in a way that lends itself to the thesis of this research. Throughout American history, hegemonic masculinity has posited multiple "others" against which to define itself and justify its dominance. These "others" have included women, sexual minorities, and every non-white race including Blacks, Asians, Native Americans, and even European immigrants throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. On a global scale we can see this dynamic playing out today between developed and developing countries. I will explore this concept in more depth in the final discussion chapter in an effort to connect the concepts of masculinity, racism, inequality, homophobia, and violence.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have provided an exploration of masculinity in Uganda through a socio-historical lens, investigating its evolution from post-colonial to current-day times. I concluded with an exploration of theories linking hegemonic patriarchal masculinity to homophobia. In the

following chapter I turn my attention to the phenomenon of violence in Uganda. I first give a brief historical description of violence from pre-colonial to post-colonial times in order to situate the reader. I then describe and explore a social theory of violence proposed by James Gilligan that provides a useful lens for which to view the present-day day phenomenon of violence against sexual minorities in Uganda.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **VIOLENCE IN UGANDAN SOCIETY**

Due to the existing and growing hostility and violence against LGBTI people in Uganda, it is essential to examine the factors that contribute to such opposition in order to prevent, intervene, and work towards solutions. In examining the nature of hate crimes and homophobic violence, it is impossible to separate this from other forms of violence that exist within the society. Because the majority of violence against sexual minorities is committed by males, not only in Uganda but throughout the world (Comstock, 1991; Ehrlich, 1992; Harry, 1992; Mason, 1997; Messerschmidt, 1993; Tomsen & Mason, 2001), this leads one to wonder: what are the causes and contributing factors of male violence in such societies? This question begs the further question, how does patriarchy, and more specifically socially constructed masculinity within a post-colonial patriarchal system, intersect with this phenomenon – both in terms of feelings about homosexuality and male use of violence?

This chapter has two objectives. Firstly, it explores the history and roots of present-day violence in Uganda, again using a historical lens from which to view this progression. Secondly, it describes a social theory of the origins of violence that will act as a lens with which to better understand the phenomenon of male-perpetrated violence against sexual minorities in Uganda. These two objectives prime the reader to then proceed into the discussion chapter that follows, in which the previous explorations of masculinity and violence in Uganda will be integrated together for a full analysis of the phenomenon.

## **Violence in Pre-Colonial times**

It is beyond the scope of this study to explore the many forms of societal violence in pre-colonial Uganda. The sheer number and diversity of tribes within the Uganda region reflects the diversity of power systems, monarchies, military strategies, and subsequent forms of violence seen amidst these societies. For an in-depth history, the reader is encouraged to refer to Chretien (2003), Kasozi (1994), Reid (2003, 2007) and other such scholars on the history of militarism and warfare in the pre-colonial region of East Africa. Briefly, African warfare in pre-colonial times was very often tribal in nature, with various tribes or clans vying for power, land, or other resources. There were incidences of both intra- and inter-clan violence, and in more stratified societies such as the Baganda (those in which power was hierarchical and distributed downward from a higher-status elite) the legitimate use of violence was a signifier of power and authority (Kasozi, 1994). As with most violence, conflict and warfare were often motivated by power struggles and the assertion of authority. Some societies were more militaristic than others, with varying levels of advanced weaponry. While colonialism introduced a great deal of violence to the greater African continent, as I will explore in the following section, it would be misleading to suggest that region was not without violence prior to western influence.

### **Colonialism: the Violence of Imperial Domination**

*Conventional wisdom has it that European colonialism ushered into 'darkest' Africa an unprecedented era of peace, justice, and stability that was unlikely to persist once the colonial officials had departed. (Kasozi, 1994, p.22).*

Such “conventional wisdom,” while unfortunately commonly held throughout the colonial era, is greatly deceptive in its illustration of colonial influence on the continent of Africa. While it is true that peace and stability are hardly words that can be used to describe

post-colonial Uganda, the above perspective does little to paint a full picture of the experience of colonialism and its role in the subsequent post-freedom instability. The process of colonialism was a violent act of domination, in which an entire population of people was subjugated and oppressed. As the land of Uganda was colonized, parallel to the process that was occurring throughout the rest of Africa, tribes and clans were set against each other by the colonizing forces as a method of maintaining control (Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005). While the establishment of central power under one set of laws seemed to decrease the overt intertribal warfare that existed prior to colonization, it essentially centralized violence under the colonial administration. The introduction of hierarchical power to non-stratified tribes and clans (those in which power was not distributed vertically) was met with high levels of resistance. Tension rose between tribes as the British favored the hierarchical Baganda above their supposedly more primitive neighboring counterparts. Some tribes, such as the Acholi, were chosen by the British specifically for military service, thereby creating an image of their tribe as being highly militarized and prone to violence – an image that has lasted until this day (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003). These early political effects of colonization left a lasting influence on inter-tribal relations and on the societal violence that has plagued the country since its independence in 1962.

The African people were oppressed and exploited socially and economically by their British colonizers, suffering not only physical violence but social, emotional, and mental violence in the form of social control, subjugation, and dehumanization. This institutionalized, non-physical type of violence is more commonly referred to as *structural violence* (Gilligan, 2001). Native Ugandans suffered high taxation, forced entrance into a capitalist economy and subsequent economic disempowerment, high demands with little or no support, exploitation of

resources, and a devaluation and destruction of traditional customs. Tribal chiefs who worked together with the British received benefits and an elite status in the new British-dominated society, while those who resisted were subject to attacks, capital punishment, destruction of villages, and forced removal or exile. Those brought to trial for resisting British rule were tried under the new written laws, which reflected British customs and regulations (Kasozi, 1994).

Religious violence was also prevalent in years leading up to colonization and the early colonial years (Kasozi, 1994). As Christians and Muslims vied for power in many areas throughout Africa, Uganda was caught in the middle of what often erupted into violent inter-religious bloodshed. Once Christianity asserted its domination in Uganda, the violence continued between Catholics and Protestants. While such inter-religious violence was not new to the area, it illustrates an important intersectionality between violence and Christianity.

### **Colonialism, Patriarchy, and the Reproduction of Power**

In the previous chapter I explored how the process of colonialism contains a masculine element that deserves to be re-emphasized here (Connell, 2005). The social control implemented by the British was carried out at the hands of males and directed mostly through male Ugandan chiefs. Women by and large were sidelined, perpetuating patriarchal male power over females (Waylen, 1996). Researchers argue that patriarchy in essence produces a hierarchy of masculine control over the feminine, and is reproduced in all power relations of domination over others (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994). Traits that are considered to fit the hegemonic form of masculinity, such as styles of dress and militaristic behavior, are therefore adopted by those craving or seeking power, including women at times. These traits serve to reproduce a hegemonic notion of power, in that power is defined as one-dimensionally *power over* and often conflated with violence and forced suppression of others. Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994)

explore the *macho male* mentality so often seen in patriarchal societies, where men vie for power and assert their authority through the expression of hegemonic masculinity. Through this lens, colonialism itself can be seen as an act of power assertion and domination, as can the production of violence anywhere.

While the violence that was to erupt in Uganda in the years following independence proved to be more brutal in many ways than the violence of colonialism, one cannot separate it from its colonial roots. The process of colonialism left heavy marks on society in which “certain tensions and inequities were enhanced, others... generated” (Kasozi, 1994, p. 29). These inequities have been the basis of much, if not the majority, of the violence and power struggles seen throughout Uganda’s post-colonial history.

### **Independence and Post-Colonial Violence**

The move toward independence was a gradual and relatively peaceful process, in which the British administration worked with Ugandan officials to establish a system of elections and handed over power in 1962 (Briggs, 2007; Kasozi, 1994). However, it was a period marked by a great deal of politically and economically-rooted tensions between tribes and political parties that have continued through various post-colonial administrations.

The decades after independence were fraught with a succession of violent regimes and brutal armed conflicts. During Idi Amin’s dictatorship in the 1970’s over 300,000 civilians were killed and the economy all but collapsed (Briggs, 2007). Following this, the area of the country known as the Luwero Triangle became a battleground for Museveni’s army, in which he battled Obote’s regime and rose to power in a bloody conflict that again cost many civilian lives. The 20-year armed conflict with the LRA in the north has caused immeasurable destruction and devastation to the region and the people (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003). Throughout this time Uganda

has born witness to a seemingly endless pattern of violence and militarization. Today, while instances of armed conflict have temporarily suspended, the country remains politically divided with a palpable tension, and many fear the return of violence (conversations with various Ugandan civilians, February 2011).

### **Current Militaristic State and its Effects on Masculinity**

The relationship between militarism and masculinity has been explored by many scholars, especially in settings of war and armed conflict (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003; Dolan, 2007; Golan, 1997). High levels of militarization in a society are often correlated with high levels of patriarchy and increased male violence in other spheres of life, such as domestic violence. The military itself is a highly patriarchal institution, perpetuating the authoritarian use of male power and the subjugation of women – and, it can be argued, other genders as well.

Dolan explores the effects of militarization on Ugandan society, especially during Museveni's 25-year reign as President (Dolan, 2007; Dolan & Cleaver, 2003). Museveni himself was a military leader who took power of the country by force, and he has continued to lead Uganda as a military state. During his bush war in the Luwero Triangle he justified the recruitment of children into his armed forces, claiming it was normal within African tradition to teach children to fight at a young age. This practice of exposing children in conflict settings to further violence and encouraging them to become militaristic raised international concern about the creation of a new generation that would be hardened to violence (Kasozi, 1994). Throughout his regime as President of Uganda, Museveni has emphasized the importance and power of the military through such practices as encouraging his (non-military) Members of Parliament, his children, and his wife to wear military fatigues and engage in boot-camp exercises (Dolan, 2007). These practices serve to reinforce a one-dimensional model of masculinity that is



inextricably linked with militarism and violence. For many Ugandan men, joining the military becomes “a source of credibility” (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003, p. 3). Ironically and problematically, the majority of the male population who are ordinary civilians are unable to reach the standards set by this model of hegemonic masculinity due to economic and political disempowerment. The emphasis on militarized masculinity “undermine(s) civilian men’s sense of their own masculinity” by increasing economic inequality between well-paid soldiers and ordinary civilians (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003, p. 7). If one is made to feel emasculated and undermined by not living up to the militarized model of masculinity, he may then seek to attain some sense of power through other forms of violence (see also Connell, 2005).

### **Masculinity and Violence**

In the previous chapter, I explored how masculinity in Uganda is currently in the process of undergoing great, albeit reluctant, transition. As men face extreme levels of poverty, limited opportunities, and challenges to their feelings of self-worth as men, they often react with violence (Silberschmidt, 2005). In their study of Tanzanian violence, Masenja and Utassa (1993) even suggest that the rape of women and children stems from men’s inner frustrations due to their inability to live up to their masculine gender expectations. Men also tend to face more stigma in creating new roles for themselves in patriarchal societies that place such high value on masculinity. For instance, a woman who takes on the role of a man (such as entering the field of microfinance and creating a small business) may experience less stigma than a man does when taking on the role of a woman (such as carrying water or cooking) given that male roles are seen as generally more superior and female roles are lowly and repugnant (Silberschmidt, 2005).

Male violence is also perpetuated generationally in patriarchal cultures. For example, children who witness violence between their parents are more likely to enter into abusive

relationships themselves later in life, either as the abuser or victim (UNICEF Innocenti Research Center, 2000; Koenig, Lutalo, Zhao, Nalugoda, Wabwire-Mangen, Kiwanuka, et al., 2003; Speizer, 2010). In this way, violence becomes a learned behavior in conflict management, and is indirectly reinforced by the culture. In examining the connection between masculinity and violence, Morrell explores the historical connection between South African masculinity and violence as rooted in and shaped by both the workplace and traditional rural life (cited in Reid & Walker, 2005). While Morrell's research is specific to South Africa, much of the same can be applied to Ugandan history. The use of violence by men in patriarchal cultures is often accepted as a legitimate means of punishment or reprimanding, especially in cases of domestic violence within the household. Compounding the rigid gender roles and expectations, violence by men against those that go against gender norms is a phenomenon worth investigating.

### **Gender-Based Violence**

As this study focuses on male-perpetrated violence against sexual minorities, which I introduced in chapter II as a form of gender-based violence, it is important to present some background on other areas of gender-related violence as they exist in Uganda today. Researchers have found varying levels of intimate partner violence (IPV) and domestic violence (DV) in Uganda, each a type of violence that occurs within the family and is most often inflicted against women by men. Koenig et al. (2003) found that 30% of women in south central Uganda experienced violence at the hands of their male partners. In urban eastern Uganda the number was 45%, and in rural eastern Uganda it was as high as 58% (Speizer, 2010). These types of violence can be seen as a means of social control, as men seek to maintain their status and use violence to control any behavior of their female partners considered by society to be deviant or disobedient (Koenig et al., 2003; Lehmann & Simmons, 2009; Speizer, 2010). In the following

chapter I will expand this conceptualization of gender-based violence against women as a form of social control to gender-based violence against sexual minorities.

So far in this chapter I have highlighted the societal manifestations of violence in Uganda, from pre-colonial through post-colonial times. I have also explored some possible causes of violence including tribalism, colonialism, the evolution of a militaristic society, and economic disempowerment. In order to continue this exploration of the possible social causes of violence in Uganda, I will now present a theory proposed by James Gilligan that analyzes the social causes of violence. While this theory originates from an American psychiatrist, there are many aspects of this theory that can be modified to fit various cultures. With cultural modification, Gilligan's theory offers a lens through which we can analyze the societal violence against sexual minorities that is occurring in Uganda today.

### **Social Causes of Violence: Through a Theoretical Lens**

The following exploration is taken primarily from the book *Preventing Violence* by James Gilligan (2001), and his earlier book *Violence: Our Deadly Epidemic and its Causes* (1996). Gilligan is a psychiatrist from the United States who has spent twenty-five years working in the American prison system with some of society's most violent criminals. His theoretical work is based on his personal experience and background in western psychology, which are of course heavily imbedded within United States and European culture, but it is also informed by his work with the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague and his cross-cultural research.

Instead of taking the traditional moral-legal perspective against violence that has been used throughout United States history, Gilligan analyzes violence from a public health or preventive medicine standpoint. In this way, interpersonal and societal violence are viewed as an

illness or pathology that should be treated rather than punished. More of his ideas on prevention, intervention and treatment – and the ineffectiveness of punishment – will be presented in the discussion chapter.

### **Inequality, Shame and Violence: A Critical Link**

According to Gilligan, violence is largely shaped by two overlapping factors: 1) inequality on a macro level and 2) the shame an individual feels as a result of this inequality. Supporting the work of many researchers before him, Gilligan explains how inequality – be it social, political, economic, or other – is a founding basis for violence because of the disparities it creates between and among people, especially regarding access to vital resources. Such inequality has resulted in violence in cultures and societies around the world and has been widely researched (Connell, 2005; Gilligan, 2001; Godenzi, 2000).

The second piece of the puzzle, Gilligan believes, is the role of shame on a personal level. Inequality breeds shame by creating a disconnect between one's level of aspiration, or what they are taught to strive for, and what they are actually able to achieve. Society acts to shame people "treating them as inferior, on an individual scale, or by assigning them to an inferior social and economic status on a collective scale" (Gilligan, 2001, p. 80). Dolan (2011, p. 9) also echoes the connection between "humiliation, resentment and oppression" and violent acts in his exploration of Ugandan masculinities. When someone is shamed, the feeling of shame is in essence being inflicted upon them by another person. In such a situation, Gilligan theorizes that it is a protective reaction against feeling shame to try to eliminate the cause of this shame by eliminating its source – which in this case is the other person who is inflicting the feeling of shame. As Gilligan describes, "Punishing others alleviates feelings of shame because it replaces the image of oneself as a weak, passive, helpless, and therefore shameful victim of... their

shaming... with the contrasting image of oneself as powerful, active, self-reliant, and therefore admirable, and unshameable” (Gilligan, 2001, p. 52).

### **On Hegemony and Homophobia**

Especially important to this research is the link Gilligan makes between violence and masculinity, especially in patriarchal societies. According to the previous logic that inequality increases feelings of shame, and shame leads to violence, it would make sense that women would be more prone to violence than men because of their inferior status in patriarchal societies. However, this is not the case as males tend to commit more violent crimes than females (Comstock, 1991; Ehrlich, 1992; Harry, 1992; Mason, 1997; Messerschmidt, 1993; Tomsen & Mason, 2001). Gilligan attributes this phenomenon to the way men are conditioned in patriarchal societies to live up to idealized, hegemonic masculine traits, such as courage, aggressiveness, and strength. Acts of violence therefore demonstrate and confirm hegemonic masculinity, and this behavior in men can serve to decrease feelings of shame and humiliation. Such behavior is contradictory to the patriarchal notions of femininity, and in this way acts of violence committed by females can instead increase feelings of shame for acting outside of one’s prescribed gender role. Men in patriarchal cultures are shamed for not being *manly* enough, which includes acting in violent ways when necessary; women are shamed if they are *too manly*.

Violence as an exaggerated assertion of one’s masculinity is closely linked to homophobia, in that both are a protection against the shame of not living up to male gender role expectations (Gilligan, 2001; Kimmel, 1997). As Gilligan describes, “the most direct and concrete ways to prove one does not love men are to murder men and rape women” (Gilligan, 2001, p. 63). Gilligan goes so far as to propose that homophobia motivates most male-

perpetrated violence, and perhaps even motivates the perpetuation of patriarchy and its cultural values, a theory mirrored by Kimmel (1997) and Connell (2005):

When I suggest that homophobia is... virtually present wherever violence occurs, I am trying to suggest that for men under patriarchy, the image or concept of "homosexuality" functions as a kind of universal symbol or equivalent of every form of masculine... inadequacy; that it therefore epitomizes every cause of shame. (Gilligan, 2001, p. 68).

Gilligan theorizes that violence is a form of behavioral "paranoia", in which the perpetrator is "acting out... the core delusion that other people are dangerous to oneself and that one can only defend oneself by attacking or even killing them (Gilligan, 2001, p. 64). He adopts Freud's theory that homophobia is a reaction to a person's own denied and shame-inducing homosexual feelings (what Kimmel would instead describe as a fear of being emasculated by other men; Kimmel, 1997), which are then projected onto sexual minorities. Sexual minorities are then seen as a threat because they remind him of his sense of shame, and the reaction to this perceived threat is then to become violent. In fact most violence can be viewed, and is always believed by the perpetrator, to be a form of self-defense, whether it is a defense against a real physical threat or defense against a threat to the ego or psyche (Gilligan, 2001, p. 64-65; p. 72). Tomsen and Mason (2001) support Gilligan's theory in their exploration of the link between sexuality, gender conformity and violence, arguing that homophobic violence is essentially an act of protecting the strict gender norms of patriarchy. Similarly David Leverenz describes how homophobia "has nothing to do with homosexual experience or even with fears of homosexuals... It comes out of the depths of manhood: a label of ultimate contempt for anyone who seems silly, untough, uncool" (quoted in Kimmel, 1997, p. 233). Men are taught to fear being emasculated by other

men, and this fear itself “makes us ashamed, because the recognition of fear in ourselves is proof to ourselves that we are not as manly as we pretend” (Kimmel, 1997, p. 233).

### **The Crucial Combination**

According to Gilligan (2001), social or economic inequality and being male in gender are risk factors for committing acts of violence. Inequality and disempowerment are risk factors because they can lead to feelings of shame and humiliation; being of male gender is a risk factor because males are conditioned in patriarchal societies to utilize violence as a means of asserting their power. However these factors are not enough by themselves to cause violence.

Related to this, feelings of shame are considered necessary, but not sufficient, for one to commit an act of violence. Violence committed by men in patriarchal societies is a behaviorally acceptable reaction to a perceived threat, and experiencing one’s own shame can certainly be a threat. Therefore whatever reminds a person of his own sense of shame – for example, when a man is reminded in a patriarchal culture of his own sense that he is not enough of a *man* – becomes a threat in itself. None of these factors – being of a subjugated status, being male in gender, or experiencing feelings of shame – can work in isolation to cause violence, but all can contribute to violence and all three together are perhaps the riskiest combination.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have explored the phenomenon of violence in Uganda, from pre-colonial to present-day times, and I have begun an exploration of the various societal causes of this violence. I have also described a theory of violence which sees inequality and shame as central components to the perpetration of violence by men. In the following chapter I will apply this theory directly to the situation in Uganda, while integrating the factors of masculinity and homophobia as discussed in the previous chapters. Using the various theories discussed in

chapters IV and V as lenses through which to frame this phenomenon, I will explore why men in Uganda are committing acts of violence against sexual minorities. Following this discussion I will give suggestions for prevention and intervention.



## **CHAPTER VI**

### **WEAVING THE TAPESTRY:**

#### **Patriarchy, Homophobia, Neo-Colonialism and Violence**

In the previous three chapters I have explored same-sex practices in Uganda, the violence and discrimination faced by sexual minorities, the evolution of masculinities and the current hegemonic masculinity in Uganda, and the social roots of violence. In the fourth and fifth chapters I introduced theories linking masculinity to homophobia, and a theory by Gilligan (2001) that attributes inequality and shame as primary social causes of violence, especially among males in patriarchal societies. This chapter weaves all of these threads into a tapestry that illuminates some of the reasons why males in Uganda may be driven to commit acts of violence against sexual minorities.

This study is unique in that it not only examines theory connecting violence against sexual minorities to patriarchal masculinity, but it does this in the context of a post-colonial developing country, where masculinity and patriarchy manifest in inherently different ways and are heavily influenced by the history of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Few researchers have examined how heterosexism and discrimination against sexual minorities are employed via third world, non-white masculinities that could be considered simultaneously hegemonic in their own locality, and outside of the hegemony on a global scale.

In the previous chapters I have identified several key factors that play a role in violence against sexual minorities, and which are each heavily influenced by socio-historical factors. In this chapter I bring together these factors to propose that violence is caused by a convergence of:

(1) patriarchy and the standard of hegemonic masculinity; (2) the history of colonialism and violence in the country and its current militaristic state; (3) men's feelings of disempowerment and subsequent sense of emasculation or shame, as exacerbated by economic disempowerment, international racism and neo-colonial influence, and shifting gender roles; and (4) institutionalized homophobia, stemming from multiple roots. Among all of these factors there is a great deal of overlap, creating a complicated tapestry where each thread is linked to and shapes the next. In the following section I will elucidate each of these causes one by one, tying them together using the theories proposed in chapters IV and V.

### **Patriarchy and Hegemonic Masculinity**

According to Gilligan (2001), patriarchal societies are rife with the conditions that create and perpetuate male-perpetrated violence. Male gender roles are strictly dictated by hegemonic norms and ideals, inequality is inherent, and shame and a sense of emasculation are all-too-common side effects, each of which increases the risk of violence.

Patriarchy in Uganda operates on a strict hierarchy of power, in which certain men (who fit the hegemonic ideal) hold power over other men, and all men hold power over women. This hierarchy maintains a power structure under which all men benefit to a degree but most men continue to suffer. All women suffer, and all other genders suffer - perhaps the most. Because most men in the world do not fit the global hegemonic model of masculinity (in other words, the white heterosexual upper-middle class male), they are subjugated under the hierarchy of "acceptable" masculinities. The patriarchal system is inherently detrimental to all genders, disempowering Ugandan men under western, white men, and only reinforces the inequality that contributes to acts of violence in the first place. Nevertheless, the system of patriarchy also

awards privileges to which Ugandan males are attached. The patriarchal system creates a self-sustaining cycle that convinces men that it is in their best interest to maintain the system.

### **Violence and Militarization**

As illustrated in chapter V, Uganda has a long history of violence that includes extensive violence inflicted through colonialism and years of post-colonial armed conflicts and power struggles. For decades the country has been run as a military state under a military leader, perpetuating a dominant masculinity that idealizes the aggressive soldier image (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003; Dolan, 2007). In many areas of the country, children have grown up exposed to high levels of violence to which they become, in a sense, accustomed. Studies have shown how children who are exposed to violence can learn violence as a normal behavior, and be at an increased risk of repeating such violence later in life (UNICEF Innocenti Research Center, 2000; Koenig et al., 2003; Speizer, 2010). Such a societal history of violence, compounded with a very narrow militarized image of acceptable masculinity, sets a stage in which many Ugandan men are at an increased risk of being violent.

### **Disempowerment, Shame, and Emasculation**

As Gilligan (2001) notes, inequality is one of the primary risk factors for violence throughout the world. High levels of unemployment, income disparity, and poverty are some of the greatest measures to predict rates of homicide (p. 39). Like many developing and developed countries, Uganda is internally very economically stratified, with much of its population living in poverty. This inequality is then reinforced on an international scale through globalization, global trade and neo-colonialist policies. While much has been written on how women are affected by local and global inequality, I will pay special attention here to how this inequality affects men,

how it becomes linked to feelings of emasculation, and how this may increase the likelihood of violence against sexual minorities.

### **Economic Disempowerment**

In colonial years the stratification of men in Ugandan society was enhanced through imperialism, creating a wealthy elite who controlled the remainder of men (Waylen, 1996). Following independence, decades of armed conflict and governmental corruption have led to rampant poverty throughout the country and particularly in certain rural regions (Dolan, 2007). Economic disparity between the majority without money and the wealthy minority continues to be the cause of unrest throughout much of the country. Most Ugandan men are unable to reach a level of economic success that is idealized. As described in chapter IV, the contradiction between the expectation of males to be breadwinners and the impoverished reality that many Ugandan men face leaves them continuously falling short of the standards of masculinity (Dolan, 2007; Wyrod, 2007). As Silberschmidt (2005) suggests, a masculine identity that is essentially already fragile, given the unrealistic expectations of patriarchy, is further threatened by such economic disempowerment, leaving men in a position to feel weakened and emasculated.

### **Political Inequality**

While politics in Uganda are dominated by men, this does not mean that most men hold political power. In fact, most men have very little power when it comes to politics. This is not to minimize the extent of women's political oppression, as women have historically had much less of a voice in the political system. However, it is important to note how the stratification of political power amongst men in Uganda influences the "average" Ugandan male who does not have access to such power. Many Ugandan citizens feel they lack a voice in relation to government matters, and that their interests are essentially unheard. As mentioned previously,

vast governmental corruption increases feelings of subjugation and discrimination among the general public. This leads to feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness as many people feel they have no agency with which to change or improve their situations. One form of agency which has historically been utilized by various resistance groups within Uganda is the use of force – the use of violence – in order to make one’s voice heard on political matters (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003).

### **Shifting Gender Roles**

As Ugandan women seek to gain more rights in society and are supported by international women’s rights movements, traditional gender roles are challenged – and along with them, patriarchy itself (Wyrod, 2008). While many men are supportive of gender equality to varying degrees, the process leaves them in a position where their traditional authority is questioned and challenged. Many men are left feeling threatened and defensive of their power. Gender-based violence, when inflicted by males, is theorized to be a reaction to the perpetrator’s sense of emasculation through an act of asserting his power over a “weaker” sex, and therefore proving his dominance (Koenig et al., 2003; Lehmann & Simmons, 2009; Masenja & Utassa, 1993; Silberschmidt, 2005; Speizer, 2010). This gender-based violence, while often inflicted on women, is also inflicted on sexual minorities.

### **International Disempowerment and Racism**

As described in chapter IV, Ugandan men – while holding power and privilege as men in their society – are also significantly disempowered on a global level as black African men in a playing field dominated by whites (Fanon, 1967). Economic and political disparities are further magnified on a global scale. Decades of colonial rule, with the exploitation of labor and natural resources and the introduction of unfair systems of taxation, have left a lasting, negative effect

on the country's economic strength, and subsequent decades of global trade continue to tip the balance unfavorably against Uganda's economic development. The trend of globalization and damaging practices inherent within trade, international aid, and "development" perpetuate a global system in which developing countries like Uganda are left disempowered and subjugated by the west (Dolan, 2007; Dolan & Cleaver, 2003).

This globalization influences Ugandan men in many ways. International NGOs, while aiming to help with development, perpetuate a one-dimensional and hegemonic discourse around gender that disallows for alternative forms of masculinity (Dolan, 2007). Racist ideology dictates relations in the global world in a way that essentially emasculates African (and all non-white) men, leaving them with a double-standard of supposed male power in a patriarchal system conflicting with significant disempowerment among the racial hierarchy of men (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003; Fanon, 1967). The expansion of western media within Uganda spreads an image of ideal masculinity based on western standards that, for most men, contradicts reality. Ugandan men are simultaneously forced to absorb and live up to western standards of patriarchal and capitalist masculinity, while being constantly reminded of their inferior racial status and second-rate world citizenship (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003; Goldsmith, 2005; Morrell, 2001). Because of this emasculation, the likelihood that Ugandan men will then seek a sense of empowerment through the acting out of aggressively patriarchal masculinity is increased. As Dolan and Cleaver (2003, p .10) describe: "...men who find one element of their 'masculinity' undermined will seek to compensate by emphasizing those elements they retain some control over" – for example, the ability to dominate others who are considered "weaker."

## **Emasculation and Shame**

We can see how each of the above forms of inequality – economic, political, and international – is closely linked to the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity, which, when compounded by shifting gender roles, leaves the situation ripe for the “average” Ugandan man to feel shamed and emasculated. The average man in Uganda lacks the same economic, political, and educational power or privilege that the elite men of Uganda possess and that the dominant western model of masculinity champions, and he is also much more limited in opportunities for advancement in these areas. Political corruption leaves most men without a voice in government; economic stratification leaves many men in poverty yet expected to provide for their families; the advancement of women’s rights threatens men’s traditional roles and further contributes to a sense of emasculation when patriarchally-defined masculinity is still the only acceptable form of masculinity; and all of this is occurring amongst the racist ideology of the global stage in which Uganda exists, which perpetuates a hegemonic masculinity that only white middle-to-upper class western males can possibly achieve. Men in Uganda continuously find their masculinity challenged in a society that accepts only one (highly militarized) form of masculinity. Violence becomes then not a random inexplicable act of emotional or mental instability, but an attempt to resolve such feelings of emasculation and assert a sense of power and dominance. Gilligan (2001) describes it well when he explains how inflicting violence on others replaces the perpetrator’s image of himself as a “weak, passive...victim” with a “powerful, active...admirable, and unshameable” image (p. 52). Dolan and Cleaver (2003, p. 9) further expand this idea when they explain that while most men cannot reach the standards of hegemonic masculinity imposed on them in Uganda, “this has not led to the emergence of alternative masculinities, rather they resort to violence to bolster up the normative model.”

When men feel disempowered in their masculinity, they will seek compensation through areas in which they still exude control; for example, violence against those that are physically or socially weaker (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003).

Why, then, inflict violence on sexual minorities? We can see how the patriarchy, a history of violence and highly militarized state, and various degrees of actual and perceived disempowerment can leave Ugandan men at risk for experiencing shame/ emasculation and committing acts of violence. However, why do sexual minorities then become the target of much of this violence? If violence is a response to the threat of shame and emasculation, why do homosexuality and gender deviance specifically represent a threat to the men who inflict violence against them?

### **Homophobia**

In Uganda, most men are made to feel ashamed by the system of patriarchy for their inability to live up to prescribed standards. Therefore, it seems that the logical *other* to eliminate would be system of patriarchy itself, or the most dominant males within that system. Or perhaps the logical *other* would be the source of the inequality that is preventing them from reaching the masculine ideal within patriarchy, such as the corrupt government, western racism, or unfair global policies. Often these do become the objects of violence, as seen in acts of political uprising or anti-western resistance. However, part of the effectiveness of patriarchy stems from its ability to divert attention away from its inherent contradictions and project attention onto others that become scapegoats for the problems it causes. Most often, the common scapegoats include those that are considered “weaker” within the gender system: often women, and in this case, sexual minorities.



Violence specifically against sexual minorities is heavily influenced by the institutionalized homophobia and heterosexism in Ugandan society, which stems from many factors. Below I will explore the contributing factors of patriarchy, religion, the backlash against western neo-colonial influence, and myths about what homosexuality actually is. Throughout this section it is important to keep in mind that lesbians, gay men, and transgendered individuals pose different threats to the men who commit violence against them, and the motivations behind such violence varies to a degree. By addressing violence against sexual minorities as one unified population throughout this research I risk oversimplifying the phenomenon, and future research should take into account these differences in order to more fully understand the diversity within the phenomenon.

### **Patriarchy**

At the same time that a militaristic model of masculinity has been promoted throughout Uganda, homosexuality – which represents the opposite of hegemonic masculinity – has been vocally condemned by the state and the church (Dolan, 2007). Homosexuality is the antithesis of the hegemonic masculine ideal, and it is argued that patriarchy could not exist without the institutionalized fear of its opposite, i.e. homophobia (Connell, 2005; Gilligan, 2001; Gough, 2002):

...male same-sex activity is understood as a major symbolic threat to the gender differences which, in the circumstances of social marginalization, are not clearly marked by much else than sexual practice. (Connell, cited in Tomsen & Mason, 2001, p. 267).

When a patriarchal system becomes threatened, hegemonic masculinity will appear more strongly, because hegemony serves to legitimize and justify the existence of patriarchy in the first place (Connell, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity is presented in a way that validates its own

existence, and perpetuates the idea that patriarchy is and should be the natural order of things because men who fit the hegemonic masculinity are naturally superior. If other alternate masculinities – and femininities – are allowed to exist, this de-legitimizes the existence of hegemony and de-structures the nature of patriarchy itself. As Connell (2005, p. 162) describes, “One cannot become homosexual without shattering this hegemony somehow.” If sexual and gender minorities are to gain acceptance, as they are slowly gaining in other areas of the world, it would legitimize alternative forms of masculinity and femininity and therefore destroy patriarchal power.

Utilizing violence against gender non-conforming individuals such as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered individuals, and other “deviant” members of a patriarchally gendered society, can be seen as an effective means of enforcing specific gender norms that maintain male dominance in patriarchal systems. In the same way that GBV against women asserts male dominance, GBV against sexual minorities proves some members of society as “weak” and others as “strong.” Violence as seen in hate crimes is an act of domination and control over others that are perceived as deserving of a more subservient status, and GBV against both women and sexual minorities can be understood as a form of social control. It becomes a way of keeping those who are defined as “lesser” in their place and under the power of dominant masculinity.

### **Homosexuality as a symbol of emasculation.**

Sexual minorities become the targets of violence not only because they represent a threat to the patriarchal system, but because they also serve as a reminder of perceived emasculation. They are, as Gilligan (2001) describes, a “symbol or equivalent of every form of masculine sexual inadequacy” (p. 68). Men fearing emasculation will often act in exaggerated,

stereotypical ways to prove their masculine power, which includes publicly dominating women *and sexual minorities*. Homophobia serves to make someone else the *other* who is even more emasculated (in the case of gay men) or gender deviant (in the case of lesbians, bisexuals or transgendered individuals), therefore drawing attention away from the self and one's own feelings of emasculation. As discussed earlier, violence is always seen as a form of self-defense to those who engage in it (Gilligan, 2001). Men in Uganda are continuously reminded of their inevitable shortcomings within the international patriarchal system in the ways described above, and are further reminded of their fragility within this system by sexual minorities. Violence against sexual minorities then becomes an act of defending against this inner sense of inferiority, as well as defending a gender system in which they at least hold some amount of power.

## **Religion**

In chapter III I explored how the Christian church introduced the concept of homophobia that carries through today and continues to dominate the anti-homosexual rhetoric in Uganda (Epprecht, 2005; Fone, 2000; Herek, 1984; Hoad, 2007; Okyne, 2009; Wax, 2005). In addition I explored how the U.S.-based evangelical group known as The Family has perpetuated anti-homosexual sentiments through workshops and strong political ties (Domi, 2011; Sharlet, 2008). It cannot be underemphasized how much influence the western Christian church has on perpetuating hegemonic masculinity and anti-gay rhetoric within Uganda.

It is also important to remember that Christianity is not native to the region of Uganda and was imposed upon the people during the process of colonialism. The power dynamic created by the colonial roots of African Christianity continues to manifest in various ways. For example the church is a very strong political actor in Uganda, and is highly controlled by international religious players (Dolan, 2007). Religion is closely linked with development and international

aid, with much of the funding for various development programs and NGOs coming from international Christian donors. As organizations are highly dependent on this aid, a system is created in which the religious views of the donors are given more voice, and therefore more power – linking religion, international aid, and politics together in a tangled web. Although not all churches within Christianity condemn homosexuality and many are becoming more accepting through the years, in many cases this powerful international voice views homosexuality as immoral and a threat to society. With unequal power distribution comes influence, and the Christian church – especially evangelical subsets – hold a great deal of power and influence over the general perception of homosexuality in Uganda

### **Backlash against a Perceived Western Neo-colonial Influence**

Ironically, while western evangelical groups influence Uganda's public sentiment about homosexuality, there is a simultaneous backlash against western neo-colonial influence that manifests through anti-homosexuality. As described in chapter III, the belief that homosexuality is an unAfrican import from the west perpetuates discourse around homosexuality in Uganda (Dolan, 2007; Morgan & Wieringa, 2005; Murray, 2004; Tamale, 2007). This is an attractive argument for many who are disenfranchised by a long history of colonial and neo-colonial influence and seek to resist international subjugation, and an argument that intensifies homophobia throughout Uganda.

### **Myths about Homosexuality**

There are many myths about homosexuality that contribute to homophobia, such as the myth that homosexuals threaten the traditional family or sexually abuse children (The Rolling Stone Investigation Team, 2010, October 02). I will not explore all of these myths in depth; however one that bears mentioning is the myth that sexual minorities receive funding from the

west and are thereby able to live in economic security, or even luxury (Tamale, 2007). While this is only one of many misconceptions about sexual minorities, it represents a potential threat to Ugandan males who already feel economically disempowered through poverty and political corruption. If such a myth that “all homosexuals are rich” is believed, it can easily become a justification for violence and discrimination against them in such an economically stratified country. Another myth that bears mentioning is the myth that homosexuals sexually abuse or “recruit” children into their lifestyle, posing a threat to family life (Tamale, 2007). As men are traditionally regarded as and expected to be the protectors of the household, such a threat to the well-being of children may trigger violent reactions as men fulfill their masculine roles.

### **The Trap of Masculinity: Tying It All Together**

Homophobia is theorized to stem from the irrational fear of being “unmasked” and publicly emasculated (Kimmel, 1997). If men in Uganda are made to feel emasculated through the various forms of inequality described above, and this emasculation leads to a sense of shame, violence against sexual minorities then becomes a way of proving one’s manhood and eliminating this sense of shame, through an exaggerated assertion of masculine power (Gilligan, 2001). Because masculinity in Uganda is already heavily shaped by patriarchy, and additionally highly militarized, the stage is set for the propensity toward violence.

According to Gilligan’s (1996, 2001) theory, the multiple risk-factors faced by men in Uganda that may lead them to commit acts of violence become apparent. They are male in a highly patriarchal environment with strict codes and expectations of masculinity, which they have little chance of living up to. From a global perspective, they are significantly disempowered economically and socially, compared to the privileged white upper-class elite in the west. Patriarchy teaches them to feel ashamed, emasculated, and threatened if they do not

live up to the standards of masculinity set out for them. Sexual minorities represent one of the most fundamental threats against the system of patriarchy which, while oppressing men through rigidly narrow expectations of masculinity, also provides them with privileges and benefits that are difficult to give up freely. Because sexual minorities violate the gender norms imposed by patriarchy, and such a system cannot function without strict adherence to such gender roles, they threaten to delegitimize the privilege held through the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity. In addition, sexual minorities serve as symbols of the ultimate masculine inadequacy, and reminders of many men's own sense of emasculation. All of these factors are then further compounded with religious-based homophobia, a history of colonialism, a militaristic society, and perpetuating neo-colonial and international influences. Therefore, violence against sexual minorities – for which Ugandan men have already been primed through the risk factors discussed above – constitutes an act of self-preservation and self-defense.

I propose then that men commit acts of violence against sexual minorities for several reasons. They do this to ward off, distract from, and scapegoat their own feelings of shame and emasculation due to their many areas of actual and perceived disempowerment. They do it to maintain dominance and control, and thereby maintain their patriarchal power, as is often seen in other kinds of GBV. They do it to protect against a perceived threat to patriarchy, which is ultimately a threat to their power. Finally, they do it as an act of resistance to a perceived western neo-colonial influence of immoral sexuality.

### **Ways Forward: Preventing Violence**

Today Ugandan LGBTI activists, organizations, and allies are working tirelessly to address and prevent violence against sexual minorities in Uganda. Unfortunately many hate crimes and acts of violence go unreported to the police, and because acts of homosexuality are

illegal and homosexuality is not considered a human right, there is little to no protection from the state. As described in chapter III, the pending Anti-Homosexuality Bill, while temporarily shelved, still threatens to pass in the future. In its current state the bill threatens the death penalty under certain conditions and increased punishment for anything that could be regarded as “promotion” of homosexuality (Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law, 2010). Such legislation would further criminalize homosexuality and limit basic human rights for sexual minorities and, in effect, serve to institutionalize violence against them by structuring a law that deems them criminals. If passed, sexual minorities would face increased arrest and subsequent violence in prison, as well as state-sanctioned violence of the death penalty. Moving forward to prevent and address violence against sexual minorities would fundamentally require that sexual minorities be considered deserving of basic human rights and accepted in the eyes of the law.

Those that are remanded for inflicting violence are typically remanded within traditional legal and moralistic approaches to violence, which emphasize punishment as a solution to future violence (Gilligan, 2001). However punishment itself can be seen as an act of violence, and only serves to further shame and isolate the perpetrator – both predictors of future violence. Furthermore, the punitive violence of punishment is justified through the assertion that the criminal “deserves it” (Gilligan, 2001, p. 12) – an assertion that mirrors the criminal’s own justification for his use of violence against his victim. Lastly, prisons themselves are breeding grounds for violence, serving even to turn non-violent criminals into violent human beings. Legal punishment and moral shaming merely set the groundwork for future violence to occur, and societies that typically utilize such punitive methods have historically seen little success in any kind of decrease in violent crimes (Gilligan, 2001).

Gilligan (2001) suggests using a public health model of prevention by focusing explicitly on the *causes* of violence, and addressing these causes on three levels. In keeping with his emphasis on inequality and shame being primary risk factors, his theory is grounded in the idea that societies must take steps toward “not shaming people... and not depriving them of access to the tools they need in order to attain and maintain their self-respect” (Gilligan, 2001, p. 80-81). In other words, we must change the conditions that cause individuals to feel shamed within society, and work toward greater economic and social equality. He asserts that “social and political egalitarianism (democracy) serves to diminish both shame and violence quite effectively, across a wide range of differing levels of overall economic and cultural development” (Gilligan, 2001, p. 91).

*Primary prevention* involves addressing an entire society – violent and non-violent citizens, victims and perpetrators alike. This includes societal-level changes to address corruption, economic inequality, unemployment, access to education, and other structural forms of inequality that Gilligan refers to as “structural violence,” or violence inflicted through economic stratification and social division of rich and poor (Gilligan, 2001, p. 101). In patriarchal societies this would necessitate a movement toward gender equality, the distribution of power among all genders, and the elimination of a dominant hegemonic masculinity. This would be a drastic undertaking in most countries and certainly in Uganda, but would help to create a society in which the average man is not led to feel that he is not living up to some impossible and imposed standard. It would require not only addressing and shifting the societal gender messages in Uganda, but internationally as well. Feelings of injustice and shame could be countered or prevented, and the tendency toward violence against sexual minorities might be decreased. An additional area for primary prevention would be the continued education of the



public around what homosexuality is, and who sexual minorities are, to dispel the myths that instigate prejudice.

*Secondary prevention* is targeted at those most at risk of becoming violent. These include males; those suffering inequality and social injustice; survivors of violence; people abusing alcohol or drugs; uneducated and unskilled workers; and politically disempowered people, among others (Gilligan, 2001). In Uganda, this includes a large population of men. Today more and more Ugandan organizations that work to eliminate violence against women are including men as allies – rather than targeting them as the “enemy” (conversations with employees from CARE International in Gulu, October 15<sup>th</sup> 2010; the Center for Domestic Violence Prevention, November 26<sup>th</sup> 2010). Such strategies are more holistic in that they acknowledge how men are oppressed through patriarchy as well as women, and aim to support the needs of men which, if left unaddressed, often contribute to violence. Similar approaches could be effective in addressing the gender-based violence against sexual minorities in Uganda.

Part of this secondary prevention requires that alternative masculinities be supported, created, and sustained, to provide a substitute for the dominant militarized masculinity that is currently the only option for men. Within this, the racist influences of colonialism and neo-colonialism must be addressed in the “negative self-images” they create among Ugandan men, and the way this can perpetuate violence as a form of internal or actual self-preservation (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003, p. 13). As Dolan and Cleaver (2003) emphasize in their exploration of militarized masculinities in Uganda, effective approaches to the current hegemonic masculinity need to hold the larger state and international factors responsible for their roles in shaping this masculinity:

To break the link between masculinity and violence requires that the sexist, adultist and heterosexist assumptions and stereotypes which underpin the model of masculinity be addressed in such a way that men are less pressurized to behave in ways which generate violence. (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003, p. 13)

*Tertiary prevention*, or therapeutic intervention, addresses those that have already committed acts of violence in a way that prevents such violence from re-occurring in the future (Gilligan, 2001). As punishment only serves to reinforce feelings of humiliation and shame, it only increases one's propensity toward violence rather than decreasing it. The prison system in most societies today is incredibly ineffective in preventing violence from recurring. Gilligan suggests the idea of the "anti-prison" in the form of "a locked, secure residential college, whose purpose and functions would be educational and therapeutic, not punitive" (Gilligan, 2001, p. 117). This would be one example of the type of intervention that could serve to rehabilitate violent members of society rather than perpetuate a culture of violence.

These suggestions for interventions are of course idealistic and would require a major overhaul of any culture, let alone a culture such as Uganda's in which homophobia is still institutionalized and threatens to become even further structuralized through pending legislation. One thing that becomes clear, however, is that violence perpetrated by individuals cannot be addressed on an individual therapeutic level without simultaneously addressing the larger state and international factors at play. Many western approaches to violence (which are carried into countries like Uganda through international NGOs and peace-building efforts) target the individual as the primary problem that must be changed, while ignoring the "social, political and economic dynamics within which masculinities are developed" (Dolan & Cleaver, 2003, p. 12;

Tomsen & Mason, 2001). Without addressing this vital piece of the picture, change is unlikely to occur.

The area of male-perpetrated violence against sexual minorities in Uganda requires a great deal more research to explore effective methods of prevention and intervention, but as this study shows, a focus on masculinities is essential in considering any intervention. Consistent steps are already being made by the LGBTI community to shift the homophobic and heterosexist sentiment of the country, using media, public statements, dialogues, a focus on human rights, and involvement of allies (conversations with LGBTI activists, November 10<sup>th</sup> 2010). The perceived threat that sexual minorities pose can be further addressed through awareness-raising campaigns, clarifying such myths as “rich, western-funded homosexuals” and their threat to the traditional family. Such an approach could also be used to shift the hegemonic masculinity that pervades society, in order to establish an opening for alternative masculinities and create a safer space in which men are not constantly shamed or emasculated. By naming and shifting the standards of masculinity, one’s sense of inferiority relative to that standard can also be shifted. Individuals and organizations can continue to explore gender belief systems that hold such a rigid grip on society.

On an international level, we might examine which model or models of masculinity are dominant within the global arena and therefore influence masculinities around the world through the processes of globalization (Connell, 2005, p. xxiii). Taking the global arena into account when studying men and masculinities has not historically been done and is a fairly recent endeavor (Pease & Pringle, cited in Connell, 2005). In the western world we can examine our own role in shaping international policy and perpetuating the discrimination and inequality that exists in developing countries such as Uganda. We can explore the ways in which foreign aid

policies and NGOs perpetuate a one-dimensional gender discourse. Finally, the role of religion in perpetuating hegemonic masculinity, and specifically western evangelical religious groups in promoting anti-homosexual sentiments in developing countries, should be the focus of critical inquiry and held publicly accountable.

While it can be difficult to find optimism within such a problematic issue as widespread structural violence, we can perhaps find some hope in the fact that violence against sexual minorities, while serving to maintain a system of hierarchical power and control, also signifies the weakness of the system. As Connell (2005, p. 84) describes, “A thoroughly legitimate hierarchy would have less need to intimidate” and resort to violence in order to maintain its authority. Such widespread violence and backlash as is currently seen against sexual minorities in Uganda suggests that the current hierarchy is not only threatened, but altogether weakened and attempting to defend itself. While it is essential to find effective ways of addressing and preventing this violence, we can be optimistic that the weakening of the patriarchal system is a step in the right direction.

### **Contributions to the Field**

This study offers an expanded perspective of violence that can be helpful to the future of sexual minority rights in Uganda and other areas of the world. As with any type of violence in any part of the world, it is of vital importance to understand the causes of violence before effective interventions can be implemented. Without understanding the causes – in this case the complex factors affecting male perpetrators of gender-based violence – we cannot hope to create solutions.

It is my hope that the findings from this study will contribute to the field of social work in several ways. Firstly, it is an area of social concern that is greatly under-researched. There is a

dearth of information available not only on violence against sexual minorities, but on historical same-sex practices in Africa, international dynamics of hegemonic masculinities, and the link between Ugandan masculinities and violence. Studies of patriarchal masculinities and the link to gender-based violence is an expanding field of vital importance, and one that has been and is becoming even more global in nature. By utilizing various theories on violence and masculinities while also emphasizing the role of colonialism and neo-colonial influence, this study not only adds to the existing literature currently available on the subject, but expands the discussion to a necessary global level.

Secondly this study suggests ways of effecting social change to address and prevent such violence in the future. As social workers we are also social change agents, and in order to attend to policy or human rights advocacy we need a comprehensive understanding of the social problem. International NGOs are often responsible for perpetuating, however unintentionally, a simplistic gender discourse through their development work, which inherently undermines efforts to engage alternative non-violent masculinities (Dolan, 2007). As social workers we may easily find ourselves in situations where the system within which we are working is perpetuating institutionalized social problems, and with greater awareness of these problems comes the ability to effect change. Furthermore, social workers working in areas of gender-based violence will be benefited by an expanded definition of what GBV can and does consist of, outside of simply violence against women.

Thirdly, as clinicians it is essential that we understand the causes of any type of violence in order to effectively work with perpetrators, survivors, or bystanders. By elucidating both the individual factors and the greater systemic components that motivate such violence, mental health providers may be better informed as to how to address and prevent such violence in the

future. Studies of masculinities have done a great deal to enhance our understanding of working with male perpetrators of violence; however most of this research has focused on white western masculinities. A focus on Ugandan masculinities as interacting with global masculinities, and the way this influences homophobia and heterosexism, is essential addressing this type of violence.

Lastly, it is essential for social workers, health professionals, human rights advocates, and policy-makers from the western world to consistently be examining the role of the west in the international playing field. By elucidating the historical evolutions of same-sex practices, homophobia, religion, masculinities, and violence in Uganda, this study adds to the important discussion on the effects of international power dynamics, and racism on a global scale, on social forms of violence in the third world.

### **Study Biases and Limitations**

This study offers a new perspective on the causes of male-perpetrated violence against sexual minorities in Uganda, grounded in theoretical frameworks that offer insights into how such violence is imbedded within and perpetuated by experiences of hegemonic and alternative masculinities in a patriarchal society. Using theories proposed by other researchers in the studies of masculinities and violence, I have integrated their ideas amidst the backdrop of post-colonial Uganda, further influenced by such factors as religion and international economics, in a way that flushes out the complexities of the causes behind such homophobic violence.

However this study has several limitations. Firstly I cannot claim that this study or the literature it is grounded in is without bias, and these biases can be many. As discussed in chapter I, the dearth of information available on pre-colonial history, on which this study relies for much of its historical analysis, creates a limitation. Much of Uganda's pre-colonial oral history has

been interpreted through western anthropologists and historians, which by nature is inherently biased. Much of the information and theory on masculinities, violence, and African same-sex practices has been researched, analyzed and written about by non-Ugandan men from a western background in a post-colonial world. Many of them are leaders in their fields and I have relied most heavily on those that are mindful themselves about issues of cultural relativity. However, it is important to keep in mind the cultural background of each of the theorists I have relied on, such as Gilligan, who has based his theory on his work within the United States prison system. This raises questions of the cultural competency of such a theory being applied to men in Uganda, even while Gilligan makes efforts to remain culturally competent and maintain a global eye in his work.

I myself am a non-Ugandan female from a western (specifically United States) background, and therefore am heavily influenced by my culture. My history working with gender-based violence, male perpetrators, and gender and sexual minority issues in the United States have also influenced the lens with which I see the world. While I have tried to take these biases into account in my own review and analysis of literature and theories, it still leaves many areas for potential weakness in analysis.

Another shortcoming of this study is that its theoretical nature creates a distance between the researcher and subject matter that a qualitative or quantitative approach would not. While this distance was beneficial due to the currently heated climate around the issue, it loses the benefits of such first-hand data collection. While I have done my best to analyze the multiple factors influencing Ugandan men and ground these analyses in theory, I have not engaged directly with the primary subject of the study itself: male perpetrators of violence against sexual minorities. I am therefore drawing all of my conclusions based on second-hand information and

theory, without ever having interacted with these men or hearing from them personally about their experiences. This would be invaluable information that no doubt would greatly enrich – and perhaps even drastically change – this research. At the same time, such information would have been difficult to gather for several reasons: (1) the narrow scope and time-limited nature of this research, (2) the current political climate, (3) ethical concerns around questioning perpetrators of violence, how I would recruit such subjects for my study, and issues of confidentiality, and (4) the fact that I am a white, western female and therefore might feel less than approachable to potential subjects. Because I have been unable to gather such first-hand information, I draw my conclusions tentatively and with the hope they will be followed up with more thorough research in the future.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

This particular field of work would benefit greatly from enrichment in multiple areas of research. Areas such as African masculinities, the differences and similarities between African same-sex practices and western homosexuality, and the influence of development discourse and policy on gender relations, to name a few, are developing areas of interest that all require a great deal more examination. While I have attempted to address issues of cultural competency, there are inherent and unavoidably biases to this study. Future research should focus more heavily on the applicability of western research and theory on masculinity, violence, patriarchy, and homophobia to non-western cultures and situations, and on the development of alternative theories to take into account these differences. The field would benefit from a diverse approach to the areas addressed in this study, so that the dominant analyses and narratives can be challenged by narratives from the margins. Such research from multiple perspectives and



worldviews would greatly expand our knowledge about factors influencing men and contributing to violent behavior.

If possible, research working directly with male perpetrators of violence would add greatly to our understanding of the phenomenon. Interviews and other forms of data collection would help to move us beyond the theoretical groundings of this study into the actual lived experiences of men in Uganda who commit acts of violence. The roles of religion, politics, economics, and development processes on masculinities and violence against sexual minorities could be examined in more detail than the introduction they were given here. Lastly, multiple differentials that I have grouped together should also be examined and differentiated, such as differences and similarities in violence against gay men, lesbian women, and transgendered individuals; age and generational factors of the perpetrators themselves; physical violence vs. other forms of violence; and Ugandan Christianity as related to yet distinct from western Christianity.

### **In Conclusion**

In this study I have explored the factors that contribute to male-perpetrated violence against sexual minorities in Uganda. Through an analysis of literature and the use of theory, I have proposed that such violence stems largely from patriarchy, a militarized society, feelings of emasculation due to structural inequality and international neo-colonialism, and institutionalized homophobia. I have used several theories – specifically a theory on the social causes of violence and literature exploring the link between masculinity and homophobia – to support this exploration, and have integrated a post-colonial analysis throughout. While this exploration is preliminary and conducted from a theoretical distance from the phenomenon in question, it is an essential step in addressing the violence that occurs against sexual minorities in Uganda today. Our understanding of this violence is

essential not only for the victims and survivors of such violence, but for the men who perpetrate this violence as well. The systems of patriarchy and global inequality that lay the groundwork for such violence to occur is damaging to all those involved, and must be fully understood before we can make substantial efforts in altering the cycle.

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