Navigating the changing intersection of masculinities and gerontocracy: Paths to marriage in a local context, Mtoni, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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Acknowledgements

This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 0623233 and conducted in collaboration with Population Services International. Comments and support from Ulla Larsen and Jon Hattori were instrumental throughout this research project. I am grateful to Michelle Poulin, Cinzia Solari, and Heather Zaykowski for providing thought-provoking comments on earlier drafts of this manuscript and to Kelley Alison Smith for edits. I would like to acknowledge the debt I owe to my colleagues in Tanzania, especially James Kajuna of PSI, Melinda Matinyi, Grace Mayala, Thobias Rutta of MAdeA, and Cerelinius Balthazar of MAdeA.

Abstract

In many settings, the path to marriage is changing from one where extended kin networks, particularly elders, have played a large role in selecting partners to a model in which young adults select their own spouses. Such institutional change warrants an examination of how gender and hierarchies of masculinities encourage or hinder specific paths to marriage. Using data from 23 in-depth interviews with young men in the Mtoni ward of Dar es Salaam, I analyze how gender is performed and policed through the marriage process, leading to a "locally molded" path to marriage. Most young men described this path, in which they selected their own spouse based on feelings of romantic love. Young men outlined more power and responsibilities in the marriage process and male elders having less power and responsibility. Negative outcomes due to the tension between older men and younger men did not pose a morale risk to either group of men, but to young women. This analysis shows how gender influences possible paths to marriage and demonstrates the process through which the internal struggles among different groups of men are resolved in such a way that allow for their continued hegemony over women during times of change.

Introduction

Marriage is a critical step in the transition to adulthood in much of sub-Saharan Africa. Traditionally, male extended kin networks played a large role in the selection of a spouse (Larsen and Hollos 2003). With increases in education and exposure to western ideals of romantic love as the basis for marriage in Tanzania, the country of this study, young people, particularly in urban areas, are increasingly delaying marriage and choosing their own spouses. At the same time, some traditions remain strong even in companionate marriages, including paying bridewealth to

the bride's family, the role of the male lineage in initiating the engagement, and the role of a husband as provider. However, during this time of change little has been theorized about how gender and masculinities encourage or block specific paths to marriage, or how young adults are held accountable for enacting gender while navigating these new paths in sub-Saharan Africa.

Descriptions of changing mores of union formation remain limited for sub-Saharan Africa (for exceptions see Author et al 2007; Clark, Poulin, and Kohler 2009; Coast 2006). This study aims to improve understanding of how individuals respond to changes in the social context of marriage by describing four young men's paths to marriage that represent the types of paths described by urban in-depth interview participants, and analyzing how gender contributes to changes and continuities in this process. This research contributes to a body of literature demonstrating the role of gender and hierarchies of masculinities in organizing the interactional and structural aspects of changes in institutions (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Specifically, I show how gender influences the possible paths to marriage and demonstrate the process through which the internal struggles among different groups of men are resolved in such a way that allow for their continued hegemony over women during times of institutional change (Demetriou 2001; West and Zimmerman 2009).

LOCAL CONTEXT OF MASCULINITIES AND MARRIAGE

Masculinities in Tanzania

Performing gender in Tanzania has expectations of how men and women are to behave (West and Zimmerman 1987, 2009) and influences interactions with partners, peers, and parents as well as structural opportunities available to young men and women. As in other contexts, hegemonic masculinity requires heterosexual marriage and parenthood (Larsen and Hollos 2003). Men in Dar es Salaam are expected to provide for the financial and material needs of their

wives and children, as well as to provide moral guidance to their wives, which manifests in expressions of male control over women and their sexuality (Silberschmidt 2004). Nearly three-quarters of married women (72.6 percent) report that their husband is jealous or angry if they talk to other men and two-thirds (65.4 percent) report that their husband insists on knowing where they are at all times (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and IFC Macro 2011). Men who cannot control their wives are seen as less masculine and feel "humiliated" (Silberschmidt 2001, 666). This control is symbolized in the groom or his family making bridewealth payments to the bride's father and, at an agreed upon point in the payments, the couple will marry and the groom may make claims to both her productive and reproductive labor (Dodoo and Frost 2008).

While men are expected to establish and support an independent household, Tanzania's marginalization within the global economy has made this problematic. Changes in Tanzanian economic policy in the 1980's and 1990's made it increasingly difficult for men to find employment in the formal economy (Briggs and Mwamfupe 2000; Silberschmidt 2004). Specifically, men's formal employment in Dar es Salaam decreased from 84 percent in 1978 to 45 percent in 1990-1991 (Bureau of Statistics 1982, cited in Silberschmidt 2004) to five percent in 2002 (Dar es Salaam City Council 2004). As a result many men in Dar es Salaam work in precarious positions in the informal economy as laborers, businessmen, or are self-employed, making achieving the financial stability required to support a family difficult.

Despite the advantages of male privilege, young men in Tanzania experience disadvantages of youth in a strict gerontocracy. The intensity of the gerontocracy in sub-Saharan Africa lead Oyěwùmí (1997) to argue that chronological age—not gender—is the primary mechanism through which individuals are classified. Examining changes in marriage in Burkina Faso, Hertrich (2013) argues that despite changes in marriage, elders' specialized knowledge of

the marriage process allows them to maintain control. Young men in Tanzania navigate changes in the institution of marriage against a similar backdrop of strict accountability to doing gender, compulsory heterosexual marriage and childbearing, male privilege, marginalization within the global economy, and their generally inferior position relative to male elders. In doing so, young men are redefining their power and responsibilities, yet as this analysis will show, are doing so in a manner that allows them to do masculinity and continue men's control over women, while remaining bound by the constraints of the gerontocracy.

Changes in Marriage in Tanzania

Throughout much of the world there has been a deinstitutionalization of marriage with an increased focus on individual choice (Cherlin 2004; Wardlow and Hirsch 2006). In the western context, the focus on individual choice has taken the form of self-development, flexibility of roles, and communication within marriage (Cherlin 2004). Elsewhere, including sub-Saharan Africa, the increased focus on individual choice has taken the form of individuals instead of extended kin networks choosing their marital partners (Clark, Poulin, and Kohler 2009; Mensch 2005; Smith 2010; Wardlow and Hirsch 2006). Traditional marriages in sub-Saharan Africa are established by patrilineal elders—with the uncommon exception of matrilineal ethnic groups where the bride's maternal uncle initiates the marriage—and have been described as having substantial distance between spouses (Caldwell, Caldwell, and Quiggin 1989).

In contrast, modern marriage in sub-Saharan Africa emphasizes individual choice, romantic love as an impetus for marriage, monogamy, and an increase in the importance of the couple-relationship (Smith 2010; Wardlow and Hirsch 2006). Theories regarding modernization and westernization suggest a deinstitutionalization that involves the shift from the traditional

path to marriage with extensive kin involvement to the "western" model where young adults are encouraged to date and marry.

As women have traditionally been the focus of research related to determinants of fertility, the majority of what is known about marriage in Tanzania focuses on women (for reviews of the lack of and potential for research on men in the region, see Dodoo and Frost 2008 and Morrell and Ouzgane 2005). Delays in women's first marriage are more common among educated individuals and among urban residents (Bledsoe and Cohen 1993; Mensch, Singh, and Casterline 2005). Among urban residents there were substantial cohort differences in women's median age at first marriage; those aged 25 to 29 married two years later (at 20.5 years) than had those aged 45 to 49 (NBS and IFC Macro 2011). Ultimately, the age gap between spouses in Tanzania is shrinking, with women in Tanzania entering their first marriage a year later than in previous cohorts while young men are marrying a year earlier (NBS and IFC Macro 2011).

As has been noted elsewhere (Mensch, Grant, and Blanc 2006) there has been substantially less inquiry into changes in the spouse selection and marriage process than there has into changes in marriage timing. Such substantial change in process creates new situations where communities, families, and young adults no longer have a shared understanding of the behaviors expected of those negotiating the process. This situation, as Cherlin (2004) points out in his discussion of changes in the United States, leaves actors navigating new processes and creates the potential for conflict, particularly for those who find themselves with less control. As young adults increasingly choose their own spouses without input from extended kin networks (Author 2008), changes in the marriage process become ripe for intergenerational conflict.

Some aspects of union formation, however, have not changed, including bridewealth payments to the bride's father (Dodoo and Frost 2008). Traditionally a young man's family was

responsible for making payments, largely in the form of livestock (Larsen and Hollos 2003). However, recently this burden is increasingly falling on young men and is paid in cash (Larsen and Hollos 2003; Author 2008). Bridewealth payments are an important source of young men's power to choose their own partners, yet make it difficult for men to marry when they would like, as they must first accumulate funds for payments. However, nearly all men, even the poorest, eventually marry (NBS and IFC Macro 2011).

Research on marriage in sub-Saharan Africa has largely approached the topic of union formation quantitatively, examining the role of women's various sociodemographic factors in marriage timing. Little research has focused on individuals' descriptions of their marriage process or on the diversity of the paths to marriage. Further, young men are rarely the focus of analysis (Dodoo and Frost 2008; Morrell and Ouzgane 2005). This analysis brings young men's voices into the discussion to detail how gender and masculinities provide structure to the changes in the institution of marriage. Theories regarding modernization and westernization may suggest that two paths would dominate: the traditional path with extensive kin involvement and the "western" model where young adults are encouraged to date prior to marriage. However, drawing on two rounds of semi-structured in-depth interviews with 23 young men and their partners in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, I highlight how gender and competing masculinities structure changes in marriage, leading to a greater understanding of the power relations influencing the "local" path to marriage that young adults molded.

METHODS

These in-depth interviews were part of a mixed-methods project based in Dar es Salaam addressing the roles of trust and commitment in condom use and fidelity. Dar es Salaam is a coastal city and the urban center of Tanzania. The Mtoni ward of Dar es Salaam was chosen due

to its ethnic and economic diversity. According to the 2002 Population and Housing Census, approximately 48,000 people lived in Mtoni. While all participants come from this urban area, changes in marriage are likely to first be evident among those living in such urban areas and precursors of changes that will spread throughout the country, although the exact details of the changes in marriage will differ across Tanzania.

I conducted two rounds of semi-structured in-depth interviews in Mtoni between December 2006 and May 2007. Interviews were conducted in Swahili, the lingua franca of Tanzania, with the assistance of a bilingual English-Swahili interpreter. A local community-based organization, Mass Development Association (Madea), which works intensively with Mtoni youth in various arenas, including job training and HIV prevention, facilitated contact with neighborhood-level leaders (the "cell leaders").

Once I attained permission from a cell leader to work in his neighborhood, Madea helped me identify youth who fell into the various categories of my purposive sample: young couples of different ethnic groups, varying educational attainment, and different marital statuses. I interviewed each member of the relationship individually. As sexual relationships between youth are secretive and hidden from those outside their peer group, it was initially difficult to find youth willing to give their partners' contact information. Some youth consented to be interviewed knowing we wanted to talk to their partner, but then did not introduce their partners. However, as youth came to trust that I was not disclosing details of our interviews to elders, I easily attained partners' contact information (interviewing 11 out of the last 12 partners). Had all of the participants initially consented to include their partners, my sample would have included more details on relationships that were less established as well as those not on the path to

marriage. However, as in most cases the male partners were my first point of contact, this bias is primarily in the female interviews.

A total of 39 young men and women participated in the first round of in-depth interviews. Of the 26 participants initially recruited, 12 consented to provide contact information for their partners (one female participant provided contact information for two partners). Only those individuals whose partners also participated in the first round of interviews were recruited for the second round of interviews. Of those 23 individuals, 18 were relocated and provided consent for a second interview. I recruited nine additional individuals to participate in the second round of in-depth interviews.

With participants' permission, I audiotaped the in-depth interviews so that I could later transcribe the interviews for analysis in Nvivo. During the in-depth interviews, I asked the young adults for a history of their current relationship in order to gain insight into the local context of relationship development. The second round of interviews, conducted 3-4 months after the first round, allowed me to clarify questions that emerged from the first round of interviews and to discuss how the participants' relationships had recently progressed or ended. Elements that emerged as common or divergent from others were analyzed.

As a white American woman, all of my interviewees viewed me as an outsider with great privilege. When I introduced myself to participants I explained that although they saw me as their elder, I was talking with them because I cared about their lives, challenges, and relationships. Although there is always inherent bias in these interactions, interviewees disclosed sensitive details and thoughts about their lives not described here —including recent sexually transmitted infections, deeply emotional perspectives about their "fight for life," and their criticism of western sexuality — suggesting that the interviews took a confessional atmosphere.

Further, my outsider status allowed for me to ask questions about commonly assumed knowledge that would have seemed nonsensical for an insider to ask.

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the male participants and their relationships. The average age of the male participants was 20.5 years old, and the average age of the female participants was 19.0 years old. On average, males were 2 years older than their female partners. These age differences meant that most young men had finished school while their female partners were more likely to still be students. As is would be expected along the coast of Tanzania, the majority of the youth interviewed in both rounds were Muslim (39 were Muslim and 9 were Christian). Tanzanians typically marry individuals from the same religion and all but three shared the same religion as their partner.

The majority of the youth interviewed were poor by urban Tanzanian standards. However, even the poorer participants had intermittent electricity and radios. Nine male participants could be considered middle class and one was wealthy. Youth whose parents were the head of the main family in a compound were considered middle class. Middle class families tended to have TVs, radios, and more space in the house. Youth from poorer households tended to live in one room, possibly shared with others. The one wealthy participant was receiving an expensive private education and his family often traveled to Europe.

FOUR PATHS TO MARRIAGE

I begin this analysis by outlining the paths to marriage described by four young men that exemplify the role of gender and changing hierarchies of masculinities in structuring changes in the marriage process. First, the paths that two brothers navigated outline both the most traditional and most western paths to marriage among the young adults interviewed (the “Neo-Arranged Path” and “Western Path,” respectively). Next, two young men outline the paths more frequently

described by my participants. In the most common path described by participants (see table 1), the "Locally Molded Path," the young man and his partner hid their relationship until he asked permission to marry her. The final path described is the "Premarital Pregnancy Path." After describing these four paths to marriage, I describe the distinguishing factors for each path and highlight the process through which each of the young men came to follow his specific path.

Neo-Arranged Path: Omary[i] and Zainab

None of the young men or women interviewed expected that their families would arrange their marriage, and the families rarely did (see table 1). Omary and Zainab were the exception, in a marriage arranged by his older brother (as his father was deceased). Omary and Zainab had been married for six months at the time of our interview and were expecting their first child. The couple lived in a two-room home. The sitting room was decorated with posters of European cities and had no furniture other than an entertainment center with a DVD, VCR, and TV. Omary, a 24-year-old who operated a video store along the main road in Mtoni, described how he came to have his brother and sister-in-law select his wife, "it's unfortunate, but it's not my first marriage, it's my second marriage. The first one didn't go on well so I had to remarry."

Omary describes his first marriage as failing for a number of reasons including his first wife's bad moral character (*tabia*), his youth—19 years old at the time—and because their marriage lacked the full support of his mother-in-law. These three elements were intertwined: his young age led him to ignore warnings that his fiancé would be *shanhingi*, a derogatory term used to describe a middle-aged woman of bad character who was stubborn and has say over her husband, similar to how he described his mother-in-law. When Omary sought his in-laws' help with problems, "She (his mother-in-law) would say, 'This is my daughter, go home, she'll stay here.' And once I even went there to apologize but… the girl had habits of the mother." Omary

explains that his first marriage ended after his first wife's attempted abortion of an unplanned pregnancy lead to a major fight. Omary's parents were concerned that his wife and mother-in-law would attempt to have him arrested and forbid him from seeing his first wife and children.

Subsequently, Omary was happy to have his brother and sister-in-law arrange his second marriage. After Omary's brother suggested the marriage, he and Zainab discussed the prospect of marriage for a few days before his family approached Zainab's. Omary felt that the main difference between his marriage process and the marriage process of past generations was that he and Zainab had this period to discuss their future. Once they agreed that they had a shared vision, Omary's parents negotiated and paid the bridewealth and the couple to marry only a month later. Omary was the only young man we spoke with who told us that his family paid the bridewealth.

Omary and Zainab were also the only couple that waited for marriage before becoming sexually intimate. While Omary had wanted to become intimate with Zainab earlier, he felt that her insistence on waiting was an important marker in the difference between Zainab and his first wife. Zainab explained that the decision to wait was largely due to the fact that her family maintains the rare practice of inspecting the bed sheet from their wedding night:

> They put a white sheet on your bed before you sleep with your husband. In the morning, that white sheet's collected… So if the blood is there then they go and congratulate your parents and say, 'Oh, your child respected you' and it's something that they're proud of. Otherwise, it'll bring shame to your family, they'll say, 'Your girl was not good.'

Omary described great happiness in his second marriage. Zainab attends to all the housework, upon which Omary remarked "I come home and everything is in good order, even the t-shirt, just after you take it off you will find it washed." The peace Omary finds in his second marriage is strengthened by Zainab's close relationship with his mother, a sharp contrast

with his family's relationship with his first wife. This neo-arranged path maintains the role of young men's extended kin in selecting a spouse; however Omary and Zainab were able to discuss their visions for the future. The importance of this shared vision in their moving forward with marriage is new and demonstrates the importance of individualization in changes in masculinities.

Western Path: Said and Arifa

Said is Omary's 23-year-old younger brother. Despite growing up in the same family and being close in age, the two followed dramatically different paths to marriage. While Omary met his second wife through his family, Said met Arifa, a 20-year-old nurse, when he was a disc jockey at her brother's wedding a year before our first interview. Said approached Arifa the day that he met her, but Arifa waited almost two months before agreeing to become his girlfriend. Shortly after Said and Arifa's relationship began, they discussed their plans for marriage. While family was instrumental in arranging Omary's second marriage, Said felt that family should defer to a young person's wishes. He explained, "The family does not have any say. For example, I told my mother that I wanted to marry (Arifa) and she agreed… I wouldn't understand her if she didn't accept. Why would she deny it? Why, when I already love (Arifa)?"

At the time of our first interview, Said had not yet asked Arifa's parents for permission to marry. The couple had, however, taken an uncommon step: once they decided that they ultimately wanted to get married, they introduced each other to their parents. After making the introductions, Arifa frequently went to Said's home and would help his mother cook while he often spent time with her brothers. However, although they were open about their relationship and Arifa had slept at Said's house, he refused to sleep at her house because he was afraid of the possible reactions of her male family members.

Despite unstable employment, Said received consent from both families to marry before our second interview. During the first interview Said explained, "When I have enough money and a better job, I'll marry her." While his work had not improved by the second time we talked, he had saved for a month to buy Arifa an engagement ring and officially asked for permission to marry. Said had initially planned to bring a proposal letter to her parents, which is how most young men sought permission to marry their girlfriends. Omary, who Said views as an elder and often goes to for advice, suggested he first bring a ring for Arifa. Said did not question why Omary suggested the ring, but told us, "I also wondered why he told me to do that." Since becoming engaged, Arifa and Said each explained that they are able to spend even more time together, that they love each other more, and truly understand each other. This Western Path to marriage includes many of the ideals of companionate marriage, such as individualization, love, and openness about the relationship with family. However, the path maintains deference to elders regarding the details of the marriage process, exemplified by Said unquestioningly following his older brother's advice to take Arifa an engagement ring instead of a proposal letter.

Locally Molded Path: Idi and Mariamu

In contrast with Arifa and Said's Western Path to marriage, nearly all of the young adults I spoke with hid their relationships from elders until the young man sent a proposal letter. Young adults explained that their parents and other adults believed that being in a relationship was a sign of bad *tabia*. This was especially important for young women, and couples went to great lengths to hide their relationships. Idi, a 23-year-old singer and intermittent worker in a plastics manufacturing plant, rented a room in a compound less than 50 feet from where his girlfriend, Mariamu, a 19-year-old student from a middle class family, lived. Idi described keeping their relationship hidden as "a big project." Mariamu explained the importance of this to me:

> Because in our society, if a girl has a boyfriend then they say she doesn't respect her parents and that she has bad *tabia*… They want a boy who loves a girl to wait until she is ready to get married and then for him to go straight to her parents to ask for her hand in marriage and marry her. They shouldn't start by being friends.

In this most common path to marriage (table 1), young men took an active role and young women were largely excluded from the engagement process. Specifically, when young men were ready to ask for permission to marry their girlfriend, most did so without telling the girlfriend that he sent a proposal letter. Our first interview with Idi was shortly after he sent the letter to Mariamu's family. Mariamu, however, did not know that he had sent the letter. Idi explained that this is due to a combination of avoiding disappointment and maintaining control:

> I don't want to disappoint her if something happens to prevent us from getting married… Many of the boys here don't tell their girlfriends when they are taking the (proposal) letters because they don't want their girlfriends thinking a lot about them. They don't want their girlfriends to know that they love them so much. Because if the girls know that their boyfriends love them so much then the boy will be doing anything for her.

Sending a proposal letter to a young woman's family calls elders' authority into question and creates conflict. The young women told us that the act of sending a proposal letter effectively informs parents that their daughter is in a sexual relationship. While typically confident and relaxed, Idi appeared quite anxious while he waited two months to find out if he had permission to marry Mariamu. Ultimately he had good reason for concern, as Mariamu's father was angry when they received the engagement letter. Idi explained, "He said [to Mariamu's mother], 'How would you let such things [Mariamu be in a relationship] happen?'"

When a young man informs his elders of his intentions the process returns firmly to the hands of the elders. Once Miriamu's father's anger subsided, Idi was accompanied by his older brother to begin marriage negotiations with Miriamu's father. During their meeting, Mariamu's father dove deeply into Idi's finances. Idi recounts a battery of questions:

> He said, "oh you do music, what do you do? Do you play music, or do you sing?" … So the father said, "So you just wait for people to come and find you, what if they don't come? How will you get money?" … He asked how much we charge to rent the equipment … The father asked me, "Now what happens if you don't get any business for the whole month, where do you get money to live?"

Consistent with the young women's accounts of why they hide their relationships, Mariamu's father was angry that she was in a relationship and felt that they had wasted their money paying her school fees. In considering the marriage proposal, there appeared to be a tension between keeping Mariamu in school and having her married to Idi before she becomes pregnant. Ultimately, Mariamu's father was satisfied with Idi's answers and, in discussions after Idi had left the meeting, told Idi's older brother that the two could marry once Mariamu finished school. The Locally Molded Path, as described by Idi, involves the same ideals of a companionate marriage described by Said, with the important exception of hiding the relationship from elders prior to beginning the engagement process out of fears that it would overtly challenge male elders' authority and control, leading others to shame the young woman as having bad *tabia* and not respecting her parents.

Premarital Pregnancy Path: Mustapha and Asha

Mariamu's parents' concerns about premarital pregnancy were well founded; three of the couples interviewed had a premarital pregnancy. While reaching full adulthood in Tanzania requires

having children, premarital pregnancy is undesirable. The mandate to have children leads to harsh stigma associated with infertility (Larsen and Hollos 2003) and few women use hormonal contraception due to fears that it can harm their fecundity. Many of the young adults, including Mariamu, initially used condoms for contraception and HIV prevention but abandoned them quickly. When I asked about other methods to prevent pregnancy, many participants said that there was only condoms and periodic abstinence. In past generations, women who became pregnant before marriage were likely to marry quickly; however, this is less common among more recent generations and may be tied to the decreased social control that elders have to legitimize premarital conceptions (Author et al 2007). The three couples with premarital pregnancies faced substantial obstacles in their paths to marriage, as the pregnancies made their relationship public and added the burden of providing for an additional dependent.

Mustapha (23 years old) and his girlfriend, Asha (22 years old) exemplify the challenging path to marriage for young adults who have a child before marriage. They met three years before our interview as members of a traditional dance group. Six months after meeting, Mustapha approached Asha and asked to be her boyfriend. As was common among all of our interviews with young women, Asha explained that she was in love with him long before he approached her. When Mustapha finally approached her, "He said he wanted to make his life with me, to be a loving husband. He told me many things!" Asha waited a month to accept him as her boyfriend because she worried about what other young people would say if she received him too quickly.

Asha became pregnant about a year into their relationship. Young women feared premarital pregnancy. Two of the three young women with a premarital pregnancy discussed unsuccessful attempts to terminate their pregnancies. While Asha was concerned about the consequences of having a child, Mustapha saw things differently. He explained:

I was so happy. She'd thought of abortion, but I didn't want that. When she realized that I didn't want her to have an abortion, she tried doing it secretly with a kind of medicine.

There was no conflict with Asha's family when Mustapha introduced himself and took responsibility for the child. For Asha, Mustapha claiming paternity was a critical moment in their relationship. However, Mustapha's mother was "furious" to find Mustapha now had a child, and assumed that she would have to help provide assistance for it, which led to their ongoing estrangement.

Although both Asha and Mustapha referred to each other as "fiancé," they were not officially engaged. Mustapha believed that things were "not yet right" for him to send a proposal letter to Asha's family because of his financial situation. Mustapha worked twelve-hour shifts, six days a week at a clothing manufacturing company earning nearly 40 US dollars a month. In describing what he would need in order get married and provide a "good environment" for his child, Mustapha explained that he would have to earn 70 to 80 US dollars. This amount would allow him and Asha to rent a room without having to share it with other family members, to own a bed and sofa, and have other material comforts.

Despite not being officially engaged, Asha's family provided Mustapha substantial support. His job offered stability and upward mobility, yet he had to pay nearly 65 US dollars for the opportunity to take the position. As Mustapha's father had passed away and he was estranged from his mother, Asha's mother loaned Mustapha the fee. While repaying the debt to Asha's mother, Mustapha ate all of his meals at Asha's home. Ultimately, while Mustapha and Asha were neither married nor engaged, aside from not being co-residential, they functioned largely as a family. This Premarital Pregnancy Path was not intentionally taken by any of the participants. The three couples on this path were initially on the Locally Molded Path, yet their relationships

became known due to the pregnancy. The financial challenges of establishing a household are compounded by a child, and slow a couple's transition to marriage. This is in sharp contrast with the experience of previous generations, in which elders had greater control to insist that premarital conceptions were quickly legitimized.

NEW PATHS: CHANGES AND CONTINUITIES

Changes in marriage in sub-Saharan Africa have been characterized as shifting from traditional to companionate marriages. The path to these companionate marriages has been less detailed, leaving the assumption that the path, spurred in part due to increased exposure to western models of sexual behavior, would resemble Western paths to marriage. Adopting western behaviors happens because, as Jamil explained, "Nowadays, people watch a lot of movies—love stories—they read about things like that. Then they imitate quite a number of things." However, many young adults are critical of westernization. Jamil continued his description of westernization, explaining its negative influence, "Maybe they might watch a movie where someone has three boyfriends so they try to imitate that and put it in their real life." As such, young adults are not simply imitating, but are adapting ideas such as the importance of companionship, love, and individuality to fit the local context that includes a hierarchy of masculinities inextricable from the gerontocracy as well as a strict sexual double standard.

The adaptation of these ideas is seen in the Locally Molded Path followed by a large majority of the young men (See Table 1). All of the young men explained that most young adults do not tell their parents that they are in a relationship until they are ready to get married for fear of angering their parents and the shame it would bring their girlfriends. Hiding the relationship prior to engagement avoids overtly questioning male elders' authority and control over young women. Once the young man asks permission to get married the questioning of elders' authority

is short lived; the young man is revealing the relationship at the same time that marriage negotiations shift into the hands of elders. Managing the potential shame from elders focused on the fear that the young woman — not the young man — would be accused of having bad *tabia*. In addition, most young women described waiting a respectable amount of time before agreeing to start a relationship so that their boyfriends and peers would say that they had good *tabia*. During this time many wanted to learn if the young man was serious about the relationship. Building a relationship with a man who wanted to marry them did not seem to pose a risk to their *tabia* in the eyes of their peers, even if they knew that their partner was not yet in the position to get married.

In addition to avoiding angering elders and bringing shame to the young woman, Kafili, a 19-year-old student, links the Locally Molded Path with poverty,

> Here parents don't have enough money. They're having problems getting enough money to pay for their children so if they know that they're in relationships it's hard for them to take it because they see that maybe they're wasting their money, that maybe their children are just playing.

Kafili's assessment of the role of money is consistent with my analysis: when parents are no longer supporting their children, there is less conflict when the parents learn about the relationship.

Given the context of powerful male elders and a strong sexual double standard, how were Said and Arifa on the Western Path — open about the relationship prior to their engagement — without negative repercussions? Arifa's social status contributed to this. First, Arifa had finished her schooling and was working as a nurse. Arifa's family was poorer than most and lived in a neighborhood where many women sold sex. Further, Arifa met Said when he was a DJ at her

brother's wedding, evidence of his employment. As such, Arifa already exceeded the expectations for women in her neighborhood, likely lessening her father's fears of her losing status due to her relationship, and allowing her the freedom to be open about her relationship.

In contrast, Said's brother Omary gave his elders the power to select his spouse. While Said felt strongly that his love for Arifa compelled his mother (their father had passed away) to accept his intentions to marry Arifa, Omary's failed first marriage led him to seek assistance from his extended family regarding whom to marry. Zainab came from a family that was much more traditional than most, as demonstrated by their practice of displaying the marital bed sheet. Omary and Zainab's willingness to have their family pick their partners led to the Neo-Arranged Path, while others faced beatings and being thrown out of the house for not giving elders control. Ultimately, this suggests that even the Neo-Arranged Path has important elements of individual choice.

The final path, the Premarital Pregnancy Path, was not a path that any of the young adults chose. The confluence of low rates of contraceptive use — due to fears of side effects and the difficulties young adults have accessing contraception without their elders' knowledge — and an individualization of the process has led to the increased occurrence of this path, as noted elsewhere in Tanzania (Author et al 2007). In this path, couples did not marry quickly because elders have less power to legitimize premarital conceptions; at the same time, young men are expected to be able to *individually* support a family prior to marriage rather than incorporating a new wife and child into the extended family's household. The three couples with premarital pregnancies described previously being on the Locally Molded Path. Two of the three young women attempted abortion. Of the three young men, one refused to acknowledge paternity, although he married and quickly divorced his partner between rounds of the interviews.

Mustapha and Eddy acknowledged paternity and intended to marry their partner, although neither was yet in the financial position to do so.

Changes and Continuities

Themes that emerged from across the four paths to marriage are consistent with past descriptions of the marriage process as well as themes not previously documented. First, love was the driving force behind young men's progression to marriage. The young men also felt that there was a minimum standard of living that they needed to be able to provide a wife and family, yet were aware of their marginalization in the global economy. They held expectations of fulfilling the provider role at the same time as they discussed the women in their lives as partners. In addition to maintaining more traditional notions of gender, the young men engaged their male elders and excluded their partners when negotiating their marriage agreements, and agreed to make bridewealth payments despite the time it took to accumulate payments. Further, each of the young adults described a pattern in which younger women who engaged in premarital sex and older women who held too much power were shamed.

Love was the critical determinant that men used as to whether a couple should marry**.** Young men controlled the marriage process prior to engagement in such a way that asserted their power to initiate the relationship and then maintained that power**.** Each time a young man described how he knew he wanted to marry his girlfriend, he would declare his complete love for her. However, many young men stated that they did not want their partners to know how much they were loved. Concern centers on the power it would give young women if they understood the full extent of their partners' feelings. As Idi explained, "I am the one who must have more power because if I don't then I'll be the one who will follow her ideas all the time. Then I will become *bushoke*." "*Bushoke"* is taken from a popular song at the time, in which the singer,

Bushoke, is so in love with "Mama Rhoda" that he is willing to do women's work such as caring for and feeding children, washing dishes, and cleaning laundry. Exclusion from the process that uses love as the determinant of who and when to marry keeps young women from knowing the full extent of their partners' love and reduces the risk that they will gain power over their male partners.

The young men had a strong sense of the expectations for their performance of masculinity and described the economic hardships faced by many Tanzanians as a critical barrier to marriage. Access to resources, particularly the resources necessary to support a wife and children, was the cornerstone of masculinity to the young men in Mtoni, as in much of the world. All of the young men discussed how much more difficult they thought it was for their generation to start a family due to economic conditions. Economic standing was also a concern for the young women's parents. Mariamu's father's worries about Idi's ability to support her echoes the role of financial strain and the lack of stable jobs articulated by the young men who would like to get married. Further, by supporting Mustapha in getting a solid financial footing prior to marriage, Asha's mother reinforced the notion that a man must earn a sufficient salary before marriage.

Although male elders were not part of the spouse selection process, they regained control once a young man decided that he wanted to marry his partner. As Idi's marriage process exemplifies, young men requesting permission to marry their girlfriends often involved conflict. This conflict largely stems from different understandings that young people and their elders have regarding behaviors expected of young adults prior to marriage, and male elders finding themselves with less control of the process. However, once this conflict was overcome, the male elders guided the process and brokered the marriage negotiations, which always included

negotiations of bridewealth payments. Further, a role for the extended kin network was maintained within the new marriage process, as demonstrated by Omary's family forbidding him from seeing his first wife and children and Said's happiness that Arifa has a close relationship with his mother. These factors allowed a role for extended kin networks despite the changes in the marriage process.

CONCLUSIONS

Consistent with findings elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, the young men described ideals of romantic love and individual choice in the marriage process (Clark, Poulin, and Kohler 2009; Mensch 2005; Smith 2010; Wardlow and Hirsch 2006). Theories regarding modernization and westernization have largely suggested a shift from the traditional path to the "western" model, although Cherlin (2004) added nuance to this description by highlighting that changes in marriage create the potential for conflict, particularly for those who find themselves with less control. This study further extends previous theories of change in the marriage process by looking at how gender and the hierarchies of masculinities structure conflict and how young adults mold specific paths to marriage in response. While a large majority of young men selected their own spouses, they also hid their early relationships from elders. Once ready for marriage, young men engaged their elders to negotiate the marriage process. This local molded path avoids conflict in two ways. First, hiding the relationship prior to engagement avoids overtly questioning male elders' role in spousal selection. Second, it protects young women who are not engaged from being viewed as disrespectful of their parents and having bad *tabia*. Ultimately, this analysis leads to a greater understanding of how the local hierarchy of masculinities has influenced young men's adaption of the western model, leading them to forge an altogether new path. Within this model, young men invoke modern identities and individualism to justify their

increased control over the marriage process, yet have brought forward practices that maintain male control with some deference to elders.

In the Tanzanian context, the potential for conflict in the marriage process (Cherlin 2004) is primarily between older and younger men. Consistent with research from other urban areas in the region (Smith 2010), the young men each explained that romantic love guided their decision to marry, which underscores that marriage is an individual decision that male elders could not make. However, this creates a situation in which the premarital relationship and conjugal union is increasingly distinct from the larger kin network. Separation from extended kin began prior to engagement when young adults hid their relationship from their elders. Consequently, when young adults seek permission to marry, they often face conflict with the young woman's parents, who express concern that their daughter was in a sexual relationship prior to her engagement.

While Oyěwùmí (1997) argued that chronological age, not gender, is the primary mechanism through which individuals are classified and allocated power, my analysis reconciles the issue by examining how masculinities and age intersect. Although most young men interviewed had initiated their own spousal selection, the lengths to which couples went to hide their relationships prior to engagement reinforces the importance of not overtly questioning male elders' role in the marriage process or fathers' control over their daughters' sexuality. Further, male elders maintained control of bridewealth and marriage negotiations. As found in other studies in the region (Hertrich 2013), elders maintain control over the process by not giving young men the specialized knowledge of how engagements are negotiated.

Woven through all of the descriptions offered by young men was a hegemonic masculinity that valued marriage and men's control of the marriage process. Young men described taking the active role in initiating relationships and proposing engagements. This was

tied closely to a sexual double standard in which young men were expected to be looking for partners and wives, while young women were the passive recipients of engagement proposals. Further, bridewealth payments continue, although increasingly paid by the groom himself rather than his male elders. Young women who challenged the double standard by having premarital sex or agreeing to begin a relationship too quickly were shamed, as were older women with too much power. This shaming of women ultimately reinforces men's control over women's sexuality and the marriage process, while holding women accountable to their sex category membership (West and Zimmerman 2009).

In this new marriage regime with a more distinct conjugal unit, young men felt compelled to strive for a hegemonic masculinity where it is their *individual* responsibility to be able to support a wife and child as well as to accumulate funds for bridewealth payments. They described their difficulties in doing so, their individual economic hardships and the challenges in finding steady employment — embedded in the nation's poor economic position — as major obstacles in the path to marriage. Although the young men explained that the power to form a union is shifting to younger men, the resources required to finalize marriages were not readily available to them. This shift in young men paying bridewealth is due to changes described by others in the larger economic environment of Tanzania, characterized by lower rates of formal employment, higher rates of inflation, and land shortages (Briggs and Mwamfupe 2000; Silberschmidt 2004; Larsen and Hollos 2003). Despite the general individualization of the process, Omari, Said, and Mustapha — along with many other young men interviewed — still described a reliance on their extended family's advice and support that is consistent with how other young Africans expect their marriages to be autonomous yet grounded within their kin network (Smith 2010).

This analysis of changes in marriage from the perspective of young men in the Mtoni ward of Dar es Salaam contributes to our understanding of how gender is performed and policed in the marriage processes, encouraging a locally molded path to marriage. Future research investigating how individuals respond to changes in the institution of marriage should consider interviewing men from multiple generations to detail how hegemonic masculinities have evolved over time with increased individualization and exposure to western ideas. Ultimately, the changes in marriage in Dar es Salaam highlight the importance of context — the local construction of masculinities, the gerontocracy, and strict sexual double standard — beyond a simple imitation of western paths to marriage.

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Table 1: Characteristics of Male Participants and their Path to Marriage

Pseudoname	Age	Religion	Socioeconomic Status	Path to marriage
Juma	19	Muslim	Poor	LM
Eddy	18	Muslim	Poor	LM – but early in the process; is waiting for her to finish school before marriage
Azizi	18	Muslim	Poor	LM – hid from her family, but he's a runaway so didn't have family to hide it from.
Musa	24	Muslim	Lower middle	LM – married
Jafari	24	Muslim	Very poor	LM – derailed by father's death, he had told his father and they were making plans for an engagement
Baraka	20	Muslim	Middle class	LM – she doesn't want to tell family about relationship
Idi	23	Muslim	Poor	LM – family upset when learn of relationship
Said	23	Muslim	Poor	Western
Mohamed	21	Muslim	Middle class	LM
Elimu	20	Muslim	Poor	LM
Kafili	19	Muslim	Middle class	LM – but he feels they are too young to marry now
Jalali	24	Muslim	Middle class	PP, omitted that he has child because he won't recognize it. Both married & divorced between interview rounds
Safi	18	Muslim	Lower middle class	LM – but girlfriend's father tried to marry her off to another man without knowing about this relationship
Issa	18	Muslim	Rich	LM – his Grandmother knows because she married a European, girlfriend's family does not know
Kafil	19	Muslim	Poor	LM - engaged but she doesn't know- father bringing bridewealth - but both done school so no conflict with her family
Thomas	23	Christian	Middle class family	LM - would like to marry girlfriend if he gets a good job. Relationship ended between interview rounds
Eddy	22	Muslim	Poor	PP– family initially said no to engagement because she was in school but she convinced them to say yes (because she knew she was pregnant)
Mohamed	17	Muslim	Middle class, unemployed	LM –girlfriend's parents sent her away to another city when they learned about the relationship
Peter	25	Christian	Poor	LM – early in relationship, waiting for girlfriend to finish school before engagement
Mwalimu	23	Muslim	Poor	LM- Engaged and living together. Families not happy that they are living together but can't stop them because they love each other. Marriage not

				moving forward because finances.
Omary	22	Muslim	Poor	N-A Path
Jamil	20	Muslim	Middle class	LM - but says it's early in relationship
Mustapha	23	Muslim	Poor	PP

Note: LM is Locally Molded, N-A is Neo-Arranged, PP is Premarital Pregnancy, and W is Western

[i] All names have been changed to protect the identities of the participants.