CHAPTER 2

Men, Masculinity and Labour-Force Participation in Kaduna, Nigeria: Are There Positive Alternatives to the Provider Role?

Colette Harris

Introduction

The contradictions between men's socially assigned position as family breadwinners and the increasing impediments to their achieving this anywhere in today's neoliberal world are exposed in many of this book's chapters. This most severely damages the working classes because their historical sectors of employment, those requiring hard manual labour, have declined significantly since the 1970s. Young men have been particularly badly affected by a lack of access to decent jobs, especially the manual labour considered appropriately manly for their social class (Jimenez and Walkerdine 2011; Willis 1977), resulting in many finding themselves in a precarious situation, with little hope of job security or opportunities to further their career aspirations (Standing 2011).

Historically, sub-Saharan Africa had a distinct social and political organization from the other settings dealt with in this volume, in relation to both class and gender. Prior to the invidious effects of colonialism, women were central to most productive labour, particularly agriculture and trading, so that their status within family and society tended to be high (Falola and

C. Harris (✉)
SOAS University of London, London, UK

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Heaton 2008), including among Muslims in the north of Nigeria, the region this chapter deals with (Mack and Boyd 2000).

From the late nineteenth century on, life in Nigeria was unsettled first by contact with Christian missionaries and later by the governing style of colonial officials. These white men worked hard to inculcate Western gender ideology into their subject peoples, including the capitalist-based concept of the male provider. Nevertheless, for the most part, women's productive roles remained strong—they dominated the lucrative palm-oil industry, for instance (Falola and Heaton 2008). However, by the time Nigeria gained its independence in 1960, breadwinning had largely been adopted as essential to masculine identity for all classes, despite the fact that few men could live up to it and that fewer than 10 % were ever formally employed (Lindsay 2003). In the intervening years this has not significantly changed, and today Nigeria's position within the global political economy has made it even harder for men there to support their families financially.

Nigeria's economy has long been dependent on oil from the Niger Delta. Discovered in 1956, oil became significant with the global price rises of the 1970s. As a result the oil price slumps of the 1980s severely affected national finances, forcing the then military government to ask the international financial institutions for a loan. The latter attempted to impose their neoliberal ideology through a set of conditionalities known as structural adjustment, with the avowed aim of improving economic efficiency. The conditions included liberalizing the currency, removing subsidies on staple foodstuffs and fuel, privatizing state enterprises and cutting back the public sector, thus significantly increasing unemployment and drastically affecting both education and health services. The result has been high levels of impoverishment, increased mortality rates and a major skills decline (Ekanade 2014; Falola and Heaton 2008). Since the return to electoral democracy in 1999, this has been exacerbated by the sale of large numbers of state enterprises at giveaway prices and a reduction in essential infrastructure required for industry to function. Today Nigeria has Africa's lowest formal employment rates (Ekanade 2014), aggravated by the doubling of unemployment between 2007 and 2011 as a result of the Global Financial Crisis (ILO 2017; Muqtada 2012).

The city of Kaduna, the main geopolitical focus of this chapter, lies in the middle-belt northern Nigerian state of that name. Populated by similar numbers of Muslims and Christians, it is best known abroad for periodic episodes of sectarian riots, sufficiently violent to kill thousands of people and

make many more homeless. The last of these followed the presidential election of April 2011. The resulting destruction has negatively affected employment rates, particularly for youths. Thus today, while fathers struggle to meet their families' needs, their sons may have a hard time even gaining the resources to marry (Harris 2016).

The cutbacks mentioned above have deeply affected the Kadunan economy, forcing the closure of most large enterprises. The city had previously been a centre of textile production with multiple large plants employing mainly Christian men from southern ethnicities (Andræ and Beckman 1998). Although the oil refinery and the bottling plant still provide some jobs for the more skilled, most men from local ethnic groups come from a background of farming or petty business and currently survive mainly through casual labour. Their sons are finding even this difficult. The drop in the number of formal workplaces means that many of today's youths are unlikely ever to gain a permanent position despite possessing considerably higher education levels than their fathers.

This situation has been described by Guy Standing as having produced a new class—the precariat. Its members no longer inhabit a stable society or hold realistic expectations of following a life trajectory similar to that of their forefathers. Instead they occupy 'a status that offers no sense of career, no sense of secure occupational identity and few, if any, entitlements to the state and enterprise benefits that several generations of those who saw themselves as belonging to the industrial proletariat or the salariat had come to expect as their due' (Standing 2011: 24). As with the majority of youths I knew in Kaduna, most members of the precariat globally have minimally completed high school, some even holding postgraduate degrees. Few, however, are likely to work solely in the field of their education. Rather, they are condemned to a lifetime of constant retraining for precarious work, generally without benefits.

This chapter addresses the problems associated with the failure of such men adequately to meet the breadwinner role. It shows how Kadunan youths, essentially members of the precariat, seek alternative paths to status even if this may not provide the financial rewards necessary for acquiring those crucial components of adult life—a wife and children. My data come from fieldwork carried out in Kaduna city between 2007 and 2011 while implementing, along with local facilitators, community-based non-formal education projects with women and youths aimed primarily at reducing violence and improving social relationships. Altogether the projects served some 60 young men and 80 women, both Christians

and Muslims, from five different neighbourhoods. Some of the data come from the education sessions themselves, the rest from interactions with other community members and informal discussions. Since my approach draws largely on participant observation, I rarely carry out formal interviews, instead drawing on notes written up at the time of my observations and discussions.[1]

The chapter starts by examining the effects of colonialism on Nigeria, focusing mainly on the introduction of Western notions of gender and its impact, with an emphasis on the masculine breadwinner role. It explores the consequences of this in Kaduna today for the lives of the young men concerned. Finally, it focuses on the current high levels of unemployment resulting from the neoliberal-inspired cutbacks outlined above and discusses what this means for young men struggling to find an alternative to becoming socially redundant and thus losing status in their communities.

The Nigerian Economy

The Protectorate of Nigeria was formed in 1914 by amalgamating a southern region ruled directly by the British, supported by a large number of missionary schools, with a north ruled indirectly via local Muslim kings or emirs, where Christian missionaries were sidelined to facilitate the local Hausa population's conversion to Islam. Thus southerners gained skills relevant for employment in the nascent capitalist state, including the civil service, the railways and, after independence, in the burgeoning textile industry, while the north struggled to overcome its considerable disadvantages. The result was a country politically divided and economically underdeveloped.

Since the 1970s, the importance of oil as its major export has made Nigeria vulnerable to global price fluctuations, a situation exacerbated since the mid-1980s by the effects of the neoliberal conditionalities discussed in the previous section and worsened by the corruption of elites competing for the benefits of its sale (Falola and Heaton 2008). The poor educational infrastructure has hampered the development of industry, producing a lack of key professionals, particularly engineers and competent business managers capable of running large enterprises (Ekanade 2014; Lindsay 2003; Teal 2014).

Neither the military regimes that governed Nigeria during most of its postcolonial history, nor the succeeding democratic administrations, have

managed to formulate adequate and realistic economic planning, while the vast majority of state funds continue to come from oil exports. During the oil boom of the 1970s, money was squandered on non-productive construction, such as of monumental buildings, rather than on crucial industrial infrastructure, while the few well-run factories were owned and/or operated by foreigners (Falola and Heaton 2008; Kohli 2004; Rodney 1973; Teal 2014).

The neopatrimonial character of the state at all levels from the federal to the local means that merit has been taken into consideration less than ethnoreligious and other client-related links. Oil monies have been diverted into private pockets, funding major excesses of the elites, while the incomes of the masses have fallen in real terms since independence. The reliance on oil rents has diverted government attention away from the now-neglected agricultural sector, which had previously accounted for the majority of exports as well as of national income, and which continues to employ the majority of the population. This has heightened rural poverty, greatly increasing rural–urban migration (Kane 2003: 43ff; Kohli 2004). According to the *Nigeria Poverty Profile Report 2010*, 90.5 % of the inhabitants of Kaduna State considered themselves poor, with 61.8 % living on less than USD1 per day (NBS Press Briefing 2012: 5, 10). While rural poverty levels are likely to be higher than urban ones, this nevertheless suggests that a considerable number of the inhabitants of Kaduna city live in absolute poverty.

Gender in Nigeria

I use gender here as an analytical concept standing for a power relation deriving from a belief in the inferiority of women and the superiority of men. By the late nineteenth century when Nigeria was being colonized, biological and social reproduction as occurring in the English household under conditions of industrial capitalism were viewed as inferior to the activities in the recently established separate economic sphere. This created an ideologically based public/private division whereby women were situated firmly in the household, men in the workforce. Led by the middle classes, by the late nineteenth century its attainment had become an important goal of the working classes too (Hall 1992; Rose 1986).

In many precolonial sub-Saharan African cultures, women played important political as well as economic roles, something the colonial powers

refused to acknowledge (Amadiume 1997; Arnfred 2011; Oyěwùmí 1997; Smedley 2004). Authority was less an effect of biology than of the more fluid categories of age and/or seniority. Under Western influence this has changed significantly. While age/seniority retains importance, this has now been combined with gender to produce what I have termed a gender-age system in which power inhabits both attributes. This gives older women considerable clout, since youths of both sexes are expected to obey them. However, this is rarely publicly acknowledged since, unlike that of men, women's power is tacit, perhaps because it does not fit the biologically based global gender ideology so that even in the gerontocratic societies of Africa (and Asia) where age holds such a strong power connotation, public discourse follows Western ideology in limiting articulation of male–female relations to the simple binary of masculine domination (Harris 2012a). This has become so ingrained that it has totally obscured the fact that as currently constructed, far from originating in local history, masculinity and femininity were in fact forged over the relatively recent colonial and postcolonial periods by combining local practices with alien ideas imported from the West (Oyěwùmí 1997; Tamale 2013).

European notions of gender as a strict binary hierarchy were brought to Nigeria in the late nineteenth century by missionaries and British colonial officials. Rather than starting by carefully assessing the local situation, they assumed that their own mores and lifestyles were automatically superior to those of other peoples, especially those living in such 'primitive' circumstances as the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa (Amadiume 1987; Nzegwu 2006; Oyěwùmí 1997). A major goal therefore was to 'civilize' the local populations, a project in which the inculcation of European gender norms was a crucial component (Ayandele 1966; Oyěwùmí 1997: 129; Prevost 2010). On the one hand, the white men bewailed what they saw as the poor treatment of African women, exemplified by polygynous marriage and their significant participation in production (Arnfred 2011), while on the other they tried to remove women from both political and economic domains. Moreover, they endeavoured to replace local rituals relating to the supernatural that lacked prescriptions of gender-normative behaviour with Europeanized Christianity and its emphasis on masculine superiority, claiming this improved women's position (Ayandele 1966; Leith-Ross 1939).

The Four Foundations of Contemporary Nigerian Masculinity[2]

One of the most insidious and damaging effects of these efforts to inculcate Western-style gender performance into African societies was the legitimation of masculine domination in societies where patriarchy in the Western sense had been absent.[3] The result was the institutionalization of female inferiority, whereby women lost their political and much of their personal, social and economic power, and found themselves bound by a new form of marriage that could be dissolved only with great difficulty and in which husbands were placed in positions of authority over them (Amadiume 1997; Nzegwu 2006; Oyěwùmí 1997).

Meanwhile, African men had to endeavour to live up to a supposedly superior masculinity embodied in white men, putting new kinds of pressure on them that they could rarely meet (Ayandele 1966; Lindsay 2003). In Nigeria at least, this has not lessened, as gender has been institutionalized within a strongly Westernized framework, albeit with local accretions, whereby family status has become dependent on men's ability to project appropriate masculinity.

Certain characteristics are particularly vital in this respect, comprising what I have termed the foundational elements of masculinity. Although these occur in some form or other among all the sociocultural groupings with which I have worked over the last 20 years or so, they derive not from some universal norm but rather from exposure to (neo)colonialism, including the gender and development paradigm, globalizing capitalism and Western media, melded with earlier practices and influenced by religion.

The foundational elements are control over material resources/breadwinning; control over human resources, particularly wives/children; virility; and the performance of bravery/protection, very often through forms of violence. In Africa, all this is predicated on the understanding that adults are by definition married with children. Irrespective of age, those failing to meet these criteria may spend their entire lives conceptualized as youths.

Control over Resources: Breadwinning

As stated in the Introduction, the notion of breadwinning was introduced to Nigeria by the colonial state along with wage labour. Ideologically, both were the purview of men alone. This contradicted African family organization where all members were expected to contribute to productive labour and women's role was crucial. Moreover, as we shall see, for the majority of those in lower-level jobs, the structure of state salaries did not permit

Nigerian men to meet the entire costs of sustaining their families, but neither did the earnings of men doing informal work, something that has not changed significantly in the meantime.

The recent increase in rural–urban migration occasioned by the difficulties of living off farming alone, mean wage labour and self-employment have become crucial, with few families existing on the earnings of the male household head alone. Nevertheless, the colonial-period ideal of the male breadwinner as sole provider is now firmly entrenched in Nigeria, despite ongoing labour market retrenchments (see below).

Thus when youths in Kaduna were interviewed about their understanding of men's roles, they characterized them as breadwinners and not for the nuclear family alone, since '[i]f you get a job, you are supposed to support your whole [extended] family' (Barker and Ricardo 2005: 6). A group of Christian youths in my own projects stated that 'a man that cannot provide for his family is term[ed] as useless in the society'. This forces men both to assume sole responsibility for breadwinning and to link any failure to do so with an overall deficiency in masculinity. No allowance is made for the inherent structural bias of neoliberal capitalism that severely limits the earning capacity of the most deprived. Rather, individuals are blamed for their personal shortcomings as if everyone started out on a level playing field, placing the majority of men in a particularly invidious situation.

As a result, poor men in Kaduna complained that their wives expected them to be 'heroes' in meeting their families' basic needs.[4] The secluded Hausa Muslim women I worked with confessed that when their husbands could not do this, they would openly reproach them in front of children and neighbours, something also noted in northern Nigeria's Hausaland (Salamone 2007). The women had met their feminine obligations, taking care of the children and carrying out household tasks as best they could within the limited means their husbands provided. The men, however, had not done their part, so the women felt justified in complaining. The Christian women, meanwhile, were somewhat more understanding since their greater participation in public life gave them a better grasp of economic realities.

Gender-Age Positionality and Control

Men who are unable to meet the provider role not only find their masculinity under threat if they permit their wives to become economically active but also find it difficult to project the second element of masculinity whereby they are expected to exert control over their wives and offspring.

Despite the fact that, ideologically, adult male superiority is inherent in their dispositional positionality (Harris 2012a)—that is, in their position as senior men—in practice this depends on their ability to satisfy their families' material needs. This means that men's capacity to comply with this second element is dependent on their ability to fulfil the first one. As the statement in the previous section by the Kadunan youths I worked with suggests, a man unable at least to appear to live up to this ideal may well find himself lacking in the authority his positionality should entitle him to within the family, as well as the lineage and the community at large. Moreover, while placing breadwinning and familial control in the hands of men produces an image of male domination, it is also a means of pressuring them to spend their time and energies for the benefit of their families rather than in the pursuit of their own short-term desires, something that could explain the Muslim women's public reprimands of their husbands (see also Vera-Sanso 2000).

Discursively, adult women hold a secondary position—higher than that of youths of both sexes but lower than that of their husbands. Young men are not yet expected to display full masculinity, although they should show themselves to be on the way to it, while the lowest position is held by young women. The age of legal majority might be 18 but, culturally, young people are not considered adults until they are married with children. The costs of this for men are high because they must pay bride price and other wedding expenses, as well as showing that they can provide for their families, making youths reliant on their fathers to help them marry, and thus emphasizing the generational aspect of gendered power relations.

As long as a father can fulfil this role, his authority is likely to be respected. The trouble starts when he is visibly unable to do this. Financially independent youths may not feel bound to honour their fathers' authority. A wife who makes a significant contribution to the family budget may also refuse even to show herself as submissive, in accordance with the norms, thus further damaging this second element of masculinity. To counteract this, the Hausa Muslim men verbally attacked by their wives often retaliated with physical violence.

Virility

The third element of the norms is the exhibition of appropriate sexuality. Men must show themselves to be sexually active, penetrating and thereby impregnating a wife or wives, with at least some of the resultant children being sons. The ability to marry multiple wives is important not only for

Muslims since, as the Christian youths I worked with insisted, a 'man that has [only] one wife they call him a fool and he cannot help the community'. The importance of polygyny ultimately derives from historical processes whereby families needed to maximize their numbers for labour power, which formed the main limitation for wealth production in precolonial Africa. Unfortunately, today, especially in urban areas, it tends to have the opposite effect by increasing the number of dependents per worker.

The capacity to marry is again dependent on the possession of material resources, particularly among Christians, where women are likely to choose their own partners, often judging them on their ability to provide. Thus a man with insufficient resources may be unable to marry even one wife, let alone several (Barker and Ricardo 2005).

Bravery/Protection

This element essentially concerns the physical protection of family and other ascriptive-identity groups, such as state, nation, ethnicity and religion. It is often therefore interpreted as facilitating men's participation in violence. In Kaduna, the episodes of rioting discussed in the Introduction have assumed an ethnoreligious form (Kazah-Toure 2002), the obligation of protection thus adhering to the religious group. At such times, men are especially commanded to look after women and children, conceptualized as inherently vulnerable and thus unable to protect themselves (Enloe 2000).

Before colonialism, African women could become warriors. Thus in the mid-nineteenth century in the large and well-trained fighting force of the West African Kingdom of Dahomey (now Benin), a third of the soldiers were women (Tucker 1855). In some parts of Nigeria, too, women acted as warriors, demonstrating bravery and protecting their cultural group. However, for the most part, it was younger men who took on such roles (Achebe 2005). To be a brave warrior was in many places an important aspiration for youths who were formally allotted the protector role for their household, clan, lineage or state.

It is no longer considered appropriate for women to be actively involved in fighting, although Christians in Kaduna said that during sectarian clashes their womenfolk helped them defend their homes and communities, for instance by bringing them refreshments or amassing stones for the men to throw. For the latter, however, the performance of violence, whether public, as in participation in rebel armies, gangs or riots, or private, as within the household, remains one of the few ways whereby those unable to comply with the previous three elements can claim masculinity. Many are pressured

into engaging in violence through accusations of cowardice and threats of ostracism or worse for those refusing to comply (Harris 2012b, 2013). As James Gilligan, an American psychiatrist working in prisons with male perpetrators of violent crimes, suggests, the norms of masculinity push many men into situations in which the only way of 'ward[ing] off... feelings of shame, disgrace and dishonour [is] by means of violence ... Masculinity... is literally defined as involving the expectation, even the requirement, of violence, under many well-specified conditions: in times of war; in response to personal insult ...etc.' (Gilligan 2001: 56). This facilitates the use of taunts and mockery focusing on the loss of masculinity to push men and even quite young boys into violent behaviour.

The Gender Framework

These four foundational elements form the basis of what today are often referred to as 'traditional' gender systems, suggesting a long history. However, they turn out to be largely invented traditions that have developed into useful tools that individual men and governments can call on to preserve notions of male superiority against the demands of their own women for equality, as well as against pressures from the international community (Tamale 2013).

Men, Masculinities and Breadwinning in Nigeria

Employment in Nigeria

The colonial institutionalization of wage labour in Nigeria made it clear not only that this concerned men alone but also that it underpinned the superiority of European gender orders in which men were the sole economic providers, their womenfolk correspondingly domesticated. When Nigerian state employees tried to emulate this by demanding a family wage and the other benefits received by white employees, they were refused on the grounds of their wives' earnings[5] (Lindsay 2003).

During colonialism only a small percentage of Nigerian men, mainly from the south, ever gained formal employment, and independence brought little change. In 1975, formal employment rates were estimated at 7.8 % (Lindsay 2003: 132, n. 93) and they have barely grown since. In 2006, less than 10 % of the adult population was formally employed. Today an additional almost 25 % of the urban adult population is self-employed,

with a quarter of adults and a far larger percentage of youths claiming to have no earnings. The vast majority of the self-employed work informally, mostly in low-skilled casual labour (Teal 2014), rather than running the small but profitable enterprises visualized by the World Bank as the future of the neoliberal economic order (2012). Incomes are generally low, to the point that some of the least skilled apparently see little point in working at all, given its minimal contribution to status and income. Moreover, since agricultural employment is the only category to have registered a significant rise since the 1990s, the implication is that secondary and tertiary education contribute little to employment/income opportunities, reducing parental interest in sending their sons to school (Teal 2014).

Kaduna, the Breadwinning Role and Men's Employment

The city of Kaduna was constructed by the British in 1912 to serve as the capital of northern Nigeria (see Harris 2013). For many decades a major political and economic centre, it lost much of its importance after 1991 when Abuja became the national capital.

In the city's early years, southerners educated in missionary schools formed the bulk of formal employees, working as low-grade civil servants and later on the railways. The local population, meanwhile, was mainly engaged in informal activities. After independence and enhanced by the oil boom of the mid-1970s, Kaduna prospered as the centre of northern Nigerian economic and political power, and a number of major textile factories was established there. Owing to the local population's lack of relevant skills, most employees were southern immigrants. The fall in the global oil price of the early 1980s greatly reduced government funding, aggravated from 1986 by the structural adjustment programme discussed in the Introduction. Together with the opening up of Nigeria to cheap foreign textile imports, the government's inability to provide the necessary infrastructure, including power, water and roads, hit Kaduna hard, forcing most of its textile plants first to cut their workforce and reduce the wages of those remaining, and then to close. This significantly decreased formal employment opportunities, leaving those laid off struggling to survive (Andræ and Beckman 1998; Ekanade 2014; Meagher 2013).

The last factory battled on until 2007, managing to retain some 7000 employees, but lack of demand has caused a large percentage of these to be laid off. Although President Muhammadu Buhari has promised to revive the textile industry—once Nigeria's largest employer after the government,

with hundreds of thousands of workers nationally—it is not clear that he will be any more successful than his predecessors (Akhaine 2015).

Meanwhile, although some highly skilled workers have shifted to informal labour such as tailoring (Meagher 2013), many have died due either to the stress of unemployment or the resulting poverty. One widow said that her husband had been forced to go from a well-paid industrial position to daily labouring in farming and bricklaying. The low remuneration rates meant that when he became ill they could not afford medical attention, leading to his death. Many of those still alive have become desperate, struggling to get by on so little that almost all their income goes on feeding their families, while their wives do their best to supplement this with their own earnings. During their last few years as industrial employees, the men worked for partial pay, agreeing to this because of promises of compensation once the factories recovered. However, as of 2014, this had not yet occurred (Adama 2014).

In the meantime, many became motorbike taxi drivers, forming a large percentage of those plying this trade in Kaduna, along with former civil servants and unemployed university graduates. However, the large numbers involved have reduced profitability. Moreover, while those with their own bikes can earn quite well, those forced to rent them make significantly less (Meagher 2013).

The situation has been exacerbated by the episodes of sectarian violence that have not only created tensions between Muslims and Christians but also increased impoverishment, reducing the demand for goods and services, and so producing a vicious circle that negatively impacts employment opportunities.

Since the 1990s, Nigeria's unemployment rate has been rising even in times of high gross domestic product (GDP) growth. In 2011 it was estimated at 23.9 % (ILO 2017), with youth unemployment around 43.3 % in 2016 (ILO 2016). These figures derive from national surveys, and employment here refers to both formal and informal labour, the latter comprising full-time, part-time and sporadic work, and even unpaid labour on family enterprises, including farms (Teal 2014).

In Kaduna, few youths have meaningful employability skills, making it impossible for them to enter trades such as tailoring, or the fine embroidery work that older Muslim men are known for (Meagher 2013). Like the young men I worked with, youths in Barker and Ricardo's study of Kaduna struggled to make a living. Halim 'was an apprentice (unpaid)... [He] found work fast, but it [was] very difficult and offer[ed] meager

pay.' Ali used to help his housepainter father and later some of the latter's friends, but for some years he had been unable to find more than odd jobs. When he could get it he did 'bricklaying, building, and digging', but this was very sporadic. Khaled did casual labour and occasionally helped his welder brother (Barker and Ricardo 2005: 8).

These youths had little formal schooling. However, while higher education is much coveted for its prestige, it does little to increase employability, providing limited skills with minimal relevance to the job market (Teal 2014). Moreover, formal positions are usually available only to those with appropriate contacts or who can pay large bribes, especially those desirous of entering state employment, which although offering relatively small wages provides some stability and is thus worthwhile despite recent reductions in pension rights (Ekanake 2014). As a result, many youths struggle to earn anything at all.

The last few governments have attempted to rectify this through the neoliberal doctrine that attaining formal employment should no longer be the goal of education, even for university graduates, but rather that individuals should be encouraged to start their own small enterprises. National-level attempts at publicizing and financing this approach have so far failed to change the population's thinking, so that families continue desperately to hope that a university degree will be a sure path for their sons to decent employment. Regrettably, for most beyond the well connected, this turns out to be an illusion. However, few Nigerians have either the appropriate mindset or skills to become profitable entrepreneurs. From the perspective of neoliberalist doctrine, this brands them as risk averse and thus feminized, inferior, 'sensitive, dominated types' as opposed to 'courageous, dominant' and thus masculinized risk lovers (Dardot and Laval 2013: 181 n. 72). In this worldview, the truly masculine is not the warrior of realist international relations but rather the successful businessman of liberal political thought (Ashworth and Swatuk 1998), now increasing national GDP by running 'his' own business. This is far from the preference of most Nigerians for the more respectable and less hazardous route of formal employment (Okorie 2016).

In Kaduna the lack of options for productive work is visible in the number of young men idling on street corners. Both the participants in our projects and local community leaders reported that many young men had taken to alcohol and drug abuse, abandoning homes and families in favour of hanging about in cemeteries where they can engage in their preferred activities with little hindrance. It was they whom society termed

'redundant' and whose example thus made the young men with whom I worked so determined to avoid attracting this label to themselves.

Although most of them also had limited economic opportunities, they tried hard to find alternative paths, such as by joining youth groups. In our projects, considerable emphasis was placed on analysing issues related to masculinity, especially the fourth norm of bravery and protection. This turned out to be key to the mechanisms described by Gilligan (2001) that encouraged young men to engage in violence, whether in the shape of a bout of fisticuffs following a traffic accident or the far more lethal riots (Harris 2012b).

Most people with whom I discussed such issues were convinced that unemployment was to blame; those with jobs or in education would not risk involving themselves in such behaviour (see also Barker and Ricardo 2005). The so-called redundant on the other hand could only gain by it, hoping to attain status and achieve masculinity via the fourth normative element after failing to do so via the first. Men's deployment of violence to protect against emasculation for such failure can be found in other contexts in Africa (Izugbara 2011) and elsewhere (Gilligan 2001). In Kaduna the breadwinner norm was particularly strong among Muslims, who saw it as a religious obligation, but Christians were also raised with this doctrine. This is corroborated by research carried out in another middle-belt state that found both teachers and pupils in a mixed-sex, mixed-religion high school subscribing overwhelmingly to the importance for masculinity of the male provider role, despite acknowledging the difficulty of achieving it.[6] Thus an ideology originating in the protocapitalist environment of colonial Nigeria has been largely stymied by the neoliberal ideology forced upon Nigeria since the mid-1980s that has produced the cutbacks which have so significantly reduced labour market opportunities.

The young men involved in our project insisted that today the only road to formal employment was via a 'godfather' or sponsor, but a figure powerful enough was rare in their social groups. The few who managed to attend university and to move into formal employment had fathers in a position to back them. Christians could study to become priests or ministers in the hope of gaining a living that way. This path was not open to Muslims since mosques rarely pay imams, so they have to fund themselves, such as by taking pupils for religious education.

Popular opinion suggested that those involved in the riots were mostly the abovementioned idlers (Barker and Ricardo 2005). This was also the perspective of a panel of civil-society agents working on youth affairs, who

claimed that unlike those with jobs and money, unemployed youths were easy targets for crooked politicians willing to ply them with drugs to get them to fight. It was the government's responsibility to remedy this situation, and they should do this first by revitalizing the education system so that schools and universities would deliver skill sets relevant to the workplace, and then by helping unemployed youngsters to establish their own small businesses, in line with the strong emphasis on individual responsibility characteristic of neoliberal ideology. However, it was pointed out that endemic corruption meant that monies set aside for national-level programmes had been 'eaten' by politicians, so that unoccupied young men remained easy prey for involvement in violence (Bobboyi and Yakubu 2005).

The first step proposed to remedy the situation was the establishment of programmes to teach trades such as carpentry, mechanics and plumbing to provide the means for young men to earn a living. A few such programmes had been established, mainly by non-governmental organizations or private philanthropists. Unfortunately, no market research had been carried out either to discover the extent of the demand for these skills or to ascertain what would be needed to help graduates to establish themselves.

In 2007 I was involved with a small trade school providing precisely this kind of training. The women learned tailoring, jewellery-making and basketry, while the men studied plumbing, welding and carpentry—identical skills to those taught by other similar schools in the city. Most of the women were married with children and functionally illiterate. The men were under 30, unmarried and had minimally completed primary school.

While the women focused on skills they could use at home to make items for sale so they could make a small contribution to the family purse, the men were looking for a trade that would allow them to earn enough to marry and start a family. On graduation they received a small sum of money to help them start their own businesses but little if any other aid. In other words, this was an example of following neoliberal principles—encouraging the poor to become independent small entrepreneurs, while oversupplying workers for a few relatively low-skilled trades and ignoring those requiring more complex skills, as well as failing to provide sufficient capital for the acquisition of the necessary tools and business premises.

As far as I could tell, the crafts training for the women had some positive impact in that they learned enough to produce some basic craft items and one group even studied dressmaking. Here, little start-up capital was needed other than for sewing machines. The women thus emerged

equipped to make small items for sale or to sew dresses for family members and neighbours. The young men, on the other hand, were in a less favourable position since on graduation they were neither sufficiently skilled nor experienced enough to work independently. Much more effective would have been a programme of apprenticeship whereby the government would provide small grants to both parties to encourage participation and the master would agree to offer assistantships to apprentices reaching a high enough standard. The neoliberal ideal whereby these young men would somehow automatically be ready on graduating from a trade school to start individual enterprises that would be sufficiently profitable to allow them to marry and support a family was without foundation. Thus the trade schools in Kaduna appeared to be no more likely to help youths out of penury than the national-level programmes discussed earlier in this section, which the government planned to start to support the development of small-scale enterprises among youths.

Since many Hausa Muslims seclude their women, few of the latter even today work in the public sphere. However, they have long run often quite lucrative small businesses from their homes (Coles 1991), hence the desire of the women in the trade school to improve their skill sets to facilitate this, and their families' decision to permit them to attend classes. While Christian women in Kaduna are not usually kept out of public life, many of the husbands of the women in our projects were apparently influenced by their Hausa neighbours to consider men who secluded their wives as superiorly masculine. This may account for the fact that almost none of our female participants of either religion went out to work, and, despite learning in our projects to produce a few commodities such as lotions and soaps, few were able to earn more than a few hundred naira (USD1–2) a day.

From the perspective of the men, since the first element of masculinity places the onus for breadwinning on males, those unable to comply are not seen as real men, irrespective of whether the fault lies with the system or the individual. Part of the problem is that working for a living is the only masculine characteristic relating to daily activities. While even unmarried women are expected to help in the house, unemployed men have nothing with which to occupy themselves. They are expected to spend minimal waking time at home, so most unemployed youths have nowhere to go and nothing to do except to hang around the streets, looking for ways to relieve the monotony. Such large numbers of unemployed youths suggest that almost anyone could be drawn into violence.

The projects I was involved with could not increase the youths' earning power but they did help them to learn to recognize how masculinity could trap them into involvement with violence. Through role-playing exercises the young men demonstrated how a refusal to participate in street-level violence could result in taunting and ostracism by their peers. It further became apparent that during sectarian riots, men might even be killed for declining to support and thus protect their own side since this was viewed as a rejection of adherence to the fourth foundational norm, at least in its common interpretation as an obligation on men to protect their own via participation in violence. No such expectations were placed on women.

Once the youths started to think through the notion that the norms were being used as a highly effective way to secure their support for what they realized were essentially projects of political elites, they became interested in how to stop this. They pointed out that a critical mass was required in order to be able to withstand such pressures, requiring the incorporation of much larger numbers. The first approach to gaining this was through street theatre, which the youths improvised and then performed in their own communities, thus spreading the project's impact far beyond the direct participants. Towards the end of each youth group's participation in the projects, they started to plan how to pass on what they had learned to other young people in local schools and youth clubs, placing considerable emphasis on violence prevention through teaching them how to resist having the fourth norm of masculinity used against them. In this divided and violence-torn city, these were very practical and relevant skills (Harris 2012b).

While this did little to earn them a living, it did provide them with the tools and credibility to gain positions as community-based volunteers, giving them a certain status and respect that helped to compensate for their lack of progress towards meeting the norms. It demonstrated more potentially effective approaches to keeping young men off the streets and out of violence than the simple provision of basic income-generating skills. The explicit addressing of issues pertaining to masculinity was crucial to this. The youths might be no nearer to becoming breadwinners so as to be able to marry and thus comply with the first three elements of the norms, but being treated with respect was nevertheless of considerable importance to them. They felt they were on their way to becoming leaders in their communities and thus no longer in danger of being relegated to 'redundant' status. In the one group that had already started to do this by the time of my last visit to Kaduna in the summer of 2011, it had produced a visible improvement in their self-esteem.

The commitment to non-violence was tested by the post-election riots of April 2011 that once again assumed a sectarian form. Project participants, both youths and women, worked hard to prevent the involvement of family members and neighbours in the rioting, with considerable success, thus producing feelings of real accomplishment (Harris 2012b). This suggests that through explicit engagement with the norms of masculinity it is possible to rethink certain facets of them as well as to discover other ways to gain respect besides via material wealth. However, this does not of course answer the question of how these youths are to become culturally accepted adults. To accomplish this they will still need to find a way to earn sufficient money to maintain themselves and a future family.

Conclusion

While Kaduna has its own specificities, the struggles of its young men are reminiscent of those in other places where neoliberalism has significantly reduced employment opportunities, leaving masculinity—often, as in Kaduna, in the shape of violence, particularly riots, facilitated by the fourth foundational norm—as one of their few remaining resources. These youths are effectively members of the precariat, most probably condemned to a lifetime of unstable short-term jobs, often in several different trades or professions rather than in the one they originally trained for. It may take them some time to realize that they are unlikely ever to be able to live up to their ideal and that of their families and communities in the shape of full-time, permanent employment with decent benefits, something only a select and diminishing few will ever achieve. Meanwhile, placing the blame on their shoulders is in part an indication that they are viewed less as individuals than as social locations (Connell 2005: 188) who must perform appropriately according to their gender/lifecycle position. The norms function as a means of enforcing this, hence their obduracy, which becomes more crucial the more changes in material circumstances hinder the vast majority of men from complying with them.

The projects I was involved with in Kaduna used participatory gender analysis to encourage young participants to seek other ways of gaining respect and status than through the foundational norms discussed here. This allowed these youths to find alternatives to being labelled redundant. However, in today's poor employment situation, exacerbated by the lack of state provision of social safety nets, paid work is essential for survival. A better understanding of masculinity may help young men to avoid

participating in riots (Harris 2012b), but it can neither provide an income to enable them to marry nor serve as an alternative to the foundational norms in the eyes of their families and other community members. This is as true for the poorest and least educated as for university graduates. The breadwinner norm continues to place tremendous burdens on those unable to support their families decently, as demonstrated by the stresses that the older men in Kaduna experienced after losing their factory jobs and failing to replace them at a similar level of status and earning capacity. In keeping women either completely out of the labour force, like the majority of Hausa Muslims, or relegating them to a minor role in income-generation on the grounds that women are not breadwinners both increases men's obligations and raises overall poverty levels. An additional negative side to normative masculinity emerges from the alternative approach to gaining status through complying with the norms that has significantly encouraged male participation in the sectarian violence that has plagued Kaduna off and on since the late 1980s.

While pressures to conform to the breadwinning norm weigh most heavily on lower-class and unskilled men who have the least capacity to comply, the global lack of decent employment resulting from neoliberal processes has also affected university-educated men. The unsuccessful attempt in Nigeria to put into practice the neoliberal doctrine of individual entrepreneurship discussed in this chapter is symptomatic of the employment situation (Cornwall 2016) that has produced a global precariat.

Deconstructing the gender norms in our projects helped the youths deal with issues they had not previously understood and to find ways round complying with the most pernicious of them. This provided them with a level of respect irrespective of their economic capacity. In this way, they found alternative paths that enabled them to avoid the worst eventualities of the trap posed by scarce employment opportunities, despite being unable to gain decent jobs themselves. This does not mean that the youths have faced up in more than a minor way to the problems posed by the norms, or embraced gender equality. They continue to believe in their rights as men implied by the first three foundational norms and thus to wish to keep for themselves, as far as possible in their circumstances, Connell's 'patriarchal dividend' (2005: 79), thereby exacerbating the marginalization and lower power positions of women and children. This nullifies any positive effects of the fact that the economic situation has forced more women to enter the workforce, albeit for the most part in even more highly precarious jobs than their menfolk.

Increases in poverty and unemployment since structural adjustment in the mid 1980s suggest that the impact on Nigerians of the neoliberal practices described here, especially insofar as they have contributed to a lack of access to decent education and training as well as to formal employment opportunities, has been to push lower-class men, as well as many of the more educated, more deeply into the precariat, making it progressively more difficult for them to offer long-term provision to their families and thus increasing the importance of shifting away from the norm of sole male responsibility for breadwinning.

Notes

1. For more details, see Harris (2012b, 2013, 2016).
2. For more details, see Harris (2016).
3. By patriarchy I mean a structure based on the European political ideology of masculinism. This is the 'ideology that justifies and naturalizes male domination ... Masculinism takes it for granted that there is a fundamental difference between men and women, it assumes that heterosexuality is normal, it accepts without question the sexual division of labour, and it sanctions the political and dominant role of men in the public and private spheres. Moreover ... it tends to be relatively resistant to change' (Brittan 1989: 4).
4. Personal communication from Maji Peterx of the non-governmental organisation Carefronting.
5. This situation was doubly contradictory. Nigerian men claimed to be proud of their wives' earning capacity but shamed into wanting to destroy it by the white men's notions of superior masculinity, while the white men wished to maintain their supremacy by refusing Nigerian men the same status (Lindsay 2003).
6. Personal communication by the researcher Noelle Oputa.

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