

AN IMPROBABLE APHRODISIAC IN THE CRISIS OF SEXUALITY: WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS?

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Abstract

Given the rising wave of violent acts across the world, this paper is designed to investigate the improbable but emerging trend which seems to suggest that violent behavior now appears to be an incentive when dating and even marriage decisions are made. The investigation is carried out with a pool of data made up of multiple variants. After displaying the data in a textbox, subjective valuing was used to attribute certain phenomena to segments of the data. After affirming that females consider violent traits in males as incentives in their male-partner preferences, data representation failed to establish a decisive link between fierce delinquent acts and sexual frustration.

Keywords: Partner preferences, masculinity, gladiator features, Germanwings flight,

Introduction

The pioneering activism of Mary Wollstonecraft launched the feminist movement in the 1790s. Interest in feminist grievances has persisted throughout the 1800s till date. The feminist cause is now in its third phase and has been instigating gender studies that focus exclusively on feminism. Such exclusive focus has marginalized other pressing gender issues like the crisis of masculinity (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007).

It is easier to identify and solve the grievances of feminism than to handle the intrigues that fuel the crisis of masculinity. At the heart of the feminist gravamen are patriarchy and the inequitable power relation they foster. Prior to the feminist movement and dating back to the ancient European regimes, women were neither allowed to be seen nor heard in the public sphere (Habermas, 2001). Records show that women were not given the voting right until the early 1920s when the United States, succumbing to the superiority of the feminist logic, pioneered giving voting right to women

(Talese, 2009). The concession of surname upon getting married and linguistic norms that systematically construct women as subordinate to men are among the patriarchal excesses that sustain the feminist brouhaha. But recent horrific incidents like the crashing of the Germanwings flight and rising inexplicable religious activism are among the issues that have re-awakened interest in the crisis of masculinity. This interest continues to seek answers to questions such as:

- (i) How is the ideal masculine archetype constructed?
- (ii) What rewards accrue from possessing the ideal masculine identity?
- (iii) Could awareness that they are deficient in masculine ideals lure some men into violent acts?

Media and Construction of Identity

Advertising discourse promotes certain body images as the ultimate and encourages everybody to aspire to possess such body images. It has been reported that discourses of interpersonal relationship and sexual roles which a century ago were the preserve of church sermons, political oratory and family elders have now been usurped by advertising discourse (Leiss, et al, 1990). The usurpation of privileged discourses by the advertising industry has not escaped the censure of moral majority who accuse advertising of encouraging moral breakdown of the society by drawing upon overt sexual themes in order to glamorize hedonistic pleasures (Leiss, et al, 1990). What could perhaps be adjudged the most profound attack on advertising as articulated by many commentators is encapsulated to read as follows:

...advertising works much as mythology does in primitive societies... it claims that goods can make us stunning, attractive in an instant, it gives us power over other people's affection, it acts as a passport into a fantastic community of desirable persons, advertising imagery and symbolism replace real people with artificial types and situations.

(Leiss, et al, 1990, pp. 25 & 26)

Accusation against advertising is made poignant in the light of how the discourse of masculine identity is analyzed. The claim by O'Shaughnessy & Stadler (2007) that masculinity in the twenty-first century is more fluid than ever before in the sense that there are more options available to men regarding how to be masculine (p. 350) is the authors' response to the fierce masculine ideals that media advertising promotes. The portrayal of the battered face of Vitali Klitschko, the claims that "masculinity and pain are strongly linked" and linking of sports icons to comments like "your thigh

muscle swells up as if you were going to pass out” are euphemistic maneuvers indulged by the authors to avoid the candor of stating that horrid acts are increasingly becoming the sign of masculine identity (O’Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2007, pp. 358 & 359).

Dating / Marriage Partner Preferences

Sexuality has continued to cause upheavals that defy casual contemplation. It remains a matter of conjecture as to why the wife of Potiphar, as narrated in the Bible book of Genesis 39, could not find conjugal satisfaction in a husband who was not only a highly placed official of the Egyptian Pharaoh but who must have been a gentle man to a degree that merited Pharaoh’s trust. It has also remained a puzzle why Herodias would not consummate her adulterous design with King Herod, her husband’s brother, until she hoodwinked the King into proving his villainous potentials with the horrid act of beheading John the Baptist (The Bible, Mark 6). The case of Edward West Browning is nonetheless perplexing. In 1926, Edward West Browning was not only worth 20 million dollars but was more than generous to Peaches a wife he showered with Rolls-Royce, chauffeur-driven Limousine, exquisite jewelry and other expensive gifts. But rather than be gratified, Peaches ended up as a wife who refused to derive marital fulfillment from Edward but would rather allow fantasizing over other shadowy males she met before marrying Edward to ruin her marriage (Talese, 2009, p. 256). The bravery of Macbeth, an army general, was not enough for Lady Macbeth to surrender her unconditional affection until her husband pacified her with the murder of King Duncan (Lott, 1980). It is easy to recall other instances where men have been coaxed into committing egregious acts in order to win the affection of desired females. The frequency of these instances had provided rationale for studies that investigated what motivates dating/marriage partner preferences in women.

While some of such studies suggest that women prefer males with feminine gentleness as opposed to masculine males, other studies suggest that only men with cluster personality consisting of psychopathic criminality, narcissism and violent Machiavellianism are typically seen by women searching for sex/marriage partners as desirable and attractive (Chauvin (2009). More disturbing, Chauvin notes, is that while women’s questionnaire self-report responses tend to suggest that their male sex partner preferences positively correlate with the feminine nice-guy male archetype, the actual real life observation of female behavior response indicates that women give reproductive access to the most aggressive dominant males. The most likely epistemological flaw to account for the discrepancy between women’s self-report questionnaire trend and what real-life observation of female behavior indicates is dissimulation and subject reactivity. While “dissimulation” is a

data-gathering flaw which arises when a research respondent feigns ignorance of the “phenomenon under investigation,” “subject reactivity” denotes a situation “where the research respondent’s response is affected by the presence of the researcher” (Lang & Lang, 1991, pp. 195 & 202; McQuail, 2010, p. 360). Since dissimulation and subject reactivity have been adjudged as undermining previous effort to gain a better insight regarding what motivates the dating/marriage partner preferences by women, this present effort is designed to minimize these methodological flaws.

Design and Methodological Imperatives of this Paper

Given the understanding that “no research proceeds in epistemological purity” (Conquergood, 1995) as cited in Ellingson (2013, p. 435), the design of this paper is in conformity with the concept of the qualitative method “as a continuum anchored by art and science” and endowed with “vast middle spaces that embody infinite possibilities for blending artistic, expository and social scientific ways of analysis and representation” (Ellingson, 2013, p. 414). Since the phenomenon under investigation borders on an issue people consider too private and since similar studies in the past were compromised by flaws inherent in traditional data generation techniques, the resolve to avoid those challenges in the present study is facilitated by the realization that data in qualitative research are not reckoned with in measurable and countable sense but are reckoned with in terms of “emotions, events, processes, performances and politics of possibilities” (Madison, 2005) as cited in Denzin (2013, p. 521). The quest for data of possibilities necessitated tapping into a variety of data pools including documentary data and two variants of “transgressive data” known as “memory” and “literature” data (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 470). It warrants being stated that exemplars 1, 2, 3 and 5 in the textbox below are documentary data while 6 and 7 are memory and literature variants of the transgressive data. It also needs to be pointed out that data were also sourced from a comment made during a manhood-initiation wrestling contest in a Southern Nigeria village. Given that data gathering process does not start only when the “cameras are rolling” but could also be enacted during “chance encounters” (Lindloff & Taylor, 2002, p. 109), a chance-encounter comment detailing reasons for manhood initiation wrestling contests was adjudged relevant in the data gathering effort. Let it be emphasized that even when varieties of data are used in qualitative research, what matters most is the “meaning the researcher uses the data to construct (Keyton, 2001, p. 70; Lindloff & Taylor, 2002, pp. 4 & 18; King, 1996, p. 175).

Data Representation Techniques

To be sure, the display below in a tabular format of the data is not intended to mimic quantitative scientism but is done to optimize data interpretation as an “ethno dramatic” performance that invites the reader to vicariously “experience the interpretive performance” and “the real time moments and scenes” that the data reflect (Denzin, 2013, p. 532). While it is necessary to note that the “process of analysis and forming representations with data overlap throughout the duration of a qualitative project” (Ellingson, 2013, p 414), it is important to state that data representation in this paper was rendered by means of “researcher construction” and “subjective valuing” (Keyton, 2001, p. 70). Researcher construction and subjective valuing promote subjective introspection in data representation. In addition to enhancing the attribution of a class of social phenomenon to segments of the data (Fielding & Lee, 1998), p. 41), subjective valuing accords with the notion that “subjectivity is advantageous and can be seen as virtuous and as the basis of researchers making a distinctive contribution that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected” (Peshkin as cited in Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013, p. 1). Peshkin’s view resonates with those of Roulston (2010) who notes that research is an explanation of subjectivities – those of the researcher and the researched. The research report, according to Roulston, is a “synthesis of the experiences of the researcher and the researched” (p. 120). It is also important to point out that “methodological rules and interpretative guidelines change” during qualitative data representation and that such change “is how it should be” (Denzin, 2013, p. 538). The relevance of the foregoing views is reinforced by the notion that the standard procedure of qualitative data analysis is custom-built and “choreographed” according to the task in hand – meaning that it is “intuitive and iterative” (Creswell, 2007, p.150).

Data Display

Textbox 1: Documentary and Transgressive¹ Data

S/N	Exemplars	Source
1.	They can choose a donor by physical traits. Conor is likeable and in a great physical shape. Caleb looks like a Roman gladiator.	<i>Newsweek</i> , 20 March, 2015, p. 25
2.	He was always seeking assurances about the way he looked and the way he was viewed by others said Maria	Dailymail online ² , March 2015
3.	Bloom also noted that male members woo women ... where the men can marry them. The FBI had said Conley fell in love with a member of the group online and planned to travel to marry him.	ABC news online ³
4.	Don't be a cynic. Use your head! Can't you see what swarms around me?	College days experience ⁴

5.	Why do male animals fight to impress the female? Because a female wants to mate with the strongest most attractive male to ensure the strongest offspring. Thus ensuring the continuation of the species. Survival of the fittest!	Google.com ⁵
6.	Sexual deprivation and frustration motivated much of the world's chaos and warfare and often conscripts men to early death.	Talese (2009, pp. 127 & 188) ⁶
7.	Women act out their sex fears and reservation but don't act out their preferences.	Talese, (2009, p. 511)

Analytic Representation

The belief that “reality and representation are mutually constitutive” finds expression in how identity, especially masculine identity, is portrayed in the media (Fairclough, 2001, p. 45; Fiske, 2004, p. 214). Exemplar 1 in the above textbox was tapped from where an embryologist in a fertility clinic explained the features that single women seeking In-Vitro Fertilization(IVF)are encouraged to lookout for in males. According to the embryologist, the males who donated the sementhat made 6000 births possible for single women in her clinic are males whose traits are typified by Caleb – a male with physical features that are described as similar to thoseof a Roman gladiator. By the embryologist’s assessment, Caleb does not only typify the ultimate masculine virilitybut is endowed with those potentialsbecause his features are like those of a Roman gladiator. The choice of the phrase ‘Roman gladiator’used to describe a male to whom she had ascribed masculine virility betrays the embryologist’sinsinuation that males without violent traits are deficient in reproductive potentials. What seems like the most subtle message in the embryologist’s insinuation is thatwomen should, in their dating and marriage decision, avoidmen who do not possess gladiatorfeatures.It might be argued that the manifestation of gladiatortraits in men does not necessarily result in violent behavior in such men. But such argument begs the question of males who do not only possess violent traits but will read the embryologist’s criteria for choosing conception partners as affirmation that the rewardmales get forviolent behavior is sexual favor.

Lately, the world has been experiencing what could be cited to support the view that females would read the embryologist’s criteria as a call onwomen to look out for males who are violent and endowed with features ofa gladiator when they contemplate marriage/conception. The entailment of exemplar three (3) in the textbox is illustrative. Conley is a nubile American who was arrested in the United States by personnel of Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). She was arrested to prevent her from traveling to Iraq and Syria to meet a lover who is endowed with violent potentials. Conley’s lust for a gladiator in the Middle East is not an isolated incident. Women

from the United Kingdom, France, Germany and other Western nations have been rearing to travel to Syria and Iraq in order to access conjugal favors from gladiators. The fact that some of these Western women have not only succeeded to travel but are now enjoying conjugal bliss underscores the point that women are attracted because the Middle-East gladiators have taken the art of violence to a level the women have not seen elsewhere. The attraction that violent features in males hold for females takes the question of what influences females' mate preferences to a point that warrants the consideration of what lower animals like chimpanzees, sea lions and so forth do when they engage in mate selection interaction.

Whether it is in the natural wild setting of Africa where two cockerels fight or by the sea shore when two sea lions spar, the prize over which the fight is enacted is usually female animals' mating favor. As the males slug it out, the female animals often watch from close quarters, taking note of the victorious male. As soon as the victors emerge, the females do not hesitate but quickly demonstrate admiration with mating favors. Exemplar five (5) of the textbox suggests that female animals instigate the males to fight to enable the females choose mates among the strongest males. As suggested in exemplar 5, females prefer the strongest males in order to guarantee the continuation of the strongest gene – survival of the fittest. It will be irrational to imagine that such innate instinct is absent in humans. It will also be unwise to imagine that it is not the natural instinct in females to confer conjugal favors on males with fierce attributes that is fueling Western girls' effort to travel to Iraq and Syria in order to meet valiant males. The entailments of exemplar four (4) in the textbox lends further evidence to the view that humans, just like lower animals, regard male violence as a high ideal in females' preference of the opposite sex. Exemplar four conveys an experience I encountered from a roommate back in the 1980s when I was an undergraduate in a Nigerian university. That exemplar captures part of the effort made by a roommate to drag me into a college confraternity. By what was swarming around him as entailed in exemplar four (4), the roommate meant the number of female students that were attracted to him. Deficient in both masculine features and intellectual acumen, the only thing that accounted for the favor lavished on the roommate by female students was nothing more than the aura of menace which his leadership of the confraternity conferred on him. Anybody who cares to understand what motivates cultish activities in Nigerian universities will easily understand that luring female students with aura of violence remains the primary incentive. To deepen the evidence that violent potentials in males positively impact women partner-selection, I recalled:

Yes! In Africa, every community has a way of determining the males with the strongest

‘uunwhor’ (a local term for gene). In some communities, it is by means of fierce initiation rites during which the youngmen are subjected to serious flogging. The males who bleed without flinching are lavished with affection by nubile girls. But here in our community, it is wrestling. Young girls often get attracted to the champion in each group...

(Excerpt from a local wrestling coach).

Females’ avidity for violent males has a frightening flip. Think about what could go on in the head of a young man who tries but fails to win the affection of a desired lady. If such a man is one of the ill-adjusted, he might wrongly construe the challenge in a way that could fool him into asserting himself through a villainous act. Exemplar six (6) lends evidence. Recent acts of violence provide justification for taking seriously, claims like “sexual deprivation and frustration motivated much of the world’s chaos and warfare and often conscripts men to early death” (Talese, pp. 127 & 188). While it might be true that no empirical evidence decisively links Andreas Lubitz’s crashing of the Germanwings flight with sexual frustration, what must not be glossed over is his obsession with how he had looked. As entailed in exemplar two (2), the fervor with which Lubitz sought assurance as to his looks and about what people said with respect to his image are the kind of identity obsession people betray when they are tormented by problems that border on sexual frustration. If a woman who sought to be recognized as a “sexually awakened heroine” (Talese, 2009, p. 115) was unable to slough off her doubt until she was re-assured, then a suspicion that he is deficient in qualities that define ultimate masculinity could dragoon an ill-adjusted male into horrid acts like the one Lubitz is linked with. This line of reasoning finds justification in the fact that males act out their sexual frustration and preferences unlike women who only act out their fears and reservations (Talese, 2009). Another fact that lends credence to this line of reasoning is the outcome of President Nixon’s 1968 “Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography” (Talese, 2009, p. 366; Howitt, 1982). The overall finding of that study suggests that “sexual deprivation” forces the deprived into delinquency and criminality (Talese, 2009, p. 376).

Conclusion

No matter how squeamish people feel about the subject of sex, the fact remains that it is a subject that has, from the earliest of times, unsettled human equanimity. Be it for recreation or procreation, sex as a basic biological instinct compels males into doing things that astound and entice females into dispensing sexual favors. Data in this paper support this view.

Also supported is that aspects of male identity promoted as the ultimate masculine archetype are linked with violence. Data also suggest that females tend to get attracted to stronger males than males that are considered otherwise. Also supported is the belief that an unwitting social benefit concomitant with females' drift towards violent males is the perpetuation of the strongest genes in the human race. What the evidence at our disposal failed to decisively support is the suggestion that dastardly acts such as the one that Andreas Lubitz is accused of results from sexual frustration. The lack of precise data in support of that claim underscores the need for studies that might pinpoint the link of sexual frustration to violent/criminal acts.

Notes

1. St. Pierre (2013, p.470) gives a reason why a comment from literature should be considered valid data. It is St. Pierre's belief that field comments by research participants who lack expert knowledge of a research subject should not be rated higher as data than comments from literature that are written by persons with better knowledge of a research phenomenon. In this light, St. Pierre promotes a pool of data she conceptualizes as "transgressive data." Transgressive data are made up of variants such as emotional, dream, memory, sensual, response and spectral. Lather (2006, pp. 787 & 789) might have inspired St. Pierre by stating that "we need a broader framework where such key terms as science, evidence, data, field, method, analysis, knowledge and truth are no longer defined from within a narrow policy-oriented positivistic framework."
2. Dailymailonline accessible @ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/new/article-3016420/killer-pilot-andreas-lubitz-planned-to-marry-teacher-girlfriend-broke-relationship-just-weeks-before-crash>
3. <http://abcnews.go.com/international/teen-love-isis-fighter-met-police-times-detained/story?id=24414020>
4. Cited as "memory data" a variant of "transgressive data" (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 470)
5. <https://www.google.com/search?q=www.why+do+male+animals+fight+to+impress+the+female+then+how+about+humans%3f&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8>
6. Literature data cited as a variant of "transgressive data" (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 470)

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