Men Doing "Women's Work": Masculinity and Gender Relations Among Street Vendors in Maputo, Mozambique

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Gender inequality in sub-Saharan urban settings is perpetuated through the differences in men's and women's positions in the labor market. However, rising unemployment and increasing informalization of the economy that result from both the demographic structure and the structural adjustment reforms undermine men's economic advantage by pushing them into low-income and low-prestige "women's" occupations, such as street commerce. Men's entry into such niches of the labor market leads to both de-gendering and re-gendering of the workplace, which in turn questions the broader gender hierarchy and stereotypes and transforms gender relations. I analyze these occupational dynamics and their profound implications for gender identity and relations drawing primarily on in-depth interviews conducted with men street vendors in Greater Maputo, Mozambique, in 1999. The analysis of the qualitative data is complemented with insights from surveys carried out in Mozambique in the second half of the 1990s.

Key Words: street commerce, gender relation, masculinity, division of labor, Mozambique, sub-Saharan Africa, urban, informal economy

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Since Ester Boserup's (1970) influential writings, the gender division of labor has been seen in the development discourse as a primary determinant of inequality.

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Women's work in the private sphere (subsistence agriculture, domestic chores) and men's work in the public sphere (cash income-generating activities) are said to perpetuate inequality, which is manifested in different domains. Recent research, however, has increasingly questioned the perpetual nature of gender inequality in the labor market. Thus, a series of studies of women's work in agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa and other developing settings demonstrated that women could successfully move beyond subsistence farming into commercially viable pursuits (Spring, 2000). Women's entrepreneurial successes in urban areas have also been documented (e.g., Osirim, 1996). Women's increased participation in the labor market has been shown to affect gender relations and fertility (e.g., Adepoju & Oppong, 1994).

Most of this literature has been concerned with women's catching up to men—in terms of women's rising rates of participation in the labor market and their entry into traditionally male occupations. Studies of work-related gender dynamics in developing settings typically overlook the opposite phenomenon—men's work in traditionally female jobs. Such an oversight is particularly common in the literature on sub-Saharan Africa that often views the continent as the land of unwavering patriarchalism. Despite enormous contextual differences, a study of this phenomenon in sub-Saharan Africa can benefit from somewhat richer literature on men's entry into traditionally female occupations in western countries and its societal implications, especially for gender relations. Williams (1989, 1992, 1995), a leading U.S. scholar in the area, showed that men and women reproduce and maintain gender differences while participating in non-traditional occupations and that, reflecting the dominant gender hierarchy, this process is asymmetrical: while women entering traditionally male occupations are relegated to their margins, men involved in traditionally female occupations are, on the contrary, often channeled to the most prestigious and materially rewarding specialties that are also seen as more "masculine." At the same time, in contrast to the internal occupational hierarchy, where the preeminence of men is rarely questioned, men in traditionally female occupations, such as nursing, librarianship, elementary school teaching, and social work, do become objects of negative "feminine" stereotypes on the part of clients and outsiders who see men's doing "women's work" as a step down in social status. The gender stigma attached to these occupations (in addition to lower material returns) may deter men from entering those occupations in greater numbers (Williams, 1992). For the same reasons, men taking on gender-atypical occupations tend to leave them quickly (Jacobs 1993; Williams & Villemez, 1993).

Bradley (1993) observed that in developed countries, men's movement into "women's" occupations is often precipitated by socioeconomic crises and the accompanying overall reduction of employment opportunities, or by major technological changes. Despite very different notions of "crisis" and "change" in contemporary developing societies, the linkage between a radically changing socioeconomic environment and atypical occupational mobility may apply to these societies as well. Bradley also observed that, compared to middle-aged men, both younger and older men are more likely to move into female-dominated occupations because they face less prestige penalty and are less concerned about the income penalty associated with such occupations (Bradley, 1993).

The degree of stigma and contempt that men (or women) face in nontraditional occupations depends on their relative numerical presence in those occupations. Kanter's (1977) influential theory of tokenism—focused mainly on women in traditionally male occupations but applicable to the inverse situation—posits that as long as the atypical group remains a token minority in any particular occupation (i.e., in Kanter's assessment, constitutes less than fifteen percent of all workers), it will continue to face discrimination and stigma.

Men's crossover into predominantly female occupational niches involves a dialectic combination of de-gendering and re-gendering. Men who assume women's work give up part of their gender identity as well as part of the dominant status that such an identity entails, but at the same time, gender hierarchy and inequality are inevitably recreated in the new settings through a restructuring and reconceptualization of these occupational niches.

STREET COMMERCE IN THE URBAN ECONOMY

Informal economic activities have been a major—and growing—segment of the urban economy in sub-Saharan and other developing countries but are also common for more developed settings (Koame, 2000; Portes, Castells, & Benton, 1989; Williams & Windebank, 1998). Street commerce (hereafter also referred to as "street vending" or "street trade") employs a sizeable share of informal workers (Cross & Balkin, 2000). In developed countries, street vending is clearly a marginal occupational niche, for it is often legally restricted or even banned, it requires minimal skills and capital, and its returns are particularly paltry and unpredictable even by the unenviable measures of the informal economy. Although in less developed countries street commerce is much more common, in both settings this occupational niche appeals to disadvantaged segments of the urban population. For one such group, the recent unskilled migrants, street commerce offers an easy entry into the urban labor market; this group is typically overrepresented in the "street economy" of developing countries (Koame, 2000; Macharia, 1997), but even in developed settings, where opportunities for street commerce are greatly reduced or even outlawed, migrants, especially from poorer countries, tend to flock to that niche (e.g., Moore & Vigil, 1993).

Literature on street commerce in various settings suggests that women, another disadvantaged group, tend to be attracted to this niche because they lack skills for more rewarding employment pursuits, they play subordinate roles in family income-packaging strategies, and because street commerce offers maximum flexibility in combining work and childcare (e.g., Chinchilla, Hamilton, & Loucky 1993; Lund, 1998; Macharia, 1997). Of course, nowhere has street vending ever been a woman's monopoly. Men's involvement in street trade has been considerable, and within street trade, gender specialization and hierarchy are always present. Yet my analysis is based on the assumption that most people—men and women alike—do not consider street commerce a "model" occupation for men but instead see it as appropriate for women. Men's presence in street commerce therefore may be seen as an anomaly, if not in absolute terms, then in the range and quality of jobs deemed appropriate for men. Men's participation in street vending therefore has to be negotiated within the dominant system of gender roles.

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Street Commerce in Maputo

In Maputo, the recent growth of informal economy has been spurred by both the continuing rural-urban migration and the reduction of alternative employment opportunities associated with the implementation of structural adjustment policies. Street commerce is among the most volatile but, at the same time, most rapidly expanding subsectors of the city's informal economy. Relatively little known in the colonial era, street vending emerged as a mass phenomenon after Mozambique's independence from Portugal in 1975, in parallel with a mass influx of rural Mozambicans into the city. In the socialist period (the first post-independence decade), street commerce developed, despite the lukewarm resistance of the city authorities, mainly as small pockets of unlicensed traders spontaneously began popping up in various parts of the city. The popular name of such illegal concentrations of traders, *dumba-nengue*, can be translated from Tsonga (the lingua franca of southern Mozambique) as "trust your feet," an allusion to the constant need to flee from the harassing police. In the subsequent period of economic and political liberalization (since the second half of the 1980s), the city government's attempts to stem the growth of street commerce have become even less energetic, and street commerce burgeoned almost all over the city. Dumba nengues mushroomed, and some grew to engulf entire city neighborhoods. This vigorous proliferation has all but choked the more traditional forms of small-scale commerce: by the end of the 1990s, many of Maputo's formal marketplaces lay dormant, surrounded by the swarming hives of street commerce. In the process of growth, much of street commerce has become stationary and formalized through the city government's attempts to tax and regulate it; much of it, however, has remained mobile, affording an easy point of entry into the urban economy for workers with the lowest levels of financial and human capital. Hence, despite the overall status and income disadvantage of street commerce relative to other forms of urban employment, this sector itself is internally stratified, with stationary commerce (in makeshift kiosks or stands) commanding higher prestige and income than mobile vending.

Street commerce has traditionally attracted less educated, poor urban women seeking cash employment, who are least likely to find alternative employment elsewhere. However, men, squeezed out of the formal labor market, have been increasingly joining the ranks of street vendors. It is difficult to assess the magnitude of men's involvement in urban street trade from existing statistical data partly because "street vendor" is not used as a separate occupational category in the census or surveys and partly because this occupation, especially if it is not primary (or not perceived as primary by men), may be underreported. The 1997 Mozambique Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS) put street vendors in the category of "non-classified workers/sales/services." According to my calculations from the MDHS (women's) individual database, in the city of Maputo and the satellite city of Matola (which together form a continuous urbanized area), 44 percent of gainfully employed women aged 15-49 were classified in that category, whereas only 6 percent of men (partners of DHS female respondents in marital unions) were. Mozambique's second general census conducted in the same year as MDHS used an equally vague umbrella category of "small merchant." Although street vendors would certainly fit there, so would those merchants who do not sell in the streets. The share of

employed Maputo men in that occupational category was 12 percent; the share of employed women was a much higher 39 percent. Looking at this category of workers for a different angle, we can see that only 32 percent of all "small merchants" were men (computed from a census table in Census, 1998, p. 33).

My study, however, is not concerned with exact numbers of men in street vending. It focuses instead on who these men are and looks through their eyes at street vending as both part of daily survival and a social venue where gender roles are challenged and renegotiated. Before I present my analysis, I would like to draw a general picture of changing gender roles and identities in Maputo urban society.

GENDER ROLES IN THE CHANGING URBAN LABOR MARKET

The traditional gender-based division of labor and corresponding gender hierarchy of patrilineal southern Mozambique have come under strong pressure in the urban environment. Urban women's increased education and job opportunities, on the one hand, and the erosion of the institutions of marriage and the family, on the other, tend to raise women's status and autonomy, even if often at the expense of economic security and social safety. These trends have been typical of most of urban sub-Saharan Africa, but Maputo has important peculiarities.

Mozambique inherited from its former colonial master a large bureaucratic machine and a strong bureaucratic culture. This legacy was further nurtured during the socialist period when the public sector, especially the government bureaucratic apparatus, greatly expanded. On the scale of occupational prestige, *serviço* (service) at a government agency was elevated not only above *negócio* (private business, trade) but even above other forms of formal-sector *emprego* (usually, wage employment). This hierarchy did not determine prestige alone: during the socialist years, especially in the first half of the 1980s, when shortages of basic goods and services were chronic and universal, employment in the formal sector, and especially work for the government, ensured privileged access to the rationed scarce resources. In that context, traditionally female occupations, such as street commerce, were particularly derated, and even today *to sell* (*vender* in Portuguese or *kushavisa* in Tsonga) is often not considered *to work* (*trabalhar* or *kutirha*).

Yet the socialist period also accelerated women's entry into the urban formal labor market by opening up employment opportunities in the public sector. Although women's employment in the public sector did not eliminate gender inequality, it nonetheless did lead to a more level playing field, thus contributing to urban women's continuous emancipation. Women's increased presence in traditionally male formal sector occupations, especially in the clerical ones, is important for my analysis because it has helped, at least indirectly, to legitimize men's entry into traditionally female occupations.

Civil war between the Frelimo government and the Renamo opposition that ravaged Mozambique, especially its southern part, for some fifteen years (until the 1992 ceasefire) amplified the migration flow from rural areas to cities, especially to the capital, thereby increasing the pressure on the already stagnant urban labor market. But the war did not just exacerbate the oversupply of unqualified labor; it also psychologically facilitated men's employment in low-prestige sectors of the economy,

such as street vending, for such an employment could be subjectively rationalized and justified as a temporary adjustment to war-induced hardships.

The public sector workforce, bloated in the socialist years, began to shrink as the structural adjustment reforms, launched in the second half of the 1980s, gained momentum. At the same time, despite the end of the civil war and robust macroeconomic growth that ensued, jobs generated in the private sector of the formal economy could not possibly absorb the swelling ranks of low-skilled workers. Although the contraction of the formal sector has affected both men and women once employed there, men's mass ejection from that sector has more implications for gender relations than does women's. In a context of an entrenched patriarchal gender hierarchy, women's employment in the formal sector still tends to be seen as unusual, whereas for men, formal sector jobs constitute not only the most appropriate and desirable type of work, but also part of their masculine identity. Therefore a woman's losing a job in the formal sector may be seen almost as the restoration of the "normal" gender division of labor; when a man loses such a job, he also loses part of his status.

The effect of the structural adjustment reforms on absolute real incomes of Maputo's population is difficult to evaluate because reliable data are lacking, but it can be argued with a reasonable degree of certainty that increased inequality, conspicuous abundance of potentially available consumer options, and rising costs of living have exacerbated the sense of relative deprivation. This perceived decline of living standards has been particularly palpable in the formal sector, where wages are more or less fixed and a subjective assessment of the purchasing capacity is therefore easier to make. Formal sector jobs have not just become scarce, but are also seen as poorly rewarded (especially because the socialist-era perks are now long gone), which, considering men's disproportionate presence in such jobs, further erodes their economic preeminence.

The last two decades have also seen a rapid reduction of legal employment opportunities for Mozambican men in South Africa. In the colonial period, contract work in South Africa, especially in the mining industry, was almost an obligatory career and life stage for Southern Mozambican men: work in the mines did not just provide money necessary for young men to pay bridewealth and to start themselves up economically, but also played an important role in the formation of their gender identity. Opportunities for legal employment in South Africa began to diminish shortly after Mozambique's independence. The initial reduction of the Mozambican workers' quota was, at least in part, a punishment that the apartheid regime imposed on the Frelimo government for its pro-Soviet political leanings. Later, after the demise of apartheid, the restrictions on Mozambican migrant workers have continued on more explicitly economic grounds, as the new South African government has been hard pressed to do something about the high levels of unemployment among that country's native blacks. As a result, migration to Joni (the Johannesburg area or South Africa in general) has increasingly become illegal and therefore often an unrewarding and even a humiliating experience, quite different from the traditionally glorified *rite de passage* into manhood.

The last important implication of recent economic changes for gender relations lies in the sphere of marriage and the family. The dwindling of income-earning

opportunities both in Mozambique and abroad has accelerated the decline of traditional marriage and family regimes in urban areas. Bridewealth payments have become increasingly delayed, underpaid, or bypassed altogether, as informal cohabitation and single-motherhood have proliferated. These changes, catalyzed by men's financial inability to live up to traditional norms and expectations, in turn, further undermine men's economic and social supremacy.

A CASE STUDY OF MEN STREET VENDORS IN MAPUTO

I analyze men's participation in street commerce and its implications for gender relations, the family, and childbearing, drawing mainly upon 38 semi-structured interviews with men street vendors in Greater Maputo in 1999. Our research team interviewed men selling in the street in different parts of Greater Maputo—both in its more urbanized core, the so-called cement city, and its less urbanized periphery, or the so-called reed city. Although the selection of informants was not fully random, we tried to include men of different ages, marital status, and origins. We also interviewed men selling different types of merchandise—from food, to clothes and shoes, to traditional medicine, to construction materials—attempting to give a representation of most specialties. Finally, we interviewed both men selling from stationary (even if rickety) stands, usually in or near the city's numerous dumba-nengues, and mobile vendors (*vendedores ambulantes* in Portuguese) who did not have any permanently established locations and often were not registered with city authorities and did not pay any taxes. I complement the interview materials with observations I carried out in different street-commerce settings in Maputo. These observations focused on male vendors: on what they sell, how they do it, how they behave in the workplace in general, and with whom and how they interact verbally and non-verbally.

Of course, based on such a small number of non-randomly selected cases and on observations alone, the conclusions of this study cannot be soundly generalized. Such statistical generalizations are not, however, a purpose of this study. Instead, this study attempts to explore the nuanced dynamics of the changes underway in men's employment and how these changes influence gender relations in and outside the workplace.

MEN'S ENTRY INTO STREET COMMERCE

Men's presence in occupations that are (or are seen by most people as) predominantly female is not an entirely new phenomenon, but their increasing entry into such occupations reflects changes in the urban labor market. Not only is men's presence in these occupations as a whole increasing, but also is their presence in the subdivisions of that market niche that until recently were considered uniquely female (e.g., minor fruit and vegetable commerce or prepared food commerce).

Men's entry into street commerce is determined by a number of socioeconomic characteristics and life circumstances. Low human capital is obviously one such characteristic. However, the type of available social capital is also important. Thus, having a male relative in street commerce facilitates a man's entry into street vending. Still, street vending is not an occupation of choice. My study shows that men

who are most likely to end up selling in the streets are those to whom the mainstream labor market is particularly unfriendly and whose manhood is not to be compromised by doing a "woman's job"—especially the young, the old, the physically disabled, and the socially marginalized.

For younger, usually still unmarried men, street vending is commonly a first and (at least subjectively) brief entry into the labor market, an easy way to earn quick cash mainly for their leisure-related needs subjectively irrelevant to their future work paths. Not surprisingly, younger men are also more likely to engage in mobile vending, an arrangement that requires minimal capital investment and accordingly involves minimal risks and is easily discontinued as other opportunities come up. Since their social manhood has not yet been fully established, street commerce poses little threat to it. If anything, this threat is different from the one that mature men face: younger men may, for example, choose their peddling routes so as to minimize the chances of embarrassing encounters with their peers and especially with their girlfriends.

On the other end of the age spectrum, older men, who have most of their working careers behind them and whose social status declines as that of their working children rises, are also more likely to compromise their maleness by taking on "women's jobs." Somewhat similar to this group are middle-aged men with physical disabilities, for such disabilities may both reduce their opportunities in the higher echelons of the labor market and serve as socially acceptable justifications for their doing "women's work."

Ethno-social marginality is functionally analogous to the biosocial or physical one. Thus, poor recent migrants are also more likely than others to be selling in the streets. Street commerce is usually their first job, and any city job commands greater respect than subsistence farming. They have not had a taste of more "dignified" and rewarding urban employment, and most of them came to the city when better employment opportunities had already been severely curtailed even for longer-term, higher-human-capital city denizens, and therefore do not harbor illusions or aspirations of a rapid economic mobility. Like other men vendors, they are not happy with their earnings and they see their current working arrangements as temporary. However, unlike longer-term urbanites thrown into street commerce by the vicissitudes of urban market transformations, many recent rural migrants still see themselves as peasants and their work in the city as a brief interlude before returning to their farms. They usually stay with their relatives in the city, as their wives remain at home toiling on the family plot. Because their main locus of social life and their thoughts are far away from the city and their family's economic well-being is cushioned by their farms' output, the city street commerce experiments do not seem to clash with their traditional gender identity.

Among recent migrants, those who came from distant parts of the country and who are ethnically alien to both the majority of city-natives and the majority of migrants—and therefore whose marginal status in society can be seen as a kind of social disability—are particularly likely to engage in street vending. Their ethnosocial marginality both hinders their entry into more mainstream male occupations and facilitates—at least psychologically—their taking on such marginal occupations as petty street trade. Also, these men typically come from Mozambique's central and northern provinces, where matrilineality traditionally has a strong influence, and

therefore they do not feel fully bound by the perceptions of men's pride and shame deeply ingrained in the patrilineal southern psyche. Long-distance migrants also usually plan to return home to their families after making some money in Maputo (or in South Africa, if they manage to cross the border and find a job).

The last category of men engaged in street commerce consists of former mainstream "male economy" workers who lost their jobs and have not been able to find new ones in the formal sector; it also includes men whose lower-end formal jobs (e.g., night watchmen) do not provide enough income to keep up with the rising cost of living and who therefore are forced to moonlight as street vendors to make both ends meet. Understandably, the dissatisfaction of this group with their current work is particularly strong, and so is their longing for a "real" job.

A common characteristic of men who sell in the streets is their economic dependence on other males, especially their older and/or economically more successful brothers. The latter commonly lend their less fortunate relatives cash necessary to start up the venture, provide them shelter, and even employ them to sell goods that they produce or buy elsewhere. Adult men's dependence on relatives is another form of social deficiency that, when transposed onto the field of gender relations, makes crossing and redressing the gender boundaries psychologically easier.

MEN IN STREET COMMERCE AND THE DIALECTICS OF GENDER IDENTITY

Men entering the labor market niche traditionally occupied by women reconstrue this niche as gender-neutral, arguing that the dire economic need erases the "old" (i.e., the "ideal") gender division of labor. Another form of redressing the gender divide is through blurring the subjective status differentiation between large-scale commerce, traditionally a man's realm, and petty street trade, traditionally a woman's lot. These socio-psychological subterfuges help men to deal with occasional public manifestations of the incongruence between men's ideal status and the reality of male vendors' lives. Thus, men selling in the streets often face derogatory comments and remarks made by women and men alike. The gist of these remarks is that street vending is not appropriate for men, who should strive for other, more profitable and dignified economic pursuits. All but a few interviewees admitted having to deal with such deprecating attitudes, but most also argued that economic hardships and unemployment justify their working in street trade and that most people with whom they interact in the process of work accept this justification.

However, men's adaptation to traditionally female occupations is not just a matter of psychological maneuvering; it entails important changes in their status—both absolute and relative to women. These changes in status—and eventually in gender self-identity—are further fostered through day-to-day interaction in the workplace. Yet the changes of gender identities in that workplace are not unidirectional and involve a dynamic and dialectic combination of de-gendering and re-gendering.

De-gendering the workplace. The street commerce workplace is largely desegregated. In *dumba-nengues* and other places where street commerce is concentrated, women and men vendors stand or sit side by side, often selling similar merchandise. Of course, the complete leveling rarely occurs, as the location remains gender-selec-

tive insofar as the types of products sold are gendered. Relative to other work settings, however, this gender specialization of space is reduced in street commerce, and both men and women vendors are seen—and see one another—as part of the same social and occupational group.

Both female and male street vendors are exposed to similar risks of being harassed by the municipal or fiscal police (with an obvious exception of sexual harassment). Although most *dumba-nengues* are now somehow formalized and regulated and all vendors are supposed to pay a fixed daily tax, police raids against real or alleged violations of the regulations are common. During such raids the police routinely ransack vending stands and chase away, verbally, and even physically abuse vendors, rarely discriminating between men and women, old and young. These interventions therefore do not just disrupt the commerce, but also publicly humiliate vendors—women and men alike. Also, importantly, the threat of police harassment cultivates the sense of solidarity among vendors that transcends the gender divide.

The spatial and structural proximity of male and female street vendors leads to a lot of cross-gender interaction and cooperation that in more spatially and structurally segregated settings would not be possible. Vendors frequently engage in informal rotating credit schemes, a way to deploy resources necessary for larger financial transactions common in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere. Such credit schemes, called *xitik* in southern Mozambique, involve vendors regardless of sex and cement mutual trust and equality of all participants. Likewise, breakdowns of *xitik* schemes due to lack of money, fraud, or a breach of trust are unrelated to the sex of participating vendors.

Xitik is probably the most formalized type of cross-gender (or agendered) cooperation, but other more sporadic instances of such cooperation are also common and help promote a gender-neutral ambience. Thus, men and women may lend one another small amounts of money (even though such favors among cash-strapped vendors are rare) or change high-denomination bills. Although vendors do not usually pull resources to buy merchandise in bulk at a discount because of the small scale and unpredictability of their ventures, the coordination of prices—explicit or implicit—does occur, again putting men and women essentially on an equal footing. Vendors may also ask other vendors—usually those selling nearby—to watch their stands if they need to step away. In addition to the solidarity in the face of police harassment, vendors develop solidarity to face another threat to their businesses—pilferage. Anti-theft vigilantism, even if not formalized, further stresses the commonality and interrelatedness of men's and women's situations. Finally, other kinds of informal social interaction—verbal (chatting, joking, etc.), through body language or observations—are also inevitable and, at least to some extent, are also inevitably genderless in that context.

Re-gendering the workplace. The re-gendering of the workplace goes hand in hand with its de-gendering. Men's entry into street trade unavoidably reestablishes gender differences and inequalities. These are manifested in the nature and status of products sold: men, for example, are more likely to sell construction materials than foodstuffs. However, the foodstuffs segment of the street market is by far the largest and

requires the least initial investment, and for some men may become the only option available. To avoid the embarrassment associated with employment in this segment and at the same time to protect their gender status, men often team up with their vendor wives and remain in their shadow by taking care of the logistics—acquisition of products from suppliers or initial treatment and sorting of products to be sold—in sum, of more "difficult" and "responsible" parts of the business chain.

Where "real" gender differences are impossible to establish, the symbolic ones take their place. Thus men often state that women vendors tend to be loud, emotional, and verbally offensive and are prone to squabbles and scuffles with other vendors and with customers—ascribing them characteristics typical of a "women's" work style. Men, in contrast, are often portrayed as reasonable, calm, and conciliating.

The gender hierarchy is also recreated through different aspirations of men and women vendors. Whereas most women vendors see street commerce as a natural and ultimate form of employment (along with domestic services, another common occupational niche for urban women), men vendors view their current occupation as a temporary stumble in their working careers, anticipating upward mobility either to higher-volume/capital trade (ideally involving supply chains in South Africa) or finding *emprego* or *serviço* outside of commerce (unless, of course, they are inclined to quit the urban labor market altogether and return to farming). Underlying either scenario is men's strong wish to get off the streets into more secure, lucrative, and prestigious jobs, commensurate with their dominant gender status. Characteristically, even the interviewees who had been selling for years still harbored such desires.

Although the street commerce environment tends to reduce the gender barriers, these barriers spring back up once vendors leave the gender-leveled terrain of the *dumba-nengue* and re-enter the gender-charted world around it. There, gender boundaries remain particularly potent in male vendors' leisure socializing—hanging out, drinking, or sports—i.e., in activities where traditional gender ideology and stereotypes are further cultivated.

MEN VENDORS, HOUSEHOLD GENDER RELATIONS, AND DECISION-MAKING

Reflecting the dialectics of de-gendering and re-gendering, the impact of men's work in this traditionally female occupation on gender relations and, specifically, on fertility-related decisions in the household is equally complex. On the one hand, men's doing female work deprives them of an important economic and social leverage in their relationships with their spouses. On the other hand, it makes them try to regain the terrain lost at work by holding on to preeminence in important household decisions. These dynamics are further complicated in cases where street commerce is a family business involving both spouses as partners: on the one hand, sharing the same business contributes to greater equality between the spouses; on the other, in most such joint businesses, the wife is usually a junior and subordinate partner. Although in the absence of a control group it is difficult to fully assess the complex influence of men's participation in street trade on household gender and decision-making dynamics, some general contours of gender relations and power-sharing in the household can be delineated from the interviews.

The interviewed men's answers and reactions to questions dealing with their relationships with their wives convey the contradiction between the patriarchal ideal and reality. Men subscribe to the traditional patriarchal gender hierarchy and functional division within the household: they consider themselves heads of their households, vindicate the traditional gender division of household labor, and claim the initiative in most important family undertakings. At the same time, however, men vendors also acknowledge frequent discussions and consultations that they have with their wives regarding issues that matter for their families' well-being; while claiming the initiative in discussing these important issues, they do not assert a monopoly on final decisions.

Deliberations and decisions regarding fertility-related matters illustrate these dynamics. These matters, of course, are inherently complex (much more so than conventional survey-based studies often lead us to believe). Men like to show that they are in charge of those matters, too: when they feel that the number of children is sufficient or that the family's economic conditions call for postponing additional births, they present these considerations to their wives, tell them to stop, and "send" them to the hospital to get family planning. However, when the interviewers probed for how such decisions are actually made, they unearthed a great deal of spousal dialogue. In fact, the interviewees usually agreed that their wives are more competent in reproductive and family planning matters and that their competence and/or their physical conditions ultimately drive both the couple's decisions to have no more children (usually phrased in terms of temporary "resting") and its choices of specific family planning options.

CONCLUSION

The literature on gender occupational crossovers in developed countries shows that such crossovers do not eliminate gender inequality, as they involve both the process of de-gendering and that of re-gendering. As women reassert their femininity in traditionally male occupations, so do men involved in traditionally female occupations reassert their masculinity—and with it, their social preeminence (Williams, 1989). Changes in gender roles, relations, and hierarchies rarely follow a straightforward path and involve a complex tradeoff of gains and losses on both sides of the gender divide.

The presented case of Maputo street vendors seems to fit in this dynamic and dialectical framework. Overall, however, this analysis also suggests that men's participation in street trade may lead to greater gender equality in the workplace. Therefore, the leveling of the gender playing field can occur not just through the more typically observed process of women's entry into men's work world, but also through a less noticeable yet increasingly common process of men's involvement in occupations usually seen as female.

The reevaluation of gender relations that male vendors are forced to experience and accept is inescapably projected onto their relationships with their spouses. Although the world of work and that of household often remain separated, the latter being more patriarchal, the egalitarianism of the workplace may help undermine inequality at home and promote women's greater say in family and household matters. This tendency is strong particularly when both spouses are in the same trading

business: although their partnership is seldom fully equal (or is seldom seen so), cooperation in work fosters collaboration in household decision-making.

Men's increasing presence in such traditionally female-dominated occupations as street trade may affect not only their own relationships with their spouses but also, however indirectly, other men's vision of gender relations. As this social anomaly increasingly becomes a norm, it challenges not only the views on gender of those directly involved in the process but also the views of those who observe this process from the outside. These gender occupational crossovers, once they become commonplace and therefore—following the logic of Kanter's theory of tokenism (Kanter, 1977)—are increasingly legitimized by society at large, may have dramatic implications for the dominant gender ideology.

Of course, one should refrain from an overly optimistic assessment of the gender changes illustrated in this study. Gender inequality does not disappear in the process or as a result of men's entry into traditionally female jobs—it is just reconsidered and attenuated. Such occupational crossovers are still rare and are still rarely seen as normal and desirable. Yet, the road to gender-equitable development does not have to lie through a total erasure of the gender division of labor. Even in economically advanced societies with high levels of women's participation in the labor force and considerable gender equality, strong gender occupational segregation persists (e.g., Haavio-Mannila & Kauppinen, 1992). The future of Africa's gender equality may not be very different from today's western model. Yet the sub-Saharan path to that future may indeed be unique. Paradoxically, as this study suggests, the segment of the urban population least integrated into the modern urban economy and therefore most economically disadvantaged may approach gender equality at a faster pace than society as a whole—exactly because its poverty and social vulnerability deprive men of important leverage of gender domination.

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