Back in the 1990s, men's movement spirituality was largely based on a particular interpretation of Jungian archetypes such as the Wild Man, King and Warrior. The call to archetypes was supposed to be about men getting in touch with their "inner essence" and the "deep masculine," but had a habit of promoting masculinities of a dominating and combative nature (Gelfer, 2009): as Philip Culbertson (1993) argues, archetypes can be seen as "calcifications of a patriarchal world view" (p. 222). Today, 20 years later, little has changed in "men’s spirituality,” as witnessed by Matthew Fox’s (2008) The Hidden Spirituality of Men: Ten Metaphors to Awaken the Sacred Masculine which—while attempting to distance itself from more problematic manifestations of archetypes—remains firmly anchored within an archetypal worldview (Gelfer, 2008). Most critics of the men’s movement reading of Jung describe it as “neo-Jungian”: the “neo” suggesting they flirt with some Jungian themes rather than pursuing any Jungian orthodoxy. For example, Jungian scholar David Tacey (1997) charges the movement with “conservative and simplistic appropriation of Jungian theory” (p. ix).

Recently, we saw the publication for the first time of Jung’s (2009) The Red Book. Jung spent 16 years on this book, but for a variety of reasons never published it. The Red Book is basically an illuminated manuscript charting the topography of Jung’s interiority. It contains numerous visionary dreams and experiences which were later distilled in a more scholarly fashion in his published writing. The book’s editor, Sonu Shamdasani (2009), claims The Red Book is “nothing less than the central book in his [Jung’s] oeuvre,” and that his other work cannot really be understood without reading this in tandem (p. 221). The publication of The Red Book offers an interesting opportunity to see how closely the men’s movement neo-Jungian presentation of archetypes intersects with Jung’s most intimate and unmediated presentation of sex and gender. Following the way Jung is mobilized in the men’s movement we would expect to see plenty of material in The Red Book about masculine archetypes, and how these are unavoidable in the male psyche. We would also expect to read of complementarity: of both natural gender roles, and of the gendered aspects of the soul (anima and animus). In The Red Book we certainly read plenty about complementarity, but almost nothing about archetypes. There are only two relatively short passages which speak to these issues: one in “Liber Secundus,” the other in “Scrutinies.”

Specifically, quite early in the section “Liber Secundus,” Jung (2009) refers to “completeness” in both men and women: men, for example, must seek the feminine more in themselves rather than in women. This would resonate quite clearly with men’s movement literature. Gender holism is also referenced when Jung states,
“humankind is masculine and feminine, not just man or woman. You can hardly say
of your soul what sex it is” (p. 263). Indeed, Jung aspires to be free from gender:
“This is the most difficult thing—to be beyond the gendered and yet remain within
the human” (p. 264). However, Jung goes on to outline some problems in masculine
performances, claiming men tend not to engage the task of identifying with the
feminine within: “It pleases you, however, to play at manliness, because it travels on
a well-worn track” (p. 263). This suggests a critique of normative masculinity, as does
his comment, “man despises you [woman] because he despises his femininity” (p.
263), which speaks to both an awareness of misogyny and homophobia. Jung speaks
either to the limitations of normative masculinity or his own problematic issues
about femininity when he claims, “It is bitter for the most masculine man to accept
his femininity; since it appears ridiculous to him, powerless and tawdry” (p. 263). Is
Jung asserting a queer challenge to masculine normativity or his misogyny when he
states, “It is good for you once to put on women’s clothes: people will laugh at you,
but through becoming a woman you attain freedom from women and their tyranny”
(pp. 263-264)? The jury remains out.

Later, in the section “Scrutinies,” Jung speaks to issues of sexuality and
spirituality, which is framed by various forms of binary thinking, of
sexuality/spirituality and men/women: “Spirituality conceives and embraces. It is
womanlike and therefore we call it MATER COELESTIS, the celestial mother. Sexuality
engenders and creates. It is manlike, and therefore we call it PHALLOS, the earthly
father. The sexuality of man is more earthly, that of woman is more spiritual” (p.
352). This, and other comments in this section, reinforce tired false distinctions: the
separation of sex and spirit, the assigning of particular roles to men and women
(although it complicates the common assumption that the feminine is earthly and
the masculine transcendent). This strategy has a long history of confining men and
women to the roles they are given rather than those they choose. Indeed, Jung is
very explicit about maintaining such distinctions: “Man and woman become devils to
each other if they do not separate their spiritual ways, for the essence of creation is
differentiation” (p. 352). Furthermore, should anyone question the construction of
such boundaries, Jung states, “no man has a spirituality unto himself or a sexuality
unto himself. Instead, he stands under the law of spirituality and of sexuality” (p.
352), and that in the end all we can do is be subject to these spiritual-sexual
“daimons.” Doesn’t sound very empowering, does it?

In short, the themes of sex and gender in The Red Book offer significantly
more nuance than anything found in men’s movement literature but—like that same
men’s movement literature—they are still bound up in a worldview which seeks to
impose a structure upon spirituality and sexuality which is neither natural nor
necessary.

References


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Ugandan Men’s Perceptions of What Causes and What Prevents Suicide

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Suicidal behavior is illegal in Uganda. There are no reliable public suicide statistics, but studies indicate that the rates of both suicide and nonfatal suicidal behavior are higher for men than for women. This study examined Ugandan men’s perceptions of what causes and what prevents suicide as well as their attitudes towards suicide and suicide prevention, including religiosity. Knowledge about this is important as the country is now planning suicide prevention strategies. A majority (26 percent) of men believed that suicide was a response to illness/disease and problems with relationships (24 percent), followed by perceived pressure (10 percent), lack of control (9 percent) and economic hardship (8 percent). These men also endorsed negative attitudes towards suicide, including when suicide is precipitated by an incurable disease. Most men believed that suicide could be prevented via health care services (45 percent) and education (22 percent), while only a few explicitly mentioned an improvement of the socioeconomic conditions. These findings are interpreted in light of the ideological demands of being a man and the socioeconomic reality making this difficult or impossible.
district. Ovuga et al. (2005) found a suicide rate of 16.7/100,000 in Adjumani District whereas Kinyanda et al. (2009) found a suicide rate of 15-20/100,000 among a post-conflict population in Northern Uganda. From 1986 to 2006 this part of the country was severely affected by civil conflict between Uganda Government armed forces and rebel groups (Dolan, 2009). Underlying ecological factors must therefore be taken into consideration and we would therefore expect differences in suicidal behavior between the conflict area of Adjumani and the capital Kampala, where the informants of the present study come from, differences that might affect men’s perceptions and attitudes. In a recent study from Kampala, 8 percent of Ugandan psychology students reported having experienced suicide within their family, 53 percent knew of someone outside their family having killed themselves, and 24 and 61 percent, respectively, knew someone in or outside their family who had engaged in suicidal behavior (Hjelmeland et al., 2008). Other than this, only limited research has recently been published on suicidal behavior in Uganda (Hjelmeland et al., 2006; Hjelmeland et al., 2008; Kinyanda et al., 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; Ovuga et al., 2005). However, the studies conducted indicate that suicidal behavior is a considerable public health problem within this country. It is, however, impossible to elaborate on trends over time due to the lack of baseline data. Since there are no reliable suicide statistics in Uganda, the exact sex ratio of suicide is unknown. However, based on the studies cited above there is reason to believe that more men than women engage in suicidal behavior in this country. For completed suicide, a male:female ratio of 4.4:1 (Kinyanda et al., 2009) and for nonfatal suicidal behavior 1.7:1 has been reported (Kinyanda et al., 2004).

Despite the growing recognition of suicide as a severe health problem there is a paucity of literature on attitudes towards suicide in Africa in general and Uganda in particular. Only few studies exist on attitudes towards suicide in Africa (e.g., Lester & Adebowale, 2001; Peltzer et al., 2000; Eshun, 2006). These studies are all quantitative, which limits explorations of the decisive social and ideological context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Gergen & Graumann, 1996). Some qualitative studies on attitudes towards suicide in Uganda (Mugisha et al., in press) and Ghana (Osafo et al., in press) are, however, underway. To the best of our knowledge, theoretical reflections on suicide in Africa are non-existing. Being highly context-dependent, it does not seem meaningful to transfer theoretical models developed to fit other cultural settings.

The aim of the present study was to examine Ugandan men’s perceptions of what causes and what prevents suicide as well as their attitudes towards suicide and suicide prevention. Knowledge about this is important as the country is now planning suicide prevention strategies and men seem to be a particularly vulnerable group. We decided to study men only in order to focus on the inherent logic in men’s beliefs rather than to compare them with women. The social and ideological context for men and women seems to be different (Kinyanda et al., 2005) and needs to be taken into account both for comprehending the internal logic in their understanding and for planning prevention efforts. When action is to be taken, attitudes become central since it is generally assumed that attitudes towards suicide are of great importance. Such attitudes affect the will of people as well as health care staff, helping persons in a suicidal crisis or those who have deliberately harmed themselves (Bagley & Ramsey, 1989). Suicidal behavior is illegal in Uganda. It is also
considered a bad omen for the clan, necessitating cleansing rituals. Hence, suicide carries enormous stigma (Hjelmeland et al., 2008). Uganda is also considered to be a very religious country (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2002). This is important as we know that religious people are considerably more intolerant towards suicide than less religious people (see Koenig et al., 2003, for an overview). Suicide is thus perceived negatively in African countries (Lester & Akande, 1994; Peltzer et al. 1998), which also was found in a study in Uganda and Ghana by Hjelmeland et al. (2008). However, it also has been shown that among religious people there is a greater belief that suicide should be prevented (Bascue et al., 1982).

To understand the men’s perceptions and attitudes it also is necessary to look at the social conditions in Uganda since they constitute the framework for their statements. With recent rebel activity, the HIV/AIDS pandemic (which has led to the death of more than 1 million people in more than 20 years of the epidemic), and a large number of deaths caused by malaria annually, Uganda has considerable challenges, not only on the economic and political scene, but also in the daily lives of its population. Ugandans are squeezed by poverty, unemployment, high rates of premature death, and insecurity regarding prospects for the future. According to the World Health Report (WHO, 2001), people in East Africa are some of the poorest in the world. Almost every Ugandan is affected by the situation of family instability and/or poverty and struggles for a decent living. This also affects Ugandan men as many of them have problems in finding adequate jobs and maintaining their traditional position as the breadwinners of the family (Dolan, 2002; Kinyanda et al., 2005). Barker and Ricardo (2005) point at the same problem when they underline that young men perceive multiple and sometimes conflicting ideas about what it means to be a man and generally perceive that they are constantly judged and evaluated for their actions as men. These pressures—arising from the clash of ideologies, Westernization trends, socioeconomic change and the challenges to traditional masculinity—may lead to feelings of humiliation, both in a man’s sense of self, as well as in his sense of how he is perceived by others (Dolan, 2002) and might impact on Ugandan men’s suicidal behavior and attitudes towards suicide.

Given the complexity of the phenomenon and the fact that little is known about suicide and Ugandan masculinity, we chose to mainly use qualitative methodology and focus only on men. With such an approach we try to handle the problem that theories are often gender biased with male suicide generally perceived as a rational choice and a reaction to external, impersonal factors, whereas female suicide is connected to emotional, personal factors (Canetto, 1997). Whether this is true across cultural settings is an important research question.

Method
Responses to the two open-ended questions: “What is the most important cause of suicide?” and, “What do you think can be done to prevent suicide?” were analyzed qualitatively. Also, some quantitative analyses were conducted in order to illuminate the qualitative analyses further where relevant. This is described in detail below.

Sample
Altogether, 329 men from the following groups participated in the study: medical students (n = 46), psychology students (n = 116), social work students (n = 79),
nursing students (n = 76) and Psychiatric Clinical Officers (PCOs; n = 12). Their mean age was 24.9 years (SD = 6.3) ranging from 18-66 although the majority were in their 20s. To assure anonymity, only age group is presented with quotations. Eighty (25.3 percent) of the men were living alone, whereas the others were living together with someone in various family constellations. The vast majority of the men were Christian (90 percent; n = 291) whereas 8 percent (n = 26) were Muslim.

Instrument
The two main questions analyzed in this study (see above) were from the Attitudes Towards Suicide questionnaire (ATTS) developed in Sweden by Salander Renberg and Jacobsson (2003). This questionnaire mainly consists of items to be scored quantitatively (for instance, on a 5-point Likert scale). On the two open-ended questions, however, the participants could describe their personal thoughts in their own words, which makes this part of the questionnaire less culturally dependent than the quantitative part. The psychometric properties of the instrument as such are described by Salander Renberg and Jacobsson (2003) and with relevance to Uganda by Hjelmeland et al. (2006).

The responses to the two open-ended questions were analyzed by thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) where the responses were categorized in main categories. The analyses were first conducted by the first author (who is Danish) and a category system was developed. The analysis was then presented to the rest of the research group (one Ugandan, one American who has lived in Uganda for the last 25 years, and one Norwegian) and discussed. If an answer encompassed several causes, each of those was categorized, but none of them was coded twice in different categories. Subsequently, subcategories for each of these main categories were developed, resulting in a branched structure. This branched structure developed into a hierarchical categorization system covering all the responses and reflecting an internal logic. The same method of analysis was employed in previous publications by this research group where similar branched structures were found using data from several European countries (Hjelmeland & Knizek, 2004; Knizek et al., 2008) as well as from Ghana (Knizek et al., in press). Descriptive statistics are presented for the respondents’ own suicidal ideation and behavior, their experiences of suicidal behavior in their surroundings, and for some of the attitude items.

Procedure
The vast majority of the participants in this study were students and the questionnaire was handed out in class at all levels of the studies involved. The participants were informed of the study in writing and in person and the voluntary nature of participation was emphasized. Participants were especially requested to seek help from a qualified counselor if the questionnaire caused them any discomfort or if they had some related issues they would like to discuss (contact details were given). None of the participants made such contact during, immediately after, or later following the data collection. The questionnaires were only distributed to those students present in the different classes targeted. The classes chosen for data collection were either those with compulsory attendance or those with a traditionally high attendance rate. There is no reason to believe that there were any systematic differences between those students attending class and
those who did not on the day of the study, since the study was not announced beforehand. All students handed in the questionnaires. A sample of convenience of PCOs (n = 12) attending work at the psychiatric hospital on the day of the study also filled in the questionnaire.

The English version of the questionnaire was used. English is Uganda’s official language and also the language used in schools so the students are very familiar with it. The data were collected in 2002. The study was approved by a research ethics committee in Norway and by the relevant bodies at Makerere University in Uganda.

Analyses and Discussion

Participants’ Experience with Suicidal Ideation and Behavior
Thirty-four percent (n = 112) of the participants expressed having had suicidal ideation (3.3 percent often, 14.0 percent sometimes and 16.7 percent hardly ever) and 22.5 percent had made a suicide plan during the last year (4.3 percent often, 8.8 percent sometimes and 9.4 percent hardly ever). Thirty-eight percent (n = 125) had thought about suicide (3.6 percent often, 17.6 percent sometimes and 16.7 percent hardly ever) and 28 percent had made a suicide plan earlier in life (3.3 percent often, 13.4 percent sometimes and 10 percent hardly ever). In an earlier study we found that the Ugandan students expressed more life-weariness last year compared to students in Ghana and Norway, whereas the Ugandan and Norwegian students expressed more life-weariness earlier in life compared to Ghanaian students (Hjelmeland et al., 2008). In the present study 4 percent (n = 12) had engaged in a suicidal act last year, whereas 7 percent (n = 22) had engaged in suicidal behavior earlier in life. Hjelmeland et al. (2008) found that Ghanaian and Ugandan students more often than the Norwegians had made at least one suicide attempt during the last year, but the effect size of this difference was very low. Nine percent (n = 28) of the men had experienced suicide and 21.5 percent (n = 65) had experienced nonfatal suicidal behavior in the family. The corresponding figures for experiences of suicide and nonfatal suicidal behavior among others were and 59.7 percent (n = 187) and 65.7 percent (n = 201), respectively. In Hjelmeland et al. (2008) the Ugandan students had more often experienced both suicides and suicide attempts in their family than the Ghanaian and Norwegian students. The Norwegian students had experienced suicide attempts among others more often than the Ugandan, who in turn had experienced this more often than the Ghanaian. However, the Norwegian and the Ugandan had experienced suicide among others more often than the Ghanaian students.

Description and Discussion of the Thematic Analysis of the Open-ended Questions

The most important cause of suicide. Three hundred and sixteen men responded to the question: “What do you think is the most important cause of suicide?” (45 medical students, 69 nursing students, 112 psychology students 79 social work students, and 12 PCOs). The responses ranged from one word to a few sentences. As each person could give more than one response, there were in total 710 statements of which 660 (93 percent) were specific and 50 (7 percent) were unspecific. An example of an unspecific response was: “Want to stop the pain in the rat race of life” (medical student in his 20s), where no specific cause was presented. Only the
specific responses were analyzed further. The thematic analysis revealed three main categories of causes: intra-personal, inter-personal and extra-personal causes (Figure 1). We have found the same structure in previous analysis of data from Europe (Hjelmeland & Knizek, 2004; Knizek et al., 2008) and in Ghana (Knizek et al., in press). The majority of the responses (60 percent) fell into the category of intra-personal causes (n = 390) whereas 185 (28 percent) could be categorized as inter-personal, and 85 (13 percent) as extra-personal causes. The subcategories for each of these main categories are presented in the following:

Intra-personal causes. Most of the statements in the group of intra-personal causes pointed towards illness/disease (43 percent) and about a third of these statements concerned mental disorders or problems, but only a quarter of these mentioned depression explicitly. Drugs and alcohol abuse were mentioned 12 times as the most important cause of suicide. However, the majority of statements in the illness/disease category were statements about HIV/AIDS and cancer. The quantitative data showed a negative attitude towards the right to kill oneself even in relation to incurable disease: The mean score on this factor was 2.2 (SD = 0.83) indicating that the men did not agree that people have the right to kill themselves, even in relation to severe, incurable illness. The score on the single item “People should have the right to take their own lives” was 1.9 (SD = 1.2).

Only one man mentioned impotence even though virility and sexual performance is one of the crucial arenas for the social construction of masculinity (Silberschmidt, 2005). Fallers and Fallers (1960) reported impotence as a significant contributor to suicide in a study they undertook in Eastern Uganda. More recently, Kinyanda et al. (2005c) also observed that sexual problems were a significant contributor to repetition of suicidal behavior in a study in urban Uganda. If sexual performance is that important, it is striking that it is not mentioned more often. This could indicate that this arena might have lost its priority or that it is taboo to talk.

Figure 1: Categories of responses to the question: What is the main cause of suicide? Number of statements in parentheses (only the specific suggestions are included in the figure).

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about this issue. Another explanation might be that this sample is relatively young and thus has not felt the pressure of this issue yet.

The second largest group within the intra-personal causes was about frustration (n = 31) and stress (n = 34) and could be named “perceived pressure.” This category has a lot of similarity with the Shweder et al. (1997) description of emergent causal ontology. This category was one of the causal ontologies of suffering they found in folk psychologies and “rooted in the metaphors of external ‘stress’, ‘pressure’, and ‘environmental risk factors’” (p. 122). These statements were equally quite unspecific, mainly expressing that “something” must be too much for these people: “The main reason could be severe stress.” Hopelessness (n = 29) and loneliness (n = 26) were also mentioned relatively often and together with the statements about low self-esteem (n = 6). This might describe a situation with lack of power/control exemplified by a statement of a young medical student: “People commit suicide because they have been pushed to breaking point. They are in a tight corner up against the wall and see no possible way out of that corner (can be a problem or anything). They’ve tried all possible routes and failed.”

When a person is entrapped in a situation like this, he either must find a way out or accept the situation through a different way of coping. Since Uganda is a religious country (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2002) spiritual or religious coping might be a possibility. Geyer and Baumeister (2005) emphasize how religion and morality in general as a central and explicit goal have to restrain the self and override people’s tendency to act out of self-interested motives. This means that even though the short-sighted goal is to put an end to life’s misery, religion here might contribute to the individual’s ability to endure. Faith thus could provide a possibility to accept a difficult situation as has been shown in a range of previous studies (see Klaassen et al., 2006, for references).

Existential and spiritual causes were also mentioned (10 percent) as illustrated by this statement from a medical student in his 20s: “People commit suicide because of the meaninglessness of life at that particular instant in their lives.” Life seems meaningless, maybe as a result of extraordinary life circumstances such as death of loved ones, as some men suggested. The significance of reflecting on the meaning of life for the men in this study was also underlined by the quantitative analysis. On the question “How often have you thought of the meaning of your life?” the mean score was 1.4 (SD = 0.7) for last year and 1.9 for earlier in life (scored on a 4-point scale from 1 = often to 4 = never) indicating a clear tendency of existential reasoning. For some, this existential reasoning seemed intertwined with spiritual reflections; nine men explicitly mentioned loss of faith as a possible cause for suicide because then all problems seem to be overwhelming, as there is no hope for a better future, neither in this life nor in the after-life: “Frustrations accompanied with little trust in Jesus Christ the Saviour of all” (psychology student in his 30s). Here, faith is believed to give hope under unbearable circumstances; confer the concept of existential coping mentioned above (Wong & MacDonald, 2002). The meaninglessness of life might be intensified by not being a believer as this coping mechanism will not be accessible: “Everybody gets into a difficult situation, but the question is what value do they attach to life. And greater than this question DO THEY FEAR GOD. If one fears God, then even if he should think of committing suicide, he may have to fear to even attempt” (medical student in his 20s). However, fear of
what happens after life here seems to be more important in preventing suicide than religion’s ability providing hope and thus giving power to deal with life’s adversities. This emphasis on negative reinforcement and prohibition as a suicide prevention strategy can perhaps be described as a moral of justice (Kohlberg, 1983) regulated by both spiritual and secular legislation. Suicide being a criminal offence in Uganda already defines it as an act violating rules and thus the welfare/good of the community that will be punished here in life; seeing it as a sin adds a spiritual offence as God is considered to be the only one that is entitled to give and take life. As many men put it, God is the “author of life” and thus to take one’s life is to compete with God, an unforgivable sin that will be punished after death. While a secular person would be able to escape this world’s atrocity through death, this is no option for the religious person, who believes in an afterlife with divine legislation.

However, aside from devastating circumstances, cognitive coping can also be problematic, not only by lack of faith in superior powers, but also by having “wrong” attitudes, which limits cognitive coping. Thirty statements (8 percent) pointed at the cause for suicide being a wrong attitude: “Most people fail to comprehend situations so they are forced to think that life with challenges is the wrong life. Yet the ideal life of no problems practically is not there” (medical student in his 20s). The statements in this group are quite different, but point to a cognitive inability to see an actual situation in a wider perspective or to lack creativity/flexibility in looking for solutions. This might be what has been described as tunnel vision as a characteristic of a suicidal process (Shneidman, 1985). There is in this category a wide connotative difference in the statements; part of them are expressions with a judgmental valor blaming individuals engaging in suicidal behavior, whereas others are mere descriptions of an ongoing process. Fifteen statements in this group point to an underlying egoism or weakness and pull in the direction of judgmental opinions. It was mentioned that a cause for suicide could be “personal satisfaction” (PCO, in his 40s), which indicates that the individual only pursues a selfish goal of peace for himself instead of fulfilling the obligations towards others in an ethics of community (Miller, 2007). This would be in contrast with what is expected in a society where people in general and men especially have many heavy and prescribed obligations arising from the actual economic situation and the numerous demands of the extended family system.

More surprising, however, were other statements like “to be remembered as a hero” (psychology student in his 30s), or “martyrdom; heroism” (social work student in his 20s). Especially the notion of heroism seems to contradict the relatively negative attitude endorsed in this study in general. These statements might reflect a notion of suicide as an act of self-sacrifice for a higher cause and thus not as selfish but rather as the opposite: a subordination of individual wishes to societal ones thus again indicating an underlying ethics of community. This is in keeping with Durkheim’s (1981) “altruistic suicide.” The notion of heroism also seems to fit into an ideology of masculinity that Canetto (1992-93) has discussed in relation to a Western population:

Whereas women’s suicidal behaviour is often viewed as indicating weakness and dependence, men’s is frequently interpreted as a sign of tragic courage and fierce independence. Suicidal men are often portrayed as victims of
powerful social and/or physical calamities. Their suicidal act is construed as part of their resistance against such forces, not as defeat; as a triumph against the possibility of submission, not as submission. In sum, men’s suicides are frequently construed as acts of ‘glory.’ (Canetto, 1992-93, p. 5)

The low number of statements going in this direction could indicate that this myth, although existing, is not widely accepted among our informants and mainly could be interpreted as ironical or sarcastic statements; and therefore are categorized under wrong attitudes.

Some (5 percent) pointed to failed expectations as a possible cause for suicide. This was most often not further explicated; they just pointed out that goals in life were not achieved. Sometimes these failed expectations were coupled with disappointment being a consequence. These failed expectations might be another expression of perceived pressure that they cannot fulfill and an acknowledgement of the overwhelming duties/obligations that people (men) have.

The last, small sub-category under intra-personal causes was about a genetic or hereditary disposition to suicide (n = 4).

Inter-personal causes. From the 185 statements under the inter-personal causes, 87 percent dealt with disharmonic relationships. Problems in marriage, with family or friends as well as broken hearts, were frequently mentioned. Lack of support was an issue in 37 statements, whereas betrayal was mentioned specifically in nine. Also, the loss of a partner or family members was emphasized through 37 statements. The Ugandan men seem to recognize the crucial meaning of having close relationships for coping with the challenges of life, which is in line with what Canetto and Lester (2002) pointed out in their study on suicide notes, saying that evidence suggests that interpersonal events are dominant precipitants of both female and male suicidal behavior, in contrast to the common gender myth mentioned above.

One sub-category encompassing 12 statements (7 percent) was about suicide as acts to influence someone. The individual tries to punish others, take revenge or simply seeks attention: “Some commit suicide to pay back dear one who have hurt them because they believe those people will never forgive themselves for causing the death” (young medical student), and, “It could be because they want to punish people who have hurt them in life: For example, a man may commit suicide to punish his unfaithful wife” (social work student in his 20s). These statements are surprising in so far as they illustrate individuals without power, which is not what is expected from men in a patriarchal society. Especially astonishing is the example of suicide as punishment of a wife in this society where polygamy and marital violence are frequent (Koenig et al., 2003; Kishor and Johnson, 2006). Among the Banyoro of south-western Uganda, Beattie (1960) describes the phenomenon of “vengeance suicide” where an aggrieved person of usually “less social status” exerts revenge on a “socially superior” antagonist through suicide.

The last group mentioned under inter-personal causes was to avoid shame (7 percent): “Because they are fed up with the wrong they have done because they don’t want to be ashamed maybe, or they think the punishment is equal to be dead” (nursing student in his 20s). But also the combination of shame and fear was mentioned in relation to specific acts: “Fear of being caught as criminal especially
those who murder their wives” (psychology student in his 20s), or, “when they are totally frustrated or embarrassed by their acts e.g. when one has raped, or defiled a young baby” (social work student in his 20s).

Draguns and Tanaka-Matsumi (2003) have pointed at shame being a more powerful emotion in interdependent cultures than in independent ones and this could explain why men see this as an important cause for suicide. However, it may be necessary to further analyze these feelings of shame in future research in order to tease out meaning and identify possible gender-specific connotations.

**Extra-personal causes.** Of the 85 statements on extra-personal causes that were mentioned, the vast majority (65 percent) were on economic reasons where especially poverty was mentioned. Sixteen statements were on work-related issues as, for example, loss of job. Only 6 percent of statements dealt with the recent war that has been in Uganda, while 8 percent pointed at politics and norms as a possible cause of suicide: “political crisis where torture and detention are involved” (psychology student in his 20s), or “political harassments made onto people like people were witch hunted during recent elections because of supporting reform” (social work student in his 20s). The politics that are pointed at here are mainly oppressive and the persecution of people seems to be anticipated as a possible cause of suicide.

Only two statements were explicitly on extra-natural causes or superstition: “When one is charmed or due to superstition” (social work student in his 20s), or: “Can’t rule out witchcraft!” (social work student in his 20s). It is positive that there were only these two statements that explicitly granted witchcraft some power in a country where such beliefs seem to be common (Wlodarczyk, 2004).

**Perception of Suicide Prevention**

Three hundred and fifteen men had responded to the question: “What do you think should be done to prevent suicide?” (45 medical students, 68 nursing students, 110 psychology students, 80 social work students and 12 PCOs). Only one medical student thought that suicide was not preventable: “I think talking to a person who has decided to commit suicide is a waste of time as the person will not change their mind.” Three hundred and fourteen men thus believed that suicide could be prevented. This positive attitude was also supported by quantitative analyses where we found a mean score of 4.5 (SD = 0.82) on the item “Suicide can be prevented” and 4.4 (SD = 1.0) on the item: “You can always help a person with suicidal thoughts.” As one person could offer more than one response, there were a total of 465 statements of which 429 were specific suggestions on what could be done. An example of an unspecific statement was “Solve any problem without committing suicide” (medical student in his 30s). Only the specific statements were analyzed. Again the specific efforts suggested could be divided in three sub-categories, namely “Efforts at the individual level,” “Efforts at the interpersonal level” and “Efforts at the societal level” (Figure 2). The same categories have also been found in Europe (Hjelmeland & Knizek, 2004; Knizek et al., 2008) and in Ghana (Knizek et al., in press). However, whereas the most important causes pointed at were at the individual level, followed by the interpersonal and then the extra-personal level, the most important preventive efforts were assumed to be at the societal level (n = 393), followed by the individual level (n = 25) and the interpersonal level (n = 11).
The “Efforts at the societal level” could be divided into structural (n = 265) and ideological (n = 128) changes. Structural changes dealt with the improvement of the health services, general socio/economic systems, the legal system and improvement of counseling (religious) services. The ideological changes focused on education, attitude changes and media attention.

Under the structural changes the vast majority (73 percent) implied that improvements in, and access to, health services were central: “Even desperate people need serious counseling and help on how to deal with their serious problems and hardships” (medical student in his 20s). Both mental and somatic health services were mentioned. This makes good sense with the men’s frequent mentioning of HIV/AIDS or cancer, along with mental health problems as the most important cause of suicide. However, counseling was not always described as support and could have some rather scary aspects: “For suicidal deaths there needs involvement organisation to provide free counselling to the people about suicide, and this should be emphasised with a lot or strong threats and outcomes or solutions (possibles)” (psychology student in his 20s). This statement follows a line of several from different areas in this study, namely to scare and threaten people, either with earthly or heavenly punishment, or to think twice and find a different solution: “Scaring people about suicide’s obvious outcomes, death” (medical student in his 20s), or, “Sensitising people about the badness of committing suicide. The Government is doing it by publicly beating any person who commit suicide so as to discourage others from doing the same” (psychology student in his 30s). Some of the statements thus widen the concept of counseling by introducing threats. This is in line with 27 statements on improvements in religious (counseling) services that are also pointing at threats as an important prevention strategy: “People should be told...
that even God will punish them for killing themselves” (social work student in his 20s), or: “Community counselling methods could be started to sensitize people against this immoral and evil act. Religious leaders could their teaching against it. National condemnation through inhuman treatment of dead bodies for suicide” (social work student in his 20s). The men here point at the consciousness of divine legislation both as an amplifier of the governmental legislation and the divine morality as a booster of the morality of community. This way of moral reasoning fits with Verhoef and Michel (1997, p. 405) who have shown that “African morality has quite a distinctly different orientation from the morality developed within western tradition in general.” While morality in the West mainly is regarded as highly individualistic and distinct from religion, it seems as if the Western definitions are unable to capture the specific African mixture of spiritual and moral factors or the strong bonds between the individual and his social context. As Mbiti (2006, p. 2) puts it: “There is no separation between concerns of a religious and philosophical nature, but complex interdependence.” We find this general relatedness of morality and religion as an ongoing theme in the responses of these men.

Only a minority of the responses (10 percent) emphasized the need for economic and social change, a surprisingly low number taking into account the socio-economic challenges of Uganda. This again underpins the observation that these men seem to be more occupied by the inter- and intra-human consequences than the socio-economic misery. Fifteen statements focused on the legal system: “In case one attempts to do so & fails, should be eliminated from society” (psychology student in his 30s), or: “Involving everybody in the legal prevention system. Serious punitive measures for the attempts” (psychology student in his 40s). The men emphasizing the law did not mention a decriminalization of suicide, but advocated for strong punishment instead. Threats and punishment seem thus to have a prominent status in the prevention strategies according to our sample. Only two statements pointed to the necessity of research on the issue.

The need for education and sensitization was cited in almost three quarters of the responses. Twenty two statements (17 percent) dealt with necessary attitude changes and 10 statements (11 percent) focused on the important role of the media. Under the ideological changes we again see the tendency of negative reinforcement that comes up in all sub-categories as a means of education: “Mass awareness about the evil of suicide” (social work student in his 20s). Education and sensitization are thus often suggested as means of installing or enhancing both communal and divine morality in people, which again mirrors the intimate relatedness of morality and religion.

The efforts at the individual level could be described as a kind of advice to people to be more open (n = 17), more positive (n = 5), to adjust to the circumstances (n = 2) and avoid drugs (n = 1). Efforts at the interpersonal level were statements about everybody’s responsibility to help (n = 9) and to give support (n = 2), which again are to be seen in the frame of communal morality, but also in light of the religious demands of caring for your fellow human beings. The low number of statements in this sub-category seems somewhat surprising taking into consideration the attention these men directed towards interpersonal problems as one of the most important causes for suicide.
Methodological Considerations
This study mainly focused on a qualitative analysis of responses to two open-ended questions at the end of a mainly quantitative questionnaire where some of the quantitative variables were used to illuminate the qualitative analyses. The quantitative part thus may have colored the answers of the open-ended questions. Another limitation is that our sample consists of relatively well-educated men who presumably have more knowledge of health related issues than other groups. Also the pressure on these men might be different than in districts with high suicide rates. We therefore suggest that in-depth interviews with men from different districts in Uganda should be conducted to get a better overview on men’s perceptions and attitudes.

General Discussion
The results of this study reflect a rather negative attitude towards suicide, even in relation to incurable disease, and a strong belief in the possibility to prevent suicide. A negative attitude towards suicide is generally assumed to be predominant in the developing world (Eshun, 2003; Lester & Akande, 1994). It is necessary to understand this against the background of the deep impact of religion onto the lives of these people: “Africans are notoriously religious, and each people has its own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it” (Mbiti, 2006, p. 1). This means that “where the individual is, there is his religion, for he is a religious being. It is this that makes Africans so religious: religion is in their whole system of being (ibid, p. 3). As previously shown, religious people are considerably more intolerant towards suicide than less religious people, but it also has been shown that in this group is a greater belief that suicide should be prevented. Our findings thus are in line with this. However, in order to understand the negative attitude as more than just an effect of religiosity it might be relevant to look at the “Big Three” theories of ethics (Shweder et al., 1997) where three broad types of moral orientations are found. The first focuses on autonomy and concerns harm, rights and justice (Kohlberg, 1983). The second concerns responsiveness to the needs of others and can be described as an ethics of community (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 2007). The third is based on cultural approaches and focuses on the influence of the divine and deals with issues like sin, purity, and so on (Miller, 2007). From the autonomy perspective, the negative attitude of the men can be understood as a conventional reasoning, where the outset is that suicide is a criminal offence (which it is by law in Uganda) and violates justice. From the community perspective, suicide must be seen in relationship to an intricate social structure with an extended family system that in times of hardship (economic, war, AIDS, etc.) means an even heavier load on the shoulders of each individual. Suicide thus must be perceived as a betrayal of others and therefore perceived negatively. Given the high impact of religion on Ugandans (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2002, Gifford, 1999), the ethics of divinity also pull towards the negative direction as suicide is understood as a way of competing with God and thus is considered a sin. The overall negative attitude towards suicide thus might be plausible. Still, one third of the participants reported suicidal ideation, and four percent admitted having engaged in suicidal behavior during the last year, and seven percent earlier in life. The majority had experienced
suicidal behavior in their surroundings. As causes for suicide they mainly pointed at illness/disease and problems with relationships, followed by perceived pressure and economic hardship. In order to understand this, it seems fruitful to see the burden of being a man in an area under stress in addition to the different underlying moral/religious reflections and demands. Here the problem of not being able to fulfill internal and external expectations (Dolan, 2002) comes in, as masculinity in East Africa is supposed to be linked to dignity and self-control (Silberschmidt, 2005):

The man of power is self-reliant, hardworking, and successful. He provides all his family’s needs and helps his kin. He does not show fear; he is always calm and decisive, slow to anger but will defend his own and his family’s honour. He does not complain in hard times or show pain. He is generous and people come to him for advice. (Dover, 2005, p. 178)

In a situation where almost all Ugandans are affected by poverty or premature death because of war or disease, these expectations might be difficult or even impossible to meet and thus result in relatively high suicidal behavior even though their attitudes towards it are negative. Or as Dolan (2007) puts it, the “high level of suicide amongst men who cannot attain the masculine norm of marriage, procreation and protection” (p.6). However, these students might be regarded as a special group rather than as representatives for Ugandan men in general, being more educated and having better prospects for their future. Even though this group might be regarded as a privileged group, more than one third of them admitted to often having had suicidal ideation. This calls for concern and targeted preventive measures.

When we turn to prevention, most of the men assumed that suicide can be prevented. Here it is very clearly indicated that they believe the problems must be solved mainly at the societal level, that is, outside the potentially suicidal individuals. Whereas illness/disease was the most often mentioned cause, in terms of prevention, the men point at improvement of the health services as the most effective way to prevent suicide. However, they also point at the necessity of education; that is, giving people some tools to reflect on the situation or to earn a living in the Ugandan context. The main impression is that the men in their suggestions for prevention seem to underline efforts that can restore people’s ability to provide for themselves and their dependents. The emphasis on threats as a powerful counseling and educational tool is, however, surprising and needs further studies.

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Philip Culbertson

Readers get an immediate taste of this book from its cover blurb, which describes the contents as a “Boot Camp” and the author as a drill instructor. With reservations about what I was getting into, I continued reading. Malebranche is a man who has sex with men, and who calls the man to whom he is committed his “compadre,” because “partner” is a lesbian word. Malebranche, who describes himself as an “unrepentant masculinist,” offers a stinging critique of “gay culture” and “the gay community.” As one who has turned his back on such identifications, he challenges members of the gay community to “become a man” by leaving the gay community, including gay politics, and embracing traditional masculinity, with all its self-reliance and personal responsibility, and to become not just lovers of men, but lovers of masculinity (androphiles) who are barely distinguishable from straight men.

Malebranche, a man in his late 30s from Portland, Oregon, is white, educated, widely read, and articulate. He is also strongly opinionated and a fag-hater who wants biological males to do masculinity his way. While acknowledging the diversity of the gay community as often containing “straight” men, straight women, non-straight women, crossdressers, and a variety of other people who do not identify as gay, he nonetheless lumps together the whole variety of those people as promoting a Gay Advocacy Identity that gains its cohesion from the “illusion” of oppression and victimization. Malebranche scorns such people, and calls for his readers to distance themselves from “the gay community” by integrating themselves into the larger community of males, most of whom identify as heterosexual. There, men can find their “essential masculinity” (which no gay man has, apparently) in “the desire to be assertive, to exert strength, to be aggressive, to be independent, to differentiate oneself from women, and to idealize manhood” (p. 78).

Malebranche claims that the Greek word *philia* implies sexual love (p. 22). Technically, this is simply not true (Culbertson, 1996). For example, I am a bibliophile (a lover of books), a cinephile (a lover of film), a logophile (a lover of words), and an ailurophile (a lover of cats), but I am not sexually aroused by any of those four things. Philia implies a deep, connecting admiration, affection, and commitment based on pleasure, usefulness, or benevolence. In this sense, I would presume that all readers of JMMS are androphiles, in that we are committed to, affectionate about, and admiring of men, and take great pleasure in promoting a variety of healthy identities among men. Perhaps there is even an erotic edge to our attraction to men, but that does not automatically imply that we lovers of men want to be sexually active with the males we know.

Few forms of identity other than androphilia escape Malebranche’s denigration. Homosexual males are “men run amok” (p. 78). Feminism, he claims, has made men more effeminate. Scholars of men’s studies write from the point of
view that “masculinity is acceptable only if viewed as a construct in need of
deconstruction, and only so long as lip service is paid to the feminist dogma often
favored by lesbians” (p. 42). His response to ideas, identities, and arguments that he
doesn’t like is made patently clear by ending his discussions with a resounding “Fuck
that!”

The primary modern source in men’s studies upon which Malebranche draws
heavily is David Gilmore’s *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity*
(1990). Gilmore’s work is, of course, important in the field of men’s studies. Unsurprisingly,
there was little reference to the work of others in the pantheon of contemporary Mens/Gay/Queer Studies to support Malebranche’s “manifesto.”

I am writing this review from my home in Palm Springs. Six months ago,
nineteen middle-aged men were arrested on the other side of town for having sex in
public (the bushes near some of the gay resorts here). Though the case has not yet
gone to trial, all nineteen now are threatened with living the rest of their lives as
registered sex offenders. Public opinion is divided in this small town—some arguing
that as long as no one was getting hurt, and all participants were mature males,
being registered as sex offenders is a draconian punishment. Others argue that this
town, like other small towns in America, does not need to tolerate sex in public, by
anyone. Even after reading Malebranche’s book, it was unclear to me whether this
case would be considered a part of the Gay Identity Advocacy that Malebranche
eschews, or whether it would be considered a normal part of androphilia—the
sexual desire by men for other men, other lovers of masculinity, acted out in a
manner that is unrepentantly masculinist. Perhaps Malebranche’s analysis of the
event would hang on whether the men involved identified as androphiles or as
gay/queer. To me, the event should be judged on the basis of community standards.
Certainly, Palm Springs’ gay community has only in part rushed to defend the
nineteen men, and other members of the gay community have condemned their
activity as inappropriate, though all are fairly well agreed that the pending sentence
of a life-long registration as a sex offender is not a fair sentence in this case.

As negative as this review might sound, I actually enjoyed reading this book. I
disagreed with lots of it, but the strong opinions therein were expressed in such an
“in your face” way that I repeatedly had to stop and ask myself whether I agreed
with Malebranche or not, and if not, why? Agree or not, like it or not, this book was
fun to read because it kept pushing my buttons as a scholar of Men’s Studies, and to
a lesser extent, of Gay Studies, forcing me to reexamine my own thinking over and
over.

The first few pages of the book are not well edited (acknowledgements, rather
than acknowledgements, for example) and hopefully the publisher can correct these
errors before anyone else purchases the book.

**Reference**

bodies, men’s gods: Male identities in a (post-) Christian culture* (pp. 149-

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This is the eighth volume in a continuing series from Routledge devoted to issues of interest to scholars in Men’s Studies, as well as to psychologists, counselors, psychotherapists, psychiatrists, social workers, and clergy. I wrote a review of volumes 3 and 5 in this series, published in previous issues of JMMS. At least seven more volumes are projected in the series.

In my previous reviews of two books in this series, I gave quite a strong recommendation to the readers of JMMS concerning their usefulness. With this book, I have some reservations. Don’t get me wrong: this book should be indispensable for psychotherapists and psychiatrists who work with white older male clients. However, the intersection between masculinities and spirituality, which is the raison d’etre of JMMS, is granted only one brief insubstantial paragraph in this book, even though the authors concede that “religion and spiritual beliefs will play a role in the lives of many older men” (p. 47). If that is true (which I believe it is), then the book’s failure to address the topic is even more glaring.

The previous volumes I reviewed were edited collections of chapters by a wide variety of authors with strong credentials. Rather than being an edited collection, this volume is team-written by three authors, all with academic credentials in psychology and psychiatry, who apparently have chosen to focus on the “hard clinical edge” of mental health treatment and counseling. Perhaps an exploration of the spirituality of older men was considered by them too ephemeral, or perhaps too “soft” (as it were—an overdetermined word to use with older men) to merit inclusion in the book. The role of sexual orientation in shaping the masculinity of older men is also given only one brief paragraph (pp. 46–47) and the role of ethnographic culture is given only four pages (pp. 43–46). I was disappointed by these slights, and believe that they significantly reduce the usefulness of this volume to many professionals who work in mental health or ministry.

I appreciated their clarity about their “Expectations of the Reader” (p. xxi). I can’t recall ever seeing that so clearly stated in a book before. The authors write: “This book is intended for the experienced therapist ... Expectations include familiarity with the American Psychological Association’s ‘Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Older Adults’ (APA, 2004) ... and the Pike’s Peak model of professional geropsychology.” Yet, while I appreciated the clarity, I also was troubled, given how few people have been trained in practicing psychotherapy with older men, by the number of potential readers of this book who would immediately feel uninvited into the conversation. The study of the psychology (and spirituality) of older men is thus positioned as elitist, it seems to me, when in fact this specialist area needs to be opened up to more practitioners and those committed to the promotion of physical, emotional, psychological, relational, sexual, and spiritual
health among the target population. As a 66-year-old white male, who conducted a practice in psychodynamic psychotherapy for ten years and taught psychodynamic psychotherapy in a tertiary training program for mental health professionals for eight years, I wasn’t even sure that I was invited into the conversation.

Fortunately, there is a small selection of materials other than this book on the market that address the target audience for JMMS, such as an essay by Edward H. Thompson entitled “Men’s Faith: The Effects of Pre- and Post-Retirement Masculinities” (in The Spirituality of Men, ed. by P. Culbertson, Fortress Press, 2002); the chapter on “Religion, Spirituality, and Older People” by Alfons Marcoen in The Cambridge Handbook on Age and Aging (2005); and sections in the two-volume Aging, Spirituality and Religion by Melvin Kimble and Susan McFadden (Fortress Press, 2003). The subject of the religion and spirituality of older men is in need of much more extensive research, written in a manner that is intended to invite mental health professionals, caregivers, and pastors into the conversation.

When I was reading this book for review, I kept thinking about a sad experience I had last year. A friend and I went to a local nursing home to play an afternoon of piano duets for the residents. I noticed one frail older man in the room who was clearly depressed, by his demeanor, and who was accompanied by a solicitous younger man to whom the older man barely responded. What I saw bothered me, and I asked a nurse’s aide about the older man. She explained that he was the only elderly gay man among the residents, that his family was all dead and he was painfully lonely and frightened, and that the younger man was his former neighbor who came to offer companionship from time to time, but the older man remained inconsolable. Psychotherapy with Older Men would probably offer little to that older man, either, since the Series Foreword (p. xiii) by Mark Kiselica falls immediately into the trap of presumed Caucasian heteronormativity, a presumption never really challenged by the rest of the book either.

There is much more yet to be written in the field of the psychospiritual needs of aging males. As a case in point, 84 percent of the suicides among America’s elderly population are committed by males. Older men can easily become lost men—lost in their inherited gender expectations and their inability to live up to those often-rigid constructions as they age. This book says some very important things, but, to my mind, defeats its own usefulness by the restrictions and presumptions from which it starts.

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Sarah Heinz

The 1990s in Britain were an era in which role models for both men and women seemed to have been in crisis for so long that no one really knew what was going on anymore. The sensitive New Man of the 1980s, who was in touch with his feelings and supported feminism, was replaced—or rather complemented—by the New Lad, a young urban male who behaved badly, was interested in girls, fast cars and sports and who was often associated with a reactionary or even antifeminist attitude. This seemed to imply a need for a new and assertive masculinity that finally returned to “real men” and their images of “real women.” However, the emergence of the New Lad did not stop gender confusion. It rather added yet another model for male behavior to the multiplicity of choices already offered.

Andrea Ochsner’s study, which is based on her dissertation, addresses this crisis and multiplication of masculinities in the 1990s in the context of eight popular male confessional novels. She argues that the 1990s were marked by a change in the quantity and quality of uncertainty about gender roles at the end of a century that “probably had seen more changes than any preceding one in terms of technology, entertainment and lifestyle proliferation” (p. 43). Ochsner assesses masculinity and its former powerful invisibility, and her book can be placed among the fast-growing body of texts about the social construction and function of male identities and their literary representation.

The main thesis of the book is that the crisis of masculinity and the emergence of the New Lad in British literature and culture should be interpreted in terms of a crisis of identity that is not only connected to gendered identities but to processes of identification and self-formation in general. Masculinity is thus defined as “an unstable and ongoing identity project” (p. 24). In this context of increasingly fluid identities, the New Lad is neither seen as the radical antithesis to the New Man, nor is the phenomenon entirely interpreted as an antifeminist backlash. Ochsner rather evaluates the New Lad as yet another symptom of a deep insecurity at the heart of contemporary gender discourses that touch upon questions of social privilege and power. The eight male confessional novels are accordingly interpreted as an oscillation between the model of the sensitive New Man and the cynical New Lad.

After an introduction entitled “The Structure of Feeling in the 1990s” the study comprises two major parts. Part one introduces theory and contexts and is divided into three subchapters. The first is concerned with the socio-historic background of British culture and literature of the 1990s and shortly introduces the concepts of masculinity and identity crisis underlying the study. The second is concerned with questions of genre. It defines the male confessional novel and connects genre criticism with questions of gender. The third subchapter is then
concerned with aspects of popular culture and its relevance and status for the
cultural studies. Here, Ochsner claims that we need to subvert the dichotomy of high
culture vs. low culture and accordingly introduces the term “middlebrow” (p. 143).
Part two then uses the eight novels to substantiate the three main claims derived
from the theories and assumptions presented in part one: firstly that the increase in
choices and options available at the end of the 20th century is seen as liberation,
potential change and insecurity at the same time; secondly that the novels are
representative examples of the crisis and renegotiation of masculinity in the 1990s
as a symptom of a larger crisis of identity; and thirdly that the novels are
representative of real life experiences of young men and women in the 1990s and of
the way literature is used to create meaning and deal with the ambiguities of
contemporary society.

While the theoretical explanations of part one could be considered a
challenge to the non-academic audience that the study allegedly aims for, the
interpretations of part two are highly readable and yield interesting insights into the
novels’ relevance for questions of masculinity and identity in the 1990s. The
interpretations of the eight male confessional novels are divided into three
subchapters whose titles are analogies to Raymond Williams’ concept of the
“structure of feeling” that forms the basis for Ochsner’s argumentation. In the first
subchapter entitled “Structures of Obsession” the first novel under scrutiny is Nick
Hornby’s High Fidelity (1995), which Ochsner sees as the founding text of the male
confessional novel. This is then followed by an interpretation of Mike Gayle’s My
Legendary Girlfriend (1998) and David Baddiel’s Time for Bed (1997). The second
subchapter entitled “Structures of Non-Commitments” focuses on Tim Lott’s White
City Blues (1999) and Mike Gayle’s Mr Commitment (1999). The third and final
subchapter entitled “Structures of Prolonged Adolescence” deals with Nick Hornby’s
About a Boy (1998), Tony Parson’s Man and Boy (1999) and John O’Farrell’s The Best
a Man Can Get (2000). A short conclusion and two appendices with information on
The Lad Lit Project, a performance by the Sheffield-based group “Third Angel,” and
with the full text of an interview with Nick Hornby conducted by Ochsner in 2005
round off the book.

One of the major merits of the study is that Ochsner not only draws attention
to the importance of literature and popular culture in academia. She also insists on
literature and popular culture providing “the space where the laughter of the less
affluent resounds at the expense of the powerful” (p. 133). She thus makes a strong
statement in favor of popular culture as a space of invention and freedom. This shift
from a passive recipient to an active producer ties in with current research on Web
communities and Web 2.0 and has gained in currency in recent years.

Another merit of the book is that the theoretical framework of the study
draws from a large number of theories and disciplines such as cultural history and
historiography, feminism, deconstruction and discourse analysis, sociology, cultural
materialism and Marxism, genre theory or media studies. Ochsner herself locates
her approach in a cultural studies that is understood as interdisciplinary and relevant
not only to academic readers but also to what the author terms “non-academic
readership” (p. 17) or “ordinary’ readers” (p. 72). Accordingly, she claims to bridge
two gaps: firstly, the gap between academic writing about masculinity in the male
confessional novel and the novels’ popular reception, and secondly the gap between
the social sciences and the humanities. In order to do both, Ochsner not only uses theories from the social sciences and the humanities, but supplements the interpretation of the novels by empirical data: reader reviews from amazon.co.uk, a questionnaire designed by Ochsner, the interview with Hornby and the information on the Lad Lit Project. As interesting as the inclusion of such material is in a study that focuses on reader activity and the importance of interdisciplinary approaches, it is problematic that methodological issues are not addressed. The reader reviews and the questionnaire seem to provide only anecdotal evidence, and methodological problems induced by the self-selectivity of respondents and the question whether the data allows for a generalization to the assumed target population should have been discussed at least shortly. Additionally, basic documentation required in the social sciences to assess such data quality issues is missing.

The eclectic theoretical framework of the study has drawbacks as well. Several central notions introduced by the study are only vaguely or not defined. For example, the repeated claim that the male confessional novels of the 1990s are marked by a return to realism (pp. 49, 104) is not substantiated by a description of how the author actually defines the notion of realism. In the same vein, a self-conscious subjectivity modeled on active reader responses is presented as a way out of postmodern aporias (p. 67). However, this new form of the subject is neither defined nor is an explanation given why such a definition might be difficult or impossible. And finally, a study focusing on the important question of the role and power of the reader would have gained from an inclusion of reader-response criticism. Last but not least, a more careful copy-editing would have been necessary and the academic use value of the book is often reduced by citations that refer to titles that cannot be found in the bibliography.

In spite of these critical remarks, Ochsner’s book is an interesting study on masculinities in one of the most popular British genres of the 1990s that uses central approaches of cultural studies and that yields many useful insights for students and fans alike.

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Gordon Hilsman hopes with *Intimate Spirituality* to bridge what he calls a chasm that exists between “intimate loving and Catholic practice” (p. xiii) by showing how a “positive, healthy view of sexuality” is a “vital spiritual path for committed couples” (jacket summary). Hilsman, who divides his work into two parts, titled “Eros and Individual Spirituality” and “Eros and Community” respectively, rightly argues in his Introduction that “the natural human mystery of intimate love can shine light on virtually every aspect of Catholic tradition.” He states that his book is intended to fill “a significant gap...between [Catholicism’s] well-developed individual and communal spiritualities” but is not a work of argumentative theology. Rather, the expressed aim is to provide suggestions for how Catholic culture might experience progress, both as individuals and ecclesiastically, “if intimate love were taken seriously as primary data for theology and ecclesiastical policy” (pp. xiv-xv).

The first part of the book reads quite fluidly, as Hilsman proffers traditional Catholic understandings of grace and sin and applies them to loving and intimate relationships. For example, he examines the Fruits of the Spirit (charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, and self-control) in light of the reality of day-to-day partnership between paramours. Hilsman writes of the joy that lovers experience when they are together, recalling that many a woman has wistfully explained, when asked why she fell in love with her groom, that he’d made her laugh. He reminds his audience that men’s and women’s libidos are oftentimes quite different; therefore, in the interest of being generous, women may need to be more open to their lover’s advances just as men need to be willing to slow things down rather than race toward climax. In this way, they show their great love for one another by being generous with their bodies. Lovers, Hilsman writes, must indulge themselves in their intimacy. Perhaps the most interesting of these reflections on a couple’s united spiritual growth is his application of peace, which he describes as something experienced in the afterglow of love-making when the amorous pair cuddles (indirectly emphasizing the rather culturally interesting irony that romance may be ultimately more pleasing than intercourse). It is noteworthy that the most profound observations are often those that ought to be more apparent to us, and Hilsman does a fine job of employing Catholic sacramentality to offer those insights: “Only a combination of efforts on the level of body and soul together contributes to experiencing this peace even once in a lifetime, let alone with any enduring and fulfilling frequency” (p. 20; emphasis Hilsman’s).

Besides the Fruits of the Spirit, Hilsman also employs the hermeneutic of the Gifts of the Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counseling, knowledge, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord), the Paschal Mystery (Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection),
the Seven Capital Sins (lust gets its own chapter, with envy, sloth, greed, gluttony, rage, and pride to follow), and the four Cardinal Virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude). Perhaps most applicable for this modern age of divorce is the relatively brief chapter that examines love in light of the Paschal Mystery, “Death, Resurrection, and the Ending of Love.” While he does spend time discussing the death of a partner, the chapter focuses on failed relationships and how people can learn and grow from them.

Hilsman takes a similar approach to communal spiritualities in the second part of the book, where he moves from the sacraments (“Can Agape Learn from Eros?”) to the Evangelical Counsels (poverty, chastity, obedience), and from society (“Eros and Social Spirituality” and “Eros and Catholic Social Teaching”) to leadership (“Intimate Love and the Leader’s Own Spirituality”). Among the more interesting readings in this section is Hilsman’s writing on marriage. He quotes a now deceased priest-friend, who always emphasized that marriage is nearly impossible to maintain, humanly-speaking, adding: “So it’s a good thing we’re not just humanly-speaking” (p. 113). The good reverend’s point implied that, according to Catholic sacramental theology, a marriage is a union not just between two people but also God. The unity of matrimony is meant to be a vehicle of grace for the couple and a sacramental sign for the community of God’s desire for unity with humanity. Later, Hilsman offers an interesting interpersonal use of the Evangelical Counsel of poverty, making a fine, though not new, point: “Maturing sexual lovers, caring deeply about one another’s welfare, are constantly learning to share all they have for the good of them both and any family for whom they may be responsible” (p. 137). In short, the desire to share everything and to place each other above all else—including financial gain—experienced so strongly when romance is young, must continue to be cultivated if love is to last.

While Hilsman’s book has its merits, I find it difficult to recommend his work. I agree whole-heartedly with several of his arguments (for example, his statement quoted above that “the natural human mystery of intimate love can shine light on virtually every aspect of Catholic tradition”) and his critique that churchmen have sometimes failed to teach properly—or, perhaps even to understand fully—the God-given beauty and meaning of sexual love, both in the past and present. However, as the book progresses, the author strays from offering insight and moves toward complaining about Catholic teachings. Sadly, his digressions often suggest that he has not recently studied his object of scorn. I think especially here of his problems with *Humanae Vitae*, which, despite Hilsman’s arguments, recognizes as a good the pleasure offered by sexual intimacy when experienced as a means toward unity as well as sometimes resulting in procreation. Too, in his arguments against the Church’s definition of artificial birth control as immoral, Hilsman neglects to provide at least some small space to the use of fertility awareness to space births, despite its effectiveness being equivalent with the pill. Those who do use this method find themselves living many of the virtues that Hilsman promotes so well in the book’s first half, while experiencing almost no divorce. Surely, natural family planning deserves at least some positive mention.

Perhaps most troublesome is the claim that the “spirituality of intimate partnering has not been significantly developed over the past five centuries” and the book’s fundamental bent against Pope John Paul II. For example, Eugene Kennedy,
who writes an introduction to the book, claims that John Paul II cared mainly about his own fame and tried to abrogate Vatican II, while Hilsman, more gently, laments that the Pope failed to implement the Council (pp. ix, xiv, 119). The irony of ignoring the Pope becomes clear when one considers how extensively he addressed the beauty and sacramentality of spousal intimacy, including pleasure. From his philosophical work *Love and Responsibility* (1960) to biblical, philosophical, and theological reflections in *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (preached 1979-1984, and published in English most recently in 2006), from Mulieris Dignitatem (1988) to his Letter to Families (1994) and beyond, a thoroughly positive depiction of human love and sexuality as both an echo and a revelation of Divine Love informs the Pope’s understanding of the Trinity, the Church, and social justice. His thought has influenced a myriad of writers, both academic and popular, such as Marc Cardinal Ouellet’s *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family* (2006) and Christopher West’s popularizations of the *Theology of the Body*.

There are other problems—stylistic, theological, historical, doctrinal—but the above issues are the most glaring. Considering that the good insights Hilsman has to offer can be found elsewhere and that much of the book’s second part, and a not insignificant portion of the first, are more focused on railing against (what this reviewer believes to be misrepresentations of) Church teachings than actually applying his hermeneutic, it seems advisable to go elsewhere. For something approximate to what Hilsman offers, I would recommend West’s *Heaven’s Song: Sexual Love As It Was Meant to Be*, which discusses the ups and downs of human relationships in the context of John Paul II’s teachings on the Bible’s Song of Songs and the Book of Tobit. For a slightly more philosophical (and perhaps slightly less spiritual) examination of sexual intimacy in light of the Catholic tradition, see Edward Sri’s *Men, Women, and the Mystery of Love*.

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If the saloon represented the space where nineteenth-century rural American men negotiated their manhood, that male realm had been lost by century’s end. Through court transcripts, novels, and plays, Elaine Frantz Parsons skillfully and engagingly enters the world of the temperance debate to reveal meaning beyond the limits of alcohol. Parsons argues that alcohol was not of central importance to the people engaged in the temperance debate. Rather, the driving forces behind temperance concerns were questions regarding the self in the midst of accelerated nineteenth-century change and new scientific revelations. In this environment of rapid development, Parsons carefully articulates the negotiation of boundaries around, one, gender and, two, agency.

The understanding of manhood in nineteenth-century rural America centered on heads of households’ ability to assume authoritative roles and their power to take responsibility for their own actions. According to the oft-told “drunkard narrative”—stories in which alcohol ruined a man by incapacitating his power to pursue respectful manly pursuits—Parsons argues that the logic of manhood shifted. The saloon once provided a place of meaning for the men who frequented them. In antebellum America, these homosocial spaces were not second-rate options but vibrant worlds of meaning. Clifford Putney (2001) has demonstrated that American men in urban and mostly northeastern regions of the country worked out industrial-era anxieties about manhood in such spaces as the YMCA. Ted Ownby (1990) has shown how explicitly anti-domestic pastimes such as fighting, shooting guns, and swearing functioned to provide a meaningful male domain of recreational competition in the postbellum South. Parsons focuses on manhood in yet another region of the country: the rural frontier. As such scholars as Ownby (1990) and Elliott Gorn (1993) have shown—and as Parsons illuminates in her discussion of “minding your own business”—men were not voluntarily leaving the their male space “where men could make visible, define, and seek to enlarge the boundaries of their ‘business’” (p. 65). However, Parsons demonstrates that manhood is not a static essence that is handed down from one generation to the next. Instead, manhood is vulnerable, unstable, and is, as she contends, destabilized and rebuilt. Here, Parsons adds a deeper level of nuance to her understanding of gender by including women’s involvement in her framework.

As Parsons notes, discourse of female drunkards unfolded differently and “with much less sympathy.” For example, women drunkards were framed as completely “beyond the pale” of seduction (p. 119); the “drunkard narrative” applied specifically to men. However, women figure prominently in Parsons’ narrative. Parsons describes the shift in understanding from alcohol as seduction to alcohol as
invasion, from individual volition to middle-class discursive construction in the decision to “take a glassful of his environment into his body” (p. 183). Juxtaposed to the metaphor of alcohol invading the male body, Parsons argues that women had to invade the male space of the saloon to save men from themselves. As the logic of the cultural narratives became more and more pervasive, alcohol rendered the male gender “lacking as a man” (p. 3). Drunkenness diverted responsibility of men for their families’ economic wellbeing and responsibility for their actions away from the drunkards and, through civil damage law, onto saloonkeepers. The loss of such gendered authority and responsibility rendered men impotent in the public sphere, and participation in the male world of the saloon transformed them into something fundamentally different, into drunkards. The intensions of female temperance reformers, Parsons argues, were not to achieve, as scholars such as Barbara Epstein (1981) maintained, a stepping-stone to women’s suffrage but instead to return to “sweet and docile” domesticity (p. 153). By invading the public sphere, female temperance reformers intended to restore the patriarch to his “pristine state” (p. 156). In contrast to men’s power, therefore, women’s power was expressed through coercion. But once women entered the male sphere, their presence was not neatly reversible. As temperance reformers like Carry Nation entered the “corrupt” realm of men, they opened a “wedge of a new system of gender relations” (p. 184). Here, Parsons offers a new argument about the emergence of the women’s suffrage, which she calls “the narrative of female invasion.” This narrative “described how women could briefly and dramatically enter and transform dangerous male spaces like the saloon, then return to their domestic sphere unharmed” (p. 13).

Not only did the drunkard narrative contribute to modified understandings of manhood in the gendered sense, it also called into question manhood in the sense of personhood. Parsons notes the “slippage” in the nineteenth-century use of the word manhood, and she intends the term’s dual nature. Alcohol could cause men to lose control of their own interiority and prevent them from pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps. Alcoholics served as case studies of extreme situations with which to debate the degree of free will that an individual may or may not possess. And as Parsons demonstrates, this free-will debate had tremendous implications for the U.S. political system. At stake was no less than “the American tradition of freedom” (p. 43). The “drink debate” would eventually construct enfranchised men “as mere parts or a social organism” (p. 21) and thereby open up suffrage for women.” Americans from all walks of life contributed to a series of slow but massive cultural changes that would culminate, above all, in a generally weakened belief in individual volition and in the fuller participation of women in public life” (p. 4).

At stake for those involved in the debate were the boundaries of the self, which also concerns Parsons who argues that “individual idiosyncrasy” can be found in the “slippage” of individuals between the two poles of the discursive model. While Parsons contends that “all problems are constructed” (p. 183), not all people fell neatly into either one or the other of the two discursive camps. Instead, people occupied any number of positions in between the extremes of temperance reformers and saloon supporters. As Parsons emphasizes the power of discursive construction, she also demonstrates that individual idiosyncrasy moved the discursive process in the persons of six individuals: Charles M. Sheldon, Jack London,
Howe, Louisa May Alcott, Elizabeth Avery Meriwether, and Carry A. Nation, whom she features in vignettes in each of her six chapters.

While religious people and movements are the central actors in Parsons’ narration of the temperance debate, scholars of American religion will note the absence of women who participated from the outset of the republic in other reform movements such as education and antislavery. Unclear are the roles of these earlier reform movements—as well as empowering revivals such as Methodist camp meetings—in the formation of, for example, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. Scholars of American religion might ask how female religious innovators such as Shaker Mother Ann Lee, Quakers Angela and Sarah Grimké, founder of Mount Holyoke Female Seminary Mary Lyon, and Restorationist itinerant preacher Nancy Towle—among others who did not understand their public roles as temporary—complicate Parsons’ narration of female invasion. Nevertheless, Parsons offers a valuable contribution to scholarship on American manhood that continues to shape the conversation of gender in America.

References

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The historical evolution (or de-evolution, depending on one’s perspective) of what makes modern men “men” and how this awareness influences the way individuals dress, eat, and present themselves in public is the central focus of Brutes in Suits and Looking Good. As a matter of fact, looked at from the perspective of the long “American Century,” the books read like a two-volume set. Chronologically, the work focusing on the Progressive Era flows nicely into the next on male body image in Contemporary America.

Readers should be aware, however, that although both books are written by professional historians, there are significant differences in how the information is presented, which speaks to the contrast between popular and academic history. Published by Hill and Wang and directed at a non-scholarly audience, Looking Good by Lynne Luciano (now Lynne Loeb, associate professor of history at the University of California, Dominguez) is lighter in tone and formality, yet still intellectually rigorous, within the confines of a general history book. On the other hand, Brutes in Suits by John Pettigrew (associate professor of history at Lehigh University), published by Johns Hopkins University Press, is denser, more detailed, printed in smaller text, and longer. As a matter of fact, the two books serve as an almost perfect case study in the differences between general and academic publishing.

Given the similarity in content matter, an easy trap to fall into as a reviewer is to privilege one type of book over the other based on these significant differences. Yet, on closer inspection, the authors under review took great care in addressing the needs of their target audiences. My own bias is that I would probably rather read Pettigrew’s book but write Luciano’s.

Either could be useful in a college classroom as a supplemental text: Brutes in Suits for advanced undergraduate or graduate courses, while Looking Good is better suited for undergrad studies. A shared strength of both books is that they include an essay on sources. These pieces—becoming more atypical as publishers look for ways to cut costs—provide readers with an overview of their research and further analysis of the theoretical foundations.

Pettigrew’s Brutes in Suits examines what he labels the “de-evolutionary turn in U.S. masculinity,” focusing on the progressive era. Pettigrew explains, “rather than trying to outrun the brutish aspects of early human history, [normative masculinity] circled back and embraced predation like never before, breaking down along the way barriers between animal and human, and savagery and civilization.
that had been so endemic to earlier ideals of white middle-class American manhood” (pp. 15-16).

Through deep research and insightful analysis, Pettegrew reveals how the idea of man as brute spread via scientific, social, and cultural forces to become the dominant notion of manhood. Men did not, as the author notes, come to this kind of thinking through instinct. Rather, “de-evolutionary masculinity spread in the manner of a contagion, insinuating itself through language and ideas as well as through the less-conscious transference of habits and dispositions” (pp. 18-19).

In five chapters and an epilogue, Pettegrew tackles post-Civil War institutions, including professional historians, literature aimed at men, college football, the military, and the legal system. The real strength of *Brutes in Suits* is the way Pettegrew researches specific topics within these broader categories, building an airtight case for de-evolutionary masculinity as a construct that infiltrated men’s thinking about themselves and the broader society.

Readers will appreciate his wide-ranging source material, from advertisements and drawings to literary texts and songs. For example, by citing college football chants, cheers, and songs, Pettegrew demonstrates how the sport’s brutality became central to its allure and growing popularity. In addition, while the author’s focus is on the progressive era, he also provides examples drawn from recent history to show the pervasiveness of hyper-masculinity in American thought. To illustrate this point, Pettegrew draws on a number of sources, from cold-blooded statements made by Timothy McVeigh to the rhetoric surrounding the Iraq War and war on terror. Pettegrew shows hyper-masculinity as an enduring trope used to understand men in contemporary America.

While *Brutes in Suits* and *Looking Good* seem like a continuum in many respects, there is a challenging transformation revealed as well. On one hand, Pettegrew shows how the idea of “man as warrior” permeated culture from a variety of influences. Luciano, however, takes on a different (but strangely related) challenge. She asks, “What caused American men to fall into the beauty trap so long assumed to be the special burden of women” (p. 5)? There is no single answer to what she labels “the new cult of male body image in postwar America,” but certainly the same impulses that caused Pettegrew’s de-evolution/hyper-masculinity in the earlier period also worked to embed body image as a central facet of male thinking in the later era.

*Looking Good* addresses in chronological fashion the many ways in which men became obsessive about the way they looked, with chapters devoted to each decade from the 1950s to 1990s. The strength of interrogating the subject in a sequence of decades is that readers can think about each era in these terms, such as the “Organization Man” of the 1950s. The challenge of presenting the material this way is that most issues do not unfold in neat, little boxes. Luciano’s stylistic prose, however, helps smooth the transitions between eras, despite the limitations of imposing restrictions on time periods in this manner.

Each chapter in *Looking Good* examines male attitudes and experiences with body image, hair, fitness, plastic surgery, and sexuality. There are strengths and weaknesses to this layout. On one hand, returning to these topics enables the reader to understand their evolution over time. However, it limits the analysis by focusing on these ideas at the expense of others. For example, in the fine chapter on the
1970s, Luciano provides powerful analysis following the template described above, but other ideas are undervalued, such as the rise of the pornography industry, disco, and recreational drug use. The latter is presented as a laundry list of side effects rather than viewed as a transformational aspect of culture in the decade.

Luciano is at her best when providing insight on specific topics within a decade and synthesizing ideas from several media into a new way of looking at male body image. Her analysis of Playboy, for example, uncovers how founder Hugh Hefner actually promoted a more conservative attitude than critics imagined, reinforcing consumerism and materialism rather than sexual freedom. According to Luciano, “Playboy promoted the same images of the good life as General Motors and Listerine...men were portrayed much as they were in mainstream magazines: well-dressed, usually fully clothed, looking less sensual than successful, less vain about their bodies than about their clothing and cars” (p. 81).

Taken together, Brutes in Suits and Looking Good give men a broader understanding of the forces that have impacted the way they view themselves and have been measured by society since the late 1800s. Interestingly, contemporary male culture still revolves around the ideas presented by Pettegrew and Luciano (though the obsession regarding male body image may, in some respects, be softening the earlier de-evolutionary masculinity). Take, for example, the rise of “bro-mance” films, which give men permission to be emotional with one another, though in a comedic context, or the popular saying “hug it out,” another instance of society allowing men to touch without fear of being labeled homosexual.

Today’s man, for better or worse, is expected to be tough, aggressive, and successful, but also sensitive, well groomed, and stylishly dressed, almost a perfect melding of Pettegrew’s brute and Luciano’s metrosexual. Certainly, what these books uncover is the depth of the male burden to portray an image mentally and physically that may or may not have anything to do with who he actually is or believes himself to be.

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