

# Maritime Masculinities – and why they matter for management

Edward H Allison

School of International Development

University of East Anglia

# Provocations

- Gender and development activism and practice in fisheries doesn't engage sufficiently with men
- Gender scholars in fisheries (with some exceptions) don't understand men
- Men appear in GAD as problematic – alcoholic, violent, repressive
- Most fisheries social research is on men, but doesn't engage with relational aspects of masculinity

# More provocation...

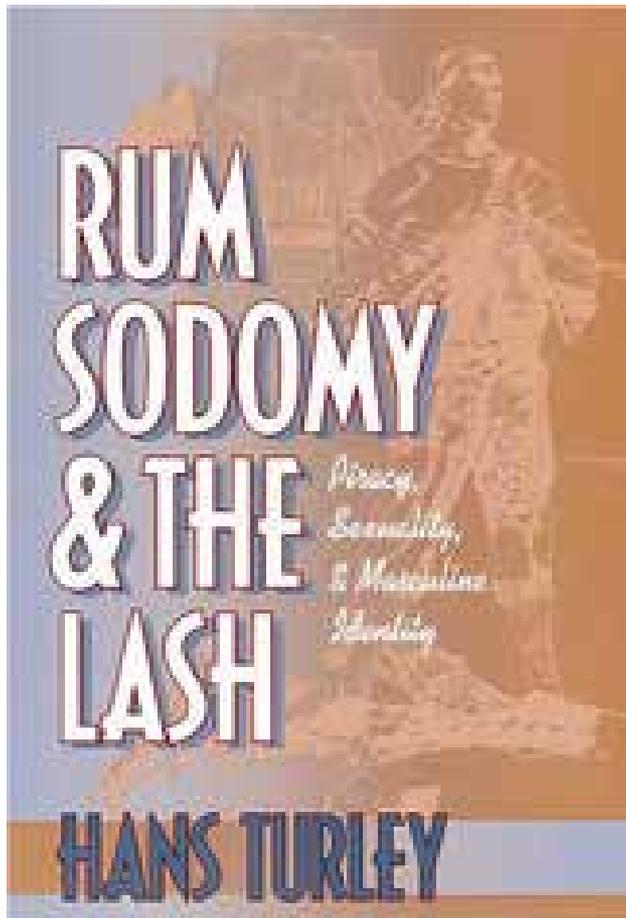
In praise of comparative anthropology:

Gilmore DD (1990) *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity*. Yale Univ Press

*Hypothesis:* there are global commonalities in the social construction of manhood that are shaped by physical setting and occupational culture: **maritime masculinities**

**The 18<sup>th</sup> century revolution in gender identity and dichotomous masculine identities;  
19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century: Epitome of traditional masculine virtues**

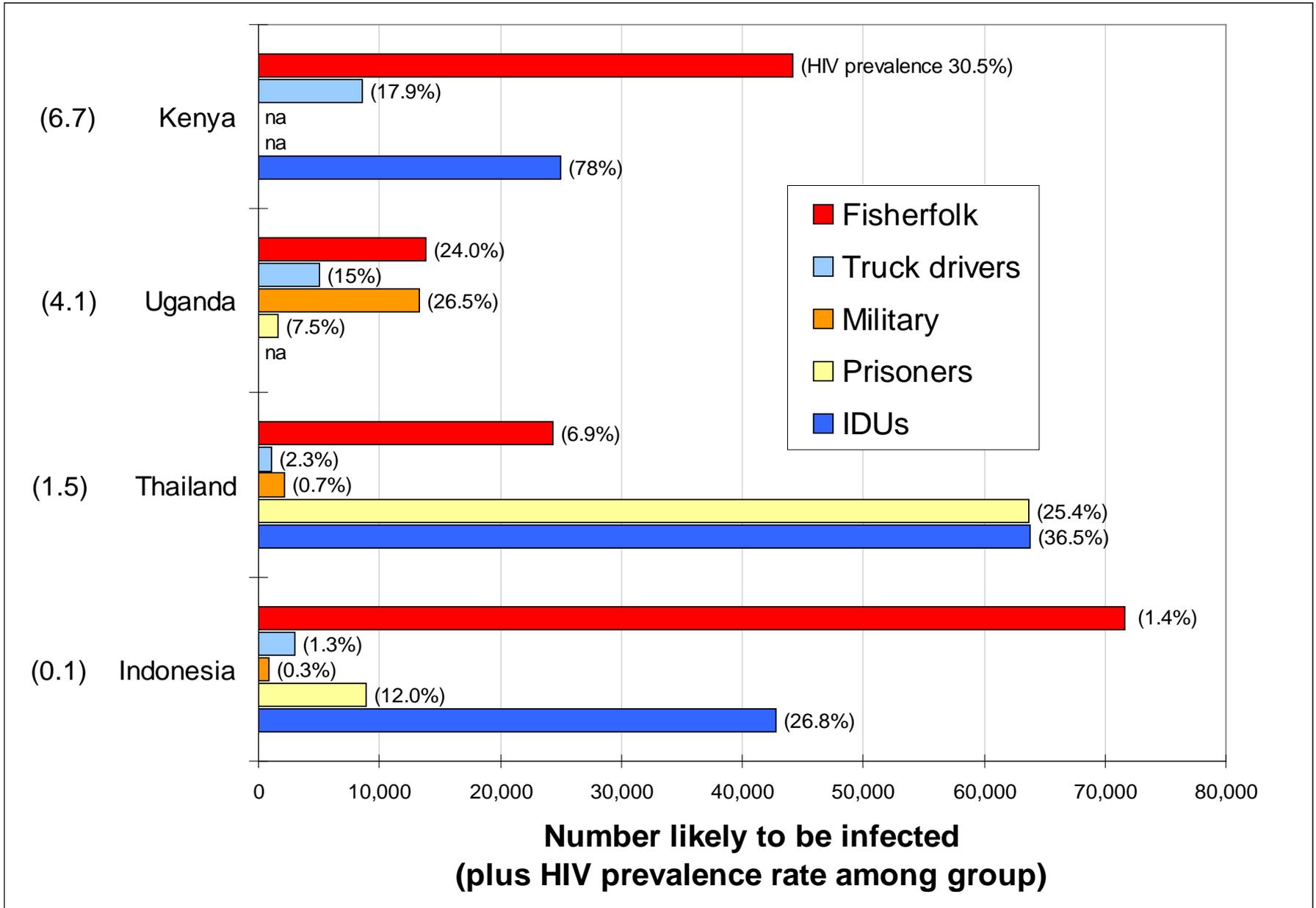
*“Ashore it ’s wine, women and song; aboard it ’s rum, bum and bacca.”*  
18<sup>th</sup> century quip about British sailors







# Why is HIV prevalence so high in fishing communities?

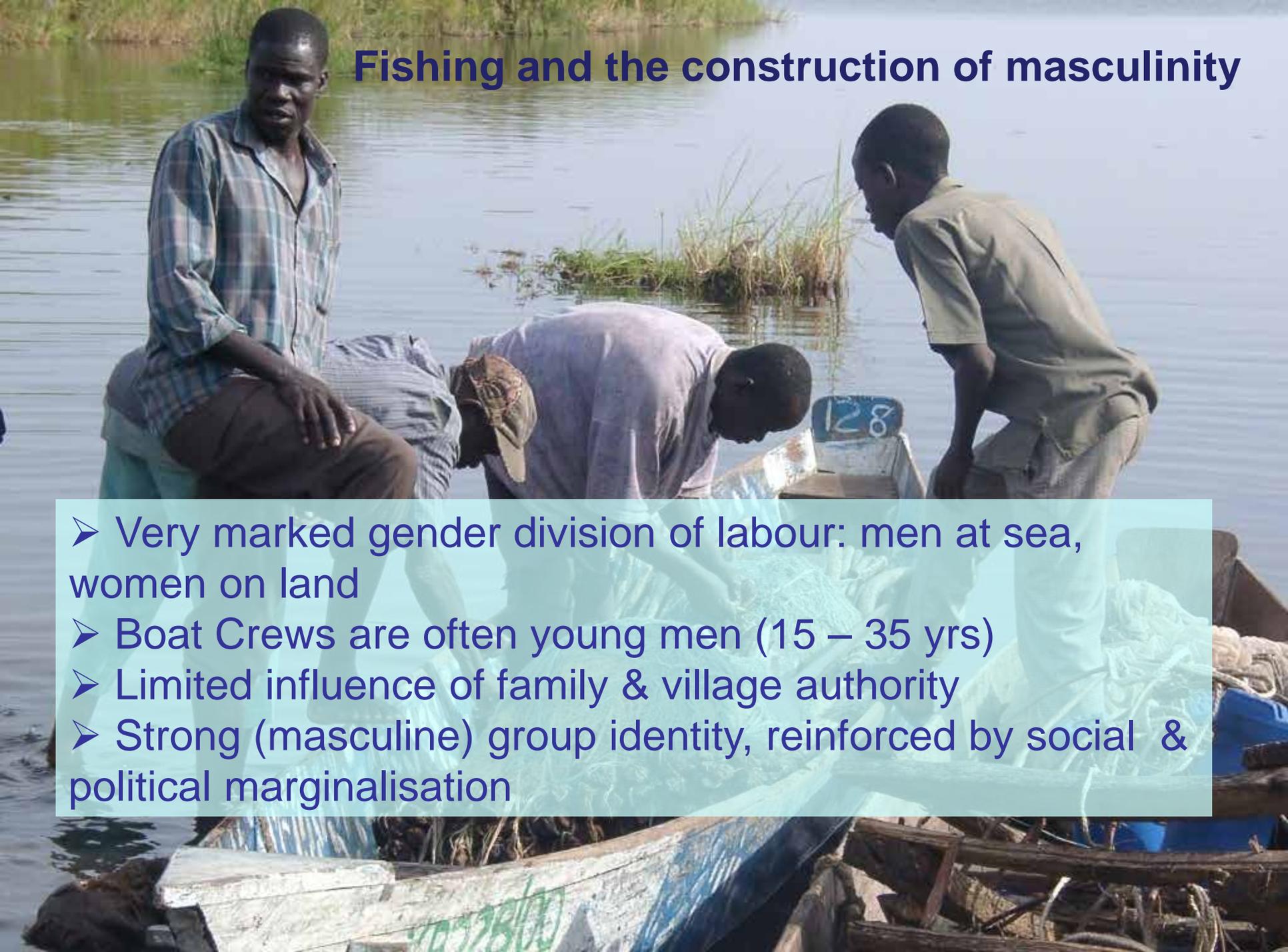


# Fishing lifestyles and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS

“Vulnerability of fisheries livelihoods systems to HIV/AIDS...stems from the socioeconomic dynamics of the fisheries trade and lifestyle, and in particular the fishermen’s high mobility, their long absences from home and their cash incomes which are then often spent in the trading centres on casual sex and alcohol. Vulnerability extends to their (fishermen’s) casual or semi-casual sexual partners and to their wives at home”

(Hemrich and Topouzis, 2000, p90)

## Fishing and the construction of masculinity

- 
- A photograph showing three men on a small boat in a body of water. One man is sitting on the left, another is bent over in the center, and a third is standing on the right. The boat has some equipment and a blue container with the number '128' on it. The background shows a calm body of water with some reeds or grasses growing in the middle ground.
- Very marked gender division of labour: men at sea, women on land
  - Boat Crews are often young men (15 – 35 yrs)
  - Limited influence of family & village authority
  - Strong (masculine) group identity, reinforced by social & political marginalisation



## Women in fishing communities:

- *De facto* household heads, due to absence of men at sea
- Often involved in fishing-related businesses (fish trading, processing) or provision of services to fishermen (food, lodging, drink, sex, credit)
- May occupy lower-margin economic opportunities
- Sometimes young, unmarried women in search of independent livelihoods
- ‘Transactional sex’ used to overcome economic and institutional barriers to building a livelihood

# Fishing, Drink, Drugs & Sex

- Fish landing centres are nodes of a thriving cash economy in often remote and cash-poor areas
- Fishermen are young males away from home, with cash living high-risk lives and facing uncertain futures
- Risk environment and masculine culture encourages binge drinking, drug use & sexual promiscuity
- Fish landing centres and ports have thriving bars and commercial sex industries



# (Fisher)men behaving badly?

## The social psychology of risk behaviour in fishing communities

- Social Marginalisation
- Uncertainty, declining catches, increased competition, lack of rights & alternative opportunities
- High physical and economic risks
- Risk-coping: denial, fatalism, defiance
- Hypermasculine behaviour- binging, promiscuity, 'living on the edge'.

FECKLESS AND RECKLESS OR FORBEARING  
AND RESOURCEFUL? LOOKING BEHIND  
THE STEREOTYPES OF HIV AND AIDS  
IN “FISHING COMMUNITIES”

ELIZABETH WESTAWAY, JANET SEELEY, AND EDWARD ALLISON

# Masculinities research in fisheries

Mike Fabinyi (2007) - illegal fishing in the Philippines

Annie George (2006) – changing masculinities in S Indian fishing communities

Tanya King (2005) - Skippers and deck-hands, Australia

Tu-Anh Hoang (2013) “because I am a man, I should be gentle to my wife and children”

# Why masculinities matter

- The need to engage men in gender and development
- Distinct maritime masculinities appear to be (at least partly) associated with fishing as an occupation across a range of societies and cultures
- Fishery management: defiance and compliance

# Men in GAD: towards a research agenda

- Understanding psycho-social risk-coping strategies, including men's vulnerabilities
- Multiple repertoires of masculinity – beyond simple characterizations of problematic hypermasculinity
- Engaging men in gender transformative action research