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Effects of perceptions and negotiation of decision making on gender relations, masculinity and contested patriachy among immigrant-South African households in Johannesburg, South Africa

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ABSTRACT.

The study aimed at understanding how immigrant men and South African women in heterosexual relationships perceive and negotiate gender relations arising from household decision-making; and the effects these have on notions of masculinity among couples living in Johannesburg, South Africa. In order to investigate the research question, I used qualitative descriptive approaches with a poststructuralist perspective. The study drew on Foucault's conceptualization of power and identified eight (8) immigrant men originating from other African countries and eight (8) South African women using purposive and snowball sampling. All individuals recruited were of at least eighteen years of age and had lived with their partners for at least two years. I perceived a minimum of two years of living together as adequate for differences in culture and socialization of people in immigrant-South African relationships to manifest in the performance of gender; and to equip participants with different constructions of decision-making, gender relations and masculinity. I selected men from other African countries because of the exclusionary discourses surrounding them in South Africa. Data was collected using face-to-face in-depth semi structured interviews with open-ended questions. Data analysis was undertaken using both thematic and discourse analysis. In doing the thematic analysis, work by Braun and Clarke (2006) was drawn on while work by Parker (1994, 1997 and 2005) was focused on for the discourse analysis.

The study found that immigration and difference in nationality shape the different perceptions that determine decisions on formation of immigrant-South African relationships; affect income inequalities and decisions on expenditures; as well as decisions related to children in immigrant-South African households; and that these affect gender relations and notions of masculinity. The study further found that there are contradiction between gender equality and traditionally acceptable gender roles; as well as patriarchal and anti-patriarchal socializations by immigrant men and South African women. It also found that immigrant men and South African women use similar strategies in reviving and silencing of transgressed masculinity.

Key words: perceptions, negotiation, gender relations, masculinities, decision making, patriarchy.