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The Construction of Masculinity in Dagestani Male Youth Communities

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Abstract

Drawing on 60 in-depth interviews with adolescents and young men in Dagestan, I examine the construction of masculinity in the context of a postcolonial and peripheral society undergoing a transformation associated with deindustrialisation, urbanisation and globalisation. I focus on three male communities: freestyle wrestlers, street workout athletes and devout Muslim youth. Members of these communities develop their variants of male identity, differing in their attitudes towards violence, their view of the power of elders and their form of moral sovereignty. These versions of masculinity are supported and stabilised both by configurations of power relations and mechanisms of intragroup homosociality.

THIS ARTICLE EXAMINES THE CONSTRUCTION AND NEGOTIATION of masculinities amongst young men from Dagestan, focusing on the intertwining of gender, religion, ethnicity and sport. It contributes to the discussion on peripheral and postcolonial masculinities, especially in the Islamic world (Kimmel 2003; Gerami 2005; Conway-Long 2006; Aslam 2014; Rizk & Makarem 2015).

Dagestan is one of the Muslim republics of the Russian Federation in the North Caucasus and home to over 30 ethnic groups. The territory of Dagestan became part of Russia during the protracted and bloody Caucasian War in the nineteenth century. Today, Dagestan is going through a complex structural transformation associated with the processes of deindustrialisation, urbanisation and globalisation, and the destruction of traditional society. The region's peripheral position in relation to both the 'core' of global capitalism and the federal centre in Moscow, along with a high level of social and political conflict in Dagestani society, gives a special dramatic character to these changes, revealing in radical form the contradictions of the patriarchal gender order. In this article, I argue that multiple tension

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lines—between city and countryside, centre and periphery, secularism and Islamic fundamentalism, tradition and modernity, older and younger generations—create uncertainty and cultural disturbance that frame social reflection amongst different groups of men about what social qualities, practices and behaviours construct socially successful or acceptable male identities.

I explore this argument through the case of adolescents and young men involved in freestyle wrestling, yard sports (street workout) and devout Muslin youth communities. Each community, while remaining within the conservative consensus that defines the basic parameters of the gender order (gender segregation and male domination over women), constructs its own versions of masculinity, relying on its available economic and cultural resources. These variants of masculinity are supported and stabilised both 'from above'—that is, by configurations of power relations in the context of the whole society—and from below by mechanisms of intragroup homosociality.

Hegemonic masculinity and homosociality

The concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005) remains the most influential theoretical framework in academic debates on masculinity. According to Connell, hegemonic masculinity is defined as 'the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women' (Connell 2005, p. 77).

Researchers have repeatedly attempted to formulate the key features of hegemonic masculinities. The four principles of traditional masculinity according to Brannon (1976) are widely known: 'no sissy stuff' (avoidance of everything feminine); 'the big wheel' (men succeed by dominating other men); 'the sturdy oak' (be strong and do not show weakness); and 'give 'em hell' (take physical risks and do not be afraid of violence). Joseph Pleck (1976) complements this repertoire of attributes with the expectation that 'a man' wins status and respect from others. For Michael Kimmel (1994), hegemonic masculinity is based on misogyny (avoiding everything feminine), homosociality (prioritising male communities) and heteronormativity, which necessarily excludes homosexual interpretations of masculinity.

However, as Connell (2005) explains, hegemonic masculinity cannot be reduced to a set of timeless attributes. Hegemony arises when there is a relationship between a cultural ideal and institutional power (individual or collective). This relationship is not cast in stone yet is constantly problematic, as changes in social institutions and contradictions arise within the gender order itself. The concept of hegemonic masculinity exists only in relation to other types of masculinity: subordinate, complicit and marginalised (Connell 2005). Subordinate masculinity characterises groups of men at the bottom of the gender hierarchy, such as homosexuals. Complicit masculinity is a form of masculinity inherent in most men. It is reflected in conformity with the dominant ideal of masculinity, which allows for a patriarchal dividend in terms of 'honour, prestige and the right to command' (Connell 2005, p. 82), while marginalised masculinity typically arises at the intersection of gender with class, race, age and ethnicity (Connell 2005).

All these types of masculinity are shaped within the broader institutional context of the gender order, which is realised in power, production and cathexis[1] relations (Connell 2005, p. 74). At the same time, power relations are particularly important. Demetriou suggests two dimensions to hegemony: internal and external (Demetriou 2001, p. 341). The first type refers to hierarchies that line up between groups of men who differ in status and power; the second describes men's domination over women.

Studies of men and masculinity (Bird 1996; Meshcherkina 2002; Flood 2008) confirm the thesis that men's lives are largely organised around relationships with other men, hence reflecting the desire to create exclusive homosocial communities. Homosociality, as Meshcherkina notes, 'is deeply functional in terms of the need for a social space "free" of women, in which collectively shared meanings of male life are typified and acquired interpersonal significance' (Meshcherkina 2002, p. 274). Thus, homosociality pervasively characterises the group dimension of masculinity. Indeed, it plays a key role in the reproduction of the hegemonic model, functioning as a social mechanism to bring normality and to reject abnormal (non-normative) behaviour.

Global and local/regional masculinities

The development of the concept of hegemonic masculinity has led to a recognition of the significance of geographical context. While at a local level hegemony is produced through face-to-face interactions within families, organisations and communities, it is produced at a regional level in the context of nation-state, and at the global level in the context of international politics, business and media (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). For example, today's global level is dominated by a transnational business masculinity that is institutionally based on multinational corporations and global financial markets (Connell 1998, p. 3). Three levels are linked: 'Global hegemonic masculinities pressure regional and local hegemonic masculinities, and regional hegemonic masculinities provide cultural materials adopted or reworked in global arenas and utilised in local gender dynamics' (Messerschmidt 2012, p. 59).

One of the promising directions of this research is to examine how globalisation affects the construction of masculinities in peripheral regions such as Asia, Africa, and Central and Latin America (Messerschmidt 2012). Combining a gender and feminist lens with a postcolonial approach, this research has been sensitive to the relations of hegemony, subordination and resistance that shape the global 'north–south' and 'centre–periphery' axis. In particular, studies of male subjectivity in Asian, African and Middle Eastern Muslim societies (Kimmel 2003; Gerami 2005; Conway-Long 2006; Aslam 2014; Rizk & Makarem 2015) have often centred their attention on the problematic and 'crisis masculinities' that emerge as a response to Western domination and interference in socio-economic and political domains. These studies have sought to bring into focus the position of those groups of men who benefit least from globalisation.

[1]According to Connell (2005), this term indicates emotional attraction (both positive and negative) to the subject.

Thus, a significant body of research focuses on the disturbance that men in traditional gender relations feel about their loss of power in the family and society due to women's economic and political empowerment (Ghoussoub 2000; Ghoussoub & Sinclair-Webb 2000; Kimmel 2003; Conway-Long 2006; Rizk & Makarem 2015). This sentiment is evident on all levels, from individual frustrations (Conway-Long 2006), media and popular culture discourses (Ghoussoub 2000) to the 'men-under-threat' political rhetoric produced by masculinist nationalist regimes (Rizk & Makarem 2015). Other authors (Harris 2012; Aslam 2014) emphasise how the global neoliberal order contributes to the precarisation and marginalisation of large parts of the male population in Muslim regions, evoking protest, including violent masculinity scripts. The peripheral and postcolonial situation in Muslim societies creates, as Ghoussoub states, a 'chaotic quest for a definition of modern masculinity' (Ghoussoub 2000, p. 234). Monterescu uses the category 'strangeness' to write about the situational masculinity of Jaffa's Arab men, who exist between 'the "real" world of inferior socio-economic and political status and the "ideal" world of proud Arabness and patriarchal manhood' (Monterescu 2006, p. 128). He describes it as an identity game that manoeuvres between Muslim and liberal-secular masculinity. Nilan (2009) writes of two conflicting modalities of Indonesian Muslim male identity: the Western, sexualised 'playboy' ideal of masculinity and the Islamist discourse about Western sexuality as the major threat to male Muslim piety. Sa'ar and Yahia-Younis (2008), in turn, describe the situation of a perceived crisis of masculinity amongst Israeli Palestinians, whose political-economic location does not permit a hegemonic position in the region, while alternative scripts of less violent masculinities are difficult to achieve.

One of the most debated topics in this field is the nexus between Muslim male identities and violence (Ahmed 2006; Baobaid 2006; Ferber & Kimmel 2008; Abu-Odeh 2011; Aslam 2012; Emig 2019), which can be seen either as a 'vestige' of the archaic patriarchal ideology or as a reaction to its crisis. Interest in this topic has been invigorated by regular outbreaks of jihadist terrorism and the retaliatory 'war on terror' that have marked the past 20 years. However, this academic agenda has been criticised for contributing to the marginalisation and stigmatisation of men with Muslim backgrounds as well as masking the visibility of other masculine discourses and social practices (Lutz 2010; Charsley & Liversage 2015). In this regard, there are a number of works that examine 'soft', nonviolent versions of masculinity amongst followers of conservative Islam (Metcalf 2000; Samuel 2011; Gökarıksel & Secor 2017; Khan 2018).

Data and methodology

The empirical basis of the article consists of semi-structured in-depth interviews with teenagers and young men, as well as field notes and observation diaries of male youth communities collected during individual and collective projects in the Republic of Dagestan in 2015–2019. The projects explored the relationship between cultural practices and the ethnic and religious identities of Dagestan's urban youth. The geography of the project included the cities of Makhachkala, Kaspiysk, Derbent and Izberbash. The total number of respondents was 61, of whom 56 were interviewed individually, and six participated in two group discussions. The respondents' ages ranged from 12 to 42. Most of them (48) were members of at least one of the following three homosocial communities.

The first, freestyle wrestling, is the most popular male sport in Dagestan. A total of 19 respondents were part of wrestling communities. Of these, 14 were trainees at children's and youth sports schools, one was a member of the Olympic team, and four worked as freestyle wrestling coaches.

The second, the street workout community, has its roots in a youth sports culture that emerged in the early 2000s in the ghettos of American metropolises and spread thanks to videos distributed on YouTube. A total of 21 respondents were members of this community. In post-Soviet spaces, street workout has become a social movement with regular free training sessions for all comers, demonstrations in educational institutions and active work with young people. Practices include work with one's own weight on horizontal bars, wall bars and handholds. In addition to interviews, I also used field notes from participant observation of the street workout communities in Makhachkala, Kaspiysk, Derbent and Izberbash.

The third community is that of devout young Muslims. Members of this group share a common interest in the study of Islam and the implementation of Islamic moral norms in everyday life. A total of nine respondents were participants of this group. Such communities frequently arise from religious educational institutions. In modern Dagestan, boys from five to six years old attend religious schools at mosques, where they read the Quran and learn about the basics of the faith. There are also higher education institutions in which Islamic subjects are taught. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Dagestani youth obtained the opportunity to receive a higher education at religious institutions abroad. With the spread of the internet, an increasing number study religion independently using Islamic resources available online. Such young people often become agents of Islamisation in the local communities and companies of which they are members. Following Gökarıksel and Secor (2017), I will call this group 'devout Muslim youth' to distinguish them, on the one hand, from young people with an Islamic identity and, on the other, from observant Muslims who are not part of active communities.

As supplementary material, I used interviews with young people who were not participants in any of the communities listed (13 respondents). However, their narratives contain an external perspective on the positions held by these communities in Dagestan society and how they are perceived by other groups of Dagestani youth.

Each community was treated as a separate case. Although the empirical base consisted of interviews from different research projects, they were conducted according to guides that included common blocks of questions, which made it possible to compare them later. First, respondents were asked a series of questions that allowed them to reconstruct the norms and ideals of masculinity that were relevant to them and their social circle; for example, who is a 'real man'? What qualities should he have? Who is an example of a real man? What is needed to achieve real man status? What behaviour is acceptable/unacceptable for a man? The second block of questions concerned how these versions of masculinity related to holders' understanding of the normative gender order, such as the ideal relationship between men and women, what social roles and positions are 'male' or 'female', and how power and responsibility should be distributed between the genders in society, family and the labour market. An additional biographical block made it possible

to place these ideal perceptions in the context of the respondents' individual life histories and everyday lives.

My task was to highlight the meanings and practices that capture the essential features of the version of masculinity designed and constructed at the group level. Individual scripts of masculinity in any of the social groups under consideration can deviate significantly from this 'ideal-typical' nucleus as well as from each other. Moreover, young people may belong to several communities and adhere to more than one masculinity script.

The local context: Dagestan and Makhachkala

Let us consider some features of Dagestani society that are important for understanding the dynamics of gender and intergenerational relations in the Republic of Dagestan. First, modern Dagestan is a society in transformation. At the beginning of the 1990s, the republic, like other Russian regions, experienced widespread deindustrialisation caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the transition from its planned economy to the market economy. Specific to the North Caucasus, however, is that this decay of the Soviet state happened in sync with another transformation: the transition from a traditional to a modern society. Attempts to modernise Dagestan during the Soviet era mainly affected the cities. The rural periphery preserved many elements of the traditional way of life based on customary law (*adats*) (Bobrovnikov 2001). In the post-Soviet period, the collapse of state-owned enterprises and a complex crime wave provoked an outflow of the urban population from the republic and an 'incoming' mass resettlement of the rural inhabitants. The most obvious consequence of this urbanisation was a period of social anarchy/unrest between the collapse of the rural customary regulations in a new setting and the development of new urban ones. On the one hand, the city no longer 'digested' the village, as deindustrialisation destroyed the economic foundation of the model that turned villagers into urban dwellers; on the other hand, the city still made traditional rural customary rules irrelevant (Starodubrovskaya & Kazenin 2014, p. 71). Starodubrovskaya (2019) speaks about the crisis of the traditional North Caucasian family, as reflected in the separation of the nuclear family from its extended family and the local community. Secondly, and as a consequence perhaps, intergenerational tension is growing within the family itself, with the younger generation more actively challenging the power of the older. It is worth noting that the crisis is not linear and does not lead to one-step changes in perceptions and behavioural patterns. In cases where family and kinship ties are the only institutions, vestiges of traditionalism remain, such as parental agreements on marriage and intra-urban marriages (Sirazhudinova 2013). Often, young people are not ready to take responsibility for establishing a family, somewhat forcing parents to intervene in this process (Starodubrovskaya 2019).

The second feature is the exceptional role of religion (Islam) in the daily life of most Dagestanis. In the post-Soviet years, Islam filled the ideological vacuum created by the collapse of communist ideology and became the central vector of regional identity (Kisriev 2009). Religion became the ideological foundation of the so-called conservative turn that led to the formation of a broad public consensus on gender segregation and male dominance over women (Starodubrovskaya 2019). The dominance of Islam affects the

construction of youth masculinities, asserting as a norm the principle of gender separation in the public sphere and marginalising masculine scenarios related to sexuality and alcohol and drug use.

At the same time, there is evidence that the structural foundations of male dominance are eroding because of economic transformation. An important result of deindustrialisation has been that the position of breadwinner has become linked not to employment in agriculture and industry but to work in trade and services, a development for which many Dagestani men were not prepared, due to a specific code of honour (Lytkina 2010; Sirazhudinova 2013; Starodubrovskaya 2019). Therefore, in many families, the breadwinner position is taken by women, calling into question the gender contract and encouraging men to seek other social mechanisms to preserve their hegemony.

Third, Dagestan, like the other republics of the North Caucasus, belongs to the so-called *namus* societies (King 2008), in which the concept of honour plays a key role in regulating social relations. The *namus* paradigm places a special obligation on men: they are responsible for maintaining not only individual honour but also the collective honour of the family or clan (Ratelle & Souleimanov 2017).

Finally, a key attribute of life in the republic is the high level of conflict and violence (Zurcher 2007; Ibragimov & Matsuzato 2014). Dagestan is part of a region that has historically served as an arena of long-term political instability and armed conflict. Russia's colonial expansion in the nineteenth century triggered the Caucasian War, which played a key role in shaping the overall Caucasian 'mountain' identity (Gammer 1994). With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Dagestan was drawn into a full-scale conflict that started as a war between separatists and federal forces in Chechnya but, later, transformed into a confrontation between federal authorities and a jihadist movement throughout the North Caucasus (Markedonov 2010). This confrontation was overlaid with local conflicts between local elites vying for control over economic and political resources, as well as between Sufi *tariqats* and the so-called Wahhabis. Despite the organisational defeat of the Islamist underground, the situation in the republic remains tense to this day. This is largely because Moscow manages the republic through a special system, wherein law enforcement agencies have been given exclusive powers and *de facto* immunity as part of the 'fight against terror'. With this protection, they use extra-judicial persecution, torture and murder to maintain the conflict in a smouldering state. The situation is exacerbated by corruption and the 'occupation' of state institutions by informal networks and clans, which block meritocratic social mobility, thus fuelling social tensions. This contributes to the preservation of forms of male dominance over other men and women that are based on aggressive expressions of force and violence.

Hegemonic and other masculinities

The masculinity of wrestlers

For many Dagestanis, freestyle wrestling acts as an ideal institution for steering the transition from childhood to adulthood while responding to the basic demands of patriarchy. Wrestling

reinforces and naturalises gender inequality, constructing and essentialising differences between sexes and linking them to the distribution of violence:

> My uncle once told his wife a phrase that I liked very much. She was outraged that the men there [at wrestling events] constantly hurt women and do not allow them to participate. He said: 'Let's fight, and you'll understand the difference between a man and a woman.' It was sarcasm. But the difference between a man and a woman is inherent in nature, so it is wrong to talk about equality.[2]

In addition, wrestling, like other contact sports, remains an important arena in which violence is a legitimate mechanism for establishing hierarchical relationships between men. The most successful men receive recognition and authority, while the less talented are weeded out through competition.

Since there are no accurate figures on how many people participate in freestyle wrestling in Dagestan, we can only indirectly estimate. In 2010, the number of freestyle wrestlers in the children's and youth sports school systems, including the children's and youth sports schools of the Olympic reserve,[3] was given as 29,769 people (Briusov 2012). This estimate did not consider older participants, or those who trained in clubs organised at schools, universities and colleges or privately.[4] According to the Ministry of Sports and Physical Culture of the Republic of Dagestan, the number of people involved in physical culture and sports increased more than sixfold from 2010 to 2019, with growth observed in almost all ages and types of mass sports.[5] Since Soviet times, freestyle wrestling has been a priority area for support and financing. Consequently, it does not seem an exaggeration to say that the overwhelming majority of boys and teenagers participate in wrestling (Solonenko 2012).

To a large extent, the unabated popularity of wrestling is due to the fact that it functions as a social elevator for those who aspire to elite positions in the republic (Solonenko 2012; Kolesnik 2018, p. 394). Former athletes often become deputies and state officials or join the police force and the Federal Security Service. This situation is a result of the long-term strategy of the wrestling communities, which in the post-Soviet period has successfully converted symbolic resources into political representation (Solonenko 2012). Sports clubs have been and continue to be important venues for the emergence of informal alliances that subsequently play a key role in the functioning of power institutions in this region (Kolesnik 2018). In the eyes of many Dagestanis, famous

[2]Respondent 1, Abdula, 23 years old, wrestling, Makhachkala, 20 May 2020. All citations illustrate opinions and interpretations about which there is consensus in that community. For respondents who illustrate external views, only their age is given.

[3]Specialised sports school for training gifted children in Russia.

[4]This estimate also does not consider the 'overflow' of athletes who start their careers in freestyle wrestling and then move on to other types of wrestling (for example, grappling, judo, jiu-jitsu, sambo), as well as to mixed martial arts (MMA), which has recently become very popular in the North Caucasus.

[5]'Fizicheskaya kul'tura i sport (Dannye Ministerstva po fizicheskoi kul'ture i sportu Respubliki Dagestan)', May 2020, available at: https://dagstat.gks.ru/storage/mediabank/Z7PGoQwU/Физическая%20культура%20и%20спорт.docx.htm, accessed 29 July 2022.

athletes who have converted recognition on the mat into power and influence are examples of meritocratic mobility:

> The athletes are now the elite youth in Dagestan. If you're an athlete, you have many opportunities. We now have young deputies in power, and so on. They are all athletes; it may still be somehow interconnected. For Olympic champions, any door is open. You can be anything you want to be.[6]

In the early 2000s, wrestling communities in the republic began to converge with religious elites representing leading Islamic organisations, such as the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Dagestan (*Dukhovnoe upravlenie musul'man Dagestana*). The resulting alliances were mutually beneficial: the religious elites had political ambitions and sought the support of influential actors, while the latter were interested in the Islamic legitimisation of their 'right to command' as Islam became the main public ideology. From this period onwards, Islamic religiosity has been seen as an integral part of the lifestyle and image of a Dagestani wrestler: 'Amongst athletes, they are all spiritual guys because sport and religion are now very much connected. However, in other directions, there are fewer religious people; there are more secular people'.[7] Thus, wrestling masculinity can be seen as a local variant of hegemonic masculinity. This hegemony relies, on the one hand, on the institution of mass sports and, on the other hand, on the bloc of former wrestlers within the political and spiritual elites.

Street workout masculinity

Hegemony remains out of reach for the vast majority of men, who adhere to more pragmatic versions of masculinity that allow them to enjoy the benefits of patriarchy without being on its 'front lines' (Connell 2005). I met an example of such complicit masculinity in the street workout community. In Makhachkala, where the community has existed since 2013, athletes work out three or four times a week, and sessions last for an hour and a half. After a 15-minute warm-up, beginners practise the so-called 'base', which includes pull-ups, push-ups on bars and push-ups on the floor, while experienced athletes practise complex acrobatic and strength skills. Underprivileged youth dominate in this community: sons of the urban subproletariat with a rural background along with the non-elite intelligentsia plunged into poverty by the shock reforms of the 1990s. Amongst those who have already graduated from school, the norm amongst participants is unemployment or part-time employment.

The street workout community exists in the shadow of mass sports. Martial arts continue to set the tone but the community is geared to those groups of male youth who are unwilling or unable to meet the rigid criteria of wrestling masculinity. In particular, my participant observation revealed that many participants had previously been forced to leave martial arts due to injuries or were not accepted into wrestling sections for health reasons.

The street workout community replicates the main features of prestigious sporting communities, which are considered the benchmark for reproducing masculinity. The

[6]Respondent 2, Khabib, 25 years old, ordinary youth, Makhachkala, 17 June 2016.
[7]Respondent 18, Mamuka, 21, no community, Makhachkala, 10 June 2017.

community is organised around practices designed to build a strong male body. The community maintains a strict homosociality: women are not allowed to train with men, although it is stipulated that they can train individually:

> Our mentality doesn't allow us to train with girls. In Islam it is also forbidden. But if a girl wants to practise, [we tell her] please practise at home, or in the morning when no one is on the court. Not with us.[8]

The priority of Islam is respected in the training space. It is visible by the presence of prayer mats, regular individual and collective prayer, and by special norms of behaviour.

Unlike wrestling, street workout can be attributed to so-called post-sports practices, typical features of which are 'grassroots' participation and an ideology that combines individualism, hedonism, self-realisation, freedom, broad inclusiveness, and lack of competitiveness and aggressiveness (Wheaton 2004). It is important for community members to keep in touch with the global street workout scene as both a source of new interpretations of masculinity and a promising venue to perform the male self. The video camera built into a smartphone, broadband mobile internet, video hosting sites and social networks combine to form a virtual infrastructure that allows athletes to track current cultural trends, represent themselves and gain recognition without leaving their city and neighbourhood:

> Now I'm planning to shoot a training video. We make videos all the time. We have an active social network on Instagram; we have a profile on Instagram. We have a channel and community on Vkontakte. All the time we make these kinds of PR moves.[9]

This example shows how elements of traditional patriarchy are combined with neoliberal hegemonic masculinity, which is based on the 'association of bodies with entrepreneurial culture' (Nash 2018, p. 6). One interviewee's definition of a workout as 'fitness for street kids', explores the logic of the individual work of self-production (Maguire 2008). Inclusion in these practices enables young people from the city's underclass to overcome —at least on a symbolic level—the structural limitations associated with their low socio-economic status.

Devout masculinity

Communities of devout Muslim youth are common in Dagestan, which reflects the position of this group of men in the system of power relations. They construct their own version of masculinity, which is revealed through faithfulness (*iman*), scrupulous adherence to the norms of Islamic morality and the performance of daily ritual duties, and the study of Islamic dogma and law. Given the consensus on the centrality of Islam in public life, this group has the potential to claim a hegemonic position: 'Everything within Dagestan is

[8]Respondent 3, Mustapha, 19 years old, street workout, Makhachkala, 10 September 2016.
[9]Respondent 4, Ali, 23 years old, street workout, Makhachkala, 1 September 2016.

[built] upon them [devout Muslims]. They study, work, know the basics of Islam, and live by these norms'.[10]

However, urban youth—which over the past 20 years has become the largest stratum of young Dagestanis—prefer to practise religion outside the traditional structures (*tariqats*) and religious organisations affiliated with the state (Yarlykapov 2010; Starodubrovskaya 2015, 2019). They reject traditional religious leaders and prefer an independent search for 'truth' by independently seeking information and discussing religious issues of interest with the most competent 'brothers'.

Regional and federal authorities labelled such uncontrolled religiosity as 'dangerous' and associated it with extremism and terrorism (Sokiryanskaya 2019). Since 1999, Dagestan has had a law prohibiting Wahhabi activity on its territory. This law creates a legal basis for the persecution of any non-traditional forms of Islam. Young people who visually resemble Wahhabi followers (that is, a beard without a moustache and rolled-up pants), as well as visitors to Salafist mosques, are regularly arrested, tortured and sometimes framed on charges of aiding and abetting terrorism. Law enforcement agencies apply preventive registration as potential extremists against them, thus involving regular checks at checkpoints and administrative borders, police reporting, and *de facto* bans on work in the state and municipal sectors (Sokiryanskaya 2019). Many young Dagestanis perceive these measures as an injustice, a humiliation of their human dignity and a violation of their basic rights:

> The only problem with preventive registration is that the police stop me at every roadblock. I get nervous like I'm a criminal, that's how it feels, although I've never broken any Russian law in my life. It's just that I've never even broken people as I know it's a sin in the Quran. Nobody here ever cheats anyone. Being the subject of preventive registration feels as if you are an extremist. They even ask you if you have any relatives in Syria.[11]

Thus, devout masculinity is celebrated in terms of religion as a form of male subjectivity but is marginalised politically as an undesirable and dangerous configuration of social practices. This tension creates a paradoxical experience of identity for members, combining a keen sense of vulnerability with a feeling of being chosen. This complex of feelings is the affective core of this version of masculinity.

Homosociality

Wrestling masculinity, which has transcended the sporting world and become a social ideal, sets a rather high bar for physical characteristics and individual involvement. At the same time, the overproduction of athletes competing for limited resources—whether for places on the national team or parliamentary mandates—has led to a steady rise in this bar for both aspiring and established wrestlers and thus has intensified competition.

Competitiveness is a norm of wrestling homosociality, which is supported both 'from above'—by the power of coaches—and 'from below', at the peer-group level. Thus, it is

[10]Respondent 5, Rasul, 20 years old, devout youth, Makhachkala, 15 May 2019.
[11]Respondent 6, Said, 26 years old, devout youth, Makhachkala, 3 June 2017.

common practice to test newcomers in team games preceding training. They are treated roughly on purpose to filter out, even at this initial stage, those who are not oriented towards competition and victory. This competitive spirit is accompanied by a regime of social isolation from peers who do not wrestle. Wrestling involves a daily routine that leaves no time for leisure, expansion of social connections and inclusion in interest groups:

> I went to college for finance. I study there and work out in the evening. There's nothing else. I jog in the morning, come home, eat breakfast, take a shower and go to school. After studying, I have about two or one and a half hours left before training. I sleep. I come to training at six o'clock and that's basically my regime. At 11 o'clock I go to bed.[12]

In this way, the community that forms in the gym becomes for children and adolescents the main, if not the only, peer group that supports their age-related socialisation. This contributes to the production of an exclusive male 'brotherhood', which is cemented by discipline, lifestyle and loyalty to each other and the coaches (Solonenko 2012). During training sessions and competitions, wrestlers acquire bodily attributes that naturalise their differences from other groups of men: 'When I first started wrestling, we treated a broken ear as something miraculous, almost sacred. If we saw someone's ear broken at competitions, we were already afraid of them'.[13] For most Dagestani wrestlers—who train on average from five to six hours a day—the gym is also an important space of collective religious experience. Every wrestling club is equipped with a prayer room and a space for ablutions. Joint prayers with 'brothers in wrestling' provide sporting solidarity with the features of a religious community.

Belonging to a 'brotherhood' provides a subjective feeling of inner community cohesion and a group sense of superiority, which is functional in terms of endorsing claims of dominance over other groups of men. In contrast, the focus on inclusion in the street workout community results in a more relaxed mode of homosociality. Ordinary participants have no obligation to attend regularly or to meet training criteria. Each individual trains at his own pace and practises the elements he prefers. Participants often discuss non-workout topics during training. Although there are elements of competition in this community as well, they do not play a defining role: 'We also have competitions, but not like in martial arts. It's more like gymnastics, you know?'[14] More important is collaboration, the need for which arises from the practice itself:

> When you practise new elements, you always have to be backed up, helped … . When we were training on the beach, when I was working on the glove [the name of an acrobatic move that consists of lifting one's torso above the bar of the horizontal bar with arms extended], my friends helped me. They would stand next to me and hold me. There was one kid who was doing somersaults, they also spotted him. M. and R. [coaches—author's note] spotted me, held me, helped me.[15]

[12]Respondent 7, Mokhammad, 17 years old, freestyle wrestling, Makhachkala, 23 March 2020.
[13]Respondent 17, Akhmet, 34 years old, wrestling, Makhachkala, 10 June 2018.
[14]Respondent 12, Ibragim, 20 years old, street workout, Makhachkala, 20 March 2017.
[15]Respondent 8, Abu, 17 years old, street workout, Makhachkala, 14 March 2017.

Furthermore, street workout training does not interfere with other recreational activities and involvement in other communities of interest. For example, many of my respondents concurrently engage in parkour, photography and videography, play group computer games, and participate in volunteer activities at their place of study. Such homosociality is comfortable for men who agree to a supporting role in the gender order in return for their share of the patriarchal dividend. In this way the street workout community supports a complicit masculinity.

The boundaries of homosocial communities that support the devout masculinity are set by norms of religious homogeneity:

> According to Islam, a Muslim cannot be friends with a non-Muslim, but he can maintain a good relationship with him. I adhere to this rule. I have non-Muslim acquaintances. I have been many places. I did an internship in Oriental Studies in Istanbul; I had many acquaintances amongst Russians. It's just different for them. They have different goals in life, a different ideology. If you're a religious person, you are not on the way with them.[16]

The closed nature of this community is also affected by the marginalisation of devout youth. As a target of systematic persecution, they are extremely careful about whom they let into their inner circle, as they fear infiltration by security service and police provocateurs.

In many cases, professional and business ties further cement ideological closeness. As already noted, young Muslims are *de facto* denied access to work in business structures affiliated with the state. The result is that devout Muslims are in general concentrated in the same sectors of small and medium enterprises, which are independent from the state. These are the so-called halal businesses (Kapustina 2016; Kaliszewska 2020), as well as business initiatives in the fields of social media and internet marketing.

Attitudes towards violence

The key difference between three types of masculinity lies in their attitudes towards man-to-man violence. For the community of wrestlers, violence is a crucial feature of this group's experience. The gender regime links the acquisition of masculinity to the successful utilisation of violence, which transforms the human body into 'a weapon to be used against other bodies' (Messner 1990, p. 203). Coaches teach beginners to initiate and not fear violence, using violence as their main pedagogical method. Slaps and minor injuries, including stabbing of the buttocks, masterfully administered by a trainer, are all normal training practices. To my question as to whether training was possible without physical punishment, all coaches without exception reacted: 'How else will you make men out of them?'[17]

[16]Respondent 6, Said, 26 years old, devout youth, Makhachkala, 3 June 2017.
[17]Respondent 9, Seif, 42 years old, wrestling, Makhachkala, 23 March 2020.

In the context of the wrestling room, certain types of violence are sanctioned as approved gender performances, and deviations from them is stigmatised as non-male behaviour:

> They punish us if we enter the mat and just don't wrestle like a man, just give up the fight. My father and my coach always scolded me for that. They could scold me and hit me and tell me why. I just wanted to tell everyone, too, that by just stepping on the mat, you have to be worthy and fight like a man and go all the way. And you can't just give up the fight like that.[18]

This pedagogy aims to develop adolescents' habitual dispositions (Bourdieu 1986) to allow them to take physical risks, to not give up and be afraid of violence, not only on the wrestling mat but in other life situations. The interviewees mention individual fights with peers in school and on the street, group confrontations between schools, school bullying, friendly 'who's stronger than who' competitions after school, petty crime and self-defence. The lives of male adolescents outside the family and home are portrayed as a 'battlefield' in which they must always be prepared to confront violence with violence:

> I moved from Kizilyurt to Makhachkala. I was hurt a lot. In those days nobody fought one-on-one. You were attacked by gangs. And in the settlement where I lived, there was such a group consisting of boys and young men. They were always chasing me, hurting me, bullying me. I even tried to go around the village on my way home. And one day my father says to me, they have the same fingers, the same hands, as you, they are the same kids as you, what are you afraid of? Hit him in the face, he'll change.[19]

The script of 'give 'em hell' masculinity is especially important at the stage of transition from childhood to adulthood, when wrestlers are still becoming rather than being men and are—in the view of informants—not yet able to fully control the desire for confrontation, which is determined by age-related psychology and physiology. This is the period when claims to male status are maximally challenged by other contenders and even a single withdrawal from violence or capitulation is regarded as a diminution of honour and entails reputational risks that remain into adulthood.

On the other hand, wrestlers are aware of the representation of Dagestani young men as physically developed but short-tempered and aggressive athletes. This representation is an important part of the post-imperial imagination of Dagestan in Russian mass consciousness, popular culture and media discourse (Khalidova *et al*. 2014; Kapustina 2016). To overcome this stereotype, wrestlers emphasise the value of education in constructing correct masculinity. However, there is a serious gap between this rhetoric and practice. The gruelling, twice-daily workouts and a strict regimen actually led to the exclusion of wrestlers from the educational process. At the same time, the high status of the sport in the republic allows them to manipulate the formal indicators of education; namely, academic performance. Successful wrestlers can count on special treatment by teachers at school and an 'automatic' evaluation at university (Solonenko 2012). Therefore, the normative attitude of 'studying well' in wrestlers' narratives is reduced to getting good grades.

[18]Respondent 10, Artur, 30 years old, wrestling, Makhachkala, 11 March 2020.
[19]Respondent 11, Arsen, 28 years old, wrestling, Makhachkala, 10 March 2020.

Street workout practitioners share an understanding of a strong body as the main asset of a man. At the same time, these participants seek to distance themselves from direct physical violence and aggression in favour of more peaceful forms of articulation of a strong-bodied masculinity:

> In martial arts, for example, a goal is to defeat like-minded people by fighting. Some kind of aggression is present. And in a street workout, the guys are, how can I say … . They are sanguine people, melancholics, calm cheerful people [laughs].[20]

In this discourse, a 'strong body' is equal to a healthy body, as reflected in their commitment to a so-called 'healthy lifestyle'. A body constructed through active violence is problematised as unhealthy, as it is attributed to social disadvantage: 'In my childhood there were such clashes, but they were rare. Well, the only conflicts were with those guys, *bydlo* [cattle, uneducated, rude people], who are looking for a reason to pick on me'.[21]

The performance of masculinity, which is staged in a training space, is a one-actor theatre. For example, the 'horizon' exercise, in which athletes stand on outstretched arms, with their body parallel to the ground, makes it possible to demonstrate, firstly, a perfectly developed musculature and, secondly, the grace and ease with which the athlete hangs parallel to the earth, defying the law of gravity. In this community, bodily power is not the same as physical dominance over other bodies but is revealed in the ability to manipulate one's own body as an instrument. In this way, 'strength' on a symbolic level is detached from 'violence' and becomes an independent constant of male subjectivity.

Yet, the practitioners of devout masculinity are the most critical of violence. They problematise both the authoritarian family upbringing of boys based on physical punishment and interpersonal peer-to-peer violence in the street and sports. Pious young people are particularly outraged by Dagestani young men's fascination with mixed martial arts as violating the Islamic ban on punching the face:

> Mixed martial arts are very popular in the North Caucasus. According to Islam, they are forbidden. Under Islam, you can't punch a person in the face. According to Islam, you can only hit someone to protect yourself. That is, if someone comes at you, self-defence is allowed, or if they want to take money from you, you can fight. But you can't just beat someone up.[22]

In the masculine discourse of devout youth, we encounter a positive assessment of qualities that in other groups are stigmatised as insufficiently masculine or even feminine, such as humility, gentleness and kindness:

> When I started to study my religion in Dagestan, I just started praying; I just prayed, and that was it. When you start to go to the mosque, you listen to the imam, you like his sermons, you like his humility, his gentleness, and his kindness. He explains religion to you.[23]

[20]Respondent 12, Ibragim, 20 years old, street workout, Makhachkala, 20 March 2017.
[21]Respondent 13, Hussein, 14 years old, street workout, Makhachkala, 1 April 2017.
[22]Respondent 6, Said, 26 years old, devout youth, Makhachkala, 3 June 2017.
[23]Respondent 14, Adam, 28 years old, devout youth, Khasavyurt /St Petersburg, 5 April 2018.

In contrast to violent forms of masculinity, these participants develop a vision of male agency that is realised in everyday life through the archetype of the 'good family man', the responsible breadwinner, the caring husband and father. This position meets the norms of social respectability and also allows them to distance themselves from the image of a violent religious fanatic created by the state authorities and the followers of competing religious movements.

The power of elders

Intergenerational relations represent another important perspective that highlights significant differences between masculinities. Male communities have responded differently to the crisis of power of elders caused by the decline of traditional institutions and urbanisation. The fact that many children and adolescents in Dagestan are involved in wrestling plays no small role in its being perceived as a substitute for the extended family and the neighbourhood community. In the gym, the distribution of power corresponds to the age hierarchy. The older students, as the stronger and more experienced ones, dominate the younger ones, while the coach, whose authority and power are unquestionable, dominates everyone. According to student testimonies, when fathers bring boys to the freestyle wrestling club for the first time, they accompany the delegation of responsibility to the coach with a verbal ritual: 'Now this is your father, obey him like me.'

The everyday life and ideology of the gym not only accustoms wrestlers to violence, but also provides a fairly effective normalisation and standardisation of traditionalist attitudes, which are then extrapolated to other social contexts. This was noticeable in discussions on the topic of marriage, which in Dagestani society is an important rite of passage marking entry into fully-fledged adulthood. The matrimonial narratives of the wrestlers stood out against the other groups for their uniformity: marriage is performed (or should be performed) according to the will of the parents upon reaching a certain age. The bride is also chosen by parents from the girls of 'their' village, that is, clan. Married respondents specifically emphasised that their relationship with their future wife initially had no romantic motives. In general, the topic of cathexis was rare even in the interviews with respondents who had been married or in relationships with women for a long time.

Street workout participants also attempt to reproduce discourses and social regimes that resonate with the idea of older athletes controlling younger athletes. Older athletes, acting as coaches, introduce newcomers to basic exercises and maintain discipline by stopping infractions during the training process and sanctioning violators. For tardiness, foul language and other infractions they may impose push-up penalties. However, the open and predominantly communicative nature of the homosociality of this community prevents the emergence of quasi-family relationships and rigid age hierarchies. Older athletes are not 'fathers' but older friends and helpers.

The matrimonial attitudes of street workout participants, particularly concerning the participation of elders in choosing a bride, were not standardised. The community includes both 'traditionalists', who believe that the choice of parents is optimal, and those who believe that they should choose marriage partners on their own.

The most radical break with traditionalist interpretations of marriage was demonstrated by devout Muslims. Respondents positioned marriage and the creation of their own

family as an individual choice that is made independently and can go against the will of their elders:

> My relatives on my father's side were against this marriage because they thought I was too young. The Laks[24] don't like early marriages. Our men usually get married in their 30s, when they have already earned money and have their own place to live. The desire to get married came about because I really wanted to create my own family and, as we say, it was the missing in my life. Every man needs its own family.[25]

They challenged the power of their elders in the family issues based on tradition, contrasting it with the authority derived from religion as a superior moral system. They inverted the symbolic age hierarchy, presenting themselves as a generation more competent in religious matters than the generation of parents who grew up and were socialised under state atheism and/or adopted traditional versions of Islam with a large 'admixture' of local ritualism and superstition:

> For example, the question of a *mawlid*, celebrating the birthday of the Prophet, may the blessing and peace of Allah be upon him. The Prophet and his companions did not celebrate his birthday at all. When I say: Why are you celebrating? There's no such holiday, the Prophet didn't celebrate it, my parents start arguing with me. And if my relatives turn up, they will also argue with me.[26]

In the context of dual pressures—both from elders and the repressive state—successful emancipation from elders largely depends on the support and emotional involvement of one's marital partner. Although conservative Muslims are often portrayed as supporters of extreme forms of patriarchy, including the subordination of women to men (Varshaver & Starodubrovskaya 2017), in my study the devout youth articulated a desire, while retaining the trappings of male dominance, to maintain a relatively egalitarian relationship with their wives.

Moral sovereignty

In all the communities under consideration, what is important for understanding male subjectivity is the contribution made by their members to maintaining the general moral order, the basic principles of which are control over women's bodies and behaviour and the maintenance of boundaries between men and women and between 'male' and 'non-male'. This position is consonant with normative attitudes in which men are concerned not only with individual honour but also with the collective honour of the family or clan, by controlling the behaviour of its younger members and women. Following King, I propose to conceptualise this position as 'sovereignty', the ability of a patrilineage or larger entity 'to decide how it will use its resources, to define its boundaries, and to use violence' (King 2008, p. 318). I refer to 'moral sovereignty', emphasising that the subject of responsibility is the moral order. Similarly, Khan (2018) examines the masculinity that

[24]An ethnic group in Dagestan.
[25]Respondent 15, Hassan, 27 years old, devout youth, Makhachkala, 1 May 2020.
[26]Respondent 6, Said, 26 years old, devout youth, Makhachkala, 3 June 2017.

predominates amongst Pakistani followers of the Islamic piety movement *Tablighi Jamaat* as a model for Islamic sovereignty, which seems to provide stability to the Islamic community in the face of moral chaos. In the context of urbanisation and globalisation, this position is reinterpreted in an anti-globalisation and anti-modernist way as a defence of 'mountain' and Muslim identity against the negative influence of Western mass culture.

Over the past ten years, groups of conservative youth in Dagestan, often with the patronage of religious and community leaders, have taken direct action against cultural practices that are seen as violating the moral order. In 2008 they broke up a rock concert at the Law Faculty of Dagestan State University; in 2010 they disrupted the Halloween celebration; in 2016 they prevented a Festival of colours[27] and a concert by Yekaterinburg goth musicians Flos Florum; and in 2018 they attacked the seventh annual anime festival in Makhachkala. The core of these groups was made up of wrestlers and representatives of other martial arts, who not only took an active part in such actions, but also acted as their organisers:

> I will even say more: they had a group on WhatsApp. I remember Habib and all the athletes were sitting there; he was for morality in Dagestan. They did not act openly, but these guys were catching all singers that were, in their opinion, publicising debauchery. They told the singers, 'If you sing again, we will kick your head in!', and these guys kept quiet after that.[28]

The significance of such actions was more symbolic than utilitarian. In their pursuit of violators of the moral order, wrestlers manifest their moral sovereignty, that is, their right to establish and control the rules of morality in public space, thus reproducing their hegemonic position. The targets for ideologically motivated violence are either characters from popular culture or youth scenes that today act as 'folk devils' in Dagestan such as anime and key-pop fans, goths and emo subculture.

Participants of these subcultures—collectively called *neformaly* or *nefery*—have been accused of idolatry, over-sexualisation, and their androgynous public image is interpreted as borderline homosexuality. Such interpretations are shared even by those groups of conservative youth who distance themselves from physical violence:

> As for the anime and so on and so forth, there's a point where if we keep quiet for today and gently say, 'Guys, don't get together', then there's no stopping it at the root. The Dragon will grow a lot of heads. That is, if the head is not cut off, in ten years we will get not an anime festival, but a gay festival.[29]

The statement that experimentation with gender images leads to the acceptance of homosexuality as the norm and ultimately to a blurring of male identity is consonant with both current Islamist discourse and homophobic rhetoric that legitimises the nationalist

[27]A social event inspired by the traditional Hindu Holi festival. Participants get together, dance and sprinkle powder paint on each other.

[28]Respondent 6, Said, 26 years old, devout youth, Makhachkala, 3 June 2017.

[29]Respondent 15, Hassan, 27 years old, devout youth, Makhachkala, 1 May 2020.

and populist regime of moral regulation (Sozaev 2012; Wilkinson 2014). Such homophobic rhetoric has increased across Russia since the early 2010s.

Street workout practitioners construct their moral sovereignty through the cultivation of a so-called ‘healthy lifestyle’, which includes, in addition to regular physical discipline, abstinence from alcohol, tobacco and drugs:

> Our task is to show a child or teenager an example of a way of life, so that when he sees our example, he adopts it and starts to do sports and lead a healthy lifestyle himself. If we do that, it will be a big plus for us. He will give up bad habits. It will be a big plus for us if we motivate him by our example.[30]

Such attitudes fit into both the neoliberal discourse of healthism (Crawford 1980) and the discourse of conservative Islam. Regular exercise is positioned as a pedagogical and socially philanthropic project that aims to shape a responsible attitude towards health and morality in adolescents. To support this image, senior members of the community spend time on *pro bono* shows in schools, colleges, universities and remote villages, which are accompanied by lectures about the healthy lifestyle.

In the context of devout masculinity, the focus of moral responsibility shifts to the spaces of home and family. In these spaces, young religious men realise scenarios of responsible masculinity (Rao 2015) by organising and supervising family life around religious norms.

> If the parents are true Muslims and practise true Islam, they will explain to the child what Islam is, how it should be observed, who the right Muslim is. They can say that a true Muslim does no harm to others, not to himself or others, and their kid grows up temperate, moderate and kind to people.[31]

In the narratives of ‘devout’ young people, there is an image of the responsible father, unusual for other groups, who is charged with ‘building close relationships with his children, emotional work towards them and other family members’ (Chernova 2012, p. 110).

Conclusion

The versions of masculinity described above represent responses to the contradictions within the gender order that are generated both by internal processes of detraditionalisation and urbanisation, and by the peripheral and postcolonial situation. Several central lines of tension can be identified.

The first is that of centre–periphery relations. The demand for a hegemonic model, with force and violence at its core, is sustained by Dagestan’s very special relationship with Moscow. The nature of these relations is determined by the exclusive influence of forceful methods of governance and the dominance of power structures in all spheres of society. It is not difficult to see that the alliance between wrestling communities and political elites, which acts as an institutional mechanism to support a particular version of

[30]Respondent 4, Ali, 23 years old, street workout, Makhachkala, 1 September 2016.
[31]Respondent 16, Shamil, 20 years old, devout youth, Makhachkala, 10 June 2019.

hegemonic masculinity, simultaneously provides a cultural legitimisation of this system as the meritocratic power of 'best' men.

Connell points to the controversial connection between violence and hegemony: 'Violence is part of a system of domination, but it is at the same time a measure of its imperfection. A thoroughly legitimate hierarchy would have less need to intimidate' (Connell 2005, p. 84). Thus, the use of violence signals that a hegemony is not stable and that the gender order is in crisis or transformation. In a global gender order, wherein hegemony is reserved for transnational business masculinities, forms of masculinity that rely on direct physical violence are marginalised and stigmatised as evidence of the backwardness and potential danger that peripheral subaltern non-Western communities pose. In the aftermath of 9/11, moral panic about peripheral masculinities—particularly young Muslim men—rose dramatically. This moral panic, Nayak and Kehily noted, is 'no longer locally situated but is part of a global geo-politics that has seen new forms of securitisation and governance implemented throughout parts of the global north' (Nayak & Kehily 2013, p. 63). For Dagestan, this stigma is reinforced by institutionalised state xenophobia, which legitimises in turn stricter governance of peripheral, 'rebellious' regions.

In all communities there is an awareness that something is wrong with both violence and the gender order it fuels and in large part depends on. Thus, wrestlers try to find in religion a more secure basis for their male hegemony than the right of the strong, and rhetorically emphasise the importance of education. Devout youth, also drawing on the authority of religion, reinterpret qualities as masculine that enable distance from violence, and link the performance of masculinity to nonviolent scenarios. For their part, street workout participants seek to separate force from violence, at least on a symbolic level.

Second, there is tension between 'tradition' and 'modernity'. Led by late urbanisation, the transition from traditional to modern society problematises both the structural and symbolic constancy of gender and age hierarchies as well as the boundaries of moral responsibility that determine the content of male honour. In this situation, the strategy of the hegemonic group is to assert the power of the elders and extend moral sovereignty to Dagestani society broadly defined. At the same time, this also reveals the limitations of this transformation, which arise from the configuration of power relations. Sharp indignation remains commonly directed towards under-resourced, stigmatised groups (such as LGBT and subcultural youth), while moral responsibility does not extend to problems associated with political and economic elites, such as corruption, nepotism and legal nihilism. For devout Muslim youth, the fulfilment of masculinity involves intergenerational disengagement and challenging the authority of their elders in the choice of marriage partners and the regulation of family life. At the same time, the limits of their moral sovereignty are defined by their position as a persecuted and discriminated group.

Third, global culture represents both a problem and a source of hope. Global culture is a powerful source of anxiety for young Dagestani men about the stability of their identities, which is largely influenced by state propaganda that focuses on the problem of homosexuality. Overall, male youth, embedded in a conservative consensus, construct their subjectivity in opposition to the Western, LGBT-tolerant, sexually promiscuous 'Other'. At the same time, it is also clear how disadvantaged youth groups adapt global

cultural trends to construct individualised masculine images and scripts with a higher prestige in the global gender order.

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Appendix. List of interviews cited

Respondent	Name	Age	Category	Location	Date
1	Abdula	23	Wrestling	Makhachkala	20 May 2020
2	Khabib	25	Ordinary youth	Makhachkala	17 June 2016
3	Mustapha	19	Street workout	Makhachkala	10 September 2016
4	Ali	23	Street workout	Makhachkala	1 September 2016
5	Rasul	20	Devout youth	Makhachkala	15 May 2019
6	Said	26	Devout youth	Makhachkala	3 June 2017
7	Mokhammad	17	Wrestling	Makhachkala	23 March 2020
8	Abu	17	Street workout	Makhachkala	14 March 2017
9	Seif	42	Wrestling	Makhachkala	23 March 2020
10	Artur	30	Wrestling	Makhachkala	11 March 2020
11	Arsen	28	Wrestling	Makhachkala	10 March 2020
12	Ibragim	20	Street workout	Makhachkala	20 March 2017
13	Hussein	14	Street workout	Makhachkala	1 April 2017
14	Adam	28	Devout youth	Khasavyurt /St Petersburg	5 April 2018
15	Hassan	27	Devout youth	Makhachkala	1 May 2020
16	Shamil	20	Devout youth	Makhachkala	10 June 2019
17	Akhmet	34	Wrestling	Makhachkala	10 June 2018
18	Mamuka	21	None	Makhachkala	10 June 2017