29.1.2013

Dear Editor

Thank you for the opportunity of re-submitting our work to the Journal of Ageing Studies. We found the reviewers' comments very helpful. We outline below how we have addressed the reviewers comments:

* *Both reviewers note that the development of wife sanctification is a strength of the article. However, both suggest that the application of the concept to your data has been taken too far, that the paper seems to apply it to almost everything the widowers said. In particular, the idea of “anticipatory sanctification” may be taking the concept beyond what one can support, given the data. The paper will benefit from a more nuanced framing of the findings in terms of wife sanctification.*

We have produced a more nuanced approach to wife sanctification and have removed comments with respect to anticipatory sanctification. We have also made clear, in our use of Matthew's quote, both why there is idealisation of marriage (as suggested by the reviewer) and wife sanctification - *nobody could compare with Gloria* – this also speaks to our discussion of what men call their wives. We have amended the abstract.

* *Both reviewers suggest that the way the men refer to their wife may be more a function of masculine linguistics (see comments of Reviewer 1) than sanctification and that bringing this idea into your discussion would enhance the paper. Both reviewers make important suggestions for strengthening the concluding discussion of the article*.

We have consulted the sociolinguistics literature and scholars in the field and have found hardly anything which addresses this issue, one paper which looks at masculinity and one at how people are referred to in interviews. However, we have rewritten the introduction to this section, and use a different starting point (what men call their new women), which was, ironically, the original starting point. Whilst we agree that there is something to be said about masculine linguistics in general, it still remains the case that there are differences between the degrees of intimacy between late wives and new women. We hope we have addressed this issue more clearly now.

* *Please note the editorial suggestions from the reviewers including the presence of typographical errors within some quotations. As well, there no need to italicize “wife sanctification” and “current woman” every time they are used.*

We have done this.

* *The authors may want to note that Moore and Stratton’s (2002: 196-7) concept of the “current woman” includes platonic friends and even daughters and sisters who accompany widowers to social events and in their travels. They describe the current woman as a “’sustaining’ relationship with a woman… For some, another wife. For many others . . . an adult daughter. . . .”*

We realise that we have over-used the word and that Moore and Stratton's phrase was broader than out usage. We have removed these references and instead use the phrase new woman.

We have also strengthened our conclusions. We now suggest that whilst wife sanctification explains much of our data, we also highlight the comments by Len who highlights the complexities of the attitudes to repartnering. We also suggest briefly, that some discussions might reflect masculine approaches to decision making.

We have also addressed comments made by individual reviewers.

1. We have removed the phrase 'broadly representative'

2. We have taken out Appendix 1

3. We have attended to typos in quotes

4. We now use the term late wives

5. We have clarified that our widowers are all living independently.

We hope you will approve of the changes we have made,

Yours faithfully

Kate M Bennett on behalf of the authors