

“We must be careful how we emancipate our women”:  
Shifting masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa

Brandon Hamber\*

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*There is a war between the rich and poor,  
a war between the man and the woman.  
There is a war between the ones who say there is a war  
and the ones who say there isn't.  
Why don't you come on back to the war, that's right, get in it,  
why don't you come on back to the war, it's just beginning.  
(Leonard Cohen, There is a War)*

## **Introduction**

The title of this paper—*we must be careful how we emancipate our women*—is paraphrased from the words of a participant who took part in an extensive three year study focusing on the security of women in societies in transition. The full quotation is reproduced later in the paper, but in essence this man, a former combatant, was trying to explain how post-apartheid South Africa, in his opinion, has not been favourable to men, particularly working class black men. Women of all races, he felt, have benefited to a greater degree than men in terms of employment, rights and social status; men are now marginalised and alienated from a society they fought to change. Although he thought some levels of equality might be necessary, he felt caution should be practiced in “emancipating women” because this could affect men, and particularly the local economy when men were excluded. His views are extreme but they are also representative of a perspective of many South African men, both black and white. To this end, the view cannot simply be dismissed as bigoted; it requires interrogation and alerts us to the changing notions of masculinity in South Africa and their dangers. The latter is the core focus of this paper.

The study<sup>1</sup> on which this paper is based focused on three case study areas namely South Africa, Northern Ireland, and Lebanon. A series of focus groups with different sectors of society and interviews with key policymakers were carried out in each context focusing on the degree to which the transitions in the three societies have impacted upon the security of women. Space does not permit a thorough exploration of the methodology of the research,<sup>2</sup> but suffice to say one of the important features of the study was that the focus groups undertaken were separated out, i.e. as all male and all female focus groups. The study aimed to produce comparative data concerning how men and women conceptualise the notion of

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\* This is a working paper, comment are welcome. All correspondence to mail@brandonhamber.com, for author details see www.brandonhamber.com.

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<sup>2</sup> The methodology and issues surrounding it are discussed by Gillian Robinson from the project team who presented a separate paper at the Re-Imagining Women’s Security: a Comparative Study of South Africa, Northern Ireland and Lebanon Round Table, United Nations University, New York, 12–13 October 2006.

security, and particularly whether the participants in the focus groups had different notions of how the security of women was affected by the transition process. What is presented in this paper is the beginning of this analysis, which at this stage only focuses on South Africa.

The paper begins by exploring *some of the main findings* of the South African part of the research, which was carried out almost exclusively with black South Africans mainly from working backgrounds in 2005. The paper begins with some comparison between how men and women participants understood the concept of security. The degree to which the participants thought the transition had impacted on security of women is then explored. Thereafter the key issues of violence against women, and attitudes to women by men in the South Africa, are discussed. This leads into a discussion on changing masculinities in South Africa. The paper then concludes with some thoughts on the policy relevance of the research and some future directions.

## **Findings**

An analysis of the main themes of the South African data<sup>3</sup> revealed a plethora of issues. This paper focuses on a limited number of these. Three broad themes or issues are considered in the paper, i.e.

- a) Definitions of security
- b) The degree to which the transition has impacted on security
- c) The equality agenda and violence against women

### **a) Defining security**

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<sup>3</sup> In all 11 focus groups were carried out in South Africa, i.e. 6 all women groups, 4 all men focus groups and one mixed group. The 6 women focus groups were broken down in terms of political campaigners, those in public life, ex-combatants, victims of political violence, those working in NGOs, and those involved in economic reconstruction. The 4 all male focus groups included political campaigners, those in public life, ex-combatants, and victims of political violence. One mixed group (due to logistical reasons) of male and female politicians was carried out. Twelve interviews with key policymakers were also undertaken. All the male focus group participants were black South Africans, and there were one or two white participants in the women focus groups. Most were from working class backgrounds, although some of the participants working in NGOs and public life could probably be seen as middle-class. The interview and focus group process was carried out by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg. I am deeply indebted to Ingrid Palmay, who coordinated the research gathering through the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and carried out the interviews, and Sinothile Msomi and Oupa Makhalemele for their research assistance and carrying out the focus groups. I would also like to thank Sheila Meintjies, Anu Pillay, Gillian Eagle and Beth Goldblatt for their comments, and attending a seminar on the data and sharing their thoughts.

All participants were asked to reflect on the word security and how they understood the concept. Both men and women participants in the research defined it widely, with conceptualisations ranging from physical to economic security. On the whole however participants largely gave fairly holistic definitions of security, for example:

Stability! Security is stability in all the areas. They've just mentioned work, health, and socially, politically, financially and otherwise. To be stable! In a sense to have stability all around [you]...financial independence becomes key. The basic necessities: shelter, food, clothing. Those becomes necessary for security (Female ex-combatant, F57-58).<sup>4</sup>

And a male participant:

I would say that security...divided into so many particles. You have economical security, you have health security, you have food security, you have individual security. So, but when they define it, they say it's [an] human rights protection (Male ex-combatant, M36).

Where responses focused on one aspect of security, typical responses which emphasised the physical dimension of security included:

I think when I think of security the first thing that comes to mind is safety. I think of safety and especially as far as women are concerned, and girls are concerned, looking at gender, you look at the figures in our country of the high rate of rape in the country – and I think when you think of security; in my mind those are some of the things that I think of (Female in economic reconstruction, F33).

And from a male participant:

Okay, I think when we talk about security...my understanding is that for something not to be vulnerable to foreign objects like – you know – a man can be assured that okay when he passes a bush. He is more secured than a woman. When a woman is supposed to cross somewhere along the bush she might think two times, three times than a man. So I'm thinking along those lines (Male victims focus group, M110-111).

Other definitions which focused on one dimension of security included those that emphasised economic aspects:

To me security it means to have access to resources. Because when I have resources I would be able to get security to get a fence in my home, and I would be secured even to exploitation. That's why I'm saying it means resources because some of us as womens we end up getting in love with the man that we don't love only because [she's] got money. So that's why I'm saying;

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<sup>4</sup> The code "M" or "F" denotes female or male participants, the number afterwards is used to help locate the quote in the transcripts. The code "I" is also used to denote interviews with key policymakers.

to me security means resources. It's like to have resources, I'll say I'm secured because I'll be working, earning (Female victim, F143).

And from a male participant:

So then – you know - at the centre of the entire debate I would put in the economic development and economic security as such and say; without that economic security there is no reason why, in today's world, maybe in a different world or the pre-industrial society we could speak of other forms of security (Male political campaigner, M2).

Some participants also captured the dire circumstances of poverty and how that impacted on their security. For example:

I'm still staying in a *mkhukhu*.<sup>5</sup> And so there is not that security. And then you would know if you ever lived in a shantytown. You know the life there is so much insecure. My shack is not even half of this – it's just for my bed and just a little paraffin stove there. What kind of security is there if that paraffin stove just burst sometime. And you know, they've broken the wall created by the state trying to control us. And now people are passing-by; and sometimes I go to conferences in the night or seminars. And I once happened...I was lucky, my machine, my stuff was not there, but they broke in, and there was no money so they took some clothes. Is there security there? Sometimes now I have to spend more and more money on things that I bought before, I haven't got money for food. I do get to work late, there is no transport in my area (Male political campaigner, M31).

Some notions of security put forward by participants also had a “human security” type conceptualisation:

To me security deals with the fact that a person leads a fulfilled life. A fulfilled life that is covered in all respects of human life. It's not a question of, you know, having barbed-wires around the place where you stay. It's a question of you having opportunities that the government is prepared to avail, it's a question of government being, or any institution that is able to tap your potential and you make a contribution into the livelihood or perhaps the welfare of the society in general. And security to me it deals about the certainty of one's future in his life. And there are other views that purport to say; if you think about security you think of a [night-watchman / security guard], a soldier. Security to me is a right of every citizen to have...to lead a fulfilled life with guaranteed future. That's what it entails (Male ex-combatant, M36).

Another dominant component of security for participants was the idea of freedom, i.e. of expression, movement, etc. This seemed, at least in part, a definition borne out of the apartheid context in which such freedoms were curtailed and associated with draconian levels of state violence. As one participant put it:

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<sup>5</sup> Meaning “chicken shack”, slang word used for a shanty or shack dwelling, but also sometimes used to describe the new government houses built since the transition.

According to my understanding security means being secured, being [err] being under maybe [err] being free to do whatever you do, you want to do, say whatever you want to say, knowing that you are protected. Your security it can mean [just] protection (Female political campaigner, F2).

And another:

The other thing is that [err] like right now there is freedom of expression in South Africa, so I think that is one of the things we're having security, because you are free to do whatever you want to do in your way, no one can change or no one can tell you what – don't do this, do that. So I think that is part and parcel of security (Female political campaigner, F3).

Some women participants also highlighted the interrelationship between men and women in ensuring the security (and insecurity) of women. For example:

They're doing it more than they are supposed to do it. Like maybe...they were told that a man should be [err] maybe like upper body who would protect his family, including his wife. But they turn that thing around. They take it like a man should boss a wife. But instead of protecting, they boss them, they rule them telling them what to do and so on and so on. And also our tradition, like maybe other people they are misunderstanding the word tradition or the rules from the tradition. Instead of maybe taking care of their families they think that being someone who is who is listening to whose head, maybe like a father you should do whatever you want to do with that person. They are not considerate of you. They don't think about...they don't for...maybe...they don't take us as women being – as people who have got feelings because if they want to beat you, they just do that (Female political campaigner, F4).

And another:

Okay for starters women need security over men. Like we need to be protected from men because they are the ones who oppress us, they are the ones who do all those bad things to us. So I think our security is different from them. Then maybe their security is that we need jobs and so on and so, so that we can be able to oppress [women]. So then maybe their security is something to oppress us. I don't know, that's how I think because we need security from them; we need to be secured from them (Female political campaigner, F4).

In addition, time and time again, participants mentioned how being of a different class and/or race group, as well as whether one lived in rural or urban South Africa, significantly impacted on how you viewed and felt about your security, e.g. “a black woman was at a bottom of the pile...she experiences oppression from her husband, she experiences it also from a white woman also in the kitchens where she is working in the suburbs” (M16) and “...definitely a white woman would be far better off than my mother” (M45). A response reflecting on children and security which summed up these type of view was:

That gives a kind of security and warmth to that kind of a kid. But it would be different of course to a kid who is...who grew up in different living standards. For other kids to have a play station is kind of a security. I mean I do have a play station, I have a bicycle, I have a ticket to a movie. That's a kind of security to the other kids in a higher standard of living or class. Whereas to the other kid it's just to have food, it doesn't matter what kind of food it is - as long as I have a full plate of food. It gives that kind of a kid security. I think it varies to the needs of different standards of living – what is security to them (Female NGO worker, F99).

A further finding was that, although men mentioned issues—such as HIV/Aids or the impact of privatisation or poverty—they tended to articulate their concerns about such issues differently to women. Many men talked about concerns with work and poverty (some lived in shacks with no basic amenities, for example), but they—broadly speaking—articulated this in a way that did not mention some of the economic or everyday realities of what this meant. Men tended to focus on their jobs and what it meant not to work. This is interesting because the realities of poverty obviously affected a number of the male participants, but the way they articulated this perhaps suggests women are more concerned or involved with everyday issues of poverty than men because of different gender roles and the public/private division often associated with men and women's lives. It also highlights the relationship between understandings of security and masculinity, i.e. men's status is most commonly measured by their job and social positioning, being unemployed is experienced is not only economically challenging but experienced as humiliating. This was captured by one participant who was not only struggling with the loss of a job but also the loss of status as a combatant now that the conflict is over, he said:

I feel like under apartheid I was much better off, although the Boers<sup>6</sup> used to beat me up and stuff like that. I was a student and I used to be well-off, but right now the situation is bad for me, I do not have teeth. That time the ladies used to love me, I'm grown up, I'm bald, and with all my certificates I'm not employable, I'm out of a job. So at a personal level; the people that I associate with – I was still a member of the PAC and I still am. I find those people most of the time they do not have money. It is degrading that indeed I must be happy for making little money (Male ex-combatant, M6).

This confirms that material life such as the labour market, workplace and job are at the centre of analyses of working class masculinity (Morrell, 2001a). What this study found was significant trends towards women discussing their “material life” through highlighted the way their daily lives were affected by poverty in a qualitatively different way to men. One participant reflecting on the child support grant compared how she felt most men would use

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<sup>6</sup> Slang for the police, particularly the white dominated apartheid police.

the money compared to using it for familial concerns, which were deeply impacted upon by the privatisation of basic services in South Africa. She said:

...R170.00 and they still use it to buy beers. You have to buy prepaid water for the child to bath when she goes to pre-school. You have to buy electricity. So they are making a business out of it. *Another participants adds, translating this comment to the group:* She is saying that this R170.00 it is also another trick that if you get R170 and you are supposed to buy water with it. So it's like they give you money while they take it back, you see (Female political campaigner, F18).

Another women captured this when she said:

...in rural areas, you find that those essential services that [are lacking] end up being a woman's problem. Like having water. So it's the woman who needs to use the water more than anybody else in the family. So she needs to make sure that there is always water – either by sending the kids to fetch it; if they are not old enough, she has to go and fetch the water herself. Same with making sure that there's coal and wood for fire, because she has to make fire to cook. So it ends up being their problem more than anybody else's in the family (Female in economic reconstruction, F42).

A male participant confirmed this view:

So I think the privatisation of essential services affects women a lot. Even the issue of water because they want to bring pre-paid water. If water is finished she has to get a bucket and [go and fetch water]. So, I can say, on the one hand they [government] are giving, but on the other hand they are taking. So there's no balance (Male victim, M121).

In summary, the above quotations confirm the interrelationship between the social and economic context, social positioning and security. Furthermore, they clearly highlight the interrelationship between women's insecurity (certainly physically) and the behaviour and attitudes of men. But they also show that in the South African study both men and women had reasonably wide definitions of security. The project team had hypothesised that men would focus more on the physical dimensions of security and women on more social and economic dimensions. This was found not to be the case. That said, and speaking generally, women were more concerned with everyday realities in relation to social and economic security (e.g. access to water, food for children, accommodation, safety) than men. The male participants had definitions of security that certainly had a human, physical, social well-being and economic element, but this so-called human dimension of security seemed, in many cases, to have a different qualitative feel between the men and women focus groups. This confirmed the different (largely gendered) positioning of participants.

## **b) Security in transition**

Across the South African focus groups and interviews there seemed to be a general consensus by both men and women that since the end of apartheid there is a greater level of physical security in terms of threats of state violence and harassment. However, how secure some participants felt in their lives since 1994, and especially in relation to violent crime and job security, varied. An ambivalent picture, certainly in terms of the women and security, was evident.

There seemed to be a general consensus among participants that since the transition in 1994 the issue of gender had been given considerably more focus. Much of this had a direct relevance to the security of women. This was particularly evident in the development of the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) and the Office of the Status of Women (OSW) based in the Office of the Presidency, and the Domestic Violence Act (1998). Other legal processes such as The Promotion Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (2000), Employment Equity Act (1998), Child Support Grant (CSG), and the Maintenance Act (1998) were also mentioned by participants as having some impact on basic levels of security. There clearly have been significant advancements in the legal frameworks in post-apartheid South Africa with *some* impacts resulting (Interviewee, Human Rights Commission). For example, it was noted that single mothers now have access to greater support provided by the state in terms of welfare and potential funding for housing (e.g. women victims focus group). Several participants also noted that educational opportunities have opened up for women and girls, and this has been deracialised, e.g. "...like Saxonwold primary; it's wonderful; because we've got white kids, black kids from all socio-economic backgrounds" (F121).

There was also a general perception held by both male and female participants that women have more rights, and they are protected by the state and law in a way that was not evident prior to the 1994 change of government. For example, several participants mentioned that now there was a tougher (albeit sporadic and patchy) approach to domestic violence. As one male participant put it:

I think they're positive also that even though sometimes it creates, chaos, women now understands their rights. That's a positive. It also helps us men to be...that even though sometimes it gets out of hand, but it's good to know that you cannot do all those things that before the transition you could do to a woman, and you won't get repercussions. If you wanted to beat a woman brain-dead, do that (Male in public life, M89).

On the whole there was also a strong trend in the interviews and focus groups towards acknowledging that women have equal rights to men, i.e. there should not be job discrimination, unequal pay, etc. Although this is not fully realised, as is discussed below, women certainly felt their rights had been affirmed and men often recognised this. A number of the women participants said they felt a greater sense of empowerment since the advent of democracy in South Africa. For example:

And also now it is better than the olden days when the girls used to say; a “No” of a girl means “Yes”. Now it is loud and clear for both girls and guys, you see. A girl knows that her “No” should be a “No”, not “No-Yes”. Then the guys they will also know that if a girl says “No”; that means she says “No” (Female political campaigner, F14).

Affirmative Action processes and the new Employment Equity Act were seen by some participants of focus groups and interviews as responsible for greater economic equality between men and women (e.g. the women in economic reconstruction focus group). For example:

Ja, I can say there are lots of changes. Before a single parent couldn't get a house; but today if you are working, earning a good salary, you can afford to get yourself a beautiful home and live with your children. And today we can afford (Female victim, F159).

And another:

And African women are driving beautiful cars because of the changes which we never had, that a woman that a woman can drive a Pajero. Now women are driving Pajeros...black women (Female victim, F159).

The fact that women were now being employed in sectors normally reserved for men (e.g. train and bus drivers, and engineers) was also highlighted (e.g. women political campaigners focus group) and as a senior women Commissioner put it “I think democracy has done good for women in the South African Police Service” (I21). Other examples included:

There is no such thing that these course are only for men and so on and so on. And even in the firm they allow a woman to wear overalls and do mechanical engineering and so on and so on (Female political campaigner, F13).

And another:

And there are many more; especially aviation, in the sciences, construction, engineering, in the medical field. I mean 15 years ago to see a female doctor was like; wow! (Female in economic reconstruction, F41).

A male participant also viewed this as positive:

If you observe at the moment, Metrorail has hired women to drive trains. I am happy to see that happening; it is no longer men only, there are also women (Male victim, M112).

Specific mention was given to sectors such as farming which have (albeit nominally) transformed so that there are now women farmers (e.g. women victims focus group). Many male participants seemed to be aware of some of these changes, and also highlighted how there had, at least to some degree, been a change in terms of women's access to economic and social power, a point to which this paper will return in the next section.

That said, there was a strong feeling among many participants that the changes mentioned were restricted to a small number of women, e.g. "there are only small little women who are empowered and the rest is these men who are just sharks. You know, and really with no money there is no security. There can't be security with no money" (F151) and "...it only affects a small percentage of women" (Interviewee, CGE, I35). Several women participants were highly critical of the ability of the so-called gender machineries such as the CGE and OSW to make a concrete change in the lives of ordinary working class—and almost exclusively—black women, e.g. "the machineries are just aren't working" (F105) and "...I mean I am aware of these institutions but I am not sure what it is they are doing. What's the purpose?" (F132). A gap between policy and implementation, especially for women lower down the economic scale, was routinely noted, e.g. "there is a gap between the machinery as it is called and the institutions that have been put in place to deal with all forms of violence against women" (M24). The senior women interviewed from COSATU, South Africa's largest union, felt that the country still needed to "capacitate them [the public and workers] about these legislations" (I67). The Human Rights Commissioner interviewed also questioned the degree to which the new legislative framework always made a difference:

And yet there has been very little attention paid to the value component of rights and how you incorporate those rights values in the day to day practices of your society. People sometimes think that if you use the law to push the rights agenda...it would result in changed attitudes and behaviour. I am not sure that always happens, I am not sure if the law is such a powerful educative tool (I52).

Participants felt economic security had a strong class and racial dimension, i.e. whites having a greater sense of economic security, along with a small number black South Africans who had moved into the middle and upper classes since the end of apartheid. That said, it appeared that some of those interviewed, particularly in senior government positions, were less convinced of a policy implementation gap (or less willing to highlight this in case it was read that there had been no changes). A senior women police Commissioner interviewed questioned the veracity of the view that there was a significant policy and implementation gap (I23). One of the participants, and interviewee from the Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD), felt the “gender machinery is working quite fine” (I9), although she questioned its operations.

In terms of women moving into the political arena the picture was similar. For example, many participants pointed to the advancements made by having a greater number of women in Parliament and Cabinet, which at a level of numbers had been a major achievement of the new South African government (roughly 33% of MPs are women and 25% of Cabinet are women, with a women Deputy President), and a greater number of women moving into managerial positions. As one women noted:

Previously you know that women were not educated. Right now there are many women who are educated. You can now find them in parliament; they are able to run offices, when you go there you find that it's only women in those offices. At least there is something to show that at least women are improving. Previously you wouldn't find a woman in an office when you go there (Female political campaigner, F15).

That said, several women participants were also sceptical about whether greater representation of women in political life has had any significant impact on the lives of the majority of women. Some of these women expressed this in the context of a concern about the inability of male power to allow women who now were in more powerful positions to make a real difference. One participant tried to articulate this by saying that she felt there was still a legacy of oppression that undermined the confidence of some women in powerful positions and at the same time men continued to limit the possibilities for women once they had made social and political advances. She said:

Another thing, just to add onto that; we should also remember that men – for a woman to be above them be it a principal at school or what she really needs to be strong – this woman. She must get support from other women, and to be strong; yes men would see that your pass rate in the interview or the questions they ask you is 85% - but then you would have to do better than that 85%, and they actually show you. They would ask you very very odd and difficult things. But they do not do that to other men. For other men it's just a walkover of the same proposition,

same level. They do not get asked all these other things they ask you. So once you get through, and you get that position, these very men are going to say things against you that they know are difficult for you - but some are not difficult for you. It's difficult for them, actually. And then because we are still lagging behind as women; we haven't actually seen that we are free, we are still having chains on ourselves. Those chains have long been removed, but we are not coming up or meeting it somewhere, we are still remaining down there – like an old dog, if you can have it chained for all itself, the day you unchain it will never move it from that chain. Even if it is not chained it would not go out of the gate. Never! So we really need to learn...we really need something. Something is necessary. Something is missing that will make this woman to realise and learn. And sometimes others, because she went through a narrow gate – she does not think. Men know our psychology that if we could do this to this person and not give her a go-ahead, and make her feel [bad]. If she gets through she forgets about those ones at the bottom. She wants them to struggle like she did, and she does not realise that is pulling her down the other side, because nobody is supporting her and she is far from everybody – every woman is down there. We don't know how can we break that – or we keep on talking about it, I don't know. But something has to be done (Female ex-combatant, F72).

Although this is a complicated piece of discourse that could be read in many ways, I read it as confirmation that the opportunities for women to succeed are still limited. Once women get through the “narrow gate” there is little or no support and hostility from men in some cases, on the “other side”— it literally becomes a process of sink or swim in a man's world. This in part contributed, in the view of a number of women participants, to successful women being forced to take on male-orientated type behaviours and become part of the wider hegemonic system. As women participants put it, women have “to fight twice as much to be in those leadership positions and perform twice as much as men” (F34); it is difficult to break into the “boy's club” (F35), there is a constant “under current” in the work place (F50); and men undermine women managers (I9). A senior women in the ICD, also said she felt she has had to be “harsher” than she was “naturally” to survive in the environment she is working (I9). The result was that several women in the study were critical of some women in power:

According to me the women MECs in parliament they are just there as flowerpots, according to me. I need to be honest...but those women are also flowerpots like, she is saying because they just do whatever they are told, they don't do things for themselves. (Female political campaigner, F11).

And another:

But because women have got to a point where they can assume powerful positions, they started to change and behaved like men. Because then a woman wants to be respected, and a woman wants to secure his job, she behaves like a man. Why do they behave like men? Because men – we all know the manner or the way men behave against women. So that woman would start behaving like those men so that she could gain respect which then becomes wrong. It is no longer right. But people who are working in government or professionals who were there these ones who are in the professions today, we must understand as to where they come from, where were they educated. (Female ex-combatant, F69-70).

Then this exchange between participants:

Respondent 2: But that's also the model of women that get into power is the male model.

Respondent 1: And it's sad the way women in power [turned to one] when they wear those caps – they forget the women. Be it towards other women or towards children, because the insecurity especially of children is contributed more by women who are in power.

Respondent 5: But let me say; don't you think these women are challenged at that level. That's when you grow in trying – because at that level you need to work 17 times – You are so focusing that you forget and at that time you become more shrewd as well, as you train yourself, your way of trying to perfect whatever you are delivering. But at the end of the day you become so hard (Female in public life focus, F123).

Clearly, change in South Africa is deeply ambivalent and contested, and much of the old institutional framework remains. Women had very different views on why changes had not been forthcoming despite greater (albeit still limited) participation of women in public and political life. Although some felt this was because the system had not changed or there was still limited participation of women in reality (not at least 50% participation), there were also those who felt—partly feeding into male stereotypes—that women often undermined other women once in power, e.g. “In fact we are worse than men when it comes to that if we feel an element of threat in another woman” (F51) and “I usually call PHD, pulling her down syndrome” (F11). I also quote at length one of the more challenging, or at least difficult to interpret perspectives put forward:

I think there are...in my view there are positive changes, but as we have just said that women we doubt ourselves, and men do not want to accept that my boss is a boss lady. and we tend to be – like...was saying just now that women they want their presence to be felt, and they will start acting like men. I think it's fear, they become so...they have this fear that maybe I do not deserve this bullshit. And women we will always ask ourselves that I heard that Barbara is a manager, I wonder who did she sleep with. That's how we are as women – that for Barbara to be a manager she must have slept with someone. Which sometimes is not true, but sometimes you'd find that it's the truth, I mean everyone wants a cherry on top, she wants a better salary or whatever. But women we are scared to take initiative. And even if a woman is in charge // look for instance at – let's talk about our Deputy President; I mean most are men that are mocking her, they feel that she does not deserve to be there. Why don't they give her a chance to prove herself? And then they'll say okay, Mr. President you have elected a woman, she has failed you. She has done nothing whatsoever, but now men do not want her, they criticise her, they boo her, it's not fair. But as women what are we doing about it, we are not saying anything, we are quiet because we are jealous, we are very jealous. It means that she slept with Mbeki that is why she is a Deputy President. That is what we say behind close doors. A woman would never be successful unless she slept with somebody, then, yes. But if it's a man, and they put Steve there as a deputy president, it's fine, there is no problem. But once they put a woman it's a problem (Female ex-combatant, F71).

In terms of physical security, most men and women interviewed or in focus groups felt that, on the whole, there was less physical security since the end of apartheid, although state violence had decreased dramatically and was almost non-existence. Fears and insecurities related particularly to violent crime, of which rape and domestic violence was mentioned routinely by participants. This was captured by a senior Commissioner of the South African Human Rights Commission who said in the interview that he felt questions of personal security impacted on his life and others:

I think from a safety point of view of these serious issues, I don't feel safe. I don't feel safe for my [public] and my children. I have three daughters and... certainly compared to 10 years ago, I would be much more careful now in terms of – if you walk to your friend's house three streets away, you know you...I know if it's paranoia – I'll drop you and you tell me when to fetch you. something like that because there is again a perception of reality – I don't know – but violence against woman and the constitutional court...And I think many South Africans do. You see it in all communities Two young girls in Soweto go to church and on their way...dressed in their church robes, they are raped and murdered. What does it say about your society? (Interview, Human Rights Commissioner, I14).

Typical responses highlighting the fear of crime in post-apartheid South Africa also included:

No, the world at large has changed. if you go to different places you will find women...for instance at the moment, we are not secured just because we are...we are not secured to walk in the street. You can't just sit – you're scared to walk in the street because you might come across a rapist. When you are inside your house, it gets broken into and you get hurt. It's worse than before; the situation has gone [bad] (Female ex-combatant, F84).

The perception of most participants, both men and women, was that domestic violence in particular had gone up since 1994. Although some felt this might be a reflection of improved reporting since the end of apartheid, certainly no one thought it had gone down, e.g. “I don't that it has decreased” (F44), and most referred to it as a very serious problem. One participant articulated this strongly while linking her analysis directly to some men feeling threatened by women's rights (this issue is discussed in detail later in the paper). She said:

So they are just using us, there is no such thing that we are free. Even this thing they are saying that women are free to oppress themselves. If you get beaten you can maybe claim it to the police station and so on and so on. There are so many cases that were maybe opened but they just disappeared, there is no follow-up link. And if you can compare the life that we are living now and the life that we used to live back then, in those olden days, I don't want to lie about it, maybe in a year I would hear about maybe three rapes, in a year. But in this time, everyday you hear that someone has been raped. And it's like it's a miracle, the issue of a child who is maybe three months has been raped by his own father or her own father. Those things were not there.

So the more they say that they give us power, it's the more they give something more to oppress us. Cause maybe those men when they hear that now women are free they say that we want to see where they would end up, we are going to do this and this to them. I don't know, that's how I view things (Female political campaigner, F12).

Interestingly, violence against women also seemed to be the one issue in which participants felt there was very little racial difference, i.e. all women regardless of race or class have less freedom of movement since the transition and are more physically unsafe. That said, there was some acceptance that since the change of government in 1994 there had been advances in how women as victims of violence are treated (e.g. specialised facilities at police stations, police being trained to deal with sexual violence, etc.). A number of participants felt that the law had, to some degree, got tougher on perpetrators of domestic violence. However, women participants felt these changes were inconsistent and varied across the country. On the whole, services and legal remedy were still poor. One women participant gave a good example of how some police stations and the one-stop gender friendly units that have meant to have been set up were still not accessible, especially for women:

Most of them do not even know where these centres are. If you are in the situation, you're gonna start phoning out and trying to find out where the centre is. I was shot with a pellet on my back side and it was a very funny sort of thing to happen, from a car. And I actually felt embarrassed to go to the police station, because whom am I going to have to show where I was shot. I mean if you have a woman policeman...okay and my husband was away. So I was on my own. So what do you do? You've got a hole and it's bleeding and all the rest of it. Now do you go and show a policeman that you've got a sort of a hole on your backside? (Female in public life, F135).

Thus, high levels of violence against women, seemingly paradoxically, co-existed with greater protection of women's rights. This was best summed up by one participant who noted that despite knowing your rights as a women you still "become violated":

...that's why I'm saying that in the past they...it's like those women who lived in those days they were much free than us, because they are used to that life. Maybe they were brainwashed, they told them that this is the life that you are going to live. So that is why they get used to it, they are free, they knew that there is no one who can come to me and rape me. You see even though there were those things, but they were...those things were better because they were free at their homes, they knew that I should respect my husband, whatever my husband says must go and so on. So to us it is a bit difficult, cause now we know our rights and we are also...you become violated knowing your rights. It is not fair knowing that this is my glass, someone else whom I don't know he will come and take my glass, while I know for sure that this is my glass, you see. So it's better you grow up knowing that this does not belong to me. even if someone can come and take it, it won't be a pain. Like it is knowing something that belongs to you, knowing that this is my rights and someone come and violate them, you see (Women political campaigner, F19).

### **c) Equality and violence against women**

Ja...it has increased [gender-based violence] because most of the men you will find them talking about this equality with women; they hate that. They hate it. (Female victims focus group, F161)

In thinking about masculinities in transition in South Africa, Morrell (2001) writes that there are a wide range of responses amongst men to the transition. He identifies three major responses, i.e. reactive and defensive responses; accommodating responses; and responsive or progressive responses (Morrell, 2001b). Others have identified what could be termed associative techniques, that is the way some men show goodwill or try to appease women when faced with challenges from feminism (Godenzi, 1999). It is fair to say that the men in the focus groups displayed a number of the responses identified above. Although none of the men spoke of being active in any progressive men's organisations, several spoke of the need for inequality, the structure impediments to women's advancement, and role and attitude of men to be addressed. Some women too acknowledged that men they knew, or their husbands in some cases, were acting differently since the transition. Some of this was voluntary and sometimes the product of circumstance, e.g. "Some men are changing because I know of cases where women are working and the men are home looking after the children, because they can't get a job and that sort of thing" (Women in public life, F119).

That said, a number of reactive and defensive views were also evident. A number of the men interviewed seemed to be under the strong misapprehension that there has been a dramatic change for women since 1994 in terms of the general social and economic security despite the fact that "more women than men continue to live in poverty, greater numbers of women are unemployed and have lower education status than men" (Walker, 2005a, p.227). These men expressed the view that women have gained excessively from the transition in terms of jobs and rights, and are now using their new-found economic and social power to exclude and persecute men. They also felt the law was now much tougher on domestic violence which they were concerned about because, in their opinion, men were punished who were wrongly accused. Some of the men interviewed, not all of course, seemed to perceive the advancement made in terms of the rights of women as a direct and tangible threat. This was exemplified by the following:

Women, now that they thought that they have power; even if we didn't do that wrong thing on her, she can go to the police and report that. Maybe you did a minor thing on her, and then she

will exaggerate that when she gets to the police station. And then they will come running after you, and they'll take you. Say maybe you are a person who is in the economy maybe of the country, of that...your local economy in your area, you have a [policy?] role that you are playing. And then they'll take you to jail, so that...now they...your local people now they will suffer because of your absence. And then all that is because of this...I'll say women emancipation. So my point...the point I'm trying to highlight is that we must be very careful at how do we emancipate our women. (Male ex-combatant, M43).

Another participant saw equality as a “soft” option which he broadly finds acceptable, but sees “feminism” as less acceptable. He seemingly associates feminism with a fundamental challenge to power, and thus, in his opinion, should be resisted:

Basically the thing that I want to say is also regarding the term ‘gender’ of which a lot of people, especially our women they confuse gender with feminism. And at the end of the day you find them talking about feminism instead of gender equality...but at this stage now, things have changed, in a sense that, it is now the exploitation and oppression of men by other forces that would say now we are promoting gender equity. Well, it is fine and good that gender equity be promoted, but it has to be done in a very good fashion. And we still need to educate our women folks about gender equality, not feminism. Because the issue of feminism and gender equity – and they intertwine it and present it as one thing (Male ex-combatant, M39).

And he continues that women are being advanced over men and are now using their advancement against men:

But at the same time now it is payback time for them in terms of exploitation of men. Look at the present situation now, whether socially or economically you will find, now it's women who have best jobs, it is women who are driving the best cars around here in town. You know, I'm not sure whether is it payback time or are we doing it the correct way, you know, or whether are we doing the gender equity the correct way. I mean the status quo...the previous status quo exploited us equally. But there were certain elements to say no, this is a woman, she can't be at this level. This is a man he can be at this level, you know. But those kinds of things have to be corrected and redirected in a proper fashion (Male ex-combatant, M39-40).

A further male participant directly linked violence against women to these perceived threats:

So I think that's the reason why you'd find that incidents of violence against women...not that they were not there in the past but they were administered within the family environment. But right now they are so in the open because it's the only weakness that you can now use against women. You can't use financial resources against them because now they are pretty much earning more than us. so we can't use that, whereas in the past we've had that leverage of saying I am working alone, I don't need your money, but right now you can't say that that. So then people start using – they are looking for another weakness within a woman. And that weakness right now is sexual weakness. That we can always rape you, we can physically show you our strength (Male in public life, M96).

Women confirmed these perceptions when they noted that there were some gains (although mainly but not exclusively in policy) for women and this they felt had created a fear and insecurity in some men making them resentful of the transition, women and the equality agenda. For example:

I think in our context, particularly in South Africa, if we look at our different cultures, I think we have got a long way to go with the way men see the independence of women because some of them are very very threatened by an independent, financially secure woman and they then feel that their male ego is being [trot] upon (Female in economic reconstruction, F34).

And another:

But is it not ego? It's ego and feelings of their manhood being disregarded, being challenged. Because pre-1994 a lot of black women, and I stand to be corrected – a lot of them didn't work, they were just domestic workers or teachers or nurses and all that, but now you're getting women in powerful positions, women in Parliament, women who are directors in companies, and men cannot deal with that – you know. And so they try to enforce and reinforce that listen. I am better than you. I am bigger than you and I'm stronger than you (Female in public life, F113).

Yet another:

Because most of the men they feel intimidated about the word democracy that women they have freedom to say whatever. They feel intimidated because they were not grown up in that situation, they want to do what they used to see from our mothers ...that's what they've learnt. So they want to practice that, they don't want to move away (Female victim, F144).

The issue of unemployment as a driving force behind this insecurity was also routinely mentioned: A women participant noted:

I think maybe one of the factors too is unemployment. Our country has got a very very high unemployment rate. And if you look at the unemployment rate and if you look at the laws of the country it seems more and more men are becoming unemployed. So maybe they also feel very vulnerable. I don't know if it could be that they have like a backlash or that type of thing against women (Female in economic reconstruction, F44).

In summary, therefore, a number of the women participants felt that there is a backlash against the equality agenda from men. On top of this, there was a feeling by a number of women participants that this has led directly to greater levels of violence against women as men take out this frustration on women violently. The regularity of the repetition of this view was concerning considering that violence against women in South Africa is excessive. South Africa has one of the highest rates of violence against women in the world for a country not at

war (Wood & Jewkes, 2005).<sup>7</sup> Women in the focus groups felt there was a direct correlation between the advancement of women and violence. They also noted that often it was empowered women who were likely candidates for abuse. Time and time again women in the focus groups made this point. Some outlined psychological abuse:

It is worse because they call us names; Miss 50/50, Miss Independent, Miss Prostitute and so on which hurt us emotionally. Because when you hear such a name you feel like...those words become painful to us, you see, being called by the names that you don't know and you don't understand; which also those things relate to [poverty] and so on and so on. Because if you are poor, even if a person can call you that, you will obey his rules and play by his rules (Female political campaigner, F22).

Others stressed physical violence:

More women are empowered, the more aggressive men get because they are loosing their space in society. So I think in as much as the law of the country allows women to be empowered that is going to have a spin-off effect on men's behaviour and men's attitudes towards women. In particular those so-called empowered women. They'll always be subject of abuse all over the...everywhere you go. Even from other women as well. And it doesn't...I am not only referring to perhaps males who they have relationship with or their husbands and partners; even complete strangers that they do not know – if you are perceived to be an empowered woman you are subject to a lot of abuse from society in general (Female in economic reconstruction, F46).

And another:

I know there are men who, because you know they are unemployed, they are not educated – and I mean we have already mentioned how women have been empowered educationally, economically and otherwise. That these men tend to be angry. And they vent out their anger in which ever way that they can... And on the other hand you have women who are so empowered, who are working, and the husband has now become unemployed, and now maybe he didn't even have education. And the woman out of frustration, out of all sort of anger that has been going on and on – you find the woman also telling them that look...I had a case where a woman was telling the husband that after all you are valueless, you are equivalent to a Zim-dollar. So their security begins to be like challenged and also that anger goes on and on and on. But I think we're really living in a situation where everybody's security, be it children, be it women, be it men themselves, our security is really not guaranteed (Female in public life, F116-117).

Yet another:

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<sup>7</sup> Some 50% of women in South Africa report experiencing domestic violence whether physical, emotional or financial (Walker, 2005b). In 1998 incidence of rape were reported to be 115.6 per year for every 100,000 of the population (Walker, 2005b). Of course South Africa is not alone in excessive levels of violence against women. For example, survey studies found that 40%, 42%, 46% and 60% of women reported being regularly physically abused in Zambia, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania respectively (cited in Wood & Jewkes, 2005). Studies in the US show that between 33% and 37% of men have physically aggressed against their female dating partners (Holtzworth-Munroe & Hutchinson, 1993; White, 1991).

What has made the men now to be so cruel to women worse than before because our government says a man and a woman are equal. That is what they don't want, they buy us in our customs, *lobola*,<sup>8</sup> you are my property, I can do anything that I like, you see. I think that *lobola* thing that is the most oppressor to a woman and the daughter, because now, today men they rape their children, his own child; not even a step-daughter. They rape [their] own child and he rapes you and you don't have to report it because now where am I going to stay? What I'm going to eat? We, women have got no security and freedom. I think it's even worse (Female victims, F144).

With another participant in the same group sharing the same view:

And the other thing what makes men to be so angry? As she said government tell all the people that women and men are equal. Ja if we are working together, me and my husband [neh]...so I'm earning more than him. So when I say a word in the house, he will say: awe! It's because she is earning more than me. So that is why they are so angry and sometimes he wants to hit me. When I say a thing he don't want to listen (Female victims, F144).

Another participant directly linked greater female representation in Parliament to violent reactions by men, saying:

I think that this issue of having women in Parliament like Manto Msimang. I think that thing has brought more oppression for us because at the grassroots men do things spitefully because they want to prove...I don't know maybe they want to prove us wrong that what we are not what we think we are. That is why the increased rates of rape, abuse. Everything is done spitefully (Female political campaigner, F24).

In other words, some of the advancements in terms of the security of women at a social, political and equality level, even if not completely realised in South Africa, have led to other insecurities at a physical level for women. This is of course not an argument to say that there should not be these advancements for women, but highlights the complex interplay between security and insecurity, and its highly gendered nature. One of the participants captured this cycle when he said:

I mean the more you provide security for women, if the security for men is not [strengthened] or it doesn't improve. I mean sort of to give security to women you take something from men. That on its own creates its own problems. Because if you look at the trends, what has happened in South Africa over the past, maybe 40 years; I mean maybe 10% of women used to have fulltime employment and almost if you compare to men maybe the difference was 30% or 70%. Most men were the breadwinners, were the sole providers in families and stuff. But what is happening now it seems which it seems as more women become economically secure, men they loose economically. So men would try other means to regain their power, which then threatens [women's] security again at the same time. So there are those sort of contradictions within this whole concept of security (Male political campaigners focus group, M4).

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<sup>8</sup> The practice whereby a man pays a prospective bride's family a set amount. Similar to a dowry but works in the opposite way as a dowry is generally paid by the bride's family to the prospective groom.

## **Masculinity, transition and violence**

There are many different issues that could be raised in interpreting the data outlined above. In this section of the paper, one aspect of this will be discussed, i.e. the relationship between South Africa's transition, masculinity and violence. Before moving into this, and because this is a dominant theme of the rest of the paper, it might be worth making some general points about the notion of masculinity and then briefly outlining what is meant by masculinity, or what is now more common parlance in the literature, masculinities.

### **Defining masculinity**

Most theorists and researchers argue that it is more accurate to talk of masculinities rather than masculinity (Brittan, 2005; Whitehead & Barrett, 2005). There are multiple masculinities (Connell, 2005b) and as many masculinities as there are men (MacInnes, 2005). Stereotypes dominate views of men in South Africa and they fail to capture masculine diversity (Morrell, 2001a). There is no typical South African man (Morrell, 2001a). What could be more different in South Africa, Morrell writes, than the "image of a grim-faced, rifle-toting soldier clad in camouflage gear, patrolling the streets of a township and a colourful cross-dresser, strutting his stuff in a gay pride march?" (Morrell, 2001a, p.3).

In addition, masculinities are not uniform and power relations exist within in them. There are subordinate and marginal masculinities (Whitehead & Barrett, 2005), as well as hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 2005a). As Connell writes "...we have to unpack the milieux of class and race and scrutinize the gender relations operating within them. There are, after all, gay black men and effeminate factory hands, not to mention middle-class rapists and cross-dressing bourgeois" (Connell, 2005b, p.38). In the South African context any discussion of masculinity must be infused with an analysis that understands different racial and class positions (not to mention sexual locations) in terms of masculinity. This analysis however also needs to recognise that all masculinities influence one another (Morrell, 2001a). Although white masculinity has been hegemonic in South Africa, urban black and rural African masculinities are now jostling for ascendancy (Morrell, 2001a). New masculinities are developing.

We also need to acknowledge that the sociology of masculinity, which has until recently largely focused on Western masculinities, is fairly new only coming into its own in latter half of the twentieth century (Whitehead & Barrett, 2005). The study of masculinities

in Africa is still in its infancy (see recent studies Lindsay & Miescher, 2003; Morrell, 2001b; Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005; Reid & Walker, 2005b; Richter & Morrell, 2005). The psychology of masculinity, or more precisely psychologists attempting to understand the male psyche, has been part of the discipline for over a century—but critical analyses of the interrelationship between psychology and a gendered social context are almost no existence. Where the study of the psychology of men exists, it is clinical and largely experimental (see the journal *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*).

There is however a vast literature on masculinity (Edwards, 2006) with some 700 references identified in the sociology field alone (Whitehead, 2006), of which a full review is beyond the present scope. That said, masculinity, because of its very nature and being “un-have-able” (Edwards, 2006) is not an object of which a coherent science can be developed (Connell, 2005b). One of the best kept secrets in the literature on masculinity, according to Clatterbaugh, is that “we have an extremely ill-defined idea of what we are talking about” (Clatterbaugh, 1998, p.28). This does not mean we should not theorise about masculinities (Brod & Kaufman, 1994), or that hegemonic (Connell, 2005a) and marginal masculinities should not be analysed.

Notwithstanding the complexities of actually trying to define masculinity and masculinities (see Clatterbaugh, 1998), Whitehead and Barret define masculinities as those “behaviours, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organizational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine” (Whitehead & Barrett, 2005, pp.15-16). In a similar vein, Connell agrees that “masculinity” does not exist except in contrast with “femininity” and no masculinity arises except in a system of gender relations (Connell, 2005b). Masculinity is “simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture” (Connell, 2005b, pp.33-34). Masculinity can also be ways of “doing gender” which are related to a social environment (Walker, 2005a, p.237).

### **Violent masculinities in South Africa**

What is evident from the research data presented above is that ways of “doing gender” in South Africa are changing as the context shifts socially, economically and politically. This is having a wide-ranging impact. In this paper I have chosen to focus on one such impact, namely, that a section of South African men are experiencing (or so they say) the process of

change and the cementing of the equality agenda in terms of women as profoundly destabilising. It has been found globally that men's responses to the equality agenda vary from the avidly anti-feminist men's movements to pro-feminist responses, and within this spectrum are a range of other phenomenon such as the gay men's movement (Whitehead & Barrett, 2005). Some men have welcomed the changes and men working for gender justice in a number of groups are now evident, across the West (Connell, 2005a) and in Southern Africa (Morrell, 2001b; Walker, 2005a). That said, and with the caveat that men are responding to the South African transition in a variety of ways, it was the reactive voices in this study that provoked most concern. Some men articulated a sense of alienation from the new order, but more concerning is that consistently women spoke of a backlash against the advancements made in terms of women's rights and equality, specifically noting that they feel this is one of the reasons why violence against women in South Africa is so high.

Other research (Walker, 2005a) has found a similar view among some South African men (in this case black men in Alexandra Township aged 22 to 35). Some of the men in Walker's study made strikingly similar comments to those in this study. For example some men felt their so-called place in society has been usurped or become redundant:

You know the biggest problem facing men today is women. Women are emancipated now. They are much more self-sufficient, they are able to do things for themselves. They don't need us men to survive. You don't even need a man anymore to have children. You need a sperm yes but at the end of the day women can survive without men (Interview, 25 April 2002 Walker, 2005a).

Others felt women were being disproportionately advantaged over men:

Men say, there is a voice for women, what about us. Some believe that the government is treating women much better ... that the government is overdoing it ... when women shout the government listens. Change to men is like taking away their privileges. When things change they fear it, I fear it, because they don't know what will be happening. (Interview, 11 June 2002 Walker, 2005a).

The link between this and violence against women was also made:

We are seen as the enemy now. Women are advancing in education, economically. Men feel threatened. I see a lot of women who have gained a lot of confidence in who they are. I know women who provide for themselves now and that threat is actually what maybe evoking a lot of violence. It is that strength, it is that threat of knowing that I can no longer hold onto that same position I held, or my father or my bother held. I suppose you could say I feel weaker. I'm not saying the rape is a new thing but it's playing itself out in why men are being more violent (Interview, 25 April 2002 cited in Walker, 2005a)

Whitehead and Barrett note that one should not be surprised by a threatening reaction from men to women's new-found sense of power because feminist thinking has exposed and highlighted the power, position and practice of men (Whitehead & Barrett, 2005). They argue, for example, that changes that have benefited certainly Western women over the last five decades have more to do with changes in social and environmental contexts (e.g. the Pill, emergence of the knowledge economy, greater legal pressure for equality) than the direct result of men changing (Whitehead & Barrett, 2005). The type of backlash found in this research is in essence not that different to the determination seen in a number of countries by men to fight even the smallest gains by women (Faludi, 1991; MacInnes, 2005; Morrell, 2005). The major difference however is that in the South African context this backlash has been directly linked to high levels of violence against women.

In the South African context this is explained as a continuum or extension from violent masculinities in the past. It appears, writes Walker, that violent masculinities of the past have become even more violent in the present South Africa (Walker, 2005a). Xaba, for example, argues that there was a "struggle masculinity", i.e. young impoverished black men were endowed with respect and status as "young lions" and "liberators" within their communities, their violence was revered, and especially those in leadership positions were coveted by women with many having multiple partners (Xaba, 2001). "Struggle masculinity" considered women to be fair game (Xaba, 2001) and rape was used at times as a way of "disciplining" women (Goldblatt & Meintjies, 1997). But the "struggle" version of masculinity is no longer considered acceptable in the new order, with the result that such men (and those that aspire to this type of masculinity), many of whom are unemployed, now find themselves villains and often on the wrong side of the law for the very same reasons that they were heroes in the past (Xaba, 2001). It has been noted that the process of demobilisation can often lead to a sense of emasculation and a subsequent desire by some men to reassert their power through violence; this can be true for ex-combatants as it can be for security forces (Gear, 2005). Men whose masculinity is threatened can feel forced to find ways of reasserting their manhood (Sideris, 2001b). This view was, at least to some degree, confirmed in the study because the male ex-combatant focus group was the most vehement in their views that they were being disproportionately discriminated against by society and women, and felt most disillusioned.

Of course there are dangers with such an analysis. It can feed into stereotyping ex-combatants who are already one of the scapegoats of the new South Africa (Cock, 2001; Gear, 2005) and fail to take into account the fact the heterogenous nature of the ex-combatant

population in South Africa (Gear, 2005). Furthermore, we cannot underestimate the marginalisation and extreme poverty of some ex-combatants in South Africa, a point the ex-combatants in this study continually emphasised. For example:

...there is a saying; 'hunger knows no law'. Any person who has a feeling of being marginalised, would definitely have within himself a stronger urge of insecurity. Because as I talk with you, we are talking in Jo'burg; around here there are combatants that are sleeping in under-tunnel garages, that are here. They survived by breaking in the stores. You meet them in town selling goods that they took from the stores; you meet some of them peddling drugs, others are washing cars. Now, a sense of feeling better as individuals is relative to the situation that is created in this country for every person (Male ex-combatant, M77).

We therefore need to guard against an analysis might result in a focus on the expressions of this masculinity (which is of course important), and fail to pay significant attention to structural factors such as unemployment and living conditions that exacerbate the expression of violent masculinities. Poverty coupled with rising expectations have "proved a tragic mixture of fostering violent masculinities" (Morrell, 2001a, p.19), or as one participant in the study put it "the economy of the country is contributing to that" (F156). This is born out of a historical context in South Africa where violence and masculinity are interconnected and "partly imprinted in social and economic conditions" (Reid & Walker, 2005a, p.7). One of the interviewees felt the threat men feel coupled with internalised aggression had devastating results:

Well I think that men are incorrectly threatened. I think that to a large extent men, have not dealt with internalised aggression and hostility and violence – we're a very violent society. Even in the way we speak – you know the psyche is. But that aside, I think that whether there has been a backlash (Interview, ICD, I9).

That said, the point at the core Xaba's analysis is an important one, i.e. there is some continuity between past and present can always be expected. This is not restricted to ex-combatants. The fact that South Africa's past was steeped in violence—in everyday life and on the sports field, in the anti-apartheid struggle, and the way whites sanctioned the use of violence with many participating in it as soldiers, police or in "ordinary" violence committed against black workers—some masculinities are invariably deeply enmeshed with violence.

Men's identity, argues Sideris, can emerge from conflict more damaged than women's (Sideris, 2001a). As a result of the fact that many women have to find survival strategies throughout the war they are often better equipped to deal with it afterwards (Sideris, 2001a). Traditional gender roles are also often disrupted during conflict, with some women who had

previously been excluded from public life becoming economic providers, leaders and activists (Turshen, 1998). Men can feel threatened by the survival of women and attempt to reassert their manhood, generally in the spaces where they can with this most typically being intimate relationships (Sideris, 2001a). This can one of the reasons why women fail to consolidate wartime gains as men reassert their claims, often violently (Meintjies *et al.*, 2001).

This type of reasoning, fits with research in the psychology field, which theorises that the process of masculine socialisation tends to results in men feeling intense pressures to abide by gender role norms and expectations (Moore & Stuart, 2004). Research studies have shown that when masculine norms are challenged, “gender role stress” (Pleck, 1981, 1995) is experienced for some men with the result being violence or verbal abuse (Eisler, 1995; Moore & Stuart, 2005).

However, as Niehaus writes reflecting on the issue of rape, we should not confuse an analysis that relates men’s positioning and violence with an overly simplistic analysis that sees men’s violence as simply an expression of patriarchy (Niehaus, 2005). It is often the fantasies of powerful identities which are inscribed in gender hierarchies and emotionally invested in by men that fuel male violence, that is violence may ensue when investments are thwarted, or when others refuse to take up certain subject positions, or when men face contrary expectations of these identities (Niehaus, 2005). This picture is complicated by the fact that there are multiple masculinities. Feminism has long argued that men collectively have power over women, critical masculinity studies show that “not all men have the same amount of power or benefit equally from it, and that power is exercised differently depending on the location and the specific arrangement of relations which are in place” (Morrell, 2001a, p.9).

### **A crisis in masculinity?**

The mass-media, and some of the men and women, in this study, clearly feel the changes in the country have left some men feeling profoundly insecure. Men articulated this in the study, for example:

...you give women economic security, it creates a problem in the balance of power inside the home. Because all of a sudden if I am the man and I am the breadwinner, and I’m used to giving orders, and all of a sudden my wife gets a job, courtesy of Affirmative Action legislation and policy; I mean she is able to interact and see a much wider world, and then that challenges our relationship in the house. It affects the power balance inside the house (Male political campaigner, M6).

And another:

Now one of the weirdest things about South Africa is the fact that men, in particular African men, have not been vocal in articulating their victimhood. They still think that they belong to a patriarchal society which is dominated by men. But in fact I see men feminised or womanised or weakened; or whatever word you want to use. I see lots of men unemployed, unable to fight for their right to earn a living, even to be men, to be able to attract a woman, because they can be able to take care of their wives or their girlfriends. I'm talking about myself and the people that I interact with (Male ex-combatant, M38).

And one of the interviewees:

But I think in that issue it may be true in a way to a certain extent that some men feel insecure. And maybe it's because of the fact that there has been more emphasis on women development. And they might feel that they have been left behind (Interviewee, senior women Police Commissioner, I31).

A women focus group participant made similar points:

Men's attitudes – in terms of the black African male – in the sense of having to deal with racism, they've had to assert themselves. And probably not in ways which are not as constructive, but they've had to battle for their manhood in a society that used to say that they are lesser of men than other men of other races. And now recently with the rising of women empowerment they are still feeling that women are getting more powerful, they are getting more rights. So they seem to be getting left behind all the time, somehow. And I think it's something that we need to look at as a country – that how do we strike that balance of getting women to the positions where they have to get to without alienating them. I think men struggle a lot with that. It's something that we need to look at as a country (Female in economic reconstruction, F38).

This discourse is not too dissimilar to what has become known as the “crisis in masculinity” discourse. The crisis in masculinity discourse assumes that men have been reduced to being confused, dysfunctional and insecure because of (1) rampant consumerism, (2) women and particularly feminism's assault on male bastions of power, and (3) the now widespread social and cultural disapproval of traditional displays of masculinity (Whitehead & Barrett, 2005).

Most of the leading theorists studying masculinity however question the notion of a crisis in masculinity. Whitehead and Barrett for example argue that changes in the construction of masculinity are not new and masculinity facing a so-called crisis has happened in most of the twentieth century (Whitehead & Barrett, 2005). Masculinity was essentially and always a holding position (MacInnes, 2005). Furthermore, to convey that traditional masculinities are in crisis implies they are disappearing, but “aggressive

masculinity is alive and well” (Whitehead & Barrett, 2005, p.7) and visible in the rituals of neo-nazis, paramilitary groups, the military, in films and on TV, and on the sports field.

Connell questions the notion of a “crisis in masculinity” because such as crisis implies that there is one masculinity and it is fixed (Connell, 2005b). The word “crisis” implies a coherent system of some kind and this is an illogical way of thinking about a configuration of practice within a system of gender relations (Connell, 2005b). Others too argue that the use of the crisis discourse implies that male identity is a fragile and tentative thing, which makes it almost impossible to talk about masculinity without implying it has some substantive base (Brittan, 2005).

This is not to say that the changes for men (and women) have not been historically significant, but Whitehead and Barret warn of falling into the trap of equating changes in men’s experiences and opportunities with a crisis in masculinity (Whitehead & Barrett, 2005). Masculinity may well be in crisis but not in the way that it is often popularly perceived (Edwards, 2006). As Edwards writes, “...some men are suffering or will in all likelihood suffer some experience of crisis on some level, whether in relation to loss of employment prospects, despair as to their future, rising demands from women in their personal lives, frustration at perceived inequalities with other men, or all of these” (Edwards, 2006, p.16). Walker however prefers to talk about masculinities being disturbed and destabilised since 1994 in South Africa (Walker, 2005a). Others too prefer to talk about the disruption and transformation of masculinities (Connell, 2005b) and not an overall crisis but rather tendencies towards crisis (Connell, 2005a, 2005b; Edwards, 2006). Edwards takes this a step further and argues that masculinity is not in crisis, rather *it* is crisis (Edwards, 2006). In the conclusion to this paper I return to the question of whether South African men are indeed in crisis, but before that I explore the implication of the application of the crisis discourse to the South African context.

### **Implications of the crisis discourse**

After listening to the testimony of the men, and the fears of the women, at the heart of this study, I am convinced we do need to consider the psychology of masculinity, or more precisely the psychological processes entangled within the political practices of masculinity. This is not a psychology that is founded on a crisis orientated discourse that seeks to explain and address how hard it apparently is to be a man in this modern world or in a transitional society, but one that seeks to understand the interrelationship between psychological

processes and the political context. Such a psychology of masculinity does not seek to understand what makes up a male psyche (as if such a thing exists in some essentialist sense) or seek to find ways to make men feel more comfortable with a changing world and acontextually reform their unhelpful masculine ways, but rather seeks to understand the interplay between psychological, social and political processes that make gender justice such a foreign concept to many men. As MacInnes writes the discussion is therefore about:

...social relations which characterize the fag-end of patriarchy, about the material and symbolic legacy of millennia of rule by men, about the processes responsible for the collapse of patriarchy, and about the ideology of gender, masculinity and femininity which women and men use to make sense of the transitional period which they are now living (MacInnes, 2005, p.326).

Elsewhere I have written about the role of fear and so-called political insecurity of some parties to political transitions (Hamber, 2006). The arguments I make about fear and insecurity during times of political upheaval can be applied to the context and questions surrounding how men are perceived as reacting to political transition processes. Essentially these arguments focus on the way issues related to political contestation are often recast as individual psychological problems in our post-1990s rapidly individualising world. The crisis in masculinity discourse is an example of this because it concerns the “psychologising” (e.g. men feel anxious and insecure) of an essentially political issue concerning the power infused relationship between men and women.

The crisis discourse implies that at the heart of the matter is the insecurity of men brought on by social changes in which their so-called traditional masculine roles have become obsolete or dysfunctional. The preferred response to this, from Cosmo man to the work of some NGOs, is for men to “abandon what is imagined to be traditional masculinity in order to get in touch with their feelings and develop their emotional articulacy, for they have nothing to lose but their inhibitions, loneliness, and alienation from intimacy and the source of their humanity” (MacInnes, 2005, p.323). This is what informs some psychological analyses that see men as suffering from “emotional autism” (Horrocks, 1994, p.1) (i.e. being bereft of feelings and emotionally empty), with the result that they are prone to violence and profound states of confusion.

To solve the problem of the recalcitrant men opposed to change, or so the popular argument goes, society needs to recognise their pain and victimhood, men need to see how damaging their emotional quarterisation is to themselves and others, and then reform—they need to become “new men”. This is a vision of masculinity that is non-violent, monogamous,

modern, responsible, and built on respect for themselves and others (Walker, 2005a). The “new man” does not hold stereotypical views such as women are nags, their place is in the home, and they should be beautiful and say little (Morrell, 2001a). The “new man” even cares for the environment, and is the polar opposite of the environmentally destroying nature killer (Allister, 2004). Although the “new man” is normally seen as a middle class white phenomenon, in South Africa some black men are adopting the “new man” approach (Morrell, 2001a). At a policy levels this means throwing money at male awareness programmes, and self-help groups to get men to better negotiate the crisis before them whilst finding their “new man” inside. Men are also encouraged to form support groups and work together to fight their inner demons.

But this approach has three problems. First, the notion of the “new man” who is sensitive, engaged in equal power relations in the office and home, and so on, is essentially a concept generated in the well-resourced West. The extent to which this will serve or will suit men in a poorly resourced context is, at least, debatable (Morrell, 2005). As Morrell and Swart have argued:

...the past half century, economic forces have wrought havoc on labour markets. Unemployment levels are very high and subsistence agriculture remains largely the preserve of women. Men have often not responded well to these challenges, with alcohol and women all too often being their refuge. In the process, relationships with family, spouses and children have been neglected. Amongst the many points that African feminists have made, is that men and women depend on one another and that efforts should be put into creating healthy bonds between men and women. In this context, the model of a desirable masculinity may look different from that of the ‘new man’ (cited in Morrell, 2005, p. 85).

Some have also question the applicability of this largely Western approach because it is predicated on the notion that men were primary bread winners and the major change leading to their so-called insecurity has been in men losing this function. In many communities in South Africa, especially because of the migrant labour system (and now the HIV/AIDS epidemic), women were/are primary breadwinners and caretakers of the family (often with the assistance of other female relatives). During apartheid, and especially in rural areas, women often found themselves with high levels of independence and a growing economic power (Sideris, 2005). Thus, it is not recent social changes that have altered power relations in the home. For many men it is the “visions of the patriarch” which offers them “the promise of maintaining control over their wives and children” (Sideris, 2005, p.122). This view (or fantasy) that “traditionally” South African domestic life has always been dominated by men and that they had only recently lost their position as head of the household, thus creating

recent insecurities about their masculinity, permeated the perceptions of men (and a number of the women) participants in this study. For example:

Because if you can change the mindset of the family first because the violence happens in a home, that is where it starts. And then we can go out and change the mindset of men; especially us black people. Because culturally, a man is supposed to be a senior. But now because women have got rights men feel threatened that the rights that we have been given by the constitution makes us not to respect them. Meanwhile we know that a man, culturally, is a senior or is a main person in the home. But if you come together and change his mindset and work together, his security...if I am safe the whole family would be safe as well (Female in the male/female politicians focus group, M135).

Second, one of the by-products of this analysis is that it treats men as a homogenous unit and beckons them as group to take up the struggle against all that is sexist and unequal. They generally can only do this once they have found themselves and their gender consciousness. Of course, there is nothing problematic with struggling against sexism and inequality, or “finding yourself” and a gendered consciousness—but as Connell (2005) reminds us we need to be careful that in doing this we do not evade the structural problem of counter-sexist politics created when we see men as an interest group. The lessons of the 1980s are that the more men’s groups emphasised solidarity among men and journeys to find such things as “deep masculinity”, the more willing men seem to be to abandon social justice (Connell, 2005b). Connell notes:

The familiar forms of radical politics, rely on mobilizing solidarity around a shared interest. That is common to working-class politics, national liberation movements, feminism and gay liberation. This cannot be the main form of counter-sexist politics among men, because the project of social justice in gender relations is directed against the interest they share. Broadly speaking, anti-sexist politics must be a source of disunity among men, not a source of solidarity (Connell, 2005a, p. 236).

This is not to say that work targeted at transforming the masculinities of individual men is not helpful and that it can prevent violence and contribute to social change. A number of useful projects aimed at men and built on the male solidarity principle have been identified in South Africa. For example, campaigns like the Five in Six Campaign in South Africa which is encouraging men to organise neighbourhood-based groups and train them to ensure greater security and justice for women and girls have been reviewed positively (Peacock, 2003). The White Ribbon Campaign has been launched in South Africa, the South African Men’s Forum, Getnet and ADAPT all now work with men and their work is considered significant (cited in Reid & Walker, 2005b). Sideris’ work in rural South Africa has shown that individual men,

working with different projects, have rejected violence, gone against social norms and are attempting to undo the ravages of violent masculinities (Sideris, 2005). The interviewee from the CGE in this study made a similar point, "...men's forums [that] are emerging, and I think it's very positive" (I45).

This good work aside, however, we need to take heed of Connell's words above, i.e. male counter-sexist politics and groups can often fail to seriously address social justice. Sideris too has noted that there "is a danger of celebrating the creative force of human agency, whilst ignoring the power of deeper psychological anxieties and wider social structure that sustain relations of domination and subordination" (Sideris, 2005, p.135).

A further by-product of the development of men's organisation can be, in societies where progressive men's movements have largely been absent, is that they then become overvalued. Such overvaluing can take the focus off more long-standing and necessary services such as providing women's shelters. The interviewee from the CGE gave an example where a recent grant was made to a men's group that was twice as large as a grant to women's organisation helping victims of violence (I45),<sup>9</sup> in part because of the attention the group has got for "behaving differently". She also went on to add that men are also now getting awards for their work, noting: "Where [three men] are gonna be given awards for being gender sensitive. I am not against it and I am saying we must be cautious around it" (I45).

Outside of the micro-politics of how resources might be allocated once we recognise the need to bring men into the process of gender transformation, the crisis in masculinity discourse has much wider social and political implications. For example, overly focusing on the transformation of individual men (as important as this might be) can feed into the mixing of politics with the language of the individual. This summons policymakers, or the political architects of transitional political processes in societies coming out of conflict, or NGOs working with men for that matter, to find ways to provide a new sense of belonging, purpose and place for men.

Stanley Cohen (1996) questions whether "self-understanding", "identity," and "meaning" should be public issues. Agreeing with Habermas, he reminds us that the state is not a religion and therefore does not have to give meaning and identity to the citizenry by

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<sup>9</sup> In South Africa NGOs are predominantly concerned with social, legal and psychological crisis support for female victims of domestic violence (Wood & Jewkes, 2005). This however is a reflection of the mismatch between the scale of the problem of domestic violence and scant resources to deal with it (Wood & Jewkes, 2005).

means of nationalism or patriotism (Cohen, 1996). The same can be said when we think about making policy to address the crisis tendencies experienced by some men. The risk of embracing the crisis in masculinity discourse, or responding too hastily to it at a policy or political level, is that the disempowerment some men feel is then *only* understood as a spontaneous manifestation of the threats they feel to their “innate” masculinity. In other words, it beckons us to see them as being in a state of psychological *anomie*. Their so-called insecurities are interpreted as psychological, biological, or cultural in origin—not political (Robin 2000).

But the crises some men report are not the product of free-floating anxieties that unexpectedly erupt with the slightest change in social and political context. Rather, these so-called crises point to disquiet about power and control in a changing political dispensation where the equality agenda is on the march. The real concern for the men in this study is about access to power in a range of spheres from the personal to the public. We cannot divorce the voicing of male insecurities (which are spoken about as belonging to all men as if men are a homogeneous whole) from their class and racial position and the daily threats different men might feel. At the same time, and without losing focus on the big picture, every person has some power if we recognise multiple agencies and capacities (Morrell, 2001a). We therefore cannot split the expression of insecurity from the secondary gain of using the rhetoric about these so-called insecurities for gendered political outcomes. Masculinity as a concept can in itself become “the last ideological defence of male supremacy” (MacInnes, 2005, p.326).

## **Conclusion**

It is true that there is now a small but vociferous men’s movement ready to argue that men are now the oppressed sex...It is also true that if it is a bad time to be a man, it is still, in almost every area of life, a worse time to be a woman (MacInnes, 2005, p.314).

As intellectuals and policymakers we need to resist the temptation to be drawn too heavily into a debate about the *anomie* that many men feel as a result of political and social change. We need to recognise that male cries of insecurity do not just come out of thin air—they are the product of a social and political context in which gender is integrally linked with power and changing power relations in a myriad of ways. As power relations begin to shift and struggles intensify, or when new and powerful discourses of equality emerge as in South Africa, there will be different responses to this. Some men will acquiesce (reluctantly), others will embrace it and still others will resist. We need to understand the nature of these

reactions, and the driving force behind them from a perspective that recognises that insecurity as a psycho-social-political phenomenon that is deeply gendered requiring fundamental dismantling. The more radical position calls for a more thorough pursuit of the politics of equality and not for masculinity to be abolished or reformed (MacInnes, 2005). As Haenfler has written, men's movements often lack "the profeminists' understanding of structural inequality, more intentional involvement of women, and thorough comprehension of the gendered nature of society" (Haenfler, 2004, p.97). To create new gender identities, Jacklyn Cock notes that this "cannot be achieved through equal rights feminism – a stunted feminism which focuses on specific issues such as women's access to armies and combat roles. Nor can it be achieved through a radical feminism which focuses narrowly on domestic violence against women. Nor can it be achieved by women acting alone" (Cock, 2001, p.54). In other words, both a structural analysis and a more detailed understanding of the interrelationship between men and women is needed.

Another critique of the individualised psychological approach to challenging masculinity is that it paints reform as a solo or male group endeavour rather than an interrelation and socially contested one. As was noted above, anti-sexist politics, or gender transformation more broadly, at least at this stage, must become a source of disunity among men not one of solidarity (Connell, 2005a) and include the intentional involvement of women (Haenfler, 2004). The process also needs to be both individual, interrelational, and community and society-wide. At the same time, we cannot simply dismiss attitudes to men who espouse some of the unpalatable views expressed in this study. The challenge when one thinks of how the insecurity of some women is interlinked with purported insecurities of some men who act out violently, is how do we engage with the unpleasant and often confused voices represented in this study, and immerse ourselves in and shape the politics they represent. We also need to be acutely attuned to the way new securities can lead to new insecurities as was mentioned earlier in this paper.

To effect change in masculinities is not a straight-forward process and it is impossible "to proclaim a particular agent as the cause of change...there is often a gap between intention and effect" (Morrell, 2001a, p.20). That said, the research presented in this paper suggests that five broad strategies are needed to improve security for women and effect change in hegemonic masculinities during times of transition, that is:

- a) the structures that perpetuate and continue to support inequality and oppression need to continually be fought against and dismantled. This is a job for feminist activists

- both men and women, and men specifically “need to critique practices and policies which fuel and flow from violent masculinities” (Morrell, 1998 cited in Cock, 2001, p. 54);
- b) in line with the view that “disunity” {Connell, 2005 #8, p.236} is needed not just solidarity among men to move the process forward, multiple masculinities should be emphasised and articulated, points of rupture between dominant masculinities and emerging new masculinities should be continually highlighted and explored. These should be accentuated to increase contestation between masculinities, seeking change through confrontation;
  - c) understanding and knowledge about the nature of the progress and changes (and their limits) in South Africa needs to be more widely spread and publicly discussed to counter the perception that women have gained disproportionately;<sup>10</sup>
  - d) legislation and policy that will alter dominant patterns of behaviours need continue to be reinforced and enforced, i.e. policies and legislation about domestic violence or equity, through to issues such as paternity rights and ensuring men’s role in childcare; and finally
  - e) conscientising, support groups and awareness raising for men about their masculinities need to continue. Increasing pressure on the masculine subject can force men to negotiate, reflect and consider their position as men {Whitehead, 2006 #35}. But such strategies cannot be solely inward-looking. Work aimed at conscientising and changing men needs to be understood contextually and seek to continually integrate a more thorough analysis of structural inequality into such processes. It also needs to encourage the involvement and interaction with women.

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<sup>10</sup> I make this point against the backdrop of the interview with a senior women from COSATU. Her opinion confirmed the thought that the fact that changes for women have been celebrated and promoted so vehemently in South Africa, it creates the impression that the gender justice has been achieved. The real statistics of the inequality still need to be continually put into the public domain. She felt very optimistic about this, noting: “In other words while we were all oppressed; because blacks were mostly oppressed the whites would feel now that we are discriminating them, whereas we are redressing. And the black men would always feel that we are discriminating them whereas they know that women have been the worst. So I believe that that theory and belief is not honest, and is resistant and it is not wanting to confront issues in the various ways in which these kinds of oppression has been taking place. But you take that man, the very same man who feels marginalized, you put him down, and you make him...you reflect to him the situation analysis that informs our biasness towards women; then that person would understand. So the political dispensation, the analysis of it is not something that would be for everybody. But the conscientisation of the people would make them to understand until we reach a common understanding of our struggle and why we have to address it in different ways” (177).

Finally, I would like to end by saying that I do not believe there is a crisis in masculinity as such in South Africa. This language in itself feeds into dangerous reactionary politics. It was used in this way by some male participants in this study. The crisis in masculinity discourse has been used to inform the backlash against feminism and women's interests the world over (Whitehead, 2006) and tends towards blaming women for the anxieties of men (Sideris, 2005). But equally, and to be true to the research data, it would be amiss not to recognise that some men certainly appear perplexed as to what is going on and feel their views of the world have been shaken. During the course of this research it became clear that many men "just don't get it" when it comes to gender justice. Simply put, globally for men "there are changes afoot" (Whitehead, 2006, p.6) and we should take the assertions of insecurity by men seriously (Sideris cited in Reid & Walker, 2005a) without pandering to them. Many men in South Africa are genuinely marginalised (Interview, senior official COSATU, I83) and this needs to be part of the analysis.

At the same time, however, the more I have read the testimonies of women in this study I have also become convinced that many of them also feel deeply confused and insecure about the state of gender relations in South Africa. More broadly, therefore, it might be more accurate to talk about the South African transition having thrown gender relations into some state of turmoil.<sup>11</sup> The changes are complex and both men and women have to grapple with these, furthermore no one is a bystander as we are all implicated in constructing a world of gender relations (Connell, 2005b). There are ruptures and destabilisation in gender relations across the board (an inter-related panoply of crises, if you will) rather than a single crisis facing men as one (undefined and indefinable) part of the system of gender relations in a rapidly liberalising South Africa. As a women participant put it "...I think we're still struggling with the concept of freedom" (F49). This requires structural change and interventions that address these "relations" as well as not shying away from radical social change. The destabilisation process is necessary. But this should not be done in a superficial way that might individualise or psychologise the political problem of gender inequality missing the root causes that find expression in insecurity and violence against women. The security of women and its relationship to masculinities needs to be understood contextually from outside in and from inside out. It is only such inquiry that can better prepare us to

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<sup>11</sup> The main focus of this paper has been the South African transition post-1994, of course we also cannot divorce wider changes from global processes. As one participant put it: "it's very difficult to separate what has happened to our society in terms of the actual peace agreement and our own internal dynamics and the effects of globalisation on society. And I think often we get the two mixed up because the timing was precisely at the same time" (Male/female politicians focus group, M141).

dismantle the obstacles to gender justice. These obstacles are not merely men as some homogenous group, but the structures and discourses that create and nurture their dangerous masculinities

In the final instance, however, the views expressed in this study are also a sober reminder that the ideological struggle for equality is far from won. To return to the words of Leonard Cohen—musician, writer and poet—quoted so loosely at the beginning of this paper, and to twist his meaning no doubt, there still is a “war between the man and the woman” and a war between those who say it is over and those who say it is not. Reactive masculinities would want us to believe the war is over and victors (women) are now taking their revenge, which can, given statistical evidence, be politely described as nonsense.

But at the same time, despite the simplicity of the war analogy, it is useful because war is notorious for people sinking into all or nothing mentalities, or mentalities that trap one into fixed positions. War is complex. Men can be allies with women, as well as the greatest obstacles to the security of both sides. Women too can be turned by the enemy. It is also understandable that many women would be sceptical of the bona fides of men who pledge their allegiance. It is reasonable if this is tested. We would also be mistaken to treat this war as static, or about a simplistic understanding of one-dimensional power that operates outside a complex set of micro-power struggles, relationships, representations and discourses. The so-called enemy is also evolving and changing all the time. Men have adopted the language of feminism and equality (or at very least taken notice of it); they are using and abusing it, and changing it.

Masculinities observed in the transitional South Africa are not gender-equitable, alternative or progressive, but they are new, ambivalent and embryonic, and vying for space for expression (Walker, 2005a). The new South Africa, with all its liberalism, has exposed different masculinities both past, present and evolving warts and all. Taking the optimistic view, the seemingly intractable male voices heard in this study also offer hope or at least show signs of progress on some level—the system has been disrupted, and change will no doubt follow. Masculinities are in a constant process of change. The next phase in this struggle is about how we react to the changes in South Africa has brought to the fore, minimise the damage that might flow from them and harness all opportunities for further change rather than sinking further into the myopia a complex transition can bring.

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