Masculinity And Transitional Justice:
An Exploratory Essay

Brandon Hamber

Abstract

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on including women in transitional justice processes. Some scholars question whether transitional justice mechanisms take obstacles for women, such as ongoing domestic violence, into account. This article follows this line of inquiry using the prism of ongoing violence against women in South Africa. It focuses on masculinity, and questions the degree to which masculinity, and violent masculinities in particular, are considered in transitional justice studies. The article calls for a nuanced understanding of masculinities and their relationship to transitional justice, and sets parameters for a more concerted study of the subject.

Author Profile

Brandon Hamber is Director of INCORE (International Conflict Research Institute), an associate site of the United Nations University based at the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland where he also serves as Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies. Trained as a clinical psychologist, he has in the past coordinated the Transition and Reconciliation unit at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg, South Africa. He has published extensively on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the psychological impact of political violence, and the process of transition and reconciliation. His latest book is entitled *Transforming Societies after Political Violence: Truth, Reconciliation and Mental Health*, and was published by Springer, New York in 2009.

Acknowledgement

Introduction

The capacity of transitional justice mechanisms to prevent violence, develop a human rights culture or generally contribute to human security in societies in transition has not been thoroughly evaluated. Questions remain regarding the impact of learning about and documenting human rights violations, for example via a truth commission[1]. There is little empirical evidence to demonstrate that lessons from transitional justice processes are generalised to the prevention of other types of violence, such as that based on gender in the wake of political conflict.

Such questions risk overloading transitional justice mechanisms with aims that are beyond their influence. Yet, societies emerging from conflict face a plethora of issues of security, social exclusion and poverty that extend beyond the conventional political arena. A broader view of justice that embraces social justice seems necessary. With regard to gender in particular, a more comprehensive analysis of transitional justice – one that takes 'intersectionality'[2] into account – is needed.[3] Christine Bell argues that we should not try to make a feminist notion of justice fit transitional justice processes but rather ask how transitional justice helps or hinders projects to secure material gains for women.[4] Meanwhile, the roles of men and of masculinity as cross-cutting themes within such a debate are largely unexplored.

---

[1] Tristan Anne Borer, ed., Telling the Truths: Truth Telling and Peace Building in Post-Conflict Societies (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); Brandon Hamber, '"Nunca Más'' and the Politics of Person: Can Truth Telling Prevent the Recurrence of Violence?' in Telling the Truths: Truth Telling and Peace Building in Post-conflict Societies, ed. Tristan Anne Borer (Indiana: University of Notre DamePress, 2006).

[2] A definition of intersectionality is challenging and the subject of much academic debate. See for example, Rooney and Ní Aoláin's article in this issue, as well as the recent special issue on intersectionality in *Politics & Gender* 3(2) (2007). The central premise of the concept is that identities are 'integrated' and 'mutually constitutive,' or that gender differences must be understood 'within a particular context and in connection with other aspects of identity, both individual and collective.' (Editorial Comment,'Intersectionality,' *Politics & Gender* 3(2) (2007): 229). In other words, as Eilish Rooney notes, intersectionality provides a framework for analysis 'of how gender relations, class relations and configurations of ethnicity and race are interwoven in the structural make-up of a given society.' (Eilish Rooney, 'Engendering Transitional Justice: Questions of Absence and Silence,' *International Journal of Context and Law* 3(2) (2007): 98).

[3] Rooney, ibid.

[4] Christine Bell and Catherine O'Rourke, 'Does Feminism Need a Theory of Transitional Justice? An Introductory Essay,' *The International Journal of Transitional Justice* 1(1) (2007): 23–44.

3

This article is intended as an exploratory essay on masculinity and transitional justice. It aims to set parameters within which a more concerted study of the subject could be undertaken. The article questions the degree to which violent masculinities in particular are taken into account in societies in transition and in the study of transitional justice. It begins by outlining some of the key literature on masculinity. It then addresses the debate in South Africa, where the literature on masculinity is burgeoning, and uses the South African case as a prism to raise questions about the relationship between transitional justice and violent masculinities. It calls for a nuanced understanding of masculinity within transitional justice debates.

The article concludes with four key points relevant to a new theoretical and research agenda. First, it recommends a greater focus on the issue of masculinity in transitional justice research and practice. Second, it highlights the dangers of an approach to masculinity that treats 'men' as an interest group devoid of a gendered analysis. Third, the article criticises responses to the questions raised by masculinity that centre on the 'crisis in masculinity' discourse. Finally, it highlights the importance of considering how transitional justice mechanisms infused with a greater understanding of masculinity can influence types of violence (such as intimate partner violence) traditionally seen as outside their focus.[5]

Masculinity: An Open Field

In recent years, there has been a growing focus on including women in transitional justice processes. This has involved, inter alia, an improved sensitivity to the concerns of women in processes such as national reparations

---

[5] Rachel Jewkes uses the term 'intimate partner violence' to describe 'physical violence directed against a woman by a current or ex-husband or boyfriend .... Intimate partner violence often includes sexual violence and can also include psychological abuse; both these forms of abuse often, but not always, accompany physical violence.' (Rachel Jewkes, 'Intimate Partner Violence: Causes and Prevention,' *The Lancet* 359 (2002): 1423). That said, there is confusion in the literature as to whether the term includes sexual violence. In this article, the terms 'intimate partner violence' and 'domestic violence' include the full gamut of violence Jewkes outlines in the quote above.

4

programs,[6] the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (ICTY and ICTR)[7] and truth commission hearings and final reports.[8] Such changes, although they represent progress, have been criticised because of the lack of capacity of such institutional reforms 'to deliver feminist transformation and the tendency of interim reforms to produce new obstacles for women.'[9] A move beyond thinking about women in transitional justice to thinking about the role of gender more broadly, including a focus on men, has also been advocated.[10] To date, however, studies on masculinity and transitional justice are all but nonexistent.

Masculinity studies, largely in sociology and psychology, have in turn said little about political transitions or transitional justice. That said, the study of masculinity itself is still developing. The sociology of masculinity, which has until recently largely focused on Western masculinities, only came into its own in the second half of the 20th century.[11] The study of masculinities in Africa is still in its infancy.[12] Although the topic is mentioned in some peacebuilding research that explores gender questions,[13] a systematic treatment of the subject is not readily available. 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 limited. Where the study of the psychology of men exists, it is clinical and largely experimental,[14] although the last decade has seen a growing number of studies on masculinity

---

[6] Ruth Rubio-Marín, ed., *What Happened to the Women? Gender and Reparations for Human Rights Violations* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2006).

[7] Bell and O'Rourke supra n 4.

[8] Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjies, 'Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission' (Johannesburg: Unpublished submission to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1997).

[9] Bell and O'Rourke, supra n 4 at 33.

[10] Rooney, supra n 2.

[11] Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett, 'The Sociology of Masculinity,' in *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett (Cambridge: Polity, 2005).

[12] See for example, Lisa A. Lindsay and Stephan F. Miescher, ed., *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003); Robert Morrell, ed., *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2001); Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morrell, ed., *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); and footnote 28 below.

[13] For example, Gender Action for Peace and Security, 'Report on Involving Men in the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security Based on the Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) Event Hosted by the Canadian High Commission' (Canada House, London: GAPS, 2007); Sheila Meintjies, Anu Pillay and Meredith Turshen, 'There Is No Aftermath for Women,' in *The Aftermath: Women in Post-Conflict Transformation*, ed. Sheila Meintjies, Anu Pillay and Meredith Turshen (London: Zed Books, 2001); Mireille Widmer, '"Real Men" without Guns,' *New Routes: A Journal of Peace Research and Action* 11(4) (2006): 12–14.

[14] See the journal, Psychology of Men and Masculinity.

5

in discursive and critical psychology.[15] In the legal field, masculinity has been largely restricted to the field of criminology[16] and family law.[17]

Clearly, there is a vast literature on masculinity,[18] with some 700 references identified in sociology alone.[19] *The Men's Bibliography*,[20] an online resource, lists 17,300 books and articles on a wide range of subjects. A full review is beyond the scope of this article. That said, masculinity, because of its nature and being 'unhave-able'[21] is not an object around which a coherent science can be developed.[22] One of the best-kept secrets in the literature on masculinity, according to Kenneth Clatterbaugh, is that 'we have an extremely ill-defined idea of what we are talking about.'[23] There is a need to theorise masculinities,[24] and theorising about masculinity in transitional justice is an open field.

Most theorists and researchers working on this subject argue that it is more accurate to talk of masculinities than of masculinity.[25] There are multiple masculinities[26] and as many masculinities as there are men.[27] In South Africa, research on masculinity in transition is burgeoning, and some of the views emerging from this work are instructive.[28] For example, it has been asserted

---

[15] See for example, Desmond Painter, Martin Terre Blanche and Jill Henderson, 'Critical Psychology in South Africa: Histories, Themes and Prospects,' *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* 5 (2006); Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley, 'Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity: Imaginary Positions and Psycho-discursive Practices,' *Feminism & Psychology* 9(3) (1999). Also see selected essays in the *International Journal of Critical Psychology*.

[16] See for example, Judith Allen, 'Men, Crime and Criminology: Recasting the Questions,' *International Journal of the Sociology of Law* 17(1) (1989): 19–39; Richard Collier, 'Men, Masculinities and Crime,' in *The Blackwell International Companion to Criminology*, ed. Colin Sumner (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003); Richard Collier, 'Reflections on the Relationship between Law and Masculinities: Rethinking the "Man Question",' *Current Legal Problems* 56 (2003): 345–402.

[17] See for example, the subsection entitled 'Divorce, Separation and Child Custody' in *The Men's Bibliography: A Comprehensive Bibliography of Writing on Men, Masculinities, Gender and Sexualities*, compiled by Michael Flood, 16th edition (2007), http://mensbiblio.xyonline.net.

[18] Tim Edwards, *Cultures of Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[19] Stephen Whitehead, *Men and Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006).

[20] Flood, supra n 17.

[21] Edwards, supra n 18 at 1.

[22] Robert William (now Raewyn) Connell, 'The Social Organization of Masculinity,' in Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11.

[23] Kenneth Clatterbaugh, 'What Is Problematic About Masculinities?' *Men and Masculinities* 1(1) (1998): 28.

[24] Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman, ed., *Theorizing Masculinities* (California: Sage, 1994).

[25] Arthur Brittan, 'Masculinities and Masculinism,' in Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11; Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11.

[26] Connell, supra n 22.

[27] John MacInnes, 'The Crisis of Masculinity and the Politics of Identity,' in Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 10.

[28] See for example, Mamphela Ramphele, 'Teach Me How to Be a Man: An Exploration of the Definition of Masculinity,' in *Violence and Subjectivity*, ed. Veena Das et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Robert Morrell, 'The Times of Change: Men and Masculinity in South Africa,' in Morrell; Graeme Reid and Liz Walker, 'Masculinities in Question,' in *Men Behaving Differently: South African Men since 1994*, ed. Graeme Reid and Liz Walker (Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005); Liz Walker, 'Men Behaving Differently: South African Men since

that stereotypes dominate views of men in South Africa and fail to capture masculine diversity,[29] as well as that there is no typical South African man.[30] What could be more different in South Africa, Robert Morrell asks, 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?'[31] Such questions could apply to many societies around the world.

In a similar vein, the international literature on masculinity generally suggests that masculinities are not uniform and that power relations exist within them. There are subordinate and marginal masculinities,[32] as well as hegemonic masculinities.[33] As Raewyn Connell writes,

> we have to unpack the milieux of class and race and scrutinise 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.[34]

In South Africa, any discussion of masculinity must be infused with an analysis that addresses different racial and class positions, not to mention sexual locations. Such an analysis also must recognise that all masculinities influence one another.[35] Although white masculinity has been hegemonic in South Africa, urban black and rural African masculinities are now jostling for ascendancy.[36] New masculinities are developing, as is true the world over.

Despite the complexities of trying to define masculinity,[37] Stephen Whitehead and Frank Barrett do so in terms of 'behaviours, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organisational locations, which are commonly

---

1994,' *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 7(3) (2005): 225–238. Thokozani Xaba, 'Masculinity and Its Malcontents: The Confrontation between "Struggle Masculinity'' and "Post-Struggle'' Masculinity (1990–1997),' in Morrell, supra n 12.
[29] Morrell, supra n 12.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid, 3.
[32] Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11.
[33] Robert William (now Raewyn) Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
[34] Connell, supra n 22 at 38.
[35] Morrell, supra n 12.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Clatterbaugh, supra n 23.

7

associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine.'[38] Connell agrees that 'masculinity' does not exist except in contrast with 'femininity' and no masculinity arises except in a system of gender relations.[39] Masculinity is 'simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture.'[40] Masculinity can also be ways of 'doing gender,' which are related to a social environment.[41]

Masculinity, for the purposes of this article, is defined as the widespread social norms and expectations of what it means to be a man,[42] or the multiple ways of 'doing male.'[43] Bearing in mind its inherent plurality, 'widespread' needs to be understood in the broadest terms possible. Within transitional justice, and particularly transitional justice mechanisms such as truth commissions or trials, the social norms and expectations under scrutiny are often those developed and shaped during war and its aftermath. Implicit will be the roles of men, and their relationship to women, as combatants and victims of political conflict. Critical masculinity studies would urge one to look beyond this to the positioning of men in a range of social and political settings following conflict.

The ways of 'doing male' are continually changing, shaped not only by the experience of war but also by the shifting social, economic and political context during and after conflict. To fully understand the role of masculinities within the transition from conflict to 'peace,' the continuities between past and present need to be tackled. This is a challenge to many transitional justice processes, which are often founded on liberal legal frameworks that demand the delineation of what is considered political violence and what is not. This kind of delineation has been challenged from a gender perspective. Defining what is conflict and what is non-conflict can result in a lack of emphasis on socio-economic exclusions (which can be seen as a form of structural violence)

---

[38] Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11 at 15-16.
[39] Connell, supra n 22.
[40] Ibid, 33–34.
[41] Walker, supra n 28 at 237.
[42] Widmer, supra n 13.
[43] Drawing on the work of Connell and Whitehead, cited in Ken Harland, Karen Beattie and Sam McCready, 'Young Men and the Squeeze of Masculinity: The Inaugural Paper for the Centre for Young Men's Studies,' Occasional Paper No. 1 (Belfast: Centre for Young Men's Studies, 2005).

or violence deemed private, such as domestic violence.[44] For example, forced marital unions or forced domestic labour have to date not been adequately recognised as human rights violations in reparations debates.[45] The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was criticised for its narrow focus on individual, physical forms of harm that underplayed the 'everyday' experience of women.[46] A narrow view of violations can lead to a gendered hierarchy of suffering because, generally, more men are directly affected by what is considered conflict-related violence.[47]

South Africa and Violent Masculinities

Violence against women is a global problem. Survey data reveals that 40, 42, 46 and 60 percent of women report being physically abused regularly in Zambia, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, respectively.[48] Studies in the United States show that between 33 and 37 percent of men have demonstrated physical aggression against their female dating partners.[49] In South Africa, a society that has undertaken major transitional justice initiatives as well as numerous policy and legislative interventions focused on addressing violence against women,[50] incidence remain extremely high – it is one of the highest rates in the world for a country not at war.[51] According to police statistics, there were 52,733 reported rapes in South Africa from 2003 to 2004.[52] Domestic violence is more difficult to assess because it is not classified as a separate crime. One study

---

[44] Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, 'Political Violence and Gender During Times of Transition,' *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 15 (2006): 829–850.

[45] Ruth Rubio-Marín, 'The Gender of Reparations: Setting the Agenda,' in Rubio-Marín, supra n 6.

[46] Fiona C. Ross, *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2003).

[47] Beth Goldblatt, 'Evaluating the Gender Content of Reparations: Lessons from South Africa,' in Rubio-Marín, supra n 6.

[48] Katherine Wood and Rachel Jewkes, 'Violence, Rape and Sexual Coercion: Everyday Love in a South African Township,' in Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11.

[49] Amy Holtzworth-Munroe and Glenn Hutchinson, 'Attributing Negative Intent to Wife Behavior: The Attributions of Maritally Violent Versus Non-violent Men,' *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 102 (1993):206–211; Jacquelyn.W.White and Mary P.Koss,'Courtship Violence: Incidence in a National Sample of Higher Education Students,' *Violence and Victims* 6 (1991): 247–256.

[50] Human Rights Watch has noted, for example, that South Africa had some of the most progressive domestic violence legislation in the world but that it was not being properly implemented. Cited in Shanaaz Matthews and Naeema Abrahams, *Combining Stories and Numbers: An Analysis of the Impact of the Domestic Violence Act (No. 116 of 1998) on Women* (Pretoria: Gender Advocacy Project and Medical Research Council, 2001).

[51] Wood and Jewkes, supra n 48.

[52] It is asserted however that only one in nine cases are actually reported to the police suggesting the figures of actual rape would be substantially higher. See, 'One in Nine: Solidarity with Women Who Speak Out,' http://www.oneinnine.org.za.

9

found that 50 percent of women in South Africa report experiencing domestic violence, whether physical, emotional or financial,[53] and another that one in four women in South Africa have experienced physical violence from an intimate partner.[54] Levels of intimate femicide are also high. On average, four women are killed per day by an intimate partner in South Africa, or 8.8 per 100,000 women.[55]

Attitudes toward violence against women, especially among men, are also alarming. According to a survey of 2,059 men in the Southern Metropolitan Local Council Area of Johannesburg (an area which includes Soweto, various informal settlements and the central business district), 31 percent of men believe that they can be violent toward women and one in four believes women mean 'yes' when they say 'no' to sexual advances.[56] One in thirteen in the same survey feel that it is acceptable to hit one's wife as a form of punishment if she argues.[57] A more recent countrywide survey found that 10 percent of South Africans feel domestic violence against women could be justified.[58]

When it comes to sexual violence, a household survey of South Africans found that almost two-thirds of men believe women are partly to blame for sexual violence, and 4 percent of women believe forcing sex with a wife or girlfriend is not sexual violence.[59] Nine percent of women surveyed said they are drawn to sexually violent men.[60] Of the male sample, 20 percent said they had had sex with women without their consent, with 6 percent saying that they like 'jackrolling' (a popular term for gang rape) or that it is a game.[61]

The connection between poverty and sexual violence is also well established in

---

[53] Liz Walker, 'Negotiating the Boundaries of Masculinity in Post-Apartheid South Africa,' in Reid and Walker, supra n 28.
[54] Matthews and Abrahams, supra n 50.
[55] Shanaaz Matthews et al., 'Every Six Hours a Woman Is Killed by Her Intimate Partner: A National Study of Female Homicide in South Africa,' MRC Policy Brief 5 (Cape Town: Medical Research Council, 2004).
[56] CIETafrica, *Summary Report South Africa: 1997–2000 Surveys on Sexual Violence* (Johannesburg: CIETafrica, 2000), supra n 56.
[57] Ibid.
[58] The World Values Survey South Africa, quoted in Sapa/AFP,'SA Proud of its Rainbow Nation - Poll,' *IOL Online*, 27 August 2007, www.iol.co.za.
[59] CIETafrica.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.

South Africa and elsewhere. Although all women surveyed in the South African study above believe they have a right to avoid sexual violence, some 60 percent feel they would accept it if they did not have enough money and 47 percent of respondents said they would allow their children to be abused in the same situation.[62] Rachel Jewkes reviewed studies across the world and concluded that although violence occurs in all socio-economic groups, poverty and associated stress are key contributors to intimate partner violence.[63] Intimate partner violence is more frequent and severe in groups living in poverty.[64] This is likely at least in part a result of the trapping influence of poverty – studies internationally show that women who are better off are more likely to leave abusive relationships.[65]

These statistics, specifically those concerning South Africa, suggest that the TRC had little impact on the physical security of women, let alone their social and economic security. Transitional justice mechanisms obviously cannot do everything. Their success needs to be evaluated within the context of other institutions, such as national human rights institutions or the criminal justice system, and of social, economic and political change more generally. As Rooney notes, however, while transitional justice experts may not be in a position to influence directly what happens to women, they can shape the discourse that determines the potential for transitions to deliver benefits.[66] This leaves one asking whether transitional justice processes, notwithstanding the context in which they unfold, are fulfilling their full potential in terms of preventing violence against women.

This question may sound tangential but it becomes vitally important to transitional justice studies when, as in the South African context, current gender violence is often explained as an extension of the past. It appears, writes Liz Walker, that violent masculinities of the anti-apartheid era have become even more violent in the present South Africa.[67] Thokozani Xaba, for example, argues that there was a 'struggle masculinity'; meaning that young

---

[62] Ibid.
[63] Jewkes, supra n 5.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Amy Farmer and Jill Tiefenthaler, 'An Economic Analysis of Domestic Violence,' *Review of Social Economy* 55(3) (1997): 337–358.
[66] Rooney, supra n 2.
[67] Walker, supra n 28.

impoverished black men who were associated with the anti-apartheid struggle were endowed with respect and status as 'young lions' and 'liberators' within their communities.[68] Their violence was revered, and those in leadership positions were coveted by women, with many having multiple partners.[69] 'Struggle masculinity' considered women fair game[70] and rape was used at times as a way of 'disciplining' women.[71] 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, find themselves vilified and often on the wrong side of the law for the same reasons that they were considered heroes in the past.[72] Demobilisation can often lead to a sense of emasculation and a resulting desire in some men, both ex-combatants and security forces, to reassert their power through violence.[73] Men whose masculinity is threatened can feel forced to find ways of reasserting their manhood.[74]

Such an analysis on its own however is limited and can feed into stereotyping of ex-combatants – already one of the scapegoats of the new South Africa[75] – and fail to consider their heterogeneous nature.[76] Further, we cannot overestimate the marginalisation and extreme poverty of some ex-combatants in South Africa, and around the world. Poverty and rising expectations have 'proved a tragic mixture of fostering violent masculinities.'[77] This stems from an historical context where violence and masculinity are interconnected and 'partly imprinted in social and economic conditions.'[78] Reviewing a range of

---

[68] Xaba, supra n 28.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjies, 'Dealing with the Aftermath – Sexual Violence and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,' Agenda 36 (1997): 7–17; Graeme Simpson, *Jackasses and Jackrollers: Rediscovering Gender in Understanding Violence* (Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 1992).

[72] Xaba, supra n 28; Graeme Simpson, Brandon Hamber and Noel Stott, 'Future Challenges to Policy-making in Countries in Transition, Presentation to the Workshop' (paper presented at the Comparative Experiences of Policy Making and Implementation in Countries in Transition Workshop, Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland, 6–7 February 2001).

[73] Sasha Gear, *Now That the War is Over: Ex-combatants Transition and the Question of Violence – a Literature Review* (Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2005).

[74] Tina Sideris, 'Rape in War and Peace: Social Context, Gender, Power and Identity,' in Meintjies et al, supra n 13.

[75] Jacklyn Cock, 'Gun Violence and Masculinity in Contemporary South Africa,' in Morrell, supra n 12; Gear, supra n 73.

[76] Gear, supra n 73.

[77] Morrell, supra n 28 at 19.

[78] Reid and Walker, supra n 28 at 7.

literature that explores the link between poverty and masculinity, Jewkes concludes:

> Violence against women is thus seen not just as an expression of male powerfulness and dominance over women, but also as being rooted in male vulnerability stemming from social expectations of manhood that are unattainable because of factors such as poverty experienced by men.[79]

We therefore need to guard against a focus merely on the expressions of masculinity, however critical these are, which do not address structural factors such as unemployment and living conditions that exacerbate violent masculinities and the fact that such dispositions are not shared or typical of all ex-combatants, or men for that matter. That said, the point at the core of Xaba's analysis is important; there is some continuity between past and present. This is not restricted to ex-combatants. South Africa's past is steeped in violence, in everyday life and on the sports field, as well as in the anti-apartheid struggle. Many whites sanctioned the use of violence, participating as soldiers, police or in 'ordinary' violence against black workers. The result is that some masculinities are deeply enmeshed with violence.

Research in South Africa has revealed trends to this end. A number of the men interviewed in a recent study seemed to have the strong misapprehension that there had been a dramatic change for women since 1994, in terms of general social and economic security.[80] In reality, 'more women than men continue to

---

[79] Jewkes, supra n 5 at 1424.

[80] The project proposed to assess the impact of political transition on the security of women in South Africa, Northern Ireland and Lebanon by comparing how men and women conceptualise the notion of security. It particularly examined whether the participants had different notions of how women's security was affected by the transition process. The core research team were Brandon Hamber, Paddy Hillyard, Amy Maguire, Monica McWilliams, Gillian Robinson, David Russell and Margaret Ward with research associates Ingrid Palmary at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in South Africa and Mona Khalaf at the American University in Beirut. See, Brandon Hamber et al., 'Discourses in Transition: Re-imagining Women's Security,' International Relations 20(4) (2006): 487–502. In all, 11 focus groups were carried out in South Africa; six all-women groups, four all-men focus groups and one mixed group. A total of 58 participants took part in the focus groups. The six 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 four male focus groups included political campaigners, those in public life, ex-combatants and victims of political violence. The mixed group (for logistical reasons) comprised male and female politicians. 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 Ingrid Palmary, Sinothile Msomi and Oupa Makhalemele at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg. The above two quotes have been extracted for illustrative purposes from the vast amount of data (one million words from across

live in poverty, greater numbers of women are unemployed and have lower education status than men.'[81] Women interviewed, meanwhile, linked men's perception that women are benefiting from the transition more than them with the challenges to their manhood that men faced, such as unemployment, and with violent behaviour in the home. This was exemplified by the comment of a male participant who directly linked violence against women (by other men, not himself) to the perceived threat of women to men:

> 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 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 ... 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.

A female participant in the study made a similar point:

> [The] more women are empowered, the more aggressive men get because they are losing 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 [the] subject of abuse all over the ... everywhere you go.

Although claims in these interviews cannot be generalised given the size and nature of the sample, they certainly point to trends, especially when read in conjunction with the data on gender violence in South Africa and other studies. Walker's research with men aged 22 to 35 in Alexandra Township

---

the three contexts) and belie a wider textual analysis of the data in which key themes were coded and extracted. This project has been funded under the UK Economic and Social Research Council New Security Challenges Programme (Ref No. RES-223-25-0066), http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/research/projects/rwsst.
[81] Walker, supra n 28 at 227.

elicited remarkably similar comments.[82] For example, some men felt women were being disproportionately advantaged:

> 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.[83]

The link between this and violence against women is 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 [is] 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 brother 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.[84]

These narratives point to a security-insecurity cycle; some of the advances in the security of women, in social, political and egalitarian terms, even if not completely realised, have led to other physical insecurities for them. This, of course, is not to say that there should be no such advances. Rather, it highlights the complex interplay among security, insecurity and masculinity, and its highly gendered nature.

Men's identity, argues Tina Sideris, can emerge from conflict more damaged than women's.[85] Since many women have to develop survival strategies throughout the war, they are often better equipped to deal with the aftermath.[86] Traditional gender roles are also often disrupted during conflict, with some women who had previously been excluded from public life

---

[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid, Interview, 11 June 2002.
[84] Ibid, Interview, 25 April 2002.
[85] Tina Sideris, 'Problems of Identity, Solidarity and Reconciliation,' in Meintjies, et al, supra n 13.
[86] Ibid.

becoming economic providers, leaders and activists.[87] Men can feel threatened by the survival of women and try to reassert their manhood in the spaces where they can, most typically in intimate relationships.[88] This may be one of the reasons why women in a number of societies fail to consolidate wartime gains as men reassert their claims, often violently.[89]

Research in psychology contends that masculine socialisation results in men feeling intense pressures to abide by gender-role norms and expectations.[90] Studies show that when masculine norms are challenged, 'gender-role stress'[91] is experienced by some men, which can lead to verbal abuse or violence.[92] However, as Isak Niehaus writes in reflecting on rape, we should not confuse an analysis that relates men's social positioning and violence with a simplistic conception of male violence as merely an expression of patriarchy.[93] It is often the fantasies of powerful identities inscribed in gender hierarchies and emotionally invested in by men that fuel male violence. Violence may ensue when investments are thwarted, when others refuse to take certain subject positions or when men face contrary expectations of identity.[94] The picture is complicated by the fact of multiple masculinities. Feminism has long argued that men collectively have power over women, while 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.[95]

---

[87] Meredith Turshen, 'Women's War Stories,' in *What Women Do in Wartime*, ed. Meredith Turshen and Clotilde Twagiramariya (London: Zed Books, 1998).
[88] Sideris, supra n 87.
[89] Meintjies, et al, supra n 13.
[90] Todd M. Moore and Gregory L. Stuart, 'Effects of Masculine Gender Role Stress on Men's Cognitive, Affective, Physiological and Aggressive Responses to Intimate Conflict Situations,' *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 5(2) (2004): 132–142.
[91] Joseph H. Pleck, 'The Gender Role Strain Paradigm: An Update,' in *A New Psychology of Men*, ed. Robert F. Levant and William S. Pollack (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Joseph H. Pleck, *The Myth of Masculinity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981).
[92] Richard M. Eisler, 'The Relationship between Masculine Gender Role Stress and Men's Health Risk: The Validation of a Construct,' in Levant and Pollack; Todd M. Moore and Gregory L. Stuart, 'A Review of the Literature on Masculinity and Partner Violence,' *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 6(1) (2005): 46–61.
[93] Isak Niehaus, 'Masculine Domination in Sexual Violence: Interpreting Accounts of Three Cases of Rape in the South African Lowveld,' in Reid and Walker, supra n 28.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Morrell, supra n 28 at 9.

Masculinity and Transitional Justice: A New Agenda

I argue that masculinity should be considered a cross-cutting issue in transitional justice. As a point of departure for future work, I suggest that four broad areas need to be explored. First, more research is needed to advance a more sophisticated approach to masculinity and transitional justice. A focus on masculinity should not be used to undermine services to female victims or a focus on the needs of women.[96] Yet the lack of rigorous studies, debate and policy direction on the role of men in the perpetuation of violence, political or otherwise, is a threat to the security of women. As Colleen Duggan notes in the foreword to a recent book on gender and reparations, further study is needed on 'how men deal with their own compromised masculinity in the face of adversity, since this has a direct impact upon women's long-term chances for recovery and empowerment.'[97] In other words, a more thorough analysis is required of the interrelationship between men, masculinity and the insecurity of women post-transition. Central is the 'need to critique practices and policies which fuel and flow from violent masculinities.'[98] This, in turn, should inform how we construct transitional justice institutions, the discourse with which we infuse them, how they deal with men and the issue of masculinity and how they affect gender relations.

Second, we must consider the impact of transitional justice processes on men. If we are to understand the role of men as the perpetrators of the majority of violence during political conflict and after it (albeit, purportedly, in a different form, such as domestic violence), we must address how we hold men accountable before, during and after transition. We thus need a more complex understanding of changing masculinities, transitional justice processes and their relationships to transition and post-conflict social reform. We must move beyond the idea of simply reforming the male psyche in an individualistic way. It is important to address the societal structures that influence the violent attitudes of many men. Attitudinal change is critical and undervalued in transitional justice, which is often legally driven and focused on larger questions of civil and political rights.[99] A concern with masculinity should not

---

[96] Colleen Duggan, 'Foreword,' in Rubio-Marín, supra n 6.
[97] Ibid, 18.
[98] Morrell (1998) cited in Cock, supra n 74 at 54.
[99] Ní Aoláin, supra n 44.

be equated with talking about masculinity in transitional justice as 'men's issues' or with asking bland questions like 'where are the men in transitional justice?'. Men should not be considered an interest group with a focus on men's needs alone. Rather, masculinity should be seen as central to how we conceptualise the outcomes that transitional justice processes can deliver in terms of gender justice more broadly and women's security in particular. The focal point needs to be on how violent masculinities endure post-transition and how transitional justice mechanism can be structured to impact upon this.

Overly stressing the needs of 'men' at the expense of considering the place of masculinity in transitional justice and a web of gendered relationships could have negative results, such as the spawning of inwardly focused men's movements around transitional justice processes. As Ross Haenfler argues, men's movements often lack a feminist understanding of structural inequality, the intentional involvement of women or a thorough comprehension of the gendered nature of society.[100] Jacklyn Cock contends that new gender identities

> 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.[101]

In the final instance, any analysis of masculinity and its relationship to transitional justice needs to recognise multiple masculinities. This should not be used to dilute a focus on violent masculinities. Anti-sexist male politics and challenges to violent masculinities, or gender transformation more broadly, at least at this stage, must become a source of disunity among men, not one of solidarity,[102] and include the intentional involvement of women.[103] Points of rupture between dominant masculinities and emerging new masculinities should be continually highlighted and explored. These should be accentuated

---

[100] Ross Haenfler, 'Manhood in Contradiction: The Two Faces of Straight Edge,' Men and Masculinities 7(1) (2004): 77–99.
[101] Cock, supra n 74 at 54.
[102] Connell, supra n 33.
[103] Haenfler, supra n 100.

to increase contestation between masculinities, seeking change through confrontation. In other words, both a structural analysis and a more comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships between men and women, and among men are needed. A robust debate should begin among transitional justice experts themselves as to how best to approach the issue of masculinity if transitional justice mechanisms are to influence post-conflict violence and gender inequities.

Third, the international literature suggests that a theory of masculinity and transitional justice cannot be built on the 'crisis in masculinity' discourse. This discourse assumes that men have been reduced to being confused, dysfunctional and insecure because of (i) rampant consumerism; (ii) women's, and more particularly feminism's, assault on male bastions of power; and (iii) the now widespread social and cultural disapproval of traditional displays of masculinity.[104] Contemporary masculinity research generally questions the notion of 'crisis,' with its implication that there is one, fixed masculinity.[105] The word 'crisis' implies a coherent system of some kind, and this is an illogical way of thinking about a configuration of practices within a system of gender relations.[106] Others 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 a substantive base.[107] Furthermore, to convey that traditional masculinities are in crisis implies they are disappearing, whereas 'aggressive masculinity is alive and well.'[108] Aggressive masculinities are visible in the rituals of neo-Nazis, paramilitary groups and the military, as well as in films, on television and on the sports field.

Recent changes for men (and women) have been historically significant, and changes within a transitional society are doubly challenging, but Whitehead and Barrett warn against the trap of equating changes in men's experiences

---

[104] Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11.
[105] Connell, supra n 22.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Brittan, supra n 25.
[108] Whitehead and Barrett, supra n 11 at 7.

and opportunities with a 'crisis in masculinity.'[109] Masculinity may well be in crisis, but not in the way popularly perceived.[110] As Tim Edwards suggests:

> 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.[111]

In the South African context, Walker prefers to talk about masculinities being disturbed and destabilised since 1994.[112] Others talk about the disruption and transformation of masculinities not as an overall crisis but rather as tendencies toward crisis.[113]

A contextual analysis recognises that male cries of insecurity do not come out of thin air but that 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. These power balances are themselves linked to transitional politics and to the transitional justice mechanisms put in place to deal with violence. As power relations begin to shift and struggles intensify, or when new and powerful discourses of equality emerge, as in the South Africa case, there will be different responses. Some men acquiesce (reluctantly), other men embrace change and still others resist. We need to understand the nature of these reactions by recognising that men's expressions of insecurity, which might lead to violent behaviour, are deeply gendered psycho-social-political phenomena that require attention.

Finally, we cannot divorce questions of accountability for human rights violations from the fact that most perpetrators of violence are men and that violence against women seldom stops once the conflict is over as it is deeply intertwined with violent masculinities. Truth commissions, as one transitional justice tool, often are committed to uncovering the truth about the past so 'it' will not happen again. However, exactly what 'it' means is generally not

---

[109] Ibid.
[110] Edwards, supra n 18.
[111] Ibid, 16.
[112] Walker, supra n 28.
[113] Connell, supra n 33; Connell, supra n 22; Edwards , supra n 18.

defined. If 'it' means politically motivated human rights violations, truth commissions may have some preventive effect by highlighting in detail what transpired in the name of politics. If 'it' means human rights violations of all types (which one has to assume is part of entrenching a human rights culture, another aim of most truth commissions), there is little evidence to date that the lessons of truth commissions extend to the post-conflict society.[114] This is starkly evident when it comes to violence against women in transitional societies, and specifically in South Africa.

Transitional justice literature has been criticised for embracing a simplistic liberal notion of moving 'from' male-defined political violence 'to' a liberal democratic framework.[115] A binary view of transition fails to recognise the multiple layers of power that exist within society and the continuities between past and present. This is important when considering gender violence before, during and after conflict. More recent truth commissions have given space for women to talk of such violence publicly, but this may create a disconnect between what is defined as being about the transition and the 'everyday' violence women experience at home and in the community.[116] The end of violence and the start of political reform, including transitional justice mechanisms primarily concerned with civil and political rights, are insufficient in dealing with the harms suffered by many women before and after the cessation of hostilities.[117] They also do not address how violent masculinities perpetuate these harms. This places an onus on transitional justice processes to move beyond concern only with the public realm, accountability processes, legal and institutional rebuilding or formal equality to consider continued injustices in the private sphere.[118] The study of masculinity is integral to this shift.

In addition, an analysis of masculinity and its relationship to transitional justice processes should recognise the complexities of individual and socio-

---

[114] Hamber, supra n 1.
[115] Bell and O'Rourke, supra n 4.
[116] Fionnuala Ní Aoláin and Catherine Turner, 'Gender, Truth and Transition,' UCLA Women's Law Review 16 (2007): 229–279.
[117] Ní Aoláin, supra n 44.
[118] Vasuki Nesiah, 'Discussion Lines on Gender and Transitional Justice: An Introductory Essay Reflecting on the ICTJ Bellagio Workshop on Gender and Transitional Justice,' Columbia Journal of Gender and Law 15 (2006); Ní Aoláin, supra n 44.

political processes in which masculinity is deeply linked to notions of femininity and the social positioning of men post-conflict. Hegemonic masculinities generally demand that 'real men' have gainful employment and provide for their families.[119] Jewkes' review of the relationship between poverty and intimate partner violence highlights the need for a 'renegotiation of ideas of masculinity, and recognition of the effects of poverty and unemployment on men in prevention of intimate partner violence.'[120] This, in turn, demands a more intersectionality-driven analysis[121] of transitional justice and careful scrutiny of how we conceptualise the relationship between transitional justice processes, social reform and prevention of violence in the long term.

The South African case clearly highlights the need for a greater focus on the interrelationship between specific transitional justice reforms (such as targeted reparations for women) and wider social reforms (such as the gender equality agenda). It is vital to understand how violent masculinities persist and react to the advances of women. Undoubtedly, transitional justice processes can shape public discourse and attitudes. To this end, the onus is on these mechanisms and the experts who work with them or theorise about their value to project a nuanced understanding of masculinity that can endure beyond the immediate post-conflict period and thus contribute to a society that allows new masculinities to develop.

---

[119] Harland et al. , supra n 42; Ramphele, supra n 28.
[120] Jewkes, supra n 5 at 1425.
[121] Rooney, supra n 2.