# GENDER ON THE AGENDA:
## NARRATIVE OF MASCULINITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN MEDIA

SANDRA BANJAC & LETHABO DIBETSO
*Edited by Sophie Haikali*

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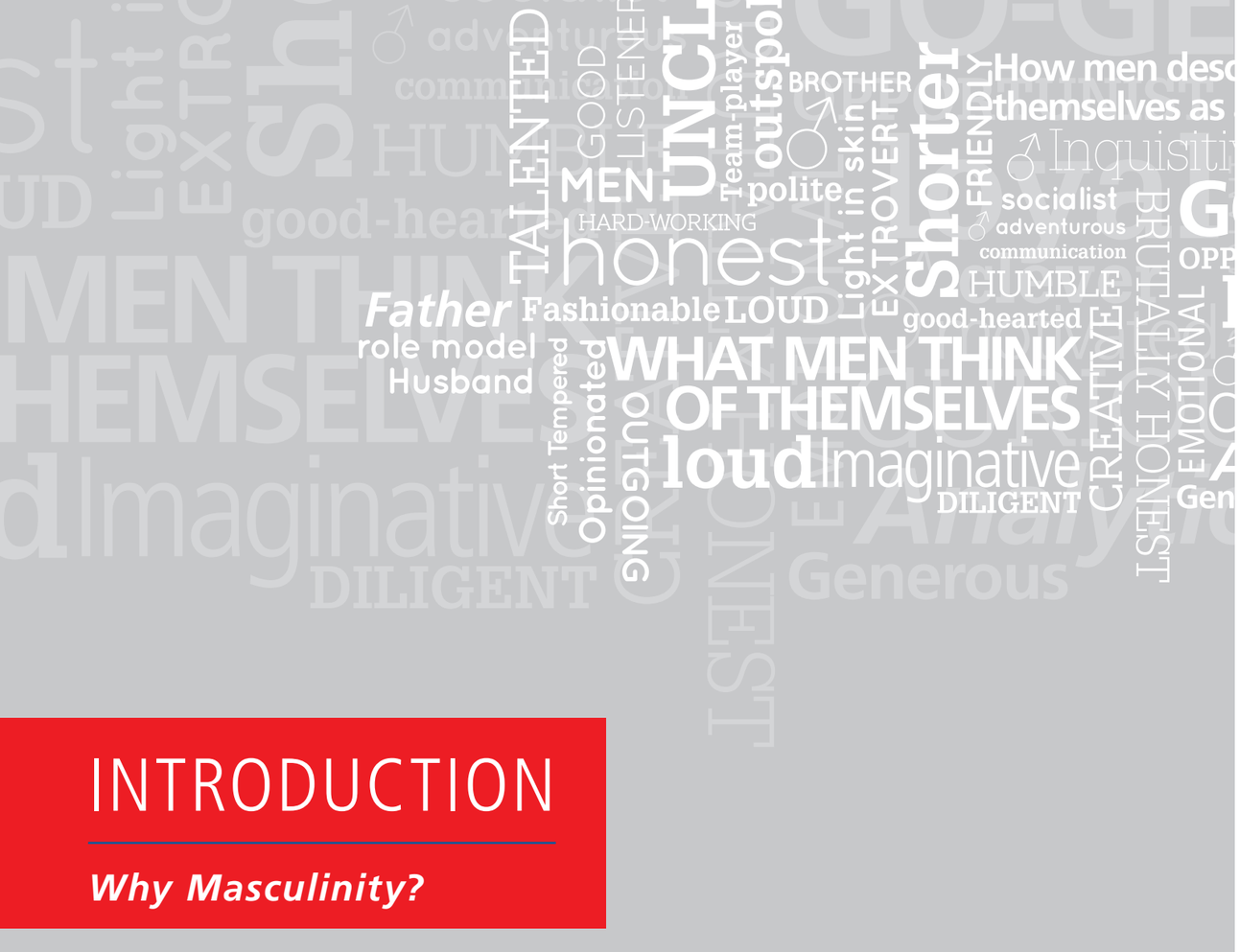


# INTRODUCTION

## *Why Masculinity?*

Media play important roles in society. They play watchdog over government and its structures, report on current events, provide frameworks for interpretation and reproduce predominant culture and society (including gender relations in society). It is said that media doesn't tell us what to think, but rather what to think about. Media news framing and priming can influence what we think about and arguably how we think about certain issues, including definitions of gender. Studies on media's representation of gender have mostly focused on how the female body has been portrayed and how femininity has been used to promote consumerism; whilst efforts to promote gender equity through a focus on men and hegemony have recently become popular discourse. The pervasiveness and impact of media means it can be used not only as a means for developing and entrenching common discourse, but also as a tool for social change; especially in an era where new media can give power to the people, enabling change that can benefit the underprivileged. Traditionally, when research has been carried out on gender and media the focus has been on women, and the representations of women have always been central to feminist media critique. While necessary and indeed understandable, such studies often ignored discussions around how media often portray only one version of heterosexual masculinity, which is described and interpreted in a stereotypical manner. The main aim of this project is to explore masculinity in the media: how it is communicated in the media, how it is understood by men and women, and how the journalists, who produce media content, react to these perceptions of masculinity and the society in which they operate. Therefore a key objective of this research project is to challenge existing versions of masculinity. Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) sought to explore how masculinity is communicated through language and in how far news media reflect or possibly distort the way men (and women) perceive their social gender roles, i.e. masculinity and femininity, and reaffirm their gender identities. The study compares and cross-references information derived from monitoring the content of news media and interviews with journalists, as well as focus group discussions conducted with male and female respondents in Alexandra (Alex) and the University of Johannesburg (UJ).





## *Report Outline*

The first section of this report provides a brief background on masculinity studies in South Africa, followed by a discussion of the research methodology. The research then discusses the findings of the content analyses of newspapers conducted during the 16–22 November 2012 period. The following two sections discuss and interpret findings from the focus groups and interviews with media. The report then pulls together the findings and offers a conclusion and recommendations.

## *Key Findings*

The research study had a three-pronged approach to exploring masculinity in media. Firstly, the project analysed media content which collected over 21,000 words associated with male and female sources in order to find linguistic patterns between different sexes and their portrayals in the media. Secondly, male, female and mixed-sex focus groups were presented with excerpts from media articles dealing with gender issues that would elicit masculine or feminine reactions, in order to assess men's and women's perceptions of masculinity in relation to issues that affect both sexes. Lastly, the project was rounded off by conducting interviews with journalists, who were shown the findings of the media analysis to get their reactions to gendered language, as well as the findings from focus group discussions on particular topics to generate discussion on methods of reporting on such issues, by journalists. The following are the study's key findings:

- Men continue to be the most frequently accessed sources. Out of 1207 sources monitored and analysed, only 20 per cent were women.
- In line with the female/male source ratio, out of 21,580 words collected, 79 per cent were spoken by male sources.
- Among the top 20 words most frequently associated with male sources, the following were specific to men only: play, win, against, bank, manage, court, company, team and govern.
- Among the top 20 words most frequently associated with female sources, the following were specific to women only: use, department, found, look, home, withdraw, school, like and sex.
- The following are the top 15 words out of 55 found to appear only in relation to female sources: husband, church, drink, MDC (Movement for Democratic Change), clinic, reproductive, abortion, hygiene, decompose, belong, chest, mutilate, classified, contraception, divorce.
- Masculinity and its power are linked to possession of money, while Femininity's power is linked to sex. Among both men and women, a man without money is perceived to be less of a man.
- Empowerment of women is perceived as directly contributing to the emasculation of men and loss of masculine identity. Physical strength and violence against the female body is seen to be the only remaining characteristic allowing men to maintain an inherent power.
- Media and society do not display or expose men to alternative versions of masculinity, which would begin to normalize behaviours, experiences and spaces traditionally associated with women.
- Although pregnancy was understood as an outcome of both sexes, girls were blamed for choosing to have sex in the first place and accused of doing so with multiple partners, resulting in the boys' dismissal of responsibility for the child.
- Young men expressed a need to be included in media coverage of teenage pregnancy which almost always focuses on the pregnant girl, to shift perception that girls carry sole responsibility.
- Journalists rely on girls for stories on teenage pregnancy because they carry the evidence of the pregnancy and are therefore easy to source.
- The act of "screaming rape" was perceived as a real and frequent occurrence, done by women to extort money or protect their dignity in the face of judgement from family and friends.
- Men's distrust in the validity of rape claims is perpetuated by media's lack of questioning and exploration of the perpetrator's background and motivation to commit violence against women, when reporting on rape.
- Violence against men is rarely reported on by media, contributing to the stigma associated with men admitting abuse by women. Validity of the claim of abuse was judged by other men according to the physical size of male victim; smaller men are more likely to be believed.

- Women explicitly felt it was necessary to encourage men to feel empowered to report abuse, but implicitly admitted that witnessing a man claiming abuse was perceived as unmanly.

- Many young men and women don't understand whether homosexuality is a choice or biology, and men especially are afraid to enquire or interact with homosexual men for fear of being suspected of being gay.

- Lesbians are believed to be "correctively raped" because their sexual orientation is perceived by men as a disruption and resistance to their inherent hetero-masculine entitlement to accessing women and sex.

- Gay men are perceived as not being real men when they display effeminate mannerism, while lesbians (and straight women) were considered not real women if they don't want to or haven't yet had children.

- Aesthetic definitions of masculinity and femininity remain guarded and show double standards. Women expected men to be well-groomed and to look after their personal appearance, but witnessing the grooming process was perceived as unmanly.

- Female sex workers were judged as "degrading" and to be making excuses to justify their professional choice, while male sex workers were perceived as entrepreneurial and owning their choice.

- Women who dress in revealing outfits were labelled as sluts, untrustworthy and promiscuous. Their choice of dress was critiqued by both men and women; men for making them feel insecure about other men's gazes, and women out of fear they'll lose the man's attention.

- Drinking alcohol, especially in public spaces such as bars and pubs, is deemed a masculine domain. Women who drink alcohol or become drunk within this domain are therefore not afforded protection from violence: If you drink like a man, protect yourself like a man.

- Many young men and women believe Lobola is losing significance, especially among women who are now financially empowered. Likewise, men feel the tradition continues to reinforce a definition of masculinity that relies on the availability of money.

- When shown findings of the media content analysis and gendered words, journalists displayed surprise, and expressed that their word choices are subconscious and driven by societal conditioning.

- Journalists felt that newsrooms are dominated by hetero-masculinity where personal agendas, gender and race influence editorial decisions and story framing.

- Newsrooms are affected by sexual harassment, and the experience of one journalist has been that "men stand together" whereas women "bash each other".

- Low numbers of female sources in stories is said to be because journalists experience them as "sensitive, nervous, and lacking confidence".

- Media's heightened focus on Black violence perpetuates a fear of Black masculinity and leads men to perceive themselves almost exclusively as "violent monsters and rapists", even though among some journalists this was merely a reflection of reality.

- Journalists are aware that White violence and patriarchy is not being interrogated, and that media's treatment and representation of death and bodies is influenced by race.

- In media coverage of violence against women, journalists are reluctant to explore perpetrators and motivations behind violence, because they are concerned about appearing as if sympathizing with the perpetrator or condoning the violence.




# THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

## *Masculinity Studies in South Africa*

Until 1995, South Africa was predominantly a 'man's country' (Morrell, 2001). Power was clearly held by men in both the public and political spheres. Within families, the situation was no different. In both Black and White families men earned the money, held the power and made the decisions. Men were often paid more than women for the same work done, and both custom and modern law discriminated against women. Masculinity and the advancement of women remain sensitive and contentious issues on the African landscape. Each culture has found different ways to express, protect and project male power. For a long time White masculinity has enjoyed the uncontested position of 'hegemony' and has always been capable of securing a position of dominance over other alternate masculinities. In the 'new' South Africa and globally, unequal power relations continue to divide men and women, and whilst beacons of hope are slowly emerging from the debates and struggles for gender change, men are included more and more directly in the change process. Media representations of masculinity have often negated masculinities that offer an alternate view of 'what it means to be a man' - views seen as threatening to destabilise the sex/gender system, and therefore rendered invisible. The study of masculinities increasingly recognises that masculinities, as a category, are not static and stable, but are 'socially constructed and fluid' (Morrell, 1998: 607). How media as the 'fourth estate' spreads discourse around these change processes is important as this directly contributes to how society speaks about and understands gender.

In South Africa, racial identity and class are key determinants in how men understand their masculinity and how they position it (Morrell 2001: 605-630). Connell (1995: 63-81) shows how the process of becoming a working class male and the absence of clear life opportunities has a dispiriting and dangerous outcome on the way young unemployed males consider and conduct themselves. To understand the diverse forms of masculinities in South Africa we need to have some idea of the country's history. South Africa as a country has seen many changes in its governmental structures. For instance we may find South Africans, still living, who have lived in three different forms of governmental eras of South Africa, namely Union, Republic and New South Africa or post-apartheid South Africa. If we thus take the position of these commentators, South Africa with its complex past should be an interesting site to study the impact that these historical changes had on its citizens in general and how they shaped, influenced and changed ideas of manhood in particular, or vice versa how the ideas and interpretations of masculinity changed throughout these different systems. The apartheid era was a critical period in South African history. It created ethnic labels like [1]"Indian", "Coloured" and "Black." Working prospects were racialised, with "Black" restricted to menial low-wage work, Coloureds and Indians in artisan enclave work and Whites in supervisory and professional positions (Morrell, 2001). This resulted in the creation of a racially fragmented society with a racial hierarchy which emphasized the hierarchy of different masculinities. These include a ''White'' masculinity (represented in the political and economic dominance of the White ruling class); an ''African,'' rurally-based masculinity that resided in and was perpetuated through indigenous institutions (such as chiefship, communal land tenure, and customary law) and finally a ''Black'' masculinity that had emerged in the context of urbanization and the development of geographically separate and culturally distinct African townships. Within the urban environment a new version of Black masculinity emerged which informed Black urban culture characterised by the culturally diverse and racially inclusive areas of Sophiatown and District 6. Although urban masculinity rejected the traditionalist and submissive values of rural African masculinity, they were never totally 'devoid of rural experiences' (Morrell, 1998: 625). The Black male subject constantly moved between the urban and rural areas, while there wives, children and parents in many cases remained in the rural villages. Urban Black masculinity was redefined through 'new styles of dress, (violent) modes of behaviour and an open scorn of country simplicity' (Morrell, 1998: 625).

To date their power still plays out in these townships and this can be traced back to critical points in South African history. For example, men who had moved from homelands to urban areas viewed masculinity differently from those that had lived in these urban areas from birth and those who had joined gangs like the Ninevites in the 1980s. Many who were part of these gangs viewed collective violence and the 'brotherhood' of being part of a gang as being superior and that gave many a different perspective on masculinity and power relations, particularly those that were from rural areas/ Bantustans because the move to the city would be their first real encounter with the racialised political economic system. For those living in the townships, gangsterism was a survival technique and a form of resistance against a socio-economic system which reproduced poverty, as well as an opportunity for (male) gang members to reproduce, create and offer each other alternative means and resources to assert their gendered identities as heterosexual men through gang rites and practices. In both Black and White communities, masculinity was used to galvanize men in the protection of privilege (White men) on the one hand, and in the pursuit of freedom (Black men) on the other. Both Black and White men saw force as a legitimate means to forward the interests of their own social group. In the struggle for liberation, being referred to as a young lion or a comrade was an intoxicating and proudly held status. For many young men coming from poor communities, where accolades of any kind were rare, this provided a powerful motivator to get involved. Xaba (2001) argues that these accolades often produced disproportionate egos in young men, reinforced by the way in which these "Young Lions" were coveted by women. Sadly, liberation has not meant employment for many who contributed to it. Many young men who gave up their education to fight for freedom, now find themselves under-qualified and unemployed. These comrades have no legitimate means to attain the "good things" in life, and have turned to their guns once again to get what they feel they deserve. In a short space of time their aggressive potential has stopped being applauded, and they have changed social status from the liberators to criminals. Popular conceptualisations of masculinity in both Black and White cultures emphasize being employed and earning a lot of money. High levels of unemployment among Black men, (and increasingly among White men) present a grave threat to men's self-esteem and manhood. The inability to support a family financially frequently equals failure.

1 Races are capitalised as per Media Monitoring Africa's writing style guide.



These varying masculinities South Africa has witnessed over the years make it compelling to study media's understanding of gender constructions of masculinity and femininity as part of a dominant ideology that prescribes 'proper' behaviour for men and for women. It was the introduction of Connell's theories of masculinity/masculinities that dramatically expanded the reach of gender research and led to the inclusion of men and masculinity as new foci in South Africa. Connell's theory of gender, power, and masculinities with its sensitivity to context and history broadened the academic scope of gender studies (Ibid). In the initial stages, the intersection of racial politics and alienation characterized gender and gender relations in South Africa. During the apartheid era, at the national level, Afrikaner nationalist governments used their political power to popularize conceptions of masculinity which superseded or at least challenged English-capitalist versions which had hitherto dominated those of White South Africans (Morrell et al. 2012: 16). These conceptions were predominantly heterosexual, militarized, and patriarchal with great emphasis on Afrikaner Nationalism and deeply rooted within the ideals of the Dutch Reform Church. This is echoed by Swart (2001) who states that hegemonic masculinity during the apartheid era in South Africa was embodied by the White, heterosexual and militarized Afrikaner, to whom all other masculinities and femininities were subordinate. This resulted in one dominant (and oppressive) masculinity, where some men dominated other men, and participated in the alienation and emasculation of unprivileged Black and Colored men. During this period, national identity was embodied in the White, Afrikaner patriarch. Later, this prestige was expanded to include all White men regardless of ethnic origins. In contrast, African men personified the brutish, infantile primitive who required the White patriarchs' guidance to nationhood whilst Coloureds in contrast were officially included within the White South African geo-political unit as an inferior 'nation-in-the making'. Since the advent of democracy, hierarchies of masculinity in South Africa have arguably become much more pluralistic. However media coverage predominantly continues to reflect only one version of masculinity. The transition to democracy and the progress made in gender studies have brought about an opportunity for the open portrayal of alternative masculinity/masculinities, aside from traditional masculinities. These include but are not limited to:

- *Hybrid men* - Men are forging hybrid identities through combining rural and urban African images with Western media and popular culture.
- *Men with guns* - Guns have been seen by a range of Black and White men as integral to struggles for liberation, robbery and assault, law enforcement, defending privilege and power, hunting and personal protection, sport and competition. Each of these uses brings with it its own contribution to a range of separate identities and ideas of masculinity, ranging from 'Freedom Fighter' to 'Family Protector'.
- *Gay men* - Sexual orientation has created a range of gay identities, from 'quiet and private' to 'Flaming Drag Queens'. In addition to broad homophobia, these men have each had to face a range of taboos and judgments from their individual cultural and social groupings.

In post-apartheid South Africa, many different men (and by implication many different forms of masculinity) have to renegotiate their positions and understanding of masculinity and their societally perceived roles as South Africa enters a new era, including global influences and post-apartheid legacies. Unterhalter in Morrell et al (2012: 17) states that President Mandela represented a ''new'' masculinity, described as ''heroic.'' His public representation challenged much of the violent and authoritarian behaviours and attitudes associated with apartheid's White male politicians, some elements within the liberation movement and the patriarchal, traditional African masculinities of Bantustan leaders. Bantustans and the migrant labour system also created an opportunity for a different type of masculinity for Black males. Those who managed to work in the city were fully exposed to White capitalism and subjected to the most inhumane conditions and humiliation, but could provide for their families and as a result of this could be elevated to a higher stratum in their homelands because they had money.

The new constitution also created an opportunity to reconfigure gender relations by enshrining the principle of equality for all people in the country; particularly by the recognition of women's rights and the right to sexual orientation. However, despite this and other progressive legislation such as the Domestic Violence Act (1997), the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (2000) and the Sexual Offences Act (2007) and policies to eradicate gender inequality and to champion the fight against gender-based violence and discrimination, the statistics on violence in South Africa with men being the perpetrator being a dominant narrative show that the new dispensation is very far from a gender-equal paradise. Many of the structures introduced to promote gender equity and protect women's rights are very weak and are only the first step. (Morrell et al. 2012: 16).


# METHODOLOGY

## How was the Project Conducted?

Over a course of 12 months the project was conducted by relying on three research methods: Media content analysis, Focus groups and Interviews. These are further explained below.

## Content Analysis

Five major South African newspapers were chosen to be monitored for the project from the 16th November to the 22nd November 2012, striking a balance between broadsheet and tabloid newspapers, weeklies and dailies. During this period a total of 557 stories were monitored. The newspapers analyzed were Daily Sun, Sowetan, Business Day, City Press, and Mail and Guardian. A handful of media monitors were selected and trained to content analyze the five newspapers by following a user guide designed to capture data across a variety of factors. The monitors analysed the entire newspaper with the exception of the classifieds. Though capturing journalists name, sex and race did not form part of the content analysis, it assisted us in contacting the journalists for interviews. Monitors were asked to determine if stories were men or women central, meaning, was the story dominated by predominantly male or female sources, and was the topic of the story about a man or a woman. The analysis process also required monitors to document every noun, verb and adjective in the article associated with a source and their sex. Meaning, all words spoken by a source were assigned to that source. Once all the data was collected, it was entered into a database system, and queries were run in order to cross-analyze various aspects of the monitoring data with one another. For example, we cross-referenced words and newspapers, to get a list of the top, most printed words according to newspaper, and how many of those words were more often used by female sources, compared to male sources.





## Focus Group Discussions

The next component of the research involved conducting six focus group discussions; three at the University of Johannesburg (UJ), and three in the Alexandra Community. Each set of three focus groups had a male-only group, female-only group, and a mixed-sex group. All focus groups, consisting of anywhere between 6 and 10 participants each, were first asked to list 5 words that describe them as a person, then as a man or woman, and then words which they associated with masculinity and femininity, followed by a discussion exploring their views on how the media represent men. Participants were then shown a series of media excerpts from publications different to those that were monitored, extracted from stories that were deemed to be on a topic concerning gender. The excerpts were singled out as challenging a gender stereotype or highlighting an inequality or tension between men and women. Each focus group lasted between 1-2 hours and all were recorded and later transcribed. Participants remained anonymous. Focus groups were organized by recruited liaison personnel at UJ and Alexandra.

## Interviews

Lastly, interviews were conducted with journalists working for newspapers that were monitored in the first section of the project. Five journalists – two male and three female - were chosen based on having written the most articles, that is, whose stories accumulated the biggest number of words during the monitoring period. The semi-structured interviews asked journalists to make observations on the findings of the focus group discussions and how that impacts their work. Also, journalists were shown a set of words which were found to appear most frequently in relation to male sources and female sources, and to discuss their thoughts on these findings. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Journalists remained anonymous.


# FINDINGS

The following section of the report will outline the findings of this project, including the media content analysis of five newspapers, focus group discussions with members of the public, and interviews with journalists.

## *MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS: How Media Communicates Masculinity*

During the monitoring period, we analysed the content of leading publications in their particular segments. The monitoring period was outside of the '16-days of activism against gender violence' campaign, meaning the data wasn't affected by spike in gender-relevant stories which occurred during the campaign. South Africa is a highly diverse society in terms of race, languages, class, gender, political and ideological orientations and religious beliefs. When it came to the sex of sources, the monitored publications failed to reflect this diversity in its content. Figure 1 shows that throughout the monitoring period, 80 per cent of the sources accessed were male.

Figure 1

| Sources | |
|---|---|
| Total | 1207 |
| Female | 20% |
| Male | 80% |

Similar to the gap between male and female sources accessed as shown in the previous table, Figure 2 shows that the word ratio reflects that of the source ratio. Word ratio describes the number of words used or allocated to a male and female source in a news story. It is clear from looking at the table that male voices were elevated compared to female sources.

This reflects the hierarchical nature of gender relations in our society with men being given more space to voice their opinion. As a result their voices are amplified in the media. By giving men such prominence, media promote a message that men are superior, which according to media research can manipulate people's perceptions (Wolska; 2011) including those of gender roles and behaviours.

Figure 2

| Words | |
|---|---|
| Total | 21580 |
| Female | 21% |
| Male | 79% |





## *Overall Breakdown of Male/Female Central Stories*

Stories were categorized into four groups with the following criteria: stories in which the most dominant source(s) were male (62%), the most dominant source(s) were female (14%), in which both male and female were equitably sourced in the story (20%) and finally, stories where neither women nor men were central (4%). Figure 3 accounts for the type of story formats in which male and female sources were found together. With the exception of classifieds which were not monitored, any story that was monitored and could not be categorized into a specific format was categorized as 'other'. The figure shows that in 73 per cent of the news stories, both genders could be found, albeit most frequently lacking in-depth exploration of the issue at hand. This was followed by business stories at seven per cent and then news analysis with five per cent, where a lack of diversity in sources becomes more apparent.

Figure 3

| Both men (boys) and women (girls) are central to the news article (as sources and topics) | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Business | 7% |
| Feature/News Analysis | 5% |
| In brief/Short | 3% |
| Interview | 0% |
| News Story | 73% |
| Opinion Piece | 1% |
| Opinion Poll | 1% |
| Photograph | 7% |
| Sport | 3% |

However, if we look at the gender breakdown of sexes central to stories, Figures 4 and 5 below show that women were central in 75 per cent of news stories and men in 53 per cent. One suggestion for the high prevalence of women central news stories could be that, due to high levels of gender-based violence in South Africa, women are often featured as the main subject in stories which cover such crimes. This can also be deduced from the list of words which most commonly appeared in articles where women were central to the story, such as 'kill' - a word that doesn't appear in men-central stories. Women were not featured as central subjects at all in business or sports which are seen as male-dominated territories. In our interviews with journalists from the publications monitored, some stated that when on a deadline or diving into a story where they don't have a lot of background, they will go to their most reliable and accessible sources with which they have an established relationship, particularly in the fields of business, politics and sports - fields which are dominated by men. It should be noted that the percentages in Figure 4, below, add up to a 101% because the figures were rounded off to the nearest decimal.

Figure 4

| Men (boys) are central to the news in this story | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Business | 7% |
| Feature/News Analysis | 2% |
| In brief/Short | 8% |
| Interview | 0% |
| News Story | 53% |
| Opinion Piece | 3% |
| Opinion Poll | 0% |
| Photograph | 3% |
| Sport | 25% |

Even though there are accomplished women in the fields of sport and business, we can see from the figure above that men are more likely to be consulted in these areas as sources and central subjects of stories. This can feed into the stereotype of men continuously being portrayed as the sports heroes and business leaders. Even though there is a consistent push to get more women in government, business and other male-dominated organisations, how media write or produce stories is a reflection of society and how gender relations are structured in society. White (2009) states that fair gender portrayal in the media should be a professional and ethical aspiration, similar to respect for accuracy, fairness and honesty. It is therefore discouraging that there is a lack of diversity when it comes to how media report on gender and who is given the opportunity to speak.

Figure 5

| Women (girls) are central to the news in this story | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Business | 0% |
| Feature/News Analysis | 5% |
| In brief/Short | 7% |
| Interview | 5% |
| News Story | 75% |
| Opinion Piece | 4% |
| Opinion Poll | 0% |
| Other | 2% |
| Photograph | 2% |
| Sport | 0% |

## *Gendered Language*

Gendered language refers to how language and discourse can be used as symbolic representations of gender bias. An important element of this project was to analyse how masculinity is communicated through language in news media, in ordrer to to determine whether male and female sources are portrayed by relying on language that is stereotypically associated with masculine or feminine spaces and occupations, and also to explore what that masculinity looks like and what it is characterized by. This was explored by monitoring and collecting words used by journalists in the process of writing a story. Language is a dynamic and socially-informed tool. Exposure to gendered language, or language used most frequently to speak about women versus men, could influence media consumers about how they perceived men and women. Crucially, men are often missing from conversations about violence against women and children and when they are present, they are shown as aggressors.

As we will see below, the media monitoring exercise indicate gender stereotyping.

## *Women and Men Central Stories According to Words*

Figure 6 below looks at the breakdown of the top 15 words that journalist used in news stories where men (boys) were central to the news story, women (girls) were central to the news story and where both women and men were central to the news story. For the purpose of this report, 'Women and Men Central Stories' refers to articles/stories where 'voices' of sources that were male or female were most dominant. To ensure that the gender of each source was captured accurately where it was not obvious, the monitors searched the internet using the source's name. Some words were commonly used across the two sexes, whilst other words were specific in their frequency to one or the other sex.

Figure 6

| Men (boys) are central to the news in this story | Women (girls) are central to the news in this story | Both men (boys) and women (girls) are central to the news in this story |
|---|---|---|
| said | said | said |
| play | pay | work |
| take | take | company |
| lead | people | have |
| tell | work | court |
| win | house | tell |
| work | kill | finance |
| bank | do | lead |
| go | tell | had |
| people | use | process |
| against | department | party |
| team | allege | share |
| manage | found | take |
| meet | know | meet |
| say | meet | govern |

It is interesting to note that even in instances where both men (boys) and women (girls) are central to the news in this story, the words most frequently featured were nevertheless "masculine" in nature (lead, play, win and govern) in so far that they speak to professions that are most often occupied by men, such as politics and sport.

Figure 7 below shows the top 20 words used by journalists across all monitored publications as they appear in association with male or female sources. The top 20 male words represent nine percent of total words captured while the top 20 female words represent ten percent of the total words captured. There is a correlation between the words used in stories where men or women were central and the most frequently used words in relation to male or female sources across all stories. The words that appear in Figure 7 account for 9 % (male) and 10 % (female) of the total words captured. Among the 20 words listed in the below tables, those highlighted are those that appear exclusively in relation to female or male sources (among the top 20 words) and those left  not highlighted are words that appear commonly among both sexes albeit in different frequencies (marked by percentages). Highlighted words therefore speak of behaviours, actions, spaces etc. that are associated with and describe women and men respectively, and may in turn shape media consumers' perceptions of gender roles and societal performances. For example, that the words 'manage' and 'company' are only seen in the male column of top 20 words insinuates that men more often than women are associated with professions requiring management or are found in corporate or sporting environments. That words such as 'home' and 'sex' are found only in the female column of top 20 words suggests that women are more often communicating in or described in traditionally feminine situations or actions revolving around the home or sex. These findings in line with previous research that shows women are most frequently portrayed as home makers or sexual objects. Such gendering of language perpetuates gender stereotyping and societal perceptions of gender roles.

Figure 7

| Language | Male | Language | Female |
|---|---|---|---|
| said | 19% | said | 16% |
| play | 7% | work | 7% |
| take | 6% | take | 7% |
| tell | 6% | people | 6% |
| lead | 5% | meet | 5% |
| work | 5% | use | 5% |
| people | 5% | department | 5% |
| win | 5% | tell | 4% |
| against | 4% | go | 4% |
| meet | 4% | pay | 4% |

| Figure 7 continued | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Language | Male | Language | Female |
| bank | 4% | found | 4% |
| manage | 4% | look | 4% |
| go | 4% | get | 4% |
| pay | 3% | lead | 4% |
| get | 3% | have | 4% |
| have | 3% | home | 4% |
| court | 3% | withdraw | 4% |
| company | 3% | school | 3% |
| team | 3% | like | 3% |
| govern | 3% | sex | 3% |

In addition to the above figures, further observation was made on words that were related to only female sources. Out of a total of 21,580 words collected, only 163 words appeared more often in relation to women than men. In all other cases, words were more often documented in relation to male sources than female ones. The following is a list of those that appeared in relation to female sources at a difference of at least 3 words more than males: *rape, bed, study, trip, undertake, wear, walk, afford, hospital, remove, shack, girl, cry, deep, document, professional, recommend.* Of those 163 words, 55 were exclusively linked to female sources only, meaning none of these appeared even once alongside a male source. These were the top 15: husband, church, drink, MDC (Movement for Democratic Change), clinic, reproductive, abortion, hygiene, decompose, belong, chest, mutilate, classified, contraception, divorce. The presence of MDC among these words as linked exclusively to women sources could be explained by the increased media attention on Morgan Tsvangirai's marriage to Elizabeth Macheka, during the project's monitoring period. In other words, a woman was linked to a political party not based on her own merit, but as an extension of her husband, the president of the MDC.

Negative stereotypes remain prevalent in everyday media. Women are often portrayed as homemakers and carriers of the family dependent on men, objects of male attention or victims of crime. In line with that, Robin Lakoff argues in Language and Woman's Places (LWP) that there is a direct correlation between language and the disproportion in men and women's social statuses, explained by his observations that language embodies gender inequity (Lakoff 1975). According to Lakoff, women's language describes how women use language and how language is used to talk about women, both of which position women as powerless.

## Words According to Newspaper

In order for citizens to make informed decisions and participate meaningfully in debate and in society, media should offer a diversity of views as seen through the eyes of women and men. This can be achieved by relying on a variety of sources. Women should be present at all levels of media organisations, including as decision-makers. Simply having an influx of women in newsroom is not enough to guarantee gender-sensitive reporting. Crucially, neither does writing about masculinity from one dominant view or discourse. Although print media might adhere to some basic principles of writing, different publications often use different writing techniques. From the publications monitored, there was a significant difference in how the publications chose and used words and this impacts on how a story is covered, while it remains to be seen if this is based on conscious editing choices or not.

Figure 8, below, shows a word choice breakdown in the publications monitored. Under each title is a list of the most frequently used words by that newspaper. The total number of words represents the overall words used by sources during the November 2012 monitoring period. Those highlighted in red and blue are also those words which were found to appear specifically in relation to male (blue) or female (red) sources in the top 20 words list in Figure 7. The non-colored words are those that either didn't appear in the top 20, or if they did, they appeared in relation to both male and female sources, although in different amounts.

| Figure 8 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Business Day | City Press | Daily Sun | Mail & Guardian | Sowetan |
| Said | Said | People | Said | Tell |
| Have | Meet | Pay | Work | Play |
| Bank | Have | Kill | Take | Work |
| Company | Work | Want | People | Lead |
| Had | Was | Take | Department | Take |
| Invest | Use | Found | Public | Win |
| Against | Tell | Win | Govern | Give |
| More | Like | Play | Manage | House |
| He | Own | Help | Allege | Get |
| Lead | Take | Money | Economy | Build |

The above table shows that across all newspapers, except for City Press, "masculine" words featured more often among the top 10 words, than "feminine" words, meaning, words that were associated with male or female sources. In particular, Business Day and Sowetan were the two newspapers that didn't feature any female-source words. Given that the content of the Business Day focuses primarily on business, it is not surprising that it features more masculine words such as 'bank', 'company', taking into account that the business sector is still a predominantly masculine space in its structure and practice. A 2011 report by the Commission for Gender Equality on National Employment Equity noted that in the private sector women seldom held more than 12% of senior and top management positions. Interestingly the City Press, a newspaper currently headed by a female editor, featured one word linked to female sources ('like') and no "masculine" words. This resonates with what male and female journalists expressed in the interviews: that having a female editor made a difference to the story topics that were likely to be approved and published – those being more often gender-sensitive – and consequently to the language used to tell such stories.

What is considered to be news and the choices made about what makes it into the news, and the way the story is reported requires a shift in understanding. Gender sensitive journalism should not only be about sources and context, that is, what the story is about. It's also about the language used in writing stories, which although influenced by the society in which journalist operate, needs to also be changed on a conscious level. Importantly, an exploration of masculinities will not only help us understand men as gendered beings – the cultural prescriptions attached to men's biological sex – but can also help us understand the varying ideals about manhood, which inform men's behaviours and how these are related to violence. All journalists, both female and male, can play a role in shifting attitudes to gender stereotypes.

## Words According to Race

Representations of Black masculinity are historically structured by and against dominant discourses of masculinity and race, specifically Whiteness. This is because historically White masculinity has often been essentialised and onthologised as given and privileged – an unproblematic and an incontestable reality. The figures below show the top 20 words according to race.

| Figure 9 | |
|---|---|
| Top 20 words according race: WHITES | Top 20 words according race: BLACKS |
| said | said |
| play | tell |
| win | take |
| bank | people |
| against | work |
| company | lead |
| go | meet |

| | |
|---|---|
| take | pay |
| team | use |
| say | support |
| work | build |
| game | want |
| have | found |
| invest | court |
| manage | department |
| customer | get |
| increase | give |
| market | allege |
| test | start |

Media's word usage differs in its frequency amongst racial groups. The above analysis focuses on Black and White specifically. Words highlighted in green are also found among the top 20 words most frequently associated with male sources, while at the same time the three words highlighted in red in the Blacks column are among the 20 top words found to be associated with female sources. What this tells us is that media language of masculinity is predominantly associated by White male sources, while there is some evidence that language associated with Black sources is more often spoken by female sources.

The word "said" – the most frequent word across the two races – was used by journalists in conjunction with White sources more often than it was with Black sources. Although the difference is seemingly marginal, we could nevertheless suggest that the White/Black language ratio isn't representative of South Africa's race statistics across the general population. This demonstrates that representation of race in the media can reflect the same sort of rigid inequalities and stereotypes that constitute gender portrayal. In 2003, Media Monitoring Project (MMP) now Media Monitoring Africa (MMA), found that the racial representation of people accessed in the South African media did not reflect the reality of the population breakdown at the time. [2]Analysing the representation of race in the media is essential, especially if inequalities and negative stereotypes are to be challenged and positive changes are to be developed.[3]

Figure 9 shows that words like bank, company, invest, manage and market were used (more often) in conjunction with White sources then Black sources. These same words also appeared on the top male-source words (in comparison to female-source words) as shown in Figure 7. This suggests not only that the language of leadership, wealth and business is dominated by White sources, but in particular White male sources, which demonstrates that penetrating the 'old boys' network in business still appears to be a challenge for males and females particularly those whom are Black.  Research released in 2013 by global wealth consultancy company New World Wealth showed that although South Africa has 7,800 millionaires from previously disadvantaged groups (Blacks, Coloureds & Indians) in 2013, this equates to only 16% of South Africa's total millionaire population. The report also showed that South Africa has the highest number of "High Net Worth Individuals" (HNWIs) in Africa but that the figure was not representative of the demographics of the country (see Figure 10 below: South Africa's HNWIs – Racial Distribution, 2007–2013).

2 Media Monitoring Project. 2003. Revealing race: An analysis of the coverage of race and xenophobia in the South African print media. Johannesburg: Media Monitoring Project. Available at: www.mediamonitoring.org/images/uploads/Final _report_v5_print_final.pdf

3 Ibid.



Figure 10

| Demographics | HNWIs 2007 | HNWIs 2013 | Growth 2007-2013 |
|---|---|---|---|
| White Male | 35,000 | 36,500 | 4% |
| Previously Disadvantaged | 4,300 | 7,800 | 81% |
| White Female | 3,500 | 4,400 | 26% |
| Total | 42,800 | 48,700 | 14% |

Source: New World Wealth

Figure 9 also shows that among the top 20 words, 'court' and 'allege' – language descriptive of the judicial system – were used in conjunction only with Black sources. These findings could suggest that in stories where Black sources are primary subjects, the stories tend to focus on crime and the judicial system – observations of racial bias that have been confirmed throughout this study, by both the journalists we interviewed and the members of the public who were participants in our focus groups.

In light of the above findings, the representation of Black and White South Africans in the media does to an extent reflect societal inequalities when it comes to race. White people appear to be portrayed more positively than Black people. It could be further hypothesized that White men will be represented as the main ('visible') characters significantly more often than Black men. These interpretations position White masculinity as more superior than Black masculinity, reinforcing the idea of Whiteness as both the hegemonic race and privileged gender.

## *FOCUS GROUPS:*

### *How do Audiences Respond to Media Messages?*

Following the completion of the media monitoring component of the project, focus groups were conducted to establish men's and women's reactions to the print media content that we analyzed, some of which they consume on a daily basis. In total, six focus groups were carried out: three at the University of Johannesburg (all female, all male and mixed) and three of the same composition in the Alexandra community (a township). The reason the project split groups in single and then mixed sexes, was to gauge different reactions to media stories based on gendered experiences by the participants. For example, men are likely to have different opinions on a story about teenage pregnancy than will women. The third and mixed-sex focus groups wanted to explore any contradictions or changes in participants' responses to the media issues discussed, once in the company of the opposite sex. The first set of three focus groups at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) targeted exclusively young people, while the focus groups in Alexandra targeted slightly older people, although some young people also joined the focus group. Responses from all focus groups will be explored and compared in the following chapter.

Focus group participants at both locations were identified by recruited liaisons that were in charge of promoting the project and identifying and inviting participants. The facilitators of the focus groups were two (male and female) researchers from Media Monitoring Africa. Although the project intended to include both Black and White participants in the focus groups, all but one participant across all groups were Black. Reasons for this could be numerous, but it is assumed that in terms of university-based groups those who volunteered to participate had a genuine desire to take part, and they happened to be Black, while in line with demographics in townships, participants in the Alexandra Township came from an exclusively Black community. It's also worthwhile adding that the sensitivity of some of the subjects discussed in focus groups could mean that many potential participants shied away from taking part. This means that almost all observations and comments discussed in the findings section of the report were shared as experienced by Black men and women media consumers. As there were no White participants in the initial three focus groups but for one woman, there is no way of evaluating masculinity across racial lines.

As far as the location of the second set of focus groups is concerned, Alexandra is a community populated exclusively by Black residents. That this location was chosen over a "suburb" that may contain both Black and White residents positions the project into a place from which it can only examine experiences

of masculinity from the perspective of Black men living in a community with a lower socio-economic rank. We are aware that such a decision might lead to the assumption that the project's choice to go to Alexandra reaffirms a stereotype that those best placed to speak about violence and evaluate masculinity as portrayed in news media are men and women living in a predominantly Black community. However, when looked at from the standpoint of media's heightened focus on issues that are communicated as primarily affecting Black people such as media's hyper-attention on Black violence compared to White violence, the choice of location to conduct the second round of focus groups becomes more relevant.

In most cases, all focus group participants were exposed to the same set of media excerpts highlighting a discussion topic, to allow for easier comparison across genders and age groups. These were:

- Male and Female power (Money and Sex)
- Gender-based violence
- Fatherhood
- Teenage Pregnancy
- Rape and "screaming rape"
- Violence and abuse against men
- "Corrective" rape of lesbians
- Homosexuality
- Metrosexuality
- Escorts, prostitution and 'Slut Walk'
- Women's bodies: An example of Palesa Mbau
- Reed Dance and virginity testing
- Women who consume alcohol
- Lobola

At the end of each focus group discussion, participants were asked to talk about the things they wish they could change about how men are perceived, and what they felt the media could do to achieve this change. These will be discussed in the following section of the report.

Excerpts shown to participants were extracted from articles identified as discussing elements of gender and chosen for the specific reason of representing inequalities, stereotypes or tension between definitions of masculinity and femininity. They were taken from a variety of South African newspapers monitored over the years for their coverage of gender issues. Participants were not limited or confined to only discussing the content of the excerpt, but any issue the participants saw as poignant and relevant to their experiences in relation to the excerpt. What the focus groups aimed to explore were links between media content and the public's perception of issues discussed in the media.

The hypothesis of our research was that men and women would react differently to the same media excerpt depending on whether they were in the company of the opposite sex, assuming that discussing topics that concern the opposite sex often prompt guarded or self-edited and censored responses. Overall, this didn't seem to be the case on all counts, especially for men.

## *Male and Female Power*

The first excerpt highlights two of the stereotypical defining characteristics of masculinity and femininity, by associating men with money and women with sex. The media excerpt alludes to gaining advantage with money if you are a man and sexual favours if you are a woman. The underlying message in the excerpt is that masculinity and masculine identity is defined by material possession.

***"Raise your dress, then I'll raise your marks! [...] If you are a female student your butt speaks for you. If you are a male student, money talks." (Daily Sun, 2/03/2011, p. 8)***

This excerpt from the Daily Sun was one of the first used to start discussions, and among both men and women the statement elicited resonance and agreement across all groups. While none of the men across all groups spoke from experience, they said they had heard "rumors" about such situations happening, and they felt that the media excerpt confirmed what they already believed. Some men on the other hand felt that this was a generalization and that the message in the excerpt spoke to a larger problem; the gendering of boys and girls from a young age, into dominant versus submissive roles, respectively. One participant said that parents are often to blame by saying things like "No, no my girly you don't worry yourself about that my girly, your brother will take care of that for you" or "Don't worry yourself darling, um, your bother will fix the light, you know he is strong, he'll fix the light." Such language and content encourages young girls to grow up expecting men to play the role of provider, while women are told to rely on men in turn.

The media excerpt seems to reflect a definition of masculinity as an exertion of power and dominance, whether through chores deemed masculine, such as fixing the light, or possession of money and wealth. Another example given by a male participant spoke of different outcomes in a situation where a woman or a man is stopped by a policeman; in the case of the woman, the participant felt the woman would be assessed on her looks, especially if she was wearing a skirt, and would be seen as "innocent", whereas a [Black] man wouldn't be asked any questions, but rather handcuffed and taken to the police station unless a bribe was offered. Again, this perception by men speaks of a masculinity that is dependent on the availability of power and money and by extension, freedom. Interestingly, men also felt frustrated that the above media excerpt "portrays men as weak" and easily swayed by a woman's appearance, that is, if a woman is so easily able to gain advantage by relying on her physique, this in turn means that men easily succumbed to women's "seductions." It is also interesting to note that nobody questioned whether or not the lecturer in the article was male or female. Everyone immediately assumed it is a male lecturer.

Where heterosexual relationships are concerned, some men also felt that women wouldn't date them unless the man was able to "sustain" or "afford" her. On the other hand, some men saw this need to be able to afford a lady as a challenge or a motivating factor to excel, while at the same time seeing such demands by women as a reason to think less of them, or deem them superficial rather than deep and emotional, as women are perceived traditionally. When the same media excerpt was presented to a group of female focus groups participants responses were mixed. Women generally felt frustrated with the simplistic view that "men are portrayed as perverts or sex offenders and that women are just sexual objects that are there to satisfy men's needs." Adding to this sentiment, one female participant commented:

> "They consider your sexuality first before your mind, your intelligence and the qualifications you have. Women are just not taken seriously at all."

Conversely, another woman remarked about a radio program she'd listened to earlier that day, and agreed with the female radio host who said that a lecturer wouldn't take advantage of a female student "if the girl has not given him the chance to take advantage." The participant went on to say that your actions are an extension of your moral stance, adding that lecturers wouldn't take advantage of students if the students weren't "willing." At the same time, participants were aware of the complexity of the issue, and felt that lecturers sometimes tried to use their position to take advantage of students who may be failing and were, for example, afraid of losing their bursary; and that in such cases women "might consider sleeping with the man or doing sexual favours for him."

Two participants said they can attest to knowing of women, or having friends who have found themselves in such a situation where they inappropriately interacted with male lecturers in exchange for higher grades. Women emphasized that it's not always the case that lecturers make unsolicited advances on women, and that it is therefore a complex and two-way interaction of demand and supply that at times was mutually beneficial. They critiqued media for engaging with this issue in a way that was too simplistic and generalist:

> "They [media] might be making such remarks against innocent men. They might be generalizing when it's not all lecturers in this case. [...] Then again we don't know if the female students are asking for it. If they are actually going to lecturers and saying 'you know what, I'm not doing well, what can I do, what can we do?'"

While the ultimate responsibility rests with lecturers to not cross the professional boundary with students, female focus group participants felt the media need to delve into the complexity of the issue further, and to investigate and question all sides of the story, so that the issue can be better understood by readers. When it came to exploring the above excerpt in a mixed-sex focus group, although the male

participants in this group were sharing the company of several other female participants, they expressed the same views and responses to the above media excerpt as the male-only group participants; that "women have it easier." It is interesting to note that relying on sexual favors and physical traits rather than merit is regarded as 'having it easier'.

One male participant added that the above excerpt scenario could go both ways, and that men could also be given preferential treatment by those of the opposite sex, meaning female lecturers. Similarly, women maintained the same view as those in the all-female group, that women who find themselves in a situation such as that in the excerpt, focus on what the man can offer them in order to "maintain" their financial needs, while the men focus solely on what the woman can offer them sexually.

Among the men in the group, this fed into the perception that they had to earn more money than women. Being in a relationship with a woman with a higher income meant that there would be a "power shift" that would attract "negative comments from the man's friends and society in general." Asked if the power shift would become more acceptable provided that his peers approved of it, one participant said: "If they say 'it's cool', I have that consolation feeling that I'm not the only one in the community" showing just how pervasive social pressure to conform can be. One of the most feared aspects of being in a relationship with a woman who earned a higher salary was loss of respect as the head of the house. One participant felt that he wouldn't be opposed to a woman earning more if she still obeyed him and didn't use her financial status to rebel. In response to this the women agreed that, once in a position to earn more than a man, some women "keep reminding" the man of this fact, exacerbating his shame of earning less. The women felt this was unfair towards the man.

Responses from the Alexandra male-focus group were no different from that at UJ. The general message was that money translates into power. The definition of what it meant to "have money" was also relative, and reflective of the community and environment in which the man lived. The possession of a car – even an old car – was perceived as evidence of financial security for a man living in Alexandra. It could be further speculated that not to 'have money', hence having the feeling of failing to prove ones masculinity, could lead to violence as a supposed alternative way of proving dominance and masculinity. This will be discussed in the next section. It gives men the opportunity to reaffirm their power and demand respect from women and other men in their respective communities. When participants were asked to consider the reverse scenario, where a female lecturer is soliciting favours from male students, men said the dynamic was such that men have nothing to offer physically, only financially. One participant said the way girls dress was proof of this:

> "If you look at the school-going children and then look at the girls, they always dress very skimpy short dresses. Even in winter they put on very skimpy dresses. They want to attract the teacher. Now, as a man, what do you flaunt on a female lecturer? [...] So as a man it's very difficult to go and flaunt, there's nothing."

When the same excerpt was presented to female focus group participants in Alex, there was overwhelming consensus amongst the women that money is important, echoing the men's sentiment. A man's ability to provide and efficiently play his role as a provider is measured by his material possessions. One female respondent said: "Money talks." If a man wants a woman to be his girlfriend he has to have a job, earn good money, dress smart and have a car. Similar to the UJ mixed-sex groups, the participants in the Alex mixed-sex group expressed the same view that "if you are a female student, your body speaks for you, if you are a male student, money talks." How one was raised was considered as a key determinant of what choices individuals made, suggesting that women are more inclined to engage in transactional sex to either supplement incomes or use it as a source of income. Women were seen to be willing to do anything to gain access to money, and participants felt that the only way to empower women out of this dependency on men for money, was education. Township life, however, was seen as an environment "not conducive to raise a girl child." Exposure to drugs, alcohol, poverty and sugar daddies were some of the main reasons cited. One father said he would be hurt if he found out his young daughter was relying on sexual favours to increase her grades, but argued that such behaviour goes back home:

> "We as parents, we have created that bond with our children. We have made our children to be afraid of us, to be scared of us. And we have taught our children not to accept failure. Everybody fails and then, fail, just start afresh. See where you went wrong. But in some societies when a child fails, they start to mope, say things which are so sad to the child. [...] So the child goes, 'if I go to school, and I fail, I am in trouble'. They will start bargaining with their bodies. It goes back home."

Although the group discussion started out as a reaction to the scenario presented in the excerpt, i.e. about gaining higher marks at school by relying on money or sex, the underlying premise of the media excerpt was that masculine power rests in material possession and money, and female power revolves around sex. What the discussion revealed was that the excerpts resonated with the opinions and experiences of men and women in the focus groups. Men felt their masculine prowess was embedded in their ability to "maintain" a woman financially, and that women in turn expected a man to be able to offer them financial security. Women considered a man to be a real man if he had money. While this was the accepted gender norm, men felt increasingly frustrated by the perceived responsibility to be an ATM machine in order to gain women's attention and therefore be considered a man, which in turn made them view women as superficial. Most men wanted this perception to be changed, so that masculinity wasn't so tightly tied with material possession, but rather measured beyond their ability to provide for a woman.

## *Gender-Based Violence and Fatherhood*

The aim of the next media excerpt was to explore men's and women's reactions to violence, specifically gender-based violence, which is a growing problem in South Africa. Because such a high rate of violence is committed by men against women, the discussion evaluated men's understanding of violence, what causes it and how self-perceived definitions of masculinity contribute to violence against women.

***"There are a number of ways in which domestic violence and gender violence can be reduced and that have been shown to work. These solutions involve addressing the way in which boys understand and express their masculinity. They involve, for example, role playing by boys and girls in school so that they can learn how to relate to each other in non-violent ways. It also requires us to reinforce the notion that being a man is not only about being strong, violent and providing materially. It does not help simply to seek to protect women and children and put in place programmes to support victims. This is important, but alone it engenders the view that women are weak, are like children and need to be protected, rather than recognized as equal members of society." (Sunday Times, Review, 11/09/2011, p. 4)***

When presented with the above excerpt, the University of Johannesburg (UJ) male group's initial attention and discussion was influenced by the last few words of the passage – "equal members of society" – rather than its broader topic, domestic and gender-based violence. The UJ women's group, on the other hand, addressed the broader issue and felt that there was a clash between modern and traditional views of equality and violence, that is, although women and men should be freer to act in more gender equal ways, their upbringing and the expectations of their elders, and in some cases religion, continue to enforce traditional 'performances' of masculinity and femininity. One woman said that women "get very used to being at the bottom because [...] in religion the man is the head of the house." She also felt that many people take this traditional expectation out of context "because it was drummed into their heads" and that women needed to become more assertive and men needed to "loosen their grip." All participants felt that,realistically, South Africa wasn't conducive to women being more assertive, and added that assertiveness gets you "punished" by being "beaten up" or "demoted" at work.

Despite legal rights to report abusive men, women felt none the safer, saying that legislation alone isn't the solution. What is needed is behavioural change, achieved by altering men's perceptions of physical strength and dominance as an exertion of masculinity and "then maybe the way they relate to women will also change." The way the system works now, women said that reporting a man leads to an arrest, a release and then "revenge" on the woman who reported him.

> "I feel like there is actually no space to be assertive in this society. I mean I know for myself when I walk in town men say things, have remarks... I really don't talk back. I just keep quiet and just move along because I don't know what they might do to me… like the woman that was wearing a short skirt all those men started beating her up and all those things, so I just keep quiet and act as if nothing happened."

Another added that women are raised not to talk back to a man. Doing so “means you are disrespecting him and he could come at you at any point.” Although the male group made no reference to the issue of violence in this media excerpt, the discussion that followed revealed sentiments around men's and women's opinions on not being truly equal. One man commented that societal efforts to emancipate women by establishing gender quotas, especially in the workforce, was actually doing a disservice to women, and “display[ed] women as perpetual minors” who needed to be boosted through forced or artificial efforts. He continued to say that in this day and age “theoretically men and women are on equal footing” and should therefore be treated that way, without the gender quotas. While male participants believed that women and men are seemingly equal in the workplace, a perception that is not based on facts, participants argued that in the domestic environment there will never be true equality because of the gendered upbringing which instils a set of masculine and feminine responsibilities and characteristics, rendering men the protectors of women: “At night, when you hear a voice, you won't say 'honey go check it out', you stand up and go look at it,” said one man.

From the domestic sphere, the discussion trickled into the topic of 'fatherhood' and paternity leave. On this issue, men in the group were divided, with some frustrated by the fact that they always felt they had to be the breadwinner and were not able to participate in their offspring's childhood, while another participant was taken aback by the suggestion that a father should be allowed paternity leave and asserted that because men are “not involved in the birthing process” they should receive no time to recover. This initial lack of involvement with the child and the mother was seen as setting a precedent to men's further engagement with the child (or the lack thereof), rendering the role of parenthood as the mother's domain. Overall, if given the choice to take paternity leave, most men unanimously said: “yeah, why not?” citing reasons such as wanting the child to know who their father is, and wanting to be close to the child. Another added: “Every day I'm gonna wake up knowing that, you know what, I've got this responsibility. I've got someone who calls me a father every day. I've got someone to bond with.” The discussion about paternity touched on a deeper issue, which is, that not having the ability or being denied to be as present in the lives of their children results in the feeling that they are not really fathers, and that the child is solely a mother's responsibility, while the men are seen as “an outsider [...] a sperm donor.”

Returning to the topic of violence, the mixed-sex group raised some challenging points, suggesting that as long as women continue to grow more empowered, there will be more violence, because this, the men felt, was the only way they could continue to exert the dominance they feel is being taken away from them in all other social domains. This would be especially true where men lacked power due to the absence of money and ability to financially provide for the woman. One man commented:

> “I know it might sound bad, but things like abuse and rape will never end, because currently women are progressing, so men feel inferior...Especially if you go to townships. A lot of men are not working… they are sitting there at the corners, so the only way they can show their power is gender violence. If more women progress you should know there will be more rape and more violence. More women are becoming economically strong and they can provide for themselves, and men are feeling very inferior. Back in the olden days, it didn't work like this. I used to be the one, who used to provide everything, but now things have changed and women are getting senior positions and a woman is a manager. How are you supposed to feel about that, so the only way I can show that I'm still the stronger one, I'm still the person, I can show that through rape and abusing [...] I'm not condoning it, but it is how I feel.”

Although, throughout history women also brought an income into their homes, the men were deemed the head of the family and therefore thought of as providing for the entire family. Previously perceived as bread-winners, men today know that in many cases they no longer need to perform this role, while at the same time feeling that there are no alternative roles and definitions of masculinity being encouraged for men to embrace. The women in the group, although taken aback, agreed with this view: “I never thought of it in that way, and it actually makes sense. That's the sad part. It actually makes sense.” However, the women still couldn't fathom and continued to question why there are so many cases of men abusing children and how this could be explained: “I don't get it when children come into play. Why would you go rape a child, a two month old? How would you justify that? It has nothing to do with a woman being empowered.” To this the men provided more insight. Although “there's no normal person who could go and rape a two-year old” some men suggested reasons for doing so were unemployment, boredom, feeling judged, and lastly, as a means to indirectly hurt the woman by harming her child:

> “If the man cannot hurt the woman directly, then the closest thing to the woman is her child. If I can't hurt you directly, I know that you love your child. [...] I think the woman would prefer that you hurt her than hurting the child.”

Providing further insight and context on violence, specifically rape of women, one man suggested that “society will turn on the victim” depending on their judgment of her character before the rape, meaning, if prior to the abuse, the woman is regarded as a “bitch who used to sleep with different men” then her rape will be justified as a deserved repercussion. Furthermore, women who were seen as sexually promiscuous will be accused of 'screaming rape'[4] and her allegations of rape interpreted as “another way of getting money from the guy.”

Opinions expressed by men from the Alex group were in sync with those of other men on the issue of violence, arguing that abuse was portrayed as an issue exclusively perpetrated by men ignoring the reality that men likewise get abused and with no outlet to report the abuse. One male respondent explained he was part of an organisation that encouraged men to be caring partners and fathers. He went on to say that media often neglected invitations from the organization to attend events where men get to spend time with their children to illustrate that men can and want to do things that “they think are impossible for men to do.” In cases where media did attend, there would just be a small article in the newspaper. While this might reflect a problem that many organisations have – not getting media coverage of events that are not considered newsworthy enough by the media – it is a missed opportunity to explore the tension that exists between traditional masculinity and the encouragement of newly emerging definitions of masculinity.

Participants generally felt that the focus of media's coverage of violence should be shifted from merely reporting that the violence happened, to explaining why it happened; questioning motives so that the public can understand the complexity of violence beyond its simplistic narrative as recurring, disjointed and isolated societal occurrences. Understanding its complexity, the participants thought, would allow media to seek out and include suggestions towards the solution, which in turn would change the public's narrow and dichotomous understanding of men as exclusively perpetrators and women as victims. As an example, one woman suggested that stories about children being raped because of the false conviction that it will cure a person of HIV, shouldn't just report that the rape happened, but also explain that such a belief is a myth, in order to deter others from committing similar crimes in the future.

Discussions around violence, and specifically violence committed by men against women raised some challenging but valuable insights into men's understanding of their own masculinity and how this masculine identity is expressed and performed when it comes to exerting dominance. Reactions to the media excerpt revealed that in response to feminism's goal of empowering women, men have lost their sense of masculine belonging and role as men. With no alternative masculinities presented by media and society in general, for example those that positively encourage fatherhood and allow men to not bear the responsibility of bread winning alone, men feel that the only way to continue to exert societal dominance is through the one defining characteristic that in most cases differentiates them from women, which is physical strengths. The expression of masculinity seems to be predominantly expressed by the exertion of physical power. Without the societal normalization of alternative versions of masculinity men seem likely to continue to feel they need to hold on to what they feel are the remaining threads of traditional masculinity, defined by being breadwinners, having money, and perceiving themselves as physically superior, among others.

4 Falsely claiming that rape occurred.

## Teenage Pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy is a topic commonly reported on in South Africa's press. More often than not, media narratives focus on the pregnant teenage girl and speak of the sacrifices and changes that have occurred in her life due to the pregnancy. Rarely, if ever, do media articles include the voices of boys or men who impregnated the girl. This arguably frames the issue of teenage pregnancy as a problem whose consequences have to be dealt with by the girl. By placing the burden and blame of the pregnancy almost entirely on the girl and her family, the underlying message of the extracts below is that boys are absolved of any involvement or responsibility, not just to the pregnancy but also fatherhood – an important but seemingly neglected component of masculinity. The excerpts below were chosen as they exemplify the lack of a male voice in a story about a pregnant girl.

***"A 16 year old pupil, whose identity cannot be revealed because she is a minor, expressed regret. She is four months pregnant and in Grade 10. Her boyfriend is a year older and in Grade 11. 'He has many girlfriends and he sleeps around with them even now. I'm not sure that he will marry me', she says." (The Star, 26/01/2011, p. 3)***

***"...teen pregnancies had both health and social consequences, and added that the campaign needed to target boys: 'Young girls do not make themselves pregnant! This problem needs a holistic solution. Peer pressure is one of the factors, the need to be hip and cool by engaging in sexual activity as a means of belonging'." (The Citizen, 21/02/2011, p. 9)***

***"It is bad for a man to neglect his fatherly duties. We want men and boys out there to know that it is very African and very cool to be proud and responsible for your children and your woman." (Daily Sun, 23/02/2011, page unknown)***

One of men's group's initial reactions to the above excerpts was that the media article should read: "A 16[sic]-year-old boy was identified to have impregnated a lady" instead of focusing exclusively on the girl, which the men said invited "pity" from the reader. Men overwhelmingly felt that in stories on teenage pregnancy the "guy's side is never portrayed as relevant." By continuing to report on teenage pregnancy by focusing only on the pregnant girls, media was said to be exacerbating "issues of inequality." Being exposed to male voices in stories about teenage pregnancy, the men said would inspire them to take responsibility and accountability for their actions.

> "I think boys should be educated more when it comes to engaging in sexual activities, because once the girl is pregnant, it's all about the girl, you don't know what happened, how long they were dating, their circumstances surrounding their situation, but I think before we all cry about the girl, 'oh she is pregnant', let's sit down with the boys and find out what they're saying, what's their mindset concerning this."

The women's response to media's coverage of the issue of 'teenage pregnancy' was that media stories often ignore the role of the boys in getting a girl pregnant, and the seeming "blame" is placed on the girl, saying the boys should be included and be seen as taking responsibility for the pregnancy. The language used in the media story made "women seem weak, vulnerable, like she was raped or something" feeding into the victimhood of women. Religion surfaced as contributing to the vilification of girls who become pregnant. Participants said that those women showing a belly were not allowed to attend church other than to come "for forgiveness classes," while the men, bearing no evidence of pregnancy, were treated differently. During interviews with journalists (in the final stage of the project), the topic of teenage pregnancy surfaced a few times, and the journalists said that the reason the girls are often the only voice in the story is because they carry the evidence of the sex and the pregnancy, echoing observations made by a female focus group participant who said that "because the guy does not physically get pregnant" they are able to "run away from their responsibility" and are virtually impossible to source for a story without the girl pointing him out.

As the discussion evolved, both male and female participants began to question the young girl's maturity and judgment, placing some of the "blame" back on the naïveté of the girl, for trusting a boy who according to the media article was seeing other girls when he got the 16-year old pregnant: "Did she not know before she fell pregnant that the guy was sleeping around?" Although initially both the men and women felt it was unfair for the evidence of sex between two people to be represented as almost exclusively the girl's fault, the choice to have sex with someone seemingly uncommitted to begin with, was seen as entirely the girl's fault. This, men said, happens because women like "the bad guys," meaning, the girl's choices invited the end result and should therefore bear all responsibility, excusing men's behaviour. While the women in the group disputed that generalized assumption and diverted attention to what they saw as the more relevant issue of "responsibility" the men argued back that if a girl chooses to sleep with a "bad guy" she should face the consequences and responsibility of taking care of the child. Furthermore, men saw this as an example of women failing to uphold their standards and to use their "power to say no" to a man – a sentiment that dismisses a reality in which women often do not feel they have the power to say 'no'.

According to participants, a young man will reject a young woman's pregnancy, his paternity and responsibility of fatherhood by accusing her of having slept with more than one guy and labeling her "a whore." Participants from Alex said men "won't be responsible for the baby" and will want to continue to have a normal life without any intention of looking after a young impregnated girl – views that contradicted previous sentiments expressed by young men wanting to be acknowledged as fathers through paternity leave. Women felt that girls often get pregnant because in contrast to men, they remained naive about sex and the idea of love, convinced that the act of sex meant commitment: "Obviously he is thinking 'sex', and she is thinking 'we are just going to sit in his room'." In an almost complete turnaround from the start of the discussion, where both men and women felt the media should include male voices to show joint responsibility over imminent parenthood, participants argued that media "shouldn't paint this picture that the girl is the victim and the guy ruined the girl's life […] She knew the consequences." Some participants suggested that one way of curbing teenage pregnancy might be to ensure that boys are denied schooling for as long as the girl is pregnant too.

Male participants linked teenage pregnancy to media's glamorization of multiple partners, while female participants argued that changes in media's sexual content won't change anything and what was more important was teaching young people "about contraception and taking responsibility, particularly the boys" to not only prevent pregnancy, but also prevent the transmission of HIV. Including the voices of the to-be fathers in the stories would split the responsibility of pregnancy between both parties, and therefore potentially challenge male reactions to teenage pregnancy.

## Rape and "Screaming Rape"

Rape is a serious problem in South Africa, which is why the term "screaming rape" sits uncomfortably with anyone who has been raped or is aware of the extent of damage rape can inflict on victims. The term is used to describe a scenario in which a woman falsely accuses a man of raping her for various reasons, including, as noted in below discussions, to extort money from a man, punish him for various reasons, or for women to protect themselves from judgment and criticism by family and friends who may have found out she has slept with a man out of wedlock. The excerpt was therefore selected in order to test men's and women's reactions to the notion of "screaming rape", especially considering the prevalence of rape in South Africa and its relationship to definitions of masculinity.

***"Despite there being so much rape in our country, there are still women out there who have sex with random men and then scream rape, ruining a man's reputation and career. Mzansi's favourite drama Zone 14 knows how it goes! We've watched soccer player Loyiso lose his friends, team and reputation because Sonja lied about her experience." (Daily Sun, 19/01/2011, p. 21)***

From both the men's and women's perspectives, cases of "screaming rape" are a reality. Men's distrust of rape claims increased due to a lack of male voices in media stories on rape. Because stories on rape always focused on telling the woman's story, excluding any explanation of who the man was and what the background and context to the relationship between the man and the victim was, men doubted the validity of the story and the alleged crime, suspecting the girl claimed she was raped because "she needs money or she wants to be in the limelight." In response to this women felt that giving men a voice would take the attention away from the "victim's pain and […] people sympathizing with them."

Overwhelmingly, men were frustrated with the perception that media often relied on simplistic narratives to tell the story of rape, portraying men as simply "predators", "vicious" and "rapists" without any inquisition on the man's background. The topic generated heated discussion among several men, some of whom spoke from experience about their fear of being accused of rape after having consensual sex:

> "...you might find you meet a girl and then in less than a week you engage in a sexual act with her, and during the act she asks you 'do you love me' then you know at that time you have a conundrum on your hand, because if you dare say you don't love her, in the morning she is going to say you raped her, or she regrets it, maybe her friends find out that she slept with you and she'll say 'no, no, this guy raped me' ...so that's the problem with women. Whenever a girl goes to the police station, the police come and arrest the guy and they'll ask him questions in the cell. You don't have time to say your side of the story outside. They think we are predators, we are vicious, and I don't think this is true, because this is sad. Not all men are rapists."

Media was seen as "evil" and blamed for creating this negative perception of men, and both media and women were seen to be allied and "conspiring" against men. Men argued that media often write headlines such as "Man Rapes 5-year Old" to create hype and sell papers, but rarely explain whether the man has gone to court and been found guilty. In cases where men may be found innocent, such corrections are never reported in the media, leaving the public with only the perception that men are rapists, period. Men felt the justice system should enforce a requirement for women who are found to have "screamed rape" to appear in court for "defamation of character." These perceptions, and in some cases experiences, made the men feel "disappointed, skeptical and scared" of women, because of the risk of being accused of rape. Men were frustrated with what they saw as women "playing the victim card" and wanted women to "stop acting like victims." Provoking anger, men said that women screaming rape were putting themselves in danger "because if they cry rape today and the guy didn't actually rape her, someone is gonna come and rape the girl and then no one is going to believe her." Some men in the Alex focus group contested what constitutes rape arguing that an act of rape can only be considered as such if it involves a minor and if the person committing rape was under the influence of drugs – meaning that a grown woman should always be able to overpower a man who tries to rape her, and if she is not, then such an act is considered by men as consensual sex. Likewise, the claim distances them from responsibility and denies connection to their 'sober character and personality' by blaming rape on alcohol. Men said that women usually screamed rape to settle scores or use it to extort money from their partners and men, especially if they found out their men have been unfaithful. One woman felt that "some women take advantage of the role they play in society and that's why they scream rape." When quizzed further on what she meant by 'role" she explained:

> "Women play the role of being weak and inferior so if you are in a place, uhm, like if you are in a firm or an office, you can scream rape because you want a promotion, you are going to do it. Because people know that women are raped every single day, because women are weak, so who is going to believe the boss over the woman that is raped? And more statistics show that women are raped so people are going to believe her because it just makes more sense. So sometimes women take advantage of the role they play. Being weak to them is actually strength."

Women in the group expressed disapproval of women who "scream rape" saying that doing so is "sick" and takes away from the seriousness of the crime and the real victims of rape, further contributing to men's anger towards women. One woman attested to having experienced in her own social environment a case of screaming rape, while other women also made reference to a character on the TV series 'Isidingo' who screamed rape, and then "actually got raped" adding this was "karma" for lying in the first place. So while only some participants had knowledge of a real case in which someone falsely claimed to be raped, the group seemed ready to presume a large number of such cases. This begs the question of where the perception of "screaming rape" comes from, something that further research would need to investigate.

The subject of "screaming rape" is being treated as reality, whether because those discussing it have encountered such cases and they don't wish to share them, or because media content is being consumed as a representation of reality, which may or may not be entirely true. Lack of interrogation of the statistical validity of "screaming rape" and yet its perpetuating reference in news and entertainment media, is arguably contributing to an already existing anger that men feel towards women, over what may be an imagined reality. Legitimacy of "screaming rape" was judged by evaluating the relationship the girl had with the man whom she alleges raped her. Among the men, the conviction remained that women scream rape to conceal bad choices, such as engaging in consensual sex and claiming they were raped once the girl's family finds out. To explain his standpoint, a man referred to a newspaper article he had recently read about a woman who was caught cheating on her partner, and when the partner became violent, she called the police and claimed the partner had raped her.

Often disputed or dismissed entirely, "screaming rape" is a sensitive topic to be acknowledged and even discussed or explored in a country where rape is a very real and prevalent crime. Claims of screaming rape have been noted in news and entertainment media and therefore warrant being evaluated, especially in a project that is exploring masculinity and its relationship to rape. It would be impossible in a focus group setting to evaluate whether any of the men or women have personally experienced cases where they or a partner "screamed rape." However, what the discussions indicated was that both men and women talked about "screaming rape" based on their interactions with other men and women, such as through rumors and storytelling, which led them to talk about it as if it was a reality. Others also made reference to media as a source of their opinions of the issue. How much of their conviction comes from lived experiences versus exposure to media stories would need to be explored in further research. However, that it was communicated as a reality for male and female participants is enough of a reason to be concerned, especially if that reality is a product of media coverage which may not be accurately or realistically representative of a complex issue. Where it was discussed as a reality among both men and women, it was seen as directly contributing to men's anger. Men perceived women as having the justice system and the public on their side due to programs and campaigns that advocate women's rights and the protection of women against violence. As a result of this heightened focus men see women as having embraced the status of "victims", which they now rely on to benefit in situations in ways that incriminate men. Men expressed feeling increasingly slighted and more violent due to what they saw as an exploitation of the empowerment devoted exclusively to women, that is, a perception that women were getting all the attention.

## *Violence Against Men*

Violence in South Africa is primarily committed by men towards women. Recently, however, there has been some increase in media coverage of violence against men at the hands of women, a crime that is under-reported due to associated stigma. One of the ways that masculinity is defined among men is as a display of physical dominance and strength. In cases where a woman, seen to be the more submissive sex, is abusing a man, the man's masculinity is viewed as having been diminished, attracting ridicule by both men and women. This discourages men from reporting such violence to the police, arguably resulting in built up and suppressed anger.

***"They may be in the minority, yes, but there are abused men. And they suffer in silence, because they are scared of being laughed at due to the stigma attached to being a man who is abused in our society. Men are also victims of violence and abuse at the hands of their spouses and partners but are shy and ashamed to seek help or speak out. [...] I have witnessed men crying at police stations while cops laugh out loud – especially policewomen." (Daily Sun, 21/01/2011, p. 35)***

Abuse of men by women, and the associated shame in coming forward and seeking help from authorities, was perceived by the men in the focus group as a "consequence of our perceived power in society." [...] Because men saw their societal role as being "rich and powerful", they couldn't allow themselves to be simultaneously seen as abused. This begs the question: Would providing and permitting men with alternative versions of masculinity, such as being comfortable with weakness and vulnerability, allow them to at least consider openly admitting abuse without shame? Would repeated exposure to media images and articles that portray men in these ways lead to empowerment for men to report abuse? If weakness and vulnerability was seen as "OK" would that encourage men to report abuse? And would this in turn change the way police men and women treat men who do come to the police station to report abuse at the hands of women? Reactions to the suggestion of reporting abuse were a resounding and unanimous "no" by all male participants, accompanied by laughter and disbelief at the question: "A woman? Someone with a bigger chest cavity making me cry? I just find that odd. I just find that odd. I'm sorry." If a man were to confide abuse to a friend, one man cited, he would lose his pride. Reporting it to police, another said, would elicit laughter. Men said they weren't allowed to be seen crying, and if being abused by a woman, they should always maintain dominance and not allow a woman to "reduce" them to "this state." Asked if they would be more likely to report abuse if the policemen took them seriously, all said they would, as this would take away the feeling that they were being judged as less of a man. Masculinity is judged on physical appearance. Men are less likely

to believe and would laugh at a large-built man reporting abuse than a smaller-built one, because abuse was “more believable if you look vulnerable.”

The reference to physical strength and appearance, the mixed group said was also evident in media's portrayal of men and women, as one man noted:

> “Maybe it's because of the way that media portrays men and how society portrays men. They are supposed to be strong and domineering and all of that. Now in my mind those things are obviously rooted in my mind. If you are coming to me and telling me as a man that you are being beaten by this person who is portrayed as being weak and all of that, then it's not going to make sense.”

But not all agreed, and some said that despite male pride, men should be able to confide in other male friends without fearing ridicule or loss of street credibility, as was the case for some men in the Alex focus group. Disparities in salary were cited as one of the reasons in cases where men were abused by women. Women who earned more than their partners “paraded” their achievements to the frustration of their partners. Men said this reversal of traditional breadwinner roles is having an impact on their social status in such a way that they are ridiculed and belittled, inciting abuse against women who have been empowered into independence. Given the option to fight back a woman, most said they wouldn't, whereas if being attacked by another man, they wouldn't think twice. This view led some in the group, again, to question the notion of equality, if the same cause (abuse) elicited different reactions (retaliating/walking away) depending on the sex of the abuser. Some men in the Alex focus group also expressed frustration at the law, which they said favours women on issues of gender based violence (GBV) and as a result, they believed, women abused that power by abusing men because they know they have the law on their side.

Speaking to the women's group on this same topic, revealed contradictions between implicit and explicit expectations they ascribe to men and masculinity. Although women encouraged men to report abuse to police, they also said that seeing a man cry was “unmanly” because men are supposed to be “strong” which sends mixed messages and discourages men from reporting abuse. When asked if they would think of this hypothetical man as “less of a man” some in the group laughed, while one participant said “these things happen.” Lack of a direct and definitive answer here is perhaps an indication of their responses to the following hypothetical scenario. Asked what their reaction would be if their father came to them and said their mother was abusing him, they initially laughed, then said their reaction would be “surprised,” “embarrassed” and “shocked,” while another woman commented “I would actually say ‘man up’.” She continued to explain that she would expect a man to “speak up” because not speaking up means:

> “The woman is going to think that you are actually worthless. Like you are just a 'toy boy' or whatever, you know, and I mean no woman, honestly speaking, wants to be associated with a toy boy or someone who is less of a man.”

The act of “speaking up” in this woman's case was seen as evidence that the man would protect her if she were to tell him that she was being abused by another man. Another participant disagreed and added that telling a man to man up ignores the complexity of the situation and dismisses the psychological and emotional trauma that man may be going through as a result of his abuse: “I just think 'don’t kick a dog when it’s down' even if it’s a man.” Even if the media were to continue to publish articles exposing abuse of men, in an attempt to “destigmatize” it and expose the prevalence of it, some participants still felt that their cultural upbringing would make it difficult for them to consider treating the situation any differently, and admitting to abuse which they saw as weakness and defeat. Measuring media effects of any such a shift in portrayals of masculinity cannot truly be evaluated with a hypothetical question to a participant in a focus group. Long term research would best determine any correlation between media exposure and shifting gender identities.

## *“Corrective Rape” of Lesbians*

The following excerpt, which includes a photo of a lesbian woman who was raped, was used to evaluate exertions of masculinity in relation to the rape of lesbians, which has been dubbed by the media as “corrective rape” – a problematic term which describes a rape committed in order to “correct” a woman's sexual orientation. The excerpt wanted to explore whether there was any correlation between the woman's sexual orientation, rape and masculinity, that is, which elements of masculinity, if any, influenced men to rape women whose sexual orientation also meant they weren't in any sexual way interested in men.

***“It is not clear at first glance if Millicent Gaika, the woman in the photo, is dead or alive. Bruises surround both of her swollen eyes, and her neck is criss-crossed by pen gashes and scars. By now the bruises have subsided, some scars have healed, and in court testimony in November, Gaika was able to tell a judge about how the man who raped her said: ‘I know you are a lesbian. You are not a man. You think you are, but I am going to show you. You are a woman’.” (The Times, 14/01/2011, p. 17)***

Sharing the photo of Milicent Gaika *(City Press, 16/01/2011, p. 10)*, a lesbian who was raped by a man because of her sexual orientation, elicited the same reaction among male and female focus group participants – shock and disgust – followed by comments alluding to disbelief. The photo was a close up of Gaika’s bruised face and gashes across her neck. Discussion on “corrective rape” evolved into the broader topic of homophobia, and the groups' reactions to gay and lesbians. While there were some misunderstandings and misconceptions about homosexuality being a “choice” all participants seemed to tread gently around the subject for fear of “insulting anyone.” In one example, a man telling a story about meeting a lesbian wasn't sure if he should call her a “girl” or a boy considering the fact that she finds women attractive. Another participant corrected him, which led to others admitting his answer helped improve their own understanding, indicating that many lack knowledge on homosexuality but are too afraid to enquire, for fear of being suspected of being gay. Another participant added that men feel entitled to access women they find attractive, alluding to issues of hetero-masculine entitlement, which when challenged by women who reject them on the basis of sexual orientation can be experienced as emasculating. This implies that if the woman in question was heterosexual she would not or could not refuse the man and he would automatically ‘have access’ to her. Young men also argued that more often than not those who rape lesbians were “older men” or traditional men who felt they were the only ones allowed to “wear the pants.” The recent rape and murder of Anene Booysen, however, who was killed by young men, challenges the “older traditional man” view, and speaks to a need for young men to distance themselves from the crime, by allocating it to “those other men out there.” Other reasons cited for “corrective rape” were the impression that lesbians became lesbians because they haven't yet found a man who “satisfied” them, and the rapists taking it upon themselves to “correct” that. Women understood and debated “corrective rape” as men's retaliation to the perception that women are stealing women from men, again speaking to issues of male entitlement, leading to men's sense of emasculation and aggression.

When asked how they would feel in the company of gay men, one respondent had the perception that a gay man might hit on him and even try to have sex with him. Men's understanding of gay men was that “anything goes” – portraying them as lacking sexual control or limits: “I might just wake up with a condom and I wouldn't know what happened, you know.” This comment made the whole group laugh. A gay man unknowingly pursuing a straight man conjured “disgust” and made participants feel “uncomfortable” and even evoked violence: “It's like you almost wanna hit the person [...] before like letting the person know, 'dude, I'm not interested. I'm not gay'.” Men from the Alex focus groups believed that men's heterosexual behaviour is innate and physiologically determined. Most of the respondents argued that heterosexuality is the ‘correct’ sexuality and that homosexuality is a lifestyle choice rather than biologically predetermined.

Women in Alex, however, were of the view that homosexuality was as natural as heterosexuality, but when asked how they would feel if a woman approached them they had mixed reactions, with some saying they would feel less of a woman, and others saying when this has happened to them they “felt good” about being admired regardless of the sex of the admirer. Men's immense sense of threat to their masculinity by being associated with homosexuals speaks directly to the importance they assign to the way they engage with women,and having the ability to engage in sexual behaviour with women, in order to exert masculine dominance. Education and exposure to gay men was important in changing men's minds on the “dangers” of homosexuality:

> “I had an opportunity to go with my girlfriend and six gay guys, three of them who are my friends and the other three her friends ... I actually went to a gay club. I was freaked out

about it. I had those same thoughts about it right, but then you get in there and it's just like normal people. You know just as much as my gay friends, I treat them like normal people, you get there and it's nothing to be scared of."

Although the participant was trying to relay a positive experience and convey to others in the group that gay clubs and gay people are "nothing to be scared of" the implication of fear, and the use of the word "normal" remains problematic and indicates an "othering", that is, a distancing and distinguishing between the "normal" heterosexual people and the "abnormal" gay people. All participants agreed that what was needed was more innovative ways of educating people on homosexuality. Despite South Africa's constitution citing and upholding the rights of gays and lesbians and legalizing gay marriage, participants felt this was a facade covering the fact that South Africans still lacked education, which would be the solution to hate crimes against gays and lesbians. Men in Alex also felt that education for the "lay guy on the street" was needed if there was to be any hope of "liberating their mind" and therefore preventing violence against the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersexual (LGBTI) community. Some male participants also questioned why there was little or no media coverage of women raping gay men. Was it because there genuinely weren't cases to report on, or was it because "the media just has to use a woman as a victim," – seen as media's commitment to perpetuating the view that only women can be victims of rape and violence, because it fits into an existing media narrative of reporting on violence? Aside from lesbian rape, which the participants said gains more media coverage, there are cases of gay rape by men and women which need to be reported on; a crime committed against men who are seen as "not playing their role as men" and therefore not being "part of society."

The above media excerpt on "corrective rape" prompted discussion on both men's relationship with lesbians and gay men. In relation to masculinity, men interpreted the rape of lesbians as a crime stemming from threat and rejection. Masculinity has been founded on a sense of privilege which for men meant access and entitlement to women, including through sex. Where those women are lesbians and reject men based on sexual orientation, the rejection is understood as a direct threat to their masculinity via rejection of their sex. In addition, lesbian women were seen as "stealing" what was perceived to rightfully belong to men. To regain masculine entitlement and authority and reclaim masculine territory, men said rape was a way to show the woman that she is in fact attracted to a man and that she is not a man who can take women from men. While none of the men or women spoke from personal experience, their understanding of "corrective rape" was in sync with that communicated in the media excerpt. Aside from rape, men also spoke of a threat to their masculinity in relation to gay men. To be seen interacting with gay men too closely was seen as evidence of the man's questionable sexual orientation. To be perceived as being gay was seen as a direct attack on a straight man's masculinity, because true masculinity was believed to only exist when exerting power over women.

## Homosexuality

Linking on from the topic of "corrective rape" was another media excerpt about a woman finding out her husband is gay, and her reactions to it. The following excerpt was posed only to the women's group to explore their reactions to displays of "homosexual behaviour" by heterosexual men in their lives, especially intimate partners, and to evaluate women's definition of masculinity in relation to homosexuality. This excerpt wasn't shown to the men's group due to time constraints, and because men's thoughts on homosexuality emerged and were explored in relation to other media excerpts.

***"The announcement from my sister floored me: 'I know a secret about your man, that is, if you are still together. We know your man is gay. He has been cheating on you with a rich White guy.' I am usually a strong woman but that announcement just about floored me. [...] It made sense, I thought. All this adventurous spirit, all the tattoos, all the gay men hitting on him. But him? Of all people. It was the longest night of my life. [...] How would anyone know for sure they are dating a straight man? One gay friend once said, every man is gay until proven otherwise. But how do you prove this?"(The Sunday Independent 27/03/2011, p. 7)***

Upon reading this, one woman said she would feel "cheated and used," while another woman said she has been in a similar situation and felt "betrayed" but "not angry" when she found out. On being surprised about the discovery, the woman said she never suspected her partner being gay because "he was so manly" saying his behaviour was typically "masculine" and didn't display any feminine characteristics.

This observation highlights two challenges, firstly, that gay men always display feminine behaviour which is false, and secondly this opinion expresses the fear of being associated with homosexuality or being thought of as homosexual by women. A woman in the Alex female group said that she would be disappointed to find out her partner was gay and likewise would not accept him being bisexual, emphasizing that she wants to be with a "real man," and that only "straight men" were real men. This definition also applied to lesbians, with one woman saying a lesbian is not as much of a woman if she doesn't have children. This of course is ignorant of the fact that lesbian women can have children, but reveals a general assumption that a woman (irrespective of her sexual orientation) is only a 'real' woman if she has children.

Some women believed that discovering their partner was gay would make them feel they weren't "woman enough" for the man to stay straight, believing that homosexuality was a learned choice. Sexual exploration and fear of homophobia were cited as reasons that men often intimately engaged with women, even though they are gay. On dating a gay man unknowingly, women said they felt like a "testing station" for the man.

> "Sometimes, some guys know that they are gay but because you see how gay people are treated in society, they are ridiculed for being gay… You see it on TV and you just don't want to come out because you don't want to be treated like that, so you date a girl, marry a girl and then 10 years down the line you are like 'I am not happy, I want a guy'."

Gay men or straight men exhibiting effeminate behaviour were dubbed by women as not being real men. Not wanting to jeopardize their masculinity, straight men perceive their interaction with gay men as being judged as emasculating; a belief further reinforced by women. Witnessing straight men react to gay men's advances with violence, made women wonder whether the aggressive behaviour was an exaggerated outward expression of masculinity to conceal homosexuality. This sort of fearful and aggressive behaviour was interpreted by women as a sign that the man might in fact be gay himself and "in the closet." In contrast, men who were accepting of and had a casual approach to gay men's advances were seen as being comfortable with their sexuality enough not to feel threatened, so long as they didn't cross over into the "too-friendly" territory which also raised suspicions. That this was the view of some women, explains men's heightened need to walk this fine line carefully, and fears when it comes to interacting with gay men. Continuing to reinforce and define one version of accepted masculinity along traditional tangents reinforces men's need to maintain that masculinity by exhibiting disapproval and rejection of homosexuality.

## Metrosexuality

The following media excerpt continued to explore women's perceptions and reactions to "metrosexuality" defined by the Merriam-Webster online dictionary as an "urban heterosexual male given to enhancing his personal appearance by fastidious grooming, beauty treatments, and fashionable clothes." Both excerpts below ridicule and criticize the metrosexual man, aiming to explore women's views of metrosexual men in relation to their own definitions of masculinity.

***"Sellouts. That's what they call cultured men who understand that women need some warming up to the idea of a new relationship. These are guys who go out of their way to look good for their dates. They are called the same name when they remember and honour their spouses' birthdays, anniversaries and Valentine's Day. Their peers call them gender sellouts because the general feeling is that by 'acting like wimps' they are ruining it for other relationships. [...] ...why do guys discourage each other from treating their women with care when they yearn to do it? Those who treat their women like queens, do so with the hope they do not get noticed by other guys. [...] 'Guys who submit to their women's demands are called wimps, spineless and whipped because this is new to us,' [...] 'we don't know how to feel like 100 percent male if now and then we borrow the apron'."(The Sunday Independent 1/08/2010, p. 22)***

***"I don't know about you, but I am totally over the metrosexual man. (This without ever being under one.) If you are a metrosexual yourself, please understand the fact that I find you as attractive as puff pastry is not personal. [...] Red-blooded women want real men. We are tired of the vulnerability, the ease with which men weep, their ability to pair wines with food and prepare food like their***

***overachieving mother. [...] Instead of showing off your manicured hands and Vichy-showered abs – clear the gutters once in a while! Stop smelling better than me and stop exfoliating." (Business Day 2/02/2012, p. 11)***

To the question "how do you feel about metrosexual males?" one female participant responded: "They are gay" – to which all others laughed. Women wanted men to have no body hair, but they didn't want to share their "face mask" or "hair lotion" or "comb" with the man. While they expected men to be clean, have clean nails, smell good and look good, the idea of witnessing the process of grooming gave them the impression they were less of a man. Clothes shopping meant women did the trying on of the clothes and modelling in front of the man, but the reverse wasn't allowed: "He must buy the jeans and go, not model in front of me."

When asked if they felt their comments were conforming to stereotypes, the women laughed and said: "No, we are stating what we like." Women said there were boundaries to how much a man could look after himself, beyond which his role as a man and sexual orientation as a heterosexual man became questionable. Observations and answers differed from moment to moment showing a conflict between conforming to rooted expectations of masculine performance and the challenging of stereotypes which allow men to take on behaviour traditionally interpreted as feminine, such as grooming. Participants added that a woman can look "pretty" or "beautiful", but a man must remain "handsome" showing a need for linguistic definition which separates the two into their gendered camps. A display of masculinity was "when a guy does not know the difference between blush and eye shadow" which the women thought was "cute" and reaffirmed their ownership of the domain of beauty.

Any suggestion that allowing men to exhibit the same level of grooming could be a sign of gender equality within that domain was rejected and seen as raising suspicion about his sexual orientation. Arguably, it's a big hypothetical leap to imagine a society right now where men, as women, are allowed to rely on makeup and other accessories to enhance and exhibit beauty, as has been the case at various times in history. The fact that these boundaries could not even begin to be explored during the focus group showed that aesthetic definitions of masculinity and femininity still remain guarded. Women believed beauty products were not only targeted at women, but made for women. If both sexes used make up, then "there is no difference between us [men and women]." Media and gendered advertising was cited as one reason women feel that beauty products were made for them:

> "It's also how media portray these products when they show these adverts. It's always a woman portrayed. It's never a man putting on the eyeliner, mascara or anything like that so people assume that only women use eye shadow. Men don't use it. [...] Just like washing machine or washing powder adverts."

Discussions show that limited grooming by men is an acceptable practice as long as it's performed within limits and away from women. Although women expected men to be clean shaven, often hairless on their bodies and well groomed, witnessing the process of grooming was perceived as emasculating. The domain of physical beauty and aesthetics was a closely guarded domain belonging to women. Even when men were engaged in grooming in order to enhance their physical appearance and attractiveness, they were still referred to as "handsome" – a word that speaks of a masculine beauty. Grooming was a sphere men had to tread carefully to strike a balance between well-kempt but manly, because to cross it was seen as a threat to their masculinity.

## *Escorts, Prostitution and 'Slut Walk'*

The following two media excerpts speak on the topic of female and male sex work. The project and facilitators of the focus group discussion weren't concerned with establishing a stance around prostitution/sex work, but merely exploring the group's gendered views on sex work through the media excerpt as presented. Both excerpts were included to delve into men's perceptions of women and the kind of masculinity that emerges when confronted with women versus men engaging in sex work. Interpretations of both will be discussed at the end of the second excerpt.

***"Sex in a car? R50. Fellation? R100. A night in a hotel? R150. The cost of being a sex worker in South Africa? No, bankrolling dirty cops. And other "perks" of the job include police harassment and name-calling. [...] 'Stop raping us, spraying us with pepper spray, calling us names and taking our money,' said Thandiwe, a prostitute who works in the Joburg CBD. [...] The sex workers said they were human beings, deserving of rights, and that they wanted access to health care and to be protected by labour legislation. [...] 'Why am I a sex worker? I stopped school because my parents didn't have money. If my mother was a nurse and my father was a doctor, I'd have a better life. I'd be sitting in an office right now'."***

Despite the above excerpt using the term 'sex worker' referring to women who work in the sex industry, the first comment by a male participant referred to the women in the excerpt as 'prostitutes' which set a precedent for other participants to rely on the same term. Among all male participants only one felt that prostitution should be legalized so that it can also be regulated, and with that provide women with safe environments to work and negotiate their working standards and practice, such as using protection. This, the participant said, would lead to lower rates of HIV infection between prostitutes and clients, and would create equality between prostitutes and women working as escorts who, he felt, charged more and therefore could also afford more safety. All other men were against prostitution. Although they were against the abusive treatment of prostitutes by the police, as exemplified in the excerpt, they felt that the profession "degrades" women. A prostitute was seen as "thinking less of herself as a woman" and that there were alternative ways to earn an income "just to make ends meet." Going to school was offered as an alternative, as participants argued that there was no excuse for being a prostitute.

Such comments show a lack of awareness of the inequalities affecting girls differently than boys and preventing them from attending school. Following further discussion, the men specified that it's not so much the profession itself that bothers them, as it is their rejection of the "excuses" made by the women in the excerpts and the suggestion that prostitution was therefore the only choice. For this reason, the male participants were far more approving of the following excerpt which speaks of male prostitutes.

***"For years women have been cashing in on the sex trade. Now some men are earning a living with what they have between their legs! [...] I dialed the number and was answered by a sexy dark brown voice with a Nigerian accent. He said his name was Beckham. He explained how the system works: 'You pay to have a guy sleep with you. If you are lonely, we can help you,' he explained. [...] There are three of us (guys) and you can choose the one you like the best,' he added. [...] Then he told me what his clients got in return: 'I'll romance you, suck you nicely and f**k you. And I'll give you four long rounds!'(Sunday Sun, 30/01/2011, p. 5)***

Although the above excerpt reads like a sex advertisement, it was framed as a news story, printed on the news pages of a newspaper. The fact that the above media excerpt portrays the work of the male prostitutes as a choice – a business of their making – made the male focus group participants far more approving of male prostitution: "Beckham is the same as Thandiwe. I just respect Beckham more because you can see he has a business running here." When asked if the difference between the situations of the male and female prostitutes could be their access to education and resources, the groups still felt that Thandiwe was portraying herself as a victim who is making excuses, therefore see as "vulnerable", and telling a "soppy story" which is what made the participants lack "respect" for the woman. Beckham on the other hand was portrayed as "more dominant" and "more masculine." Furthermore, the men emphasized that even when men aren't the prostitutes, they are "in charge" by being pimps, while the "girls are the ones doing the rounds."

These observations further confirm the view that men perceive women as victims, informed not by the reality that women are more often victimized and discriminated against, but by the perception that women now, – thanks to the women's movement – are no longer disempowered and at this point in time are just "acting" as victims. Such perceptions are also an interpretation of the way in which both Thandiwe and Beckham were differently portrayed in these media articles, which speak to the larger issue of media's influence on how they frame men and women differently around the same topic.

## *Women's Bodies: Palesa Mbau*

Next, the men were shown a picture of an attractive woman, who appeared alongside an article advertising her as an escort. The accompanying article was only shown to the group once they'd had an opportunity to share their impressions of the woman without the context. The photo, without the context, aimed to evaluate men's observations of the woman, as they would, had they been exposed to it in a newspaper, which is frequently the case. Later the men were shown the text which described the woman in the picture as an escort. Reactions were compared to draw further information on the way men and women evaluate women's bodies alone, and in the context of a profession such as being an escort.

**(City Press, 19/06/2011, p. 3)**

The image of the woman, Palesa Mbau, drew various responses. All said she was "hot". One said the image made him think of "Slut Walk", which led to others describing her attire and her as a "slut". Another assumed she might be an escort. All participants but one said they would sleep with her, have a one night stand, or show her off to their male friends to achieve "status," but would not date her. The reason cited for this was lack of trust, because her outfit exuded promiscuity and told men that she "doesn't respect herself as a lady." While the men wouldn't mind having a girl dress up like this for them only, most said that seeing a girl like this in a night club would give them the impression that she was "marketing herself" and "looking for Mr. Right Now" which would make them wonder "how many guys she's been through." Asked if they would judge Palesa any differently if more or all women dressed like her, the response was: "I guess. If you can't beat them, join them", which confirms that events like Slut Walk might in the long run have the desired effect (although, there has been some debate on the relevance and effectiveness of Slut Walk in a country like South Africa where causes of sexual violence are rooted beyond just short skirts).

When presented to the women's focus group, some participants commented that Palesa was pretty, while others asked critically: "What is she wearing?" or "What isn't she wearing?" Most women assumed her outfit was for "Slut Walk" or a "uniform of some sort" for a job posing for a magazine such as FHM or Playboy. Men said she was showing too much and this turned men off. According to men in the mixed-sex group, if a woman shows her cleavage then she mustn't show her legs. Putting it all out there made men insecure about other men's glances, placing the blame not on men's intentions but on the woman's "inappropriate" choice of attire, instilling distrust and signaling a perception that women are weak and unable to reject unwanted attention. Again, this places responsibility on women to ease men's insecurities, instead of interrogating men's abilities to overcome possessiveness and insecurity. Men would refuse to go on a date with a girl dressed in an outfit that was too revealing, saying this would make them hyper-aware of other men's gazes, because they themselves are familiar with their own behaviour and thought-processes when seeing an attractive woman. While the women argued they wouldn't back down to a man's demand to change an outfit deemed inappropriate by a man, the women also said they would feel uncomfortable if on a date, another attractive woman dressed like Palesa Mbau was in the room, fearing that she would "grab" their date's attention. Such fears place men in a position to maintain their power over female bodies while women are left with the responsibility to adapt, simultaneously creating competition and critique of fellow women.

Although some admired Palesa's confidence, this view was simultaneously conflicted, with both male and female participants arguing that her outfit was calling for rape. This reaffirmed the problematic view that women who dress in miniskirts are asking for sexual violence. When the women in the focus group learned that she was a prostitute she was perceived as an even bigger threat. Like the men, women said that being a prostitute meant she had no dignity. Above discussions around Palesa Mbau's image indicate that similar media images in South Africa's newspapers are potentially either creating or contributing to an existing negative judgment of women who dress in revealing clothing, deemed provocative and undeserving of respect.

Presenting the participants with the following media excerpt describing Palesa's work as an escort prompted conversations around men's awareness and fear of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs).

***"'I'm Palesa Mbau, South Africa's soft-body sweetheart. I am a model and first porn star, and I'm all yours. You may get mesmerized by my brown eyes, my pouty and skilful lips or by my round afro ass,' is the introduction to her site. [...] 'My rates are not negotiable, I cater to high-class clients only. I would suggest you consider a companion more suitable to your financial situation,' she writes on her site. [...] And she doesn't waste time telling her clients they can give her gifts, as she has a "wish list" of goodies such as "a townhouse in Midrand, a Mini Cooper, lingerie, an HD flat screen TV, an HD camera, sex toys and books'."(City Press, 19/06/2011, p. 3)***

On realizing that Palesa was an escort, discussion diverted to men's fear of contracting STDs and unwillingness to date one. While health was the main concern for most men, they also felt that dating an escort gave away their privilege of being the only man in her life. While the women said Palesa's work choice doesn't speak to her character, they also said they wouldn't want to have a friend like her, worried that she would corrupt them into "thinking like her" and wishing they could also have access to as much money and possessions as she does, and considering entering the same profession. One participant felt that she would simultaneously disapprove of her job and relate to her on a friendship level, by sharing this personal example:

> "I have a friend that is very loose. She just picks up guys because they have money. We joke about it but she takes it very seriously and does not compromise on the fact that she dates guys with cars, money and houses. But I don't do that. But we meet at another level. We met at church and we talk and do church stuff. We do youth, church events and fundraising and that's what we talk about. I can confide in her and she can confide in me, although she doesn't do a lot of that because the men give whatever she wants and is never disappointed in life. But I can confide in her because she is my friend. I don't do Mini Coopers and Mercedes, but we meet at a very different place."

Bringing back into the discussion previous comments and frustrations about women never being taken seriously or judged for their intellect, the women were asked how they would feel if they came across this article in a newspaper. Participants were in two minds. Some felt such media portrayals of women were sending women and especially young girls the wrong message, again deeming Palesa's profession as degrading to women, which is contradictory to the efforts of the women's movement to encourage women to feel empowered about their professional choices. Female participants also felt that pictures of women in newspapers, such as the "Sunday Babes"[5] feature communicates the message that women will "basically be only seen for their bodies." She added:

> "A woman is a woman because of her body nothing more. Even though we try to show them that we have more than just that, but that's how the media just portrays us and that's what stays in people's minds. I can say that I have five or more degrees, I am a CEO of a huge corporation. They are not going to see past my suit. If my suit is a jacket and skirt which fits nicely and tight they will not see past that."

At the same time, the women contemplated that since the photos are submitted by the women themselves, taking the photo feature away would shortchange some women of opportunities to become models. Participants suggested that one of the ways to take away potential for stereotyping and judgment would be for the media to also publish articles alongside the photos, explaining the woman's reasons for wanting to have her photograph published, and sharing more details about the woman's life and who she is. Participants felt this would chip away at the perception of women as bodies first, before all else. Here, the discussion was brought back to debating the term "slut" and the meaning of "Slut Walk." Many men in the group didn't know what Slut Walk was, and those who

5 Sunday Babes is a feature newspaper page devoted to modeling women in bikinis.

did said it was just one more way of “causing traffic” - an event that achieved very little education. One participant said the campaign failed to target their audience in a way that was effective and appealing, adding that if it didn't appeal to him, then it will certainly not have any effect on men who are “pushing the limits and won’t take 'no' for an answer.” The women echoed this sentiment:

> “People’s mindsets will not change overnight, it will not be a matter of 'okay, oh these females are trying to raise awareness, they are trying to tell us to stop discriminating against them' [...] As much as they may try to raise awareness, if you are going to walk in town the next day with your mini-skirt, those people are going to come at you like wild dogs. In their minds, they are not thinking Slut Walk [...] It’s a matter of, 'You know what? You are arousing me and I am going to act out because of that'.”

Women felt that those most likely to commit the crime of rape either don't know about awareness-raising campaigns, or don't care about them, meaning they'll have no resonance with a rapist. The first Slut Walk march which took place in Johannesburg was criticized by local feminist groups as being an event which has little to no resonance with the lived realities of every-day African women. Quizzed on what they thought might be an effective way of stopping men from raping women, women reacted emotionally by saying that men would need to walk in women's shoes and have a crime as violent as rape happen to them or someone close to them. A more feasible suggestion was to teach boys from a young age that rape is a crime. However, women felt that achieving this in South Africa would be “tough” because culture and tradition are often used as an excuse to replicate past behaviour, even when such behaviour is detrimental to women.

The discussion around Palesa Mbau highlighted men's views on trust and perceptions of promiscuity. Before contextualizing the photo of Palesa Mbau, most men were willing to have sex with Palesa but not a relationship. Her outfit communicated promiscuity which the men said made them not trust her, not only for fearing other men's gazes, but also for interpreting her outfit as evidence that she lacked self-control and was therefore a promiscuous woman who would stray. Women were also critical of Palesa's outfit, seen as provocative and therefore a threat to them for seducing their male partners. The discussion painted a complex picture which places masculinity at its centre, as uncontrollable and desire-driven, mitigated only by controlling women's choices in dress and behaviour. As an extension, this definition of masculinity is reinforced by a woman's attempt to control the male gaze and masculinity by criticizing and fearing other women's dress choices.

These concepts flowed into the next excerpt on the Reed Dance, an annual traditional event, involving young girls whose virginity has been tested and proven, making them eligible to dance in front of a king who is expected to choose another wife. The excerpt was chosen to explore men's reactions to virginity testing, a topic which has been contested in the media as violating women's rights and reinforcing masculine sexual freedom by policing that of women. What also happened was a discussion comparing the Reed girls and their partial nudity to that of Palesa Mbau, and the way men's understanding of masculinity informs their interpretations of respect and value assigned to different women.

## *Reed Dance and Virginity Testing*

(Times Live, 12/09/2011, Online[6])

6 Photo sourced online at: http://www.timeslive.co.za/ilive/2011/09/12/zulu-maidens-do-the-reed-dance-ilive



***“‘I firmly believe that the rampant spread of HIV-Aids has been slowed down by the reintroduction of the reed dance. I applaud his majesty our king for championing this fight,” [...] “We owe our king [Goodwill Zwelithini] a debt of gratitude,’ Buthelezi said.”***

***“We don’t think that one can ascribe the reduction of Aids in the country to one particular abstinence programme. This is a great concern to us, with great respect to him, we wonder where he got that from,’ said Van Niekerk.”(both excerpts from The New Age, 27/09/2011, p. 9)***

Reactions to this excerpt and photo of the girls participating in the Reed Dance were mixed across all focus groups at UJ and in Alex. The photo prompted the men to suggest that if these were White girls their nipples would be covered, but because they were Black they were exposed, leading them to suggest that race played a role in the representation of women’s bodies in the media. Most men felt that the media has an anti-tradition agenda, especially concerning traditional practices, such as the Reed Dance and virginity testing, but also male circumcision. Although circumcision-related deaths happen in hospitals too, participants argued that the media only criticize traditional circumcision which happens in the mountains. Returning to the topic of the Reed Dance and virginity testing, most men saw it as a noble act. When comparing these girls to Palesa Mbau and their criticism of her dress code, they said the difference was that the Reed girls “are not sleeping around.” Although they couldn't guarantee that the Reed girls weren't “sleeping around,” knowing that the process of virginity testing was in place led the men to feel they would respect and trust the girls in the picture because they were “doing this for culture”, and “not selling themselves” like Palesa.

Men said they would continue to support the tradition of virginity testing when it made them feel more “comfortable as men.” Most men preferred a virgin for marriage, saying that otherwise being with a virgin is a “headache [...] because virgins get emotionally attached.” They argued that this preference echoes that of women who prefer to date “guys with experience” instead of virgins. In the mixed-sex group, the focus of discussion around the Reed dance and virginity testing was pride, noble motives and HIV. Because it's tradition, the girls' nudity was seen as an expression of pride and appreciation of their bodies. The men also believed that the Reed dance was a reliable indication that the participating girls “are all virgins” and are therefore HIV-negative; another reason the men supported the tradition. In saying this, men also acknowledged the discrepancy in women's and men's bodies, making only the former able to test for virginity. If men could also have their virginity tested, one man commented, he would also be proud to take part in such a ceremony.

More so than their virginity, the girls were respected because their participation in the tradition denoted they were strong-minded and determined in their choices; they “know what they want in life, and what's their purpose.” Respect was also earned because of the perception that, unlike Palesa Mbau, the girls “are not doing it to try and grab everybody's attention.” There was agreement among both male and female focus group participants that virginity, although perceived as noble, was not a yardstick by which the value of a girl was necessarily measured. While the women respected the girls’ choices, they weren't entirely convinced whether the choices were voluntary or a result of family pressure. Consequently, men's comments about Palesa Mbau also shifted, suggesting that she shouldn't be judged on her attire, “because she may also know what she wants in life“ assuming that she may well be a “doctor” or “hold a higher degree.” However, they maintained that first impressions last and contribute to initial judgment of character. Asked how they would feel if the “back page” that often features female models in sexual poses, was to be removed from the newspaper content, one man said: “I'd go, 'oh, okay, they are not there.' Just move on.” Others added that they wouldn't care because the purpose of a paper was to inform its readers of news, whereas pictures of half-naked women was not news and could be accessed by choice in magazines such as Playboy.

While men would prefer to marry a virgin it wasn't something considered necessary in order to marry a woman. Where men’s admiration for the Reed Dance strongly emerged was when comparing them to Palesa Mbau, who was seen to be using her body to “sell herself” instead of for culture. The female body was viewed as sacred, and respect for the woman varied according to how her body was used. What emerged as both encouraging and discouraging was men's awareness of STDs and HIV infection in their discussion on sex work and the Reed Dance, while simultaneously placing the responsibility to remain STD-free on women. That men were so concerned about STDs could either speak to the successes of awareness-raising campaigns or indicative that men felt they had the power to negotiate safe sex, in contrast to women who often feel that they don't.

## Women and Alcohol

Traditionally, alcohol consumption has been seen as a masculine act. The excerpt aimed to get responses from both women and men on their perceptions of women who drink, and to evaluate how this traditionally male domain is seen to be "interrupted" by women. Findings were complex and multifaceted.

**(Originally appeared in The Sunday Independent, 16/01/2011, p. 3)[7]**

***"A decade ago they were known as 'kitchen cupboard drinkers' – secret drunks. These days South African women imbibe as freely as men in public and increasing numbers end up in police vans at roadblocks. [...] Society, she says, has a lower tolerance for women alcohol dependents. It tolerates some behaviour exhibited by intoxicated men, she writes, 'but if women display the same behaviour they are viewed as indecent'." (City Press, 5/06/2011, p. 10)***

***"Women are not only wearing the pants these days, they're drinking like men too. [...] Thanks to their new-found economic wealth and 'girlpower', South African women are drinking like never before." (The Sunday Independent, 16/01/2011, p. 3)***

Seen as an exertion of traditional masculinity, witnessing women drinking alcohol was frowned upon by the men in the focus group. On the one hand, women in all groups across UJ and Alex rebelled and didn't want to be defined according to whether they drank or how much they drank. At the same time, most women in the group felt that in reality, there were limitations: "The problem is not with the alcohol but how you behave after drinking." Women worried about alcohol making them more sexually vulnerable to men, suggesting that women still carry the responsibility of having to protect themselves by adjusting their behaviour in public. Furthermore, women spoke from experience in saying that men perceived women who drink as deserving of sexual abuse:

> "Some of my guy friends always say that it doesn't look good on a woman when like she is drinking or smoking, like you should never smoke or hold a bottle...'it's like she does not respect herself, we won't even take her seriously.' They won't even feel sorry for her if something happens to her, they won't even defend her if a man is harassing her or something."

Hearing such comments from their male friends played on the minds of women, and influenced whether they drank and how much they drank. One participant said she preferred to pour her drink in a glass, to make it less obvious what sort of beverage she was consuming and avoid attracting unwanted attention: "It kind of also makes you feel like the moment you have that drink someone is already targeting you, waiting for you to have a few extra before they act." Men confirmed some of these fears and constraints and emphasized that for this reason they felt "it's not acceptable" for women to drink like men. Seeing a girl drinking out of a bottle in a nightclub or bar, one man said: "The next day she is going to be crying rape." Again, responsibility of preventing sexual violence was placed on women not to invite harm, rather than men not to inflict harm. On seeing a drunk girl, men argued, they saw

7 Above photo sourced online at: http://www.iol.co.za/lifestyle/boozylicious-and-able-to-carry-their-liquor-1.1012469#.Uyb5087_jXQ



potential for sex, an opportunity they wouldn't want to miss out on. The men in Alex argued that women are going against the 'norm' by being consumers of alcohol and smokers, which was deemed unfeminine. Women were judged for their "beauty and kindness" - qualities tarnished by alcohol and smoking. When women smoked and drank alcohol they engaged in traditionally masculine behaviour. Beside the pressure on women to always be guarded when drinking, some men also see women who drink alcohol and are independent as a "challenge" and a threat to their masculinity.

Although women rebelled against narrow, masculine definitions of alcohol consumption, they simultaneously acknowledged the reality of the relationship between alcohol and sexual violence. Many women saw it as their right to drink as much as they wanted to, but in reality feared that drinking alcohol made them vulnerable to sexual assault. Women who drink were viewed as encroaching on man's territory and therefore exposing themselves to violence, manifested through sexual abuse. An abused woman who is drunk was seen as "deserving" the abuse because she invited it upon herself. Because a woman drank alcohol – a masculine act – she would be left to fend for herself and wouldn't receive any protection from men. By drinking, women were perceived as abandoning a traditional definition of a woman as "innocent and pure" – someone who needed to be protected by a man.

## Lobola

Lastly, the focus groups wanted to explore men's and women's thoughts on Lobola, a traditional practice where men give the family of their bride-to-be gifts and money to say thank you for allowing the man to take the girl from her family into his own. The tradition has been criticized as engendering inequality between men and women and seen as the purchase of a woman by a man. The excerpt below illustrates this critique.

***And Lobola opens another can of worms as debates have been raging about why women do not pay Lobola, seeing as we want equal status with men on all levels. [...] Customary marriages are another quandary. If a man can have more than one wife, can a wife have more than one husband?" (The Sunday Independent, 8/08/2010, p. 21)***

***"The practice of paying and receiving 'bride price' comes down to the sale and purchase of 'reproductive rights', and needs revisiting. [...] If one of us were to corrupt our girlfriend – get her into drugs and ruin her life – the worst that could happen would be suffering the consequences of being hated by the girl's father (assuming she is not raised by a single mother). However if one of us got the girl pregnant before wedlock, the girl's father would demand that 'damages' be paid. [...] The ceremony has become a spectacle of bargaining skills, with the girl's finer characteristics cited to demand a higher going price – that she hasn't had illegitimate children, that she has great cooking skills, that she is well educated. Could one possibly objectify women any more than this?"(City Press, 31/01/2011, p. 22)***

The above media excerpt was shown only to the mixed-sex group of participants due to time constraints. The men in the group felt the tradition of Lobola was being misinterpreted as an act of "buying" a woman, instead of an act of "saying thank you for raising this well-mannered and disciplined child" - a comment that is in itself problematic, as it suggests that women are valuable if they are well-mannered and disciplined. Some women however maintained that the practice made them feel "bought," giving men control over them, adding that Lobola was not necessarily an indication of love from the man.

One man suggested that the practice of Lobola was changing as women continue to be empowered, especially financially. Where Lobola used to dictate that if problems emerge in a marriage the man can go to the family of the wife "and tell them that the daughter is misbehaving," nowadays women are making enough money to say: "You know what? You paid R20,000 and I can give you back your R20,000 and give you R30,000 on top of it! Don't you come with your nonsense." Increasingly, men said they felt that the tradition of Lobola was being turned into a "business transaction" and although they still wanted to pay Lobola for a future wife to maintain culture, they didn't want to be perceived an ATM machine, who was simply there to make the bride's family "millionaires." There was a split among men on the staying power of Lobola. Some participants highlighted that people cannot be "rigid" about culture and that there are other ways of showing appreciation to the family of the bride. Others insisted that Lobola was here to stay because it honoured women who wanted to raise a family with one man, critiquing women who "spend nights with different men for nothing."

Debating changes to culture in the name of gender equality is challenging, as was the case in discussing Lobola with both men and women. As women become financially independent, participants claimed the tradition is becoming outdated. Men have also criticized aspects of Lobola as having become an abused money-making practice which reinforces a definition of masculinity that relies on material wealth – something the men expressed was becoming an increasingly frustrating and limiting expression of masculinity. While some felt the tradition had to remain, this was a view mostly held by elderly men. The younger men felt the tradition could be challenged.

## *If Men Could Have It Differently*

At the end of all focus groups, participants were asked the following question in order to see which aspects of their masculine identity surfaced as most needing reevaluation, on a personal level and in relation to how masculinity was communicated in media.

> *If you could be perceived differently as a man or have the opportunity to behave differently as a man, without any social pressures, how would you behave?*

All men said they would want to change the perception that "men don't cry" because, as they said, "men do cry." Provided they were in a relationship they felt safe and comfortable in, men said they would cry in front of a woman. Men also wanted to be able to go to the police to report abuse without feeling ashamed or being seen as weak. Lastly, they also wished that media's representation of men wasn't so often negative, focusing on portraying "men as evil, a predator that's only hungry to rape women." Women, on being asked if they could change anything about the way men are perceived socially, said they would want dominance not to be such a strong component of male identity. They wanted men to be "accountable and not blame their actions on tradition." At the same time, women felt that the "perception of men as monsters" should change, and that they should be allowed to "show their emotions," that is, "men must be allowed to be human." The men in the mixed-sex groups echoed similar sentiments, that at the end of the day, men are "human beings" and shouldn't feel they have to "act all macho" all the time, as bottling up their emotions leads to outbursts of violence. Likewise, men don't want to feel the social pressure of having to be the breadwinner and protector and were frustrated by comments made by some female participants that "women expect men to have money, otherwise what's in it for the girls."

## *SUMMARY:*
## *What the Focus Group Discussions Reveal*

Across all focus group discussions, male participants felt more confident than women about expressing their opinions, even when those may have been offensive to the opposite sex. Female participants were at times, more guarded and subdued in their responses in the presence of men. Men were considered real men if they have money and can maintain a woman financially, which leads to increasing frustration on men's behalf as they wish to disconnect masculinity from the power of having money. In the face of feminism's efforts to empower women, men have been left questioning their socially gendered roles. Responding to this, men have expressed the view that physical strength, through which violence is exerted, seems to remain one of few defining characteristics of power that differentiate them from women. Masculine dominance appears to have become synonymous with physical power. Inclusion of male voices in stories dealing with teenage pregnancy would encourage boys and men to feel part of the debate and therefore to take responsibility for fatherhood. Where media emphasizes that the pregnant girl was in a sexual relationship with a man who had multiple partners, men felt absolved of their involvement, and the blame was placed on the girl who, according to participants "should have known better." Screaming rape was discussed as a reality, even if drawn from social interactions through rumors, storytelling and sharing, and exposure to media. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, personal experiences couldn't be explored but their construction of reality based on interactions and media exposure convinced participants that cases of screaming rape happened often. Among both sexes this was interpreted as women exploiting the "victim" status, due to society's focus on the empowerment of women and emphasis on protection from violence. Although violence against men is an under reported reality, discussions revealed conflict between wanting to report such crimes and fearing that it would evoke social ridicule based on expectations of men to be strong. Likewise, women felt that encouraging men to report cases of abuse by women was the right thing to do, but simultaneously stated that a man who has been abused or shows weakness would be seen as less of a man in their eyes. Corrective rape was perceived to be a result of threatened masculinities. Men felt emasculated in cases where women rejected them based on their sexual orientation rather than merely their persona. The issue of "stealing women" from heterosexual men, by a "subordinate sex" – the woman – also emerged as a reason behind corrective rape. Displays of "gay behaviour" among straight men was seen as emasculating, by both men and women, emboldening existing fears among heterosexual men of being associated with gay men. Grooming performed by metrosexual men was patrolled by women as an acceptable behaviour, but with limits. While women expected men to be well-groomed, witnessing the process of grooming emasculated men in the view of some women. Beauty was a closely guarded female domain. Male and female prostitution was viewed differently – the former was perceived by men as a business initiative and the latter as an excuse shrouded in self-victimhood, pointing to the different ways in which both media and the public understand and talk about prostitution. Discussions around the escort named Palesa Mbau revealed that clothing which attracts the male gaze was a source of masculine insecurities, controlled by men's enforcement of "appropriate" outfits for "their" women, and by women themselves who attempted to ease men's insecurities, by critiquing and fearing other women who dress "provocatively." Palesa became a point of comparison for men who showed appreciation for the traditional Reed Dance, and virginity testing, explaining that in contrast to the Reed dance girls, Palesa was not to be trusted and lacked self-respect because she was selling her body. Although women fought to defend their right to drink alcohol, in reality they feared consequences of sexual abuse and being targeted by men once they were drunk and became vulnerable. Men felt that by encroaching on what is traditionally male territory, drinking alcohol exposed women to violence from which they didn't deserve protection. Lastly, conversations around the tradition of Lobola showed that it is a practice becoming increasingly contested among younger men and women as a sign of "ownership" as opposed to "real love." Men likewise felt that it has become a practice that requires men to exert the very thing they wish to shed as a dominant definition of masculinity: financial wealth. In their final remarks, men wished to be given the freedom to express emotions without the associated stigma of being perceived as weak and emasculated. Men also expressed a concern over media's heightened focus on portraying men as monsters and vicious rapists, as a predominant masculine definition. In general, with regard to many topics, participants bemoaned superficial media coverage and would appreciate well researched stories that put the causes and events into context and that follow up on cases.

## *INTERVIEWS:*
## *What Journalists think of Masculinity*

Interviews were conducted with male and female journalists working for some of the same newspapers which were monitored for the content analysis, All interviewees were afforded anonymity. The five interviewed journalists were presented with results from the content analysis and findings from the focus groups to get their reactions. The main aim was to investigate the journalist's position with regard to the findings. Although the interviews resembled more of a discussion than a structured question-answer, most respondents were asked to address similar subjects, such as: Men's perceptions that media portrays them most frequently as violent and vicious, and then reflect on the words which were found to appear most frequently in relation to male versus female sources, and how those words influence our understanding of gender and gendered identities. Depending on the journalist's area of focus, they related the research findings back to their own experience and expertise.

## *Gendered Language and Sources*

Journalists were shown the list of the top words that appeared most frequently in relation to female sources versus male sources. "Jesus Christ, that's pretty insane, hey" was one journalist's reaction to the list. Another said, "wow, that's incredible." Generally speaking, journalists didn't seem to be conscious of their word choices in the process of writing stories. Neither was there any attempt to control gender portrayals or strike a gender balance. Most journalists feel that their words merely reflect the words used by society to speak about the same issues: "I don't really think about it unless it's pointed out to me really." Adding to that, the pressures and time constraints of producing daily news means that less consideration is given to word choice when it comes to story composition, especially in relation to gender equality. Journalists who write feature news stories, however, have more freedom and time to maneuver their language choices, and for that reason they are more conscious of language. Beyond that, any gender stereotypes embedded in language are subconscious and emerge from the writer as a result of their societal conditioning. One journalist said that Page 3[8] in some tabloid newspaper was

the perfect example of a space where language and images entrench gender stereotypes, saying it was “a war zone linguistically [...] a traditional voyeuristic exploitative space where women are being impregnated, the bitches, the villains.”

All journalists, male or female described their newsrooms as hetero-masculine, that is, a space defined by heterosexual men: “We are so geared towards the voice of God being male; we are so driven as news people to scoop a story in a certain way.” Journalists also emphasized the fact that their writing is not entirely their own, and what the public sees is a cluster of words, sentences and messages that have been molded and re-molded by a line of editors and subeditors. “With journalism it's not just me writing a story and then it goes to print. From the edit, from me writing it, it goes to the editor, then there are the sub-editors...” Some journalists felt that personal agendas, informed by the editor’s gender and race, influenced their editing, word choices and story framing. One said: “By the time it gets to the paper it's not what I initially wrote. People have their own personal agendas. I don't have the opportunity to control my story.” In this particular journalist's case, “the chain is run by men.”

One of the journalists said she experienced sexual harassment in her newsroom constantly and felt powerless to confront it: “There is no platform to deal with things. It's like the men are together, they rule, end of story. You are the woman.” Through tears she explained that she records conversations as proof of sexual harassment if ever there comes a time when she is in a position to file a complaint. “We are scared of being victimized and it's a small interest to report one of your bosses. There needs to be a structure. Do we have unions in the newsrooms? No. So how do we know that when we report to whoever is running the thing, it's going to be objective?” As a female journalist her experience so far has been that “men stand together, no matter how shit something is” while women, despite education and emancipation, “are bashing each other.” One of the female journalists interviewed, spoke of having witnessed male journalists sticking together, making it difficult for females to break into the “boys network”. More support and respect is what this journalist felt would improve trust and bonding among women in the newsroom; “Women are paranoid and... we are not paranoid...things have been done to us and we end up treating everyone as a suspect.” This raises further questions on the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in the newsroom, i.e. does this only happen to subordinates or do women at senior levels in the newsroom experience such? Do male journalists experience sexual harassment?

Having a female editor on the other hand was said to make a significant difference to language choice and gender portrayals. To female editors, “women's voices and representations of women outside of the stereotypical world was an important aspect.” In one journalist's experience, working with a female editor makes a “massive difference.” Telling human interest stories is “infinitely more successfully handled by women. They tend to be able to tap into human interest more readily than men”. This is in line with the stereotype, however, that female journalists should be restricted to a softer spectrum of news making. For example, Gallagher (2005:64) argues that women are assigned to local news beats whilst their male counterparts are earning kudos and increasing their career prospects by reporting the more prestigious national and international stories. Alternatively, it is because display of emotion by women is societally accepted, and even expected, that women are said to be better at, or rather, assigned to telling such stories. However, if men were to be afforded the same opportunity to openly display emotion without the associated stigma of weakness, (as our findings show) then perhaps male journalist would likewise be as willing to tell human stories from an angle that taps into human interest more readily. It is therefore not so much about the stereotypical perception that women are biologically wired to be emotional, as it is about societal conditioning behind the allowance of emotional display and expression.

Unlike female editors and female journalists, “young White males who are in charge of news pages are not as consultative […] However, the fact that the two biggest newspapers[9] in the country have female editors now, you can see that the tone is different.” However, the feminization of journalism, meaning an increase in numbers of female journalists, puts an onerous task on women in the sense that they are at times forced to support the objectification of women on Page 3, and on other occasions they must provide women with space for identification where women are shown as educated and hardworking women, modern mothers and so on. All this may have to be done at times at the expense of remaining outside hard news, away from important political and public topics, thus further perpetuating the stereotypes that women can only be restricted to specific stories and beats.

Although shocked by the 20:80 ratio of female to male sources in analyzed media, they felt this was merely a reflection of societal gender bias and the scarcity of female sources willing to speak as authoritatively as most of their male sources, and not the journalists’ intentional gender bias. One journalist found that male sources are more likely to come forward with a story than are female sources, possibly because of mens position in government or business. Most acknowledged that their current sources are largely male as they tend to be in leadership positions, compared to women who they found were often in administrative positions. One journalist added that her male sources are “bold and I can trust them. Some of the women will be more cautious, they'll take longer to respond, they might say something then backtrack and say they need to check with the man. So, of course then I'm going to go directly to the man.” Another reason journalists tended to rely on male sources more than female ones was that their editors (usually men) suggested sources for them to contact when pursuing a story, most of whom are also men: “Editors give us suggestions for who to phone and a lot of the time it's their colleagues, their ex-colleagues, or their friends, who are men.”Female sources were perceived to be “sensitive, nervous, lacking confidence in themselves and what they are going to say, maybe because they are pre-empting a reaction from a man.” This perception of female and male sources was seen as matching the gendered implication of words associated with female and male sources shown in the media content analysis, where wordslike ‘win’ or ‘manage’ were associated with male sources while words like ‘home’ or ‘sex’ were attributed to female sources. One female journalist preferred female sources over male sources, due to her experience that men, whether journalists or sources, tended to “stick together and be loyal to each other” making her distrustful of them: “I treat male sources as suspect because they always have an agenda going on. But with females I tend to trust them.” It is important that we explore the factors that contribute to a lack of diversity in sources. Whilst it is obvious that access to sources is a reflection of a patriarchal society, other possible contributing factors are lack of diversity among reporters whose stories appeared on the front page, a tendency to turn to the “usual suspects”, women not stepping up to be sources, and a lack of female sources, are possible contributing factors.

When asked if media's gendered language could shift, most said this could be achieved once journalism's environment is challenged and changed, that is, a gender-stereotyped society in which media operates. One journalist added that although we have a “progressive constitution [...] we are actually quite a conservative country. The media reflect that.” Journalist felt the skewed ratios between male and female sources could be changed if conscious efforts were made to inject more balance between female and male source. For that to happen, journalism's time constraints and therefore tendency to rely on sources most readily available, men, would need to be changed.

## *Masculinity and Violence: Male Voices on Male Violence*

Aside from sharing the media content analysis results, journalists were also told about some of the findings revealed by focus group discussions with men and women about masculinity in South Africa. When journalists were told that most male focus group participants felt the media portrayed men as violent monsters, all journalists argued that their news stories were merely reflecting what was happening around them in society, on a daily basis: “The problem of rape and sexual violence is so huge in our society that obviously our stories are going to reflect the woman as a victim.” Because of the high rate of rape and sexual abuse perpetrated by mostly men, journalists said that not to write about it would be to ignore what was so obviously prevalent in the country. In response to men's impressions that media portrays men as aggressors more often than not, one journalist said: “How can the man in the media not look like the aggressor when we are reporting so much about men being violent against women, because that's usually the direction it takes. It's men being sexually violent, raping women, causing women to fall pregnant.” Other responses were similar: “It's not women raping men. We have some of the highest rates of violent rape in the world today. What the fuck must the media do to highlight the issue? There are no gangs of women going around attacking men.” Another added: “But who kills? Who is raping? Is it women? It's men! ” One journalist argued that such a perception by focus group participants was “dangerous” and “one-sided”, likely generated by those who find themselves either permanently or fleetingly in societal spaces and situations defined

8 Usually a page in tabloid newspapers that features naked female models or celebrity news.
9 City Press and Sunday Times.

by violence: “You'll find that some of the people that said that are people that know a lot of what's happening in townships, children being raped, you know women being murdered.” This sentiment, that only those living in violent communities perceive media reporting as primarily focused on violent portrayals of men, cannot be evaluated in the context of this study, because three of its focus groups took place in Alexandra community known to be a township that experiences violence, while the remaining three focus groups were conducted on the University of Johannesburg campus, where participants' residential addresses weren't recorded.

Most male participants in the focus groups expressed a need for stories dealing with gender-based violence and rape of women to include male voices, so that male readers and the broader public can better understand the reasons and reactions of men in the communities where rape happens. Participants felt that it was important that men’s voices are amplified so that men are seen not only as perpetrators of violence, but also as a solution to this violence. Doing so would show readers that there isn't always a dichotomy and a gaping schism between men and women on issues of violence and crime, and that instead there are often complex reasons behind why men rape.

To actively change men's responses would require an emphasis on asking them how they feel about the situation rather than how they want to react. Journalists said that “there's almost no room to contextualize rape.” Trying to write a story that investigates and includes explanations of rapist motivations is difficult, because the sensitivity and outrage behind the topic always attracts such anger, that nobody wants to engage in discussing or understanding why a man committed such a crime. By committing this crime he immediately becomes a monster who needs to be dealt with and removed from society.

Even though men are overwhelmingly involved in all forms of violence, murder titillates and excites the public, and those in the media business understand that this translates into profit. Bearing this in mind, it is important that news remains reflective of the public’s interest, addressing issues of masculinity, violence and how men can be part of the solution. Alienating men’s voices will only further perpetuate the stereotype that men are exclusively violent. Journalists could theoretically see the merit in this, even though suggesting a probe into a rapist’s background “would not be accepted” by a roundtable of journalists and editors. The public “so easily just slip into the role of hating the rapist and hating what he did [...] I don't think they would be very open to understanding his side of the story”, refusing all possibility that some criminals can be reformed. At the end of the day, writing a story that explores men's motivations to commit crime won't garner support as will a story that supports the public's vilification. Presenting readers with an article that explains a rapist's motives in a rational way, shifting him from monster to human being, means that “people might see parts of themselves” in this person, and they are simply “not willing to go into that area” of consciousness. People aren't “open to admitting the darkness in them.” Pitching a story that attempts to investigate or understand motivations behind rape would be difficult because editors “know what the opinion is out there. People aren't looking for reasoning you know, they are looking for justice [...] so you want to give them a story that makes them feel better about it.” However, what the men in the focus groups sought from the media wasn't so much sympathy for the criminal but rather a reporting that would offer more investigation, context, and a full analysis of circumstances as well as a follow-up to the story which would attempt to explain why the man in question may have committed the crime.

Journalists also struggled to think of sources that would be willing to discuss rape from the rapist’s point of view and were reluctant to pursue a story that would try to understand the psychology behind rape, or be construed as sympathizing: “You would have to be so brave writing it [...] I can't think of any journalists jumping up and down to interview a rapist.” On the flip side, even in cases where journalists want to report on the abuse of men by women, for example, the feeling is that the public wants to see the media reflect what they perceive as the real problem first, which is abuse of women by men. According to journalists, editors prefer stories that fall neatly into topics that are already being discussed by other media and appeal to the public. One journalist said that sometimes they do try and interview perpetrators of abuse or murder, asking them why they committed the crime, but are often left with chilling answers they don't know how to incorporate into the story: “It's like they own their victims [...] Sometimes you speak to someone who killed someone: 'Ja, I snapped'. You snapped? Someone is dead and he's just going to sit there with the straight face. So, how are we supposed to write that one?”

On the reverse side of abuse, male focus group participants repeatedly stated that men suffer from abuse at the hands of women, albeit not as often as the reverse, but felt powerless to report the abuse to the police because they feared being laughed at. It is perhaps because there are so few reported cases that such stories rarely appear in the media. Asked if such a story would be of interest to a journalist and editor, one journalist said “I think it would be... I think it's happened once or twice” – explaining that such articles usually tell a similar story, of men being laughed at by police. “I have a situation right now – the male doesn't want to be mentioned, which is a problem because females want to be mentioned. He is sitting in a situation with a case where the wife lied and cried rape, but he doesn't want to be named. Why? His friends are going to laugh at him.” The fears that many men have of reporting abuse by their spouses speaks to the issue of emasculation.

## *Fear of Black Masculinities*

As mentioned in the beginning, representations of Black masculinity are historically structured by and against dominant discourses of masculinity and race, specifically Whiteness. Journalists felt that not only gender, but also race played a role in the construction of news and the stereotyped perpetuation of Black masculinity. One journalist offered this explanation:

> “I think as seen through the media, we are probably very biased towards interrogating and being fearful of Black masculinity and it sort of, I think it's still very much based on very archaic notions of Blackness, which go back to the noble savage, the libidoness of the Black man, you know. And there isn't enough, if any, critique of sort of constructions of White masculinity, which I found equally problematic and that came up in the Pistorius case [...] you know the culture of violence that White males grow up in which is not really interrogated. You know going to same sex schools where this sort of misogyny and patriarchy is really encouraged and forms itself whether in the initiation rites and the games, sporting games and otherwise. And there's been no real sort of correlation or attempt to interrogate any correlation – if there is one – between that upbringing and one where there is always a background noise of sort of the mentality, the fear of the Black man and hence a need, to defend oneself whether through alarm systems, barbed wire fences and guns.”

Likewise, media treatment of blood and bodies differs, depending on the race of the body. One journalist exemplified this by comparing pictures displaying blood of Reeva Steenkamp in the Pistorius case to images showing bodies of Marikana miners: “When there's no second thought given to a poor dead Black person on the front page, but there is a lot more conversation around rich White person’s bloodied doors... It's a race and class thing I think, which needs to be interrogated and I don't think we are doing that.” Likewise: “If a Black person was hijacked in Alexandra, it would probably be a short on page two, but if it was a rich White person, preferably famous, it would be on the front page.”One of the reasons there is such an imbalance in reporting Black and White violence lies in the racial make-up of those heading news, which according to the journalists interviewed are “largely White males.” Another journalist who felt discriminated along gender and race lines, said media ownership in South Africa was a problem: “So what are you saying about democracy and freedom and equality to me? Who controls the media? White people. White people are the beneficiaries of apartheid.” When gender was injected into the discussion as a factor, to determine whether masculinity was perceived differently according to race, the journalist felt that race trumped gender: “Whites tend to stick together. Whites give each other opportunities. Whites use their own without the necessary experience to get far, while Blacks, they set you up for failure. They hire you wanting a puppet and you are the enemy.” According to journalists, what seems to also be contributing to the overall problem of

inequality and its reflection in media content is a shrinking gap between classes, or rather a growth of middle class journalists, which is problematic when a story needs to be addressed by journalistic voices coming from varied class and race backgrounds. One journalist said this was especially evident in stories dealing with violence: “The fear of being broken into in the middle of the night and being ransacked by a Black male is a profoundly middle class sort of fear, it's a paranoia, which is probably why we run so many violent stories” which the public continue to buy to “feed their fear.”

## *Teenage Pregnancy*

Teenage pregnancy was one of the subjects that generated a lot of discussion during focus groups and touched on the fact that boys/fathers are so often absent in stories dealing with this issue. Subsequently, teenage pregnancy also emerged as a topic during interviews with journalists. When asked why stories on teenage pregnancy so often focused primarily on the pregnant girl, ignoring the role of the father in the situation, journalists said this was because “the girl is carrying the evidence of the sex, she is the one left with the baby, she is pregnant and there isn't a way of proving who the father is.” Journalists also rarely ask the pregnant girl where the father is because they assume the answer will be “I don't know” or if the girl has been sexually active with several boys, then a DNA test would be required, which would be an infringement on the girl's privacy. One journalist also said they found that girls “were reluctant to talk about the father.” Another journalist said that the reason girls were interviewed more often than boys was because of time constraints, as well as “the idea of journalism” meaning the need to always be the first to break or report a story in the least amount of time, so as to generate profit. As a result of this system “there is a lack of nuance and empathy” when it comes to reporting on complex issues, such as, teenage pregnancy. Amid all this, journalist still felt that boys needed to be included in stories and would endeavour to do so in future reporting. It is important that in their stories on teenage pregnancy, media include or involve the fathers/boys. This will assist in promoting responsibility for fatherhood and changing the language of manhood.

## *A Need for Change*

In retrospect, journalists felt there was need for much change in the journalism field. To challenge some of the issues identified, one journalist said children need to start being exposed to books and reading at a young age. One journalist pointed out the discrepancy between what is taught at universities and the reality of working in a newsroom: “Universities, they tell us the truth; at the same time they lie. They give you all these theories on what to expect … when you start working. Bullshit.” Similar sentiments were expressed by another journalist who said there was a need for university mindsets and curriculums to shift towards better integrating journalism writing and media theory, so that ultimately ethical reporting becomes part and parcel of quality writing once young journalists arrive at newsrooms.

Juniorisation of newsrooms also needs to be addressed by providing young journalists with mentors and better on-the-job training programs. Young pupils through to university students need to be exposed to “more gender courses all the way through” to get them thinking about gender as they progress into their careers. To tackle some of the persistent societal issues, one journalist said media need to engage in “proper journalism”, meaning, looking at these issues “more holistically [...] we need to be more considerate, look at why it's happening and where it's happening. What are the issues? That's proper journalism, isn't it?” For example, in stories on teenage pregnancies where finding a father might be a challenge, a journalist shouldn't assume he cannot be found and interviewed, but needs to seek him out in order to get a full story.

Media has developed what one journalist called a “defensive attitude” hindering progress on introspection around gender, race and class bias. “At some point we also have to take a moral stand point on something and say the media has the power to change opinions.” During Oscar Pistorius' murder case, one journalist suggested the newspaper do a story on Anene Booysen, but this was dismissed by the editor who feared loss of readership if they didn't run with a story every other media house was running with. Often, rather than engaging on an issue, newspapers fear reader-fatigue, therefore failing to strike a balance between maintaining readerships and encouraging “proper journalism” that probes and reports on single issues over an extended period of time, allowing it to generate progressive debate. One journalist’s opinion was that newspapers were slowly dying and that while traditional newspapers bred gender inequality, entrenched in a historically masculine profession, “the internet is going to be a great equalizer when it comes to women and men and journalism.” Research shows, however, that noticeable disparities remain, regarding the extent to which women have access to the Internet and the skills to utilize Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in order to provide content. In most cases, women find themselves not only excluded from equal social and economic opportunities in general, but also in terms of the benefits offered by ICTs.

Journalists agreed that there was a need for definitions and portrayals of masculinity to be challenged, and some said that whenever possible they do make conscious changes to their stories to represent men in a positive light, where the temptation might be to do the opposite: “I do feel conscious of it, but I don't know if the media has an agenda in its portrayals. I think it has a lack of agenda in correcting its portrayals.” One journalist, particularly aware of the negative impact masculinity can have on addressing abuse among men, said: “It’s like this masculinity of wanting to be macho; or if I find out my wife is doing this people are going to laugh at me. People need to change how they think. Wrong is wrong. If someone does something wrong to you, you need to speak up against it. And it needs to be addressed.”


# CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this study was to explore masculinity and masculine identity among male and female media consumers of a select number of South Africa's newspapers. The study had a three-pronged approach to examining masculinity.

What the overall findings of this study show is that women continue to be underrepresented as sources in news media, with women occupying only 21 percent of news language, that is, words were documented in relation to female sources only 21 percent of time. Language was also found to be gendered and embedded in seemingly traditional definitions and perceptions of masculinity and femininity in so far that words associated with male sources reflected professions and spaces traditionally occupied by men, such as 'manage', 'bank', 'company' or 'court'. Words found in relation to female sources, however, spoke of roles and spaces traditionally assumed to belong to women, reflected in words such as 'home', 'school', 'sex' or 'withdraw'.

Focus group discussions indicated contradictions between men's self-expectations of masculinity and those imposed on them by society, as well as their need to have the freedom to be an emotional human being. Likewise, women's perceptions of masculinity were contradictory, swinging between progressive ideals expressed by allowing men to be sensitive and fashion conscious, and their implicit expectations of men to be traditionally masculine – strong and protective breadwinners – engrained by what they saw was a traditional upbringing with clear dichotomous definitions of gender roles. Men overwhelmingly felt that the media portrayed them almost exclusively as violent, rapists and monsters, and argued that this may well be contributing to a narrow view of their masculine identity, enhancing in turn a penchant towards violence. Participants felt that this was aggravated by shallow reporting, which does not give stories enough context or follow-up. The general perception was that if this is how the media sees men, and if that's how the rest of society sees men, then perhaps that violent attitude also constitutes being a man.

Lastly, journalists were interviewed in order to explore their reactions to above findings, especially to gendered language and men's reactions to media's portrayals of masculinity. Journalists expressed shock at media analysis results, especially at the striking imbalance between male and female sources, but more so about the nature of most commonly used words in relation to women. Reflecting on those, most said they generally don't explicitly deliberate over words in order to strike a conscious balance in gender language. Similarly, although most journalists recognize a need to include more diverse female voices as sources, most





said that time pressures associated with news journalism prevented them from seeking out female sources, when male sources are more readily available. In addition, some journalists had a preference for male sources due to their perceived assertiveness and boldness. Female sources were said to be more reticent and retracted their comments too often, making the time-sensitive job of generating stories more challenging.

Journalists noted that aside from gender, race played a significant role in how news is produced, amplifying the portrayal of the Black man as perpetrator and feeding into middle-class fears of violence, by reporting on violence as an almost exclusively Black issue. Reactions were mixed, but according to journalists, one of the reason for this gender and race bias was media ownership, largely in the hands of White men.

Overall, findings indicate several complex challenges arising from media content – a circular process which feeds into itself: journalists build news, the public consumes news, and the public feeds back into the society which creates news. In assessing the link between these and how each react to the other, for example how public reacts to media and how journalists react to public views, challenges and contradictions emerged, as well as a need to address these. The recommendations below provide some suggestions on how these challenges can be tackled. As much as is possible, journalists need to increase awareness of the use of language when composing stories, to ensure that stereotypes are being challenged.

These include:

- Portrayals of women as victims which perpetuates these views in the minds of men and women.
- Portrayals of men, and especially the Black man, as almost exclusively a "monster" or violent rapist.
- Challenging the media narrative and template used to report on violence in general which reinforces the fear of Black masculinities among the South African middle-class.
- Challenging journalists who report on teenage pregnancy to include boys' and men's voices, and to refrain from telling the story in such a way that places all responsibility or blame on the woman as a "victim."
- Challenging definitions of masculinity by actively sourcing and publishing stories which portray men in roles significant to alternative masculinities, including roles which show men in roles traditionally considered feminine, such as parenthood, care, and domestic roles.
- When dealing with cases where a woman has been accused of "screaming rape", that the issue is thoroughly investigated and contextualized before the term is used to describe what is a serious crime of rape.
- To publish more frequently stories on cases of violence against men, committed by women, and explore the issue's complexity from the perspective of men and women, and how it could realistically be challenged so that men stop feeling excluded.
- To explore and delve into the issues of "corrective rape" not merely as an outrageous crime committed by men against lesbians, but a deeply rooted reflection of threatened masculinities within the broader context of violence against women, and ways in which these can be challenged.
- To explain homosexuality from the perspective of gays and lesbians, so that the media consuming public can begin to gain more education and insight into a domain that is largely under-explored and therefore seen as a threat to traditional masculinities.
- To explore metrosexuality and its place in the largely female-guarded domain of beauty, perpetuated by media's focus on the physical beauty as embodied by the female body and femininity.
- To carefully communicate and explore issues around prostitution so as not to communicate women's choices to become sex workers as something rooted in victimhood but rather a choice derivative of complex societal factors, as this would begin to change masculine perceptions of sex work and their consequent reactions.
- To challenge portrayals of women's bodies as not merely decontextualized bodies presented for the male gaze and a place to exert masculine control.
- To be weary of the way in which sexual violence is communicated in relation to the consumption of alcohol, so as not to draw correlations between the two which encourages implicit blame and absolves perpetrators of responsibility.
- Lobola needs to continue to be debated as both a traditional practice to be respected within its cultural realm, and as a financial responsibility embedded in definitions of masculinity.

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