

**A study investigating  
the construction of unemployed men's masculinity**

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by

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*I wish I knew how it would feel to be free  
I wish I could break all the chains holding me  
I wish I could say all the things that I should say  
Say them loud say them clear for the whole round world to hear  
I wish I could share all the love that's in my heart  
remove all the doubts it keeps us apart  
and I wish you could know what it means to be me  
then you'd see and agree  
every man should be free.*

*Nina Simone*

## **Abstract**

In South Africa, the erosion of jobs in the formal economy, the increased role played by the informal economy in people's survival and the high unemployment rate are the main causes of chronic poverty. Between 40% and 50% of the South African population is considered as poor and 25% categorised as ultra-poor. As Von Holdt and Webster wrote (2005:31), "the restructuring of work has a destructive impact on society and social cohesion".

This research is interested in finding what the consequences of unemployment on the construction of black men's identities are. The construction of African masculinity was shaped throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the economic and social policies of the colonial and apartheid regimes. New types of masculinities emerged related to the capacity of African men to earn a salary through employment and provide for their families. This research looks at masculinities in times of economic hardship: how are African men constructing their masculine identities when work has historically been a defining variable of their manhood and that they are now deprived from employment? Do men still abide to the hegemonic norm that they are supposed to provide financially for their families or do they reject this patriarchal model and assert their masculinity differently?

This research has found that unemployment and deteriorating working conditions have distressing consequences on men. Some participants expressed their need for political and economic freedom but abide to the norms of patriarchal masculinity and are therefore ashamed of their unemployed situation. Their obedience to this system oppresses them as they cannot provide for their families. They do not allow themselves to talk about their pain. They show self-hatred, lack of confidence, fear and uncertainty. Patriarchal masculinity marginalises them further.

On the contrary, participants who have rejected the norms of capitalist patriarchy have a healthier sense of family and community. Although unemployed and unable to provide for their families, those men have refuted the hegemonic norms of masculinity and asserted their manhood positively. They are involved fathers and partners. They share responsibilities and decision-making power within their households. They are not


depressed and anxious. Self-actualisation, love and ubuntu are the pillars unemployed men need to work with in order to overcome capitalist patriarchy and reconstruct masculinity. Reconstructing masculinity would not only benefit men but is also a necessity for gender equality.

## Declaration

This dissertation represents original work by the author and has not been submitted in any other form to another university. Where use has been made of the work of others is has been duly acknowledged and referenced in the text.

The research for this dissertation was performed in the School of Development Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal , Durban . Research was undertaken under the supervision of Mr. Imraan Valodia during the period from January 2007 to December 2007.

Signed,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Claire Ichou

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## **Chapter 1.**

### **Theorising masculinities**

At the end of July 2007 in a Durban township, a young woman is stripped naked and paraded through the streets. Later, her house is set alight. Her crime? She defied a ban on women wearing trousers. Residents of Umlazi's T section "unanimously" took the decision that women can not wear trousers. According to a traditional leader, "women in the area do not like wearing pants. It is just outsiders who want to impose their rules on us and it won't work" (The Mercury, 2007:4). This anecdote is symbolic to the difficulties South Africa is facing as a country in transition. The shift from a traditional gender regime to a constitution promoting gender equality is fuelled by misunderstandings and incomprehension. Men and women's gender roles are changing and many find it hard to adapt.

The consequences of this changing gender order, South Africa's violent past and its unequal socioeconomic situation are unfortunately notorious: inter alia, excessive levels of violence against women and children, high HIV prevalence rate and a dislocated social structure. In South Africa, one woman is killed every six hours by her intimate partner (Smith, 2005), sexual violence is endemic and the majority of children do not live with their biological fathers (Roy, 2007). In South Africa, the common construction of masculinity expects men to physically and economically dominate women (Walker et al. 2004), be fearless and risk taking (Salo, 2004), and be knowledgeable about and experimented with sex (Campbell, 2003) while women are supposed to be passive, naïve and rely on men (Campbell, 2003). With such a construction of gender, it seems as if men are to be blamed for the lot. But in this postulation, men's perspectives are missing.

Gender has for a long time been a discipline meant to study women where men would mostly be considered as obstacles to gender equality and gender justice (Cornwall, 1997; Morrell and Swart, 2005). Their representations were stereotypical and under problematised while women's views were often the only one considered. Such gender theories are flawed since they ignore the context of relationships and power relations between men and women but also among men themselves. In order to address gender inequalities, we need to understand masculinity as a gender construct (Chant, 2000).

## 1. The meanings and uses of masculinity

The sex role theory argues that the main differences between men and women are biological (Nurse, 2004). On the contrary, this research is built on the premise that gender roles are socially constructed. “Whereas sex denotes a limited set of innate structural and physiological characteristics...gender is specific to humans and connotes all complex attributes ascribed by cultures to human males and females.” (Lotto and Maluso quoted in Augustine, 2002:23). Everyday men and women conduct their lives according to their gender. Connell (1995) notes that gender roles are played at three different levels: in relation to production, emotional attachment and power.

- In the production arena, the sexual division of labour expects women to ensure social reproduction in the private sphere and men capital production in the public sphere.
- Sexual desires and emotional energy are also constructed practices that position men’s heterosexuality and sexual pleasure as socially dominant.
- Finally, Connell distinguishes power relations. It is the relationship between patriarchy and capital. Capitalism and patriarchy are both related relations of power –based respectively on production and gender (Connell, 1995).

The capitalist system has historically shaped and affected the construction of patriarchy. The industrial revolution and the creation of proletariat have propelled men in the public sphere and have constrained women in the private sphere. Men’s identities are derived from their constructed place in the society while women have the natural responsibilities to care, nurture and ensure the social reproduction within their households. The public sphere legitimates men’s domination over women. In the public domain, men have access to political, economic and cultural power. Patriarchy is thus “the institutionalisation of men’s power over women within the economy, the polity, the household and heterosexual relations” (Greig et al., 2000:7). Patriarchy is located in every sphere of the society, from paid work and housework to culture, sexuality, violence, church, mass media and the state (Walby, 1994; Connell, 1995; Lemon, 1995; Bourdieu, 1998). Men benefit from patriarchy as they acquire what Connell (1995) calls a patriarchal dividend. They gain “in terms of honour, prestige and the right to command”. According to Lemon (1995:62), male domination is defined by men’s “particular psychological identity, social role, place

in the labour force and sense of self". She further states that "real men" are distinguished by three characteristics:

- Their ability to earn money in the public workforce and to support their families. Men are expected to be the main provider and breadwinner.
- Power over women and children in their families. Men are expected to be the head of their household.
- "Real men" are unquestionably heterosexual.

Masculinity is a social practice created, used and imposed by both men and women in their social context. It is "simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture" (Connell, 1995:71). Masculinity is not only a term referring to a specific gender identity but is also acquired in the context of economic class, social status, race, ethnicity, sexuality and age (Connell, 1995; Morrell, 2001; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Masculinities are therefore fluid gender constructs.

Connell (1995) has developed a framework to differentiate and understand the various types of masculinities. The "real men" described above belong to the "hegemonic" type of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is a blueprint of practices that perpetuates and legitimises men's control over women. It is a normative idea that forces men to situate themselves in relation to it. Consequently, men oppress women but are also oppressed by other men. Connell (1995) identifies masculinities that do not conform to the hegemonic masculine norms.

- She first mentions subordinate masculinity: men who are dominated by hegemonic masculinity. She gives the example of heterosexual men and the subordination of gay men. Homosexuals are politically and culturally excluded as well as victims of violence. The gender hierarchy of men positions gay men at the bottom. Homosexuality is associated with femininity and as such rejected by hegemonic masculinity.
- Connell then refers to complicit masculinity. Not all men produce the entire norms of hegemonic masculinity. Many (most?) men do not beat up their wives nor excessively abuse substances but most gain patriarchal dividend from the subordination of women.

- Connell finally distinguishes marginalised masculinity. Marginalised masculinity takes into consideration the interplay of gender, class and race. Marginal men (poor men, black men) require the authorisation from hegemonic men to be accepted in the dominant group and gain patriarchal dividend. Marginal men tend to refine characteristics of hegemonic masculinity to show their credibility as men.

This research is interested in understanding the construction of masculinity of marginalised (poor and unemployed) South African men. Connell’s analytical framework will be complemented by the work done by African American feminist bell hooks<sup>1</sup>. bell hooks adds the racial dimension that is of interest in this research. She is considered a leading social critic and has published extensively on questions of race, gender and identity. She explains how gender, race and class are a closely intertwined network of power. She explains how white capitalist patriarchal norms have been imposed in black communities and engendered an interlocked system of domination that positions poor black people at the bottom of the social ladder. In We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity, bell hooks explains how the entangled “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” has emasculated black men. This framework informs this research.

## 2. Theoretical framework

bell hooks writes about a northern American situation that I will transpose here to a South African context. Both masculinities in the United States and in South Africa have been shaped by “complex histories of social oppression, economic subordination and racial conflict” (Roy, 2007:6). The situation of black American men described by bell hooks is in many ways similar to that of African men in South Africa. From slavery to industrialisation and urbanisation, American black men’s masculinity has been shaped by white capitalist patriarchy. Racial and economic segregation disadvantaged black people and forced black men into marginalised position. In South Africa, domination was enforced by a culture of violence, state control and propaganda education until 1994 and via the legitimisation of a dominant highly unequal capitalist system since.

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<sup>1</sup> The name “bell hooks” is Gloria Watkins’s pseudonym. She voluntarily spells it without capital letters to stress the importance of the content of her work.

According to bell hooks (2004:49), “cultures of domination are founded on the principle that violence is necessary for the maintenance of a status quo”. Violence was indeed one of the main attributes of manhood during apartheid. South Africa was built by violence. White men were “fighting terrorism” in the army while black men were fighting for freedom. Violence against women was –and is still- happening privately in both white and black households. Today, violence and criminality are seen as a black man’s feature. The media commonly depict black men with the most aggressive characteristics. “They are almost always the perpetrators of violence in films and in the news, almost always shown to be the causes and instigators of sexual violence” (Davis, 2005:6). Natural-born rapists, hijackers, thieves...black masculinity holds all sorts of derogatory stereotypes.

In a society that rewards materialism and consumerism however, it might be morally unethical but sociologically justified to try to accumulate goods by all means. Money and what it can buy are symbols of success. Men will be looked at with envy if they can generously provide for their families. “Male success in patriarchal society tends to be measured by material standards -how much money a man makes, what kind of car he drives or even the looks of the babe on his arm” (bell hooks, 2004: 98). This is the basic principle of economic growth in a capitalist society: consumption sustains the system and allows its reproduction. Money becomes life and a symbol of power. But in capitalist patriarchal societies, most black men are prevented from reaching position of power and dominance. The segregative racial system has maintained their level of education and skills to the minimum and ensured that the level of exploitation and the maximisation of profits were optimised. Up to the today, work for most black men is synonymous with wage slavery.

Unemployment is particularly rife among black people. Regardless, patriarchal masculinity is closely related to men’s ability to provide for their families. It therefore provokes emotional pain for men not to be able to fulfil their roles in particular as patriarchal masculinity expects men to repress their feelings and to always appear strong and resilient. bell hooks (2004: 85) states powerfully that

Most black men have consistently received contradictory messages from society about what it means to be responsible. Patriarchal socialisation says you are responsible if you get a job, bring your wages home and provide for your family’s material well-being. Yet poverty and a lack of job opportunities have prevented many black males from being responsible in the patriarchal

sense of the term. Many black men accept this definition of responsible manhood and spend their lives feeling like a failure, feeling as though their self-esteem is assaulted and assailed on all sides, because they cannot acquire the means to fulfil their roles.

Some black men therefore try to assert their patriarchal masculinity in prohibited ways. Violence, and frequently violence against women and children, substance abuse and criminality, although not excusably, become a means for poor black men to affirm their patriarchal masculinity in a society that marginalises them. bell hooks (2004:31) concludes that

Until a progressive vision of productive unemployment can be shared with black men collectively, intervening on the patriarchal assumption that equates unemployment with loss of value as well as challenging the materialist assumptions that you are what you can buy, most black men (like many of their white counterparts among the poor and disenfranchised) will continue to confront a work world and a culture of joblessness that demoralizes and dehumanizes the spirit. Black men's material survival will be ensured only as they turn away from fantasies of wealth and the notion that money will solve all problems and make everything better, and turn toward the reality of sharing resources, reconceptualising work and using leisure for the practice of self-actualisation.

This briefly gives an overview of the content of this research. I am interested in finding what have been the consequences of unemployment on the construction of black men's identities in the nowadays patriarchal capitalist South Africa. I am not arguing here that pre-colonial South Africa was not a patriarchal system that dominated women. Nor am I trying to defend men who, in a patriarchal capitalist society, still hold power over women. I am maintaining that the intertwined system of class, race and gender domination has emasculated black men and has negative consequences on the whole society.

### 3. Aims of the study

South Africa has gone through a political, economic and social transition in the past 13 years. At the end of apartheid, the democratic government faced numerous challenges. Equitable socioeconomic policies had to be implemented to restore the injustice of the past and erase the legacies of segregation. However, lack of basic services, poverty and unemployment are still a major concern for most of the population. In such a context, this research intends to qualitatively explore the consequences of economic hardship on the

social construct of masculinity. The aim of this research is to explore underlying and often overlooked factors which contribute to an understanding of the social construct of masculinity. I am particularly interested in economic transformation processes and its consequences on the traditional male breadwinner role. Men are not only recipients of social changes. They react, resist and respond to changes. Their identities transform according to altering socio-economic contexts. This research looks at masculinities in times of economic hardship: how are African men constructing their masculine identities when work has historically been a defining variable of their manhood and that they are now deprived from employment?

More specifically, this research intends to analyse how the loss of formal employment impacts on masculinity at different levels. First, at a personal level, the research aspires to look at how do men who were once employed in the formal economy but are now unemployed or working in the informal economy define masculinity and their change of status. How do they see themselves in relation to the expectation of men as breadwinners? According to the participants, what does it mean to be a black working class man in South Africa today and how do they experience times of economic hardship at a personal level? Second, at a household level, the research aspires to look at how men place themselves in their household in relation to what they believe masculinity expect from them. How does their economic situation influence their relationships with their spouses, their children and their extended families? How does patriarchy unfold when men are not able to fulfill all its requirement and what are the means used by men who have lost formal work to assert their masculinity? Finally, at a societal level, the research aspires to look at how work creates a social identity and therefore how unemployed men interact in the social sphere.

## Chapter 2.

### **The history of South African black masculinity**

*Men make their history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.*

*Karl Marx*

The construction of gender in South Africa is linked with questions of race and class. The South African interlocking system of domination has been institutionalised during colonisation and apartheid placing white men socio-economically on top and emasculating African men and women. This review supports the revisionist thesis that the primary purpose of the apartheid was the reproduction of a supply of cheap African labour for urban industries (Posel, 1991). I will maintain that African urban proletariat was generated by apartheid policies and will further argue that apartheid as a generator of African proletariat has shaped African masculinities. Racial oppression and proletarianisation have created new forms of black masculinities;

Throughout pre-colonial Africa, African masculinity was hegemonic (Jackson, 2001). Men were heading homesteads, providing for their families and ensuring the continuation of a male lineage (Hunter, 2005). They had power over women's labour and sexuality. Their privileges lay in their homes. As the Zulu Chief Buthelezi declared: "The Chiefs as much as the commoners observe the sanctity of homes. That is the place where each man is king, no matter what his station in life may be" (quoted in Waetjen, 2006:54). Colonialism destroyed these indigenous gender regimes. Lands were taken and taxation forced men to look for wage labour in urban areas (Hunter, 2005). Shortage of labour further forced the colonial system to make use of African labourers. Migrant labour is thus a key feature of the social and economic development of South Africa (Hindson, 1987). Industrialisation expanded quickly with the development of diamond mining in Kimberly in the 1860s and the discovery of gold in Gauteng in 1886. Not only did the colonial system make profit out of black men's cheap labour but it also enforced racial discrimination. In 1889 in the province of the Cape, it had been decided that "no native should work or be allowed to work anytime in any mine (...) except under the responsible charge of some particular white man as his master or baas" and under the Natal colonial government, blacks were vigorously discouraged from remaining in town except as single

workers (Rabe, 2006). The structuralist literature theorises that by undermining African people, colonialism and apartheid also destabilized African masculinities. The social, economic and political changes in rural areas and the creation of a black working class positioned black men as dominated by white hegemonic masculinities (Morrell, 1998). From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onward, new masculinities emerged in urban contexts. Working and earning a wage; white domination and racial segregation have been intrinsically related since.

Residential racial segregation was an important aspect of the discriminatory organization of the country. In 1913, the Natives Land Act intended to restrict access to land to indigenous South Africans and to group them in reserves set aside for African occupation (Rabe, 2006). About 7% of the country's land was set aside for ethnic reserves (Posel, 1991:29). The goal of this scheme was to secure the reproduction of urban proletariat by displacing surplus population to reserves and to help entrepreneurs to access released lands for industrial purposes (Hindson, 1987). Employment opportunities were however growing in cities and economic prospects were declining in reserves. Consequently, the number of African people moving to urban areas and meaning to settle permanently in town kept increasing (Hindson, 1987). In 1923, the Natives Urban Areas Act meant to establish segregated municipal locations to accommodate African people (Christopher, 1990). It stated that "the native should only be allowed to enter the urban areas, which are essentially the White Man's creation, when he is willing to enter and minister to the needs of the White Man and should therefore depart therefrom when he ceases to minister" (Goodlard, 1996: 1630). Black workers were still considered as "temporary sojourners" used for their labour and were never permitted to settle permanently in urban areas. They had to apply for work seekers' permits and visitors' permits in order to be able to access towns. From 1934, the influx control was further tightened and the Pass Law Proclamation forced African people to hold a pass to enter, travel through and leave their reserves (Hindson, 1987). Despite the terrible conditions of employment and demeaning jobs, earning wages was somehow empowering as it helped men to contribute to their families' survival. Working was the only chance to get a pass and have access to the city life and to earning a living. In order to be able to provide for their families, men needed to live and work in the city. In different cultures, working in the city became a *rite de passage* to manhood. Young men who came back from towns

gained respect as they had acquired consumer power wage (Waetjen, 2006). Black masculinity came to be closely associated with employment.

In 1948, the National Party was elected. It marked the beginning of the apartheid system. One of its goals was to offer a policy of strict control over urbanisation. Indeed, the “black tide” was considered as a threat to the South African political stability. Since 1946, the African population had exceeded the white population in cities. According to the Minister of Native Affairs: “the position in the urban areas has become intolerable” (Posel, 1991:61). Influx controls were reinforced to a) ensure the adequate supply of African labour to white employers in rural and urban areas and b) to restrict the number of Africans in urban areas (Posel, 1991). Labour bureaux were created to control the movement of black population in urban areas. They kept registers of population, taxation, movements and fingerprints. They also produced reference books required to move in the country and to register as a work seeker. No African could remain in a municipal area for longer than 72 hours without the permission of an office. On the other hand, residential rights were recognised for “detrribalised”<sup>2</sup> Africans. Permanent resident permits were obtained if a man had been working for one employer for at least 10 years or several employers for at least 15 years (Hindson, 1987: 62). President Verwoerd indeed acknowledged that “the presence of natives in the European areas...as labourers is essential” (Posel, 1991:67). However, further urbanisation was quickly frozen and no African born in the rural area was permitted to settle permanently in the urban area. Women were further seen as undesirable as responsible for moral decay. Many earned a living independently from men<sup>3</sup>. It was considered as defying traditional patriarchal norms and was forbidden.

Despite a severe influx control, there were still more work opportunities in urban areas and the African urban population kept increasing rapidly (Hindson, 1987, Posel, 1991). The demand for labour was particularly significant in the manufacturing sector, the railways and harbours and the construction industry (Posel, 1991). Notwithstanding an increased mechanisation in those industries, 84% of the working population remained unskilled (Posel, 1991:1957) and their working conditions became more and more

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<sup>2</sup> Urbanised workers who have settled in urban areas for long were considered as detrribalised. Posel (2001) argues that the National Party’s apartheid policies implemented a differentiated policy between “detrribalised” Africans and rural Africans.

<sup>3</sup> Through brewing beers, running illegal shebeens or even prostitution.

dehumanising and infantilising (Waetjen, 2006). In the mines for example, all men, despite their age and traditional hierarchy, were called “boys”. They were addressed using identification numbers and received intimate public medical examinations (Waetjen, 2006). Those experiences had terrible consequences on men’s self-esteem and dignity.

One of African men’s coping mechanisms to maintain hegemonic masculinity was to preserve strong links with rural areas and to established ethnic ties within the city. Men organised themselves in migrants’ associations. It was meant to “control the corrosive effects of proletarianisation on migrants” (Posel, 1991:161). It was often based on ethnic identity, home region and degree of traditionalism. It was a way for men who had lost their patriarchal privileges and were working in oppressive places to create solidarity and tribal mutual dependence (Waetjen, 2006). Those associations tended to target specific types of employment. Migrants from the same clans or regions would therefore work alongside and secure their tribal and gender identities (Posel, 1991). It was the case for example with Basotho mine workers. Although dominated by white men, they asserted their identities through work by negotiating the understanding of their employment conditions (Morrell, 2001). Notions of work and ethnicity became the cornerstone of emergent African masculinities (Morrell, 1998; Reid and Walker, 2005; Sideris, 2005).

Those tribal identities retained a political meaning which stimulated political violence in the late 1970s. Historically, the apartheid regime was built on violence and repression. From 1948, all forms of contestations were severely contained. A consequence of the African National Congress/ Pan African Congress campaign against pass laws was the massacre of 69 people in Sharpeville in 1960, the ban of liberation movements and the arrests of hundreds of people. Despite the early formation of the armed branch of the ANC Umkhonto we Sizwe, it is not until the 1970s that a militarist culture of resistance appeared in South Africa (Kane-Berman, 1993). On June 16, 1976 the police opened fire on a crowd of school children marching against the Bantu system of education. This is considered as a turning point in the history of the struggle against apartheid. From then on, fighting for freedom became a people’s war and violence became synonym to “struggle masculinity” (Xaba, 2001). Masses, specially the youth, had the responsibility to make the country ungovernable. As one of Campbell’s 20-year old participants explained (1992:624):

I would like to die when I am old, but now as I have devoted myself to the struggle, I know that one day I will be killed by the bullet of the Boer or by their puppets. This means that I will die young. I have devoted myself to being a comrade, so there is no need to be afraid. I am not afraid of anything.

About 700 people died between June 1976 and October 1977, most of them killed by the police (Kane-Berman, 1993: 29). The pattern of violence however changed in the 1980s. The majority of the conflicts did not oppose the apartheid regime directly but different groups of black people. The struggle was enforced through intimidation, coercion and fear of reprisal. An editorial of the Sowetan in 1985 stated that “the stoning and burning of people is becoming almost fashionable among blacks” (Kane-Berman, 1993: 34). Hundreds of black people were “necklaced” to death as they were believed to be “collaborators” or “sell outs”. Violence was further exacerbated by power struggles between Zulu hostel residents and urban dwellers respectively members of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the African National Congress. A “third force” theory argues that the IFP might have been a government agent paid to destabilise the ANC and to ensure that the National Party remained in power (Kane-Berman, 1993: 34). The IFP played on ethnic ties and Zulu masculinity to captivate its members. Thus, King Zwelithini explained that “the ANC seeks to deprive Zulu men of their manhood by taking away their cultural weapons” (quoted in Campbell, 1992: 614) and to isolated and alienated Zulu migrant labourers in Johannesburg, Chief Buthelezi declared that: “the whole Inkatha supports you here where you live in your own circumstances. You can call on Inkatha. Inkatha is your natural ally in the struggle for liberation; Inkhata is your political home” (quoted in Waetjen, 2006: 56). Hostels and shacks were set on fire, stoning, shootings, stabbings, attacks in trains, assassinations were extremely common between in the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s<sup>4</sup>. Defending one’s honour and one’s ethnic group was exemplary. Being involved in the struggle became a sign of masculinity.

In conclusion, African masculinities today were influenced by a political context that destabilized the traditional gender order and emasculated black men. The construction of African masculinity was shaped throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the economic and social policy of the colonial and apartheid regimes. African men were at the bottom of the interlocking system of domination. Their race and class defined their inferior status. Black

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<sup>4</sup> In 1992 in an address to the United Nations Security Council, Nelson Mandela stated that “security services, using certain black organisations, have been responsible for the death of no less than 15 000 people since 1984” (Kane-Berman, 1993: 16).

men had to perform the most menial and unmanly tasks in order to meet patriarchal expectations and to provide for their families. New types of masculinities therefore emerged related to the capacity of a man to earn a salary through employment. The struggle against apartheid further shaped African masculinity around notions of tribalism and violence.

## Chapter 3.

### **The post-apartheid South African labour market**

In post-apartheid South Africa, poverty is both deeper and more pervasive. Despite its middle-income wealth, South Africa has an “anti-poor” growth<sup>5</sup>. Its impact on the alleviation of poverty and inequality is small (Aliber, 2003). Terreblanche (2002) has analysed poverty traps inherent to the South African situation and responsible for its pauperisation. He mentions, inter alia, “high and rising level of unemployment in a sluggish economy” (2002:31). Unemployment has risen up to 45% (Aliber, 2003:478) and the GDP per capita has only been slightly rising at 0.6% annually since 1994. It is further observed that job creation is higher in the secondary labour market (such as temporary or casual employment). Aliber (2003: 479) notes that “the protracted nature of unemployment is a major factor maintaining chronic poverty.” With an actual loss of 800 000 jobs rather than the projected creation of 1.3 million jobs from 1998 to 2003, jobless growth is a characteristic of the South African economy (Aliber, 2003: 476). This chapter intends to contextualise this study through an analysis of the South African labour market.

#### 1. Employment

Employment is considered as the single most effective means of poverty reduction (Pollin et al., 2006). It provides an improved source of income distribution and household welfare. It allows for a more sustainable economic growth as the productive sector can support less productive parts of the economy. It also allows for non-economic considerations such as well-being, social cohesion, self-respect, good health and sense of contribution to a family and a community (Altman, 2004).

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<sup>5</sup> South Africa has implemented economic policies such as the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy in 1996 and the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative (AsgiSA) in 2006 to promote growth to reduce poverty and inequalities. GEAR has implemented fiscal restraint, privatisation and deregulation. By 2000, the GDP rate had increased from 2.8% to 4.2% between 1996 and 2000 and the budget deficit had reached less than 3% of the GDP (Hoogeveen et al., 2004:3). But those policies failed to reduce poverty and inequalities (May, 2004). AgisSa is the new economic project intending to halve poverty and unemployment by 2014 via economic growth. Its expected annual growth rate is 4.5% between 2005 and 2009, followed by 6% GDP between 2010 and 2014. It is presumed that the economic benefits accruing from this economic initiative will be shared among South Africans.

South Africa has a very distinctive labour market. The distribution of jobs, occupations and income correlates strongly with race, gender, age and spatial factors (UNDP, 2003). Table 1 shows the types of wage inequalities existing between the white and black population and between African men and women in urban and non-urban areas. African men working in the formal economy earn on average a third of the income of white men working in the formal economy. Furthermore, African women working as domestic workers earn on average respectively 24% in urban areas and 18% in non-urban areas of the wage of African men working in the formal economy. At a country level, white urban men have the highest wages while rural African women are the most hit by poverty and unemployment (Aliber, 2003). The labour market shows high levels of discrepancies.

**Table 1- Mean monthly income (Rand, 1999)**

			As a percentage of formal African male earning	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>White workers</b>				
Formal (urban)	R7514	R4774	340%	216%
<b>African workers</b>				
Formal (urban)	R2204	R2068	100%	94%
Informal (urban)	R1012	R845	46%	38%
Informal (non-urban)	R705	R524	32%	24%
Domestic (urban)	R903	R537	41%	24%
Domestic (non-urban)	R347	R397	16%	18%

Source: Altman (2004:167)

The South African labour market is characterised by inequalities and per se constituted of three different types of sectors: the core, the non-core and the periphery (Buhlungu and Webster, 2006). The first zone is the core. It includes skilled permanent workers who earn benefits and have security of employment. 6.6 million South Africans are part of the core

of the labour market (Von Holdt and Webster, 2005: 28). The second zone is the non-core. It includes 3.1 million semi-skilled and non-skilled workers who earn low wages, get no benefits and have poor working conditions. Casualisation and externalisation are common characteristics of this segment of the labour market. Casualisation consists of insecure and unstable relations between employers and employees such as temporary and part-time contracts. Externalisation entails outsourcing work through a third party. Both those forms of employment aim at reducing costs of work as the workers are excluded from labour legislation. They are easier to hire and fire, employers do not have to compel to health and safety regulations, to trade union rights and to basic conditions of employment. With such flexibility, casual labourers are losing their rights in the name of increasing competitiveness. Less than half of the economically active population is part of the core and the non-core sector. Consequently, 10.6 million people fall within the periphery of the labour market. They are unemployed or part of the informal economy (Von Holdt and Webster, 2005: 28).

## 2. Unemployment

South Africans are experiencing a critical economic crisis in terms of high unemployment rate and casualisation of labour. While the world's unemployment rate is 6.3%, transition economies' rate is 9.4% and Sub-Saharan Africa's is 10.8% (AIDC, 2006), the South African unemployment rate was 25.6% in March 2006 according to the official definition and 38% according to the extended definition (Business Report, 2006:5). There are methodological issues to define unemployment. The Labour Force Survey defines official unemployment as those people within the economically active population who:

- did not work during the seven days prior to the interview;
- want to work and are available to start work within two weeks of the interview; and
- Have taken active steps to look for work or to start some form of self-employment in the four weeks prior to the interview.

In the expanded definition of unemployment, the third criterion (some sort of work-seeking activity) is dropped. The expanded definition will therefore include, as unemployed, those who might be termed "discouraged job seekers". Survival activities such as begging, fishing, or gardening are counted in labour force survey as forms of

employment although it provides low and insecure earnings and few possibilities for advancement. The statistics of unemployment are thus underestimated (AIDC, 2006) and as table 2 illustrates, unemployment rate has increased steadily since 1994. It has risen from 20% in 1994 to almost 30% in 2001 according to the narrow definition of unemployment or from 28.6% to 41.5% according to the expanded definition.

**Table 2-Unemployment trends (percentages)**

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Narrow definition	20.0	16.9	19.3	21.0	25.2	23.3	25.8	29.5
Expanded definition	28.6	26.5	34.9	38.9	37.5	36.2	35.9	41.5

Source: Altman, 2004: 160

With the continued mechanisation of the manufacturing industry and the will to be more internationally competitive, most jobs created in South Africa require skilled labour. Fewer people with no education are hired. Between 1995 and 2002, the unemployment rate of people who have not completed their primary education had increased from 37% to 45% and those who have not completed their secondary education from 27% to 40% (Bhorat and Oosthuizen, 2006: 167). In 2002, 72% of unemployed did not have a matriculation certificate (Bhorat and Oosthuizen, 2006: 166). On the contrary, the holders of secondary and tertiary education are more likely to find employment<sup>6</sup>. Low skilled and poorly educated workers tend to take the strain of rising unemployment.

In addition, as table 3 indicates, the unemployment rate has been rising at a faster rate for rural people compared to urban people. It has also risen faster for African people compared to any other racial groups. As a matter of fact, in March 2003, 43% of the black population was willing and able to work but could not find employment (Wilson, 2006: 29).

Long-term unemployment is another characteristic of the South African labour market. According to the 1994 October Household Survey, 17% of the unemployed had been

<sup>6</sup> Although this likelihood is also quite limited. The unemployment rate has also been rising for people with tertiary degrees. They constituted 15% of the unemployed in 2002 (Bhorat and Oosthuizen, 2006: 167).

unemployed for up to six months, 15% had been unemployed between 6 and 12 months and 66% for more than 12 months (Seekings, 2003:14). Long-term unemployed tend to have lower income than short-term unemployed and have fewer amenities (such as toilet, running water, electricity...) in their households. Actually, 25% of people with regular employment are amongst the poorest half of the population compared to 62% of unemployed (Seekings, 2003:25). Furthermore, as the duration of unemployment lasts, people are less likely to find a job. They are less likely to have human capital and more importantly to have the necessary social capital to find employment. According to a research done in Cape Town in 2000, connections are the best way to find employment. 35% of the respondents were told about their first job by a family member or a friend, 15% by a household member, and 10% got their job at their friends or relatives' workplace. On the other hand, only 3% got their first job through an agency, 1% waiting on the side of the road for a potential employer and 0% on a notice board (Seekings, 2003:20). Many people have therefore never had any work experience. It was observed that only 41% of urban men and 32% of urban women have previously had ever a formal job (Altman, 2004: 160).

**Table 3- Unemployment rate by gender, type of area and population group (percentages)**

Unemployment Rate	Gender		Type of area		Population group	
	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	African	other
<b>1995</b>						
official	13	20.7	15.5	18.2	20.3	8.0
expanded	22.5	36.6	24.5	36.9	36.1	12.4
<b>2002</b>						
Official	26.8	34.7	30	31.5	36.8	14.1
Expanded	35.6	48.2	37.1	49.6	49.3	19.0

Source: UNDP, 2003:20

The unemployment situation in South Africa is highly problematic. The informal economy becomes an income generating alternative for many unemployed people.

### 3. Informal economy

The International Labour Organisation (Quoted in Devey et al., 2006: 225) defines informal economy as

a way of doing things, characterised by ease of entry, reliance on indigenous resources, family ownership of enterprises, small scale of operation, labour intensive and adopted technology, skill acquired outside of the formal school system and unregulated competitive market.

Informal workers are involved in different types of activities. In South Africa, the majority of informal workers work in retail and wholesale trade (47.1% of informal workers), construction (13.1%), manufacturing (10.4%), in private households (such as domestic work or gardening, 9.5%), community services (9%), and then transport and business services (Devey et al., 2006:232). The informal economy includes different types of employment relations (self-employed, paid or unpaid workers, disguised wage workers) and different types of economic prospective (from survivalist activities to successful companies). There is however a strong association between poverty and the informal economy. 40% of informal workers earn less than R500 and 11% report earning nothing (Devey et al., 2006:233). Households depending on the informal economy are more likely to be poor. Indeed, informal work is characterised by low earnings and insecurity.

In South Africa, about 30% of the labour force is part of the informal economy (Valodia, 2007: 9). The number of South Africans joining this economy keeps increasing. From 1 742 754 in 1990, it reached 3 545 284 workers in 2002<sup>7</sup> (Buhlungu and Webster, 2006: 251). Seemingly, although the formal economy created 250 000 jobs between 2004 and 2005, it was outnumbered by informal economy employment that increased by 500 000 jobs in the same period (Meth, 2007: 27). This increased number of informal workers is mostly explained by the increasing feminisation of the labour force in South Africa. There is an overall increased proportion of women and men working or willing to work but the rise among women is greater than men. In 2005, the labour force participation rate<sup>8</sup> for men was still higher than that of women (72% compared to 64%), but the gap between the

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<sup>7</sup> We should however be cautious in analysing this increase as StatsSA has been better able to capture informal work data over the years.

<sup>8</sup> The labour force participation rate is the percentage of the total working age population participating in the labour force.

rates by gender decreased. The change in the labour force participation was the most significant among African females. It increased by 17% between 1995 and 2005 compared by 7.6% for African males (Department of labour, 2006:8). Thanks to an increase in education among women and the 1998 Employment Equity Act<sup>9</sup>, women benefited more than men from the increased demand for labour (Casale and Posel, 2005). More than 55% of the new jobs created between 1995 and 2005 were taken by women (Department of labour, 2006:15). Consequently, the number of women represented among the top income-earners increased from 20% in 1995 to 33% in 2003 (Casale and Posel, 2005:24). However, most women did not benefit from those improvements. The South African labour market is characterised by the feminisation of low paid insecure forms of employment. Indeed, women are overrepresented in the informal economy (Casale and Posel, 2002). In 2000, the informal sector accounted for 45% of female employment (Department of labour, 2006:15). By 2003, more than 60% of additional jobs recorded among women were self-employed in the informal sector (Casale and Posel, 2005:24). Casale and Posel (2002) note that household changes are one of the factors explaining the increased participation of women in the labour force. Among other changes, the average number of employed men per African households has decreased from 0.62 in 1995 to 0.47 in 1999 (Casale and Posel, 2002:20). Indeed, although women are still more vulnerable to unemployment<sup>10</sup>, unemployment among men also rose from 1.7 million to 3.7 million unemployed men from 1995 to 2003 (Casale and Posel, 2005:22). In KwaZulu-Natal, in only a year from 2004 to 2005, the rate of male unemployment rose from 29.2% to 30% (Labour Force Survey). Job and income insecurity pressure women to earn an income. Chant (2000) further explains that the feminisation of the workforce due to men's lack of employment opportunities affect men's identities. This is the impact of economic policies on families and households.

In conclusion, the erosion of core jobs and the growth of unemployment, insecure and low wage jobs and the informal economy are major causes of chronic poverty. As such, between 40% and 50% of the South African population is considered as poor and 25% categorised as ultra-poor (May, 2004:6). The majority of the economically active

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<sup>9</sup> It intends to eliminate unfair discrimination at the workplace such as gender and race discrimination.

<sup>10</sup> Another characteristic of the South African labour market is that women are particularly vulnerable to unemployment. Of the four million women who entered the labour market from 1995 to 2003, only 1.4 million found a job (Casale and Posel, 2006:22). The female unemployment rate actually increased from 38% in 1995 to 49% in 2003 (Casale and Posel, 2005:22).

population is part of the peripheral economy that has no rights and access to no benefits at all. As Von Holdt and Webster wrote (2005:31), “the restructuring of work has a destructive impact on society and social cohesion and on the development of social capital”. It will be reviewed in the next chapters.

## **Chapter 4.**

### **Research Methodology**

#### 1. Context of the Study

Racial segregation and the regulation of influx of labour were at the core of apartheid policies. This engendered the creation of townships and squatter camps at the periphery of cities. The site of the study, Clermont, is a township situated in the north of Durban. According to the 1996 census, there are 49 580 people living in Clermont, constituting 17 880 households. 98% of the Clermont population is African and just over 50% is female (Luthuli, 2007:31).

The site of Clermont was an interesting site of study for different reasons. First, not surprisingly, the Clermont rate of unemployment, according to the 2001 census, is higher than its employment rate at respectively 42.1% versus 34.3% (Luthuli, 2007:31). Second, Clermont is relatively close to Durban and it is easy to access with public transport. Also, Siyabonga (Siya) Mkhwanazi, my research assistant and I are both familiar with the place and its people. Siya comes from Richard's Bay but has been living and schooling in Durban for the past four years. He moved to Durban to pursue his study in criminology. In his free time, Siya plays football. Not only does he play for the university team but he also joined one of the Clermont teams. Sport –and more especially football- is a wonderful display of masculinity and male bonding. Siya has an extended network of male acquaintances in Clermont.

I have been introduced to Clermont by a colleague. Besides her work as a Voluntary Counselling and Testing counsellor at the university, she also manages her father's taxi business. She is responsible for the daily running of six kombis in Clermont. She and her drivers are very well informed of the community life and are my key informants in the area.

Clermont was also chosen as a study site because of its high number of shacks settlements. Although about 26% of Clermont residents live in a house on a separate stand or a flat in a block of flats, more than 42% of the population live in shacks (Luthuli, 2007:31). Furthermore, the largest hostel in the Southern hemisphere was built in

KwaDabeka, a district to Clermont, in the 1980s, to accommodate 10 000 male migrant workers. Accommodating men in single sex hostels was a way to oppress and dehumanize men, to keep them under control and easily use their labour force.

## 2. Research Methods

This research was designed and implemented following feminist methodology and participatory principles. Feminist methodology is defined by Kirsch (1999:3) as “research to honour the voices of the participants, to create opportunities for reciprocal learning and, most importantly, to improve participants to change the conditions of their lives.” Siyabonga Mkhwanazi and I have carefully attempted to break down any hierarchical barriers and power relations between us and participants. Rather than a top-down approach that creates asymmetrical power relations and denigrates indigenous knowledge by assuming that researchers/academics have the supreme knowledge (Elabor-Idemuida, 2004), we have attempted to (a) take into consideration participant knowledge by using participatory methods as a “radical change in the production of knowledge” and (b) invest our own identities and subjectivities in this research.

### a. Participatory research

Time and budget have been a critical limitation to the field work. Ideally, we would have liked to thoroughly employ participatory action research. It is a practice of research that emphasises on the political aspect of knowledge production. It wishes to address issues of power relations between research “subjects” and researchers. For researchers, it is about becoming agents of change and empowering research participants to formulate a problem, design and implement a research project and ultimately generate new local knowledge. According to Babbie and Mouton (2003), empowerment is first about conscientisation. It is the process of socio-political awareness-raising through exchange of knowledge and information. “The aim of conscientisation is to empower participants so that they see through the ways in which the establishment monopolizes the production and use of knowledge for the benefit of its members” (Babbie and Mouton, 2003: 323). Emancipation is then also about learning, strengthening participants’ research capacities and generating autonomy. I have been involved in feminist projects that have meticulously implemented participatory action research. The will to learn from each other

and the combinations of participants' energies have engendered remarkable feminist-grounded research. But it is also very time consuming and costly.

Consequently, this research only intended to conscientise participants through the use of participatory research. As Elabor-Idemudia (2004:233) explains,

the cores aspects of participatory research that require emphasis in development include political action, individual consciousness raising, democratic relationships and equal participation in decision-making and skills acquisition, and using everyday life experience and feelings of participants as a major source of knowledge.

We hoped to conscientise research participants by first valuing their own knowledge. Increasing self-esteem and self-determination is an important instrument for awareness. We then wished to listen to participants' life histories without judging or interpreting. This intended to build a common field of knowledge amongst us. However, we acknowledge here our subjectivity and the difficulty of being impartial. Therefore the need for reflexivity. Finally, we have introduced participants to the Right 2 Work Campaign, a coalition that fights for the right of unemployed people to work. A volunteer of the coalition organised small workshops after each focus group.

#### b. Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a tool used in feminist methodology. It acknowledges that researcher's values, principles, social and economic background are inherent to the identity of the person. It is therefore impossible to be totally objective in the field and during the analysis of the data. Reflexivity is a means to recognize the subjectivity of the researcher in order to give more significant meanings to informants' lives.

As a young white foreign middle-class woman, my own identity has shaped this research on African men and unemployment. Reflexivity allows me to position myself and explain my beliefs and the biases of my work. I have never intended here to be objective but rather to clarify my assumptions.

Since I moved to South Africa in 2003, I have developed and refined my political stance as personal, local and national events have affected me. Meeting several women who eventually became my mentors; hearing and enduring horrifying testimonies of abuse, rape and violence convinced me of the need for feminism and for fighting for women's

rights. A couple of years ago, I was certain of the significance of focusing on women and women's rights only. Since men (and patriarchy) were the cause of most trouble and women had been for centuries marginalised and silenced, it was our turn to get our voices heard. Teaching and discussing with gender studies students helped me to engage with my own prejudices. Students used to be offended by my colleagues' and my constant male bashing. Our hopes to raise consciousness were simply overwhelmed.

My critical understanding of the current politico-economic paradigm reminded me that patriarchy functions conjointly with capitalism. Not only gender but race and class are also decisive determinants of domination. I recognize that masculinities are socially constructed and that black men from lower economic classes are as marginalised –if not more- than many women. Many social afflictions are the consequences of white imperialistic capitalist patriarchy on marginalised men. Thus my interest in researching the consequences of unemployment on the construction of identities of poor black men.

### 3. Data collection

Qualitative methods were chosen over quantitative approach as the main aim of this research is to understand social reality with its nuances, ambiguities and complexities. The number of participants selected is relatively small as “the aim was not to make claims on the basis of numbers but to use the richness of the interview material to trace connections between individual biographies and wider aspects of social structure and cultural practice” (Pinder: 1995:612). This research is therefore purely exploratory.

Councillor Zulu was approached to request the authorisation to use Clermont as the site of study and as a contact to book the municipality board room to run the focus groups. He also generously advised us to request assistance from the eThekweni Poverty Alleviation project to select participants.

#### a. Selection of the participants

The eThekweni municipality runs a Poverty Alleviation project in the centre of Clermont. It is sponsoring meals for about 200 people daily. The project is lead by a group of women. They are the one who set up the venture, looked for sponsors and volunteer to

cook every day<sup>11</sup>. Most young and old men, women and children eating at the soup kitchen are extremely poor, unemployed or retired and living in the surrounding shacks. The ladies working in this project very kindly selected participants for our two focus groups on the sole criteria that they must be men and unemployed. A third focus group was organised in collaboration with a private recruitment agency in Pinetown. Unemployed men and women spend their days outside the agency, waiting to be called to work as contract staff for short periods. The agency helped us in selecting participants and also allowed us to use their boardroom to run our focus group. After each focus group, participants were asked if they wished to be interviewed about their life history. A few were therefore interviewed personally. For the in-depth interviews, we also selected participants from the soup kitchen as well as men waiting for employment on the side of the road in Pinetown.

#### b. Focus group

The aim of a focus group is to bring together a group of people to discuss a certain topic facilitated by a moderator. The underlying principle of a focus group is that the dynamics of interaction will stimulate conversation. It is important that participants feel comfortable and do not feel pressurised to express different views. Interaction between the participants becomes the research data (Litosseliti, 2003). The role of the facilitator is to ensure that the main research questions are answered and that the participants do not digress from the topic or dominate the discussion. The focus groups were used here to assess how masculinity is defined by unemployed men and what their perceptions of hegemonic masculinity are. We ran one pilot focus group and three focus groups. From 6 to 8 men attended each of them. The first focus group's average age was 51. The second and third focus groups' participants were younger with average ages of respectively 28 and 29. The participants in the third focus group were more proactively searching for employment as they were selected at the recruitment agency itself. Overall, they had a higher educational background (from grade 10 to grade 12) than men selected from the soup kitchen (from no schooling at all to grade 5). Similarly, their socio-economic status, if judged by their type of dwelling, was slightly better (as 2 men lived in a house and one in a flat compared to all other participants living in shacks or hostels). All the participants were unemployed

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<sup>11</sup> One can wonder how the project is supposed to alleviate poverty when it mainly offers food for mere survival. One can also note that yet again women are expected to work for free for the good of the community.

but had held previous positions, mostly as casual staff whose contracts had ended but also victims of wide scale retrenchment.

#### c. In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were used in this research to collect data. Semi-structured in-depth interviews offered us the opportunities to probe, ask follow-up questions and interact with the participants. In addition, these interviews used open-ended questions which allow participants to give in depth details about their attitudes and opinions and therefore provide deeper meanings of the issues (Babbie and Mouton, 2003). The loose structure of the in-depth interviews also allowed the participants an opportunity to expand on the topic under discussion. In-depth interviews were used here to understand how men construct their identity and whether employment is a determinant in the construction of their masculinity.

#### 4. Data analysis

The questions asked in both the focus groups and interviews were pilot tested. A pilot test is aimed at ensuring that the participants understood the intended meaning of the questions and that their answers were logical and it also helps to detect errors such as ambiguous questions. We reviewed the responses to the pilot-test and revised the questions where necessary. In order for the participants to express themselves more comfortably, all interviews –except one where the participant wanted to “practice English”- were done in IsiZulu. With the authorisation of the participants, the interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated from IsiZulu to English.

The data from the in-depth interviews and the focus groups were then qualitatively analyzed using thematic analysis which involves sorting data according to themes. Significant themes from the focus groups and interviews were identified and discussed. Though thematic analysis is a demanding process, it is a useful method to explore the depth of qualitative data.

## 5. Ethical considerations

Informed consent forms were given to all the respondents as part of the requirements for ethical research. The informed consents were translated into IsiZulu and notified the participants about the purpose of the study, the sampling methods, how the information obtained would be made available to them as well as my contact details. The informed consent also ensured that confidentiality, anonymity and privacy were strictly observed. The names of the participants have therefore been changed to ensure confidentiality. In addition, this research was granted ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

## 6. Limitations of the study

Besides the issues around gender, race and class mentioned above; the biggest limitation of the study was the language barrier. Not being able to directly talk to the participants was a significant constraint for me. Siya was translating the questions from English to IsiZulu to the participants and then writing down their answers into English so that I could ask follow-up questions. This was time-consuming and a critical drawback in the discussion with the participants.

In conclusion, the study used qualitative research methodology to acquire information about the construction of masculinity of unemployed men in Clermont. A total of three focus group discussions and ten in-depth interviews were conducted. The next chapters will introduce the participants and present the findings from this study.

## Chapter 5.

### Presentation of the participants

Employment closely defines patriarchal masculinity. Everywhere men are pressured to financially provide for their households. My maternal grandfather escaped Sicilian rural poverty to seek for a job in the mines of France in order to provide for his wife and children. Similarly my paternal grandfather, he worked all around the world to earn an income, coming home to Lebanon once a year only to leave again. Most of the men we have met expressed their struggle for hegemonic masculinity and their sense of failure when they can not fulfil those expectations.

Sandile<sup>12</sup> is one of them. Sandile wears a leather jacket that is too big. He has long woolly brown hair left uncombed and never looks at people straight in the eyes. He speaks slowly and ends his sentences in long silences. Sandile seems terrified of talking, frightened of smiling, even afraid of breathing. Sandile is 30 and lives more or less on the streets. He spends his morning looking for temporary jobs, gets his lunch from the soup kitchen and his afternoon hanging around. His 8-year old daughter lives with her mom. They broke up after Sandile lost his job. He sees her “when (he has) money”. Sandile lacks confidence and feels that since he is unemployed he has lost respect from everybody. He does not interact with his family members, does not have friends nor leisure time. Sandile claims never to have had a happy moment in his life. He is distressed.

Zamani is in a similar situation. Zamani wears a light yellow shirt, brown trousers and shiny shoes. He stands out in the soup kitchen with his good looks. He insists to be interviewed in English. He wants to practice. I wonder whether he is high on drugs or psychotic. Our encounter is long and Zamani loses the flow of his thoughts. He is helpful, then aggressive, then tries to flirt. He shares his personal reflections, then accuses me of “having taken Mister Madiba to Robben Island”, then mentions that the happiest moment of his life was that day with me. Zamani is 26 and claims to be Muslim. He starts reciting Arabic prayers. He keeps asking me whether I believe him or think he is a liar. Zamani was abandoned by his young mother and raised by an aunt. He was excluded from school for “(being) a failure”. He went to jail for shoplifting. Zamani shows me the pipe he uses

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<sup>12</sup> All the names have been changed.

to smoke dagga. He has never had a formal work and survives on small jobs and little money. He explains that he has learnt how to fast and can therefore survive for days without food. Zamani says that he does not have any dreams and that he is tired of living. I am exhausted after our encounter. His aggressiveness and suspicion are strenuous. I am also saddened that although bright, he is disturbed.

Peter upsets me. His conformity to an oppressive system pains me. Peter is resigned and overwhelmed by the construction of masculinity. He is 47 and left school in grade 5 after the death of his parents. He is now married and has five children. Peter worked for 17 years as a machine operator in a textile company. He was retrenched in 1996. The only income of his household comes from his temporary piece jobs. Peter explains very painfully how he has lost his dignity. He declares that his wife does not respect him. He tells us that his children are starving. But Peter also admits that a man without a job is not a man and that there is nothing he can do. He has no status. He further states that women do not have the capacity to head households. It is a man's duty and women cannot help men who are not working. In his submission to the existing patriarchal system, Peter commits to undermining himself.

Thabo is from the Eastern Cape. He dropped out of school in grade 10 to help his mother take care of his siblings. He was "the man of the house". Thabo is now 45 and unemployed. He has been working here and there, mostly as a contract worker. His wife left him after he lost his job. His children were staying with his mother. She has now passed away. He is not aware of their actual situation but explains that they have a good relationship. Thabo drinks to forget.

We did not meet Wiseman at the soup kitchen in Clermont like all the other participants but in Pinetown. He was sitting on the side of the road by the library waiting for a "small work" for the day. Wiseman felt like talking and sharing his anger and his frustration with us. Wiseman comes to Pinetown everyday to sit on the side of the road and offer his services. He lives with his three children and his wife. Wiseman used to have a steady job in a construction company. He fell and hurt his leg. He can no longer do "tough jobs" but possibly do "work such as sweeping". He was thus retrenched and did not receive any compensation package. Since then, he has only been able to receive the disability grant for six months during which "it was much better". His wife and him were "helping each

other". Nowadays, Wiseman feels helpless and disrespected because he cannot provide for his family.

Blessing and Baba Dlamini are two different cases. They are both older and do not have the responsibility of a household. Blessing is an old man. His children are grown-ups who have left the house. He is now responsible for himself and does not seem to bother too much about his unemployed situation. His daughter married a rich man and helps him financially. He now survives on small jobs but clearly articulates that a man should be the head of his house and provide for his family. Even if not applied, norms of patriarchal masculinity are deeply entrenched in Blessing's consciousness.

Baba Dlamini has sparkling eyes and a big smile. He was born and raised in Clermont. He lives in the family house that his grandfather built. His home is his glory and the vestige of his manhood. Baba Dlamini is actually quite happy. He worked for 12 years in a bakery but left his job. He "felt no longer interested" and had heavy drinking problems. After a few rehabilitation attempts, he stopped drinking but never managed to find employment again. At first, his unemployment benefits allowed him to live comfortably. Today, he believes that he is too old to find a job and is waiting to turn 65 to start earning a pension. He survives on fixing shoes in his house and doing "small jobs" around. He also relies on his sister. She occasionally deposits money for him and does his groceries. Baba Dlamini is not too worried. Being the first born and living with his brother in the five-bedroom house his father built make him the head of his household. Money and ownership rather than employment generate masculinity according to Baba Dlamini.

Meeting Zakhele, Siphon and Xolani was a delight. Although young and unemployed, they were light hearted and optimistic. Their positive attitude towards life was inspiring.

Zakhele was born and raised in Clermont. He is in his late 20s, has two kids and lives with his girlfriend. Zakhele has learnt how not to listen to what the neighbours have to say and to think positive. He was employed for a short time in a warehouse in Pinetown and now looks for temporary employment. He spends his morning searching for a job and his afternoon taking care of his children coming back from crèche. His girlfriend and his mother support his household. Zakhele explains that with love obstacles can be overcome. One should not give up and things will be fine.

Sipho comes from a deep rural area in northern KwaZulu-Natal. He worked for four years in a Mondi forest for a subcontracted company. The firm closed down after a fatal accident. Since then, Sipho has moved to Clermont, gained several skills and attended different training. He is a qualified painter and sets up fences for people. He is also in the process of qualifying as a security guard and about to attend a plumbing training. Sipho sees himself as a man with skills but no job. He offers his services around Clermont by knocking at people's door. What I appreciated the most about Sipho is his open-mindedness. He claims that his girlfriend and him are both equally heads of the household, that he washes dishes, fetches water and changes "pampers" and that he is not bothered with what the neighbours have to say. Because a man should not be seen hanging around, Sipho spends his free time at the library reading. Sipho epitomises for me the reconstruction of marginalised masculinity. Since he did not fit in the norms of hegemonic masculinity, he created his own definition of manhood that would suit him better. He decided to be trained and get certificates to show his family that he is capable and that unemployment is not an end in itself.

Xolani is also a model of self-actualisation. He has recreated the norms of capitalist patriarchy and detached his identity from the fact of being unemployed. He quotes humility as a way to relate to the community. He is from Umtata, has worked as a security guard and in a construction company that closed down. Xolani's relationships are disengaged from monetary value. Xolani relates to people and not status. I feel that Xolani is the model we should strive to follow in order to defy capitalist patriarchy.

This chapter intended to introduce the participants. They have all reacted differently from their unemployed situation according to their age, family background and economic prospects. I felt inspired to meet young men who were supportive to their partners and did not feel undermined by their economic situation. On the contrary, some participants had given up and were destroyed by the construction of patriarchal masculinity. They placed themselves as victims of a situation but have no will to get out of it. The following chapter will attempt to give those men a voice.

## Chapter 6. Hegemonic masculinity and unemployed men

*Since I am unemployed, I am nobody. I'm like a paper on the street.  
Participant of a Focus Group Discussion,  
9 July 2007*

This chapter intends to give a voice to the participants of my research. It attempts to let the participants define masculinity and hegemonic masculinity. Overall, it shows that patriarchal masculinity is built around the cultural and traditional notion that men have to provide for their household. Rather than offering a social status, employment is mainly considered as a source of income. This chapter will then review the consequences of unemployment on men and their households.

### 1. Traditional perspectives of masculinity

In the focus groups and interviews, we first asked the participants to define “real men” and what makes a man a man. It served as an ice breaker and allowed men to reflect about their life without putting them under pressure. All participants noted that times have changed and that men are esteemed for different reasons today. Younger men noted that owning livestock used to be a sign of manhood. As Xolani explained: “(men) stayed at home with their wives; people had fields to plough and did not have to worry about working- they lived off their livestock.” Zakhele further mentioned that life must have been easier before:

There is a problem of hardship now. Our grandfathers did not have problems like that. Our grandfathers had freedom. They were cultivating food. Nowadays, we buy food from the market, and food is expensive. You must have money to get everything you need.

Older men remembered how it used to be. Blessing was sharing with us the happy times of his childhood:

I was born in 1948 and when I was growing up we lived very well. We grew sorghum and the women would make traditional beer, crush mealies to make samp and mealie meal. In the past we had fields of mealies, sorghum and nuts. No one starved; all we had to buy was salt since we even grew chillies. We grew everything so one didn't need to buy anything.

Participants held an uncritical nostalgia for the good old days. This traditional masculinity is associated with men being able to head their families and to be able to provide for them. Those are still the cornerstone of hegemonic masculinity today.

## 2. Having a family

Hegemonic masculinity is unsurprisingly associated with providing for the household. The main feature of a man is his responsibility to maintain his home. Baba Dlamini is very blunt: “in order to be a man, you need to have a home and a family”. Marriage and children are signs of manhood. Having children and getting married are even considered as ways to assert one’s masculinity. We were told that “getting married is a solution to regain respect”<sup>13</sup> for unemployed men. Similarly, “you must have kids. If you are unemployed and you have kids, then you are a man”<sup>14</sup>. It becomes the men’s pride to have a family. The man’s role is to provide financially for his family.

(A real man) is the type of a person who is able to support his family. He is the kind of a person who takes care of his responsibilities. This includes taking care of his parents and other things. He should be able to do everything in his household<sup>15</sup>.

Culture reinforces the norm that men should provide. All participants were persistent that it is the men’s duty to provide.

Our culture stipulates that we are men. Therefore, it is our responsibility as men to support our family. Additionally, it is the man’s task to build the home. Then, your responsibility as a man is to take the woman from her family to live with you (*to marry her*).<sup>16</sup>

Peter actually became very emotional when he told us that the happiest moment of his life was when he had a work and “(he) was able to do everything for (his) family”.

I felt so happy when I was able to do things for my family. I was able to buy necessary needs for them and I was able to do anything for them. We had a good relationship with my family and we were close to each other. There was a connection in my family. I was able to do everything for my family. We had a good relationship with my wife and this made me so happy. I used to buy big birthday cakes for my children. I was doing birthday parties for my children and I could make them so happy. I would buy them meat and my

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<sup>13</sup> Focus group discussion 1, 9 July 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Focus group discussion 1, 9 July 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Siphso, 26 July 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Wiseman, 27 July 2007.

children would be happy on their birthdays. These were the happiest moments of my life.

Providing financially for their families is at the core of being a man. Most participants mentioned that a “man must have money”<sup>17</sup> so that he can provide for his wife and children. Only Sandile talked explicitly about love when we discussed family life. “I also think that you should be happy in life. You should love your family as a man”.

Similarly, fathering was restricted to “getting the children all their necessary needs”<sup>18</sup>. Older men have mentioned that women are responsible for raising children and that men should not get involved in women’s duties. Wiseman explained that “the wife is the main person in charge of the house and is the person who controls the children. Usually, the man does not communicate with the children. You talk to your wife if there is something wrong in the house”. The role of the man in the household is to supervise and not to show care. Men have to financially ensure that everything is under control. “A man needs to provide for the family, a man is head of the family. He takes care of everything, he need to buy food and to buy clothes for his family”<sup>19</sup>.

Being a man therefore involves having a wife and children and more importantly providing for them. A focus group participant concluded on the shift from traditional masculinity to nowadays hegemonic masculinity.

Before, a man was characterized by his livestock. You could conclude that he is a man. But now there is no livestock for most men, people can only tell with the plastic of grocery that this guy has money.

Money matters as it allows one to provide.

### 3. Giving and obtaining respect

Respect is another important characteristic of masculinity mentioned by the participants. Being respected and giving respect holds a lot of significance. It is at the foundation of all human interactions. Respect is at the core of being. The participants explained that they gain respect by abiding to social norms. As an individual, respect is about self-worth.

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Sipho, 26 July 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Peter, 20 July 2007.

<sup>19</sup> Focus group discussion 3, 11 July 2007.

I think a man should have respect for himself and he has to be considered as a person who respects himself. A man should be a person who is determined. He is the person who has honesty in the community. This also involves how he behaves in the community<sup>20</sup>

The norms to abide to are also related to providing for the family.

In order to get respect from your children, you should buy them food and clothes. You should ensure that you support your children in order to get respect from them. It is important that there is grocery in the household so that you can get respect as a man<sup>21</sup>.

Respect is also about abiding to community beliefs and perceptions. It reinforces the norms of masculinity. As we have seen above, a man is expected to provide for his family. A man who is unemployed has to bear the social pressure of not being able to provide and thus be considered as disrespectful to his family and to the community at large. Sandile and Baba Dlamini respectively explained how unemployed men lose respect from the community.

Hey, a man loses his dignity if he is not employed. He loses his dignity even to his neighbours and the people in general. You lose your dignity because you do not have anything.

It happens that the community does not treat you like a human being if you are not working. You do not get enough respect even though they do respect you, especially your neighbours. Usually, it is your neighbours and the people close to you, who don't respect you and they do not take you seriously. They take you for granted.

Getting and giving respect are central to patriarchal masculinity and more generally to men's sense of self.

#### 4. Employment

It is very unambiguous to all participants that men have the duty to work. Employment is the main attribute to hegemonic masculinity: "if you are employed, then you are a man"<sup>22</sup> Indeed, employment offers men the chance to earn money and provide for their families.

A man feels free if he is employed because he is able to do all the things that he needs to do. He is able to help any family member if they need something. It is easy to find ways to do things that are needed by the family when he is

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Sandile, 26 July 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Wiseman, 27 July 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Focus Group Discussion 1, 9 July 2007.

employed. He can even “lay buy” (*sort of depositing for something*) because he is working. He can even pay cash. It depends on what the family members want.<sup>23</sup>

Work is valued for being an income generator. Money becomes the most important tool for men to assert their masculinity. “You do not usually have problems if you are working because you have your own money”<sup>24</sup>. Work allows one to accumulate. “One of the things that are wonderful for a person who is working is the fact that he has a house, his own car, and all these things make him different from other community members”<sup>25</sup>. But work is not valued for the social status it offers but for its remuneration. As Blessing explained, “if you do not work, you do not have money and money is everything”. Indeed, “it does not matter what kind of job you are doing as long as you have money”<sup>26</sup>. So when Baba Dlamini lost his job and obtained an unemployment package, his life improved. “It was much better in those days because I had received the unemployment benefit. It was not a lot of money. I did not get a lot of money but it was much better in those times. There was money”. Zakhele further shared with us that the most difficult thing about being a man today is money.

Eish, it is the money. It is the money. You do not have money if you are not working. You cannot claim that you are a man, if you see that you neighbour is coming back with the groceries from Pick and Pay, and you find that you are hungry. You find that this is your neighbour and he is showing that he is the man and you do not have anything. There is a difference which shows that you are the man. You find that even the mothers praise this person. They say that, “so and so is a man and this is shown by his actions”.

Indeed, participants have said that it is difficult to find a job. Peter for example explained that he “is walking around searching for employment”, he “stands in queues in search for work”, and he goes “to agencies to submit (his) CV”. He concludes that “there are difficult circumstances in terms of finding employment. I have been looking for employment, but I do not know what I should do now.”

Baba Dlamini explains that he is too old to get employment. “We are old and it is impossible to employ people of my age. We are old.” He furthermore states that he lacks experience to find a job.

I mean that one of the requirements to get employment is the working experience, which shows how long you have been working before. I was

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Sipho, 26 July 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Wiseman, 27 July 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Sandile, 26 July 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Focus group discussion 3, 11 July 2007.

working in the bakery. It is not easy for me to be employed because there is no work in the bakery now.

Sipho has also analysed that mechanisation is a factor that increases the unemployment rate.

Do you remember that people were responsible for carrying things such as the bags of mealie meal and cement? Now, there are machines responsible for moving these things. What do you think will happen to the people who did not go to school and those who do not have degrees and master's degrees? What do you think will happen to people like us? There is no work for us because we are not educated and now, there are machines to carry these things.

According to Blessing, women's rights have abolished men's privileges and had an impact on the employment rate.

If a man doesn't have a job, you find that the woman (*wife*) has to try something, such as getting casual work. Men do not work; women are now doing all the work. In petrol stations you find that it's women who are doing the work. In the end you will find them bricklaying. Men are nothing these days.

Many participants' work experiences in the formal economy were in subcontracted companies. There is a high level of competition among subcontracted companies. They tend to hire and retrench easily and pay very low wages. Sandile, Xolani, Thabo and Zakhele were working as construction workers in subcontracted companies. Blessing was working as a security guard in a company that was subcontracted. Sipho was working in a company subcontracted by Mondi. They were all retrenched.

All the men we have interviewed survive now thank to *amatoho* (temporary informal jobs).

A man has to work. A man should try to work. I do not know what should happen because there is no employment. I do not know how people survive and put things together because there is no employment. However, it is important that a man should work, and a man should have the money. If not, a man should search for temporary employment in different places so that he can survive.<sup>27</sup>

Sandile explained that he spends all his Sundays searching for temporary employment. "You find that people who have money need us on weekends. So, I usually go to those places, where I can sit and wait to get temporary work. Sometimes, it happens that I have luck to get work even on Sundays." Baba Dlamini survives by "repairing shoes".

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Baba Dlamini, 26 July 2007.

I would get R60 for doing gardening....Others ask me to install doors for them or a key handle. I would get money from that. I do have simple skills to do those things... I can do things such as installing pipes, doors, door handles. I have skills to do these things for people. I can do small jobs for people. I did not study to do these things but I have learnt from observing other people doing it. I am not busy but people come occasionally to ask me to do these things for them.

Men surviving on *itoho* earn very little money but do not have much of an alternative. “I am currently surviving on *amato* since I am not working. I am getting temporary employment and it helps me to get little money “izimali ezincane” so that I can support my family.<sup>28</sup>” As Blessing explains, “one way (of surviving) could be to get *itoho* but I don’t know a family that can be fed by *itoho*”. Wiseman explained that what he earns in temporary jobs is below the minimum wage but that he has to be grateful to actually earn something.

No, no, there is no money here my children. For example, you earn about R60 or R70 a day. This is a tough job. In legal terms, we should be earning about R150 per day. Do you understand my concerns? What could you say? There is nothing you could do about it. Instead, you become grateful of what you are getting rather than to get nothing<sup>29</sup>

Sipho concluded that since he has no choice, he should work hard and make sure that he earns anything he can in order to provide for his household.

I have to get out of the house to go to a place where I can sit and wait for those (employers) who need people to work for them and search for other employment that I could do. Definitely, I will get something within few days or get about R20 and R30. I do not choose the type of employment that I want to do. Sometimes, I find people who offer work to do for about half a day for R20. I cannot refuse to do that employment because it may be possible that I do not even have R5 in the house. This R20 would help me. Maybe, I could spend R5 today and I could even save R15. I would be able to use that R15 on the following day.

Employment is thus considered as the best way for men to earn an income and provide for their families. However, it is difficult to find a job and men have to resort to work hard for very small income in the informal economy. They also have to come up with different survival strategies.

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Peter, 20 July 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Wiseman, 27 July 2007.

## 5. Different sources of income

Unemployment brings upon a severe lack of income to families. For most participants, earning a regular living is very difficult and forces them to resort to different survival strategies. Receiving a government grant, relying on relatives as sources of income and crime are three of those strategies.

Some participants' only hope for an income is the social security system. Wiseman for example used to receive the disability grant after his accident but it has now stopped. His wife still receives the Child Support Grant for his two children. He explains that "it was much better when I was still getting the disability grant. I managed to buy groceries for the household, and my wife will do other things with the child support grant. We were helping each other. Now, it is a problem that my disability grant has stopped." Indeed, an important part of his revenue has been cut off. He is now in the process of renewing his disability grant but "the doctor needs money in order to give me an approval note to get the grant. What do you think the children are eating at that time? Do you realize that it is a process to get this grant?" In the meantime, they survive on R400 a month from the child support grant. "Can you really support a family with that money?"

Baba Dlamini is in a similar situation: he is waiting for his old age pension. He explains that it is difficult to get a job because he is too old. "I am 55 years old. I wonder when I will get pension. What would I be eating all this time? When will I turn 65 years so that I can get pension?" In the period in-between, his sister assists him whenever she can. Indeed, many participants receive help from their family members. Thabo explains that the most difficult moment of his life was when his mother passed away because "she used to help me a lot and things are not going well now". Zakhele's mother helps him as well. She is a domestic worker. With her income, she supports her three children and her grandchildren.

My father died five years ago. My mother is supporting me and she is also supporting my other two sisters who do not have money. They have completed school but they do not have employment because there is no job. They are not working. My mother is supporting me and my children and she is also supporting my two sisters. It is very painful when I think about this thing that my mother has to support us. I am accepting her support because I am not working. I feel that I should be the one supporting my mother. But, I cannot do that. This is not a good life and I am not happy about it.

In those circumstances, another way of obtaining money is crime. All the participants mentioned that one of the consequences of unemployment is crime. Crime is indeed an easy way to get money to help providing for the family.

Eish man this is difficult especially to me because I am not working and I have a child and the child needs milk but I am not working. Where I live I need to pay a rent. I'll sit until I see that there is nothing I can do, and then I end up doing house breaking just to take care of this kid. I'll end up running away from the mother and the baby, and the child will grow up without a father. Why? It is because there is no job<sup>30</sup>.

Although it is widely argued that unemployment and poverty foster crime, I was quite surprised with the outcome of one of the activities used during the focus groups. The participants were given a list of professions and remunerative occupations to classify accordingly to which profession they thought was the most respected in their community and which was the least. I assumed that the criteria used to classify the professions would have been solely monetary (and thus that drug dealing would have been high in the hierarchy). However, participants decided that the most respected careers were those that hold a higher social status. Unsurprisingly thus, doctors and teachers were considered as the most important careers. Often men mentioned that although teachers earn less than doctors, they are the most important as they actually teach doctors. They then classified the next most respected professions according to the income they generate in what they considered was the formal economy. It included hierarchically taxi drivers, security guards and construction workers, followed by gardeners and street traders who hold the same level of respect. Finally, at the bottom of the pyramid were the unemployed, drug dealers and petty criminals. Unemployed men, because they do not earn any income, do not hold any respect from the community. Drug dealers and petty criminals, because of their immoral and illegal activities and its negative consequences on the communities, are the least respected. It means that although money seems to be more valued than employment itself for the men we interviewed, they hold high moral judgement and employment is seen as the most respected way to earn an income and provide for one's family.

Only Zamani admitted engaging in criminal activities. Zamani shared with me his tsotsi past. Interviewing him was quite dramatic. He simulated a crime scene. As we were talking, he insisted on showing me something that forced me to turn around. In a few

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<sup>30</sup> Focus group 1, 9 July 2007.

seconds, the recorder I was using for the interview had disappeared. “This is how I started. Did you see? You were looking there and I started taking”. Zamani started shoplifting and pick pocketing when he was 15. He explained that he was stealing out of greed. “You see, as we live here, it like jealous in the eye when you look things far from our eyes, you look at things and you think that you would like to get this cell phone now”. Stealing was a means to get money and to own goods. “You see when a person is coming with a thing in the pocket, and now, what would you do? You don’t have money, and there is R200 maybe R250 going around me and I don’t even have any shoes and I am going just around in shop here in Durban. I would take that money now and get those shoes”. Zamani was also stealing perfumes from shops and selling them on the street. He mentioned that his aunt and cousins tried to dissuade him from stealing. “They can try but now who will help me? I am stealing because I don’t have any money. That’s just it. You just don’t get things easily. You need a job, even at home.” He was arrested in 2002 and spent a few months in prison. He decided afterwards to definitely drop out of crime and of school.

In brief, participants defined hegemonic masculinity as the cultural expectation that men should provide for their wife and children and therefore gain respect from their communities. Work is seen as an important notion that assists men in taking care of their families. More importantly, work is seen as the source of money which allows men to assert their masculinities. Money is considered as the asset that defines patriarchal masculinity. Unemployed men rely on different survival strategies to earn an income and still provide for their families. What then are the consequences of unemployment in their lives and their households?

#### 6. Consequences of unemployment on households

We asked the participants what they thought was the most difficult thing about being a man in South Africa today. Most of them mentioned unemployment.

If you observe around in the country, you can see that there is unemployment. There is a lack of job opportunities. Job opportunities have to be created.

There is lack of opportunities and there is no employment. These are the main difficulties for men in South Africa<sup>31</sup>.

Unemployment impacts on men's capabilities to provide for their families. Unemployed men feel that they can no longer head their households. "You do not feel like a man. You do not see yourself as a person who owns the home<sup>32</sup>." Poverty was justifiably the main concern of the unemployed men participating in this research.

It is their poverty. I think (unemployed people) are stressed because they are poor and they are unemployed. Many problems are created by the fact that you are not working. You find that even your mind get disturbed. Sometimes, you appear like somebody who is not mentally okay<sup>33</sup>.

First, the participants mentioned that life was too expensive and that they could not meet their most fundamental needs.

Some days I eat, other times I am too lazy to come here (*to the soup kitchen*) so I sleep without any food. There is nothing much I can do.<sup>34</sup>

Families therefore need to trade-off to survive.

I was happy to get a pension since I was sick and my kids were suffering. They had nothing to eat. I was happy I got a pension. Now they can eat. They then came up with the idea that since the school fees are so high, they are leaving school. I said if you think so my kids it is okay. It made me happier. I have more money for grocery.

The participants' daily expenses are rationed to the bare minimum to allow their optimisation. When unexpected situations occur, coping strategies are distressing. Wiseman explained that it costs him R10 everyday to commute from his home to the place where he looks for employment.

It happens that you sit here for the whole week and the whole month and still do not get employment. Where do you get the transport money? As a result, you use the money that is supposed to be spent on groceries for your children to pay for the transport fee.

#### a. Difficulties providing

Not being able to provide for the family but moreover for children is one of the consequences of unemployment that affects the participants the most. Peter is the father of

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with Sandile, 26 July 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Baba Dlamini, 26 July 2007.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Baba Dlamini, 26 July 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Thabo, 25 July 2007.

five children. Nobody in his household is employed. He is the only one trying to find employment to provide for his family.

My children are suffering from starvation as I am not working. I should be working so that I am able to support my children and have a good life with my family...This hurts me a lot because it is so painful to know that you have children but to find that you cannot support them.... Now, my children cannot further their education and they cannot have a good and a healthy life.

Peter further explained he is losing self-esteem as he is not able to provide for his children.

Possibly, you can end up losing your dignity if you are that kind of a father, because you cannot do anything for your children if they ask anything from you. You find that you cannot give them money if there is a need for money in school. You do not have the money. You cannot even buy clothes for your children. There is a problem in that case.

Wiseman explained that besides losing self-esteem, he has also lost respect from his children and Sandile from his family. As stated above, providing for the family and gaining respect are at the core of patriarchal masculinity. The participants felt undermined.

There has been a change (*since unemployed*) with my grown up children because they stop respecting you. But, the little ones continue to respect you because they do not know anything. It means that they will do the same thing as the grown ups once they get older.

Even at home, you find that they dish for the employed people first if there is not enough food and they tell you to dish for yourself if there is insufficient food. Possibly, you will find that they have finished the food in the pots. I have noticed that all the bad things are always linked to the unemployed people, even if they have not done anything wrong...They do not respect me anymore. However, they had respect for me in the past...I would say that their behaviour has changed. Their behaviour is different now, compared to the time when I was working...They do not listen to me when I talk to them because I am not working. They think I am useless as I am distant to them.

Participants also felt that they were losing respect from their communities. "Unemployed people find it difficult to be respected by the community because the people know that he/she is not working<sup>35</sup>". They mainly explained that they are taken for granted because they are unemployed.

It happens that the community does not treat you like a human being if you are not working. You do not get enough respect even though they do respect you, especially your neighbours. Usually, it is your neighbours and the

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Sandile, 26 July 2007.

people close to you who do not respect you and they do not take you seriously. They take you for granted<sup>36</sup>.

Indeed, a participant of a focus group agreed that an unemployed man is less of a man and explained that “it is the truth because even among other men you are taken for granted, if you guys were working and I was the only one not working I would be taken for granted<sup>37</sup>.” Siphso also felt that unemployed are undervalued by community members because they do not have money.

I have noticed that people do not even listen to you when you tell them to do something if you are not working. They do not take your advice because they think that you do not know anything and you do not have the money. Sometimes, you find it difficult even to suggest things when people are talking because you do not have the money. The people do not listen to you even if you talk sense. For example, you can encourage men to jog or go for soccer practice. They do not bother and they do not listen to you because you are not working. In response to that, they would tease you and tell you that you do not have the money.

#### b. Relationships with women

Certain traditions are still highly respected in Southern Africa. Paying lobolo<sup>38</sup> is one of them. Lobolo is the bride-price that men are expected to pay to the family of the bride. It is considered as the celebration of the union of two families. However nowadays lobolo seems to be a mere financial transaction. Baba Dlamini told to us his misfortune about getting married:

Actually, I once paid lobolo. This made me so angry. I paid lobolo and I paid for everything. After some time, I heard that my fiancée got married to another man. My fiancée was living in the iXopo area. My mother in law wrote me a letter stating that I should come to fetch my cows (*lobolo*). I was going to fetch my cows but I found that it was impossible as it was during the times of violence in the 1980s. This is how I lost my cows. I was so angry because I wasted so much of my money on that. Actually, I lost all my money on that lobolo. We only needed to get married. Now, I meet women but I am no longer serious about those relationships. I want to organize my life first and be in a good place. There is a need for money.

Similarly with Baba Dlamini’s brother, he was dismissed from work in 2005 because he was very sick. He is now using his entire benefit and all his savings to get married. Baba Dlamini explained that “the lobolo is very expensive. You spend a lot of money when you

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Baba Dlamini, 26 July 2007.

<sup>37</sup> Focus Group 3, 11 July 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Lobolo is the equivalent of approximately eleven cows but is now paid mostly in cash.

pay for the lobolo. The izibizo<sup>39</sup> are very expensive especially if you have a list of more than 10 people. You have to buy things for all these people.” Lobolo is an important tradition that allows families to come together and couples to marry. But paying lobolo is a constraint for many men. I do not understand why it is that so many traditions have been lost or changed but that paying the lobolo subsisted. For example, it is now accepted that women have children before their marriage although the tradition wants them to remain virgin until their wedding night. Why then would a custom that has often turned into being a monetary transaction that marginalises poor men is still perpetuated? Even meeting women becomes challenging for unemployed men.

- Meeting women

Unemployment also has consequences for men and their relationships with women. All the participants mentioned that “you must have money in order to have a girlfriend. It is impossible to find a girlfriend if you do not have money”<sup>40</sup>. It is thus very difficult for unemployed men to approach women.

There is no woman who can accept your proposal if you tell her that you are not working and you do not have money. Women accept proposals from those who are working, who will be able to help them if they need assistance in certain things, such as money.<sup>41</sup>

It is very difficult if you are unemployed. There is no woman who would choose hunger. Some people even hang themselves because of this. If you have a lot of problems, you can't find a woman<sup>42</sup>.

Employment offers men a boost in their confidence and is the human connector. Without employment and money, men do not feel comfortable to approach women. Sandile explained that

You see I am not working. It means girls always see me on the street because I am not working. I do not approach women. I ignore them. I tell myself that I have to get a job...I just ignore them. I do not care about them. (*He is laughing*). I am taking it easy.

- Gender equality: should women work and head households?

Younger men agreed that men and women are now equal and that women also have the responsibility to provide financially for their families.

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<sup>39</sup> Items that are part of lobolo. They are specially meant for the family.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Siphosiso, 26 July 2007.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Peter, 20 July 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Focus group 1, 9 July 2007.

The woman should go out and search for employment. Now, we have equal rights. This means that a woman can do everything that a man does. She is like a man and she has the power to do that.<sup>43</sup>

Sipho further stated that men and women should help each other when they can.

I think we are both equal. We are both equal. There are times when I am broke and she helps me and there are times when she is broke and I help her when she does not have money. I would say that we have the same circumstances.

Xolani also explained that having a partner who can provide does not make one less of a man and that in a family power must be shared and decisions taken in common.

Her headship may be over something but she is not above you. Your manhood is there even if you are not working so you are still the head. Her responsibilities as a woman are still hers and they will remain hers; just as I will always take care of my manly responsibilities. She can keep her money if she wants to but there are no decisions she can take on her own. Even if she works there is no decision she can take without me- she must make her suggestions and let me do the same.

Younger men seemed to say that young women could now bear both burdens: caring and providing for their households. However, they have also mentioned that they willingly “help” to care for their children and household chores. Older men on the other hand believed that only men have power over the family. Wiseman even referred to culture to explain that men are the heads of households and that “the wife is always below the husband”. He stated that a woman should not support a household.

Hawu! Hawu! It is very difficult to be supported by a woman. As a result, women stop respecting their men at some point. You find that some women act contemptuously in the end if they are responsible for the needs of the household. They picture you as somebody who has failed to maintain your home, and they say that they are in charge of house.

However, he later acknowledged that his wife is the head of the household as she is the one receiving the child support grant and feeding the children.

There is no one else who is taking care of the households’ needs, other than my wife who is getting R400. She is person who is responsible for the households’ needs as I am sitting here. She is the person who is buying mealie meal so that the children can eat.

But he concluded about his situation:

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<sup>43</sup> Interview with Zakhelc, 24 July 2007.

In this regard, she would tell you something that you can observe as a man. Because you cannot even buy clothes for your children: it means that you are no longer a man.

Men who are not working feel emasculated. Their responsibilities as breadwinners are not met. The norms of patriarchal masculinity are not fulfilled. If you are not working, “it means that you are no longer a man”.

Another reason, according to some participants, why women should not work is that it might give them more freedom to cheat on their partners.

For example, my wife is working and she is working with other men.... There is a possibility that you are having a misunderstanding in the house. It happens that you end up not trusting your partner. It becomes worse if she is working and you are not<sup>44</sup>.

Some participants seemed resigned about it, because as unemployed men, there is nothing they can provide and are therefore not able to keep their partner faithful.

You have to accept that situation, even if she comes late, you’ll have to accept that. Maybe you’ll find out that it was not really at work. You can not keep a secret forever. Then you will know that she has been playing games with you, even if guys come to fetch her with their cars, she’ll tell you that they are going to a meeting, you’ll have to listen to that because you have no choice<sup>45</sup>.

While others acknowledged that their partners can be cheating for survival purposes.

**Part A:** it is because as men we are not working. Otherwise women would not be doing that. It is difficult because your wife will end up cheating just to survive.

**Part B:** some guys know that their women are cheating on them but if they say something, women will ask them if they are going to give them money<sup>46</sup>.

Unemployed men are suspicious about working women. They appear not to be trustworthy and reliable. The most shocking to me was the resignation around the idea that women –participants’ girlfriends- might use their bodies to survive. It seems to be such a common behaviour that it is acceptable.

- Arguments in the household

Being unemployed can provoke a number of arguments in the house because men are not able to provide for their wife and children.

Sometimes, the child needs clothes. If the child has a problem, the mother tells the father. She even tells you that she child is naked and does not have

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<sup>44</sup> Interview with Zakhele, 24 July 2007.

<sup>45</sup> Focus group 1, 9 July 2007.

<sup>46</sup> Focus group 3, 11 July 2007.

clothes. How could I buy clothes for the children because she knows that I am not getting a salary, as I am unemployed? This is how the fights begin<sup>47</sup>.

Peter explains that “we do not have a good relationship like before (*with his wife*). We are no longer friends” because he can no longer provide for the needs of the household.

You find that even your wife does not get her needs and she ends up not respecting you. You end up fighting with your wife because you are not working. It happens that you end up scolding each other everyday with your wife when you are no longer employed.

Several participants<sup>48</sup> shared with us that their wives had left them for “greener pastures”.

I had a woman but she left me. Why? She could see I had nothing and I was not working and she decided to have an affair. We broke up and I sent her to that guy.

If you are unemployed, you cannot help her. She will get a better man with money. Your wife will leave you for a better person with a better life.

But we broke up and she got a better man. I am suffering. She could not stand me.

Only Xolani appeared more serene. He explained that being unemployed is not a fatality and that fights happen in any relationship no matter the social status of the person.

Even if you work, arguments could still be there. You never know how they will come about. People who have money can also have arguments. Doctors and teachers can also divorce. So I’m trying to say is that not being employed is not the cause of fights.

## 7. Consequences of unemployment on men

The participants of this research have truly opened up and shared with us their feelings and emotions. They have described dejection, anger and emotional pain.

### a. Emotional Pain

Participants talked about their different feelings related to their unemployed status. They mentioned frustration, loneliness, resignation, low self-worth and anxiety.

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with Wiseman, 27 July 2007.

<sup>48</sup> From focus group 1, 9 July 2007.

- Frustration

Sipho explained that unemployed men have dreams and ambition about their lives. Whenever those aspirations are inaccessible, it creates disappointment.

Things like that do happen. I think unemployed people prefer to spend time alone so that they can think about their dreams and their wishes. For example, they could be thinking about the things that they wish to do if they could get money. They think about the things that they wish to buy. It is frustrating to them to have these wishes and not to get employment. If you think about the fact that they wake every morning and go to a place where they queue for work, and then go back home in the evening without a job, it becomes so frustrating to them. They become easily irritated, and they easily get into a fight. Because they are thinking about other things, which includes that they did not get employment on that day. Sometimes, you may try to play with them and find that they are thinking and you are disturbing their thoughts.

- Loneliness

Participants also mentioned that being unemployed brings upon loneliness. They have lost friends and relationships with their families have deteriorated.

For example, maybe there is a party, and we are sitting with other men and drinking. They usually exclude those men who are not working. They say, “You should not join us because you are not working”. They do not want to be friends with unemployed people<sup>49</sup>.

Zakhele was sharing with us the happy moment of his life and how losing his job has had an impact on his relationship with his friends.

I can only say that I was happy when I was working. There was a time when we would hire a taxi with my friends to go to Johannesburg to watch a “spectacular” (*big soccer match*). Then we would come back when the soccer match ends. Sometimes, we would go to a festival in town with my friends during December time and we would celebrate New Year’s Eve and come back home. We would also go to the beach and to Umhlanga areas, and then come back...It was very easy to go to Johannesburg to the FNB stadium with my friends to watch soccer. We knew that we were leaving on Friday, the car would fetch us. We knew that we were not going to sleep until we arrive in the stadium on the following day. We were very happy with my friends in the soccer ground. Then, we would go to our friend’s house after the soccer match. We would have a bath and change clothes. Those things don’t happen anymore.

The situation has changed since he has lost his job.

There is a big difference. I have lost many friends among the group that we used to have fun with.

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Sandile, 26 July 2007.

Employment creates a social network. It is easier to maintain a relationship with men and develop a friendship when employed. A consequence of unemployment is exclusion.

○ Resignation

The worst of all to me was the feeling of resignation described by many of the participants. They had reached such a low level of self-esteem and confidence that they were just acquiescent to this unbearable socio-economic situation. Peter, who cannot provide for his children but does not think that a woman can help, expressed that:

This hurts me a lot. It is so painful to know that you have children but find that you cannot support them...This is so painful to me...I should be working to be able to support my children and have a good life with my family. Hayi, this is the main thing that is hurting me. This is so painful to me.

Peter expressed that “there is no progress in life if you are not working” and wonders “what can I do for my children?”

I was hurt. It happened that there was nothing that I could do about it. It happened that I was retrenched. I realized that my life would change and it would not be the same. I realized that I was going to experience changes in my life. Things are not good for me since I was retrenched.

He further explained that:

There is no other way to make the situation better except to get employment and work. This only can help to gain back your dignity and be respected. There is no other way to make things better at home and to have a good relationship with your family without getting employment.

Furthermore, participants have expressed compliance:

I did not know that one day I’ll go around asking for food. Now every thing is the same to me<sup>50</sup>.

As well as hopelessness:

Another man decides to sleep on the road and just eat from the bin. He just gives up<sup>51</sup>.

Sandile and Baba Dlamini have also both shown resignation about their unemployed situation.

I think it is impossible that you can change the circumstances of a person’s life in general. I do not think that you have the “power” to change the situation of a person’s life.

I have no other options. I cannot change the circumstances.

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<sup>50</sup> Focus group 1, 9 July 2007.

<sup>51</sup> Focus group 3, 11 July 2007.

○ Low self-esteem

All participants expressed very low self-respect, explaining that “if you are not working, you are less of a man<sup>52</sup>”. Siphso explained that unemployed men have low self-worth because “they feel self-conscious about themselves. I can also say that they feel violated. They are not comfortable with themselves because they are associated with bad things.” Baba Dlamini talked very generally about the situation of unemployed men.

You do not feel like a man. You do not see yourself as a person who owns the home. You just lack self-confidence. You do not feel like a human being. You find that you compare yourself to other people who are doing better than you do.

He later on shared more about his own feelings:

I was not happy. Even today, I do not feel good about myself. I lack self-confidence. I do not feel that I am a human being. I will have confidence on the day I make money.

○ Anxiety

The feelings described above all lead to apprehension and depression: “unemployed people are confused<sup>53</sup>”. Baba Dlamini reckons that unemployed men are stressed because “they think a lot...they are thinking about survival strategies. They are thinking about their future. Everybody wants to have a better life.”

Certain participants shared with us very distressing thoughts. In our first focus group, older men had families to feed and household to take care of. About their unemployed situation, they shared that:

I have suffered enough I am only waiting for the day I die

Do you think this is life to come for food here at the soup kitchen? This is not life. I did not know that one day I'll go around asking for food. Now every thing is the same to me. Death is nearer. I have nothing to say. Do you think I like this life? No. I am an old man.

You are unemployed. Some people even hang themselves because of this.

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<sup>52</sup> Focus group 1, 9 July 2007.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Siphso, 26 July 2007.

Unemployment creates emotional pain for men. As they are not able to provide for their families and to be respected by the communities, they feel undermined and emasculated. Resignation, loneliness, frustration are feelings that the participants talked about. This can lead to depression but also to suicide. It can also provoke anger and rage.

b. Rage

○ Substance abuse

All participants acknowledged that unemployed men drink heavily but only Thabo admitted drinking. They assumed that “unemployed people drink a lot because they believe that their problems will fade away<sup>54</sup>.” Indeed, Thabo explained that

I drink to try to get away from my situation. If I drink things seem better and I don't think too much, I forget. I think if my mom was still around, things wouldn't be this hard. I get drunk, forget and just go straight to bed.

Blessing wondered how unemployed men can afford to drink “when (his) family is starving?” and did not believe that unemployed men drink more than anybody else. Apparently, participants explained that “people who drink are not stingy<sup>55</sup>” and that “you go to the tavern and you sit down when you arrive there. You find that there are people who would sympathize with you and buy alcohol for you. In this case, you would get so drunk easily because you are thinking about your problems<sup>56</sup>”

Besides alcohol, drugs were another topic raised by some participants. Sandile explained that he used to smoke cigarettes and marijuana when he was working and could afford it. Zamani still smokes marijuana on a regular basis. He started smoking when he was 15. He tried different types of hard drugs but now only smokes marijuana. He could neither explain the reason why he smokes nor how he feels when he smokes. He just said that he likes it.

○ Violence

A participant of a focus group mentioned that people's behaviour changed after “the fights between ANC and IFP. People became like animals and changed very much”. Violent behaviour seems to be common, especially among unemployed people. Khumbalani explains that the violence comes from the frustration of being unemployed.

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with Sipho, 26 July 2007.

<sup>55</sup> interview with Sipho, 26 July 2007.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Wiseman, 27 July 2007.

If you think about the fact they wake every morning and go to a place where they queue for work, and then go back home in the evening without a job, it becomes so frustrating to them. They become easily irritated, and they can easily get into a fight because they are thinking about other things, which includes that they did not get employment on that day. Sometimes, you may try to play with them and find that they are thinking and you are disturbing their thoughts.

While Peter thinks that not being able to own and accumulate creates irritability amongst unemployed men.

Yes, this happens because you find that you are not comfortable within yourself. You tend to have a short temper when you are not free and uncomfortable. You become violent to people if they talk to you because you do not have money and you have nothing. You tend to be violent and have a short temper.

Similarly, Baba Dlamini reckons that “it creates ill temper when you do not have money”. One of the means that unemployed men adopt to overcome their emotional pain is thus only too widespread. It is violence against women and children.

Hey, firstly you become violent at home. It does not start with the community. Usually, you first become violent against your wife. It happens that the children will start crying. Then, you become violent against the children. But, you are more violent against the wife.

Losing respect from their wives and children because of their unemployed situation is the frequent justification given by participants to legitimate domestic violence. Peter explains:

It happens that you do not get respect at home when you are no longer employed. You tend to be violent when this happens, since you are not employed. You find that you tell your child to do something, and it happens that the child does not do that thing. Then, you end up being violent and scolding your child. In fact, it is not that you are intending to be violent against the children when you are scolding them. You do this occasionally because there is something that pushes you to do it.

Wiseman’s violence is not directed at his children but at his wife.

Actually, it usually happens against the wife because she is the main person who is in charge of the house, and she is the one who controls the children. Usually, the man does not communicate with the children. You talk to your wife if there is something wrong in the house. It is possible that you could be treating her unfairly.

He further explains that his unemployed situation exacerbates his relationship with his wife.

All these violent acts happen because you are unemployed and you are staying at home. In fact, you are supposed to support the family as a man. This is how we experience problems as men in most cases. You can observe many wrong things at home if you are not working as a man. Possibly, you would have not seen all those things if you were working. The cause of all these violent acts is that fact that the man must support his family. This is how the problems begin at home.

He also tries to justify himself stating that he does not understand this violent behaviour himself but that it might also be due to a medical condition.

I have discovered that my brain also works like that as I am not a healthy person. It happens that I lose my temper in some occasion. However, I do not understand where this short temper comes from. I do not understand the cause of my short temper. I think it involves sicknesses, because there are diseases. We visit the doctors and they tell us that the level of BP is higher.

Finally, a participant of a focus group explained that sex is used as a stress relief for poor people.

Even if you go to the shacks there is so much poverty with many kids. Why? It is stress. They are having sex just to relieve stress and to keep themselves happy. It is the only happiness they get<sup>57</sup>.

But being poor is also considered as an obstacle from having sex.

A woman cannot tolerate to sleep with you when you have nothing. She says: "do you think you are going to sleep with me. You can't even buy me soap!" Then she will leave you for other people<sup>58</sup>.

So not being able to be sexually satisfied from a partner can lead to violence.

You even lose hope in life. Sometime she will not even have sex with you and she'll give it to other people and she'll ask you how are you going to take care of a child? That is very difficult and you become very violent. You even think of killing her<sup>59</sup>.

Sandile thus explained that it is difficult to approach women when one is unemployed.

The fear of being rejected actually leads to sexual violence.

A person who is unemployed cannot talk. He is unable to talk even a single word to a woman who is well educated, such as the teachers and nurses. I mean he finds it difficult to approach this woman and to tell that he likes her. Instead, he acts violently because he tells himself that he is unemployed. Because he feels that, he is useless in the community. He is not respectable. Therefore, he decides to rape her.

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<sup>57</sup> Focus group 3, 11 July 2007.

<sup>58</sup> Focus group 1, 9 July 2007.

<sup>59</sup> Focus group 3, 11 July.

Thabo further explained that men who cannot afford to be sexually satisfied with their partners tend to abuse children. “If you don’t have money the woman has a boyfriend on the side who buys her things. You end up raping kids and buying them snacks so that they agree to have sex with you.”

In brief, emotional pain and rage and anger are the overall feeling that characterise unemployed men. Not being able to assert their patriarchal masculinity by providing for their families resulted in anxiety and violence.

During our fieldwork, men have explained that masculinity is very closely associated with providing for their households. They have also expressed how difficult it was to find a job and how strenuous it is to be unemployed. It is difficult to meet the social expectations of masculinity as they do not have money. This has consequences on them and their households. They mentioned that they lost respect from their children and their wives. This in turn results in emotional pain and rage. Only a few younger participants explained that unemployment is not a strain on masculinity. The next chapter will analyse and discuss these findings.

## Chapter 7. Discussion

*The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed*  
Steve Biko

The men we met throughout the month we spent in Clermont shared their time but more importantly their stories with us. They shared individual and unique stories that needed to be heard and documented. Listening to their life narratives reminded me of Emile Zola's novel L'Assomoir. Zola was one of the founders of the naturalism movement in the French literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He described, in his series on the Rougon Macquart family, the consequences of the industrial revolution on the proletariat. L'Assomoir is the story of the rise and fall of a female labourer Gervaise Macquart. Similarly to the participants of this research, Gervaise's life relied only on her workforce. She worked really hard and reached the happy culmination point of getting married, giving birth and opening her own laundry. But she, like the participants of this research, was vulnerable to shocks. After an accident, her husband is badly injured and could no longer work. He plunges into alcoholism. From there, their existence is propelled into misery. Gervaise eventually gives up on life and resigns herself to destitution. The lives of the participants are similar to Gervaise's in that they rely on their workforce and are vulnerable.

According to bell hooks, we live in a hierarchical social system that uses race, class and gender as instruments of exploitation. bell hooks talks about the "white imperialist supremacist capitalist patriarchy". Women and more especially women of colour are at the bottom of this paradigm, dominated. Men who do not conform to hegemonic masculinity are also trapped into the capitalist and patriarchal system. This socioeconomic order is perpetuated by the norm that men have to financially provide for their families. Much research, throughout the world, has shown that hegemonic masculinity is built around the notion of being a breadwinner and providing for a family (Chant, 2000 and Mannon, 2006 in Costa Rica; Fuller, 2001 in Peru; Silberschmidt, 2001 in East Africa; Lemon, 1995 and Hunter, 2005, 2006, 2007 and Morrell, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2006 in South Africa; Haque and Kusakabe, 2005 in Bangladesh, Roy, 2007 in the United States). Men who cannot afford to provide for their families are marginalised by the system because a/

they do not fulfil the norm that men are breadwinners and b/ they are economically disadvantaged.

I have attempted to show that in South Africa the construction of black masculinities has changed with colonialism and apartheid. Whereas black men held hegemonic positions in pre-colonial times, proletarianisation and racial oppression have created new forms of masculinities directly related to employment. In order to be able to provide for their families, black men needed to work for white people in urban areas. Employment became an attribute to assert their manhood. However, from the 1970s onward, a severe economic crisis has resulted in job losses and extremely high unemployment rates. Today, out of the 20 million South Africans who are part of the workforce, 8.4 million people are unemployed (Von Holdt and Webster, 2005: 28).

The participants of this research are all wounded by these socioeconomic circumstances. They are poor. Their social capital is low. Their chance of finding employment is limited. This chapter intends to analyse the findings of the research in light of the abovementioned theoretical framework. How does capitalist patriarchy impacts on poor unemployed men's lives? What are the consequences of the South African political economy on their identity? How are they constructing their masculine identity?

This chapter is structured as follow. I will first review the experiences of men who have decided to accept the patriarchal norm of masculinity and are therefore marginalised by their unemployed status. The world economic order, i.e. capitalism, and the world social order, i.e. patriarchy emasculates them. I will then review the experiences of participants who have rejected patriarchal norms and shown self-actualisation. Although unemployed and unable to provide for their families, those men have refuted the patriarchal norms of masculinity and asserted their manhood positively.

#### 1. Consequences of marginalised masculinity: Domination and Resignation

Participants experience their unemployed situation differently. Wiseman, Peter, Zamani and Sandile seem powerless. They can not see any alternative. They admit wanting the best for their families but being economically constrained. Everyday, they seek for a job,

have lunch at the Clermont soup kitchen<sup>60</sup> and go home. Finding a job or receiving financial assistance from the government is their only hope.

Expectedly, they related masculinity with the traditional norms of building a home and providing for a family. This is consistent with most literature on masculinity in patriarchal society. Mannon (2006) in Costa Rica and Silberschmidt (2001) in East Africa have both described the role of women and men in their families. Men are expected to be primary breadwinners while their wives are expected to be homemakers. Haque and Kusakabe (2005) explain that work offers men a space to develop a masculine identity as it turns them into responsible persons and heads of families. In this research, only older participants mentioned marriage when they defined hegemonic masculinity<sup>61</sup>. Hunter (2005) actually notes that in pre-colonial times building a home was the foundation of being a man. However the migrant labour system, today's high unemployment rate, the drop in marital status and women's greater participation in the labour force are factors that have influenced households' composition. Those different issues will be reviewed in turn.

The participants never really talked about poverty. They talked about lack of money and incapacity to accumulate. As bell hooks explain, we live in a world that rewards possessions and ownership. Nurse (2004) further explains that while women are objectified as "sex objects", men are as "success objects". Clark's argument (2002) on American masculinity is, I believe, relevant to South African masculinities. He explains, using ecofeminism and Faludi's frameworks, that consumerism has turned into a new religion and that accumulation means satisfaction. Being successful is related to how much can one amass. Male worth is "measured by participation in consumer culture" (2002:67). The participants believed in those norms. They strongly believed in accumulating goods and providing financially for their families. "You find that you need money and that you are not a man if you do not have money<sup>62</sup>". Money is used to "gain dignity", "buy respect from children", as well as secure relationships. The participants' lives are shaped by the fact that they do not have money. Consumer culture has

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<sup>60</sup> Besides Wiseman whom we met in Pinetown

<sup>61</sup> More especially Peter and Wiseman who are both married with children. Younger men talked more generally about care and support towards family and extended family and not necessarily living with the mother of their child. For example Sandile has a child but does not live with the mother; Siphso, Zakhele and Xolani live with the mother of their children and their children but are not married

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Zakhele, 24 July 2007

emasculated them. They have no way to provide for their families, be good fathers and get respect from the community. When we asked the participants if they could think of a way for unemployed men to regain their lost respect, we were told that

He should try to do something for himself and to search for temporary employment. He should search in all places to get work to do. He has to work for other people and do small jobs such as cutting the grass so that he would be able to survive. He has to try to generate money if he has certain skills such as repairing shoes. He can also cut the grass for other people to make money<sup>63</sup>.

The participants thought that the only way unemployed people could regain their dignity was by taking up any types of job and therefore earn money. This is what bell hooks calls wage slavery. The socio-economic system is taking advantage of the destitution and desperation of unemployed people. They work in the informal economy or as contractors. Their salary is ridiculously low and random but they have no choice other than being grateful for what they earn. We were told in a work agency that an unskilled labourer earns in average R7 an hour. It means that one to three hours of his/her day at work are solely devoted to daily transport money<sup>64</sup>. In South Africa, the labour market is more and more polarised between formal and secured type of employment and the non-core and peripheral zones. It means that more South Africans are working without any job security, benefits or decent wages (Von Holdt and Webster, 2005). In the meantime, wage inequalities are increasing and upper class have a growing influence over national policies. The 2003 UNDP Human Development Report explains that the South African upper class is a small white wealthy segment of the population<sup>65</sup> and that it holds power over most companies and over South African politics. The report (2003:73) states that “the wealth of the upper class gives it enormous corporate power and a direct influence over the economic lives of the majority of South Africa.” They benefit from the extreme disparities of the labour market. The pool of unskilled labour is so large that it keeps wages down and the working conditions deteriorating. Wiseman, for example, receives R400 for his two children and wonders how to feed his family. Poor South Africans have no other alternative than to comply to a system that takes advantage of their workforce with no other benefits than survival wage.

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<sup>63</sup> Interview with Baba Dlamini, 26 July 2007.

<sup>64</sup> As most Africans live in townships, designed purposefully away from cities-economic centres- meant for white people.

<sup>65</sup> Thanks to Black Economic Empowerment policies, a black minority is now part of that wealthy upper class (Bond, 2000).

The unemployed men we have met have lost confidence and dignity. They are stressed, pessimistic and disillusioned. Living in an invariable survival state is dehumanizing. Human relations are difficult. Moreover with women, money is considered as a way to women's heart (Chant, 2000; Silberschmidt, 2001). As a consequence, poor men do not dare approaching women. All the participants agreed that it is impossible to attract women without money. Getting married and paying the bride-price is therefore almost impossible. Consequently, less than 30% of African men and women are in a marital relationship (Hunter, 2006:103). Amongst the unmarried participants, only Siphon mentioned that he was raising cattle to eventually pay lobolo. Marriage was not considered as a priority for the participants living with their partners. As men do not have the economic means to support their families, marriage is no longer the revered institution it used to be.

However, men can easily impregnate women. But they are then unable to build a household for their family. Fatherhood, which is one of the principal components of the construction of masculinity, is not a South African characteristic (Morrell and Richer, 2006). The normative role of a father is to provide, care and protect his children. South Africa has an extremely high level of paternal absence. Sandile had a daughter when he was still working. After he lost his job, the mother of his child left him. She is now dating an employed man. Sandile reckons that it is better like that. The new boyfriend can provide for his child. Sandile explains that now he only visits his daughter when he has money. Similarly 42% of African children lived with their mothers only in 1998 while 1% lived with their fathers only (Morrell and Richter, 2006:6). In 2002, 11.5% of black children's fathers had passed away and 45.8% were absent (Posel and Devey, 2006). Men do not assume their paternity. Patriarchy expects them to provide. As they cannot afford to provide, they use their lack of money as an excuse not to spend time with their children.

The greater participation of women in the labour market has increased their financial independence. They do not need men to provide for their family anymore. Men generally react negatively towards women's employment. They feel that they have lost command over them. They feel threatened and more vulnerable (Chant, 2000; Silberschmidt, 2001). Like most research findings on unemployed men and increased participation of women in the labour force, some of the participants in this research felt threatened by women

employment. Chant (2000) explains that it constitutes the crisis of masculinity. In her research on low-income men in Costa Rica, she found that women play a critical role in men's lives. If they are working, it means that they are gaining financial independence and do not rely on men anymore. Men's masculine identities are threatened if they cannot provide for their household and if women no longer need men's support. Silberschmidt (2001) had similar findings in East Africa. Men have a negative attitude towards women's labour. They tend to withdraw from their traditional roles and expectations. It creates an extra burden for women who now need to assume both responsibilities in their households. They have to provide financially for their families and still assume unpaid work (UNIFEM, 2005). Zakhele's mother for example financially supports her three children and grandchildren with her domestic worker income. Similarly, Baba Dlamini's sister ensures that he is fine by regularly depositing money for him. Even though women are playing an important part in men's lives, participants of this research believe that men must be tough and should not share their worries with their partners. It confirms the norm that men are strong and should not to talk about their feelings and emotions.

**Participant:** A man is "ufelaphakathi". He dies with his problem. A man does not talk about his problem. How could anybody help him? Who can I talk to about my problems?

**Siya:** Not even your wife?

**Part:** No I can speak to my wife since she knows if I have problem, I can tell her.

**Part:** I disagree. I disagree because if I talk my wife she will defiantly talk to people about it, definitely. Women talk. It is in their nature. So I disagree on telling a woman. She will defiantly talk to her friend and her friend will tell hers. It will end up all over the place.

**Part:** I only speak to myself because if I speak to anyone it is a problem. You must have secrets if you are a man.

**Part:** Yes, she is the one who'll tell people about it. Then people will laugh at me. I would rather die.

**Part:** I don't agree. If you have problems you need to talk to your wife. She may have something to say. For example a kid may have a problem and she can not tell her dad but you suspect your kid is having a problem you may tell her to have a look at it. That is what we call talking to people and sharing your views.

**Part:** Maybe it may help to negotiate.

**Siya:** So she is the only person you can talk to?

**Part:** I also agree, my wife is the person I talk to.

**Part:** There are things you can share but there are those that you do not need to share, since they will easily reach other people. Like if a person buys a gun and hides it. A woman will go out after a misunderstanding. She will go out

and shout ‘now you want to kill me with that gun of yours you bought’. That is where people will know your secret.<sup>66</sup>

Wiseman explains that “our culture does not allow the woman to be the head of the household. Our culture stipulates that we are the men.” Culture is often used as a justification. Cultural norms may sometime limit men’s involvement but it is critical to remember that cultures are not static and that they evolved according to the circumstances<sup>67</sup> (Peacock, 2003). In this case, men who are using culture and traditions in their desire to dominate are also the one suffering from being unemployed. Indeed, unemployment puts a lot of pressure on men who cannot afford to provide. Research has shown that the persisting effects of unemployment on health and well-being are heavy. Besides increased risk of smoking and drinking, anxiety and depression are long-term effects (Wadsworth et al., 1999). Unemployed men show a lot of resignation and contempt towards their situation. Amongst the participants of this research, those who have accepted the patriarchal norms of masculinity appear to have the most difficulties coping with their unemployed situation. Older and married men hardly know how to deal with not being able to provide for their families. This can probably be explained by three factors. Firstly, because they are older, they have integrated the patriarchal norms of hegemonic masculinity. Secondly, because they are married, they have the duty to provide for their wife and children. Thirdly because they grew up under more favourable economic conditions and have experienced (on the contrary to younger participants) formal long-term employment, it might be more difficult to be unemployed and survive on *amatoho*. Interestingly, Wiseman and Peter are the two participants who admitted using violence against their wives or children in order to regain respect. Younger men – like Sandile- seemed very frightened of women but also acknowledged that women’s rejection might lead to sexual violence. Focus group participants also talked about women unwillingness to be sexually active with men who can not provide financially. They explained that coerced sex is an alternative for unemployed men. It matches with the hypothesis that young men assert their manhood by mobilising power and sexuality over women rather than getting married and founding a family. Men have found alternative ways to assert their masculinities through violence and crime. Indeed, studies on violence

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<sup>66</sup> Focus group 1, 9 July 2007.

<sup>67</sup> Reverend Bafana Khumalo from the Gender Equality Commission (in Peacock, 2003:7) explains that “men use culture to hide behind it, it provides a comfort. But they are speaking English, wearing western clothes and holding down untraditional jobs. I confront them and ask, “what are you saying about culture? You call on African culture only when it oppresses others, when you put a foot right on someone’s neck.”

have shown that masculine performances depend on heterosexual successes. As an East African man stated: “if you cannot be a successful breadwinner, you can be a successful seducer” (Silberschmidt, 2001:198). For men with marginal status, sexuality and multiple sexual partnerships is the main focus of their manhood (Sideris, 2005; Hunter, 2006, Morrell, 2006). But for men who can not afford seduction, this is often asserted with violence. “Violence against women is a mean of resolving crisis because it allows expression of power that is otherwise denied” (Jewkes, 2002: 1424). In South Africa, more than 52,000 cases of rape and 9,000 cases of indecent assault were reported between April 2006 and March 2007. One in three South African women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime. Furthermore, in many cases, women in relationships are forced into sexual intercourse by their partner. Wood et al. (1998:236) describe coerced sexuality in relationship whereby young men believe that the purpose of a relationship is penetrative intercourses “as often as possible,” even if the girlfriend disagrees. “It is rape but we don’t call it rape because they are our boyfriends.” (Campbell, 2003: 130). In this context, the construction of masculinity also perpetuates violence against women and the spread of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (Burja, 2002).

In brief, in South Africa, unemployment and deteriorating working conditions have distressing consequences on men while the country’s economy keeps growing. The acceptance of the capitalist patriarchal system has provoked depression, dehumanization, rage and wage slavery amongst poor unemployed participants who have accepted to conform to those norms. What Ramphele and Wilson (in Pityana et al., 1991) called the bitter fruits of powerlessness. This social paradigm only benefits capitalism and wealth creation. This order is further successful in that it has constrained participants’ critical understanding. Indeed they positioned themselves as victims. They are, legitimately, too concerned about their survival state to care about the broader political and economic context that oppresses them. They have no sense of agency and no will to fight for a better socioeconomic situation. Capitalism and patriarchy have colonised their minds. They assert their masculinity through anger and depression rather than channelling this energy in reconstructing the notions of employment and of masculinity. It is critical for unemployed men to understand the intertwined system of domination and the need to fight against it for a more equal society. We will now turn to participants who have suggested other ways to assert their masculinities and regain respect while unemployed.

## 2. Alternative ways to assert masculinities

If liberty is defined as the power to define one's destiny, the participants of this research are clearly not free as they can hardly survive. Their incapacity to fit into patriarchal norms, at the expenses of capitalist patriarchs, has an impact on their self-confidence and their self-esteem. In the 1970s, the Black Consciousness Movement talked of this oppression (Biko quoted in Hook, 2005:491). "The black man has become a shadow, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave and ox, bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity". It explained the need for conscientisation in order to reach "mental emancipation". Conscientisation makes reference to how black people can "grapple realistically with their problems...to develop what one might call awareness of their situation, to be able to analyse it, and to provide answers for themselves" (Biko quoted Hook, 2005:491). The psychological and cultural liberation of the black mind was considered as a prerequisite for political freedom. South Africa has reached its political freedom but poor South Africans are still not free and their mind is still colonised with values and norms created during colonisation and apartheid, i.e. capitalist patriarchal norms. The basic principle of black consciousness is that black people must throw out value systems that undermine them and "build up their value system, see themselves as self-defined and not defined by others" (Pityana et al., 1991:121).

Sipho, Zakhele and Xolani might not have reached consciousness but seem to have a better sense of agency. They are young and unemployed. They live with their children and the mother of their children. They are confident and optimistic. The main reason is probably that they do not subscribe to patriarchal norms as much as the other participants. When capitalist patriarchy requires men to dominate women, to be the main breadwinner and to have control over the household, they talked about equality, being part of the household for their partners and for their children.

First of all, they acknowledged gender equality and equal decision making between them and their partners. Their families are surviving thanks to their partners' incomes. They are therefore participating in the household with household chores. Haque and Kusakabe (2005:196) in their research on retrenched men in Bangladesh found that men did not consider household work as a man's work but that they were "forced to assist because of economic difficulty". Similarly,

In this regard, you must share the chores that are taking place in the house. To give you an example, sometimes it happens that I arrive first at home before “usisi” the woman I live with arrives. I wash the pots if it happens that I am the first person to arrive home. She continues to dish for us when it is ready. Then, we eat. I can say that we have to share the chores that need to be done in the household. I do the cooking. I do not have a problem to wash dishes. I also do not have a problem to fetch water. I do not have a problem to do household chores even if my partner is at home. She does the same thing when she arrives first. No, I do not have a problem. I do the cleaning. I scrub the floor, and polish the place. I wash the pots. I cook. I wash the bedding and the blankets. I do not have a problem about that. I also help the baby to change “pampers”.<sup>68</sup>

Of course, the participants did not become househusbands and still state that they are “helping women” in their households rather than taking the lead. But it shows a progress. From the patriarchal perspective that women have to bear the household burden on their own and ensure societal reproduction, men have shown that they can participate and make women’s lives easier. We are moving towards more gender equality.

The desire to conform to social norms is universal but very taxing. One of the main issues that came out of the interviews was community’s perceptions. Social pressure forced men to be compliant to norms that undermine them. On the contrary, younger participants explained that one should not take into consideration what other people have to say. They should first ensure that all is fine in their household. Zakhele explained that

You do not have to pay attention to other people if you are in that situation. You should be firm and tell people that you are living with the mother of your children. You should tell them she is working and she could be doing household chores, but she cannot do them because she is working and she does not have time. You should tell the people that your partner is working to get income that will help both of you. You should tell them you are helping your partner where it is possible to help because she does not have time to do it.

Indeed, Thabo also explained that “if you keep quiet, you don’t get help. Don’t think that you will be embarrassed. You don’t live on an island so you have to depend on other people.” Similarly, Xolani explained that rather than hiding problems and torment from everybody, men should learn to open up and share their difficulties.

**Xolani:** One way of keeping yourself as a man is to go to other people- family or friends and explain your situation to them. It’s not a shame to ask for food because you are not working. Friends and family can help you.

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with Siphso, 26 July 2007.

**Siya:** So you think a man has to humble himself and share his problems with other people?

**Xolani:** Yes it is so. A man should share his problems with other men and not hide them. Hiding things might result in you doing wrong things, stealing, burglary or even murder while talking might have helped you get a solution to your problem. Another person might not have something to give but talking might give you another perspective on things and you can start thinking in a different way.

To men who are unemployed, he explains that they should be optimistic and ask for support.

It means that you should be brave in this case. Nowadays, you should expect that there are times when you will be poor and there are times when you will be happy. I mentioned that you should not “give up” if you see that you have shortage of something. You should tell yourself that things will be fine. You should not pay attention to your neighbours if you have problems. You should not even attempt to lock yourself inside the house and not get out because you have problems. You should move on with your life and you should let people observe that you have a problem. There are people who love you and who can help you.

Xolani is conscious and insightful about his unemployed situation. He explains being unemployed should not influence someone’s self-esteem.

There are some feelings of being inferior (*about being unemployed*) but it comes down to what I’ve said to you- it depends on how one thinks. It doesn’t make sense to feel inferior when you hang out with working people because you are also human. If you distance yourself you feel more inferior and you may start thinking about mugging. Just remember that you are also human. If I’m ok on the inside (*in my soul*) and do not define myself by my unemployment status then there is no difference. If I get that soup here and money to get by and communicate with people then I’m ok.

Hegemonic masculinity is based on the assumption that men are unemotional. They have to be strong and in control. However, what this research shows is that men who openly talk about their feelings and their problems actually reach self-actualisation. Siphso, Zakhele and Xolani resisted patriarchal norms and opened up. Their rejection of patriarchal masculinity and its need to dominate has helped them to overcome feelings of despair and rage shared by other participants. Siphso, Zakhele and Xolani are powerful men who have asserted their rights to be real men.

This chapter has attempted to review the experiences of men who have decided to accept the patriarchal norm of masculinity and are therefore marginalised by their unemployed status. Patriarchy has emasculated them to the benefits of capitalism. They have no other

choice than to sell their labour force at the lowest rate and be grateful about it in order to provide for their families and subscribe to the hegemonic masculine norms.

I have also tried to demonstrate that other participants have rejected patriarchal norms and shown self-actualisation. Although unemployed and unable to provide for their families, those men have refuted the hegemonic norms of masculinity and asserted their manhood positively. Of course, their unemployed situation prevails. Similarly to the participants described above, they take part in the exploitation by working for the bare minimum in order to survive. However, they have questioned the gender order.

Questioning the gender order that undermines most men and definitely women is the way forward to achieve gender equality. In a gender equal society, women and men would enjoy more intimate and trusting relations. Men would be able to express their emotions and feelings. They would be able to contribute to their children's growth, to show love and care. Ultimately, men who reject hegemonic masculinity are more humane, they have a richer personal life and are psychologically and physically better-off.

## Chapter 8.

### Conclusion

In the patriarchal and capitalist system we live in, we all have material concerns. We have the duty to conform to the norms: achieve as much as possible, earn always more money and acquire always more goods. White capitalist patriarchy benefits from this system at the expense of women, proletariat and people of colour. Racism, sexism and poverty are the fruits of this paradigm. Developed countries accumulated their wealth from years of plunder and underdevelopment in their colonies (Frank, 1978). The development of white people generated the underdevelopment of people of colour (Rodney, 1972). Men's prosperity brought poverty upon women.

But many people are fighting for a world free of those scourges. Many South Africans, for example, fought for their liberation. They joined the struggle to end a racist regime and bring democracy to their nation. But the struggle was dominated by men who perpetuated violence against women. Rapes were recurrent phenomenon in training camps and were never acknowledged. Women were told that the liberation of the country was the priority (Motsei, 2007). The violation of their bodies and minds was not perceived as a concern. Even the Truth and Reconciliation Commission failed to deal with issues of sexual violence (Motsei, 2007). The level of violence against women in South Africa today is a consequence of this impunity. By focusing on one struggle without analysing the interlinked system of oppression, freedom fighters were fighting against racism but complicit to patriarchy. Up to today, South Africa has not reached its liberation. The status quo of the apartheid regime is maintained. Patriarchy and capitalism are still the power ruling the state. A black elite is now reproducing this system of domination, at the expense of the majority of the population who still lives in indigence. We need to understand that all forms of domination are interrelated. We cannot end racism without fighting against patriarchy nor can we end patriarchy without fighting against capitalism. All forms of oppression need to be eliminated.

In this research, some participants expressed their need for political and economic freedom but refused to accept gender equality. Not surprisingly, they are the same participants who abide to the norms of patriarchal masculinity and are therefore ashamed of their unemployed situation. Their obedience to an exploitative system oppresses them.

They do not allow themselves to talk about their pain. They show self-hatred, lack of confidence, fear and uncertainty. The current structure of gender relations disadvantages marginalised men.

On the contrary, participants who have rejected the norms of capitalist patriarchy have a healthier sense of family and community. They are involved fathers and partners. They share responsibilities and decision-making power within their households. They are not depressed and anxious. Self-actualisation, love and ubuntu are the pillar unemployed men need to work with in order to overcome capitalist patriarchy and reconstruct masculinity. Reconstructing masculinity would not only benefit men but is also a necessity for gender equality.

The only way to reach gender equality is by using what bell hooks calls the power of love. She defines love as “the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one another spiritual growth”. (2004:5). Love is about learning solidarity and working together. Love is about respect. The politicisation of love will help us to resist domination. Love can be the source of empowerment that helps us to work together to fight all domination. Women and men need to come together and work on the eradication of capitalist and patriarchal domination. Rather than isolationism, we need to come together to regain consciousness. As a collective, we should seek for recovery. As bell hooks (1994: 250) explains:

The moment we choose to love, we begin to move against domination, against oppression. The moment we choose to love, we begin to move beyond freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others. That action is the testimony of love as the practice of freedom.

Love, as described by bell hooks, exists in many African cultures. In IsiZulu, it is called ubuntu. Ubuntu is a sub-Saharan philosophy related to humaneness. On the contrary to western philosophies that promote individualism and materialism, ubuntu is the basis for “a morality of co-operation, compassion, community” (Justice Yvonne Mokgoro, quoted in Devenish, 2005). The Cartesian “I think therefore I am” becomes “I am because I belong”. According to Makgoba (quoted in Enslin and Horsthemke, 2004:547),

Ubuntu is unique in the following respects: it emphasizes respect for the non-material order that exists in us and among us; it fosters man’s respect for himself, for others, and for the environment; it has spirituality; it has remained non-racial; it accommodates other cultures and it is the invisible force uniting Africans worldwide.

Poor unemployed people but more importantly economists and governments need to take into consideration humans' unique need and will to love. Capitalism and patriarchy have placed people against each other in order to benefit a small élite. In this research, marginalised men who have accepted the hegemonic norms of patriarchy are depressed, anxious and resigned because they can not provide for their families. Their only alternative is to work for a minimal wage. They are selling their labour power for a bare survival. Hegemonic males are benefiting from their powerlessness. The capitalist system is sustained, growing and getting richer thanks to emasculated men and their families. With love, we can learn to resist domination. We can reject oppressive norms. Indeed, this research has shown that certain participants are confident and assertive. They are unemployed and struggling to provide for their families. They are also selling their labour force at a shamefully low rate. But they do not show the same emotional pain and rage as the other participants. They are more self-assured and show more self-worth. They respect themselves and their families. Love can help men to raise consciousness, reconstruct their masculinities and fight for gender equality.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

Focus group interview guide

(The questions have been refined after the pilot focus group)

### -The construction of masculinity among unemployed men-

#### **Aim:**

**-unpacking the concept of hegemonic masculinity**

**= what constitutes a real man?**

**-what are the consequences of unemployment on the social construct of masculinity?**

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#### 1. Agree/disagree activity

=strongly agree/ strongly disagree/ agree/ disagree

- It is easier to be a man than a woman
- Domestic violence is a private matter between the couple
- I don't think a husband should have to do the housework
- Drinking heavily is a sign of manhood
- A man needs to provide financially for his family
- It is essential for a guy to get respect from others
- Women are equal to men
- An unemployed man is less of a man
- It is essential for a man to have several sexual partners
- Fighting is natural for a man
- A guy will lose respect if he talks about his problem

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#### Masculinity

##### General/ community questions

- what does it mean to be a man?
- Who decides on such meaning?
- Does everyone subscribe to this definition? Can you give example of "different" men who do not subscribe to this definition?
- Has the definition of masculinity changed with time? Think of your fathers and your grand-fathers: is the situation different now?
- -what do you think is the most difficult thing about being a man in SA today?
  
- who do you think should provide the household?
- How can that person be expected to provide? (Work, crime....)
- What is the case today for households in Clermont?
  
- Who should be the caregiver in a household?

- What is the case today for households in Clermont?
- 

2. List of people to classify hierarchically (variable to play with: social status/ employment condition):

Classify from the weakest to the strongest status in society- which men are the most important and the most respected in your community

- gardener
  - unemployed
  - street trader
  - foreman
  - doctor
  - taxi driver
  - petty criminal
  - drug dealer
  - construction worker
  - teacher
- 

### Masculinity and unemployment

- How important is it for a man to have a work?
  - Any types of jobs or specific types of jobs? (Any difference in menial job vs. no job at all?)
  - How do you think unemployed men feel compared to employed men in the community?
  - How do you think unemployed men feel compared to employed women in the community?
  - **Do you have any idea on how unemployed men assert their masculinity? How do unemployed men affirm that they are men?**
  - Do you think that unemployed men are more often violent than employed men? Why (not)?
  - Violent against whom? (Other men? their partners?...)
  - Do you think that unemployed men have more girlfriends/ sexual partners than employed men? Why (not)?
- 

### 3. Problem Tree

Statement: “work makes a man, someone who does not work has no stability, he does not know who he is. Definitely, a guy with no job is a disabled being”

What do you think are the consequences of unemployment on men?

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## Household questions

-Unemployment and partners:

- How do you think being unemployed impact on men and their relationships with women/ with marrying a woman/ with having children?

-In relation to his family:

- How easy is it for unemployed men to have a family (providing, paying for the lobolo)?
- Can unemployed men be the head of their household and main breadwinner? What do you think of household where women are the head?
- What do you think of mature men living with their mothers?

-At a personal level:

- How do you think men feel when they cannot provide?
- What happens when a man loses his work?
- What kind of man is an unemployed man?
- How does he fit in the definition of masculinity given above? What are his means of survival? What is the same thing at the time of your fathers and grand-fathers?

## Appendix 2

### In-depth Interview guide

Can you please tell me more about yourself? Who are you? *Get the participant comfortable to talk about himself*

#### Demographics

Where are you from?

How old are you?

When did you come to Clermont/ Durban?

Do you have family here?

Are you married? How did you meet your wife?

Do you have children? How old are they? Where do they stay....

#### Masculinity

What do you think it means to be a man?

Who decides on such meaning?

What does it mean to be a man for you?

What makes you a man?

What is the role of a man?

Has the definition of masculinity changed with time? Think of your fathers and your grand-fathers: is the situation different now?

What do you think is the most difficult thing about being a man in SA today?

-who do you think should provide the household?

How can that person be expected to provide? (Work, crime....)

#### Masculinity and unemployment

How important is it for a man to have a work?

What type of work is best suited for a man? What kind of work they feel qualified to do and would like to do?

How do you think unemployed men feel compared to employed men in the community? Compared to women in the community?

Do you think unemployed men are more often violent than employed men? Why (not)?

Violent against whom? (Other men? their partners?...)

Do you think that unemployed men have more girlfriends/ sexual partners than employed men? Why (not)?

Do you have any idea on how unemployed men assert their masculinity?

## Personal questions

What was the happiest moment in your life?

What was the most difficult moment in your life?

How did you feel when you lost your job?

How the absence of paid work in your life makes you feel?

How are things at home since then? (How has it shaped your ideas of what you can do in relation to children, women, extended family? What was your relation with your wife before and after?)

How are things with your male friends since then?

Who is the head of your household?

How do you feel about it?

What do you do for leisure?

Are you part of any clubs, association, political party...?