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Becoming cornered

Migration, masculinities and marginalisation in inner-city Johannesburg

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CHAPTER SIX

‘All men are considered rapists’: gender-based structural violence among migrants

Introduction

On Sunday, 8 September 2019, Uncle Kofi sent a voice note to the WhatsApp group 'Kofi's Shop', which I had joined in May 2019. Hearing his message in the safety of my home in Amsterdam, I was happy to hear from him, even if the situation of unfolding xenophobic violence in Johannesburg that he was describing seemed both dire and depressingly familiar:

Uncle Kofi here, my good brothers and sisters. It's not easy here in the [inner city]. The Zulus are standing one place and the Zimbabweans [on] the other side, and they are waiting for a war, and the metro [police] are in between and want to separate them. It's very tough: gunshots are all over and we don't know what's going to happen tonight. Zulus are coming and Zimbabweans are ready.... It's really bad people. I don't know. God help us.

This message was followed by many photos and videos of what was happening, not only in Johannesburg but in other cities in South Africa and other African countries. Everyone in the group posted something as a commentary on the situation. I was not surprised by Uncle Kofi's message as it had become an important source of on-the-ground information for me as tensions were heating up in South Africa. In the days leading up to his message, many warning messages had also been shared within the group: 'They are coming, be ready! . . . Spread the word', 'Too bad, may the Lord be with us,' 'Guys, be careful. I hear noise in town. . . It's happening now'. 'Yooh, shooting!' 'Sad, this is war', 'More than war'.

In the following days, as the violence unfolded, the flow of messages continued: 'Foreigners are ready for war now'. The members of the group frequently checked in and shared updates: 'It's ok today, but we don't know [about] tomorrow'. As I followed the events happening in Johannesburg as shared on Kofi's Shop WhatsApp group, I was receiving similar messages from other friends and relatives in South Africa. I often found myself forwarding messages I received on the Kofi's Shop WhatsApp group to other groups and individuals, and vice versa. The media was flooded with grotesque photographs and videos of the anti-immigrant attacks that were happening: people being burnt, shops being looted, cars set ablaze, groups of armed people, mostly men, marching. South Africa was once again in the news for its violence. This time other African countries had responded by attacking South African nationals and businesses in their respective countries.

The month before this outbreak of violence, there had been an outcry on social media about the rape and murder of a 19-year-old University of Cape Town

student, known by the name of Uyinene Mrwetyana. In an article entitled 'Every 3 hours a woman is murdered in South Africa, posted on the Al Jazeera news website, South Africa's Minister of Women, Youth and People with Disabilities, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, reported that 30 women had been murdered by their partners in the month of August alone (Hendricks 2019).

Ironically, August, declared to be Women's Month in South Africa, had, as is usual, seen increased levels of NGO activity, including campaigning and advocating for women's rights and equal treatment, and condemning violence against women. Mrwetyana's murder led to yet another intensification of condemnation from all corners and angles as social media activists, protesters, politicians, celebrities and NGOs took a public stance against violence.

As a person researching masculinities and violence in South Africa, I was taken back to the early days of my 2017 fieldwork when I had been overwhelmed by the different and often intersecting forms of violence I encountered. I found myself having to struggle with which ball to catch as there were just so many in the air: gender-based, structural, symbolic, class-based, and xenophobic violence. I also found myself again questioning the efficacy of interventions that were meant to address violence in its many forms, and wondering about the real relevance of my study. While there are various forms of violence in South Africa, gender-based violence (shortened to 'GBV' for interventions) is the most widely acknowledged, most publicised and the 'most visible due to decades of feminist activism' (Fu 2015, 51) and because it has been vigorously researched in South Africa (Dunkle and Jewkes 2007; Dunkle et al. 2004; Jewkes et al. 2010; Jewkes 2001; Mathews, Jewkes, and Abrahams 2015).

These studies have concluded that men's failure to live up to societal and self-expectations has led some men to become violent. In the previous chapter, I discussed how men's violence directed at women is seen as one of the markers of hegemonic masculinity, and the provision of care as a marker of positive masculinities, as defined by gender-transformative interventions. NGOs like Fighting Inequality conducted awareness-raising workshops with the aim of transforming men from hegemonic masculinities (violence) to positive masculinities (care).

In this chapter, I attempt to destabilise any assumption of such a linear transformation by illustrating how gendered violence is a complex issue that is understood and manifested in multiple ways among differently positioned individuals, including cornered migrants, making it difficult to fully comprehend and, consequently, address it. I achieve this by presenting the multiple ways that gendered violence is defined and understood in different contexts, for example within global platforms, locally within institutions such as the police and the family, and at an individual level on the streets. I focus on intimate partner violence (IPV), which is an established category of gender-based violence according to the

World Health Organisation (WHO).³⁰ Despite being an established category, the everyday manifestations of IPV are complex, varied and often hard to capture. This chapter is theoretically anchored by Ratele's (2017, 79) concept of 'hegemonic masculinities in the periphery or margins', and grounded in my ethnographic research that shows the complexity of violence among cornered migrant men who are simultaneously subordinated and considered to practice hegemonic masculinity.

Background

In 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) identified gender-based violence as a form of discrimination against women; since then there has been growing recognition of violence against women in relation to human rights, public health and development (Western and Varley 2019). In 2015, gender-based violence found its place in the global agenda in the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), after having been excluded from the Millennium Development Goals, whose timeframe was 2000–2015 (UN 2015). Framed as a human rights violation and an indicator of gender inequality, such violence has been identified as a significant problem needing redress in order to achieve gender equality and sustainable development more broadly. The emphasis on combatting gender-based violence gained strength because of its association with HIV (Jewkes et al. 2010). Within the SDGs there are two indicators that relate to gender-based violence, both of which refer to violence against women; men's experiences of violence are not addressed. In this chapter, I put forth the argument that many other forms of violence are also gendered, although they are not usually framed as such by policymakers or organisations working on gendered violence. Following Read-Hamilton (2014), I suggest that politics and power dynamics come into play in the processes of naming and defining both 'gender' and 'violence'.

In order to understand gender-based violence, it is imperative to understand each of the terms separately. Since gender is socially constructed, performative and varies according to place and time, it is difficult to create a universal definition of gender-based violence. For some time, the social construction of gender identities has been anchored in the masculinity/femininity binary. However, in recent years we have seen that the categories go beyond these two to include non-conforming gender identities (Butler 1990b; Good and Sanchez 2010). Equally complex is what constitutes violence, as there is an interplay of power between individuals or groups about who gets to make their perspective count as

³⁰ IPV describes physical violence, sexual violence, stalking and psychological aggression (including coercive acts) by a current or former intimate partner (Heise et al. 1999).

to what is and what is not violence (Pilcher and Whelehan 2017). According to Read-Hamilton (2014), the most widely used interpretation of GBV, endorsed by UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in 1993, finds its roots in feminist theory and emphasises women's subordinated status.

The 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defined violence against women as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life' (WHO 1994). In this chapter, I depart from the common framing of gender-based violence as violence against women resulting from their subordinate status. This is not to deny that women are disproportionately affected by men's use of violence, especially in South Africa where there is ample evidence of women's suffering found in both academic studies and police statistics (Jewkes et al. 2001, 2010; Matthews, Jewkes and Abrahams 2011). I discuss this further in the next section.

With the understanding that violence, whatever form it takes, is always gendered, I take the anthropological definition of gender-based violence as proposed by Merry (2009, 3): an 'interpretation of violence through gender'. I take this as a situated understanding of the gendered dimensions of various forms of violence without necessarily prioritising one gender. This definition allows me to make room for the multiple and changeable positions – both subordinations and associations with hegemony – within marginalised groups like my study participants. In this way I can capture the multiple perspectives that my study participants expressed. According to them, while gender-based violence results from men's domination over women, it also has spiritual and structural roots, neither of which are usually addressed within the behavioural-change interventions championed by NGOs. These are anchored in a human rights discourse that emphasises individual rights and responsibilities as well as individual behaviours. Some feminist scholars and critical masculinity scholars have bemoaned this narrowed framing of gender-based violence, arguing that we cannot talk of gender-based violence or interpersonal violence outside of structural violence (Fu 2015; Ratele 2017). As Fu (2015, 52) aptly puts it, 'When we say violence is gender-based, we cannot separate it from other forms of structural oppression based on race, class, age, sexuality and disability'. I present a few case studies to highlight the various manifestations of gendered violence, with examples of both violence against women and violence against men; I show how these can be linked to structural violence.

Gender-based violence in South Africa: what quantitative data show

Many studies have researched different forms of GBV in various contexts,

focusing mostly on violence against women. However, South Africa still does not have national baseline data that capture the various forms of GBV among women and men. Obtaining reliable and standardised statistics on different forms of gender-based violence in South Africa as elsewhere continues to be a priority for government departments as well as the NGO sector, in part due to a desire to illustrate progress toward the SDG goal to eliminate violence against women by 2030 (Lowe-Morna, Dube, and Makamure 2017). 'How do we know we have reached our goal, when we do not know where we are starting from?' was the mantra used by some NGOs to lobby the government and donors to provide the resources needed to produce more reliable and standardised data on gender-based violence (Lowe-Morna, Dube, and Makamure 2017).

However, owing to the underreporting of violence and the varied definitions of violence and gender within the police department, obtaining reliable information has long been a challenge. Routinely collected or administrative data, such as police-reported cases, were unreliable. Similarly, some NGOs did not accept statistics produced by academics or statistical bodies, citing their lack of expert and localised knowledge of lived experiences. In this way NGOs presented themselves as more qualified to research and understand gender-based violence because of their 'close proximity to the communities'. However, as I began to explore in the previous chapter, data produced by NGOs and activist scholars can also be contested as being partisan; at times, research is mixed up with political and economic interests, compromising claims of neutrality and objectivity.

In September 2018, Africa Check, an independent fact-checking agency based in South Africa and other parts of Africa, identified an error in the 2017/18 crime statistics released by the South African Police Service (SAPS).³¹ The error was a result of using the wrong denominator (population estimates) in the calculations of crime rates. Following this correction by Africa Check, SAPS with Stats SA amended the crime rates, and consequently publicised on their website their partnership with Stats SA in ensuring that accurate statistics would be reported from then on. This incident highlights the complexities associated with measuring crime, including violence in South Africa.

Reaching a consensus on what constitutes a certain form of violence or criminal offence – for example whether to classify something as murder or femicide – is usually contentious. According to SAPS, murder only applies to the intentional killing of another person. However, according to Stats SA's Victims of Crime Survey of 2018/19, murder also included unintentional killings, but SAPS categorised it as culpable homicide rather than murder. While Stats SA's survey seems comprehensive in its definition, it could not include the murder cases of homeless or unidentified people because the sample focused on households. In another

31 <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/factsheet-south-africas-crime-statistics-for-2017-18/>

report, *Crime Against Women in South Africa 2018*, Stats SA highlighted the multiple definitions of femicide and how these make it difficult to categorise certain acts as femicide, writing that the definition of femicide as 'killing of females by males because they are females' fails to incorporate those who identify as neither female nor male (Stats SA 2018, 7). Similarly, as highlighted in the introduction of this thesis, Karabo Mokoena's murder, which was initially registered as a case of gender-based violence (femicide) in 2017, was being referred to as ritual killing in 2019. This change in definition again brings complexity and challenges in addressing gender-based violence using conventional interventions (Mfecane 2018).

While acknowledging the limitations of the statistics in regards to underreporting and the existence of varied definitions, I also must rely on that flawed data to make my arguments. Specifically, I draw on the reported cases by SAPS in their 2018 Crime Statistics Report, the 2018 victims of crime survey by Stats SA, and the analysis done by Africa Check. While these reports all refer to the same phenomena, they present different statistics in some instances. Despite their inconsistencies, the statistics are useful to facilitate an examination of the gendered dimensions of different forms of violence.

Based on the xenophobia and femicide cases I shared above, I focus on the two forms of violence that affect women and men differently, murder and sexual offences, both of which fall within the ambit of contact offences³² as defined by SAPS. Contact offences are also referred to as 'social fabric' crimes because 'they are often associated with complex interlinked social factors such as poverty, systemic substance abuse, broken homes, absent parents, unemployment, general feelings of despair and lack of education. Social fabric crimes are often spontaneous rather than premeditated and commonly occur in private spaces' (Brodie 2013,n.d).

Sexual offences

According to the Sexual Offence and Related Matters Amendment Act (2007), this category of crime contains more than 70 subcategories, including rape, compelled rape, sexual assault, incest, bestiality, statutory rape and the sexual grooming of children. In the year 2017/18, 50,108 sexual offences were recorded, with the vast majority (80%) being rapes and 14% being sexual assault. A total of 40,035 rapes were recorded by police, translating to 70.5 rapes per 100,000 people, or, an average of 110 rapes every day (Africa Check 2019). Analyses of sexual offences were done for many of the provinces, drawing on samples from

³² Contact offences involve the use of violence or the threat to use violence that is directed against the person of a victim. Crimes categorised as contact crime include murder, attempted murder, sexual offences, all categories of assault, common robbery and robbery with aggravating circumstances (SAPS 2019, 3).

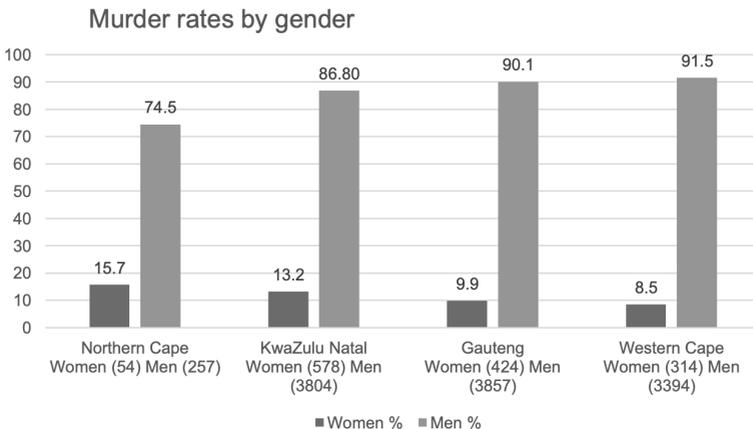
reported cases. However, the report does not include data from all provinces and in particular there were no reported numbers for Gauteng, the site of my research. In the few provinces where analysis was done, women were the majority of victims of sexual offences; for example, of those who had reported a sexual offence in Limpopo, 93% were women and 7% were men. In their calculations of prevalence rates in the victims of crime study, Stats SA did not analyse the percentage of men who experienced sexual offences, citing poor estimates.

Murder

While rape statistics reported by police are unreliable due to the underreporting of the crime and existence of multiple definitions, murder is a much more reliable statistic because most murders do not go unreported. However, in this chapter I use murder statistics not to capture the accuracy of the crime data but to highlight how different forms of violence affect men and women differently. In the year 2017/18 the police recorded 20,336 cases of murder at the rate of 35.8 per 100,000 people, with an average of 56 people being murdered every day. Murders of men made up 81% of the cases, women 14%, and children 5%; further breakdown shows among children, more boys were murdered than girls. Based on these statistics, the femicide rate was recorded at 15.2 murders per 100,000 women. Further analysis was done on selected samples at the provincial level to determine the proportion of victims and offenders according to age and other factors.

Figure 1. Murder rates reported in SAPS stations in four provinces (2017/18)

Source: Samples of murder docket opened with SAPS (SAPS 2019)



The graph shows that in all four provinces, the proportion of men who were victims of murder was higher than the proportion of women. For example, in Gauteng where I conducted my research, 90% of the murder cases were men and 10% women. According to the SAPS (2019, 42) report, the murders were usually triggered by social factors, such as discontent between individuals, domestic violence and substance abuse, group conflict, criminal activities and acts of revenge or retaliation by communities.

The report also recorded murder cases resulting from mob justice, when community members attacked an individual or a group in trying to deal with the alleged criminals who plague their communities (SAPS 2019, 18). Many types of xenophobic violence, as occurred in September 2019, would have been categorised as mob justice, at least from the perspective of the mob. Mob justice murders, according to the SAPS report, were triggered by high levels of frustration within communities, resulting in community-based violence.

While these statistics show that men also experience gendered violence, such information continues to be overshadowed by partisan research and the problematic masculinities narrative, both of which foreground violence against women. Ratele's (2013) extensive work on homicide in South Africa shows that young black men are six times more likely to become victims of homicide and other forms of violence than women.

Also writing about South Africa, Clowes (2013) finds that 'the ubiquity of men's violence towards themselves and others might be linked to men's attempts to live up to normative expectations of patriarchal masculinity', thus qualifying self-violence as having a gendered dimension. In his discussion on violence against women, Kaufman (1995) identifies a triad of men's violence, which in addition to violence against women includes violence against other men and violence against oneself, making clear that violence can be enacted in different ways and against different people. Kaufman (1995) also emphasises that the three corners of the triad feed into one another and need to be addressed simultaneously. Highlighting men's near-monopoly as perpetrators of violence in South Africa, Vetten and Ratele (2013) among others have argued that regardless of whether violence is perpetrated against women or men, or is self-directed, violence and gender are intimately linked, resulting in a blurring of lines as to what may be qualified as gender-based violence (Abrahams, Jewkes and Matthews 2011). Next, I explore other manifestations of violence against men as my study participants understood them.

'You can't leave women out of the equation': provision woes as gendered violence

In the early days of my fieldwork, I avoided talking about violence, and violence against women specifically, because of the resistance I first received when my prospective participants thought of me as a women's rights activist who was 'against men'. Eventually, when I gained their trust and my participants were more comfortable with me, they began opening up about their experiences with gendered violence. While at times I was tempted to ask about violence based on the neat categories I was used to – emotional, physical, economic, etc. – I resisted.

Specifically, I wanted to understand how they, as cornered men, framed their own experiences and understandings of gendered violence. This approach elicited a wide range of responses, including in relation to structural issues such as employment, finances, nationality and government; personal inclinations such as love for material things; ideas about skin colour and fake statistics, demon possession and witchcraft; experiences with sexuality and sexual performance; and stress. I often found myself having to ask, 'So, how does that relate to gender-based violence?' and my interlocutors always found ways not apparent to me to link such issues back to gendered violence.

From such conversations, I came to appreciate the role of statistics in making different forms of gender based-violence easily knowable. Having defined categories of gender-based violence would have allowed for the production of readily available and easy to deduce information on violence. However, as an anthropologist, I could not help but wonder what local particularities and nuances might have been lost in that process (Gerrets 2015). As Merry (2011, s84) rightly puts it, having predefined indicators or categories falls into the trap of creating 'the phenomenon it is measuring instead of the other way around'. I propose that such predefined categories have cornering effects because they limit the ability to capture the multiple and varied experiences and ideas around violence and gender.

One afternoon during an informal group discussion, we found ourselves speaking about violence against women and the crisis of masculinity. A general consensus among my study participants was that women played a critical role in the so-called crisis that men were experiencing. But rather than calling it a 'crisis of masculinity', they identified it as the 'money crisis'. While several men cited political and economic conditions as the cause of unemployment and poverty, many pointed out that having or wanting a woman complicated their lives as they felt pressured to financially provide for her. 'If you don't give her the money she needs, she will go to the next man. So if you want her, you have to do whatever

you have to, even rob a bank', Khulu explained. 'Women nowadays even have a tendency that they can withhold food [sex] from you, even seeing that your banana [penis] is already up', Uncle Kofi said. Mdu added: 'You are having pressure from all corners: at work, your boss is giving you problems, there is nothing you can do because you do not have papers; at home [Zimbabwe] they tell you your mother is sick or they need school fees; then here, your girlfriend or wife is also putting pressure saying she wants Brazilian hair [artificial hair].... All on one person. You just end up screaming, saying "Aaah! Please give me a break!"'

Not only international migrants voiced this problem. Zondo, a South African man in his late 50s from KwaZulu Natal, shared the same sentiment. He pointed down to show me his old and worn-out brown shoes: 'You see I am working right now, and everything to do with the children, they push it to me. You see I am running short of shoes, but what do I do? I have to look after my family'. In addition to the pressure that men experience in a tough economy, they still have to meet the expectations of being the provider to their women and families. 'We are born not to be supported but to support. We are hurting inside. When will I get a job? Maybe my wife will find somebody else', added Zondo, as he lamented the tough economy, especially for the 'uneducated', as he called himself.

Given the challenges that they were facing, these men wanted women to be more understanding and supportive. They wanted women to understand that the economy was tough and thus they should not demand 'things' or insult men when they failed to meet their expectations of them. In their view, women were not supportive, particularly when they denied them sexual intercourse or left them for other men. They identified such acts as a form of violence against men by women.

Several men pointed out that when a man was unemployed and the woman employed, the relationship would not last because women cannot stand an unemployed man. They also said that a man would feel undermined if a woman was the one bringing the money home. One man likened this situation to a woman 'wearing trousers', implying she had taken on the role of a man. In such scenarios, women were said to lack respect for their partners. Respect, as highlighted in Chapter 4, was an important marker of masculinity. Several men commented that women lacked respect and were changed by living in Johannesburg. Precious, a woman who visited Uncle Kofi's Corner, said: 'Men feel like I don't respect them, but it's not like that. The thing is they can't provide'. Her statement was met with some men nodding and Khulu saying, 'See, what we told you'.

Men claimed that coming to Johannesburg changed women. While men too changed, their change was not seen in a bad light. Upon arrival, men had to assume a tough masculinity that was usually characterised by enduring hardship, which was seen by them as positive, as noted in Chapter 4. However, women were characterised as becoming materialistic, comparing themselves to other women

whose husbands could afford the finer things in life. Bouncer explained that he thought migrant women were different from those who remained home: 'For me, once a woman crosses Limpopo River [the border between South Africa and Zimbabwe], she is no longer marriage material. I call her 'the Trojan horse'. She ceases to be Mariya Musande [Saint/Mother Mary]'. In addition to being materialistic, women were said to assume a tough femininity upon arrival in Johannesburg, one that was not always compatible with marriage. 'Marriage material' was the term that most men used to refer to respectable women. This usually referred to the subservient position that a woman was expected to take if she wanted to get married or remain married. While toughness was a marker of admirable masculinity, it was condemned in women.

Women in Johannesburg were also said to be 'too streetwise'. 'Imagine sleeping next to a woman who has a knife under the pillow.... That's not a woman, that is a crocodile, and [it] can kill you anytime. Or a woman who drinks excessively', Khulu said. 'Especially the moment you get a life policy', added one of the men, to everyone's agreement. In this discussion, men expressed a constant fear of being killed by female partners for material gain. Three men at Uncle Kofi's Corner even professed that because of this fear, they had decided to stop dating in South Africa, and to take their time to find someone who was 'suitable'.

I asked Nomthi, one of the women at Uncle Kofi's Corner present during this informal discussion, what she thought: 'You see me, I am coming from KZN [KwaZulu Natal], and I need a house to live in and food to eat, so you think [that] I am just going [to go] for anyone. No, I need someone who can provide for me, period!' Nomthi confirmed that women, like men, had to do whatever they could to survive the harsh economic conditions of Johannesburg. She added that because she was looking for someone who could provide for her, she had ended up in an abusive relationship: 'This guy thought money could compensate for love. He just was never there emotionally, so eventually I had to leave that marriage and the good life, including my kids'. Responding to such stories, men at Uncle Kofi's had often presented themselves as the opposite of that 'loveless' type of man. 'I may not have money, but I have love', one man announced.

Uncle Kofi and Khulu told me one story at least four times of a woman who rejected Uncle Kofi's proposal because he was a 'poor' shoe mender, choosing instead a man who had a car. Before long, the man was arrested for robbery and the woman started coming back to Uncle Kofi, but he had moved on. As recounted in Chapter 4 another woman who had rejected him came back after she experienced abuse at the hands of another man. Similarly, Zondo, a South African man, told me that 'women these days are rude and evil because of their love for money; she can even leave you for someone with money or a younger man'. In these stories, women, like men, engage in *kukiya kiya* when they come to Johannesburg. Because the men in my study were not used to women taking up

certain spaces or engaging in certain activities, for example, being streetwise or drinking, they felt threatened by this, which, they claimed, triggered violent responses.

Several men at Uncle Kofi's Corner occasionally played super bet, a form of gambling. One day I jokingly asked if I could play. All of them discouraged me, saying that it was not a woman's game because it was addictive and only men could handle it. When I asked why they played it, if it was harmful, one man replied, 'Isn't the family is waiting on me? You women, you don't understand things are hard. So, at times, we walk through crocodile-infested rivers for you', referring to the illegal crossing of the Zimbabwe/South Africa border via the Limpopo River.

When I explicitly asked how they might link such pressures to gender based violence, they told me that the pressures caused them immense trauma. 'Why do you think men kill themselves?' Uncle Kofi asked, to highlight the emotional stress some experienced. Just as Nomthi commented that her ex-husband was not 'there' emotionally, some men felt women did not understand the pressure they were under, and they equated women's demands with emotional abuse.

While my study participants were unequivocal in their analysis, only a few NGOs have started to name certain experiences that men go through as violence or abuse, and specifically as gender-based violence. In November 2017, I attended one of the events held during the 16 Days of Activism on Violence against Women Campaign.

This is a global campaign that runs annually from 25 November to 10 December to raise awareness around gender-based violence, linking it with HIV, which is commemorated on World AIDS Day, 1 December. Several organisations emphasised the pervasiveness of violence against women, including Men and Boys, represented by Timmy, and the Department of Social Development, represented by Mam Virginia (pseudonym). Timmy spoke about the need to 'engage men to challenge harmful gender norms that perpetuate gender-based violence'. Mam Virginia, in contrast, stressed the importance of economically empowering women and girls so that they 'do not need to rely on abusive men'. Doubling as the MC of the event, she also intermittently announced scholarships and vacancies in various government departments. Then, a representative of Men's Forum (pseudonym) stood to speak, and he argued that violence against men was as common as violence against women, listing several items that he identified as violence: '*Obaba* [fathers] also get abused. One in 1,000 men. When [women] say you are useless, you don't buy anything for the kids, [that is abuse]. Jealousy also is abuse, when you suspect that if I am not with you there is something I am doing [wrong]. Denying children to see their father [is also abuse]. If you want to control *mali yababa* [daddy's money]. Telling your husband, "You are gay *wena!*"' He concluded: 'We are in denial. We see these things, but we are

in denial. Why?' His speech was met with much criticism, particularly from women. Many men agreed with him, although a few, like Timmy who identified as a feminist, believed that 'once we start naming men's violence by women, we can easily overshadow women's experience'. At the same time Timmy agreed with some of the points raised by the speaker from Men's Forum, for example, denying children the right to see their father, which he confirmed was a trigger of violence against women but not necessarily violence against men.

On love and the law

Apart from women changing after their migration or because of their relative economic power, many of my participants made statements like 'women in South Africa have too many rights'. According to Zondo:

I am speaking for myself here. I came from the rural areas. I paid lobola for you, I took you to school, then you come back later and you say you are not my type. Because we are in Joburg. What do I do? I kill her.... Women have too many rights. If a woman harasses me and I go to the police, they will just look at me or even laugh, but if you go and report me, they [will] lock me up. Women can even have three boyfriends, knowing there is nothing you can do to them.

Zondo referred to himself as a 'traditional man' with certain expectations of his wife, especially because he had paid bride price for her. He said that 'women's rights' were now overriding his own (customary) rights. During our conversations, he repeatedly mentioned that women's rights and the gender-equality agenda had turned women 'into animals' who could easily hurt men, knowing the law is on their side. Zondo was not alone. Other study participants said that the law and the women's rights movement had turned the tables, making men more vulnerable to violence from women.

Many men condemned gender-based violence, particularly violence against women. During an informal conversation at Uncle Kofi's Corner, I asked about men's views on violence against women. These were some of their responses: 'Who can beat up such beautiful flowers?' 'A real man cannot fight his wife; the one who fights a woman is he who cannot stand up to other men'. 'If women are a weaker vessel, therefore you cannot be beating your woman; she is your partner'. I understood comments like these as condemning violence against women. Reuben, a Zimbabwean man in his late 30s, explicitly condemned violence or any form of abuse against women: 'Men should not enter a marriage with a primitive mind where they think women are subservient. It's not a school where there is a

headmaster or company where there is a boss. You are servants to each other, as the Bible says'. Nickson, a Malawian man, said that 'the idea that men are above women is outdated. We are all human beings. I also train my two daughters to be [economically independent] like men so that they will not rely on men. I believe everyone is equal as long as they respect each other'. Uncle Kofi concurred with this, saying that 'gender equality is easy for me when it is centred on love. When they put it in the constitution and against God's word it doesn't work'. This was seconded by Khulu: 'The problem comes when the women's rights are forcefully imposed on us and when women take advantage of these so-called rights. . . . Especially in this country where men are considered rapists. Imagine gender equality protecting women like Grace Mugabe?'³³

While condemning violence against women and claiming they did not have a problem with certain aspects of gender equality, many were critical of the idea of a constitutional article or law condemning violence. Reuben commented: 'Laws do not change the inside of a man. The more they put laws, the worse the situation. Laws make it seem that I have to do it; if I don't, then there is a penalty. Entering a marriage becomes like entering a company with laws governing it. Government should stop pushing this gender equality and just preach love. Even the love – they should be careful not to turn it into law, because man is always rebellious to the law'. These men explained that the moment a law or policy was introduced, they felt like they were being cornered in that they were not given options. Men felt that their roles or positions were being undermined, and they viewed this as abuse.

While in most cases the men at Uncle Kofi's Corner condemned violence against women, there were times when they would make comments that appeared misogynistic. For example, all of the men in my study denied the existence of marital rape, despite the Sexual Offences Act of 2012 criminalising rape in marriage. Men asked, 'How can you rape a woman who you paid *lobola* for?' 'How do you tell it was rape? What if she agrees and later on refuses in the act? What do you expect me to do. I can't just stop'. They also insisted: 'Be careful, women are now using marital rape to punish us, if you don't buy her Brazilian hair [artificial hair]' and 'What if she seduces me while I am not in the mood? You should also call it rape'. Based on statements such as these, it was evident that the men in this study did not agree with legal punishment of marital rape but rather condemned the law as a product of 'white women teaching [our] women things that are not practical'.

A number of men at Uncle Kofi's also subscribed to the idea that 'all men cheat'. 'Don't get angry over your husband, Linda, if you find him cheating. It does not

³³ Grace Mugabe, the former first lady of Zimbabwe, at this time was in the papers for having beaten a South African girl over allegations that she had wooed Mugabe's sons into mischief. She was given diplomatic immunity.

mean he doesn't love you or he loves the other woman', Uncle Kofi said to me one day, while he laughed. During that same conversation, Nkululeko added: 'Men can have sex without sentiments. However, a woman has to be emotionally involved. Therefore if your woman cheats, know that she is already taken by that other man, because she becomes emotionally involved'. Uncle Kofi continued: 'Here and there, a man needs to test if the pump is working or if he still has the zing that makes women tick'. In this conversation, men professed that it was manly to cheat and because of that it could not be considered as violence or abuse, notwithstanding the pain cheating caused to the other party. Again, the practice was acceptable for men but condemnable for women.

However, while they at times professed and upheld attitudes that appeared to condone violence towards women, only two men in my study admitted to having beaten a woman. Kimo, a young man from DRC, was one. To my utter shock, he said one day, 'If I say to her, "Baby, bring me food", and she doesn't, I will slap her there and then. She should know I am her king and she is my servant'. Before I could engage further with him, the other men at Uncle Kofi's Corner told me not to mind him as he was bluffing. 'He is playing with you. You think a *Kwerekwere*³⁴ like him can slap a South African woman? ...Maybe in his country', one man responded, then going on to tell me that Kimo was married to a South African woman and thus was not at liberty to act violently towards her, despite how he may have felt. I would later learn that this was so because, as a migrant, he relied on her status as a citizen for his papers that allowed him to stay legally in South Africa. The fact that he relied on her for his papers could also have been a source of resentment and a trigger for violence, but because he would not want to lose this benefit, his hands were tied. A similar point was made by Nomthi, a South African woman who frequented Uncle Kofi's Corner. Citing the reason for divorcing her ex- husband from Nigeria, she explained that: 'I realised he only needed papers from me. He used to be so sweet and being there for me.... Shame.... But the moment he got his papers and his business started booming, he became abusive, cheating, drinking. He was now throwing money to me, to replace real love'.

Her response suggests that her husband's behaviour changed when his subject position changed. This correlation helps elucidate why differently positioned migrant men held different views on the use of violence, suggesting that the so-called patriarchal dividend varies not only among men but also in time and space as I will discuss later in this chapter (McKay, Messner, and Sabo 2000, 111). Cornered men may be less likely to use violence due to their subordinate position; they may think that violent behaviour is legitimate, but this does not always translate to perpetrating violence. Similarly, people may speak against

³⁴ Derogatory name for foreigner.

violence, but an eruption of anger may lead them to violence. Some study participants avoided crossing paths with police because they did not have legal papers to stay in the country. This was a deterrent against committing domestic violence because they did not want to risk being deported. Furthermore, it seemed that cornered men were more likely to experience violence not only at the hands of other men but also at the hands of women who held a higher social or economic position. This is perhaps epitomised in the story of one of the men who had worked as a garden boy, whose female boss would solicit sex from him.

When 'perpetrator' becomes victim

Violence against men manifests itself in ways that qualify as gender-based violence. One day in December 2017, I visited Tino's street-corner salon for a hairdo. Sitting with me and Tino was his friend Bouncer, mentioned earlier, a Zimbabwean man in his early 40s. We were deep in conversation about Zimbabwean women in South Africa, when we were joined by Jimalo, another young Zimbabwean man and also Tino's friend. Jimalo's face was swollen and covered in scabs. His left eye was slightly closed and one tooth was missing. Bouncer was quick to ask him what had happened, and Jimalo responded, 'The boys attacked me again when I was coming from SPAR [a grocery store]. They took my food – *sadza* [thick porridge] and meat'. Bouncer burst out in sharp laughter: '*Blaz* [brother], you almost died for a morsel of *sadza*'. Tino interjected, sharing his own experiences of the same boys attacking him twice for food and a third time for his phone. Bouncer continued to laugh hysterically, annoying Jimalo. Taking offense, Jimalo retorted: '*Blaz*, what's wrong with you? You see I almost died and you treat this as a laughing matter'. Bouncer replied, now more soberly: 'But you also – have issues. Why would you pass through the Corridor alone at night?' ('The Corridor' is a spot on one of the streets in the inner city that is known to be dangerous: there are always young boys hanging around there waiting to attack and steal from passersby.)

During my fieldwork, I met more men than women who had experienced violence and, while men were overrepresented in my study sample, I was surprised they experienced violence at such a high frequency. Male-on-male violence proved to be very common, but men rarely shared their experiences. In explaining this, Tanaka, a Zimbabwean PhD student at the university, had this to say: 'Men are easy targets of violence in the streets of Johannesburg, because men do not scream when attacked. Whereas a woman screams when she is attacked and this attracts attention. That men are strong and resilient is a myth. Men just do not report violence. That's why violence against women is more projected [popularised], at the expense of violence against men'.

Tanaka went on to assert that men did not report violence for many other reasons, beyond the fear of risking being deported if they went to the police. One reason pertains to their ideas of how a man should behave: a man should not scream. Another reason was that men do not necessarily identify attacks as violence, at least not as something warranting reporting. If a woman were attacked in the Corridor, it would be seen as violence against women. However, my study participants did not consider such an assault as violence per se: it was just *kubatwa*, to use the emic term meaning 'being attacked'. They excused such behaviour as a strategy to survive in harsh economic conditions. Hence this type of violence was normalised and seen as economically or structurally motivated, rather than gendered. Only if it were a woman, with possible sexual implications, would it become gendered.

Violence against men pertains to violence that emanates from social positioning across economic and gender spectra. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), who discuss hegemony between and within genders, also make a clear distinction between masculine subordination and marginalisation. Subordination refers to 'relations internal to gender order', for example heterosexuality over homosexuality, while marginalisation refers to 'relations resulting from interplay between gender and other social structures such as class or ethnicity', such as white men over black men (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 839). Using this distinction, we might interpret Jimalo's experience of violence as marginalisation rather than subordination. However, following Ratele (2017), I propose looking at such violence as emanating from subordination that comes with their marginalised positions. This is particularly relevant in the inner-city context, where physical strength is as much a marker of masculinity as is heterosexuality, as Tanaka explained: 'When in Joburg you are required to perform a certain type of manhood, that favours physical strength, compared to when I am here [university]':

One day at Uncle Kofi's Corner, a group of men were talking about working within the construction sector and on farms. One man said, 'We [men] are required to do hard labour. Do you think a gay can push a wheelbarrow?' In this context, physical strength and lack thereof were viewed as markers of masculinity and femininity, respectively. While being gay relates to sexuality, my participants understood it as a marker of gender. Physical strength was expressed in many ways, including performing hard labour and getting involved in physical fights, whether attacking or defending. When one's physical strength is undermined, it has implications for one's self-identity as a man and may stimulate fear about other people's perceptions of one's masculinity. This could explain why it took so long for some men to reveal to me that they too had experienced violence and abuse. Ratele (2013, 256) makes a similar remark that, in contexts where marginalised men fail to achieve social expectations of masculinity owing to their historically inscribed subjectivities, the 'body offers one of the opportunities to

exercise masculine dominance'. When bodily strength is thus undermined, masculine identity is injured. Hence, although cornered men may still hold social power over women, their marginalised position place them in a subordinated position within the gender order. Ratele (2016, 10) terms this hegemony in the margins, meaning a space where the supposed power that comes with being male is undermined, resulting in 'powerless' men or 'failed' masculinities.

'It's just [like] any other crime': gendered violence as an outcome of structural inequalities

As already explored, some men felt that Johannesburg was a breeding ground for violence. Bouncer once said to me: 'Before I came here I was a God-fearing man, but right now I can tell you that I do not hesitate to hold a gun. The situation here forces you. You have to defend yourself. Otherwise you are dead'. Bouncer saw violence as one way of *kukiya kiya* in order to survive. Tanaka said the same thing: 'As a migrant in Johannesburg, it is difficult to understand your manhood. Because you are forced to act in a particular way – you are expected to be more aggressive.... Otherwise you will be abused'. Tanaka saw aggression as an expectation placed on (migrant) men, particularly in Johannesburg. Such an expectation can be seen as a form of cornering, leaving one with limited options. If a man is not aggressive, he will suffer abuse at the hands of other men who assert themselves by being violent. Jimalo and Tino had had their fair share of abuse from other men in the Corridor. This was similar in its dynamic to the xenophobic attacks of September 2019, as the WhatsApp group messages revealed a sentiment of 'the foreigners are tired and wanting to stand up for themselves'. Ex-military migrants called on other migrants to support them, as they prepared to retaliate and show South Africans that they were 'better fighters who fought in the revolutions' according to one WhatsApp message. From my observations, such messages or threats by migrants were not really condemned by my study participants because they deemed such violence as necessary. Thus, being violent was a way of expressing manhood and solidarity, both in a negative and a positive way, and so, at least, among my participants, violence was understood as a complex phenomenon, something that was acceptable and unacceptable at the same time.

I have presented how men perceive violence perpetrated against other men and how it is gendered. While their stories can be read as complaints against women, my aim is to show how these are gendered by situating them within larger gender dynamics. Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004, 4) assert that violence cannot be understood solely in terms of its physicality; rather it is the 'social and

cultural dimensions of violence, that give violence its power and meaning'. For example, what did being able to provide for their families mean to these men? What happened if their capacity to do so was undermined? One of my study participants said he would feel like a boy. Another said he was 'troubled inside'.

Structural inequalities, particularly economic ones, are gendered in that they have varying impacts on women and men. Unemployment or lack of money directly undermines men's ability to fulfil their role to provide, marry and start a family. In contrast, an unemployed woman can still get married and have children, and fulfil the normative markers of womanhood. While both migrant women and men find themselves in the same cornered position, owing to the harsh economy of the inner city, the woman has an option of marrying a man who can take care of her, as was the case with Nomthi. A man in a similar position cannot enjoy that benefit. From a place of subordination (as a woman), she can question a man's masculinity when he fails to provide. This indicates that men can simultaneously find themselves in hegemonic positions and subordinated ones.

Intersection of gender-based violence and class among migrants

Subordination was associated with being cornered. I related the story of Nomthi's husband to show that a man may be dependent on a woman if he does not have papers. According to Nomthi, when her husband had no papers and was still cornered, he was 'loving'; when he got his papers and his business began to do well, he became abusive. Thando, a Zimbabwean woman, shared a similar story about Phil, her middle-class Zimbabwean husband who, at the time of my study, was in the process of divorcing Thando. Phil had moved out of their matrimonial home in June 2016, and he visited occasionally to see the children. He had left Thando, stating that he felt unhappy in his marriage. However, when he visited, he would still expect to have sexual intercourse with her, leaving her confused about 'where the relationship was going', as she put it. She learnt through Facebook that Phil was living with another woman, who was also his work colleague. She had tried to ask him about it, as she was afraid she could be exposed to sexually transmitted diseases. He rebuked her and told her to 'mind her own business'.

When she told her family in Zimbabwe, they comforted her, reasoning with her that as long as he was not beating her and he was paying rent for her, she had to be patient. 'All men have extramarital affairs, that's not something to lose your sleep over', they added, making it difficult for Thando to take any action. Furthermore, they advised her not to take any action like going to the police or moving out. They were waiting for Phil to officially visit them to undertake the

*gupuro*³⁵ ceremony or traditional divorce. Over the course of the two months that I spent with Thando, I saw her spirit dim, her self-confidence wane and her weight drop. I could see the fear, anxiety and hopelessness behind her smiles that she always gave generously whenever we met. Knowing my involvement with victims of domestic violence, she asked if I knew of any shelter that she could go to; she could not afford to rent her own place. In her mind, the shelter would provide her with space to break free from Phil and start over. Getting a job would be difficult since she had not worked for a long time. An accountant by qualification, she regretted having listened to Phil when he told her to stay at home and look after the children more than five years ago. That period of time out of work was now stubbornly evident on her CV. Every now and again she would reminisce about working for a big NGO where she had a good salary. 'You know, when we first came to South Africa, Phil was not working and I was working for this NGO', she told me once, in trying to highlight how unfair Phil was to her. Thando made the same correlation as Nomthi did: while her husband was still a cornered migrant man, he had exhibited 'good' behaviour.

I found Phil and Thando's case similar to many other cases of violence that I had heard over the course of my professional life. When Phil was exhibiting controlling behaviour, such as telling Thando to quit her job, she did not perceive this as a form of abuse. During the 'happy' years of their marriage, she did not feel that being made to stay at home was a form of abuse, and she had praised Phil for financially taking care of her and the family. But in retrospect, she had come to understand this as an act of violence. Retrospection plays a key role in constituting certain behaviours as violent or nonviolent. One of the challenges in the prosecution of gender-based-violence cases, particularly when they concern intimate partner violence, is high attrition rates because victims often withdraw cases. While a woman may look back and see a certain behaviour as violent, she can also look back and see something as not violent or abusive. When I was working with victims of gender-based violence, I often heard statements such as 'I overreacted' or 'It was not as bad as I had initially put it across'.

Family involvement also made it difficult for Thando, as it did in other cases involving marriage, family and kinsfolk. While Thando saw her experience as abusive, her family did not see it as such. For a very long time Thando had to negotiate with her family to make them see what she was going through. This shows how violence is socially constructed based on normative gender ideas, and how both violence and gender simultaneously construct, (re)produce and endorse each other. In denying Thando's experiences as violent, her family drew on normative ideas of masculinity and femininity: a 'good' wife is one who is patient; it is a manly thing to cheat because 'all men cheat'. To them, as long as

³⁵ Gupuro is a Shona (Zimbabwean) ceremony when a man visits his in laws and gives them a small amount of money, such as 50c, as a symbol of divorce. It is only after this ceremony that the divorce can be processed through legal channels.

their son-in-law was meeting societal expectations, such as providing for his family and making occasional visits, there was nothing wrong. In addition, they were waiting for the ultimate signal that would prove that their son-in-law did not love their daughter anymore, the giving of *gupuro*. Among Shona people, *gupuro* is equally as important as paying bride price. The only difference was that bride price requires more money than *gupuro*.³⁶ According to customary norms in Zimbabwe and other African states, a family's hands are tied until the husband brings the *gupuro*. This meant that Thando's family could not interfere in the marriage, including taking the children from him. When Thando's husband paid the bride price, he became a man who could now govern his own home (without interference) and was entitled to the children. In the event of a failure to pay bride price, or the payment of damages³⁷ in the case of marriage dissolution, the children would belong to the woman's family. Moore and Himonga (2018, 62) make similar observations of other South African contexts, where a man only has rights to his biological children if he pays bride price or 'damages' (*inhlawulo*).

Family is not the only institution that supports hegemonic masculinity. Thando received a similar response from the police when she decided to seek legal help because Phil had taken their children from her and forbade her from seeing them. When she told the police, they advised her to be grateful that he was taking care of the children. Apparently, she did not qualify as a victim according to the Victim Support Unit standards, despite the fact that according to the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development 1998) her case was one of intimate partner violence, especially emotional violence. The views expressed by the police and Phil's in-laws were influenced by social norms and beliefs entailing predefined ideas of a 'good man' or 'good woman'. Because a man looking after his children can be uncommon in South Africa, where there are high levels of father absenteeism (Morrell et al. 2012), the sentiment that 'one should be grateful' if the father was present was expressed.

I have shared Thando's story to show the intersection of violence and class, as well as the complexity in defining violence. While intimate partner violence is framed as clearly visible and well defined within public health circles and policy documents, my ethnographic evidence shows the difficulties involved in coming to a consensus of what violence is or is not. With Thando's case, I have also shown how violence emanates from a gendered structure that favours men over women. Shona customary norms certainly shaped both Phil's and Thando's practices and

³⁶ Bride price is also tied to the value that is placed on the woman by the husband-to-be. Historically, virgins were more expensive than nonvirgins. In contemporary times, the better educated the woman is, the higher the bride price. Given the value attached to women, one question is: if *gupuro* brings only 50 cents, has the value of the woman diminished?

³⁷ Paying 'damages' occurs when a man pays a certain amount of money to the woman's family as a sign of responsibility and acknowledgement that he impregnated their daughter. This is usually done if the man is not willing to marry the woman or if pregnancy happens before the paying of bride price.

choices. And, despite being miles away, her family could still police her and direct her actions. South African customary law shares similarities with the Zimbabwean customary system, and it did not help Thando; rather it reinforced the ideology that subordinated her. Thando was left with no recourse but to rely on an under-resourced NGO to represent her in court, while Phil, a middle-class business owner, hired a strong legal team to facilitate the divorce and ensure he gained full custody over the children.

In her explanation of structural gender violence, Fu (2015, 52) defines it as 'those forms of violence that are much more insidious and invisible because they are hegemonic, taken for granted and part and parcel of the social norm'. She further identifies migrant women as victims of this form of violence. Several factors come into play in increasing the risk of violence. For example, Thando's legal papers to stay in South Africa were tied to Phil's; Phil had permanent residence but she was on an accompanying spouse permit, limiting her opportunities to get formal work. Even if she were to win custody of her children, she would not be able to look after them since she relied on Phil financially. Because of this, her involvement in her children's lives was dependent on Phil. The psychological impact this had on her cannot be overemphasised. Schepers-Hughes and Bourgois (2004, 1) posit that, apart from its physicality, 'violence also includes assault on the personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value of the victim'. In light of this, I propose looking at Thando's experience as gender-based violence because of its roots in men's domination over women.

I also use Phil's case to refute one of the claims made in the crisis of masculinity discourse, that men are prone to use violence because of frustrations due to economic challenges. Phil's use of violence cannot be read in this regard, rather it appeared to be linked to his powerful position, which was anchored by various institutions. Therefore, in addition to looking at violence as a result of the changes in political and economic landscapes or disruptions that come with migration, it is imperative to also focus on the continuities.

Migration and the patriarchal dividend

Thando's family interpreted Phil's behaviour as being in line with men's 'general behaviour' and concluded that her case was not exceptional. Within the context of customary norms, Phil's behaviour was acceptable. His apparent ability to meet his masculine role, such as paying the bills, was balanced against the abuse that Thando charged him with. That he was cheating was not seen as violence because 'all men cheat'. Men still enjoy certain privileges – what some scholars call a 'patriarchal dividend', meaning 'the ability of men to benefit from their gender class, in regards to certain rewards' – over women (McKay, Messner, and Sabo 2000, 111). When I asked men about violence against women, most

situated violence within a broad spectrum of challenges that men and women face, disqualifying violence against women as deserving any special attention.

In the following chapter, I show how migration disrupts hegemonic masculinity when gender norms and roles are shifted. However, in Phil's case it appears that hegemonic masculinity was not disrupted and his patriarchal dividend was left intact. The fact that Phil could leave Thando, and still come back and demand sex from her, while refusing to be accountable to her, shows the privilege and power that he had over her. This serves to show that, despite being a migrant, he does not fall in the same category as cornered migrants who found themselves level with their female partners after migration. As a middle-class man, he could afford to financially take care of and exert control over two households, while some migrant men were unable to look after themselves. His control even extended to Thando's family, who allowed him to discredit Thando's complaints. One can only wonder whether Thando's family would still stand by Phil if he were in the same situation as some of my unemployed interlocutors.

In explaining the differences and inequalities among men, Messner (1997, 7) in his book *Politics of Masculinities*, argues that while it is true that 'men as a group enjoy institutional privileges, at the expense of women as a group, men share very unequally in these fruits'. As Vetten and Ratele (2013, 10) aptly put it, 'men's violence is shaped within crucibles of inequalities simultaneously gendered, racialised and classed, intersecting with discrimination based on age and sexuality'. Similarly, among my participants, despite agreeing on certain ideas, their practices always differed owing to their different positions in society. Phil's case discredits the assumption within the crisis of masculinity narrative that gendered violence erupts only when men fail to meet other expectations of them, such as being the breadwinner.

Becoming spiritual: the demonisation of violence

On 30 November, 2017, I attended an event organised by Men and Boys, also part of the 16 Days of Activism campaign. This event was attended by representatives of various organisations, including government departments, NGOs and faith-based organisations. Various stakeholders had come together in agreement that gender-based violence was a serious issue in South Africa. But they all had different, at times overlapping, understandings of the meanings, root causes and solutions to violence. It was evident from the deliberations that gender based violence was a complex issue that was proving difficult to tackle due to varied ideological and political factors. One striking presentation was made by Pastor Rapulana, representing a faith-based organisation, who declared:

'We believe abuse is a spirit – a demonic activity. It is the duty of the church to ensure this spirit is chased away and that people live in harmony and peace. We pray for the spirit of humility in women so that they support their partners and encourage them in these tough times'.

The pastor's speech evoked mixed responses from the audience, with some welcoming his remarks, others outright rejecting them, and still others remaining ambivalent. He ended up closing the ceremony with the following prayer:

Lord, we thank you for gathering us here. Your children have failed to address this GBV but Father, there is a name that is above every other name. They have called different departments in the government trying to tackle this but have failed still. We cast out this demon so that your children can live in peace. Bless the NGOs and all those that are trying to address this.

As the pastor spoke, I was taken aback by his prayer, despite being a Christian myself. I was surprised by his framing of gender-based violence as a spiritual matter at a gathering where all parties were supposed to share a commitment to human rights. But it was not the first time I heard someone attributing violence to bad spirits. Several men and women at Uncle Kofi's Corner spoke of demonic forces and how they influenced people to behave violently. However, in my mind, I had come to associate certain spaces with certain types of languages. For example, at religious gatherings the language of spirituality and faith was to be expected, and at a human rights' gathering human rights language was appropriate. That is what I thought.

Framing violence as a spiritual matter is not uncommon in South Africa. For example, in the introductory chapter, I briefly highlighted how Karabo Mokoena's murder, initially labelled as femicide, became understood as a spiritual matter after speculations that she was killed for ritual purposes.³⁸ Many of my study participants talked of 'demon possession' when referring to a perpetrator of violence, be it a man or woman, and church was usually the first port of call after a violent interaction between couples. For this reason, NGOs and government departments realised there was a need to engage faith-based organisations, including churches and traditional leaders. The aim of engaging these two sectors was to educate them so that they would apply a human rights approach and challenge harmful gender norms espoused by religion and tradition. However, the pastor's remarks suggest he had a different understanding of gender-based violence, outside of the human rights framework.

38 <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2018-05-09-watch-her-heart-was-missing-cop-still-believes-karabo-mokoenas-death-a-ritual-murder/>

Many of my study participants held similar sentiments. For example, on 25 November 2017 around 9 pm, I received a WhatsApp message from Nester, one of my female research participants, who was in a relationship with Stevo:

Hi, an hour ago, Stevo threatened me with a knife...again. He pulled the knife, opened it, licked it and started swearing in Shona. He is now sleeping. . . . Maybe when he wakes up he will continue. I am just tired of this drama, I don't want this to end in bloodshed. Even though he is drunk, his behaviour is not normal, you should have seen his expression, very scary. This guy is possessed.

In this text, Nester highlights two factors that may have triggered the violent behaviour: being drunk and being possessed. Nester would eventually leave Stevo after spending more than five years together, saying: 'I tried to drag him to church so that he could be delivered, but he refused, so how does he expect to solve our problems? Now I am tired. If he wants, he can go and get delivered for himself. I am out of his life'. From her statements, it was apparent that she believed that Stevo's abusive or anger problems could be solved through deliverance, a process that entailed praying over someone's body to entice an evil spirit to leave it.

Tafadzwa, a Zimbabwean PhD student based in Johannesburg who was part of this study, had just finalised her divorce from her abusive husband. Similarly, she described him as someone who was 'possessed by some demon': 'Eventually I had to make that decision to leave the abusive marriage. Yes, I believe in prayer and I know God can change anyone, but I pray God will change him for the next person in his life. I am done', she said, as she burst into laughter.

Thando had tried to go to church in search of a solution. Initially she had not told me that her husband had asked for divorce, saying only that he had moved out of the house. I would later learn that he had served her with divorce papers, which she had given to her pastor to pray over. I found this out when she requested that I collect the papers for her from the church as her lawyer urgently needed them. I read her withholding this information from me as arising from shame about what I would think of her. When I asked her about the divorce papers, she said, 'To be honest, one part of me still wants to fight for my marriage but at the moment my main objective is to get my kids back'. She was feeling ashamed that she was still committed to someone who was asking for divorce, and thus had only told the pastor that she wanted her marriage back.

In all three cases, the women had turned to the church hoping for a spiritual intervention leading to the personal transformation of their partners. Burchardt (2009, 348), in his article on the role of faith-based organisations in responding to HIV and AIDS in Cape Town, notes how personal transformation was emphasised within African Christianity, following the rise of Neo-Pentecostalism, and cites Van

Dijk's (2001) observation that personal transformation was sometimes associated with deliverance. However, according to my study participants, deliverance was a continuous process that was never fully attained, thereby resembling the process of becoming.

Besides their spiritual beliefs in a higher power, most of my study participants, particularly women who had experienced violence, had no other recourse. Thando sought help through legal channels but to no avail; her family too was unhelpful. Seeking spiritual help was amplified in scenarios when a person did not have papers, and because they did not have the same rights as citizens or permanent residents they found it difficult to access formal help. Some people ended up without accommodation, and resorted to seeking shelter from churches. In the process they ended up following the doctrine preached by the church in relation to their situation. Such was the case with many of my study participants who frequented Uncle Kofi's Corner. Again, Burchardt (2009) highlights how in both historical and contemporary contexts, religious institutions have played a critical role in providing welfare and health services in many parts of Africa. An additional reason my participants consulted spiritual institutions was the fact that the church hardly ever presented divorce as an option. Rather, religious leaders promised positive change, through counselling and prayer. This seemed like a viable option for women like Thando, who despite challenges in their relationships did not want to divorce or to seek legal help.

In order to elaborate the framings of violence as a form of demonic interference, I refer to scholarship on endogenous conceptualisations of what it means to be a person in some African settings. Gerrets' (2012) study on Malaria in Kilombero Valley in Tanzania shows how the residents attributed the aetiology of the disease to witchcraft and spirits despite their exposure to public health messaging. In his study on masculinities and HIV biomedical intervention, Mfecane (2018) similarly found that his study participants attributed gender-based violence to spiritual factors, which were difficult for interventions to address. He and other scholars argue that this framing of gender-based violence as emanating from spiritual forces speaks to people's ideas of 'what it means to be a person in most African settings' when unseen elements operate with seen elements in the making of an individual (Mfecane 2018, 293; see also Nyamnjoh 2015). Mfecane further argues that interventions that target men fail because of their narrow characterisation of gender-based violence as 'purely a matter of masculine domination'. These arguments, complemented by the statements made by my study participants, fit very well with the framing of masculinities as becoming. Here becoming relates to the immaterial world, as one becomes possessed by spirits and becomes something or someone else. Nyamnjoh (2015, 4) expresses this very well in his discussion of frontier beings, in which he writes that 'spirits assume human forms, and humans can transform themselves into spirits, animals and plants'.

Conclusion

My aim in this chapter was to situate gendered violence among migrants within South African scholarship, which has identified violence as predominantly the result of hegemonic masculinity and hypermasculinity (Jewkes et al. 2015). I have also drawn on the work of scholars who have begun to question this concept as the only lens through which violence can be understood. Existing studies have shown the need to situate violence and masculinity within relevant contexts such as structural issues, political economy and indigenous framings of identities, which include immaterial aspects (Nyamnjoh 2015; Mfecane 2018; Jewkes et al. 2014; Ratele 2017; Dworkin et al. 2015). Ratele (2013) specifically contextualises the concept to theorise the lives of young black African men whose ideas and practices of masculinities expose them to a high risk of both experiencing and perpetrating violence. In similar ways my interlocutors, because of their precarious migration status, were at risk of both experiencing and perpetrating violence. However, because of their lack of requisite papers, they were not at liberty to seek justice via the police for fear of being reported for migration irregularities as well as fear of being thought less of as men.

My study participants accorded various meanings to gender-based violence, from the cultural, political, governmental and economic to the spiritual. I have shown the complexity of the process of defining certain behaviours as violence and highlighted the need to unravel interrelated strands of violence that affect men and women differently. Existing studies, particularly those emanating from public health, have deemed gender-based violence to be knowable, quantifiable and intervenable. But the ethnographic evidence in this chapter shows that gender-based violence differs according to context and time, and has different manifestations, thus making it difficult to fully comprehend. I have drawn on findings from other studies to illustrate how men's dominance over women is institutionalised and practiced at all levels of society (Morrell et al. 2012). In some cases, such violence is naturalised within hegemonic ideologies, particularly when the dominated fail to recognise the power imbalances working against them (Bourgeois 2001), for example condemning cheating in relationships by women but accepting if not encouraging the same practice by men.

Studies have shown that transnational migration can interrupt hegemonic masculinity, resulting in men losing their power over women and other genders (Howson 2013; Mangezvo 2015). While this may be so, Phil's case shows that, even after migration, there may be continuities in certain hegemonic masculinities. Men may also experience forms of violence at the hands of other men. I have attempted to qualify the pressures that men experience in trying to meet the provider role as structural gender-based violence, and though I refer to

this as gender-based, I emphasise that it affects men and women differently. While acknowledging the unreliability of statistics on violence in South Africa, especially given the politics associated with their production, I have shown how crime reports from the police and Stats SA record that men and women are affected differently by violence. For example, higher proportions of men were victims of murder, while higher proportions of women were victims of sexual offences.

In South Africa, several scholars have more recently shown how certain ideas and practices of masculinity not only harm women but men as well, especially among marginalised groups (Ratele and Vetten 2013; Peacock, Khumalo, and Macnab 2004). Despite such evidence, presently the 'gender' in gender-based violence continues to be understood as synonymous with women, excluding men or gender nonconforming individuals as potential survivors of gender-based violence. This understanding draws from the theory of power relations, which portrays men as inherently more powerful than women. However, among anthropologists, power has since been theorised as relational and gender-based violence as all-encompassing to include structural, symbolic and everyday violence (Fu 2015; Scheper- Hughes and Bourgois 2004). In the field, men indicated that their power was undermined by certain factors, for example, the women's rights movement and laws on violence against women. Power or the feeling of being in control was determined by a person's social and financial position in society. Thus, men further down on the hierarchy were bound to experience violence at the hands of other men and women.

This finding is in line with Ratele's notion of hegemony in the margins, whereby marginalised men are simultaneously subordinated and hegemonic. I have shown how both cornered men and women experience vulnerabilities in ways that are distinct and gendered. For example, while becoming streetwise and being able to *(ku)kiya kiya* in a tough economy was commendable in men, this same set of skills was condemned in women, and not only by men but women as well. Unemployment, which could be identified as a form of structural violence especially among migrants who did not have requisite papers, prevented men from fulfilling their expected roles as providers and consequently starting a family. However, women's expected role as mothers was not necessarily affected. In studies of masculinities and gender-based violence, it is imperative to investigate violence in varied and multiple manifestations, attending both to the interconnectedness and the varied meanings that violence assumes in different contexts.