
Women in Peace Processes

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This research seeks to discover the extent to which women in post-conflict Northern Ireland and post-Apartheid South Africa felt safer after formal conflict ended and each country began the process of developing democratic structures to create a sustainable peace. I determined that, of the one hundred women I interviewed in both countries in this study, 98 percent actually felt less safe since The Troubles in Northern Ireland and Apartheid in South Africa ended despite ceasefires, political agreements, and enhanced legislation to protect women.

These women continue to experience gender violence and its effects in three venues. First, paramilitaries in Northern Ireland, gangs in South Africa, and groups of young men in both countries continue to dominate public space and often inflict violence upon women. While paramilitary and gang activity might dominate some communities more than others, all women live under the fear of attacks, harassment, and rape from strangers while navigating public space. Second, women experience physical, verbal, financial, emotional, and sexual abuse within their most intimate relationships. Economic and political insecurities that exist after conflict challenge traditional gender roles, creating conflict in marital and dating relationships. The ensuing conflict and abuse can impact a woman's self-esteem, physical health, and relationships with others. Third, institutions designed to protect women, such as healthcare systems and criminal justice systems, remain ineffective in many instances.

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Women continue to struggle for freedom from gender violence and sexual discrimination because society has not transformed the traditional dichotomies that elevate the masculine and degrade the feminine. Gender binaries become more aggravated when patriarchal institutions facilitate

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animosity, competition, and miscommunication between men and women. Challenging gender violence involves disrupting patriarchies within social structures, politics, and families that make gender violence permissible.

Feminists have long argued that gender violence is rooted in men's attempts to gain power and control over women. Social institutions sanction gender stereotypes that perpetuate traditional gender roles and consolidate male privileges. Traditional gender roles

promote male privileges by setting boundaries regarding women's ability to be in public (such as not allowing women to go out after dark or making it so women must stay home and care for children) and by perpetuating female insecurity in abilities and body image in order to minimize women's self-confidence and self-esteem. Such hierarchies make women more susceptible to certain types of violence, and instill a lack of social recourse due to their gender.

Research on post-conflict societies largely focuses on the increase in crime during the post-conflict phase, neglecting the intersections between street violence and intimidation against women. Some theorists posit that street violence increases because of the inextricable link between militarization, aggression, and violence with combatants' masculine identities during the conflict, which require alternative outlets to displace their aggression. Xaba¹ finds that gang subculture permeates South Africa and that during the political transition, young men lost their traditional roles of fighting for their cause. Many do not see significant improvements to their quality of life and continue to seek social capital by dominating others. Gang activity during the transition comes to involve criminal rather than political activity. Morrell² shows that when violence ends, gender role construction needs to be renegotiated, or else men will act out their traumas, as well as the constructions of violent masculinities they learned during wartime on the women they are closest to.

However, men who desire to utilize violence continue to have

the opportunity to do so through paramilitary and gang activity, which continues to thrive in the aftermath of political conflict. Since such avenues of violence continue to be rife, women do not “need” to be the target of misplaced aggression. Simpson and Kraak argue, “Criminal youth gangs function as a cohesive vehicle for sustaining male identity when others fail as places of belonging.”³ Violence against immigrants is one venue to express such power.⁴ Such violence becomes as much a part of proving to others that the perpetrator can garner power as it is about intimidating and humiliating the victim. In addition, Ni Aolain’s examination of multiple post-conflict societies finds that street crime increases in the aftermath of conflict but that it is difficult to determine whether violence against women has increased. While this study shows that paramilitaries, gangs, and some groups of young men intimidate women and perpetuate violence against them, the majority of perpetrators of domestic violence to the women in this study were not combatants during political conflict.

In terms of domestic violence, while such violence is certainly an epidemic, it is not possible to determine whether it has increased. I agree with Ni Aolain,⁵ who argues that potential increases in domestic violence remain inconclusive. First, perpetrators of gender violence may include former militarized combatants, but they comprise only one segment of the population of perpetrators. While some women from this study identified perpetrators that were former combatants, other identified perpetrators of domestic violence and rape included businessmen, lawyers, college students, and ministers.⁶ Secondly, visits to police stations and domestic violence shelters confirmed that both groups only recently started to keep statistics since the conflict ended, and greater awareness of the problem could lead women to call police or visit shelters.

Some women from this study report that their husbands’ desire for power and control over them did not relate to conditioning towards violence. Rather, upon returning from prison, women, who became the heads of

household and acted as mother and father, were reluctant to return to traditional gender norms that dictated that women submit to their husbands. Such conflict proved destabilizing to their marriages upon the return of their husbands from jail.⁷ Such evidence shows that, while partners used violence,

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Hence, the disruption of traditional gender roles and the desire of men to reassert power and control lies at the root of gender violence. Since each of the peace processes began, men have uncomfortably resituated themselves into a society with changing gender roles and norms. Gender violence persists as a result of male fears that women are making certain gains at their own expense. Politically, women are benefiting through laws and protections. In South Africa, more women occupy seats in government. Women are performing better than men in education and are benefiting from increased work opportunities. It is the sense that men are being victimized by the success of women that is used to justify both political violence and gender violence.

Many men in South Africa and Northern Ireland view the gains made by women as losses for themselves. In this zero-sum worldview, men think that women cannot do well in school unless men do poorly, that women in the workforce are competition for employment, and that women in politics disrupt their power. Men with such a view are unwilling to adjust to the changing nature of the workforce, and subsequently view legislation on women's behalf as a threat.

THE ROOTS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: POLITICAL, EDUCATIONAL, AND ECONOMIC COMPETITION BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND SOUTH AFRICA

Demands for equality for women were a significant part of the peace processes in both South Africa and Northern Ireland. With legislative gains that sought to ensure women's human rights and protect them from gender violence, men felt left behind. This section discusses the way some men in each country perceived that women gained politically, educationally, and economically at their expense and the subsequent hostility that men felt toward women. This disruption of male and female gender roles coupled with male desire to reassert power and control through gender violence.

Ironically, women's gains in each of these venues were limited. Even though statistics do not support the male perception of women surpassing men, understanding such a perception is important for a study of gender-

based violence. First, it illustrates that men feel competitive toward women. Second, it demonstrates that men sense that women have begun to encroach upon their traditional domain. As mentioned in the introduction, a rigid construction of traditional gender roles is a paramount indicator for male violence against women, as the man wants to punish the woman who transgresses her traditional role. Third, the male perception of women surpassing them appears to be accompanied with a sense of entitlement—that men deserve to do well in school, that men deserve jobs over women. The sense of entitlement, when combined with traditional gender-role ideology, creates a climate where abusers, rapists, and perpetrators of sexual harassment can justify their behavior because they believe society tells them that they are victims of women overstepping their boundaries. They believe they need to restore their identity and reclaim their power, and degrading women becomes the vehicle through which they do so.

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South Africa: Political Competition

In South Africa, the government instituted The Termination of Pregnancy Act in 1997 to ensure that women could have safe and legal abortions; The Domestic Violence Act of 1998, arguably the most progressive act of its kind;⁸ The Maintenance Act of 1998 which requires that both parents of a child contribute financially toward that child's financial well-being; and, finally, the Sexual Offenses Act which took effect in 2007.⁹ Despite women's gains during the peace process, however, the African National Congress (ANC) rejected the Women's Bill of Rights, for which a cross-national coalition of women lobbied in the hopes that their pressing concerns would be reflected in the 1998 constitution.¹⁰ In addition, the Office of the Status of Women did not succeed in passing legislation that could improve women's status, such as land reform. This proposed legislation would have redistributed cultivable land to Africans, allowing many impoverished individuals to grow food for economic survival.¹¹

Hassim argues that women relinquished their fight for economic equality in order to gain political equality:

At the outset of the negotiations, the concern with the peaceful transfer of power dominated discussions ... As a consequence, gender concerns that extended beyond former equality, such as demands for the redistribution of power, were marginalized or at best deferred to some future political era.¹²

Women, not wanting to disrupt the transition process, decided to set aside any discussion of more transformative gender concerns. In passing over such an opportunity, they would become complicit in perpetuating social stratification throughout the transition predicated on racial, class, and gender hierarchies.

Although the ANC instituted a 33 percent quota allowing women to constitute one-third of political seats, women continue to face stereotypes that they cannot make good leaders.¹³ Two women who were interviewed experienced sexual harassment in the political realm. One held a high-ranking position and resigned after false allegations negatively affected her blood pressure.¹⁴ The other, who was a devoted activist during the struggle

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..... and survived a house burning and another attempted murder, revealed that the ANC promised her a position in government after the transition. However, the ANC failed to deliver on its promise, and she currently works at a factory in Port Elizabeth.¹⁵ Both

women felt the ANC would have treated them better if they were male. Given that much female activism historically took place through the marginalized Women's League, such sentiments may well be true. Even if women have gained full status within the ANC, some men may have difficulty adjusting to working with women on an equal basis.

Other research participants struggled to balance their political careers with their duties at home. While an increase in the number of women in government was an indicator of improved status, it did not necessarily lead to changes within familial structures. Norma,¹⁶ a middle-class Tswana woman who became mayor of a medium-sized town, felt that her husband's abusiveness began when she graduated from school and that his violence escalated with each promotion.¹⁷ When she began to make more money than he did, life became unbearable and she asked for a divorce. In another case, a middle-aged parliamentarian quoted her husband as saying, "You

may be a politician, but when you step through that gate, you are my wife.”¹⁸ She did not reveal abuse within her home, but she did indicate that she and her husband both subscribe to the ideology that a man should be the head of the household while the wife should be subservient. The husband’s need to reaffirm traditional gender roles indicates a level of insecurity that the wife’s new status could change the hierarchy within the home.

South Africa: Educational Competition

Men are also lashing out because they perceive that women surpass them in education. In the Eastern Cape, South Africa, where this study took place, women outrank men in education at every level of schooling, with 57.4 percent of females to 42.6 percent of males in 2001 who completed school through age eighteen. In addition, in the Eastern Cape only 43.9 percent of males achieved literacy, as compared to 56.1 percent of females.¹⁹ This study did discover, however, that boys performed better in math and physical sciences than did girls.²⁰ A study conducted in KwaZulu Natal found that girls finish primary school more quickly than boys and leave secondary school at roughly the same time as boys.²¹

Such data neglects to illuminate the broader landscape of obstacles the girl-child faces in obtaining an education. First, pregnancy impacts girls’ educational attainment. Even though girls may finish primary school faster than boys, they often take a relatively longer time to finish secondary school due to pregnancy.²² Women who have been pregnant are only half as likely to graduate.²³ In addition, girls still experience social expectations to leave school if the family needs more help to care for children or for the sick, or if the family does not have enough money for school fees for all of the children. Furthermore, in the wake of HIV/AIDS, many girls stay out of school to care for dying parents or to care for younger children after they have lost their parents.²⁴

School has become a hostile and frightening environment for many girls, as they face sexual harassment and assault from male educators and students.²⁵ Males intimidate and degrade girls through unwanted touching, suggestive comments, and jokes. Rapes occur on school grounds, and studies suggest that 30 percent of rapes of young women occur at school.²⁶ In the mid-2000s, schools fired thirty-two teachers for sexual misconduct.²⁷ Pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and sexual harassment and assault indicate that girls may continue to face disadvantages due to their gender.

Young women encounter gender violence that may disrupt their studies. Ntombe, for example, experienced two attempted rapes one in her

dorm room and another on the street in the township where she was from. These experiences compromised her academic success. After being introduced to drugs at university, Yonela became a drug addict and left school. While in the gang, she was subject to gender violence. She feels that dropping out of university delayed her life. Finally, Mandisa continues to face difficulties concentrating on her studies after experiencing an attempted rape from a neighbor. While her mother supports her and helps her to press charges against the neighbor, the perpetrator's wife and many community members stand by him and question Mandisa's promiscuity. With the case pending, she must still walk past his house daily. Her grades have suffered and she struggles to feel hopeful about the future.

Ntombe, Yonela, and Mandisa's stories all show the way gender violence can compromise a young woman's academic success. While recovering from violent experiences, a young woman is not likely to perform as well academically as she otherwise would have. Some young women, like Yonela, drop out of school altogether. The inability to excel academically can further hinder a young woman's self-esteem after already experiencing the degradation of gender violence. Such compromised self-esteem and disrupted academic success can limit a woman's opportunities for personal and professional growth.

South Africa: Economic Competition, "The Wages of a Woman"

In South Africa, the educational attainments of women, discussed above, have not translated into better employment prospects. Women participated in the labor force in 1980 at a rate of 25.8 percent and in 2000 at 31.4 percent, while men participated in employment in 1980 at

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..... a rate of 48 percent and in 2000 at a rate of 52.1 percent.²⁸ While women narrowed the gap in employment, men still constituted the majority of employed persons. Jobs in the community and service sectors constituted the highest percentage of new jobs in the Eastern Cape in 2004, and since such sectors represent traditionally feminine fields, men may fear that new jobs will go to women and will be unwilling to take those jobs themselves.

..... Severe economic stratification and feminization of poverty²⁹ exacerbates women's experience of sexual violence and their vulnerability

toward HIV/AIDS. Economic stratification under capitalism, and racial and ethnic discrimination, also reinforces the dynamic of dominance and subservience. The feminization of poverty places women at risk for becoming involved in sex work. Women frequently develop intimate relationships with their pimps, and in many cases, such relationships become abusive. For example, Joyce experienced intimate partner violence at the hands of her husband who was also her pimp. Joyce describes the way her abuse escalated to a devastating final beating:

It escalated over the years and it started off as a little slap every now and again and got worse. The last ... point I felt I had enough because one day soon I felt I'd end up losing my life. His temper got so bad that I ended up in the ICU—I had broken ribs. I had stitches in my head, I had a broken ankle. My face was beyond recognition. It took me about three months to recover from that beating. That's when I started realizing that my daughter was about three months old, and that I had to stop completely. Either he was going to kill me ... his temper, when he lost it he didn't know what he was doing.³⁰

Joyce blames the intimate partner abuse she experienced on her drug habit, on her tendency to defy her husband's wishes, and on her lack of success in making enough money on a particular night. The abuse she experienced was deeply intertwined with her belief that sex work was the most viable way to earn a living and with her pimp and partner's control over her earnings.

Among women in the township of Motherwell, lack of physical security intersects with lack of economic security. Unlike middle-class South Africans that barricade themselves behind walls and security gates, at least half of the twelve women from Motherwell had toilets outside their house and felt unsafe using them at night. Many women live in houses with broken windows, doors that do not lock, or even lack doors. They therefore fear intruders. If they cannot afford to put walls in one-room houses, then they lack privacy within their homes, which means they have little place to retreat if their husbands demand sex. The proximity of drinking establishments near houses means that crowds of men often harass women as they walk past.

Men may be free to roam the streets when they want, but women need to be more safety conscious. In South Africa, women feel less safe in their communities now than they did during Apartheid. Ntombe discusses the freedom she felt in walking through her community late at night, but she now finds it unsafe to walk alone after 7:00 p.m. unless she has a male escort.³¹ This means that women not only need to limit their access of public space because men might perpetrate violence against them, but women also need to rely on men for safety in those same spaces.

Such masculine assertion of power manifests in groups who perform gender-based violence in front of or alongside each other. Vetten³² found that young men were likely to commit rape in groups in order to bolster their masculinity. Vetten finds, “Victims of crime survey calculated that 12 percent of rapes reported in their study involved two or more perpetrators while a study of 1,401 rapes registered between 1996–1998 at Hillbrow Hospital, Lenasia South Hospital, and Chris Hani Baragwaneth (CHB) Hospital found 27 percent to have involved two or more perpetrators.”³³ Vetten argues, “In acting together, the group develops a common sense of masculinity and power, which may reduce their inhibitions as well as diminish individual feelings of responsibility.”³⁴ Her findings indicate that much violence in South Africa is performative. Multiple perpetrators commit rape together in order to reinforce each one’s standing among other men.

Northern Ireland: Political Competition

In Northern Ireland, individuals from both sides of the political divide may feel they are victims of the political conflict and betrayed by the peace process. Some members of society still intertwine victimization with their identity.³⁵ Men, who already feel victimized through the conflict, become afraid that their status and identity will continue to erode if women make political and economic gains. Such men fear that a gender-corrective approach to policy will hurt them. This is not the goal of a gender-corrective strategy, and while such a strategy does require men to give up the desire to hold power over women, proponents argue that it is in the best inter-

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Women in Northern Ireland made legislative gains after the peace process. The Equality Commission, established under the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 put forth several new measures to improve the status of marginalized groups including women.³⁶ Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act of 1998 is one of the most significant and most controversial pieces of Equality Legislation.³⁷ While such legislation appears to be progressive, interpretation of this section can possibly threaten

the advancement of equality. The legislation assumes no power differential between men and women, and, consequently, those applying the legislation attempt to ensure that men and women receive the same benefits, services, and other recognitions. Interpreters of the act do not recognize differences in need that may require different actions, or that extra services may be needed to create equality. Many women's sector advocates argue that the law is being implemented in a way that can harm women.

One interviewee, for instance, discusses the way the government utilizes Section 75 to interpret domestic violence in a "gender-neutral" manner. Rather than correcting the exclusion of women through improving their access to venues traditionally denied to them, officials have used the legislation to grant men equal access to women's services, even if men do not need the same types of services. Another woman argues that Section 75 fails to account for the multiple identities of women.³⁸ Disabled women are effectively excluded because the government expects to include them in the disability strategy. But they may be marginalized from the disability strategy as well. Similar situations apply to rural women

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and to racial minorities. If the government fails to take an intersectional approach to women's issues, then it may overlook the diversity of women's needs and fail to develop appropriate and inclusive policies.

The United Kingdom's women's sector argues that the national government needs to adopt an integrated strategy to end violence against women. The United Kingdom has launched a domestic violence strategy, a coordinated prostitution strategy, and a sexual violence strategy, but government officials have no budgets, timelines, or plans for monitoring.³⁹ The Northern Irish Government has also developed a domestic violence strategy, but not a coordinated strategy to end violence against women. In grading each governmental department within the whole of the United Kingdom on its efficacy in confronting violence against women, the United Kingdom women's sector gave the government a 2.28 out of ten for 2006,⁴⁰ illustrating that public ministries, including education, finance, and media, fail to accept their role in an integrated strategy to end violence against women.

The departments with the lowest scores show an unwillingness to acknowledge that violence against women is relevant to their Department and therefore recognize no responsibilities in relation to violence against women. We remain extremely disappointed with the Department for Education and Skills; they have a major role to play, particularly with respect to prevention and changing attitudes amongst children and young people.⁴¹

The women's sector recommends that the government develop an integrated strategy to end violence against women utilizing all departments, receive training, initiate extensive education and training programs for the public, and consider violence against women when crafting all governmental policy.⁴²

Northern Ireland: Educational Competition

Men in Northern Ireland believe that women perform better in education, and have become resentful as a result.⁴³ Educational statistics support this perception. In 2007/2008, 74 percent of girls scored A-C on the standardized tests taken in subjects of the students' choosing at age fifteen, as compared to 60 percent of males. After taking exams at age 16 called GCSE's, students can choose to continue schooling and take A-level exams, which determine the universities a student is eligible to attend. Fifty-six percent of girls succeeded in passing at least two A-levels, while only 38 percent of boys did.⁴⁴

Morrissey and Smyth argue that two factors adversely impacted men's participation in education. First, The Troubles were more likely to disrupt

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young men's schooling than that of young women.⁴⁵ Second, at some point during the conflict, young men decided that education was "uncool."⁴⁶ Young men, seeing deprivation, conflict, and systemic failures around them, engaged in anti-social behavior rather than prioritizing school.⁴⁷ Working-class men in Northern Ireland provided for their families through manual labor, such as working in the shipyard or operating machinery in the textile industry or aerospace industries. Men often did not need an education in order to be employed, and, in fact, derived their masculinity through

their brawn rather than their brains. Consequently, men believed education was for “sissies” or “nerds”, and consequently did not see education as a path to achievement. Young women, on the other hand, saw their mothers return to school or get qualifications through women’s centers during the conflict. They hoped that education would lead to advancement. Disparities in educational attainment between men and women appear to relate to perceptions of hegemonic masculinity that invalidate school as relevant to young men’s lives.

Women, then, do not succeed at the expense of men. If young men choose to opt out of education, such a decision is theirs. Room exists in education for all to succeed if they choose to; in order for young men to succeed in school, they must choose to do so. They must believe that doing so will yield better opportunities in the future and that gaining more knowledge can be an end in and of itself. Families, peers, and the youth sector can encourage such choices.

Northern Ireland: Economic Competition

Paradoxically, in Northern Ireland, men who may have under-achieved in education still may be faring better in the workforce than women who achieved in education. For instance, only 22 percent of local councilors in government are women.

In 2008, only 2.3 percent of women, as compared to 7.4 percent of men, were entrepreneurs.⁴⁸ Hence, employment data actually indicates that women’s successes in education did not translate into enormous success in employment.

Economic analysis still remains strikingly absent from many post-conflict conversations in Northern

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Ireland, especially relating to gender. Just as Protestants perceive that Catholics occupy a majority of jobs, men perceive that women occupy more jobs than men. In each case, groups previously in power (Protestants and men) fear that traditionally subordinated groups (Catholics and women) will dominate them. Groups previously in power fear that equality legislation, combined with the demands from the service and part-time labor sectors, will give disadvantaged groups the upper hand. The 2001 census revealed an overall decline in the workforce from 53 percent of the available workforce to 43.7 percent. The data shows a small decline in labor activity

among Protestants and a small increase in wage labor among Catholics, but it still indicates that Protestants outrank Catholics in the workforce.⁴⁹

An understanding of women's economic status is an elusive topic of study, not least due to the amount of time women spend in unpaid labor raising children, caring for elderly or disabled family members, and as housewives. While Belfast City Council cites far fewer unemployed women than men, the numbers are misleading because women are often not counted as unemployed persons. The definition of unemployed is limited to people who "were available to start work in the two weeks following their interview and had either looked for work in the four weeks prior to the interview or were waiting to start a job they had already obtained."⁵⁰ Women who were unable to make childcare arrangements to start a job within two weeks, women who did not look for jobs due to caring responsibilities at home, or who lacked marketable skills or transport to look for work would not be considered as unemployed.

Records also indicate, however, that many more women are not seeking employment outside the household because they care for children, the disabled, and the elderly in the home. Forty-five percent of women in this research sample were caregivers, as compared to less than 10 percent of males.⁵¹ Therefore, even though women actively seeking employment may be more likely to find jobs, many women experience constraints from participating within the labor force. The government considers such women "economically inactive" rather than "unemployed."

Moreover, those women who are employed occupy more part-time and flexible employment, which counts them as employed, but does not grant them the same status as many full-time employees. Women are disproportionately represented in part-time labor, as they constitute 83 percent of all part-time employees and 38 percent of all women who work are part-time laborers.⁵²

Similarly, the gendered division of labor that creates sex-segregated industries is a factor of concern, since traditionally female-dominated professions are often paid less. Almost all women work in the service sector, healthcare and education, with very few women occupying manufacturing positions. Secretaries are predominantly women, and women comprise only 35 percent of all senior managers in Northern Ireland.⁵³ Wage disparities continue to exist. Full-time women workers receive an average of £385.5 while males receive £438.8 per week. Finally, many women gravitate toward non-profit work, which remains under-recognized and under-paid, and has done little to promote women's economic security. While these sectors contribute to policy formulation, they continue to rely on devoted individuals who work for low pay.

FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Women in South Africa and Northern Ireland experience gender-based violence in three major ways. First, they experience violence and intimidation in public through gang, paramilitary, and youth activity. Research participants admitted that they feared rape, sexual violence, and attacks from men more so in the mid-2000s than they did during the conflict. Safety, then, is gendered, as women experience safety very differently than men. Theorist Liz Kelly argues, “The obvious fact that women have been excluded from structural power has been ignored, as is the fact that individual violent men, as well as men as a group may benefit, at least in the short-term, from their use of violence.”⁵⁴ Men do not fear walking alone at night the way women do, nor do they fear pregnancy or depend on women for protection the way women often depend on men. Sadly, the very men that may be “protecting” women—acquaintances, intimate partners, and family members—may be the ones committing the sexual violence. Rape becomes political because language that promotes rape gives men social power. Marcus argues that rape is designed to feminize women and make men more masculine.⁵⁵ Society is not doomed to re-enact the same script repeatedly, and individuals can write a script that empowers women and makes them less vulnerable to rape.

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Male Intimidation of Women within Communities: South Africa

In South Africa, gangs act similar to the paramilitary organizations of Northern Ireland, as they, too, control territory. One young woman described the way she became involved with a gang after being introduced into drugs in university. She dropped out of university and became one of the most dangerous members of her gang. She eventually realized that gang life harmed her prospects for a future and she tried to leave the gang multiple times. They kidnapped her, raped her, and tortured her to keep her involved with the gang. She attempted to get help from the police to no avail. She eventually escaped to a women’s shelter and felt confident that the gang would leave her alone.⁵⁶

Two women became involved with gangs through sex work. They initially hoped sex work would help them to achieve financial independence, but they became addicted to drugs in order to survive the trauma of sex work. Eventually, they became indebted to gang members, who not only controlled where they worked and who their clients were, but they also controlled the two women through physical violence.⁵⁷

The presence of men drinking and loitering on the streets intimidates women, as they become subject of harassment and violent attacks. For instance, the lack of safe transport at various times of the day put a woman at risk. Next, the prevalence of outdoor *shebeens*, public drinking establishments, mean that women may have to navigate around drunk men when

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they are walking home. Many women interviewed encountered harassment from drunk men, and two women experienced attempted rape from drunk men in their neighborhoods. A young woman named Thandiwe discussed the way boys chased her and her friends as they walked home. One friend did not make it home safely and was raped.⁵⁸

Lupe described the way a drunk man leaving a *shebeen* tried to force her home with him, but she was able to fight him off.⁵⁹ Fatima discussed the fear of rape: "You try to be careful but in the back of your mind you think that eventually you are going to be a statistic."⁶⁰

Male Intimidation of Women within Communities: Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, young men and paramilitary members often intimidate women. Of women interviewed, 88 percent endured paramilitary or gang intimidation and 40 percent experienced youth intimidation. Women in both countries felt young men intimidated and harassed them within their communities. With limited resources for young people, young men often spend their leisure time on street corners.⁶¹ In Northern Ireland, Kate discussed the way young men enjoyed playing with firecrackers and at times put them through letterboxes. "Someone's idea of fun is another person's sense of danger."⁶² Helen discusses how she censors where she goes now more than during The Troubles due to fear of crowds of young men. "During The Troubles, you just feared the stray bullet ... now I cannot go running at night because of the crowds of boys on my street."⁶³ Women felt even more threatened due to the greater likelihood that the young

men they encountered would be on drugs because they believed drugs had increased in their community.⁶⁴

Paramilitary membership may be decreasing in some areas, but it is actually increasing in other communities. Loyalist women, in particular, discussed the way increased activity threatened them. Some loyalist women described the way paramilitaries silenced them through fear and intimidation. In the late 1990s, a local paramilitary firebombed a Belfast women's center in retaliation for inviting an Irish dignitary.⁶⁵ Another woman discussed her anger at arriving to work with the remnants of a punishment beating—tar, feathers, and blood—from the night before visible from her window. Other colleagues refused to clean the mess for fear of reprisal from the paramilitaries who wanted the mess to remain as a symbol to others not to cross the group. She describes the way she was so fed up that she cleaned up the mess, even though such an action put her in danger.⁶⁶ An immigrant woman, who was given public housing in a paramilitary hotspot, described her fear of attack as a woman and an ethnic minority living in a politically volatile neighborhood.⁶⁷ She described the way her fear compels her to stay in the house most days. Hence, many women remain concerned about how to navigate public space in the presence of paramilitaries. As one community worker said, "In the past paramilitaries were another spoke that threatened women. Now they still are."⁶⁸ Her observation indicates that fear of paramilitaries is not just a part of the past; it is a concern for many women in the present.

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Abuse by Intimate Partners in South Africa and Northern Ireland

Violence perpetrated by intimate partners is a major reason that women did not feel safe. In both countries, women believed their intimate partners perpetuated domestic violence in order to assert traditional gender roles that would maintain power and control over women. Their experiences of men controlling their work, finances, and whereabouts are so similar that they warrant simultaneous discussion.

In Northern Ireland, men who believe in traditional gendered divisions of labor tend to have difficulty adapting. For instance, Megan, a Northern Irish Protestant, worked in a factory making suits while her boyfriend struggled to find a job. Alienated from his lack of employment prospects, he began to spend his days gambling. Eventually, he would steal

her money and gamble it away.⁶⁹ Some partners refused to let their partner work, kept them from leaving the house, or kept close tabs on them when they did leave the house.⁷⁰ Men who espouse controlling behavior dictate whether or not women can work outside the home. Lydia, a middle-aged Catholic from Northern Ireland describes the traditional roles within their marriage, "I had to mind the kids. That was my job, not his job."⁷¹ Nadia, an Eastern European who sought political asylum in Northern Ireland, is married to a man from her country of origin who only permits her to stay at home and look after their child. Staying mostly indoors makes it difficult for her to learn English and to become friends with other women. Since the rest of her family is still in her country of origin, she feels lonely and depressed.⁷²

In South Africa, men limited women's job prospects. Nkosazana owns a sewing machine and sold clothes that she made, but her husband forced her to stop. "He said he cannot take the wages of a woman. She must stay at home and look after the children. I was not a full worker because he did not want me to go and work."⁷³ Mandy, a mixed-race South African woman, observed that her partner dropped out of family life once he lost his job. He began spending his days drinking and would only come home when he wanted food or sex. He often started arguments, broke household items, and beat her. Mpho and Carol, both workers at South African voluntary organizations describe family dynamics they observe in the transition where women find jobs and make more money than their partners. In such instances, partners who adhere more stringently to conventional gender-role norms become resentful towards their partner for being more successful. They direct their hostility toward their partner rather than the economic system that fails to provide them with viable jobs and begin to degrade and abuse their partners in order to restore their sense of power over women.⁷⁴

In each country, women struggled with decisions of staying in abusive relationships or leaving them. Some women did not find it prudent to leave controlling and abusive relationships. Lydia from Northern Ireland described the way her husband demands that she not work outside the home and insists that she care for their children. She stays in the relationship because she feels too afraid to not have a man in her life and she has no money to divorce him. She has gained some self-confidence through her involvement in a local women's center, but reports that her increased confidence is angering her husband, adding, "He's fed up with me finding my own voice."⁷⁵ Consequently, she repeatedly needs to negotiate her independence with his desire to constrain her into a more traditional role.

While she takes steps to build her support network and her self-esteem, she lacks the financial security to leave the relationship. Margaret, a republican from Northern Ireland, said that when her husband, who had been jailed for paramilitary involvement, returned from prison, he was not content with his wife's unwillingness to return to her wifely role: "While he was in prison, I was the mother and father. I was not going to take a back seat to him again."⁷⁶ She stays in her marriage, but attempts to renegotiate the terms of her own relationship.

Other women divorced their husbands despite financial insecurity to attain freedom from abusive husbands. Prudence, from a township in South Africa, divorced her abusive husband: "When taking the decision to divorce, you say, 'I've had enough. I want to be free in my house.' Now, I do not have money for food, but I would rather worry about that and be free in my house."⁷⁷ Myrna, too, divorced her husband after she became more confident and less submissive when she joined a local women's center: "Before, I kept quiet and let him go about his own business. I say things now I would not have said before. I will not be a doormat anymore."⁷⁸ The center helped her realize that she did not need to live under his rules.

Women feared for their children as well as themselves. Eighty percent of women who revealed they were abused expressed concern for children, fearing that abusers would harm them, or fearing the effects of what children witnessed. Women felt saddened when abusers turned children against them, and feared they would lose custody if they left an abusive relationship. They also felt self-blame if children grew up to be in abusive relationships.

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Women suffered from physical and mental torture, the effects of which lasted well beyond the abuse. Eighty-eight of the one hundred women interviewed blamed themselves for their perpetrator's actions. Twenty-six percent of the women experienced chronic physical health problems as a result of gender violence. They had high blood pressure, diabetes, HIV, and physical disabilities. At one extreme, Nadine remained confined to a wheelchair for the rest of her life. Thirty-eight percent of women experienced PTSD, depression, or anxiety. Eighteen percent abused drugs or alcohol at some point in their lives. Thirty-two percent divorced, and 42 percent lived in poverty.

Hence, women in both countries experienced violence from intimate partners, most of whom were not combatants during political conflict. Violence emanated from male desire to assert their power through traditional gender roles. Women negotiated this violence in different ways, and whether they left the abusive relationship depended on finances, severity of the abuse, children, and support systems available to them. Many of the women suffered long-term physical and emotional consequences from the violence, and the extent to which they recovered was related to their ability to receive support.

Structural Violence in South Africa and Northern Ireland

The third way in which women experienced violence was through societal structures that prevented them from receiving support, safety, and justice. All of the 10 percent of individuals who attempted to kill themselves did so after they sought help from doctors, voluntary agencies, and

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the legal system and did not get what they needed. Structural violence perpetrated by communities who minimize violence against women reinforces the notion that women continue to lack equality with men, and that society does not take gender violence seriously.

In both South Africa and Northern Ireland, women felt the criminal justice system failed to bring them security. Many Northern Irish women saw some improvements in the police response and arrest, but women in some working class areas, both loyalist and republican, felt the police continued to fail to police their neighborhoods. Women felt that, even when police made arrests, cases were often left unprosecuted. Most importantly, when perpetrators were arrested, prosecuted, and then convicted in court, the sentences were so light that it made little difference to their lives. One woman said, "When the judge slapped that gavel, he handed me a life sentence and not my rapist."⁷⁹ She was one of thirteen women and children raped, and the judge sentenced the man to one month per person, for a total of thirteen months. In South Africa, women believed that, although a new police force was put in place, police still did not respond to calls regarding domestic violence or rape, stating that "when you call them, they

do not come.”⁸⁰ Women in townships and rural areas found it hard to testify because they lacked the resources to get to the city.⁸¹ In addition, women also felt that courts handed light sentences. A majority of convictions involved non-custodial sentences—sentences that involved community service or counseling rather than jail time.⁸² Not putting convicted perpetrators in prison compromises the safety of women, as they are more likely to face reprisal from their abuser. Therefore, the criminal justice system failed to provide justice to women.

In Northern Ireland, the healthcare system let down many women. They felt that General Practitioners (GPs) provided women sedatives to help them cope but did not guide them to resources that could help them change their situations.⁸³ Many women reported becoming addicted to such medications and having an extra hurdle of drug abuse to overcome. One woman reported that she was raped while visiting a GP to report abuse.⁸⁴ Housing executive and child protective services also have placed obstacles for women.⁸⁵ Not only did women face difficulty receiving public housing, in some cases housing executive officials accused women of making up the abuse in order to get public housing faster.

In South Africa, women faced obstacles accessing services. Many women could not access healthcare facilities or medicines. Prudence, who acquired HIV from her husband, said, “You go to the clinic for medicines and they are finished. You have to go back the next day, and they still may not be there.”⁸⁶ Government efforts to build housing and promote development in the townships failed to consider women’s safety. Services for women who have been raped or abused are available in cities, but not easily accessible to women living in
townships and rural areas. Women from two townships described how they do not have money for transport to go to courts to get protection orders or follow through with charges they filed.⁸⁷ Shelters and counseling services are also largely available in cities, but they are inaccessible and unknown to many women. The degree to which women who did access such services actually received help varied, as many services were personality-driven, had limited spaces, and were closed over holidays. Some women who did not receive help after seeking it attempted suicide.⁸⁸

Such structural violence indicates that gender violence is perpetuated not only by individual perpetrators, but also by a society that continues to place obstacles in front of women who survive such atrocities.

Consequently, in both countries, women experience obstacles from service providers, government agencies, the criminal justice system, and the healthcare system when attempting to heal from violence or make a new life for themselves after surviving an abusive relationship. Such systemic obstacles show a lack of sensitivity towards the dynamics of gender violence amongst institutional policies and amongst individuals who work for such institutions. Such structural violence indicates that gender violence is perpetuated not only by individual perpetrators, but also by a society that continues to place obstacles in front of women who survive such atrocities.

CONCLUSION

This study recommends cross-national research on best practices to transform hegemonic masculinity; that is, identification of the normative standards within a society of acceptable behavior for men. Such research should continue to listen to women from a variety of backgrounds in order to more thoroughly identify the similarities and differences between different social groupings, especially those of different sexualities, different classes, and in both urban and rural settings. This research illustrated

When women construct and voice their narratives of violence, they are also less likely to experience long term effects of trauma. Listening to women can facilitate changes to social structures that are more responsive to the needs of women who experience violence as well as help prevent women from experiencing violence.

..... general themes among women, and began to distinguish which were more pronounced amongst different races and classes. It showed the way one's place in society did play an important role in the way women's experiences manifested themselves, even if their concerns were similar to each other. It also begins to show that disability is a relevant feature in the way a woman experiences gender violence, and one which should be examined further.

..... and democratic society capable of treating all citizens fairly.”⁸⁹ In addition, gathering women's stories helps women feel their experiences are valid. Such affirmation can help women feel empowered. When women construct and voice their narratives of violence, they are also less likely to

experience long term effects of trauma. Listening to women can facilitate changes to social structures that are more responsive to the needs of women who experience violence as well as help prevent women from experiencing violence. Finally, we must challenge the belief of some men in each country that gender equality is a zero-sum game. Society must find ways to devise institutions that challenge gender roles and, hence, disrupt patriarchal norms to establish more equitable gender relations.*f*

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