

# **“You’re On The Floor, I’m The Roof And I Will Cover You’’: Social Representations Of Intimate Partner Violence In Two Cape Town Communities**

TARYN J. VAN NIEKERK

FLORETTA A. BOONZAIER

University of Cape Town

The act of intimate partner violence (IPV) is a social event, shaped by a complex web of social conditions and intersections. Consequently, a theory that is sensitive to the socio-historical context in which IPV occurs is necessary, as well as recognition that a man who perpetrates violence against a woman partner, does so in relationship to other men and women, to a family, community and society. In this paper, we employ the theory of social representations to gain new insight into this multifaceted phenomenon, and to unearth representations of partner violence against women amongst male perpetrators and their social networks in Cape Town, South Africa. Individual interviews were conducted with eleven men, recruited from a men’s programme at an NGO, and focus group discussions were conducted with the men’s social networks. The findings shed light on the polarity of human thought in defining gender-appropriate performances for men and women, whilst excluding the ‘other’ who fails to conform to such ‘gendered laws’. Gender role norms were represented as static categories confining men to violent performances of

*Correspondence should be addressed to: Taryn J. van Niekerk, Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, 7700 email: [taryn.vanniekerk@uct.ac.za](mailto:taryn.vanniekerk@uct.ac.za)*

masculinity, and women to subordinate positions in relation to men. The findings also demonstrated the extent to which men's representations about violence were influenced by an audience of networks and community representations that make violence permissible. The value of studying the community, relationships and individuals as inseparable spheres is a key outcome of this paper, and the contextualised analysis of power and oppression is shown to open possibilities for social change.

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***“Violence in South Africa is nothing new.”***

This was the opening sentence for a recent Mail & Guardian<sup>1</sup> blog post, in which Dziejanski (2014, para. 1) spoke to the common, and sometimes, daily occurrence of violence in South Africa<sup>2</sup>, and its devastating effects that continue to pervade all corners of the country. While this report was framed in response to the internationally renowned case in which athlete Oscar Pistorius stood trial for shooting and killing his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, other recent events have also contributed to our understanding that interpersonal violence is commonplace in South Africa. In the small Western Cape town of Bredasdorp, the brutal gang rape and murder of Anene Booysen, that occurred in February 2013, just a few days before the Pistorius shooting, provides a further example. Although the backgrounds and contexts to each of these events differ, they point to the same concerns and questions around why “violence is so gendered” (p. 4), and in particular, why violence has become a problem of men (Vetten & Ratele, 2013).

Men's violence against women in the South African context has been associated with socio-cultural and structural factors such as widespread poverty, gendered and racialised inequalities, a long history of violence as a result of colonialism and apartheid, alongside the almost normative use of violence as a means of conflict resolution (Gopal & Chetty, 2006;

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<sup>1</sup> The Mail & Guardian was launched in 1994 as Africa's first online newspaper, and one of the first online newspapers in the world. This newspaper, which also appears in print, offers content that is in-depth and insightful and has landed numerous awards for their online work.

<sup>2</sup> In 1999, the female homicide rate in South Africa was six times the global average, with half of these murders being perpetrated by women's intimate male partners (Seedat et al., 2009). Over the next decade, the prevalence of violence against women did not decline substantially. Although the prevalence of intimate femicide decreased from 8.8/100 000 in 1999 to 5.6/100 000 in 2009, the prevalence did not decline as considerably as non-intimate homicides, resulting in intimate femicide being the leading cause of female homicide (Abrahams et al., 2013). Kaminer and colleagues (2008) also reported that based upon data from the South African Stress and Health (SASH) survey, domestic violence was the most common form of violence experienced by women. Furthermore in 2011, over half (51.3%) the women in the Gauteng province reported experiencing some form of violence by an intimate partner over their lifetime (Machisa, Jewkes, Lowe Morna & Rama, 2011).

Jewkes & Morrell, 2010; Morrell, 2001), and individual-psychological factors such as alcohol and substance abuse (Abrahams, Jewkes, Laubscher & Hoffman, 2006; Jewkes, 2002; Jewkes, Levin & Penn-Kekana, 2002; Matzopoulos, Myers, Bowman & Mathews, 2008; Sawyer-Kurian, Wechsberg & Luseno, 2009; Strebel et al., 2006). Critical social psychological theories, in particular discursive approaches, have made significant contributions in terms of understanding the reproduction of masculine identities, and men's accounts of partner violence in heterosexual relationships, locally and internationally (Adams, Towns & Gavey, 1995; Boonzaier, 2008; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Ideas about the multiple ways in which a successful, dominant masculinity may be performed through violence against women have been highlighted as a significant contributing factor for the perpetration of violence (Abrahams et al., 2006; Dunkle et al., 2004; Hoosen & Collins, 2004; Jewkes, 2002; Jewkes et al., 2002; Jewkes & Morrell, 2010; Sawyer-Kurian et al., 2009; Strebel et al., 2006). In South Africa, a growing scholarship has also problematised the stated connections between love, discipline and violence in intimate relationships (Lau & Stevens, 2012; Sathiparsad, 2008; Wood & Jewkes, 2001); traditional gender role norms that maintain oppressive systems (Shefer et al., 2008); and the interplay between masculinity, emotions and homicide (Ratele, 2013). Some studies have also shown that men's talk about their own violence serves a performative function (LeCouteur & Oxlad, 2011), allowing men to configure a certain self-presentation that may be considered socially desirable (Adams et al., 1995; Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004; Hearn, 1998a; Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

Although some work has begun to argue that gender-based violence is a relational and social event (Boonzaier, 2008; Matzopoulos et al., 2008), the social psychological literature pays too little attention to this relational nature of men's violence against women. Men's violence has, to a large degree, been individualised, contributing to a dearth of studies that explore violent men's behaviour in the context of their relationships, communities and within larger society. As Ratele (2013) argues, "Violence demands to be accounted for at structural, symbolic and subjective levels" (p. 251), particularly because masculinities do not exist within "social and cultural vacuums" (p. 133), but they are constructed and maintained within various institutional contexts such as the family, the workplace, schools, factories and in the media (Hearn & Kimmel, 2007).

As a product of its social context, violence against women should be researched in a range of contexts. However, most research that focuses on the explanations of violence against women has been from North America, which may have led to generalising what is known about intimate partner violence from a 'westernised' viewpoint (Jewkes, 2002). As Farr (1991, as cited in Liu, 2006) highlighted, individualism is a cultural product in Anglo-Saxon societies; the theoretical models and explanations of violence developed in western cultures are mainly shaped by the individual perspective alone (Liu, 2006) while in contexts such as South Africa, the individual and social are closely linked to each other. The interlinking of the individual and social is important for understanding the contribution that southern perspectives might bring to thinking about gender-based violence. Specifically, we are suggesting that thinking through violence against women as a product of its cultural context (i.e., southern contexts) is central to broadening understandings of why and how it happens.

The problem of violence against women in South Africa requires a social psychology that is sensitive and relevant to its unique features and patterns, ranging from investigations into the individual sphere to broader arenas such as social and cultural norms. A theory that might serve to attend to this limitation and marry these investigations simultaneously is that of social representations theory; which understands the individual and social to be inseparable in understanding social experience (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005). Social representations theory requires that the researcher pays attention to the intra-personal, interpersonal, positional and ideological systems in any analysis and interpretation of meaning-making (Doise, 1986). Some theorists have regarded social representations theory as a crucial challenge to dominant US social psychology, which has been depicted as individualistic, behaviourist and experimentally driven (Jahoda, 1988; Parker, 1987). Studies involving social representations have generally been carried out in Southern European countries, such as France and Italy, as well as in the United Kingdom, Latin America, Australia and more recently, Asia (Flick, 1995; Marková, 2008). Social representations research has only started emerging in South Africa within the context of HIV/AIDS research (Joffe, 1995; Winskell, Obyerodhyambo & Stephenson, 2011) and briefly in media and communications research on constructions of masculinity, femininity and sexuality (Lewis & Orderson, 2012). As a social psychological theory, it is necessary that social representations theory be applied broadly across various social arenas and that it be developed as a critical tool with which to expose and address social oppressions and inequalities that pervade

and infiltrate social research, and become a tool for social change (Howarth, 2006; Voelklein & Howarth, 2005). This paper draws from data collected for a larger research project on social representations of intimate partner violence amongst men and their social networks to gain greater insight into the complexities of intimate partner violence, and to investigate this social problem within its unique socio-cultural context and within and amongst social groups where meaning-making may occur.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study employed a qualitative methodology and drew upon two different methods of data collection. Individual interviews were conducted with men who had perpetrated abuse against a woman partner(s) and focus group discussions were held with men's social networks who live in the same communities as the men. The data were drawn from two historically marginalised communities in Cape Town, South Africa.

### **Individual Interviews**

This paper presents an analysis of 22 individual interviews conducted with 11 men who perpetrated violence against a woman partner(s). The men were recruited from men's programmes at NGOs in the two communities studied. Men were eligible to participate if they were above 18 years of age. The men's ages ranged from 19 to 57 years, with a mean age of 37 years, and all participants described themselves as Coloured<sup>3</sup>. Five participants reported that they were unemployed at the time of the interviews, while two worked in the informal sector, and the remainder were employed full-time, predominantly in unskilled or low-skilled employment. The majority of men reported being in long-term relationships.

Each of the men participated in two interviews to ensure depth and quality of the data collected, and for the interviewer to gain some rapport with the men. The two interviews did not

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<sup>3</sup> 'Coloured' is a racial term created during Apartheid that referred to people of mixed race origin and grouped particular South African citizens according to their skin 'colour' (Hendricks, 2001; Lewis, 2001). The Coloured group was often perceived of as 'between' the black and white racial divides (Adhikari, 2005; Erasmus, 2001; Lewis, 2001). Since the abolition of Apartheid, this term is still in use; however it is predominantly conceived of as a social construction that serves particular political purposes (Grunebaum & Robins, 2001; Hendricks, 2001). Some find the term controversial and offensive and use it in inverted commas or prefixed by 'so-called', while others use it with pride (Erasmus & Pieterse, 1999; Grunebaum & Robins, 2001).

vary in type; however, aspects that were not covered or that needed clarification in the first, were addressed in the second interview. The episodic interview was employed, which is a specific type of semi-structured, narrative interview (See Flick, 2000, 2004). This kind of interview draws on the strengths of the more focused semi-structured interview and the narrative interview (Flick, 2009). The episodic interview was considered important because of the study's interest in the subjective experiences of violence perpetration and its linkages to the situational, process-oriented, and abstract aspects of violence as a social representation.

The interviews were complimented by sensory (in particular, visual) methods as a way of accessing in-depth accounts. Although creative interviewing is not necessarily a feature of episodic interviewing, Mason and Davies (2009) make a case for the use of sensory methodology in qualitative research to understand the complex ways in which senses are intermingled with peoples' experiences and ways of knowing. Moscovici (2001) explained that people make sense of unfamiliar phenomena through linking them to existing ideas and images, and in order to elicit some of these cognitive images, participants were asked to list or draw some of the things and people that they associate with violence, and to tell more about it.

### **Focus Groups**

Seven focus groups were conducted with members of men's social networks<sup>4</sup>, such as their peers, neighbours, and kin residing in their communities. The aim of the group discussions were to hear the social networks' views about violence against women, rather than to generate stories about the individual male participants. A newspaper article about intimate partner violence was used as a vignette to stimulate the group discussion. Taking a semi-structured approach, the following topics were covered: why men commit violence against women; how violence affects their communities; how they would define the act of abuse, where violence normally takes place and how community members respond to violence perpetration.

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<sup>4</sup> Men's social networks were recruited by drawing on aspects of the recently developed respondent driven sampling (RDS) method, which is used to recruit hidden, difficult to access, high-risk and socially networked populations (Abdul-Quader, Heckathorn, Sabin & Saidel, 2006; Heckathorn, 1997; Townsend et al., 2010). Respondent driven sampling begins with a certain number of initial contacts called 'seeds' who are eligible for the study (Heckathorn, 1997). In the case of this study, the men who were interviewed were the 'seeds'. Once the 'seeds' were interviewed they became recruiters for their social network members. On average, the men each referred between two and 11 network members.

A total of forty five social network members were recruited and participated in seven focus group discussions, all of whom identified as Coloured. The focus groups were predominantly mixed, combining both men and women, with the exception of one group which was composed of only women network members. The aim of the focus groups was not to have a representative sample of men and women, but rather to ensure that sufficient network members attended, since it was their views on violence against women that were key for the study. Participants' ages ranged between 20 and 72 years with a mean age of 36 years. Twenty-five women and twenty men comprised the focus group sample. More than 60 percent of the participants reported that they were unemployed at the time of their participation, while just over a quarter of the sample reported being employed, either full-time, part-time or in the informal sector. The remainder of the participants described themselves as pensioners, housewives or 'other'. In terms of education, four out of five (or 37 out of 45) participants reported not having completed their high school education.

### **Analysis Of Data**

In our exploration of the intra-personal, interpersonal, positional and ideological systems of men's violence against women, we drew upon aspects of social representations theory and the narrative approach, which share very similar intellectual traditions. These two approaches worked collectively to show that constructions of IPV in individuals' stories could be seen as part of the common stories contained in a particular culture or society (László, 1997). We interpret the findings through an intersectional lens, taking the intersections of race, class and gender seriously, as well as taking a critical perspective of power and systems of domination (Sokoloff & DuPont, 2005). These additional investigations into power and resistance are crucially important particularly as this is an aspect of SRT that requires development (Howarth, 2006; Voelklein & Howarth, 2005). Furthermore, the idea of violence as a product of power and control, and as a patriarchal means of disciplining women partners has been documented in psychological literature, particularly amongst feminist scholars (Bograd, 1990; Brown & Hendricks, 1998; Campbell, 1992; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Dutton, 1995; Felson, 2002; Shefer, 2004; Wood, 2004). It follows that an analysis of power is essential in research on men's perpetration of violence against women, thereby making it necessary to attend to the shortcomings of SRT, by showing how it may be further developed along these lines.

We employed Stenner's (1993) thematic decomposition analysis to allow us to integrate these varied and dynamic perspectives. Stenner's (1993) approach attempts to discover patterns such as themes, narratives and discourses within the data, while also reflecting upon subject positions made available to or taken up by a person (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ussher & Mooney-Somers, 2000). Inherent in the thematic decomposition approach is the idea that meaning is largely shaped and co-constructed in the social sphere (Stenner, 1993), with an emphasis upon language, power, and subjectivity.

### **ANTINOMIES AND 'GENDER LAWS': SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE**

This paper explores the social representations of intimate partner violence that emerge in men and their social networks' narratives. According to Hoijer (2011) there are a number of devices that may emerge in the anchoring of an object, such as naming, emotional anchoring, thematic anchoring, metaphoric anchoring and anchoring via basic antinomies. Although these anchoring manoeuvres have been shown to be present in the media (Hoijer, 2011), this study found that they too surfaced in individuals' narratives of violence against women. We show how the anchoring of violence against women takes place through the mechanism of antinomies. A series of theorists have claimed that making sense of phenomena is driven by the ability to negate and think in oppositions, dualisms, dichotomies and antinomies (e.g., life/death, us/them, good/bad, freedom/oppression) (Billig, 1993; Douglas, 1970; Marková, 2003). Such antinomies may too become a source of conflict in some socio-historical contexts, and it is these moments that are of primary interest in this study.

We found, that as participants spoke about the meanings associated with intimate partner violence against women, a core narrative of respectability emerged. Within the core narratives of respectability, social representations of "the villain/non-man" and "the good/bad woman" were found to surface. Respectability was largely understood by participants as being a fixed category, denying the possibility of fluidity, with expectations that men and women ought to behave as respectable, moral and 'good' characters.

#### **The Respected Villain/Disreputable Non-man**



In current day South Africa, the perpetration of violence has continued to be defined by many forms of masculinity. In the existing study, the avoidance of vulnerability and weakness was key for the men in their performance of masculinity, and it served a significant purpose for earning respectability in their communities. Subjectivities of brave men, both emotionally and physically, were marked in men's narratives of violence. Learning how to survive in conditions where men are expected to be emotionally brave and physically strong was argued to leave no space for vulnerabilities and speaking about their feelings – something that was instead constructed as non-respectable performance. Lloyd narrated how men might be 'othered' and disrespected if they chose to oppose and exclude themselves from this social representation that encourages a violent masculinity:

**Lloyd:** You know Taryn, that is almost like, in our community, if you're not a violent person, people don't respect you. They don't respect you.

**Taryn (interviewer):** So respect is earned through violence?

**Lloyd:** Through violence yes, because I had chosen to lead my life like this, there's another very painful (thing)<sup>5</sup> word, name they call me and it's *moffie*. But the (thing) is man, I'm, to be a gentleman is almost like people don't understand the meaning of the word gentleman.

**Taryn:** Do they call you moffie?

**Lloyd:** Yes. (**T:** Okay.) But the thing is I've changed it and they call me (Wolf) now. [Laughs]<sup>6</sup> But the thing is I had to get violent to change it. You see, you understand what I've done here.

**Taryn:** So if you want to be a 'real' man -

**Lloyd:** It must be violent.

[...]<sup>7</sup>

**Taryn:** And the women too?

**Lloyd:** Ya.

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<sup>5</sup> Speech in rounded brackets denotes translation from Afrikaans to English.

<sup>6</sup> Speech in square brackets serves to add more context to the participant's narrative, predominantly by describing non-verbal responses.

<sup>7</sup> Square brackets with ellipsis signals that text has been deleted in order to keep the meaning of the extract clear.

‘Moffie’ is a derogatory Afrikaans term for a homosexual or a feminine masculinity and in Lloyd’s experience of interacting in a gentlemanly nature, his performance of masculinity was considered to be outside the category of respected masculinity; a form of masculinity that Lloyd reasoned to be less esteemed amongst residents of his community. By signalling that women are too accomplices in accusing him of being a ‘moffie’, Lloyd positions women in his narrative of heterosexual masculinity and violence as endorsing a violent, rather than chivalrous performance of masculinity. Previous research has found that the subject positioning of the moffie is one to be avoided by men, lest they face moral condemnation. In studies by Gibson and Lindegaard (2007) and Ratele and colleagues (2007) it was found that school boys from townships in South Africa constructed a feminine masculinity (also referred to as “moffie”, p. 139) as more offensive to the boys than gay sexuality. If township boys refused to use violence or stay indoors they were more easily ‘feminised’. In middle-class white schools, however, ‘soft’ boys did not find it as challenging to convince others of their masculinity and could still perform a ‘soft’ masculinity while escaping a feminine label (Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007). These findings lend more insight into the contextual significance of gender performances and the way in which they may be perceived differently across settings.

The interaction with Lloyd in this extract should also be unpacked. The interviewer’s approach to interviewing might have been best described as an attempt to nurture mutual respect, empathy and non-judgment, approaches similarly noted by Boonzaier (2014) and Hydén (2014). In addition, I (TVN) might have also been *invested* in hearing a particular story about change by the ‘seeds’ (Boonzaier, 2014). One such example was when I interjected in the above extract with, “So if you want to be a ‘real’ man”, in which this discourse of ‘real’ manhood was reinforced, rather than challenged. Boonzaier (2014) also argued that it is critical to explore how the interview context shapes what is being said. Within the interview, Lloyd might also have been performing ‘chivalry’ in wanting to be perceived as a gentleman, while also positioning me within a traditional feminine discourse, appealing to my perceived gentle and nurturing ‘side’ as a woman (Boonzaier, 2014; Presser, 2005). As a 26 year-old woman at the time of the interview (I was almost 10 years Lloyd’s junior), my positioning as a naïve female researcher may have also been prominent. The interview encounter may indeed have acted as an opportunity for Lloyd to fulfil his agenda – to justify his violence and position it as an obligation rather than a choice.

In further reflecting on Lloyd's extract above, gaining and maintaining respect was central to his narrative and despite his preference for being a "gentleman" he found that being violent earned him more respect, and the less "painful" nickname of Wolf. In Whitehead's (2005, p. 416) investigation into two ideologies of masculinity, namely the hero and villain, it was said that:

The individual man may prove his manhood equally well from the Villain position as from the Hero position, albeit at the potential cost of social sanctions [...] the Villain reflects, rather than negates the Hero, and vice versa.

The hero (and even the villain) is described as being brave, courageous and willing to fight. According to Whitehead's description of the hero subjectivity, the opposite of the hero or villain masculinity would be the non-man – the one who is defined as the coward and who fails to position himself as a villain or hero (Whitehead, 2005). In being anchored within an antimonie of the villain versus the 'moffie', the men participants in this study explained that there are limited ways of achieving a respectable form of masculinity, thereby emphasising the polarisation of one respectable form of masculinity against the disreputable 'moffie'. In referring to Lloyd's narration, fear of being ridiculed seemed to have triggered him to move towards the 'villain' category where he could position himself as a violent man who demands authority and as an individual who is more accepted and respected in his community.

It should also be noted that through male participants' constructions of women as preferring violent men, they implicated women in the violence being perpetrated against them. The data obtained from men's social networks shed some light on women's positionings of violent men, and whether this kind of masculinity is favoured above other forms. Men's social networks constitute another crucial audience, some of which represented the violent masculinity as a respected version of manhood. Similarly men's networks also reported that there are penalties for betraying the community's expectations for men to perform respectable duties (i.e. physical disciplining). Upon asking men's social networks whether women are also abusive towards men, debates surrounding constructions of femininity and masculinity came into view:

**Theresa:** There is women who hits the men. You know you get some uh, men who's like, retarded, like say like retarded, the women just walk over them. If the woman say, "Adam

just go wash the, the dishes or children” or whatever, then they do it. So then it’s then sometimes the women hits then he don’t hit her back, you know.

**Duncan:** But men say, the police don’t do nothing to (for) them [...]

**Theresa:** This is a woman’s world [women participants laughing].

**Duncan:** That guy did sleep so, so the woman did burn him with warm fish oil over his face. Because he say all the time his woman abusing him there because he’s coming late from work and all that.

**Faheema:** So maybe he’s a two-timer.

The group discussion above might be best described as a lively and good-humoured debate between two women and one man participant. The tone of the extract comes across as more light-hearted than serious, with some playful banter, teasing (“it’s a woman’s world”) and laughter. The presence of this laughter leaves an imprint in the discussion, since it has the potential to reinforce the extent to which men are marginalised and made to appear on the periphery in a “woman’s world”. Simply put, Billig (2005) claimed that laughter can have the effect of dividing or uniting people. The cheer and happiness born out of ridiculing or rebelling authority may be considered to unify people, while using ridicule to reinforce social order may have the opposite effect of creating sadness. If Billig’s (2005) interpretation of ridicule was to be applied in the above debate, it could be argued that the pleasure that Theresa and Faheema took in their ridicule of ‘feminised’ men may be the result of them having challenged the patriarchal social order.

Theresa also attempted to evidence how women can ‘turn the tables’ and dominate men in an abusive fashion. She did this by depicting the abused man as the humiliated character in her narration of the feminised man. This kind of negativity and wariness of non-violent men was documented in a study by Hearn (1998b) in which male peers expected men to be violent, and an absence of this violence generated suspicion about their commitment to masculine ideals. Name-calling and references to mental impairment (“retarded”) by the female participants in the above focus group were the common reactions to men who not only performed feminine tasks but also listened to women’s orders. While men who committed ‘gendered treason’ in Hearn’s (1998b) sample may have bred suspicion amongst their networks, in this study, some participants resorted to ridicule and mockery in which non-violent men were represented as weak and cowardly because they did not reciprocate violence and “hit her back”.

In summary, the men reported how the performance of men's violence perpetration is encouraged and respected in their communities, by men and by some women. Emphasis was placed upon positioning women in narratives as preferring men who are stronger and tougher rather than men who seem 'feminine' yet heterosexual, such as the 'moffie'. Men's constructions here could have been a way for them to show that violence perpetration against women is widely accepted and tolerated, even by women who may be victims of violence themselves. This socio-cultural representation was echoed in the discussions with men's social networks, and traditional gender norms and 'respectability' appeared to be kept in line by audiences of social networks and other community members.

### **The Good/Bad Woman**

The previous representation highlighted the way in which men were argued to be monitored in their performances of respected masculine behaviours. For decades, however, girls and women continue to be largely the objects of public scrutiny, having their respectability censored under the watchful gaze of men and other women (Huggins, 2000; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Lindegaard & Henriksen, 2009; Salo, 2003; Thomas, 2006). In both apartheid and contemporary South Africa the notion of respectability has deep-seated meaning for the intersection of multiple identities, such as race, class, gender and sexuality. Black<sup>8</sup> women have been disparaged for lacking respectability; yet, white South African women have been represented as naturally inhabiting respectability (Lindegaard & Henriksen, 2009). For the sake of being regarded as respectable and moral, it has been contended that black women were compelled into refashioning their behaviours in order to meet a white 'standard' of respectability (Lindegaard & Henriksen, 2009). Beyond the classed and racialised features of respectability, this ideological force was also a patriarchal tool for men to govern women's behaviour (Thomas, 2006).

The loss of women's respectability in the communities studied was found to be problematised by men's social networks in this study, particularly by the male social network members. In a focus group discussion, the 'new' and modern generation of girls were represented as 'rough', with barely any respectable attributes:

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<sup>8</sup> We are using the term 'black' here as a unifying term to refer to all oppressed groups.

**James:** Ya, there was a new generation [...] (today's young women, you get very few women that know what, by the name 'woman' – today's youth. Understand? I always say, I ask a girl the other day), that is a feminine – (you know 'street talk', that's all. Understand? You do not see the youth that can see anymore, you can see, no, the women that come this way, no man – it's not a man, it's a 'thing' that comes this way. Do you understand? The women have lost that, that side. You see, very often a woman can be how pretty, if her mouth is dirty, then it basically puts me off and so on [...] the women's mouths of today are dirty and is sometimes worse than the men sometimes in this) area.

**Clive:** They must take their part in life back as a woman [...] (What he means is a woman that walks there, she does not have a feminine side, she does not have her worth) [...] The way they look at her, the way they talk to men if a man talks with them. Perhaps say I ask her, "sorry girl, will you give a light (*for a cigarette*) quickly?". "Why should I give you a light? You can buy your own light. Why should I give you a light? I am not your -" that attitude.

James and Clive's co-constructed narrative of the indecent girl made reference to the respectability women and young girls are losing due to their "dirty mouths" and bad attitudes towards men. They reasoned that women ought to project their "feminine" side if they want to be respected by an audience of men. When these 'gender laws' are broken, men no longer find the 'non-feminine' women attractive because they are argued to lose their "worth". In Bourdieu's (2001) analogy of women and men's bodies and what he terms, *noble origins of self-presentation* (p. 17), he argued that honourable performances by a man may require him to "face up to others and look them in the eye" (p. 17), using the "upper, male part of the body – facing up, confronting [...] looking at another man in the face, in the eyes" (p. 17). On the other hand, some women ought to avoid the public gaze "they walk in public with eyes directed at the ground" (p. 17) and their speech which is often confined to utterances such as "I don't know", is in opposition to men's speech which is encouraged to be succinct and firm (Bourdieu, 2001). In a similar light, for James above, girls and women are considered 'rough' and indecent if these self-presentations of composure and etiquette are absent: "You see, very often a woman can be how pretty, if her mouth is dirty, then it basically puts me off".

Much of this discontent with ‘bad’ girls and women was reported to be ‘rectified’ through men's violence against women. In returning to the individual interviews conducted with the men - although the men did not necessarily use the term ‘discipline’ or ‘dominate’ to depict their own violence against women partners, they anchored these terms via metaphorical descriptions (see Hoijer, 2011) that visually demonstrated the power they wanted to hold as men, and the submission they expected of women partners. Ray, for example, drew upon a religious cultural narrative to show how women were treated within the Rastafarian group, through the deployment of metaphors of royalty:

**Taryn:** You also were verbally abusive and emotionally abusive towards your wife during the time that you were a Rasta. I mean, was that okay for, for your religion, as a Rasta?

**Ray:** You know it was actually not, you know, but just to let her understand that I am the king. And she is the queen. If she let me be the king, she will be the queen. And I will treat her like a queen. Do you understand my point? That is how they say it. That was their saying you know.

Ray provided a metaphorical depiction of a powerful couple signalling that if a woman is ‘good’, respectable and fulfils her duty to treat a man as a king - one who has authority, and is the ruler - the woman would then be rewarded and treated respectfully, as a queen or a lady. Ray was the only participant in this study's sample who drew upon this particular metaphor. Adams and colleagues (1995) found that men who had perpetrated violence consistently used metaphors as rhetorical devices in their speech. They found that metaphors of anger, for example, imply that there is a limit to which a man could be expected to endure pressure or stress, which in turn allowed men perpetrators to reduce or avoid responsibility for their violent eruptions (Adams et al., 1995). Adams and colleagues' (1995) examination of the metaphor in violent men's talk shows the importance of paying attention to more subtle speech devices.

In Ray's extract, he also demonstrated the way in which his personal narrative is part of a larger religious cultural narrative by saying “that is how they say it. That was their saying”. By making me aware of the collective treatment of women in the Rastafarian religion, Ray succeeded in taking the focus off his individual violence and instead made Rastafarians, as a

group, liable for the use of this metaphor. This emphasis upon the shared knowledge and collective representations may have been used strategically for a number of men in the sample, in order to lay emphasis upon collective responsibility for the men's violence against women. Another metaphor – unique to this study's sample – that served to anchor the idea of men's superiority and power over women, was that of the man as the roof and the women as the floor:

**John:** I tried to build a reputation for myself so um every girl – I got a lot of girlfriends but they never last because...I abuse a lot of girls, young girls, I beat a lot of them. I brought up with it man. You are under my feet, I'm on top of you. You're on the floor, I'm the roof and I will cover you [...] (Most of the women think that it should happen like that. It's almost like a natural thing), a natural thing. A man hit a woman when she is wrong, just like that.

And in a different interview:

**Donny:** (But from the women even, the women of today also, they believe they are the floor [...] “The man is the roof, I am the floor”.)

John and Donny drew upon a floor-roof metaphor, in which men are positioned as the “roof”, naturally superior to women, while women are likened to the “floor”, something that men can walk all over. Similarly to the king-queen metaphor, the floor-roof metaphorical anchoring furthermore underscores the nature of human thought to negate and conceptualise in terms of polarities. Three of the men, across the communities studied, drew upon the floor-roof metaphor. In fact, the men even add that women in their communities share the belief that they are the ‘floor’, implying that women consent to being disrespected and abused. Ambiguous ‘talk’ allows a violent man to rhetorically position himself in consensual agreement with his woman partner and Adams and colleagues (1995) termed this device, reference ambiguity. In the existing study, by speaking ambiguously about victims of abuse as accepting men's domination, it blurs the victim/perpetrator categories and the victim is no longer constructed as helpless and passive but rather as being in agreement with this social representation of disciplining the ‘bad’ woman. As John reported, “A man hit a woman when she is wrong” in order to punish her from straying from respectable notions of being a ‘good’ woman.



In sum, violence perpetration against women appeared to be metaphorically anchored as a form of ‘discipline’ and reinforced through community representations of the king-queen and the floor-roof metaphors; findings which are unique to this study’s sample. Some male social network members were found to demonise and ‘rectify’ the ‘bad’ women who appeared to be ‘betraying’ the respectable code of conduct expected of women. The implications of these findings will be discussed in the next section.

## **THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

A series of representations of intimate partner violence – emerging from the two marginalised Cape Town communities studied – were found to be anchored in basic antinomies, in which the performance of gender is limited and confined to one particular ideal that draws respectability. In employing social representations theory, we were able to unravel the extent to which intimate partner violence is a social event, deeply influenced by an ‘audience’ of peers, kin and community members, and their ideas of what a man and women ought to be and do. Another discovery was that partner violence and traditional gender norms are anchored so as to unambiguously construct the stigmatised ‘other’ who wanders from respected-man and obedient-woman categories. As noted by Hoijer (2011), “Stereotypical naming is doubly fraudulent” (p. 8) because characteristics of the ‘other’ are made to appear naturalized rather than as socially constructed. The more repetitively the stereotypical namings are used, the more such ideas become entrenched as fixed versions of reality (Hoijer, 2011). These rigid polarisations of gendered performance may then be problematic for men in the communities studied who seek to end violence, and reconstruct a healthy and peaceful masculinity.

Violence was also noted to be gendered as a masculinised performance, thereby making it permissible for ‘masculinised’ and dominating women to physically discipline ‘feminised’ men for straying from the expected and respected masculine performance. Often this masculinised performance by women has been found to resonate with a discourse of women empowerment (as Theresa said: “it’s a woman’s world”), thereby implying that women who abuse men are acting as empowered women. Such justifications for partner violence do not underscore the wrongness of interpersonal violence, but rather still makes violence a permissible ‘masculinised’ performance, regardless of who the performer is.

Despite the advancements made in social, legal and political institutions to foster gender equality and empowerment in the ‘new’ South Africa (Gqola, 2007), the findings presented in this paper show how ‘good’ women are still subject to much surveillance. Indeed, notions of respectability in South Africa might also reinforce symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2001; Lindegaard & Henriksen, 2009) and militarism (Cock, 1991), irrevocably sanctioning violence against women. Cock (1991) attributed this disciplining of women to an ‘ideology of militarism’ and problematised the way in which a so-called ‘new’ South Africa has failed to undo this ideology. In finding expression in academia, business, language, culture and entertainment; an ideology of militarism emerges within the larger discourse of discipline that “helps to mask other repressive systems” (Gqola, 2007, p. 114). This discourse of discipline may too resonate with symbolic violence which has been defined by Bourdieu (2001) as a form of power that is exerted upon bodies “as if by magic, without any physical constraint” (p. 38). The use of language became a form of symbolic violence amongst the participants in this study, used to discipline women into subordination and men into violent masculinities. The findings from this paper confirm that the application of social representations theory in South Africa – a post-colonial context shaped by continuing gendered and racialised inequalities, and structural oppressions – requires an approach that attends to hidden forms of power and matrices of domination. Subsequently, this paper paired social representations theory with a critical analysis of power to intensify the analysis of gendered, racialised, sexualised inequalities. In echoing Lau and Steven’s (2012) suggestion, given the ongoing pervasiveness of gender-based violence in post-apartheid South Africa, interventions may need to reconnect with collective traumas of apartheid as well as the multiple cultural discourses that serve to justify violence.

The difference between using and mentioning a representation also requires critical analysis. Some individuals might be aware of significant social representations in their encounters and practices, yet may not act “within a representational field as our accepted construction of reality” (Howarth, 2006, p. 68). The men participants in this study would frequently reference representations of respectable, violent men which served to, in some ways, justify their choices to perpetrate violence. However, although the men recognised and described these representations, it did not necessarily follow that they too professed its truth. The men participants often adopted a ‘now and then’ structure to their narratives thereby indicating at one time, such representations may have been a truth for them, but as non-violent men these

representations no longer hold true. Although these representations might have informed the way in which the men experienced their realities at one time, they may too find ways to resist such representations, opening possibilities for social change.

Despite the theory's origin in Europe, it has great value for a nation in which the individual is intrinsically linked to the social. Its application has the potential to instigate social change if emphasis is placed upon not only overt forms of power, but also those that are hidden and serve to repress individuals and groups. In particular the connections between language, power and representations require sustained attention. Howarth (2006) contended that "representations have to be seen as alive and dynamic [...] They are not static templates that we pull out of our cognitive schemas" (p. 68). Indeed, unravelling notions of power and equality are integral in acting as a catalyst for social change and to challenge men's violence toward women partners.

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TARYN VAN NIEKERK obtained her PhD in psychology at the University of Cape Town. Her doctoral work explores the social representations of intimate partner violence against women, amongst men, their social networks and within the media in the South African context. Her research interests include feminist poststructuralist theories of gender, the social construction of masculinities particularly within the South African context, and intimate partner violence against women, recognized as occurring within specific historical, social contexts, and social networks.

FLORETTA BOONZAIER is Associate Professor in psychology at the University of Cape Town. Her primary research areas include work on the social psychological aspects of gender-based violence, the intersections of raced, classed and gendered subjectivities, and a focus on the social construction of femininities and masculinities. She has published on intimate partner

violence against women locally and internationally, and is co-editor of *The Gender of Psychology* (2006), published by UCT Press and co-author of *South African Women Living with HIV: Global Lessons from Local Voices*, published by Indiana University Press. Email:

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