

9-20-2016

# Negotiating Globalization from Below: Social Entrepreneurship, Neoliberalism, and the Making of the New South African Subject

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**DOI:** 10.25148/etd.FIDC001185

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

NEGOTIATING GLOBALIZATION FROM BELOW: SOCIAL  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP, NEOLIBERALISM, AND THE MAKING OF THE NEW  
SOUTH AFRICAN SUBJECT

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

GLOBAL & SOCIOCULTURAL STUDIES

by

Océane Jasor

2016

To: Dean John F. Stack  
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This dissertation, written by Océane Jasor, and entitled Negotiating Globalization from Below: Social Entrepreneurship, Neoliberalism, and the Making of the New South African Subject, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Vrushali Patil, Major Professor

Date of Defense: September 20, 2016

The dissertation of Océane Jasor is approved.

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Dean John F. Stack  
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

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Andrés G. Gil  
Vice President for Research and Economic Development  
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2016

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my mother, Chantal Confiant, and my son, Kanyon A. Roberts, who have been an indispensable source of love and support.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The process of writing this dissertation has been long, arduous, introspective and at times, extremely emotional. Overcoming its challenges - from getting access to organizations and participants to time and financial pressures – is certainly not done singlehandedly. I wish to acknowledge the unwavering support of my family, friends, colleagues, and professors, who have all contributed to helping me achieve my educational goals. Their constant faith in my abilities, guidance, and encouragements have kept me focused on, and enthusiastic about, writing and making contributions to my field of study.

I would like to extend my deep-felt gratitude to my advisor and chair, Dr. Vrushali Patil, who has not only been an academic role-model to me, but also a conscientious, punctual, and critical reviewer and editor of my work. Dr. Patil has played a fundamental role in helping me grow as a writer and a critical feminist scholar. I am also beholden to Dr. Percy Hintzen for mentoring me and challenging me to sharpen my theoretical arguments and contributions. Dr. Hintzen’s extensive and important feedback undeniably improved the quality of this dissertation. I also want to extend my appreciation to Dr. Benjamin Smith for guiding me through the maze of doctoral requirements and deadlines. He has been a force of encouragement throughout the dissertation process. I am thankful to Dr. Cem Karayalcin for his support and commitment.

In addition to my supportive committee, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Caroline Faria at the University of Texas for her role in helping me develop my writing skills, her support and feedback. I would also like to thank Dr. Patricia Price at Guttman College for

her support as I was applying to the Ph.D. program in Global Sociocultural Studies (GSS) at FIU. I want to recognize the support of Dr. Mamyrah Prosper, Dr. Jason Ritchie, Billy Hall, Valerie Canon, Janna Lafferty, Dr. Brittany Kiessling, Kimiko Tanita, Dominic Lomando, and Joannette Brookes.

Another set of people, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, has played a major role in my journey. I want to profusely thank the directors and staff of Sonke Gender Justice for allowing me free access to the organization and its programs. Without their dedication in helping me set up interviews and focus groups throughout South Africa, I would not have been able to write this dissertation. I am indebted to each member of the staff, especially Tanya Charles, Mzwakhe Khumalo, Mbuyiselo Botha, and Bonginkosi Mthembu, for sharing their knowledge and life-stories with me. Zoya Mabuto, Elizabeth Egbe, and Obed Mathabe and many extraordinary beings have not only made my time in South Africa life-changing, they have also allowed me to conduct my research by caring for my son when I was traveling.

I also want to acknowledge the generous financial support I have received from Florida International University. I am especially grateful for the Doctoral Evidence Acquisition Grant and the Dissertation Year Fellowship from the University Graduate School. The Morris and Anita Broad Research Fellowship Award has also been invaluable in helping me cover some of my in-country travels in South Africa. Finally, I am appreciative of GSS for granting me some travel funds. Without FIU's support, my research and subsequent writing could not have been undertaken.

Finally, the indefatigable love and support from my family and friends deserve my wholehearted praise. I wish to thank my mother, Chantal Confiant, for all the

logistical support she provided. Her optimism and love encouraged me to go on. I also extend my gratitude to Antonio F. Roberts, Beatrice Brown, Nina Vilus, Tessa Whitaker, Obed Mathabe, Yannick Thams, Max Jasor and Sonny Jasor who have been my support team, always cheering me on through this grueling process. I want to especially acknowledge my son, Kanyon Roberts, who despite his young age, understood my drive and passion for the work that I do. He happily follows me around – from South Africa to FIU’s campus -; and his patience, humor, pride in me, and unconditional love saw me through trying times and sleepless nights.



ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION  
NEGOTIATING GLOBALIZATION FROM BELOW: SOCIAL  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP, NEOLIBERALISM, AND THE MAKING OF THE NEW  
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by

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Florida International University, 2016

Miami, Florida

Professor Vrushali Patil, Major Professor

Neoliberal globalization can threaten the growth of a global civil society that sanctions power-sharing arrangements. Yet, scholarship that focuses unidirectionally on global processes may in effect eviscerate the transformative power of the local. To counter this tendency, this dissertation examines the interrelationships between contextualized and historically-specific experiences in South Africa and transnational processes through a case study of social entrepreneurship, an emerging global justice movement. Drawing on a 12-months institutional ethnography of Sonke Gender Justice, a transnational social entrepreneurship NGO working to achieve gender equality, prevent gender-based violence and reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa, this dissertation explores the gendered dimensions of identity construction under conditions of neoliberalism. I look at the ways in which a transnational discourse of masculinity unfolds and is confronted locally as an essential element of the neoliberal project. I argue that, in Africa, the developmentalist agenda of neoliberalism is integrally tied to the demonization of black masculinity, posed as a problem. This acts to elide the ways in

which factors of oppression intersect in the manufacture of a patriarchal, sexist, racist and homophobic society, negating any effort to promote healthy gender relations. The dissertation concludes that global discourses and scholarship on African masculinity need to be informed by African women's lived experiences, survival strategies, and aspirations for gender and racial democracy in order for the development of a truly transformative gendered democracy to occur. This can be accomplished by sound and detailed ethnographic work that engages with the messiness and fluidity of cultures, knowledges, and practices on the ground. This approach opens up spaces of possibilities and visibility for an array of local renegotiations, borrowings, and frank resistances. My conclusion acknowledges the potential for significant contributions to global civil society's struggle for justice and for transformation when transnational solidarity projects are inserted into local formations. However, these goals can only be accomplished when there is acknowledgement and engagement of the practical ways in which local agents try to negotiate and reformulate transnational discourses and challenge neoliberal representations.

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## CHAPTER I

### Localizing “Globalization from Below”

This dissertation investigates local negotiations of an emergent transnational social movement in the thick of neoliberal globalization. While neoliberal globalization can threaten the growth of a global civil society that sanctions power-sharing arrangements, scholarship that focuses unidirectionally on global processes elides the influence and achievements of grassroots engagements. To counter this tendency, an important body of work has conceptualized “globalization from below,” arguing that transnational social movements can effectively challenge the core premises of neoliberal globalizations (Brecher and Costello 1998; Roy 2001; Shiva 2006; Escobar 2008; Sharma 2008; Steger 2009). Rejecting the omnipotence of neoliberal globalization, scholars such as Evans (2000) maintain that “globalization from below” serves as “counter-hegemonic” to the powerful interests and ideologies of global institutions (Held 2004; Sassen 2004; Bennett 2005; Della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Evans 2005; Mayo 2005; Bayart 2007; Drache and Froese 2008). Since the late 1999, “globalization from below” has begun to catch much attention as an increasing number of people in the West became aware of the growing inequalities, acculturation, and environmental degradation caused by top-down globalization-from above kinds of projects. The term became well-known when tens of thousands citizens led protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO), G8 Summit and APEC (Brecher et al. 2000).

However, the literature on “globalization from below” has focused on the ability of *transnational* actors to spur social change, both domestically and globally. As such,

most studies of ‘transnationalism from below’ explore what Hsiao-Chuan Hsia (2007) calls “big events” - such as the Seattle protests or transnational non-governmental organizations’ (NGOs) activism - (3). As a result, little studies have documented how conscious and unconscious struggles at the local level may be included as an essential element of counter-hegemonic globalization. In fact, Porta and Tarrow’s (2005) argue that it is necessary to draw a distinction between global activism and local activism. According to these authors, three processes have to be achieved for social movements to become transnational: diffusion (the spread of ideas from one country to another); domestication (leveraging domestic conflicts that have their origin externally); and externalization (challenging supranational institutions to intervene in domestic problems). Similarly, Evans (2000) separates local from transnational struggles by asserting that “it is precisely the potential catalytic effects of transnational networks on local struggles that make them worthwhile: building transnational networks give local organizing new prospects of success” (240).

The literature on “globalization from below” too often paints a picture in which transnational organizing trumps local needs, voices, and practices. In contrast, I draw on postcolonial and transnational feminist scholarship that complicates the globalist view by highlighting 1) the relationships between the local and the global, 2) the workings of power and knowledge-production, and 3) the modalities of solidarity across difference. Not only does transnational feminist theorizing recognizes that global processes collude with place-specific relations to (re)produce complex forms of inequalities and marginalization (Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Pratt and Yeoh 2003; Mohanty 2003; Alexander and Mohanty 2010; Patil 2013), it also highlights the critical linkages between

“the micropolitics of context, subjectivity and struggle [...] [and] the macropolitics of global economic and political systems and processes” (Mohanty 2003: 223). These arguments have repercussions for how we understand knowledge, power, but also resistance.

Drawing on this body of work, my dissertation examines the interrelationships between contextualized and historically-specific experiences in South Africa and transnational processes through a case study of social entrepreneurship, an emerging global justice movement. First, problematizing the ‘transnational’, I argue that scholarship tends to ignore its elitist and non-representative tendencies. In particular, lack of attention to the intersectionality of race, class, and gender, and sexuality in transnational solidarity projects is one of the greatest shortcomings of the current literature on “globalization from below.” Bayart (2007) warns that "civil society, however 'international' it may be, is itself an asymmetric field of power in which the effects of competition, hierarchy or exclusion are intense, and which in simple terms reflects the global division of wealth and influence" (59). Similarly, Keane (2003) challenges the idea of a civil society devoid of conflict, power, and epistemological violence. If he imagines a global civil society that sanctioned power-sharing arrangements, he also recognizes the forces that may threaten its growth.

Second, while many transnational NGOs claim that their goal is to ‘empower’ marginalized groups, their discourse of ‘empowerment’ – often formulated as ‘self-transformation’ - may mis-conceptualize the actual demands of local communities. We need to ask ourselves whether transnational discourses reflect the voices of local agents or seek to ‘transform’ local agency. Transnational influences on identity formation and



production of knowledge need to be problematized for true solidarity-building to be achieved. As a project of “globalization from below”, social entrepreneurship’s goal should be to bring about “cosmopolitan social democracy” (Held and McGrew 2002). Yet, the type of neoliberal forms of empowerment that is often associated with social entrepreneurship may conscript the latter to the project of global capitalism. While social entrepreneurship has been directly linked to neoliberal formation, taking a closer look at its local reinterpretations reveals its more transformative – sometimes subversive – processes. Third, I contend that the restrictive boundaries between the global and the local may in effect eviscerate the transformative power of the local. My conclusion acknowledges the potential for significant contributions to global civil society’s struggle for justice and transformation when transnational solidarity projects are inserted into local formations.

### **The Case of Social entrepreneurship: Complicating “Globalization from Below”**

Nicholls (2010), examining the concept of social entrepreneurship in relation to civil society, argues that it represents one of the most notable innovations in global civil society in recent times. Furthermore, he reckons that social entrepreneurs represent a new generation of civil society actors who are driven to address the systemic problems facing the world today. Martin and Osberg (2007) explain that the social entrepreneur “aims for value in the form of large-scale, transformational benefit that accrues either to a significant segment of society or to society at large [...] the social entrepreneur’s value proposition targets an underserved, neglected, or highly disadvantaged population that

lacks the financial means or political clout to achieve the transformative benefit on its own” (35).

Martin and Osberg (2007) also describe the three main components of social entrepreneurship:

(1) Identifying a stable but inherently unjust equilibrium that causes the exclusion, marginalization, or suffering of a segment of humanity that lacks the financial means or political clout to achieve any transformative benefit on its own; (2) identifying an opportunity in this unjust equilibrium, developing a social value proposition, and bringing to bear inspiration, creativity, direct action, courage, and fortitude, thereby challenging the stable state’s hegemony; and (3) forging a new, stable equilibrium that releases trapped potential or alleviates the suffering of the targeted group, and through imitation and the creation of a stable ecosystem around the new equilibrium ensuring a better future for the targeted group and even society at large (35).

The scalable and sustainable dimensions of social entrepreneurship are essential, and serve to differentiate it from social service organizations. While the outcomes of social service depend heavily on the existence of the organization generating it, the outcome of social entrepreneurship is the creation of a stable new equilibrium that is sustainable even after the organization has ceased to exist. Social entrepreneurship is also distinct from social activism, although they are not mutually-exclusive. Martin and Osberg’s definition (2007) entails that “the successful social entrepreneur takes direct action and generates a new and sustained equilibrium; the social activist influences others to generate a new and sustained equilibrium” (37). However, in the real world, hybrid models combining social service, and/or activism can also be inscribed in the social entrepreneurship model. Social entrepreneurship does not always exist in its ‘pure’ form, but ultimately, the model should be judged by its ability to achieve social uplift and transformation.

Notions of social entrepreneurship are still highly contextual and debatable.

Social entrepreneurship can be interpreted in various ways depending on the ideology and

the goals of the institutions and people championing it (Dart 2004; Dey and Steyaert 2010; Nicholls 2010). One of the ways it has been framed lies in its ties with the global market. When it is embedded in the discourse of neoliberalism, and directed at producing responsible and productive citizenship, social entrepreneurship is *represented* as a savior of capitalism. The emphasis on individual qualities and the application of the logic of the market to social problems are congruent with the multi-faceted reach of global capitalism.

This dissertation demonstrates how the construct of social entrepreneurship can become inscribed into the global capitalist project or coopted by it, rather than imbricated in the project of global civil society. Business schools have led a great deal of the literature on social entrepreneurship, seeking to define the concept by establishing its congruence with for-profit entrepreneurship. Elaborating on economist Jean-Baptiste Say's definition of an entrepreneur, Martin and Osberg (2007) make parallels between the for-profit entrepreneur and the social entrepreneur, asserting that the latter aims "to engineer a permanent shift from a lower-quality equilibrium to a higher-quality one. The new equilibrium is permanent because it first survives and then stabilizes, even though some aspects of the original equilibrium may persist. Its survival and success ultimately move beyond the entrepreneur and the original entrepreneurial venture. It is through mass-market adoption, significant levels of imitation, and the creation of an ecosystem around and within the new equilibrium that it first stabilizes and then securely persists" (34). Furthermore, if the social entrepreneur's value proposition targets an underserved, neglected, or highly disadvantaged group – as opposed to the for-profit entrepreneur's catering to a market that is assumed to be able to pay for the innovation - the business

literature has tended to focus on the similarity between the two. The social entrepreneur becomes the ideal individual to successfully bring about change *because of* the individual characteristics they share with their for-profit cousin. Both are praised for possessing a set of unique qualities: vision, creativity, courage, fortitude, hard work, persistence, and passion.

Importantly, discussions on the importance of the entrepreneurial element of social entrepreneurship have distracted the attention away from analyses of the kind of ‘new equilibrium’ that social entrepreneurship actually *creates* in the world. How do social entrepreneurs understand social problems and what strategies are put in place to change ‘the system’ from within? How are marginalized groups included in the process, and how do they define what the work that social entrepreneurs do in their communities? How do *local groups* understand their immediate realities and structural change at large? Answering these questions led to one of the main arguments put forth in this dissertation. I argue that when inserted into localized spaces, social entrepreneurship, notwithstanding its entangled relationship with global capitalism, offers the possibilities for transformation into noncapitalist representations. This can be accomplished by sound and detailed ethnographic work that engages with the messiness and fluidity of cultures, knowledges, and practices on the ground. This approach serves to destabilize the developmentalist agenda of neoliberalism and opens up spaces of possibilities and visibility for an array of local renegotiations, borrowings, and frank resistances.

My analysis, based on 12 months of data collection in South African marginalized communities, uncovers how interactions – from concessions to plain-spoken confrontations – on the ground do impact normative transnational discourses and

practices in a way that is still insufficiently discussed in the literature. Drawing on ethnographic research with Sonke Gender Justice, a transnational social entrepreneurship non-governmental organization (NGO) working in South African impoverished communities, I analyze the gendered dimensions of identity construction under conditions of neoliberalism. In particular, I look at the ways in which a transnational discourse of masculinity unfolds and is confronted locally as an essential element of the neoliberal project. Sonke Gender Justice has established a growing presence on the African continent and plays an active role internationally. The NGO works to create the change necessary for men, women, young people and children to enjoy equitable, healthy and happy relationships that contribute to the development of just and democratic societies. It implements programs and activities that promote gender equality, prevent domestic and sexual violence, and reduce the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS through the mobilization of men and boys.

Sonke's association to social entrepreneurship has been forged through the organization's ties with Ashoka, one of the most influential and well-known transnational organizations that aims to find social entrepreneurs from all corners of the world, fund and support their projects. Ashoka was created in 1980 by Bill Drayton, a Harvard Business School graduate, and is now operating in 75 countries, with 30 regional offices throughout the world. Ashoka's mission is to "change the world" by investing in social entrepreneurs. The perfect candidate must fit a specific profile, and thereafter, go through a rigorous process of interviews so that the organization can make sure they have the right person: irreverent, creative, and tenacious in their desire to make a social impact. Dean Peacock, the founder and CEO of Sonke Gender Justice, is one of the social

entrepreneurs that Ashoka has supported and funded in South Africa. Peacock became an Ashoka Fellow in 2013. Ashoka asserted that Peacock's "new idea" made him a beacon of what social entrepreneurship is all about: applying an innovative idea to a problem to achieve scalable, sustainable social transformation. On Ashoka's website, one can read:

"The New Idea: In South Africa, nearly half of all men say they've assaulted an intimate partner and twenty-seven percent say they've raped a woman. To address the urgency of this calamity, many organizations and government initiatives have embarked on participatory life skills development and AIDS education geared to empower women and girls. However, Deal realized that the main root cause of this problem is related to the rigid gender norms, and harmful perceptions of what it means to be a man or a woman. And no one was truly engaging men who are always seen as only a part of the problem and not of the solution. He believes that at the core of the problem is society's perception of masculinity and its supremacy over women. He thus seeks to deal directly with this deeply embedded ideology [...] He has seen how men also benefit in real and tangible ways from a world with less rigid and less violent models of manhood and thus should engage directly in ending violence against women and in promoting gender equality" (Ashoka website, <http://africa.ashoka.org/fellows/dean-peacock>).

What is implied in this description is that Peacock applied moral qualities of an entrepreneur – vision, creativity, innovation – to an acute social problem, with the purpose of creating a new equilibrium: an African society with less oppressive gender norms, gender-based violence and gender inequality.

Notwithstanding the altruistic intent of social entrepreneurship in general, and Sonke's work in particular, this dissertation examines the workings of power within social entrepreneurship, insisting that doing so is a step toward making a cautious and productive critique of the construct. I argue that an uncritical representation of transnational social justice eviscerates and elides localized practices in the Global South. In this discourse, local agency and experiences are rendered invisible, hence preventing social entrepreneurship's agenda to achieve the kind of transformation that includes and uplifts marginalized subjects. Although the merit of the model is largely attributed to its

attention to excluded and marginalized groups, both the literature and popular discourses on social entrepreneurship give little visibility to how transnational processes are understood, lived, negotiated and contested in marginalized spaces. Because transnational initiatives have to ultimately rely on local workers' knowledge of and access to the marginalized communities they seek to transform, the flow of power and meaning is not as unidirectional as it first seemed. In the case of Sonke Gender Justice, both black trainers and trainees were able to reflect on the validity of transnational messages for their realities and contexts, and complicate them, which created significant disruptions in the transnational hegemonic masculinity discourse. Although the trainings, campaigns and community dialogues were originally intended to be a simple transfer of knowledge from transnational powerful actors to poor, 'ignorant', disadvantaged groups, they often ended up being platforms for the expression of subaltern life and struggles. My analysis of Sonke's actions on the ground makes it abundantly clear that despite much silencing, local agency should, and most importantly will, continue to have an impact on the global arena.

The dissertation concludes that global civil society's struggle for justice can be realized through forms of transformation that occur when solidarity projects are inserted into local formations. However, these goals can only be accomplished when there is acknowledgement of, and engagement with, the practical ways in which local agents try to negotiate and reformulate transnational discourses and challenge neoliberal representations in order to create possibilities for real social transformation.

## **Research Inquiries**

In addition to the literature on “globalization from below” and social entrepreneurship, an array of theoretical frameworks have informed my research questions. Postcolonial and transnational feminist scholarship on globalization in particular have shaped both my initial intellectual inquiries and my ethnographic research. The largely uncritical business literature on social entrepreneurship and the issues discussed by their more blunt counterparts in the social sciences have led me to: 1. Examine the discourses and practices of the agents of social entrepreneurship (transnational organizations, academic institutions, the social entrepreneurs) in general, and the latter’s concern with gender equality; 2. Explore how new transnational forms of governmentality - and their multiple axes of power - provide the conditions of possibility for the (re)production of social inequities in the Global South, and 3. To offer a narrative that includes African’s agency and negotiations within transnational power-laden processes.

## **Chapter Summaries**

My argumentation necessitates that this dissertation be organized thematically, rather than chronologically. Analyzing the emergence of social entrepreneurship in South Africa demands that I situate it within a particular historical moment: the neoliberal turn of the South African state. As such, I locate the discourses and practices of social entrepreneurship in the political, economic and cultural contexts that facilitate – justify, even – their development and influence. Prior to that, however, in accordance with my feminist training and commitment, I position myself in the South African context and in my own work. Chapter II, which discusses the methodology used in this dissertation, lays



out the factors that helped me gain access to the research subjects as well as the situations and cultural specificities that challenged me along the way. Both have enriched my understanding of the object of study and the wider structural constraints faced by South Africans. Most importantly, my research encounters have made me privy of the strategic, unapologetic and often humbling ways in which South African men and women exercise their agency, understand their struggles, and resist their circumstances. In this chapter, I explain my use of feminist praxis to address my fluctuating positionalities in the field but also to highlight interactions and emotions that have proven central to the research process, yet are too often marginalized in the mainstream, more masculinist scholarship. Hence, I emphasize the importance of friendship and affect while conducting engaged ethnographic work. I also describe other methods – semi-structured interviews, discourse analysis of the social entrepreneurship model, and participatory action research (PAR) – that were used in this dissertation in an effort to provide a ‘thick’ description of my object of study. Ultimately, discussing the ‘messy’ dynamics that informed and affected my research bears lessons for transnational social justice projects such as social entrepreneurship. My interviews with agents of social entrepreneurship have revealed that too often social entrepreneurs’ positionalities are unproblematized although it has real consequences for the legitimacy and reception of their programs and messages within local communities. In addition, the relationships that social entrepreneurs have had to form with local agents in order to have access to marginalized groups are not explored in the literature, therefore eclipsing the rejections and resistance that are bound to happen on the ground. Chapter III demonstrates that notwithstanding neoliberal forms of erasure, local activism is vibrant in South Africa. In this chapter, I examine South Africa’s current

political and social crisis. Many of the protests that are occurring in the country reflect the contradictions between state policies and the demands and expectations of civil society as South Africa has experienced a shift from the project of national development to the neoliberal project. The previously disadvantaged black majority of the country is resisting the current path to ‘transformation’ that the country has taken over roughly the last ten years, and has voiced their frustrations stridently in the waves of social movements that have taken the country by storm between 2014 and 2016. Chapter III puts in focus the historical waves of women’s commitment to achieve greater equality while changing society. Giving visibility to the struggles that black women have led to empower themselves and blacks in general is important as I later examine the work of Sonke Gender Justice in promoting healthy gender relations in South Africa. In this chapter – as well as through interjections of women’s voices in Chapter V - I argue that the entanglement of gender and race renders invisible the liberatory and transformative role played by African women and their influence on global and western feminisms. I conclude that global discourses and scholarship on African masculinity need to be informed by, African women’s lived experiences, survival strategies, and aspirations for gender *and* racial democracy in order for the development of a truly transformative gendered democracy.

Chapter IV delves into the world of social entrepreneurship. Situating the model within the globalization-from-below movement, I look at how it has been conceptualized in the literature and the gaps that have yet to be addressed. Commonly recognized as a model that put forth business sense and efficiency to solve social issues, the “entrepreneurship as salvation” narrative disseminated by the ‘business school’

scholarship offers social entrepreneurship as a way to salvage capitalism. Furthermore, when neoliberal forms of social entrepreneurship enter the space of the Global South, the model becomes entangled in the intersectionalities of race, class, and gender. In its neoliberal ‘representation,’ the construct is embowelled of its transformative aspirations. Social entrepreneurship is, however, more complex than its popular definition. The interviews I have conducted with South African entrepreneurs point to a continuum of practices and discourses within the model. Most importantly, when the model is effectuated at the local level it can come with transformative and anti-capitalist possibilities. This is because local communities are by no means passive recipients of power-laden transnational discourses and processes.

How initiatives of social entrepreneurship are received, contested, and transformed on the ground is the subject of Chapter V. Concerned with offering a richer analysis of the linkages between cultural forms of neoliberalism and local subjectivities, I explore the model’s focus on self-transformation and self-empowerment. I first embed Sonke Gender Justice’s narrative of toxic masculinity within the literature on transnational masculinity. The tacit narrative behind Sonke’s engagement is that South African men and women must be liberated from their oppressive -literally deathly - practices through self-transformation in order to be (re)included in the global, modern, order. Underlining the contributions of African and African Diaspora scholars, I use ethnographic data to problematize assumptions of the global spread of a hegemonic mode of masculinity. My use of qualitative methods serve to disrupt western imaginaries of African inferiority and inhumanity as explanations for its political, economic, and social failures. Chapter V therefore offers a richer and more problematic analysis of social

entrepreneurship, underscoring important circuits of power and resistance in the remaking of placed identities and agency. The focus on black men's role in gender equality also opens up new areas of inquiry. Chapter V examines the extent to which efforts to transform African masculinity through transnational channels actually lead to greater equality for women and healthier gendered relationships in poor communities. While I do not deny the need for a national discussion of South African masculinities, especially in the post-apartheid moment, I contend that this necessary dialogue must take into account the historical context – and wounds – of the multi-racial society and the contemporary constraints that reproduce violence, disempowerment, and marginalization. To this end, ventures whose mission is to 'liberate' the African man and woman must be informed by a complex understanding of local realities rather than understood as universalized and generalized notions that can be replicated elsewhere. Otherwise, the result may well be the re-entrenchment of structures of power, established stereotypes, and inequality within South African society.

To conclude, I restate the main arguments and contributions of the previous chapters. Chapter VI ties together the different themes examined in the dissertation to produce a critical assessment of social entrepreneurship as part of the globalization-from-below project. The aim of this dissertation is not, despite its nonconformist reading, to disparage social entrepreneurship as a model of global solidarity and justice, but to challenge the tendency to mainstream some practices – often neoliberal – at the expense of a real inclusion of the ways local constraints are addressed by local social movements and understood by disenfranchised communities. This dissertation tells a story that challenges global civil society to dig deeper and forego its unspoken disciplinarian and

privileged epistemology. Achieving ‘inclusion’ on the global platform may complicate the model of social entrepreneurship: solutions may no longer be as simple, innovative, scalable, and profitable as transnational organizations may like. However, paying attention to the unequal distribution of power within benevolent ventures remains a critical endeavor if one wants or claims to ‘change the world.’ In this sense, this dissertation, with its unapologetic scrutiny, conspires to deconstruct the African as an object of study and posit them as fully participatory - at times liberatory, at times oppressing - actors of societal change, and history at large. Their situated experiences and agency bear lessons for, and indeed are integral to (although not readily acknowledged) global constructions of social justice.

I close these chapters by opening up areas for future investigation. For example, in this dissertation, the discourse of sexuality remained quite heterosexual in its non-inclusion of members of the LGBT community in South Africa. It is definitely my future goal to address this present limitation in future research. Also, for practical reasons the focus of this dissertation was on the African male. As such, the experiences of other groups – notably women and members of the Colored community – are not sufficiently documented. Including the vibrant narratives of these groups will be my next intellectual endeavor. Notwithstanding these limitations, I believe that my analysis is critical because it demonstrates that active local negotiations of transnational narratives play an essential role in holding global civil society accountable to its diktats on, and aspirations for, global justice and solidarity.

## CHAPTER II

### Feminist and Transnational Approaches and Methodologies

In Chapter I, after introducing the subject of this study, I laid out the research questions that informed my ethnographic fieldwork. In addition, I presented the theoretical foundations of my work in transnational feminist theory, development and globalization studies, and postcolonial cultural studies. In this chapter, I discuss the methodological underpinning of my work. My choice of methods of inquiry is rooted in my academic training as a feminist scholar, and therefore draws on feminist contributions about knowledge, power, and identity in the research process. However, much of the relational entry-points of the project were also unplanned for and emerged organically as I interacted with the South African people. In many respects, my attentiveness to the impromptu, the affective, and the mundane is reflective of my approach to the field. I started my research cautious of avoiding rigidity, both in my interactions with my informants and in my own positionality as a researcher. Although I drew on the more scripted ethnographic methods (i.e. semi-structured interviews) to gather data, I also remained open to interesting jokes, ambiguous winks, and tearful eyes, aware that although emotions in the research process are less thoroughly discussed in textbooks, they are nonetheless an important dimension of collecting experiential evidence. Thus, after outlining some of the feminist concepts that guide my research, I discuss my use of participant-observation, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and oral histories. I close by reflecting on the ways in which the subjects I came in contact with have given meaning to my presence in their communities and even in the privacy of their homes. These ever-changing, often contradictory meanings compelled me to remain open to

ironic reinventions of my identity, which hopefully gave more depth to my fieldwork experience and scholarly contribution.

### **Conducting Feminist Research: Guiding Concepts and Interests**

My research is informed by, and calls for, postcolonial and feminist epistemologies and methodologies because they allow for critical analyses of universalized development practices and knowledges. Rather than aiming for the production of objective knowledge on the intersection of social entrepreneurship with race and gender in South Africa, I sought to leverage my subjective experiences to examine differences along the lines of class, race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Hence, I understand academic research to be an embodied practice and the product of multiple subjectivities, as opposed to a positivist interpretation of the world. My theoretical stance and the nature of my research encounters have been mutually-inclusive, co-producing a type of knowledge that is unapologetically situated and subjective. Like other feminist theorists, I draw on personal experiences as a legitimate methodological tool to produce knowledge that is partial, affective, *and* richer.

Many disciplines in the social sciences tend to seek exhaustive, all-encompassing knowledge about a subject, which may explain theorists' reluctance to reflect on positionality. In my project, I endeavor to deconstruct the kind of masculinist rationality that assumes what Donna Haraway (1998) has called the "master subject's position." Feminist geographers, for instance, have pointed to the dearth of attention paid to women's realities as well as the slow incorporation of feminist perspectives in human geography. They argue that a masculinist observation and interpretation of the world are

inadequate in that they obscure, conceptually and methodologically, the experiences of half the world's population (Monk and Hanson 1982). In this vein, Rose (1993), in her powerful account of the gendered barriers that exist in geographical research, highlights how sexist, masculinist positions may essentially act as “a fundamental resistance to women as subjects and authors of geographical knowledge” (3).

### *Positionality in the Research Encounter*

Positionality becomes important once we recognize that our stories, convictions, identities and perceptions of embodiment are involved in our interpretations of information and our experiences in the field. My research admits to its partiality precisely because it stresses the “conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher” (England, 1994: 244). In other words, my identity(ies) animate my interactions with both the object of the research and its subjects. However, positioning oneself, a traceable and accountable feminist practice, should not create boundaries that can be fallacious. Furthermore, using positionality as a strategy to reveal the relations of power inherent in the field, can, in fact, reinforce and sediment these very relations of power (Mohammad 2001). True reflexivity therefore requires the researcher to accept that “experience is at once always already an interpretation and is in need of interpretation” (Hyndman, 2007: 266). In other words, reflexivity, as a “negotiated process”, implies discernment and awareness of the fieldwork and one's position in it (Driessen 1998: 43).

Throughout my research, I have been careful not to essentialize myself and others. For instance, I recognize that in many ways, I have been both an insider and an outsider and that observing and interacting with local communities have not automatically



produced ‘total truths’ about the object of my research. To be sure, venturing into the messiness of identities may yield more questions than answers. But importantly, admitting to the complexity of both the researcher and the researched and allowing knowledge to remain boundless can effectively fortify marginalized subjects’ agency and power.

*Transnational Solidarity through a Critical Feminist Lens*

The nature of my research inquiry required that I challenge positivist empirical and theoretical approaches in favor of a more responsible reporting and analysis of fieldwork. Examining the potential of social entrepreneurship to promote alternative possibilities to capitalism grounded in transnational solidarity and commitment to social change pressed for theories and praxis that understand power and knowledge as inherently relational. Such approach stresses the omissions, exclusions and power relations that are obscured in the process of creating solidarity networks. Like other postcolonial and feminist scholars, I call for empirical work that highlights the dominant forms of knowledge and relationships of power that are creative of the world. Dwelling on the everyday experiences of men and women in their situated contexts yields valuable critiques of practices and institutions that tend to be viewed as empowering.

Social entrepreneurship, built on the idea that social change transcends national boundaries, can in effect make the ‘transnational’ a normalizing affair. In contrast, transnational feminist praxis stresses the political use of the term in a way that underlines the complexities of power across geographical territories. Hence, transnational feminist theorists contend that for solidarity and empowerment to occur, we need to pay attention

to the ways politics of location and hierarchies of place are constructed and normalized, and the ways border crossing should be ethically undertaken (Mohanty 2003; Swarr and Nagar 2010, Alexander and Mohanty 2010). Transnational social movements such as social entrepreneurship can be colonizing in that they construct the subjectivities of marginalized subjects in certain ways, while appearing as inherently apolitical. Analyzing how the images, ideals, and knowledge of social entrepreneurship are received and negotiated by different groups of people can effectively challenge the power of the neoliberal globalization discourse. More importantly, alternative possibilities that do not foreclose South African women and men's sense of agency can be imagined. A critical analysis of the field of social entrepreneurship can open new windows for framing social change, and allow one to glimpse at the complex routes people take to pursue happiness and well-being, and make sense of their lives and struggles.

My research was essentially collaborative. Not only did I conduct fieldwork within Sonke, I also offered my services as a researcher when the organization was in need of such skills. Therefore, I was introduced to community members not only as a doctoral student, but also as a Sonke's trainer. Critical transnational feminist praxis was valuable as I conducted fieldwork because it informed my attentiveness to the different epistemic realities of local communities in the South and feminist academia in the North, as well as some of the ways in which ethical and nonexploitative relationships can develop while engaging in both activist and academic research (Peake and De Souza 2010). Collaborating across places, material and economic spaces, political locations, and areas of work can be beneficial if it is deeply dialogic and self-reflexive about knowledge production and dissemination. Through self-critique and collective reflection,

transnational feminism can “attend to racialized, classed, masculinized, and heteronormative logics and practices of globalization and capitalist patriarchies, and the multiple ways in which they (re)structure colonial and neocolonial relations of domination and subordination” (Peake and De Souza 2010: 5). Hence, collaborating with Sonke’s staff, networks and trainees in the villages, I sought to be constantly aware of issues of positionality, accountability, and representation as we collaborated to produce alternative knowledges.

I was also cognizant of the academic/activist divide that has effectively established academic work as the legitimate space for knowledge production. This spurious divide has relegated community-based activism to an inferior, hyper-racialized space in which knowledge producers are rendered outsiders (Alexander and Mohanty 2010). Drawing on Alexander and Mohanty’s (2010) understanding of transnational feminist knowledge, I was eager to conduct research that could break the “epistemological contract” (41) that makes some knowledge producers authoritative and others, located in the various ‘elsewheres’, invisible. In order to do so, I provided some of my informants with copies of the chapters I wrote as part of this dissertation, especially when I was drawing on their interviews and reflections. Their feedback was thereafter included in the final drafts. Also, informants were encouraged to speak in their own languages as opposed to English. Although someone in the room would translate simultaneously what was being said to me, it was a Sonke’s trainer, Karabo, who transcribed all focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and oral histories. Karabo, who was present during most of these interactions, was able to capture the complexities of spoken and body languages, jokes, and other sideline comments.

This collaboration was useful to ensure that important cultural subtleties in communication informed the knowledge production process. In this sense, the academic knowledge produced as a result of my research does not exclude other understandings and political mobilizations, making for a richer, more ethical transnational feminist practice. It should be noted that this process was not devoid of conflict, often ideological but also sometimes personal. However, Desai, Bouchard and Detournay (2010) remind us that it is the contested nature of the field that may make it so radical and productive. The transnational should not be seen as a mode of consensus. Transnational feminist praxis does not solve problems of inclusion and difference; rather, its ability to self-critique and acknowledge unequal relations of power that allows for “thievery” and epistemic violence may be one of its most important contribution.

### **An Organizational Overview of Sonke Gender Justice**

Sonke Gender Justice (Sonke) is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation that started in South Africa in 2006. It was co-founded by Dean Peacock (current Executive Director) and Bafana Khumalo with the initial aim of engaging men and boys to end gender-based violence, stop the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS and inculcate gender equality in society. To achieve this, Sonke developed the One Man Can (OMC) campaign which is an initiative that works through multi-week workshops with men and boys from diverse communities with the aim of supporting men to “change their belief on gender norms...and sustain these changes in their personal lives.”<sup>1</sup> The OMC campaign has

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<sup>1</sup> Sonke Gender Justice website: <http://www.genderjustice.org.za/community-education-mobilisation/one-man-can/>

become Sonke’s flagship project, and it has been replicated and adapted in a number of African countries such as Sudan, for example.<sup>2</sup>

Over the years, Sonke has grown to have a both a broader target audience and a far larger number of projects and programmes throughout Africa and the world. While the organisation continues to include a focus on men and boys throughout its programming, Sonke now works to “strengthen government, civil society and citizen capacity to promote gender equality, prevent domestic and sexual violence, and reduce the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS” which forms its core vision<sup>3</sup>. The broader shift is born out of the realisation “that effecting sustained change to gender roles and relations requires addressing the forces that shape individual attitudes and community norms and practices – traditions and cultures, government policies, laws and institutions, civil society organisations, the media and the family – as well as underlying economic, political and social pressures.”<sup>4</sup>

Sonke utilises the ‘spectrum of change’ model, drawing on a broad range of social change strategies that include:

- Partnering with government to promote policy development and effective implementation
- Advocacy, activism and community mobilisation
- Networking and coalition work nationally and internationally

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.genderjustice.org.za/news-item/undp-in-sudan-adapt-sonkes-one-man-can-campaign-to-the-sudanese-context/>

<sup>3</sup> Sonke Gender Justice: <http://www.genderjustice.org.za/about-us/about-sonke/>

<sup>4</sup> Sonke Gender Justice: <http://www.genderjustice.org.za/about-us/about-sonke/>

- Capacity building and training with partner organisations
- Innovative communication strategies for social change
- Community education
- Individual skills building
- Research and monitoring and evaluation

Sonke implements its various projects through the following units and portfolios, each with a specific, though inter-related focus:

1. Community Education and Mobilisation (CEM): This unit works within communities to address gender inequality, violence, health issues and other human rights concerns at the most microcosmic level. The CEM unit has several campaigns, but for the most part their work is led by trainers, who run community groups and form Community Action Teams (CATs). CATs are comprised of community members who have graduated from Sonke programs, and continue educating their peers and communities about these issues, as well as being an on-going point of contact for Sonke in the community.
2. Policy Development and Advocacy (PDA) : PDA's work stems across many areas, but in general focuses on shaping local, regional, national and international legal and policy decisions on gender equality, gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights and more.
3. International Programmes Network (IPN): The IPN unit focuses on work across and outside of Africa. The IPN Unit heads Sonke's alliance with international NGO Promundo, called the MenEngage Africa and MenEngage Global Alliances, which work across Africa and worldwide respectively to link NGOs that seek to engage men and boys in gender equality initiatives.

4. Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights (SRHR): The SRHR portfolio cuts across several units, including IPN and CEM, to ensure that all of Sonke's programming highlights important issues in the sexual and reproductive health, health education and services, and sexual and reproductive rights of all men, women and children. The SRHR unit works with the One Man Can programme at their One Man Can Wellness Centre in the South African township of Gugulethu, a men's clinic focused on making health care accessible to men and encouraging males to be clients of their own health services as well as being involved in the health of their partners and children
5. Child Rights and Positive Parenting: This unit is made up of a subset of CEM employees, and is currently focused on banning corporal punishment and promoting positive parenting strategies as opposed to violent ways of parents and teachers punishing children.
6. Social and Structural Drivers (SSD) of Violence Portfolio: Sonke's Social and Structural Drivers (SSD) portfolio was established to address the social and structural drivers of violence and aims to achieve social transformation and justice through challenging some of the norms and beliefs within the religious and traditional sectors that continue to hinder gender equality or engender violence. Gender equality and economic justice are two special interest areas that drive this portfolio, and the portfolio primarily works through the faith and traditional sectors, and through economic and social justice platforms.
7. Communications & Strategic Information (CSI): Sonke's Communications and Strategic Information (CSI) unit is responsible for the overall communications

function of the organisation – both internally and externally. It is also responsible for shaping and implementing Behaviour Change Communications initiatives, which employ a variety of social communication strategies to promote positive changes in social norms and practices.

8. Research and Monitoring & Evaluation (RME) Unit: Research as a key element in promoting gender equality, preventing HIV and GBV, and advocating for social justice. The Research and Monitoring and Evaluation (RME) Unit leads the knowledge generation arm of Sonke’s social justice strategy, seeking to rigorously measure the effectiveness and impact of Sonke’s programmatic, capacity building and policy advocacy work in an effort to strengthen the evidence base on gender transformative practice and policy.

To effectively run its many projects and programmes, Sonke employs approximately one hundred full time and contract staff. The work is largely funded by international donors with minimal government sponsorship and very few corporate financiers. Its largest donors include the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and the Oak Foundation. Sonke has an approximately US \$8 million operational annual budget and is one of the best funded local South African NGOs in the country.

#### *Unpacking Empowerment: Participatory Action Research*

My collaboration with Sonke during its trainings, campaigns, community dialogues, and internal meetings ensured a more transparent mode of knowledge production. My position as a researcher at times faded as I became, and was often introduced as, “a



colleague.” Applying research methodologies such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) compelled me to allow my positionality in the field to freely flow from that of an observer and interviewer (the researcher) to that of an active agent of social change, participating in protests, marches, and planning events with other social movements seeking social justice. Shifting from ‘researcher’ to ‘researched’ made for more fluid, less hierarchical, and more forthcoming exchanges in the field. More importantly, using the research participants’ own political language and engaging in their everyday actions to create the social reality they envision, make for a thicker ethnography, intent on highlighting the complexities of identity, language and representation.

Combining research with action yields valuable knowledge on the range of subjectivities, ideas and abilities that may be obscured when the focus is on one type of representation only. Linking PAR to poststructuralism, Cameron and Gibson (2005) contend that “poststructuralism, through its suspicion of overarching theories and paradigms recognizes multiple knowledges, just as PAR values local and indigenous knowledges. Poststructuralism highlights the political nature of all knowledge-making, just as PAR appreciates that politics infuses every aspect of so-called objective and expert knowledge. Poststructuralism recognizes that language constructs the world, just as PAR seeks to ensure that everyday knowledges are used to shape the lives of ordinary people” (317). PAR allowed me to not only grasp the viewpoints of the diverse communities I worked with, and that of Sonke’s management and staff, but also to witness – indeed *live* – the ways in which particular, often conflicting, practices and discourses constantly shaped subjects, ensuring that they are always in the process of becoming.

In a sense, both the ‘researched’ and I were *becoming* as we took action in the field. I often evidenced the micropolitics of self-transformation as I conducted campaigns and dialogues along with Sonke’s trainers. The latter espoused Sonke’s discourses, becoming perfect deacons of the organization’s vision in their interactions with community members, and performed strikingly different identities and values as soon as the work day was over. Working alongside Sonke’s trainers and other social movements’ actors served not only as a way of engaging with inequalities, power-laden relations, and marginalization (Pain 2004), but was also a potent reminder to refrain from fetishizing and essentializing local knowledges. Cameron and Gibson (2005) rightly state that “individual subjects may [...] hold multiple knowledges about aspects of their lives and broader social, economic and environmental conditions, only some of which may be transformative. In other words, the poststructuralist approach advises that local knowledges and representations be approached with a degree of caution, and not be blindly accepted at face value as inherently transformative” (317). Therefore, my focus while conducting both research *and* activist work was never on ‘liberating’ oppressed subjects, but on examining multiple, and conflicting, local knowledges while including “‘imported’ or ‘outsider’ knowledges [that] may offer new insights [challenging] the current order to provide the basis for transformation” (Cameron and Gibson 2005: 317). I did this through constant critical reflexivity.

### *Reporting Culture: Group Banter and Story-telling*

In addition to the evidence of observation and participation in Sonke’s meetings and community-based programs, I draw in my research on experiences, discussions,

testimonies, and stories collected through interviews, focus groups, and oral histories. I use this wealth of data to understand the discourses and practices of Sonke around the role of men's activism in promoting gender equality and the state of South Africa's current – and changing – gender relations. While a significant part of my fieldwork involved conducting participant-observation work with the organization, I also spent much time identifying and interviewing important actors in South Africa's world of social entrepreneurship. Although the two sets of data may appear unrelated at first, they really complement each other. Interviews with social entrepreneurs on one hand, and the use of multimodal qualitative tools to analyze the particular work of Sonke Gender Justice on the other hand, allowed me to elucidate the connections between the transnational, national and the local. Indeed, analyzing both sets of data together was useful to explore the ways powerful transnational narratives shaped the daily lives of, and were challenged by, actors at the local level. I feel that an examination of the frictions between encompassing global discourses and minoritized narratives and forms of cultural production offers insights into the complex, multiscalar, racialized and gendered processes at work in the contemporary, solidaritarian, neoliberal moment.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with several social entrepreneurs. Some were tackling social issues, while others took a more structural approach to inequality and marginalization. Examining various forms of social entrepreneurship was useful to grasp the related differences in discourses and outcomes. All, however, offered insights into the power relations inherent to social entrepreneurship. I was then able to verify and/or contradict how both the discourses of social entrepreneurship and the power relations that come with it, were lived out in the field.

I thus draw on a particular body of evidence that combined mixed methods of research and analysis to grasp the co-constitutive ways in which hegemonic processes and local cultural practices work to shape reality(ies) at both the transnational and local level. My intellectual interests led me to focus on the “embodied experiences of living and knowing the global” (Mountz and Hyndman 2006: 448), as well as the (im)mobilities of identities happening at the local level. To this end, I used qualitative data collected across two provinces (Free State and Eastern Cape) in South Africa. The study covered three communities in each province (for a total of six communities). In the Free State, I did fieldwork in Bethlehem, Welkom, and Qwaqwa; and in the Eastern Cape, the communities included in my research were Butterworth, Mtata, and Matatiele. Participants were for the most part blacks<sup>5</sup>, but differed in age, gender, and social status. While some held social capital, others were marginalized by their gender, socio-economic background, or by their HIV/AIDS status. In each of these communities, I – with the help of Sonke’s staff – organized a focus group consisting of 7 to 10 individuals. Whereas Sonke typically prefers to have homogeneous groups of men participating, I chose to include women as well, hoping that gendered differences in viewpoints and lived experiences would emerge and lead to richer discussions on women’s rights, gender relations, and cultural practices. Depending on the community, participants belonged to different ethnic groups: Xhosas, Sothos, and Tswanas. In contrast, many of the Sonke’s trainers were Isizulus. When I asked them how they could communicate in the other

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<sup>5</sup> Because South Africa has its own racial classification, I differentiate blacks from other racial groups that also have an African heritage, such as the Colored community. For the purpose of this dissertation, ‘black’ and ‘African’ are used interchangeably, and exclude Colored people.

African languages, they explained to me that it was because they grew up in the township of Soweto<sup>6</sup>, where all African ethnicities tend to cohabit and learn from each other. When they were unsure about some expressions in xhosa, sotho or tswana, they would switch to speaking isizulu, which all participants understood and more or less spoke, as it is a dominant language in South Africa.

Focus groups participants were Community Action Teams members (CATs), meaning that they were individuals that had been previously trained in gender-based issues by Sonke and encouraged to form groups (CATs) that disseminated the imparted knowledge (at no charge, and with no salary) in their communities whenever possible. They were told the study intended to examine the changes in attitudes, values, and behaviors both at the personal level and the community level, as a result of Sonke Gender Justice's activities and support (dialogues, door-to-door prevention campaigns, school mobilization, and training).

Focus groups enabled me to gain insight on how CATs' members (and consequently, other community members) engage with the messages and knowledge that Sonke seeks to pass on. This method is useful because at the community level, people's values are shaped by shared narratives and, therefore, are irreducibly embedded within social relations and interactions. Focus groups can act as a microcosm of wider-society interactions. Crang and Cook (2007) explain that "such groups can provide forums for the expression and discussion of the plurality of sometimes contradictory and competing

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<sup>6</sup> Soweto is the most populous black urban area in the country. It was created, as part of the segregationist planning, to house the black laborers who worked in mines and other industry in Johannesburg. Black migrant workers from different Homesteads and neighboring countries moved to Soweto, producing a multi-cultural and multi-lingual hub at the heart of the city.

views that individuals and groups hold and can become ‘spaces of resistance’ in which participants can explore and enable [...]their social agency and collective knowledge production” (90). Capitalizing on communication to generate data, focus groups were especially useful for:

1) Exploring people’s knowledge (what people think, how they think, why they think that way). Espousing Gilbert Ryle’s (1971) concept of ‘thick description’, Geertz (1973) describes a society’s culture as consisting “of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members” (11). This performance of culture can best be observed in a group of people engaging around a particular subject. Such interactions can yield critical information on what discourses and practices are deemed acceptable or ‘abnormal’ in a specific cultural setting. While recording the group sessions, I kept in mind Denzin’s (1989) elaboration of thick description: “In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard” (83). I thus ensured that my notes included not only *what* was said, but also *how* it was said.

2) Helping participants to explore, clarify, and possibly change their views through group interaction, in a way that would not be possible in one-on-one interviews. In particular, I was able to observe whether participants change their minds on certain issues because of their peers’ responses.

3) Facilitating the discussion of ‘taboo’ topics because the more outspoken participants break the ice for the shy participants. Participants felt encouraged by their peers to talk openly about experiences of sexual violence, rape and gender-based violence in their lives and/or the lives of community members.

Another important method used in this research is oral histories. Being privy to individuals' personal experiences and life stories cannot be done without establishing relationships of trust. In my case, trust gradually gave way to friendship before my 'informants' felt comfortable to share their stories of oppression, violence, empowerment and resistance. These stories not only added empirical value to my work, they also highlighted the unsung influence of emotions in providing a thick description of the research object. Cameron (2012) examines geographers' attention to story "as part of a relational and material turn within the discipline, as part of a renewed focus on the political possibilities afforded by storytelling, and as a mode of expressing, non-representational, (post)phenomenological geographies" (Abstract). I strived not to analyze these stories only in terms of power, knowledge, and other structural difference, but to also really delve into the affective and experiential dimension of storytelling. Sociologists have complicated the 'narrative turn' of the 1980s, animated by the antistructuralist and antipositivist sociological agenda, by focusing on conversational analysis and symbolic interactionism (Polletta et al. 2011). These approaches can challenge authority and highlight how inequalities are produced and maintained because stories are a potent avenue into human experience and the culturally-embedded meaning of marginalized groups (Orbuch 1997). Sociologists have increasingly turned to storytelling to describe the ways in which individuals understand their social world. While stories are a technology of power, they can also be a tool of agency, and disrupt the power relations at the heart of knowledge-making. This is because stories are useful for gaining insight into the human experience and arriving at meanings or culturally embedded normative explanations.

In my research, I have followed Gibson-Graham's interest in analyzing "the interplay of discourse and story" (as cited in Cameron 2012: 581). This is because stories may reveal the impact of dominant discourses while simultaneously uncovering the mundane, everyday ways in which alternative, at times subversive, formations and narratives are applied, performed, and lived locally. Furthermore, I have found that accessing – and appreciating – the 'small things' that make a story all the more meaningful compels one to recognize the affective dimension of fieldwork. Thus, acknowledging the importance of the "affective ties of friendship" (Rawlins 1992) was central to my project's development and outcomes.

#### *Secondary Sources: Formalizing Discourse*

This data was supplemented with primary materials such as emails, website texts, Facebook posts, and photographs. These documents may be divided into two categories: texts about social entrepreneurship in general, and materials produced in the context of Sonke's gender-based work, in particular. The first category is comprised of texts primarily drawn from the Internet, which I used to conduct a textual analysis of the dominant discourses and practices of social entrepreneurship. I focused on two key sites: the website of Ashoka, one of the leading transnational organizations promoting social entrepreneurship globally, and NextBillion.com, a well-known site where thousands of people blog daily about social entrepreneurship. These two sites, I felt, featured materials that stressed the discursive norms and values of social entrepreneurship as well as provided a wealth of examples of successful social ventures around the world. Both websites were replete with texts, posts, and publications around social entrepreneurship's



growing recognition as a flourishing development model, the impact of innovative and replicable solutions to the world's social ills, and the success of business-minded individuals in empowering the poor and the oppressed. Overall, conducting a textual discourse analysis of the sites' materials exposed the formulation of neoliberal cultural meanings and individual identities, and the ways in which they are reproduced and circulated transnationally. Close examination of the online texts also made me aware of the ways in which access was classed, raced, and gendered.

In addition to these website, I drew on another key source of visual and discursive production – a Facebook page called “Social Entrepreneurship in South Africa. This page, intended for anyone interested in the progress of social entrepreneurship in the country, boasts thousands of posts and videos regarding the initiatives of social entrepreneurs, opportunities and trainings/educational courses in the field, and meanings/definitions to attract like-minded individuals and sympathizers. People can ‘like’ the page, discuss ideas and events with each other, and keep track of innovations in South Africa. I have been a ‘follower’ of this page for nearly two years after stumbling upon it on Facebook in 2014. I have watched it grow in use, quality, and outreach, and I have found it to be a useful source of information on developments in the field, but most importantly on the type of people that are included in the promotion of social entrepreneurship in South Africa. Reading the posts of forum members gave me a good understanding of the dominant views – mostly neoliberal – around issues such as poverty, marginalization, and empowerment. My critical discursive analysis of these secondary materials were complemented by semi-structured interviews of social entrepreneurs and Ashoka Fellows in South Africa.

Secondly, I collected a wide range of secondary materials during my work with Sonke Gender Justice. Before following Sonke's trainers in the field, I went through pamphlets, training manuals, programs reports, and academic courses offered as part of Sonke's activities' portfolio. I also watched countless videos – called photovoice – of men's testimonies of change and read success stories displayed on Sonke's website and printed documents. In addition to these textual materials, I conducted visual and textual analysis of photos of Sonke's work in the field. These photos were titled with slogans such as "One Man Can", "Real Men Don't Rape" or "Not in My Name." These slogans were also displayed on wall paintings and advertising posters in Johannesburg townships such as Soweto. In addition to these texts, I was also included in Sonke's listserv, thereby getting internal emails regarding the organization's activist victories and challenges, and present and future endeavors. Similarly, I was allowed to attend staff meetings where logistical efforts were discussed, queries and discontents settled, and programs/campaigns planned and assessed. Access was graciously given to me by Dean Peacock, Sonke's founder, in exchange for volunteering my skills and knowledge as a feminist scholar and researcher. I completed this exposure with semi-structured interviews conducted with Peacock and several Sonke's staff members, focus groups comprised of Community Action Team members (community members that have been exposed to Sonke's programs), and oral histories with key informants met during fieldwork. Supplementing secondary materials with ethnographic methods, I was able to gain a rich understanding about key areas of interest for my work. Equally important to my research was my recollection of personal experiences and private thoughts and feelings, articulated through self-reflection and recorded as entries in my fieldwork diary.

Chronicling my experiences – thereby producing experiential evidence – became as essential to me as documenting my informants’ stories.

### **Thickening the Field: The Use of Experiential Evidence**

Adopting a reflexive stance to my work meant that I was acutely attentive to the impact of emotions in the research process. The feelings and thoughts I had toward certain aspects of my research or subjects proved just as important as the impressions participants and informants had of me in producing a kind of evidence deeply informed by personal experience. However, scholars concerned with feminist methodologies have lamented the lack of formal discussion on the role of emotions in academic research (Widdowfield 2000; Valentine 2003; Bondi 2007). If the subjective nature of research is more and more accepted in academic circles, the emotive ways by which the researcher is affected by both the research process and encounters is much less acknowledged, at least in academic writing. In this section, I do not just discuss how my positionality has influenced the data collected (Rose 1997). I consciously chose to articulate how others’ feelings toward me impacted my work *and* my very identity. As Widdowfield (2000) points out, attentiveness to the influence of emotions on the research process is by no means an inherently feminist praxis. However, it does fit into the feminist effort to do away with masculinist binaries that have plagued academia: culture/nature, mind/body, objective/subjective, reason/emotion, etc. Following this tradition, I unapologetically discuss the role of friendship, motherhood, and emotions such as anger, sadness, frustration, happiness and affection in producing a thick ethnographic analysis. Widdowfield (2000) agrees that “not only are emotions an inevitable and unavoidable

part of the research process, but writing emotions into research accounts can facilitate a better understanding of the work undertaken and forms an important part of the process of situating knowledge” (205).

### *Friendship in the Field*

Four different circles of friendship were essential to my research. The first set of friendship enabled me to gain insight in the lives, experiences, and discourses of several white South Africans of Afrikaans descent. As a black woman, getting access to the closed, gated, and highly homogenous Afrikaans communities was a difficult process. It was motherhood that ultimately opened a few doors for me. As I first settled in South Africa, I lived in Sandton, a pervasively white neighborhood, in order to be closer to the American School that my 6-year old son was attending. As in many of Sandton’s gated complexes, mine was one where parents felt safe to let their children play outside, largely unattended. The complex was a rather small one compared to other Sandton’s communities and the large majority of the tenants were white and Afrikaans. The presence of a Clubhouse with a pool, an entertainment area for kids, a bar and a restaurant ensured that most evenings, tenants would gather there to drink, eat, and socialize while their kids ran freely within the complex. My son was the only black kid in the complex, and I initially feared that he would not be accepted by the other children. As most of them were home-schooled, they very rarely ventured beyond the community’s electric fences, and although most of them had black nannies, it became evident to me that the children – especially the younger ones – had not been much exposed to their country’s cultural and racial heterogeneity. In time, however, my son formed strong

friendships within that cliquish community, and tens of kids flocked to my small apartment daily in order to partake in the games and activities I planned for my child. At first awkward and distrustful, the parents had no choice but to come and meet me as they collected their children, all of which had become extremely attached to me. They slowly began to accept my presence, to greet me, and ultimately ended up welcoming me to their tables at the clubhouse.

The friendships that I developed in that community were fraught with contradictions. As we began helping each other taking care and entertaining the kids in the evening and on week-ends, these relationships were deeply woven with threads of care, empathy, and solidarity that motherhood can, at times, spur. However, these new-found and unsolicited friendships were often uncomfortable, and at times, frankly disturbing at a very personal level. If the neighborhood children seem instantly oblivious of my and my son's blackness, their parents were not. Yet, several factors contributed to my acceptance into their impermeable circle. My privileged position as a foreigner from the United States (although I stated many times that I was from the Caribbean), a highly educated woman pursuing a doctorate degree, a member of the upper-middle class (thanks to the favorable dollar to rand exchange rate), my command of the English language, and the fact that I was able to enroll my son in the prestigious – and expensive – American School of Johannesburg, ensured that in due time, they stopped seeing me as a black woman and a single mother.

This new-found 'invisibility' made me privy of their hardships, struggles, and daily lives. I often had to intervene in my neighbors' domestic disputes, console and lend money to battered women, and more than once, take them to private clinics after they had

been physically abused by their husbands. But I also got a glimpse into their stance on race in South Africa. In conversations in which they were discussing political issues and the ruling of the country by the black majority, they often made bluntly racist comments, completely oblivious of my presence. Although a silent observer of these discussions, I felt not only conflicted between my role as a researcher and my identity as a black person, but also submerged by a sense of betrayal to my race, my identity, my personal ethics, and my political beliefs. Once, I pointed out the racist connotations of their comments, and the group of white women quickly sought to appease me by insisting that even though I have a “brown skin”, I am not “like them” (meaning, black South Africans). The different emotions felt during these encounters – from disbelief to disgust – impacted my understanding of the racial tensions prevalent in South Africa, and instructed many of my observations on gendered and racial relations in the country. In the end, the racist language used both implicitly and explicitly by my Afrikaans acquaintances made it problematic for me to pursue these friendships. For the most part, I did not remain in contact with any of them at the end of my stay in South Africa.

My geographical location in Sandton and my cordial relationships with the community residents enabled me to establish rapport with subjects radically different from the Afrikaans women I had befriended. As the latter frequently sent their personnel to fetch their kids at my place, I developed a close friendship with the black women that served as my neighbors’ nannies and maids. They were ‘foreigners’ who had immigrated illegally to South Africa – mostly from Zimbabwe and Malawi – to look for work. Grossly underpaid and overworked, and often emotionally abused by their employers, these women played a central role in my year-long ethnographic research. As our bond

got stronger, it developed into a sort of sisterhood in which we helped and care for each other in our own ways. I would help them with their administrative paperwork or give them rides to their townships in my old rented car on rainy days (which prevented them from walking extremely long distances at night and in the cold). I would also take them to public clinics when they fell sick, as several of them lived with HIV/AIDS and struggled daily to hide their disease from their white employers. In exchange, and without a word ever spoken, I would come home from the field to a home-cooked meal, my apartment thoroughly cleaned, my clothes impeccably ironed, and my son fed, bathed, and put to bed. It became a usual sight to find a dozen young women gathered in my small apartment around my then 6-year old listening attentively as he read bed-time stories for children to them.

This type of care work, although not usually mentioned in academic work on research methods, was the rock upon which I came to rely on the numerous occasions when I had to spend days traveling across provinces to conduct research. Moreover, these women opened their homes to me, and my son and I soon became a familiar, if peculiar, presence in the illegal settlements and poverty-stricken townships where my friends lived. These relations of trust and solidarity were further strengthened during the xenophobic attacks that shook the country in the spring of 2015. On a particularly violent night, the women, one by one, flocked into my apartment with the complicity of the South Africans security guards, as their shacks were being looted. That night, we shared our life stories. Theirs were ones of pain, poverty, disease, unbearable loss, displacement, violence and longing. Although most of them could not read and write, they analyzed the systemic oppressions and inequalities that marginalized them with accuracy and

surprising discernment. Most importantly, I learnt a great deal about the ties of solidarity and communal care work that these women rely on to ensure not only their economic survival and that of their families back home, but also their emotional well-being, health, and happiness. Some of the most important emotions I felt and observed during my fieldwork were linked to the relationships I forged with these marginalized, illiterate, diseased, violated yet vibrant, joyous, and subversive women.

In time, I made a different, yet equally instructive and enriching, set of encounters. Although I had contacted and communicated with Dean Peacock, the founder of Sonke Gender Justice, the social enterprise within which I would engage in activist ethnographic research, a year before I started fieldwork, I actually only met him several weeks after my arrival in South Africa. We met over lunch in a café nearby Sonke's offices where he shared with me that many years prior, while a graduate student in Berkeley, one of my dissertation committee members had served on his committee and had played an important role in shaping his own research. I believe that it was this shared relationship more than my curriculum vitae that prompted his decision to give me free access to all of Sonke's operations, programs, facilities, and staff in exchange for my help in conducting focus groups with Sonke's beneficiaries and producing a report for its donors. As it is typically the case for non-profit organizations, the work to staff ratio is grossly disproportionate, and my help was readily welcome in the office. While 'volunteering' at Sonke, I was able to forge relationships of respect and trust with the trainers, and although I conducted several formal interviews and attended staff meetings, the bulk of my observations comes from informal banter in the office's kitchen and hallways.



In particular, two male trainers proved highly influential in shaping my research and informing my reflections on many of South Africa's political, economic and social issues – from the legacies of apartheid to quotidian life in the townships to popular tensions and preconceptions among the different South African ethnicities. I met Anele shortly after I started 'helping out' at Sonke. He was overwhelmed with work and under pressing time constraints to submit a thorough end-of-project assessment report to donor agencies. He asked me if I would be willing to accompany him in the different provinces where Sonke had conducted trainings and community dialogues throughout the years. We agreed that I would conduct all semi-structured interviews and focus groups with the help of Karabo, a seasonally contracted trainer at Sonke. While the latter would translate and transcribe all encounters, I would be able to own all data and use it toward my own academic career. This arrangement not only saved me precious time and other transcribing resources, it also facilitated my access to gatekeepers and informants in the communities.

Having worked with Sonke for years, Karabo was well-liked across all provinces, and the amicable relationships he had with the beneficiaries were useful in the latter opening up and sharing their experiences with me. As we were 'on the road' for days, driving from Johannesburg to the different provinces, Anele, Karabo and I learnt to rely on each other, and a deep friendship developed among us. During our long travels and late-night meetings in hotel bedrooms, the two men told a host of stories of their experiences in the field, which often ended up in the three of us laughing hysterically. At times, however, they would also share their own personal stories, doubts, aspirations, and struggles. These two particular friendships gave me a rich and intimate understanding of

black men's involvement with and negotiations of changing gender norms, gender equality, and gendered activist strategies. Acquiring a better appreciation for – and indeed, experiencing first-hand – the complexities and differences of gender relations across South Africa's cultural groups resulted in a richer analysis of black masculinities and gender norms, expectations, and traditions.

While my relationships with Sonke staff made data collection possible, it also influenced the direction of my work, and in some ways restricted the scope of my analysis. Relying on Sonke's professional and social networks to recruit interviewees and focus group participants contextualized some of the responses and stories I obtained. For example, as the organization works to train and empower men, as opposed to women, I had to insist on the inclusion of some women in the focus groups. Even as I successfully recruited women, their being outnumbered by men sometimes worked to subdue their participation and quiet their voices. Secondly, all interactions with community members required the presence of Karabo or Anele for translation purposes, which I assume, restricted the informants' freedom to express opinions that diverged too radically from Sonke's teachings. Although the trainers reassured interviewees that they should feel free to speak openly and truly, it is understandable that their very presence in the room and role as translators stifled my informants' openness a bit. In general, they appeared reluctant to criticize Sonke's mission and the usefulness of trainings on gender equality. Instead, they were adamant to share their stories of success, boasting how much participating in Sonke's programmes had changed them for the better. Karabo and Anele were not easily duped, though. After the interviews and focus groups were conducted, they would remind me:

*“You have to take their stories of change with a grain of salt sometimes. Sometimes, they just lie, you know? Sometimes, it is true that they have changed a lot...in these cases, other people in the community can observe the same and they have something to show far bigger than just words...but sometimes, they are full of lies.”*

Therefore, my research is particularly marked by men-centered interactions and experiences. Thankfully, I was able to conduct a few in-depth interviews and have informal conversations with women in the communities, which served to balance the gender bias that came with working with Sonke.

*“What Is She?” The Social Construction of My Racialized Body*

When I entered Sikwele’s building in March 2015, I was particularly nervous. I had traveled to the Free State with Karabo to conduct in-depth interviews of the NGO’s staff and community members, all of whom had been trained by Sonke on gender inequality, toxic masculinities, and domestic violence. Sikwele, located in Bethlehem, was to be our first stop in a three-day long journey across the Free State. I had learnt some basic Tsutu language in order to greet and have small chats with the participants in their own language. At the end of the day, relieved that all had gone well, I asked Karabo how he felt about the interview process and the data collected. What he told me did not surprise me, but prompted me to reflect more thoroughly on markers of my identity as they were seen by my informants. My conversation with Karabo as we were driving back to our lodging described how my embodied location, real or perceived, has shaped my research encounters:

B: Well, at first the people, they were confused...

Me: What do you mean they were confused? Confused about what?

B: They asked “what is she?!” At first, they thought you were a colored, but then you do not act or speak like them, and you kept saying “we” and “us” when you talked about blacks...so they were confused. They couldn’t place you in the blacks or in the colored.

Me: Yeah, I am getting accustomed to my new racial identity here in South Africa (laughs)

B: They were not sure. But once I explained to them that you were from the U.S. and that your experience of blackness is different from ours, and they were fine. One participant told me at the end “Ocee, she acts like us, like an African. I like her.”

This exchange illustrates the complexity and ambiguity of my positionality in the field. Not quite an insider, but not quite an outsider, I needed to be figured out. The fact that Karabo and the focus group participants had had a full conversation about me in my very presence was something that I would quickly get accustomed to because it happened at every town and village we visited subsequently. My informants would express their curiosity to Karabo in isizulu, tsutu, xhosa or tswana, and the only thing betraying them was their insistent stares. However, their interest in locating my “identity” was hardly new to me. From the very first day I arrived in South Africa, I became aware of people’s need to identify their peers based on race and/or ethnicity. Specific traits and behaviors are attributed to zulus, xhosas, or colored. I quickly learnt that Colored had the reputation to be violent and quick-tempered people, especially when under the influence of alcohol. For example, after showing up at a party with a friend of mine, he was approached by an acquaintance and told: “I see that you brought a *puss*<sup>7</sup> with you. I hope she won’t break any bottle tonight.” When I questioned my friend about this bizarre statement, he apologized for the other man’s rudeness and explained that Colored people were known to get drunk and start fights, using broken bottles as weapons. Of course, we both recognized that these preconceived ideas were gross generalizations and exaggerations,

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<sup>7</sup> Pejorative name given to members of the Colored community. In most cases, it describes their alleged violent tendencies.

but the point remains that ambivalent feelings and skepticism were often attached to my very presence. To my surprise however, this kind of distrust in general dissipated very quickly, without me trying to assuage it. Over and over during my stay in South Africa, I have heard that very sentence: “you look Colored, but you don’t act Colored. *What are you?*”

The idea that race is socially constructed is widely accepted within the social sciences (Omi and Winant 1986; Waters 1990; Frankenberg 1993; Haney Lopez 1996). Omi and Winant (2001) propose a definition of race as “a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (405). Actions, behaviors and performances that were invisible to me – indeed, ‘unspeakable’ to all - were acutely perceived by my informants, and in fact, were given important meaning. My body (skin tone, hair texture, facial features), as a product of lived and historical experiences rather than a natural, biological entity, was imbued with notions of power, better treatment, and superior social status. In South Africa, the construction of racialized bodies are part of a specific social and historical process, created in part by the apartheid regime. To an outside observer, the differentiation between ‘blacks’ and ‘colored’ along the lines of race can often seem incredibly arbitrary. Indeed, I have met individuals who identify (and are recognized by others) to be ‘black’ even though they physically looked like a Colored person, and vice versa. Yet, discarding race as an illusion is counter-productive because understanding racial formation (in South Africa for our present purposes) is critical to grasping the ways in which human bodies are organized within “historically situated projects” (Omi and Winant 2001: 406).

The importance of my racial identification needs to be appreciated in a context where the salience of racial group politics continues to dominate the political culture. Apartheid created a system based on racial hierarchy. The Population Registration Act of 1950 established four racial categories: blacks (or Africans), whites, Colored people, and people of Indian origin. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission defined these racial groups: “a White person is one who is in appearance obviously white – and not generally accepted as Colored – or who is generally accepted as White [...] A Bantu is a person who is, or is generally accepted as, a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa [...] a Colored is a person who is not a white person or a Bantu” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 1998: 30). Notwithstanding this racial classification, Gibson (2004) also notes other differences. His quantitative study shows that while whites are the most economically advantaged group in South Africa, Colored people and those of Asian origin also appear to have a much higher economic standard of living than black South Africans (36).

The same trend applies to education and literacy, where blacks are overwhelmingly disadvantaged in comparison to the other racialized groups (i.e. Colored and Indian). Gibson (2004) offers another interesting findings, which more than race perhaps illustrates the different subjectivities of black South Africans and Colored people. Reporting results of his focus groups, he shows the strikingly different positioning that Africans and Colored have toward apartheid. While Africans use terms such as ‘victim’, ‘slave’, and ‘activist’, Colored people were most likely to characterize themselves as ‘bystanders’ or ‘spectators.’ The author further asserts that these findings suggest that “Colored people were especially disengaged from the struggle over

apartheid. Being neither fully oppressed nor fully free, Colored people occupied an ambivalent position under the apartheid system” (Gibson 2004: 39). In fact, Gibson finds that a plurality of Colored South Africans not only dissociate with Black (black was their anti-identity) (60), but also that 39.5% of Colored people claim to have lived *better* under apartheid than at the time of the survey in 2001.

Although these findings probably misconstrue the identity of many members of the Colored community, it became clear through my interactions with informants that they are well perceived by black South Africans. They might be the basis for the general distrust and bitterness – even though they interact, befriend each other and inter-marry – felt toward Colored people. Although I did not anticipate how my blackness was going to be represented and rendered meaningful prior to going in the field, it turned out to be a critical factor. Somehow, people appreciated the fact that although I looked ‘mixed’, I considered myself a black woman and was proud of my African heritage. For the purpose of my fieldwork, it got me the trust and sympathy of my black informants.

Beyond the historical circumstances that constructed different racialized bodies in South Africa, race is being (re)formed through everyday experiences and encounters. Omi and Winant (2001) explain that comments such as “funny, you don’t look black” (409), utilize race as the main indicator of *who* a person *is* and how they are expected to *act*. Similarly, my respondents’ reckoned that my visible body was dissonant with my embodied performance of identity. The sense of disorientation that many of them experienced as they tried to understand *who* I was speaks to the role that racial signification plays in organizing and making sense of society. Importantly, my respondents’ efforts to *know* me on the basis of my racial identity was not a racist act in

itself. They were merely attempting to decide how they should react to my presence and act around me, the things they could say to me and could not say. They were gauging whether to *trust* me or not<sup>8</sup>. In other words, the visible and the ‘thing’ seen were different, yet co-constitutive of the same subject and made completely congruent through doing and simply *being*. These fieldwork experiences reinforced an idea expressed by Merleau-Ponty (1962) that “the body is the vehicle of being-in-the-world [...] it is enacted at every instant in the movement of existence (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, in Wylie 2002: 445). Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) ontology “not only adduces a new set of relations between subject and object, seer and seen, but that, in doing so, it further opens a relational means of conceiving the interinvolvement of the material and the discursive” (in Wylie 2002: 446). The thoughts and emotions that mark bodies in different ways are essentially informed by, and cannot be divorced from human experience. In research, much like in everyday life, objective thoughts and sensorial impressions cannot be easily separated.

If theories of the construction of racial categories informed my understanding of the forces at work in the *(re)making* of my identity in South Africa, the *forces* that informed my participants were both mundane and affective. For this reason, I, here, give serious attention to affect. I take this approach to complement my use of social constructivism. Stressing the importance of performativity, non-representational theory pushes the boundaries of social constructivism to include the role of affect<sup>9</sup>, the

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<sup>8</sup> Of course, the notion that, for my informants, trust was so dependent on racial identity is yet another sign of the deep inequalities and animosity that continue to animate the ‘Rainbow Nation.’

<sup>9</sup> Affect theory is complex. For the sake of this discussion, I simply understand affect as culturally-coded bodily responses to external stimuli and interactions.



epiphenomenal, the unseen, and everyday encounters in creating the world we inhabit and shaping human interactions (Anderson and Harrison 2010). The concept of affect disturbs concepts such as representations, meanings, identities, consciousness, and structure. I will never know for sure what prompted my informants to *like* me, despite their relative failure at classifying me in a racial category familiar to them. I want to believe that the momentary discomfort that my unfamiliarity prompted was erased through a process of impalpable, quasi-instinctual decisions. Affect – understood as “those visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing that can serve to drive us toward movement, thought, and ever-changing forms of relation (Gregg and Seigworth 2010: 1) – is a concept that grasps complex and immaterial “forces of encounter” (Gregg and Seigworth: 3). I could often tell that these forces were unfolding quietly, beneath the surface, as the quizzical looks were intermittently softened by a timid smile in my direction.

Affective reality may shape or inhibit relations, open or close doors, categorize and/or liberate bodies in mostly unspoken, intangible ways. Although I have tried to figure out what exactly constituted a “Colored’s behavior”, neither my informants nor my friends could truly describe it to me. They would say: “I don’t know how to *speak* it to you... it’s a way of walking, talking, dressing...just a way of being...and it is different from us, but also from you.” Most importantly, as an older man said to me, with a puzzled look on his face: “I am not sure exactly what you are, but somehow, I like you.” These remarks point to the socially constructed dimension of (racialized) bodies but also to the “relational, affective, sensual, dynamic, and non-representational” dimension of positionality and identit(ies) in research encounters (Price 2013: 11). Theories of affect

were helpful as I contemplated the fleeting disruptions of racial representations and social structures that particular encounters occasioned.

*Insider/Outsider: Negotiating Fluid Positionalities*

Without my conscious realization, my racial identity as a black person *emerged* through my interactions with black South Africans, somehow including me as one of them despite all other excluding factors. My personal experience has taught me that in some black circles of the Rainbow Nation, a foreigner may be more readily trusted and accepted than a Coloured South African. This lesson further informed my analysis of the complex, rich, and disturbing racial relations in a country that is still trying to mend the inequalities and injuries of the past.

However confusing to me, Black South Africans' perceptions that I was acting more 'black' than 'colored' helped me to gain more legitimacy in the townships and in the villages. Other factors equally facilitated my role as a participant-observer. If my position as a black trainer affiliated with Sonke, and friend with the well-respected Anele and Karabo, made me somewhat of an insider, my gender, class, education, and position as a non-South African made it clear that I was also an outsider, and therefore, unthreatening to local hierarchies and customs. Reinforcing my 'otherness', Anele and Karabo took great pleasure, despite my protests, in calling me 'Doctor' in public. They also never failed to introduce me as a "doctoral student from the United States", which always seemed to impress our audience. While I was at first uncomfortable with the clout of power my friends artfully created around me, Karabo settled my embarrassment when he expounded:

“These people, they are honored when they think ‘important’ people from abroad are coming to talk to them and learn from them. When I call you ‘doctor’ it’s not for you, it’s for them. The same way, people – especially in xhosa land<sup>10</sup> - like to have to speak in English. They can show off to their peers that they can speak English, and it is a source of great pride for them. Sometimes you see, *your* power is really *their* power...do you understand what I am trying to say?”

Karabo’s assessment proved right. During the focus groups, participants remarked with humor that at least for a few hours, *they* were my teachers, and that I should ask questions if I wanted clarifications. Importantly, my informants’ perception of me as an educated outsider who had traveled a long way from home to meet with them, prompted more introspective and thoughtful answers. Also, they felt the need to go into details when explaining their traditions and customs to me, aware that I may not be familiar with many of them. More than once, a member of the community has addressed his peers during community dialogues to state:

“Our sister right here has traveled far just to hear our stories... And she has many diplomas, she will one day be a “Doctor”... So you see, our stories do matter. Although she is from a foreign land, she is our sister<sup>11</sup>, and we should aim to be truthful to her, but also patient because she may not understand some of our customs and our jokes.”<sup>12</sup>

My ambiguous and shifting insider/outsider positionality provided me access to places and objects that were private – homes, photo albums, diaries – which produced richer responses, stories, and data. The freedom one felt in opening up to a ‘foreigner’ was puzzlingly deepened by the closeness of racial association. Gender also played an important role: in general, women felt a closer connection to me than men. When men

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<sup>10</sup> Communities and villages where mostly Xhosa people live, such as Mtata, Matatiele, Butterworth, which are located in the Eastern Cape.

<sup>11</sup> The term ‘sister’ pointed to my identity as a black woman.

<sup>12</sup> Focus group in Welkom on April 8<sup>th</sup> 2015

told their stories in a factual manner, as in to elucidate my queries on South African masculinities, gender relations, and the work of Sonke, women related their experiences more intimately, often with the assumption that I understood where they were coming from. Conversely at other times, these aspects of my identity restricted my access to places that were deemed too dangerous (i.e. particular townships' streets) or customarily sensitive (i.e. indabas). Positionality and geographies often become intertwined during research encounters, and therefore both deserve full consideration in any discussion of research methodologies. My positionality therefore was dynamic and constantly unfolding, ever so different in time and place. In the words of human geographer, Patricia Price (2013): "It is through movement, encounter, and engagement among landscape elements, including but not limited to humans, that the self [...] emerges through direct sensory engagement with the world, and in tandem with the landscape, itself understood as a pulling-together or gathering of sorts rather than a finished whole" (18).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have outlined the concepts and methods that frame my research. I have discussed how the examination of transnational solidarity efforts, gender equality and embodiments of masculinities, and contestation and reinventions of neoliberal cultural forms, have necessitated the use of methods that could capture the power-laden, multi-scalar, yet deeply intimate aspects of South African experiences with global discourses and practices. The approaches described in this chapter underline a type of research that is partial, emotive, rooted in particular contexts, and always relational. Although carefully designed, this research has developed over time and has been informed by

different places, people, and situations. Shaped by relationships and emotions, my research is resonant with feminist ethics, reflexivity, and contributions on collaboration. My interactions with research subjects proved to me that how we *feel* does impact the way we *act* in the world, and can make or break alliances and collaborations. To be sure, the body of evidence that is produced when applying feminist praxis and paying attention to affect, although richer, also bears limitations. My attentiveness to issues of representation and multiple positionalities is an effort to acknowledge the constraints of ‘partial’ research findings.

Relating my experience of fieldwork is valuable in the context of transnational social movements. In the upcoming chapters, I will discuss my interactions with social entrepreneurs and the ‘beneficiaries’ of Sonke’s work in the community. My interviews with the social entrepreneurs – as well as my review of the literature on social entrepreneurship – indicated that little is said about the dynamics and relationships that permitted them access to the groups and communities they sought to empower or transform. The literature hardly addresses the reactions – resistant or welcoming – of local groups when faced with a discourse or practice that is foreign to them. We only hear about the execution of programs/activities on the ground, but the stories, actors, and interactions that made the work possible are left in the background. For transnational solidarity to be rooted in the realities of local groups, these subtleties have to come to the forefront and be explored. This chapter was an exercise of reflexivity and positionality that I believe is essential to any effort at building bridges across differences.

CHAPTER III  
Civil Society, Neoliberalism, and the State  
Renegotiating Race, Class, and Gender in the ‘New’ South Africa

*For many of the activists [...] there was unmitigated opposition to the economic policies adopted by the ANC [...] Activists spoke of how the right-wing economic policies lead to widespread and escalating unemployment, with concomitant water and electricity cut-offs and evictions even from the ‘toilets in the veld’ provided by the government in the place of houses. Most importantly, there was general agreement that this was not just a question of short-term pain for long-term gain. The ANC had become a party of neoliberalism [...] The ANC had to be challenged and a movement built to render its policies unworkable. It seemed increasingly unlikely that open confrontation with the repressive power of the post-apartheid state cannot be avoided” Ashwin Desai (2002: 147).*

In Chapter I, I challenged the restrictive boundaries that separate local politics from global struggles. Too much of the credit is attributed to external actors and little attention is paid to the African women and men who have brought about social changes. To be sure, the entanglement of gender and race renders invisible the liberatory and transformative role played by African women and their influence on global networks of social justice. I argue that globalized processes and practices become transformed in the local context to offer up opportunities for transformation and counter-hegemonic narratives. In this chapter, I discuss gendered rejections of national and global forms of oppression in South Africa, concluding that they bear lessons for the “globalization from below” project. I explore different phases of local organizing, which provided possibilities for transformation. I then discuss South Africa’s conscription into globalized processes and practices post-apartheid, how it has impacted African women, and the battles they have had to fight in order to challenge forms of political, economic, social, and cultural oppression. Women’s involvement and leadership have also influenced gender regime change. The rise in domestic women’s mobilization, which was facilitated

by the pressures of the apartheid regime, has led to changes in domestic *and* global institutions, gender norms and gender relations. Still, studies of transnational civil society have not sufficiently addressed the South African women's movements role – past and present - in redefining gendered oppression in African terms. This chapter is one attempt to rectify this omission. However, for all the advances that South African have made and the impact they have had on the development of a less oppressive society, South Africa's jettisoning and marginalization of women is still a reality. This is why the work of Sonke is so relevant today as the country faces high levels of gender-based violence. However, in this dissertation, I insist that any struggle against patriarchal norms needs to be informed by African women's lived experiences, survival strategies, and aspirations for gender *and* racial democracy in order for the development of a truly transformative gendered democracy.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that gender oppression is one of the deleterious consequences of globalized forms (including colonialism) and their legacies. However, I also examine the way globalized processes and practices become transformed in the local context to offer up opportunities for transformation. First, gender oppression has to be related to colonialism, understood as a globalized system geared at subjugating the cultures and the people of the Global South.

### **The Role of Women in the Anti-Apartheid Struggle**

The context of the liberation struggle against apartheid has framed the inclusion of women-specific demands and needs within civil society movements. While some argued that the urgent need for national liberation has stifled the emergence of a strong women's

movement (Beall, Hassim, and Todes 1989; Horn 1991), others have pointed to the futility of separating the gender struggle from its racial counterpart (Kemp et al. 1995). However, while women have played a vigorous role in democratization movements, it has often been displaced to the periphery when not erased altogether. Hassim and Gouws (1988) point to the relations of power that exist within civil society, arguing that far from being a gender-neutral realm, it can work to relegate women's organizing to the private sphere and prevent women from positioning their claims within other demands for socioeconomic and political transformation.

The role that women played in national liberation set the stage for the transformative possibilities of the post-Apartheid era. Far from divisive, women's organizing under the apartheid regime initially supported and complemented male-led liberation organizations (Steady 1993; Kuumba 2001; Molyneaux 2001). Women's participation in the anti-apartheid struggle is best known through the Anti-Pass Campaign, where women protested against the use of identification documents – or 'passes' – as a tool for disciplining, imprisoning, and oppressing black male bodies. The apartheid regime's decision to extend mandatory passes to women in 1952 prompted women to come together, creating the foundation for women's political participation in liberation organizations, which has traditionally been the fiefdom of men (Beall et al. 1989; Walker 1991; Seidman 1993; Wells 1993; Kuumba 2002). Organizing around the Federation of African Women (FSAW), thousands of women led anti-pass protests and other forms of civil disobedience that culminated with more than 20,000 women marching to Pretoria, the capital, on August 9, 1956, clamoring against the pass laws. Many were detained, yet refused bail, giving impetus to FSAW's "fill-the-jails" strategy



(FSAW 1958). Despite the subsequent dissipation of the Federations' dissident strategies by the male-led organizations (ANC, Pan African Congress), women's fervent leadership in the anti-pass struggle was at the front of the liberation movement in the 1950s, considerably impacting the more visible men's organizations. Following the success of the FSAW, other women's organizations developed, and while demanding racial equality and national liberation in one voice with their larger, male-led counterparts, also stressed gender-specific needs and demands as part of their political agenda (Kuumba 2002).

The gendered political structure of apartheid provided an opportunity for women to put in place organizational strategies. As the migratory labor system used black males as cheap labor in the gold and diamond mines, more women had to join the urban labor force, as opposed to staying in their native rural homelands. Serving primarily as domestic workers or self-employed in casual jobs, women were able to unionize and gain political influence in the struggle against apartheid, because of the regime's patriarchal assumption that men only belonged to the public sphere, while women remained in the private. Therefore, a fortuitous consequence of the apartheid patriarchal structure was that the legislation did not forbid women – the way it did men – to organize into unions (Kuumba 2002). The Western-imposed gendered division of labor also impacted women's organizing in less formal ways. The fact that women were often relegated to private spaces, like the home and the community, influenced the mode of their involvement in the struggle. Women would set up communal collectivities or tap into their extensive kinship-based social networks to provide their families with basic welfare services, and solve insecurity issues in their neighborhoods (Payne 1990). Berger (1986) reckons that South African women's increased political presence was built on “a tradition

of union organizing but also on a history of women's solidarity expressed in religious organizations, informal assistance networks, and community based protest movements" (218). Comparing the role of African-American and black South African women in the national project, Kuumba (2002) recognizes that "in both the United States and South African cases, the particular structural location and semiautonomous resistance of African/Black women [...] served as catalysts that catapulted these movements for racial justice and/or national liberation to higher levels" (505). The informal, self-help, type of mobilization that women were able to engage in was not only the care network communities came to rely on in the absence of men, it also paralleled, complemented, *and* eventually challenged the male-dominated 'official' liberation organizations (Kaplan 1997; Meer 1985).

Women's activism was built around gendered meanings and understandings of oppression. For instance, African women's roles as mothers shaped their participation in the anti-pass laws and other protests. Kuumba (2002) relates how the FSAW would appeal to women to join organizations, marches, and protests based on their responsibility to their children (517). Pamphlets reading "our children's future depends on the extent to which we, the mothers of South Africa, organize and work and fight for a better life for our little ones" (Kuumba 2002: 518). Similarly, male-led liberation organizations, generally silent on gender issues, envisaged the particular gendered impact of socio-political institutions only in terms of how apartheid laws may interfere with women's ability to perform their duties as mothers and wives. Women's reproductive, care-driven roles provided a socially-acceptable and less-disruptive avenue to fight against apartheid's repressive laws. South Africans, like other Third World women in the

decolonization movements, for the most part entered the struggle as mothers of the nation.

Nationalism as a masculinist project undermined the liberatory possibilities of women's mobilization. To this day, debates on the women's movement in South Africa, often take a backseat to mobilization against broader social issues (Hassim and Gouws 1998). Tendencies to disregard gender are legion in the history of nation-building, and South Africa did not break with this pattern until the late 1980s. As such, scholarly attention to the construction of the 'New' South Africa has either lacked a gendered approach (Slabbert 1992; Adam and Moodley 1993; Adler and Webster 1995), or considered gender concerns to be subsumed to nationalist aspirations (Walker 1991; McClintock 1993). In activist circles, unwillingness to deal with gender inequality was also salient. Drawing on interviews with ANC Women's League officers in 1993, Seidman (1999) describes:

"In discussions in the 1990s, several women who are now self-described feminists said that in earlier antiapartheid campaigns, they avoided raising gender issues publically because they feared creating internal divisions in an already embattled antiapartheid movement; moreover some women said that in townships, they faced physical threats from male activists if they raised questions such as reproductive rights [...] others admitted in interviews that they simply accepted uncritically the general antiapartheid discourse that stressed the need to reunify African families divided by apartheid's gendered migrant labor, rather than to address inequalities within families" (291-292).

Similarly ANC activist Pethu Serote (1991) wrote:

"[...] It was always argued that the national liberation struggle was supreme (an argument nobodies disagrees with) and that the emancipation of women would come naturally and automatically with its triumph. History...negates the second part of the statement" (in Seidman 1999: 296).

While antiapartheid women's movements were more geared toward racial freedom than gender justice in the 1990s, women activists grew adamant about putting gender concerns

at the center of the democratic negotiations (Seidman 1999). It was this dynamic feminist activism that compelled the post-apartheid ANC-led governments, from Nelson Mandela's to Jacob Zuma's, to commit – at least on paper – to the consolidation of a new gendered democracy.

### **Articulations of Gendered Citizenship during the Democratic Transition**

The change in international norms pertaining to women's rights influenced South African women's movement. The United Nations (UN) mainstreaming of gender impacted women activists' change in vision, starting in the late 1990s, and manifested itself in a number of ways. First, they developed the language and knowledge of feminist theory, drawn from international feminist movements. As women (and some men) exiles returned to their country to take part in the antiapartheid struggle, they imported new feminist ideas, generally from the United States and Europe. Integrating lessons from the international feminist debates and documents, women's movements were now better able to articulate their gendered needs and interests and to demand that they be an integral part of the new democratic state (Kemp et al. 1995).

However, as important as the international influences and pressures were, they should not be seen as decisive and should not overshadow the advances fueled by a domestic women's movement (Tripp 2015). Transnational discourses can work to effectively exclude grassroots' initiatives towards democratic transformation. One of the way this has been done in Africa is through the identification of 'culture' and 'tradition' as culprits for South Africa's persistent gender disparities, with transnational narratives and decrees representing progress and modernity. The South African Constitution is the

product of such compromises and negotiations between transnational processes and local formations. As the country sought reconciliation between antagonistic racial groups and political parties *and* reparation for the economic, social, and cultural dispossession of the black majority, the Constitution is intended to be a document affirming South Africa's transformation and insertion in the global moment. It is not only infused with a democratic spirit and language of human rights to freedom, equality, and dignity, but also includes constitutional and international laws on women's rights, safety, and well-being. Charged with promoting the equal status of women, section 181 (1) of the Constitution established the Commission on Gender Equality. This Commission, along with other institutional bodies, is intended to carry out the corresponding international laws and regulations (Bentley 2004). For example, South Africa is a party of the 1979 *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, which the post-apartheid state signed and ratified in 1995. As stated in Article 5, participating states must commit to 'modify social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based in the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.' Article 16 further insists on the state's responsibility to ensure that women are not discriminated against within marriage and the family (Bentley 2004). However, both constitutional law and African customary law are recognized in South Africa. The maintenance of customary law was a way to restore the right to cultural determination denied to blacks for so long. I relate the following event in an effort to highlight the frictions constitutional law and African customary law in the South African context.

In February 2016, as I was living in South Africa, state institutions, cultural leaders, and civil society became embroiled in a heated public – indeed, national – debate over the exercise of customary law in a land ruled by a Western-centric Constitution. Parties with widely diverging beliefs and agendas passionately deliberated the Maidens Bursary, created by the Kwazulu-Natal’s municipality to fund higher education for young women. In order to be eligible, the 16 girls receiving the bursary, have to be and remain for the duration of the program, virgins. They are therefore duly examined by a female cultural leader to ensure their virginity. The organization, *People Against Women Abuse* (POWA) and other members of the civil society and academia have claimed that the program is unethical (if a recipient loses her virginity due to rape, she loses her bursary and chances for higher education), it is also unconstitutional. In turn, the municipality’s mayor, Dudu Mazibuko, retaliated by saying that the Maidens Bursary is a way to deter young women from “falling in love with sugar daddies, get disease and fall pregnant and then their lives are messed up” (EWN 2016). Cultural leaders were interviewed in the media and stated that challenging ‘virginity testing’, a millennial cultural practice and symbol of pride for families in the communities, is just another ploy to destroy African culture and replace it with Western values. Discussions ensued about the inconsistencies between the Constitution and African customary law, and the place that each should occupy in the ‘New’ South Africa.

Pitting transnational norms against cultural practices reinforces the simplistic notion that gender equality can best be achieved through the transformation of African cultures, which are seen as intrinsically oppressive. For instance, Bentley (2004) argues that the maintenance of a dual system of law, “formalizing the role of traditional leaders

[...] contributes to entrenching the unequal status of women in South Africa” (251). I, however, suggest that, notwithstanding the reality that *some* cultural norms and traditions impair the dignity of women and undermine equality between women and men, a dualistic approach of ‘liberatory’ transnational discourses and ‘oppressive’ local practices is counter-productive to the liberation of women. It is congruent with a colonizing, global agenda that imposes its ideas of progress while jettisoning women activists’ attempts at redefining social transformation in both feminist and African terms.

In contrast, prominent feminist intellectuals recognized that post-apartheid institutions would not automatically improve gender oppression if women’s demands were not integrated in the democratic agenda (Hassim 1991; Horn 1991). Therefore, establishing that socio-political structures affected men and women differently, grassroots movements became increasingly gendered, with women-only groups springing up in an effort to mobilize more women and encourage them to speak freely about their own experiences with gender inequalities and envision contextualized solutions. These public and grassroots strategies were central to creating an explicit gendered collective identity in South Africa (Seidman 1993). Albeit reluctantly, male-led organizations integrated some of the feminist demands to their nationalist goals. In 1991, the ANC Women’s League, along with tens of women’s organizations, developed the ‘Women’s Charter’, a political document that was intended as a comprehensive document framing issues of gender inequality. Beyond widely different experiences from women at distinct social locations, the Charter, drawing on extensive research across the country, was able to formulate a clear plan to be included in the new Constitution. In general terms, the Charter was concerned with granting women equal opportunities in the world of work

and lessening patriarchal dominion over women's lives in the home (South African Women's Charter 1994). The Women's Charter's public examination of gender-specific inequalities was essential to the strengthening of a gendered democracy. Men activists who had initially rebuked women for gender norms, had to not only witness women's inclusion in the national negotiations, but also vocally call for a Constitution that opposed and fought all forms of gender subordination (Bonnin 1992; Mothopeng 1992; Moodley 1993). In the 1990s, ANC slogans demanded "a nonracial, democratic, and *nonsexist* South Africa", and by 1994, under the sympathetic government of Nelson Mandela, commitment to dealing with women's issues were fully incorporated in the Constitution.

This accomplishment also points to the fallacy of disregarding the interrelationships between global and local norms. Tripp (2015) recognizes that "inasmuch as global norms have shaped local norms, they have also been heavily influenced by local women's movements" (40). African women's struggle for gender equality played an influential role in domestic recognition of gender oppression and a subsequent shift in attitudes. As a result, the state's approach to gender issues changed from a morally desirable attention to women's woes, to a binding participation in international development platforms on gender norms. As such South Africa's participation in the 1995 United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing was a decisive victory for, and most importantly *prompted by*, local women's movements. Feminists at home were then able to leverage the promises made by the newly-elected democratic government and the documents it signed to further their interests. The result was the full integration of gender issues at both the national and the grassroots level, the latter holding the former to its international obligations.



Furthermore, armed with years of political activism, black South African women offer a complex analysis of the political, economic, and social forms of oppressions that shape their lives, identities, and performances of gender. Burnett (2002) rightly argues that patriarchy in South Africa has been exacerbated by other inequalities, such as race and class. Indeed, postcolonial patriarchies are often “organized around social, political and economic hierarchies of race and class” (28). In what follows I discuss the social crisis that is shaking the hard-earned ideals of the ‘Rainbow Nations’, civil society’s response to it (many of the movements were prompted by women), and the country’s insertion in the neoliberal global order. Taking a detour to examine the present South African context is important and necessary to discuss the emergence of the contemporary feminist movement in South Africa.

### **Inequalities Must Fall: Civil Society and the State**

The year 2016 opened with racial incidents that took South Africa by storm. On January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, Penny Sparrow, a white South African Estate Agent, posted her dislike at witnessing black bodies on Durban Beach during the New Year’s celebrations on Facebook. Ranting about the state of the beach after the holidays, she deplored the sight of “black on black skins” on the beach and concluded by saying, “from now on, I shall address the blacks of South Africa as monkeys as I see the cute, little wild monkeys do the same: pick, drop, and litter” (News24 January, 4 2016). A few hours later, another white South African, Justin Van Vuuren, expressed similar disgust on Facebook, posting “there is no control over these animals [...] Go back to where you came from, and take your 13 kids with you [...] I recommend we make our promenade private! It shouldn’t be

enjoyed by the scum of the nation” (eNCA January, 4 2016). Both lost their jobs after a deluge of comments made on social media, and Penny Sparrow was thereafter reported to be in hiding (The Guardian January, 7, 2016). A few days later, Chris Hart, a senior economist at Standard Bank, was suspended over his tweet stating that “more than 25 years after apartheid ended, the victims are increasing along with a sense of entitlement and hatred towards minorities” (Mail&Guardian January, 5, 2016). Similarly, a renowned public figure, Gareth Cliff, host of the popular musical show *Idols of SA*, was boycotted and fired from the M-Net television network after his post, lamenting the lack of freedom of speech granted to Penny Sparrow, went viral on twitter.

In the aftermath of the series of events, political parties, corporate institutions, civil society, and a multi-generational multitude of ordinary individuals took to social media and the streets to decry the highly racialized system that persists in South Africa, twenty-five years after the end of apartheid. The surge of raw emotional upheaval, encapsulated under the #RacismMustFall movement, is a tell-tale sign of South Africa’s traumatic past and contemporary internal racial (dis)order. Attempts at sweeping past wounds under the grand concept of ‘Rainbow Nation’ were shattered, in the space of one week. Instead, a national conversation started on the spaces of exclusion and identity in post-apartheid South Africa, threatening to destroy the fragile social contract by which whites and blacks – and everyone in between –should co-exist peacefully and respectfully. What these incidents reveal is that South African nation-building is a process that extends beyond constitutional and legal discourses. Like in other post-colonial nations, it needs to take into account citizens’ collective memory of oppression and violence (McEwan 2003). President Zuma’s attempts to pacify the near tangible

restlessness in the country proved to be a derisory exercise. The televised interview in which he virulently stated that the people involved in the anti-apartheid struggle – with some insistence on his own political party, the African National Congress (ANC) – have once and for all defeated racism and that the ‘New’ South Africa must be acclaimed as the Rainbow Nation that it is. Commentators did not fail to note the quasi-desperation in Zuma’s address to the nation as the utopia of a Rainbow Nation was quickly collapsing.

The #RacismMustFall movement unfolded at a time of crisis in South Africa. Several other popular protests had shaken the country the year prior, each further eroding popular support for the ANC. In a massive burst of anger, Black voters, upon which the ANC had ascended into power, were demanding answers and actions from a government, increasingly seen as unable to address the persistent and debilitating inequalities in the ‘New’ South Africa. The youth in particular became the pillar of movements denouncing the appalling material, economic, and social inequities between the black majority and the white minority in the only South Africa they have ever known, the post-apartheid one. On March 9, 2015, a collective of students, academics and staff of the University of Cape Town (UCT) started a controversial protest movement directed against the display of symbols of white supremacy and institutional racism on campus. The protesters were demanding the removal of the statue of Cecil Rhodes, a staunch advocate of settler colonialism and British imperialism in Southern Africa, erected at the heart of UCT. Making headlines throughout 2015, the #RhodesMustFall movement inspired other student demonstrations in South Africa and around the world. Following the removal of the statue on April 9, 2015, students at Oxford University’s Oriel College also demanded that a similar statue of the colonialist on their campus, be taken away (International

Business Times December 26, 2015). The cry against the segregationist legacy of colonialism and apartheid resonated loudly in a nation still in the process of exhorting reconciliation and building democracy.

The #RhodesMustFall movement was soon followed by other protests pressing for more decolonizing efforts in the ‘New’ South Africa. In October 2015, as a result of tuition fees increasing, students shut down universities across the country and marched to the parliament to demand free education. The #FeesMustFall movement is a platform to not only make academia more inclusive, but also to voice the South African youth’s disillusion and frustration toward a government that they no longer trust. Furthermore, the ongoing #ZumaMustFall movement captures the deep crisis of governance faced by the ANC. With the ANC’s authority questioned by its historically black constituency, the multitude of social ills – among which high unemployment, unequal wealth distribution, unequal quality of education, and persistent poverty – affecting the black majority of South Africans can no longer be covered by political demagoguery and populism. The youth’s rebellion against exclusionary and discriminatory institutions and processes is a timely reflection of the general malaise affecting the South African masses as the country has embarked on aggressive neoliberal policies. Amidst the multitude of crises, the concept of a non-racial nation is losing ground at the same time as the ANC’s promise to decolonize South Africa is fading away.

### *Deteriorating State-Civil Society Relations and the Emergence of ‘New’ Social Movements*

On April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1994, new leaders, replacing the fallen apartheid regime, infused the political landscape of South Africa. The world rejoiced alongside South Africans, full of

hopes and promises for a better tomorrow. South Africans recognized the mammoth task ahead to build a new democracy and were willing to make sacrifices and exert patience. For many years, with the euphoria of the political transition still being felt, social struggles were stifled and, for the most part, the relations between the state and civil society were collaborative. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organization (CBOs) were included in the new government's attempts to put in place developmentalist and people-centered policies (Ballard et al. 2005), and all entities sought to repair the damage of apartheid. However, soon enough – and coinciding with Thabo Mbeki's neoliberal pursuits – civil society lost its patience, and albeit in a very different context, angry voices rose once again.

Civil society is a concept that has become almost impossible to define. While recognizing that the term “often degenerates into a muddled political slogan” (White 1994: 376), Gordon White nevertheless, offers a broad definition by which civil society is “an intermediate associational realm between state and family populated by organizations which are separate from the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their interests or values” (379). In addition, Cohen and Arato (1992) contend that identity formation is a crucial component for the development of a social movement from mass protest action to collective, grassroots action. The extent to which the ‘new’ social movements have been able to formulate a collective identity or agenda in South Africa is debatable. However, the fact remains that agents of the South African civil society have been able to mobilize – oftentimes across political parties, and racial, classed, sexed, gendered and generational lines – and communicate reformist demands targeting political and economic institutions.

The 'new' social movements, like their 'older' counterparts, emerged in particular material and social contexts. If earlier social movements were characterized by their stance against apartheid and their role in the liberation of South Africa, newer social struggles have risen due to the growing level of poverty and inequalities post-apartheid. Confronting both domestic and transnational forces of oppression, many social struggles in South Africa, and in other postcolonial states, target the neoliberal restructuring of the states (Clifford 1994; Appadurai 2001; Appadurai 2003; Glick-Schiller and Levitt 2004; Shiva 2006; Escobar 2008). In challenging modern states' tendency to privilege the interests and discourses of capitalist actors and institutions, they seek to redefine not only the terms of their citizenship, but also what constitutes acceptable knowledge. Ballard et al. (2005) identify three developments that prompted the 'new' struggles in South Africa. First, many protests were directed at the state's adoption of neoliberal macroeconomic policies and promotion of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR). Second, other movements tackled the government's failure to, and/or sluggish pace at, providing services and effecting promised changes. Finally, other social struggles aim to resist state violence.

It is important to note that most of the 'new' movements do not wish to overthrow the regime<sup>13</sup> as was the case during the anti-apartheid struggle, but are responding to the majority of the population's inability to meet their basic needs. In fact, anti-globalization social movements often identify the state as the potential grantor of their demands. Citing their constitutional rights as a basis for their demands, contemporary civil society actors

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<sup>13</sup> Even the #ZumaMust Fall movement does not advocate for the fall of the ANC as a party. The protests are solely directed at Jacob Zuma.

still direct their grievances to the government, holding the state accountable for the consolidation of democracy and the eradication of the conditions of marginalization. Analyzing the emergence of ‘new’ social movements in South Africa, Ballard et al. (2005) have found that “movements confront questions of social exclusion in terms of gender, sexuality, education, labor status, access to land, housing and services, poverty and citizenship: issues which sit at the intersection of recognition and redistribution” (618).

Civil society has stepped up to fill the void left by the state in various ways. Caught in a neoliberal system, marginalized communities have organized to resist its ravages. The surge of survivalist efforts in the form of informal networks (community-based associations) is a testimony of grassroots organizations’ attempts to withstand the waves of unemployment, disease, poor services, and overwhelming poverty (Russel and Swilling 2002). Second, more formal social movements have taken form, mainly led by middle-class activists. Contrary to their survivalist counterparts, these movements have a more explicit political mandate. Their aim is not only to mobilize and empower the poor, but also to challenge the oppressive policies of the state. Using anti-hegemonic language, they seek to contest the political and socio-economic status quo through campaigns, marches, and other tools of protest (Habib 2005). Habib (2005), drawing on a study done by the Center of Civil Society at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, notes that these movements operate with substantial material and human resources, counting on interventions from prominent activists in the anti-apartheid struggle who had been marginalized due to their stance against the political leadership (Habib 2005: 684). In response to the challenges of democratization and globalization, non-governmental

organizations (NGOs), community-based associations (CBOs), and social movements have flourished.

### **The ‘New’ South Africa: The Promises of the State and the Constraints of Neoliberal Globalization**

In the 2016 State of the Nation address, President Jacob Zuma urged his fellow South Africans to be patient as South Africa tries to recover from the 2008 global economic crisis (Zuma 2016). His claim that the country’s “transformation” has been slowed down due to external factors – implicitly, as opposed to internal mismanagement and corruption – must be understood in the context of post-apartheid South Africa’s immersion in transnational neoliberalism. The characterization of South Africa as a state in “transformation” needs to be examined and questioned. The post-Apartheid state was formed on highly ideological grounds. The people of South Africa rallied around the ANC with great hope for a non-racial, people-centered democracy. Economic and political transformation was to be achieved through programmatic politics that put the people, especially the previously disadvantaged, first. South African national identity was built around the national project of overcoming centuries of apartheid, along with its legacy of domination, poverty and violence. And the ANC-led state was to play a primary role in nation-building through its adoption of the *Freedom Charter* drafted in 1955.

In the early 2000s, the ruling-ANC declared South Africa to be a “developmental state” (Mbeki 2006). Zuma explained the concept in his 2012 State of the Nation Address when he declared that “as a developmental state [...] we see our role as being to lead and guide the economy and to intervene in the interest of the poor, given the history of our



country” (Zuma 2012). However, Satgar (2012), writing on South Africa’s deepening articulation with neoliberal globalization since 1996, comments that instead of state-led transformation and redistribution, the “developmental state” embarked in increasingly comprehensive neoliberalization. He argues that South Africa’s “embrace of neoliberalism [...] and deepening integration into global circuits of accumulation” is incompatible with the state’s popular developmentalist claims (Satgar 2012: 35). The ideals of the liberation project, still professed during government’s political rallies and public speeches, have been replaced by the rule and logic of global capital.

In the aftermath of the multitude of social movements that shook the country between 2015 and 2016, Zuma warned that such public – global – displays of internal social conflicts has had for effect to depress Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), affecting the country’s long-term growth *and* goals. He, then, admonished the people of South Africa to instead join him in restoring the imaginary of a democratic, stable, functional, and non-racial nation-state (Zuma 2016). To assuage foreign investors and reestablish South Africa’s comparative advantage in attracting global capital, the nation is asked to stop ‘washing its dirty laundry in public’ and preserve the discourse of “South African exceptionalism.” In reality, Zuma’s plea is in accord with the state’s efforts to create the conditions for the accumulation and reproduction of transnational capital in South Africa. Bolstering political, economic and social stability is aimed at attracting FDIs, which becomes a tool for foreign investors to exploit the country’s comparative advantage.

The post-apartheid state has allowed this exploitation to happen through various macro-economic policies, including fiscal austerity measures, cutback in state expenditure, privatization, liberalization, and deregulation (Hart 2002; Bond 2004; 2005;

Sewpaul 2004; Satgar 2012). These measures, congruent with neoliberal policies, have however, exacerbated the crisis. South African enrollment in the neoliberal order is illustrated by the path of the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) plan, initiated in 1996. GEAR was adopted as a macroeconomic strategy to transform South Africa into a more equitable society. With this plan, the government anticipated increases in economic opportunities through the creation of jobs, the redistribution of income, and increased social expenditure and welfare programs (Magubane 2002). Two decades later, GEAR has become a framework committed to the privatization of state assets, trade liberalization, and other prescriptions of capitalism (Bond 2000; Satgar 2008, 2012). As a result, the poverty gap has widened, impacting African women the most. The consequences of GEAR have been well documented (Hart 2002; Terreblanche 2002; Bond 2004; 2005; Sewpaul 2004; 2005). Instead of creating jobs, the adoption of neoliberal policies has increased unemployment, with more than 1 million jobs lost since 1996 (Terreblanche 2002). Here again, unemployment rates are gendered with higher percentage losses for African women than for African men (Sewpaul 2005). In addition, while employment has historically been raced in South Africa, with white males occupying more managerial and lucrative positions (Moleke 2003), neoliberal globalization has reinforced the already segmented labor market. Barchiesi (2008) argues that “the post-apartheid combination of political and economic liberalization challenges the promise of social emancipation that wage labor had come to embody throughout past black working-class struggles” (120). Economic liberalization policies have undermined the significance of wage labor as a vehicle for the social ascension of the previously oppressed majority. The rise of unemployment rates, unstable wage labor, and informal

occupations continue to incorporate the black working class in a subordinate and vulnerable position.

The economic practices of the state, clashing as they may with its political announcements, locked post-Apartheid South Africa into a neoliberal development model. Trapped between promises of state interventionism and its active role in facilitating neoliberal globalization, South Africa has been conceptualized as an Afro-neoliberal state (Satgar 2012; see also Ferguson 2006 and Harrison 2010). Indeed, despite the state's developmentalist rhetoric, Satgar (2012) observes that "the state is locked into managing an elite economic consensus rather than discharging a democratic mandate from its citizens to ensure economic transformation and self-determination" (49). The type of ambiguous neoliberalism espoused by South Africa is consistent with the policies adopted in the rest of the continent. The approval of The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 2001 is representative of the ideological path that Africa has taken. NEPAD is the first document that explicitly states Africa's commitment to embracing a neoliberal economic framework for development. As such, contradicting its claims and promises for people-centered development, NEPAD has furthered the continent's dependence on international financial institutions and capitalist powers. With African governments pressured to remain viable in a free-market economy and struggling under structural adjustment programs and the debt crisis, poor people have borne the brunt of capitalism. South Africa in particular, has superimposed inequalities created by the capitalist system to the segregation legacy of its past.

Ironically, in the 2016 State of the Nation Address, president Zuma attempted to assuage popular discontent by blaming the sluggish pace of national transformation on the vagaries of the global market (Zuma 2016). Surely state sovereignty and efficacy is threatened in the context of economic globalization (Mittleman 1997), lessening the possibilities for developmentalist initiatives. However, in the face of enduring inequalities and racially-based underdevelopment, the state's failure to live up to its stance on state-sponsored social welfare initiatives has wreaked havoc on the authority of the state, but especially in the lives of the most marginalized communities (Magubane 2002). Once the "champion of the working class", Jacob Zuma has lost his clout, and amidst endemic corruption at the state level, has been accused of betraying the visions of a democratic South Africa and using state violence to manage the exigencies of the powerful actors of the globalized economy. The #ZumaMustFall movement is the gloomy reflection of the popular disillusion with the state of the South African "transformation."

South Africa has entered the globalization process on peculiar grounds. The new democratic regime's support of neoliberal economic policies was accompanied by political promises to rectify the social ills created by apartheid. Promoted in the 1990s, the Black Economic Empowerment Act (BEE), an affirmative action enrolling black South Africans into global capital, is a reflection of the state compromise. In theory, BEE was designed to be a mechanism for structural transformation, a way to redistribute resources from the white, wealthy minority to the black, dispossessed majority. The Act proposed to empower previously disadvantaged groups through programs such as black ownership and control of enterprises, employment quotas, and procurement. Black

entrepreneurs were able to take part in new investments from both domestic and foreign capital, while skilled employees benefitted from equity targets requiring certain quotas of minorities (people of color but also white women) in senior and managerial positions.

However, attempts at deracializing capitalist globalization through the BEE have served to deepen the impact of neoliberalism on the social policies of the post-apartheid state. BEE has also been a machinery for widespread corruption and the plundering of state resources (Southall 2007, Satgar 2012). If BEE was conceptualized as a vessel for redressing past inequalities, it also highlights class relations within capitalist globalization. While BEE has allowed class formation among blacks, it is essentially “a crucial part of a trade-off with white monopoly capital to facilitate the globalization of South Africa from within” (Satgar 2012: 56). The current economic climate has ensured that South African society remains hierarchized and divided by class and race as whites remain the wealthiest group, and the majority of Africans –despite a rising black middle and upper class that benefited from BEE – continue to occupy the bottom of the occupational ladder (Woolard & Woolard 2006).

### *Neoliberal Globalization and the Feminization of Poverty*

Despite the state tendency to disregard gendered examinations of political and socio-economic phenomena, (some) women are the hardest-hit victims of state neoliberal policies. Market hegemony in South Africa, like in other countries, has had gendered consequences. First, the privatization of basic services has been most felt by African women, who often are the heads of the household and care-providers for the youth and the sick. Water and electricity cut-offs, as well as cutbacks in health and education

expenditures, have impacted African women and children the most (Bond 2004). These cut-backs, along with the failure of the small banks that would service the poor, have worsened women's already unequal access to social resources like healthcare, education, credit and land (Sewpaul 2005). Importantly, the impact of neoliberal restructuring overlapping with forms of marginalization inherited from the past have created alternative economies on the continent. Global neoliberal policies (such as NEPAD) and actors do not often address the impact of globalization on the gendered division of labor; yet the terms of women's participation in the labor market have been well documented (House-Midamba and Ekechi 1995; Casale and Posel 2005; Singh 2007; Motala 2008; Lindell 2010; Magidimisha and Gordon 2015).

In the post-1994 context, women entered the informal market to compensate for jobless husbands and sons, and/or migrated from rural areas to the cities in search of low-paid jobs (Posel 2003; Mosoetsa 2005; Barchiesi 2008). Casale and Posel (2005) report that in 2003, "almost two million women (close to 40% of all employed women) were involved in unskilled agriculture, self-employment in the informal sector or domestic work, compared to just over one million men (less than 17% of all employed men)" (26). As a result, feminist scholars have recognized the sector as a critical socioeconomic phenomenon (Moser 1993; Das 2003; Chen et al. 2004; Overa 2007; Lloyd-Evans 2008; Motala 2008). Casual jobs constitute strategies of survival – and perhaps of subversion – against conditions of hopelessness. An empowering source of income, commerce within the informal sector is a critical component of the 'second economy' pervasive in South Africa. Other sources of livelihood, such as state grants, migration remittances, and kin-related support and barter, have also compensated for the restructuring of the formal

economy. Typically, the ‘second economy’ is characterized by its gendered dynamics with women, and a potent survival option for the women who partake in it (Das 2003; Chen et al. 2004; Overa 2007).

However, these gains are also hampered by gender inequality. Even in the informal sector where men are a minority, women tend to earn less than men (Magidimisha and Gordon 2015). Moser (1993) attributes the difference of income to the fact that women are often pushed into less lucrative activities within the informal sector (see also Casale 2004). Furthermore, women’s survivalist strategies are also associated with low levels of health and security, and omnipresent violence (Valodia et al. 2006; Singh 2007; Motala 2008). Some of the women with whom I have created bonds during fieldwork illustrated this reality in the form of simple anecdotes that may have been humorous if they were not so tragic. I recall, in particular, a conversation with a group of women in the Free State. They worked low-paid, casual jobs at quite a distance from their homes. They explained that most days they would return to their homes after dark, either by foot or ‘taxi’<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, most days, they wore five or six layers of clothes under their work uniforms in the hope to deter rapists. Poverty, exacerbated by the state’s neoliberal macroeconomic policies, the high national tolerance for patriarchal norms and violence, and the historical irreverence for black lives, all impact women materially and physically. Whether they are heads of households or not, their responsibility to provide for their children and family leaves them with no choice but to put their own bodies at

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<sup>14</sup> Taxis are the usual mode of transportation for blacks living in the townships. They are minivans, turned into busses, usually driven by young males from the townships. Stories of physical and sexual abuse of women passengers perpetrated by taxi drivers or male passengers are not unusual.

risk, and face the high likelihood to be sexually abused and become infected with HIV/AIDS.

In addition, there is a rich literature demonstrating that when men, due to the pressure of the global economic system, are pushed into activities associated with women, the change in gender relations negatively affects the well-being of women (Agadjanian 2002; Ampofo et al. 2004; Overa 2007). This scholarship understands women's bodies as spaces for retaliation for men who have been dispossessed and emasculated by colonialism, imperialism, modernization, capitalism, and other Western interventions in traditional modes of living. Still more, changing gender roles combined with women's low income and insecure working conditions may translate into a greater risk of physical and sexual abuse and accrued vulnerability to HIV/AIDS (Singh 2007). During the trainings and community dialogues that I have attended with and/or conducted for Sonke Gender Justice, my interactions with some traditional leaders and male-members of the community have pointed to a deep resistance toward the promotion of equal rights and economic opportunities for women, under the pretext that it goes against cultural norms. This is because gender is a metaphor for power. Its current shape in South Africa is the result of a history of frictions, imbalances, and antagonism between hierarchized systems of power.

Women's movement agendas throughout the years can best be understood as reactions to the wider political, economic and social environment of the time. From apartheid to the 'New' South Africa, women's movements have undergone transformation, mirroring changes in the country's socio-economic structure. It is in the failures and cracks of the democratization process that the contemporary, youth-led, non-



partisan women's movement is best discussed. Next, I discuss the emergence of a distinct feminist movement in South Africa.

*Emerging Feminist Consciousness: Contemporary South African Women's Movements*

As I am writing this section, hundreds of women are leading anti-rape protests at Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape Province, sparked by the publication of a list, then circulated on social media, of male students alleged to have sexually assaulted female students. The female protesters who have marched half-naked, bare-breasted in the streets of Grahamstown, have incensed the South African population, some regretting the inappropriate boldness of young black women, some feeling empowered by women's radical attempt to take back their bodies and voices. Engrossed in the unfolding of the movement, I asked myself what this meant for the state of feminism in Africa. After all, the display of naked bodies during feminist protests is a well-known strategy in the West. A phone conversation with a friend and South African black feminist complicated this easy first impression. She said,

“A lot of people in Africa and in the West look at young black women displaying shamelessly their nakedness and assume either that we have finally been liberated by western feminist teachings or that we have been empoisoned by white women's promiscuity and lack of modesty...it depends which side you are on, but ultimately such boldness and clear rejection of patriarchal authority could only be due to the penetration of Western values in Africa. They could not be more wrong. The idea of female, naked body as insurrection hardly originated from the West. It is a political, ancestral practice in Africa... for example, take the traditional practice of Anluin some part of Cameroon.”

The Rhodes student protests, challenging the separation of the public and the private as two distinct societal spheres, are yet another instance of the women's role in changing gender norms and practices. Furthermore, some scholars have documented how pressures from women's movements within Africa have influenced global gender norms, in areas

as diverse as peacemaking to sexual violence against women (Snyder 2006; Tripp et al. 2009; Tripp 2015).

If African women have contributed immensely to international gendered advances, the question remains: Why are some strategies in the west deemed feminist, while unrecognized as such in Africa (both by western agents *and* some African activists)? Why do debates as to whether feminism exists in Africa still relevant? It is worth interrogating the – real or perceived – suspicion that black South African women hold toward feminism. Yet, , After all, Amina Mama reminds us that “the historical record tells us that even white women have always looked to Africa for alternatives to their own subordination, since the days of the early anthropologists [...] So we have always been part of the early conceptualizations of so-called ‘Western feminism,’ even if not properly acknowledged as such” (Salo and Mama 2001:60). This debate, which undoubtedly have roots in the power-laden access to knowledge-making, have prompted African activists to de-identify as feminists, in response to the fact that analyses of what constitutes gender liberating practices and discourses are still the domain of privileged women. Yet, if the existence of a feminist consciousness remains an elusive concept in South Africa, a very real gender consciousness has been an important element in the consolidation of women’s movements (Hassim and Gouws 1988).

There is a wealth of academic writing by black women that insists on the notion of difference in feminist theorizing. This work, originally concerned with writing back to white feminism and complicating global sisterhood, has succeeded in centering the “experience of alienation and perpetual humiliation [...] of African women within Africa and in the diaspora” (Mangena 2003: 100). However, there have been fewer attempts at

theorizing the way African women partake in and influence feminist spaces and global discourses (Gqola 2001). Some have questioned the extent to which South African women's activism can be called feminist (Wells 1993), while others have denounced the tendency to view the west as the "exclusive repository of feminism in the singular", relegating expressions of African gendered agency to a plural form (i.e. African feminisms) (Mangena 2003). The relationship between the African subject and the subject of feminism has been hazy, at best. These interrogations speak to the difficulty of placing the unique political praxis of African women (both on the continent and in the diaspora) within the mainstream feminist canon. Tracing some of the early developments in women's rights and gender in South Africa, Elaine Salo (2007) expounded that while most of the women activists in the apartheid struggle were black, contributions of South African feminism were credited to largely white, middle-class women located in the academy. Emerging in the 80s and the early 90s, this body of work denounced gender-blind analyses of social reality, but ultimately failed to question its own positionality and privilege (Kemp 1993). Therefore, that brand of African feminism examined the conditions that affected the 'survival' of black women from a social, physical, and analytical distance (Salo and Mama 2001). In an interview with Elaine Salo, Amina Mama (2001) describes it as "a use of the term 'feminism' that elides all the other aspirations [beyond survival] you and I know African women to have, as if in being African, we forgo all the things that other feminists struggle for - [...] political, economic, social, intellectual, professional, and indeed personal desires for change" (60). African women remained the silent subjects of study.

Despite white women's relative power in defining feminism, African women have never been voiceless, however (Salo and Mama 2001). Gqola (2001) believes that the African feminist movement, in its dissent with white, capitalist patriarchy, is in fact a practice of "worlding our environs" (12), while Carole Boyce Davis, writes as early as 1995 that "black women's [activism] [...] exists in cross-cultural, trans-national, diasporic contexts" (1). Black women have engaged in gender politics to reshape outsiders' definitions of their subjectivity, and struggle for liberation at both the personal and macro-political level. Therefore, liberating black women's praxis from the binaries of academia and activism can open up a world of exciting and imaginative collaborations for challenging hierarchical knowledge-making. Activism is an important space that black women have invested with the 'everyday-ness' of their lived meanings and agency (Ogundipe-Leslie 2001) and a platform for the creation of a collective identity for women. Hassim and Gouws (1988) rightly stated that "a feminist consciousness cannot – should not – be defined *a priori* according to the abstract definitions of universal theory, but should be defined in the context of particular social formations and should have resonance in the historical experience and political culture of specific societies" (59).

My interactions with South African female leaders have convinced me that regardless of whether they defined themselves as feminists or not, black women are no longer willing to be the victims of intellectual and epistemic violence. While in South Africa, I attended a 'secret' event, in which only black women and girls were allowed. Notwithstanding the protests of white women who felt excluded, the meeting engaged its participants on the necessity of taking back the *language* that incessantly not only disempowers and alienates black agency, but also *imagines* identities for the justification

and reproduction of such alienation, in the same vein as black scholars who have written extensively about the use of language to challenge the representation and definition of black subjectivities (Collins 1990; Lewis 1993; Mirza 1997). The meeting, promoted under the hashtag #ForBlackGirlsOnly, acted as a private space (highly protected by the police for fear of white and male dissidence and penetration) where women were prompted to define what it is to be African and Feminist. It was an incredible moment when black women (only) were allowed to “uncover and learn from how we know what we know and how we create what we do create socially and ideationally” (Ogundipe-Leslie 2001: 136). Drawing from personal experiences of multiple oppressions, hundreds of women of all walks of life sought to position their journeys in relation to anti-racist, anti-patriarchy, anti-capitalist academic discourses.

Moreover, as many of this movement’s leaders identified as members of the LGBT community, they were intent on deconstructing heterosexual assumptions about family lives and women’s subjectivities. If they recognized that men had to be part of their struggles for gender equality, they were reluctant to include them in meetings for fear that the diversity of women’s aspirations and sexual orientations would be stifled by men’s visions of and limitations on what should constitute the participants’ subjectivities and practices of desire. The #ForBlackGirlsOnly meeting bears many lessons for transnational men’s organizations like Sonke Gender Justice. First, gender work among men should necessarily be informed by women’s voices. This is because women have always carried out their own struggles (Salo and Mama 2001) and are in the best position to ascertain what renegotiations of gender norms would look like in their specific contexts. As discussed in Chapter V, men’s organization such as Sonke Gender Justice

are doing important work redefining notions of family arrangements and behaviors (i.e. gentle fathers, helpful and supportive husbands). However, such discourses fail to encompass the variety of women's experiences, needs, and goals. For instance, the men that are part of Sonke Gender Justice (staff and clients) may envisage an African society less violent towards women, but may not effectively deconstruct its heterosexual norms. Thus, fighting one aspect of contemporary patriarchies, although a crucial aspect for protecting *and* empowering (some) women, is not the panacea to the liberation of women and communities from system-wide subordination and silencing practices. Young black South African women's feminist stance breaks the boundaries of representation. Inclusion is no longer black women's ultimate demand; they want to re-define and re-shape the forms of representation. Their experiences should no longer be an addendum to western theories and discourses. Instead, they aim at creating spaces for new signification and new forms of *speaking* their truth (Nnameka 1998).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed the issue of gender and counterhegemonic challenge in South Africa. This discussion is central to my assertion that the local provides liberatory possibilities of transformation when it is impinged upon by the global. From the apartheid era to South Africa insertion's in globalized neoliberal capitalism, women have played an essential role in challenging systems of oppression. Furthermore, I have given a comprehensive overview of the crisis that is shaking some of South Africa's hard-earned assumptions. Discussing the current South African context is important for a number of reasons. The contemporary state of civil protest has to be analyzed against an

environment defined by mounting racial tensions, accrued poverty, political disillusionment, and exacerbated inequalities. Despite the very different ways in which men and women experience structural inequalities, actors in the democratization process have given prominence to racial and classed dynamics over articulations of gendered citizenship. If women often bear the brunt of an oppressive (and increasingly repressive) system, gender issues are quietly relegated to the political and social background. This chapter takes a feminist approach to chronicle the different moments of the South African women's movement. Importantly, women's movements agenda has shifted over the years, from a non-divisive anti-apartheid stand to pluralist articulations of gender oppression. Increasingly non-apologetic, young African women are rebelling against the patriarchal, white supremacist, heterosexual, capitalist system and are exposing all the oppressive forms by which it continues to marginalize and objectify women. The contemporary feminist movement is vocal about the multi-level sufferings women experience under neoliberal policies and the political failure to address tacit gender inequalities at the broader societal level. Therefore, the neoliberal moment is happening amidst, and has contributed to, subversive renegotiations of race, class, gender and other factors of oppression. I dwell on black women's understanding of oppression, not only to paint a more complete picture of the South African transformation, but also to assert that African women have never been the passive victims of global practices and processes. Their agency has transformed these processes, shaping the global in ways that are consistently overlooked. Paying attention to their multi-level acts of resistance points to the interactive dimension of the relationship between the global and the local. Examining gendered counter-hegemonic challenges that originate in the South also serves to

decolonize “globalization from below.” Local mobilization is an essential element of counter-hegemonic globalization. This chapter, paying attention to the growing activism of South African women, argues that these types of grassroots mobilizing should not be confined to the mere realm of ‘local politics.’ Women’s organizing simultaneously encounter local practices, state policies, and the deleterious effects of capitalist globalization. As such, African women’s organizing intervenes and shapes global processes as much as it is shaped by the latter. Studies that grapple with these interrelationships are important to examine the racial, gendered, and national boundaries that may threaten “globalization from below,’ but also to challenge the idea that transnational practices and discourses are best able to liberate the Global South from its local repressive traditions. Instead, I have demonstrated the liberating potential of local formations.



CHAPTER IV  
“Social Entrepreneurship Can Change the World”: Analyzing an Emerging Transnational  
Movement

*“Social entrepreneurship is a little like pornography. It’s hard to define, but you know it when you see it.”- Tony Sheldon<sup>15</sup>*

*“A lot of companies now, and a lot of business schools, have adopted the vocabulary of social enterprise. The dangers are that it becomes just a marketing ploy, rather than an expression of purpose.” – Tony Sheldon<sup>16</sup>*

In October 2006, Zinhle “Zinny” Thabethe a South African woman travelled to Camden, Maine to speak at PopTech, a social entrepreneurship initiative bringing together a coalition of innovators. HIV positive Zinny came to share how the disease is affecting her, her family and her country. Her speech incited social entrepreneur Andrew Zolli, founder of PopTech, to start Project Masiluleke. This venture is an alliance between a world-renowned design firm, one of the planet’s most visible media brands, South African foundations and leading mobile technology companies. The solution found was not only an incredible market niche, but also a high-impact - nearly 100% of South Africans have access to a mobile device and the project touches virtually every one of them-, low-cost tool in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Zolli initiated the broadcast of specialized text messages each day to the general public with accurate healthcare information, counseling and referrals to local testing clinics. Indeed, it was assessed that text messages are a discreet, yet effective, way of reaching out to the population at-risk and prompting behavioral, and ultimately social, change.

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<sup>15</sup> As cited in Guttenplan, D. 2011. “Business School with a Social Appeal.” *New York Times*, January 23

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Although discussed less in the literature on civil society, an increasing number of social actors have looked to the market as a response to the state's abandonment of its developmentalist promises. Acting as connectors between global resources and local communities, social entrepreneurs and transnational organizations fostering social entrepreneurship represent a new kind of global social justice movements that advocate for global forms of solidarities. Project Masiluleke, for example brings together a technology-savvy social entrepreneur from the United States, an HIV-positive activist from South Africa, and several multinational corporations, with a common aim to fight HIV/AIDS. This type of market-based solution, with the potential of inducing sweeping social change for large segments of the population across nation-states, is what gave social entrepreneurship its exceptional reputation. Social entrepreneurship is commonly understood as a model merging innovative business solutions with the deep commitment to social justice of remarkable individuals, known as social entrepreneurs. Gaining recognition in the late 1990s, the construct became a phenomenon at a time when increased tensions over inequalities, uneven development patterns, and environmental degradation were shaking the neoliberal order. There are a growing number of universities that are building the field of social entrepreneurship. Institutions such as New York University, Harvard University, Stanford University and Duke University have all established departments on social entrepreneurship, mostly under the school of business and management. As social ventures permeate the market-place, Hollywood celebrities have increasingly become involved as well. From U2's Bono to X-Men's Hugh Jackman, famous people have lent their name, face, and/or voice to endorse social enterprises.

Amidst such unbridled enthusiasm, it is important to produce critical research on a construct for which there is still little consensus over what it exactly is. Researchers and observers have approached the subject from a normative point of view, discussing what social entrepreneurs *could* and *should* achieve, as opposed to the way they actually operate in the social world. In other words, case studies continue to be used as illustrative examples of what social entrepreneurship *is* or *ought to be*, instead of what it *does* and what it ultimately *creates*. I aim to offer a more radical, yet hopeful, view of a complex phenomenon. Ultimately, social entrepreneurship can be rescued from its “capitalocentric” potential (Gibson-Graham 1996: 6). To do so, this dissertation looks at the at times liberatory, at times oppressive discourses and practices of social entrepreneurship, highlighting its intersection with factors of oppression such as race, class, and gender. Beyond the much-celebrated commercial aspect of the model, I examine the extent to which social entrepreneurship could be a tool to challenge existing social arrangements and systems of oppression (Ashoka 2012).

In this chapter, I assemble testimonies from various social entrepreneurs in South Africa in order to examine the discourses and practices of social entrepreneurship. I first chronicle how the model has been conceptualized in the literature. This is necessary for two reasons. First, a quick assessment of the scholarship reveals that social entrepreneurship is an emergent construct, still in much need for solid, and most importantly, contextualized analysis. Second, scholarly efforts to frame the concept can be a power-laden exercise that in effect promotes a transnational definition of social entrepreneurship at the expense of other, localized, meanings and applications. Consequently, social entrepreneurship is tacitly apprehended as a neoliberal model that

depends on capitalistic dispositions to thrive. Here, I draw attention to the more complex practices and understandings of social entrepreneurship. While I do not deny its strong potential to make global capitalism ‘look good’, I also explore the different forms that the model can take. Scholarly emphasis on what I call ‘commercial social entrepreneurship’ can obscure more radical and transformative endeavors to address social issues. Still, both types are built on inequalities that are not addressed in the literature. Highlighting the raced, gendered, and classed composition of social entrepreneurs, I discuss the systems of oppression from which social entrepreneurship silently benefits.

### **Debates on Social Entrepreneurship: A Review of the Literature**

Social entrepreneurship is a relatively new field in academia. Nearly absent in academic research until the end of the 1990s, it has gained increasing attention since then. To date, it has been mostly analyzed by business scholars and field builders supporting social entrepreneurs (i.e. Ashoka, the Skoll Foundation, Schwab Foundation). A simple, although by no means consensual, definition of social entrepreneurship offers the model as the application of market-oriented initiatives for the pursuit of social goals (Roberts and Woods 2000; Huybrechts and Nicholls 2012). However, because of the wide range of activities and practices that may ‘fit’ into social entrepreneurship, establishing an agreed definition of the construct has proved to be an arduous task. Huybrechts and Nicholls (2012) proposes that social entrepreneurship is, in essence, “the dynamic process through which specific types of individuals deserving the name of ‘social entrepreneurs’ create and develop organizations that may be defined as ‘social enterprises’ (2). However, understanding of the terms is highly contextual.

*The 'Commercial Social Entrepreneurship' School of Thought*

Scholarship on social entrepreneurship tends to originate in the Global North, although it has developed differently in the 'Anglo-world' (United Kingdom and United States) and in continental Europe. In the former, the study of social entrepreneurship has focused on its commercial aspect and on market-led initiatives that deliver public welfare goods (Huybrechts and Nicholls 2012). In the latter, analyses of its organizational specificities have dominated (Defourny and Nyssens 2008; Kerlin 2008). This may explain why field builders and (mostly) business scholars located in the North, have given much emphasis to the entrepreneurial aspect of the model. In these circles, it is suggested that the true test of social entrepreneurship is in the use of business skills and earned income strategies by social-minded organizations (Emerson and Twersky 1996; CCSE 2001; Thompson et al. 2000; Davis 1997; Fowler 2000; Boschee and Goddard 2001).

For business schools specifically, social entrepreneurship can create new markets and market niches or opportunities for socially responsible investments. Thus, some business scholars contend that even ventures that put profitability as their central goal, may be looked upon as social enterprises as long as they exhibit some commitment to social issues (Austin and Reficco 2005; Peredo and McLean 2005; Austin et al. 2006; Baron 2007). Peredo and McLean (2005), supporting the inclusion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a form of social entrepreneurship, assert that "in general, there appears to be a continuum of possibilities, ranging from the requirement that social benefits be the only goal of the entrepreneurial undertaking, to the stipulation merely that social goals are somewhere among its claim" (23). Yet, Huybrechts and Nicholls (2012)

refute this claim, arguing that CSR is not necessarily entrepreneurial or innovative and that to be a form of social entrepreneurship, the social mission has to have primacy over profit maximization.

Notwithstanding these debates, the ‘business model’ understands global markets to be benevolent at the core, arguing that it can bring significant improvements and growth for impoverished and marginalized groups. This line of thought is exemplified by the work of scholars such as Prahalad and Hammond (2002). They argue that catering to the needs of the bottom of the pyramid could be a win-win situation. According to the authors, the misconceptions that the West holds about developing countries have prevented multinational corporations (MNCs) from tapping into the immense potential that the developing world represents with its 4 billion people at the bottom of the pyramid. In this perspective, a market-driven paradigm, such as social entrepreneurship, can be particularly apt to tackle poverty *and* create business opportunities for entrepreneurial people in the Global North. In an interview with the New York Times, John Danner of the Haas School’s Lester Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation explains: “the fact remains that there are more future opportunities figuring out useful and profitable (and perhaps personally fulfilling) solutions to the needs of the 4 billion people living on less than \$10/day than there are tweaking the next gadget for consumers living at the tip of the world’s economic pyramid and this is not lost on our students” (Guttenplan 2011).

While attention has been unmistakably directed toward the business elements of social entrepreneurship, the literature, oddly, does not discuss the ways in which the phenomenon has become intertwined with that of neoliberal globalization. Some

commentators, however, have not failed to note the potential for social entrepreneurship to salvage a much tarnished capitalist system (The Canadian Centre for Social Entrepreneurship (CCSE) 2001; Schwab Foundation 2002; Schwab<sup>17</sup> 2008).

*'Commercial Social Entrepreneurship' and the Neoliberal Project*

With its reliance on market strategies and neoliberal ideologies to achieve social transformation, social enterprises can be looked at as a redemptory model for capitalism, at the same time as they seek to transform systems of oppression and inequality. In this sense, social entrepreneurship lies at the intersection of the development project and the globalization project. As an example of 'globalization from below', the discourse of social entrepreneurship emphasizes the positive impact that contemporary forms of neoliberal globalization can have in the lives of disenfranchised men and women. Although it has a clear developmentalist goal -to empower marginalized groups economically and socially,- the consensus among commentators is that social entrepreneurship's strategy is no longer to provide these groups with social securities and national aid, but to enlist them in the project of global capital. Hence, Richardson, a social entrepreneur in South Africa, is skeptical of the government's ability to solve social issues and says:

"I do think that combining social good with business solutions is a way of salvaging capitalism, to make it look better than it does now. Capitalism can achieve both goals. In contrast, to rely on government to solve social problems... it's not gonna happen! It's never happened anywhere. Governments are not geared to do that. They make a lot of

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<sup>17</sup> Klaus Schwabb is also the CEO and Founder of The World Economic Forum

noise, but they don't deliver on anything, and I am not being negative on government, it is just what it is. So it's all fallen on the hands of businesses.”<sup>18</sup>

Social enterprises can be vehicles for the dissemination and reproduction of neoliberal cultural forms that identify individuals as active agents in the global marketplace and posit social change in formal economic terms. The Acumen Fund's mission, a transnational organization fostering socially entrepreneurial ventures, is a case at point. It is dedicated to create a world “beyond poverty by investing in social enterprises, emerging leaders, and breakthrough ideas.” This organization believes in market-based approaches and patient capital to ensure that “one day every human being will have access to the critical goods and services they need [...] so that they can make decisions and choices for themselves and unleash their full human potential [...] This is where dignity starts, not just for the poor, but for everyone on earth”

(<http://www.acumenfund.org/about-us/about-us.html>). The Acumen Fund's faith in free market value is largely shared among Western actors of social entrepreneurship. This worldview decrees that neoliberalism is the best route to achieve individual empowerment and collective self-realization. Cameron and Palan (2004) describe this phenomenon appropriately: “in the twenty-first century world, the poor are viewed as ‘inhabiting a series of local places across the globe that, marked by the label ‘social exclusion,’ lie outside of normal civil society. Their route back into the amorphous space of inclusion that the rest of us inhabit is through the willing and active transformation of

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Brian Richardson at Wizzit International in May 2015



themselves to conform to the disciplines of the market, since it is that which they are ultimately rejoining” (148).

*Social Change: The True Purpose of Social Entrepreneurship*

Since most of the research and theorization around social entrepreneurship has been conducted within business schools, it is not surprising that dominant definitions of the construct center around the ‘commercial’ or ‘social enterprises’ model. However, there is a growing scholarship critiquing the fact that social entrepreneurship has been so easily conflated with social enterprise (Leviner et al. 2006). This literature suggests that despite dominant discourses on social entrepreneurship, earned income, market-based solutions and enterprises are not central to the construct. Instead, the focus should be on social entrepreneurship’s potential to provide system-changing and pattern-breaking ideas that generate lasting social change. Martin and Osberg (2007) argue that “social entrepreneurship signals the imperative to drive social change, and it is that potential payoff, with its lasting, transformational benefit to society, that sets the field and its practitioners apart” (30). Similarly, Bill Drayton, the founder of Ashoka, who coined the term ‘social entrepreneurship’ in the late 1980s, ascertains the *raison-d’être* of the model to be social transformation.

Drayton (2005), however, emphasizes the primacy of the social entrepreneur. This individual is the agent of change *par excellence*. Social entrepreneurs exhibit an indefatigable commitment to the social problem they have vowed to solve. emphasizing social entrepreneurs’ potential to achieve social transformation, Martin and Osberg (2007) explain that the social entrepreneur “aims for value in the form of large-scale,

transformational benefit that accrues either to a significant segment of society or to society at large [...] the social entrepreneur's value proposition targets an underserved, neglected, or highly disadvantaged population that lacks the financial means or political clout to achieve the transformative benefit on its own" (35). The authors also define social entrepreneurship by the social entrepreneur's ability to create sustainable change rather than its use of market-oriented practices. They describe the three main components of social entrepreneurship:

(1) Identifying a stable but inherently unjust equilibrium that causes the exclusion, marginalization, or suffering of a segment of humanity that lacks the financial means or political clout to achieve any transformative benefit on its own; (2) identifying an opportunity in this unjust equilibrium, developing a social value proposition, and bringing to bear inspiration, creativity, direct action, courage, and fortitude, thereby challenging the stable state's hegemony; and (3) forging a new, stable equilibrium that releases trapped potential or alleviates the suffering of the targeted group, and through imitation and the creation of a stable ecosystem around the new equilibrium ensuring a better future for the targeted group and even society at large (Martin and Osberg 2007:35).

In addition to their dedication to social change, they also show a particular aptitude to innovate. Following Schumpeter's (1951) tradition, some scholars have also looked at innovation as a defining feature of social entrepreneurship (Uphoff et al. 1998; Prabhu 1998; Sullivan Mort et al 2003). Huybrechts and Nicholls (2012) state:

"Innovation can be pursued through new organizational models and processes, through new products and services, or through new thinking about, and framing of, societal challenges. Several social entrepreneurship initiatives combine these different ways of innovating" (3). In Drayton's words (2005), "the job of a social entrepreneur is to recognize when a part of society is stuck and to provide a new way to get it unstuck. He or she finds what is not working and solves the problem by changing the system,

spreading the solution and persuading entire societies to take new leaps” (2). In addition, Gregory Dees (2004), who is credited for envisioning social entrepreneurship as an area of study, laments:

Despite efforts to spread an innovation-based definition, far too many people still think of social entrepreneurship in terms of non-profits generating earned income. This is a dangerously narrow view. It shifts attention away from the ultimate goal of any self-respecting social entrepreneur, namely social impact” (2).

Instead, he proposes that “social entrepreneurs play the role of change agents in the social sector, by:

- Adopting a mission to create and sustain social value (not just private value),
- Recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission,
- Engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning,
- Acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand, and
- Exhibiting a heightened sense of accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created” (4)

These definitions, while rebutting the ‘business school model,’ share a common emphasis on the individual, the social entrepreneur. In what follows, I explore the discourses that elevate the social entrepreneur to the stature of a hero who single-handedly effects social change despite all odds.

### *The Social Entrepreneur: The Ideal Figure of Benevolent Neoliberalism*

The unique qualities that set social entrepreneurs aside from traditional entrepreneurs *and* non-for-profit NGOs are well documented (Lewis et al. 1980; Waddock and Post 1991;

Borins 2000; Hibbert et al. 2001; Shaw et al. 2002). The success and visibility of social entrepreneurship is often said to fall squarely on the social entrepreneur's shoulders (Seelos and Mair 2005). The social entrepreneur has been defined as a "social hero" (Ashoka 2000), as "one species in the genus entrepreneur" (Dees 1998: 3), or again as "extraordinary individuals with unprecedented ideas for change in their communities" (Ashoka 2004). Needless to say, these individuals are a rare breed. Bill Drayton (2002), founder of Ashoka, considers social entrepreneurs' unique traits to be shared by only a small percentage of the population. In his book, *How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of New Ideas*, David Bornstein (2004) registers the social entrepreneurs who have become Ashoka Fellows in the past and the present and relates Ashoka's vision of these individuals as "people with new ideas to address major problems, who are relentless in the pursuit of their vision, people who simply will not take no for an answer and who will not give up until they spread their ideas as far as they possibly can" (1). Social entrepreneurs are said to be change-makers, path-breakers with an unquenchable desire to make a difference in the world.

Comparing 'regular' people with social entrepreneurs, the director of Ashoka-Miami explains how to transform into a 'changemaker':

"We tell people: you have the power within yourself to understand your reality, your community and identify the role that you can play in that community and take action... we want to imprint in you, in a way that becomes now part of your DNA, that you have the capacity to change things that you dislike in a productive, efficient, and collaborative way. Dream, be bare enough to dream big and transform into a changemaker."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Interview with Lorena Duran at Ashoka in Miami in September 2012

If they often use an emotive and caring language, social entrepreneurs are nonetheless said to be sharp opportunity and risk-takers. Sullivan Mort et al. (2003) propose a model with four key dimensions to capture the entrepreneurial aspect of social entrepreneurship. According to their analysis, to be considered entrepreneurial, individuals must apply viable strategies to their endeavors, display unity of purpose in the face of social complexity and key decision-making characteristics of proactiveness, innovativeness and risk-taking. Johnson (2002), in turn, emphasizes the significance of opportunity in social entrepreneurship. According to the business literature, even though social entrepreneurs are deeply committed to changing the world, they are, at the end of the day, business people, or at least, virtuous individuals who undoubtedly think in business-like ways.

Yet, social entrepreneurs describe what they do with a highly passionate, idealistic, even naïve language. Such emotivity creates a productive messiness that is not well reflected in scholarly work. Roberts and Woods (2000) note that when asked to define the field, social entrepreneurs usually dwell on their passion for social change and the unique characteristics practitioners must possess in order to lead socially entrepreneurial ventures. Reconciling academic model-making and practitioners' change-making, the authors propose a definition that highlight the passion of social entrepreneurs: "social entrepreneurship is the construction, evaluation and pursuit of opportunities for transformative social change carried out by visionary, passionately dedicated individuals" (Roberts and Woods 2000: 49). The authors (2000) note that "many social entrepreneurs would balk at seeing their services as 'marketable' because their *raison d'être* is to address a social need not a commercial one" (46).

Even as a pragmatic supporter of the free market, Brian Richardson, an Ashoka Fellow in South Africa, describes his entrepreneurial journey with great emotion, stressing that his motivation was never to make profits, but to advance social change. Richardson's resilience and passion are qualities that most social entrepreneurs exhibit. In his own words, "the main challenge of social entrepreneurship is to bridge the do-gooders and the market." In a tough market environment, the social entrepreneur is said to persevere until their impact on the world has been made. Richardson recalls with a smile: "People, friends, family were looking at me like I am actually crazy. I had people come to me asking 'Brian, why do you keep going? How do you keep doing this'. I was begged to launch this business anywhere else but in South Africa. They said I would struggle too much here. But I said I need to make it work in my market."

The social entrepreneur describes many of his peers' motivation:

"I keep saying about everything in life: you can have the best education in the world, you could have the best skills in the world, and the common characteristics that every successful person in the world has got is passion and enthusiasm. Would I have been better off if I'd stayed as an employee in the banking industry? Miles better off...financially. Would I be a better person? I am not sure. Changing the world is what motivated me and it still does. I get a kick out of it. I go home and reflect on my day and I ask myself 'how has it helped my customers'? 'Has it made my domestics' life safer, easier'?"<sup>20</sup>

### **Defining Social Entrepreneurship in South Africa**

The rising interest in social entrepreneurship in South Africa is evidenced by the growing presence of field builders in the country. An increase in academic courses in the field has gone hand in hand with the emergence of networks for social entrepreneurs, such as The African Social Entrepreneurs Network (ASEN) and The Impact Hub, Johannesburg. In addition, several transnational organizations – such as Ashoka, UnLtd South Africa, the

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Brian Richardson at Wizzit International in Johannesburg in May 2015

Schwab foundation, and Spark -, Networks for social entrepreneurs – have looked to South Africa as an incubator for testing the model before scaling it to other African countries. Rejoice Shumba (2014) notes that South Africa, has the greater number of Ashoka Fellows in the continent. The country boasts 110 Ashoka Fellows whereas neighboring Zimbabwe possesses only 15 (Shumba 2014:62). An interview that she conducted with Flavio Bassi, the (previous) Director of Ashoka in South Africa revealed that he attributed the high number of social entrepreneurs to the country's democratization process, which is fertile ground for innovation and social change.

However, Shumba's (2014) review of the field builders operating in South Africa also yields a more perturbing finding. She argues that the prevailing definitions of social entrepreneurship in South Africa have emphasized the 'commercial model' or 'social enterprise' model at the expense of the 'social transformation model.' The key players in the field, espousing such narrow perspective, continue to shape local understanding of the construct and its practices. Shumba further asserts that the state has promptly endorsed the 'social enterprise model,' seeing an opportunity to first invest civil society with the task of finding solutions to the rampant unemployment that plagues the country, and second to deepen the penetration of neoliberal market forms into local realities.

Postcolonial authors have examined the construction of racialized identities within capitalist globalization (Ferguson 2006; Hintzen 2012). The current crisis of global capital has compelled a complete change in the discourses about black people in general, and Africans in particular. The long-unrecognized entrepreneurial and innovative qualities of African people, significant markers of modernity and enlightenment, are now emphasized in an attempt to deepen the linkages and reach of global capital (Hintzen

2012). Hintzen (2012) warns against celebrating this shift, however. He posits that contemporary globalization disavows the historical distinction between tradition and modernity to enlist entrepreneurial and consumerist African subjects in the dynamics of the market and its logic of supply and demand. Ironically, a shift in colonizing epistemologies can lead to the re-establishment and reinforcement of capitalism (Hintzen 2012).

### **A Sociological and Contextualized Perspective of Social Entrepreneurship**

Contesting its neoliberal impetus, Shumba (2014) therefore calls for a scholarship on social entrepreneurship that is not only more critical, but that also emerges from the Global South. The dearth of studies originated from the African continent contributes to the circulation of hegemonic, western-centric, and neoliberal representations of social entrepreneurship. Some scholars, however have criticized the emphasis on entrepreneurialism and individualism as reflecting western values and misrepresenting the reality on the ground where collective action is fundamental (Lounsbury and Strang 2009; Huybrechts and Nicholls 2012). Challenging business schools' authority in the field, the work of Ion Bogdan Vasi (2009) calls for a 'sociological approach' to social entrepreneurship. He notes that the fact that "sociological literature has almost nothing to say about social entrepreneurship is surprising, given its importance as a process through which significant social change occurs in contemporary societies (156). Nicholls and Cho (2006) also lament the scarcity of sociological analysis of the construct as they remark "of particular note has been the lack of any sociological interpretations of the phenomenon to date" (99). However, one can get a glimpse of what a sociological



approach to social entrepreneurship would contribute by examining social scientists' critiques of microfinance.

*Social Entrepreneurship in the Social Sciences: Analyzing Microfinance*

Microfinance is a well-researched example of scholarly work analyzing projects at the intersection of development and neoliberalism. It is also the object of the most thorough attempt of researchers in the fields of sociology, geography, and anthropology to examine social entrepreneurship. In the business and nonprofit literature, the Grameen Bank is widely cited as the “flagship” of social entrepreneurship (Huybrechts and Nicholls 2012). The Grameen Bank, started in 1976 by social entrepreneur Muhammed Yunus, a Bangladeshi economics professor, provides group-based loans for poor and marginalized people, especially women, to develop income-generating activities. The latter empower local groups to create change for themselves and their communities in the face of scarce resources (Uphoff, Esman, and Krishna 1998). Business scholars suggest that through the innovative dissemination of a micro-credit package, the Grameen Bank has been able to profitably manage a very large organization, while mobilizing the assets and capacities of the poor (Alvord et al. 2002). The Grameen Bank has successfully scaled up its operations to 65 developing countries, reaching more than 17 million borrowers (Seelos and Mair 2005).

In contrast, critical feminist scholars offer a strikingly different take on the model, critiquing the adoption of microcredit as the panacea for poverty alleviation and gender equality (Mayoux 1995). A consequence of the recognition among development planners of the need to incorporate women in their discourse and tactics, microfinance is said to

tap into the entrepreneurial spirit of women in the Global South. Planners and advocates of microfinance believe that now able to start their own micro-businesses and generate some income, women would be able to acquire some freedom/equality within their patriarchal households.

Governmentality studies suggest that ‘commercial social entrepreneurship’ – with its emphasis on individual rationality and entrepreneurialism – requires the construction of particular forms of subjectivity. The subjects who must self-transform into what Barbara Cruikshank (1999) calls “useful citizens” are almost always raced and gendered. Rankin (2001) has identified the emergence of the subjectivity of ‘rational economic woman’ to be most reflective of the intersection of the development project and the neoliberal globalization project. Indeed, in the context of microcredit, women have been approached as the best vehicles of neoliberal identity, thereby making them the ideal agents of development. Indeed, Mohammed Yunus, explains that 97% of the Bank’s clients are women because women have longer vision and want to change their lives much more intensively (Karnani 2007). The beneficiaries of this type of social entrepreneurship are consequently asked to self-transform into clients responsible for their own social and economic well-being and that of their families (Rankin 2002). This governmental strategy aims at disciplining the subjects of development in a manner consistent with a neoliberal impetus. Self-help discourses do not always help empower marginalized groups, however. Scholars have discussed the futility of promoting development initiatives that generate income for the poor without transforming the socio-economic relations, particularly along the lines of race, gender, and class that are

detrimental to true empowerment (Beneria and Sen 1982; Goetz and Gupta 1996; Kabeer 1998; Mayoux 1998; Young 2010).

This dissertation in general, and this chapter in particular, offer a much-needed critical analysis of the politics of social entrepreneurship. In addition, my sociological exploration of social entrepreneurship fills an important gap in the literature. With a rich ethnography of the discourses and practices of social entrepreneurship, my work not only presents a South African perspective to the literature, but most importantly, it centers the agency of agents ‘from below’ often ignored in the field. My focus on the socio-cultural context of South Africa represents a major contribution to both the social entrepreneurship and “globalization from below” scholarship. Social entrepreneurship, notwithstanding the current debates regarding its definition, is an adequate case study to examine, 1) how capitalist formations get re-inserted in the “globalization from below” project, 2) how the intersectionalities of race, class, and gender determine who is identified and represented as a transnational agent of change and who is excluded from the transnational narrative. I argue that enduring social change is the result of collective action at various levels. Second, when the model is effectuated at the local level it can come with transformative and anti-capitalist possibilities. These arguments point to the necessity for scholarship on “globalization from below” to reflect on the latter’s ‘peripheral’ subjects and spaces. In the next section, I review the context of “globalization from below.” Then, I present three cases of social entrepreneurship in South Africa, suggesting that there is a continuum of social entrepreneurship organizations and activities. Johnson (2000) writes, “socially entrepreneurial activities blur the traditional boundaries between the public, private, and non-profit sector, and

emphasize hybrid models of for-profit and non-profit activities” (1). Finally, I discuss the intersectionality of social entrepreneurship.

### **Inclusive Globalization: The Contemporary Neoliberal Moment**

The Washington Consensus, with its emphasis on macroeconomic stability and integration into the international economy, reoriented development strategies from state-managed projects to the implementation of ‘market rule.’ Neoliberal globalization, dividing the world according to the logic of capital and the supremacy of the market, resulted in compulsory participation, by both states and individuals, in the world market (McMichael 1996). While mainstream works on globalization have celebrated the friction-free circuits of commodities, capital, corporations and communication (Ohmae 1990; Fukuyama 1992; Toffler and Toffler 1995; Friedman 2005), critical scholars have problematized the nature of contemporary global governance (Castells 1989; Sklair 1999; Sassen 2000; Sparke 2006; Steger 2009). Offering a more complex analysis of transnational fluxes of ideas, signs, ideologies, and bodies, this body of work understands globalization as something more than a matter of evident homogenization. In particular, scholars have examined the extent to which it includes and empowers the poor and the marginalized (Keck and Sikkink 1997; Falk 1999; Rodrik 1999; Stiglitz 2002; Held and McGrew 2002; Norberg 2003; Sachs 2005; Evans 2005).

Hannerz (1996), looking at globalization from a center-periphery perspective, has pointed to the asymmetries of cultural flows in the world. If it is true that the center-periphery flow of culture has tended toward global cultural homogenization, the author argues that alarmist predictions of the end of local cultures are not warranted.

Transnational cultural flows do not impede local interpretations and forms of cultural creativity, or in the words of Ferguson (2006) “surprising borrowings, ironic reinventions, and dazzling resignifications” (30). In this sense, globalization does not necessarily assimilate localized meanings and practices; rather, the local and the transnational become interconnected as people use cultural items that are important to them in creative ways. Similarly, Appadurai (1990) has looked at the persistence of difference in the global cultural economy, advocating for a greater emphasis on ‘place’ among both proponents and detractors of globalization. He understands the global cultural economy as a “complex, overlapping, disjunctive order” (296), in which different types of ‘landscapes’ – ethnoscaping, mediascaping, technoscapes, finanscaping, and ideoscapes – constitute the ‘imagined worlds’ of historically-situated groups. Global flows of these ‘imagined worlds’ compel us to see today’s globalization as the complex, fractal, unpredictable, somewhat chaotic system that it is.

By and large, mainstream renditions of globalization have offered grand, encompassing readings of the phenomenon that lack grounding in the lives and intimate experiences of small-scale individuals. In time, however, observers in the Global North started to point to unregulated market forces as the culprit for a “race to the bottom”, characterized by poverty, low wages, unemployment, shrinking national social securities, gender inequalities, and environmental degradation to name a few (Brecher and Costello 1998; Schuurman 2001). They sought to reframe the discourse of globalization to center global justice and shift the focus from the interests of the dominant actors to those of individuals and communities whose lives have been affected by the neoliberal agenda. As national governments and national social movements were increasingly destabilized by

wide-reaching global networks, the use of old tactics was questioned. Faced with global restructuring, individuals, groups and social movements looked to the establishment of *transnational* networks as a more viable strategy. The idea that a new, global, social counter-force was emerging culminated when protestors took to the streets of Western cities like Seattle to decry the establishment of market globalism as the ultimate reality of our time. Globalization from below, as it is now known, is a global movement that started at the end of the 1990s, advocating for small-scale social actors to participate in and shape the “new architecture” of the global economy (Brecher and Castello 1998; Falk 1999).

Scholars’ responses and understandings of globalization-from-below can be broadly categorized into two very different camps. One is profoundly globalist in nature and deals with the benefits of ‘inclusive’ globalization. Stiglitz (2002) points out that there has been some willingness on the part of international economic institutions to at least talk about poverty and listen to the voices of the poor.

However, recognizing the hegemonic implications and unequal relations of power that lie at the heart of such comments, critical scholars have problematized the concept of ‘inclusive’ globalization (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; Rankin 2001; Prempeh 2004; Schild 2007; Gill 2008; Sharma 2008; Steger 2009). Prempeh (2004) asks whether the social forces representing globalization-from below are representative of marginalized voices, or whether they can set new grounds for disempowering African political agents. Furthermore, Comaroff and Comaroff (2001), question the claim that ‘revamped’ neoliberal globalization is best suited to redress the inequalities that it has brought forth to begin with. Suspecting the hidden agenda of inclusive globalization, they ask “could it

be that all these characteristics of millennial capitalism [...] are connected [...] with other, more mundane features of the contemporary historical moment? Like the increasing relevance of consumption [...] in shaping selfhood, society, identity, even epistemic reality?" (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2001: 2).

This body of work has therefore paid unprecedented attention to the cultural and ideological aspects of neoliberal globalization. Defining globalization both as a set of material processes *and* a powerfully dominant ideological discourse (Gibson-Graham 1996; Yeoh 1999; Sparke 2004; Massey 2005), theorists have focused on the discursive effects it has on people's subjectivities and identities. This literature posits that neoliberal governance has increased the relevance of consumption as a shaper of identity and society and an instrument of empowerment (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001, Rankin 2001; Schild 2007; Gill 2008; Hintzen 2008; Hintzen 2014). Drawing on the Foucauldian concept of governmentality, scholars have examined the ways in which neoliberal social norms and discourses seek to manage and self-regulate local populations (Ong 1987; Burchell et al. 1991; Cruikshank 1993; Lemke 2001; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Faria 2008).

### **Social Entrepreneurship in South Africa: A Continuum Between Capitalist and Non-Capitalist Representations**

Alvord et al. (2002) identify three forms of innovation used by social entrepreneurs: building local capacity, disseminating a package, and building a movement. Capacity-building projects involve working closely with the constituents or beneficiaries of the initiatives so that they may be able to use self-help strategies in the future. The package-

dissemination model, as instantiated by the bottom-of-the-pyramid research (Prahalad and Hammond 2002), focuses on innovatively delivering products and services that are lacking in marginalized communities. The building a movement model involves the mobilization of grassroots alliances to take on abusive elites, institutions, or norms.

*Case 1: The Package Dissemination Model: Wizzit International and Founder Brian Richardson.*<sup>21</sup>

Brian Richardson, the founder of Wizzit International, launched in 2004 on a pilot basis in South Africa. Currently operating in 9 emerging markets from 3 continents, and serving close to 10 million customers, Wizzit International partners with other leading financial institutions in emerging markets to create financial empowerment and inclusion.

Richardson addresses an important gap in the market. He states:

“There are 7 billion people on the planet, half of which do not have access to financial services. We look at Africa, it’s a continent of 1 billion people, and 85% do not have access to financial services. Many of the leading banks in the world do not have as part of their strategic agenda financial empowerment and financial inclusion. Their whole models are geared toward the upper- middle income groups. Their belief is in fact that you cannot make money at the bottom end of the pyramid.”

The logic followed in launching Wizzit International is straightforward:

“People cannot get out of the poverty trap if they are not economic citizens, and you cannot be an economic citizen when your only means of participating in the economy is with cash. Cash is expensive, it is incredibly dangerous, it is highly inefficient, and we need to move people away from cash to something more electronic. But that implies that they have to have an account of some sort, ideally with a registered financial institution.”

Richardson went around the world, talking to the segment of the population he was hoping to access, asking one simple question: “why don’t you have a bank account?” Their reasons were not dissimilar: affordability (opening a bank account is expensive),

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<sup>21</sup> Based on interview with Brian Richardson at Wizzit International in Johannesburg in May 2015



accessibility (banks are typically located in urban centers), and availability (banks' opening hours coincide with working hours). Richardson recognized that if he could solve those issues (that he refers to as the Three As'), he would have a chance at giving people access to basic bank accounts. After spending some time in the field, he found similar reasons why the unbanked would need a bank account. First, it provides a safe place where they can keep their money. Second, it is an easy way to access that money as and when people need it. Third, it facilitates transactionability, allowing people to readily send money to friends and family or purchase prepaid water and electricity. Fourth, building a banking track record is key to gaining access to loans or services such as micro-insurance (i.e. burial or funeral policies, emergency medical policy, insurance against crops and livestock). However, the stringent regulations of the banking industry make simple bank accounts inaccessible to the lower end of the market, often because they simply do not have the adequate paperwork. Revolted by what he considers a violation of basic human rights, Richardson asks "why stop a farm laborer earning less than 200 a month from opening a bank account because he can't provide proof of residence"? He then fervently adds that "in a country like South Africa, where you can get killed for 20 rands, refusing the poor a safe way to carry their money, amounts to committing the crime yourself."

Once he identified this market gap, Richardson set out to solve the problem of financial access through innovative technologies. He observed that "the poor might not have shoes but they got a phone because communication is very important." However, the technology available at the time required to have a phase 2 compliance phone, a specific sim card and to belong to a specific network provider, none of which the poor

can afford. Wizzit International was the first to launch a commercialized business that made access to financial services possible irrespective of the handset, the network and the simcard of their clients. Still, the social venture faced, and continues to face, challenges. One of them, understandably, is the distrust of the poor toward the banking industry. Richardson reflects that his social enterprise is fundamentally about changing people behaviors:

“How do you get people to go from cash, which they have grown very accustomed to, to electronic? I never thought in my wildest dreams that I would have to educate people about the risk, the insecurity, the danger of cash. Let’s take the example of people who live in camps or informal settlements, they keep money under their mattresses or bury it in holes around their houses, but everybody knows it because everybody does the same. So they stay awake all night protecting what little money they have. It is a crazy situation.”

*Carrying the State’s Burden: The Role of Social Entrepreneurship*

Social entrepreneurs’ mission to change society is particularly relevant in a political context where developmental programs for achieving social objectives such as poverty alleviation and employment are no longer provided by the state. With joblessness rising and government resources dwindling, universities, businesses, and social enterprises are persuaded to tackle unemployment themselves. In an interview with the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Professor Irene Moutlana, vice-chancellor of Vaal University of Technology and deputy chair of the South African Technology Network, says:

“unemployment has triggered a focus in higher education across the country on the notion of entrepreneurship. Universities need to produce job creators instead of job seekers. That goes hand in hand with the National Development Plan [...] this means that we have to form a value chain. An idea comes in, you convert that idea into something

commercial and then you transfer it for the upliftment of society. It is that meaningful transference that gives it a greater depth as an entrepreneurial product” (MacGregor 2015).

Susan Steinman, the then director of the Centre for Social Entrepreneurship and Social Economy (CSESE) at the University of Johannesburg, states: “the biggest creator of employment is the social sector”. She adds: “if I look at what we achieved in Soweto: all our social entrepreneurs employed more people at the same time as they were addressing social ills. That’s fantastic. We can get people to create jobs *and* tackle social ills. When you create jobs, you change the world.”<sup>22</sup> The following case study corroborates Steinman’s assertion.

*Case 2: Building Local Capacity: Thokoza Mjo’s Beyond the Lemonade Stand*<sup>23</sup>

Thokoza Mjo, a black South African woman social entrepreneur, launched her for-profit, *Beyond the Lemonade Stand*, in 2013 after conducting a pilot in the township of Thembisa. Her enterprise facilitates personal development and entrepreneurial skills among young people by partnering with under-resourced local high schools, teaching learners to produce, publish, and sell copies of their own school newspapers. Her team personally selects a group of twenty learners per school to become ‘newspaper teams.’ After school, twice a week, they meet with these teams to provide workshops in personal leadership and twenty-first century’s skills. Her innovative idea came from the

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Susan Steinman in Johannesburg in February 2015

<sup>23</sup> Based on interview with Thokoza Mjo in Johannesburg in May 2015

identification of a particular problem: the defeatist mindset among young black people in the townships. She says:

“This mindset manifests itself in a few ways. One, the number of dropout rate in high school: about 50% of young people do not finish high school matric. After grade nine, there is a huge dropout rate. And the students who do make it to Varsity [university], about 40% of them drop out in their first year of university. I therefore asked myself: how do we develop a “can-do” mindset among these kids and give them the right kind of skills to overcome educational and societal challenges. My personal take on that question was that we allow them to do things that they previously thought was impossible to do, and so when challenges do come, they do not just give up.”

In order to generate revenues for her company, Mjo leverages her extensive network to sell advertising space in the paper. Once the newspaper has been produced, students who are part of the program go out and sell it, keeping the revenues they make from selling the paper for themselves. The school newspaper is not only the vehicle used to teach kids to manage an enterprise themselves, it is also a platform for ‘previously disadvantaged’ youth to make their voices heard. Looking back to when she started *Beyond the Lemonade Stand*, Mjo observes: “a lot of the students just could not articulate their thoughts. We are able to track the improvement in terms of the articles that they write and the questions that they are asking around the articles. They really have developed an ability to think about personal things critically, to express that thought clearly, and ultimately to make their voice and experiences heard in a way that can no longer be silenced.” However, her main goal and the main impact that her venture has had so far is to enable young black South Africans to make money for themselves. Mjo’s emphasis on income-generating solutions to poverty is motivated by her belief that young blacks have to eventually be empowered to solve their own problems. She says: “they

can't rely on the social entrepreneur, or the government for that matter, for their survival.”

*Beyond the Lemonade Stand* already boasts a few success stories. One of the beneficiary students is publishing her own book. She has been writing for a while but did not realize that she could publish her own work. Another participant was really good at playing sports but his parents could not afford to buy him the adequate shoes to play rugby. Through selling the newspaper he was able to generate enough money to cover half of the cost of the shoes and meet his parents half way. Mjo notes that her venture has been successful in that ‘her’ students can now acquire the things that they were not able to buy previously. However, the true test of the program will come much later, when the high schoolers graduate and decide what to do with their future. She says, “it is so important for us black South Africans to invest in our youth. The biggest thing for me is for students to be economically active, whether or not they decide to go to Varsity.”

### **A Blurry Frontier between Capitalist and Non-Capitalist Representations**

It is somewhat problematic that most existing research linking social entrepreneurship to neoliberal globalization – from the business sector to the humanities – has centered on commercial initiatives. Social entrepreneurship can take many forms, as evidenced by the lack of consensus around the construct. In particular, the model can foster the creation of grassroots’ movements that can challenge institutions that (re)produce oppression. The paucity of comprehensive works on social entrepreneurship is baffling because the construct is sorely in need of critical analysis. Critical examinations of the many forms of

socially entrepreneurial ventures would offer valuable contributions to the critical literature on development and neoliberal globalization.

*Re-Appropriating Social Entrepreneurship: A Global South Perspective*

Reducing social entrepreneurship to a mere neoliberal project may exclude and fail to acknowledge individuals whose identity and agency are not congruent with neoliberal capital. According to Steinman, social entrepreneurship is understood very differently in the Global South and in the Global North. She believes that Western insistence on relating social entrepreneurship to neoliberalism is merely a plot to construct capitalism as a benevolent project. She vehemently states that:

“After the financial crisis, the capitalist system launched onto social entrepreneurship and described it as a capitalist model because they feared that the world was becoming socialist... It’s the whole push of capitalism (for example from the World Economic Forum and Schwab Foundation) to look good with social entrepreneurship... In order to avoid this, I have argued that the enterprise aspect must be split from social entrepreneurship. It is not about the enterprise, it is about making change. Social entrepreneurship cannot be used to sanctify capitalism... I was asked to change my definition of social entrepreneurship. I was pushed beyond what you cannot believe, but I will not budge.”<sup>24</sup>

Thokoza Mjo also shares a radical view of social entrepreneurship: “I hate the idea of 1% of the population sharing most of the world’s resources and the rest of us living on so little. The idea is to say let’s turn the whole capitalistic system on its head and to create a way in which the distribution of wealth is more equally distributed. As a

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Susan Steinman in Johannesburg in February 2015

social entrepreneur, my goal is not to accumulate wealth for myself, it is to enable other people to move up the economic and social ladder.”<sup>25</sup>

Rejoice Shemba, a scholar of social entrepreneurship at the University of Johannesburg, questions the business school understanding of the model. Shemba argues that Ashoka Founder, Bill Drayton’s original idea focused on the social as opposed to the opportunistic penchant from which social entrepreneurship suffers today. She says: “When you speak to people in business schools, they tell you that there is no social entrepreneurship without income or a business model. But most of the examples that Bill Drayton provides are of people who did not have a business model; they had good ideas that brought about social change. In this sense, social entrepreneurship is different from social enterprises, but they tend to be lumped together in business schools. What’s really important in social entrepreneurship is not its integration with market values, it is innovation, the newness of the idea and how it is institutionalized to promote systemic change.”<sup>26</sup>

Talking about her motivation to become a social entrepreneur, Mjo expresses a similar idea: “Our drive to make some profit is informed by our passion for the social impact we want to make. The profit is the enabler, not the end goal. Even if you make an income, your motivation is to use that profit to create an even bigger impact.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Thokoza Mjo in Johannesburg in May 2015

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Rejoice Shemba at the University of Johannesburg in February 2015

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Thokoza Mjo in Johannesburg in May 2015

Going beyond small-scale changes, one strand of scholars has considered the role of social entrepreneurship in really transforming the social systems that lead to marginalization, oppression and poverty. In this view, social entrepreneurs should be committed to, not only providing immediate relief to impoverished communities, but also to challenge existing social arrangements and systems of oppression (Ashoka 2000; Alvord et al 2002).

*Case 3: Building a Social Movement: Dean Peacock's Sonke Gender Justice*<sup>28</sup>

In 2006, Ashoka Fellow Dean Peacock established his non-profit, Sonke Gender Justice, in South Africa and in a short amount of time has scaled Sonke's programs throughout the African continent. Sonke works to empower governments, civil society organizations, and citizens to achieve gender equality, prevent gender-based violence, and reduce the spread of HIV and the impact of AIDS. Sonke uses many tools, such as community education, media outreach, digital storytelling, international networks, and policy advocacy, to carry out its mission. In particular, its national campaigns – OneManCan, Brother for Life, and MenCare – are well-known throughout the nine South African provinces in which the organization works.

Peacock speaks passionately about his work. He believes that empowering men and boys (but also women) to become active advocates of gender equality, responsible fathers, husbands, and sexual partners, and caring individuals can lead to great social change. He expounds:

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<sup>28</sup> Based on interview with Dean Peacock in Cape Town in June 2015



“My girlfriend at the time told me about an organization in Los Angeles that was doing work on men overcoming violence and that they were doing important work and she asked me if I would consider volunteering there. It was an epiphany. A light bulb moment. I thought it was a powerful work I could do: working with men to challenge patriarchy. I then moved to Nicaragua and started to work with homeless kids that were in the streets because of violence in their homes. So I started asking myself: how do you stop the violence upstream so these kids don’t have to end up in the streets? When I went back to San Francisco and started working for another organization, it all came together for me. At that organization, I was doing interviews of men who had been arrested for domestic violence. The work was fascinating... Instead of angry and violent men, I discovered that they were broken and ashamed. There was almost no one who was resolutely committed to their violent ways. I learnt from that A) you could do powerful work with men and that men were hungry for it, and B) that I loved doing it.”

Peacock also credits his innovative model to challenge patriarchy to his intimate relationships with two strong, fiercely anticapitalist women. These women, both from South America, radically shaped his perspective on gender, sexuality, and imperialism while he was still a student at Berkeley University in the 1990s. Peacock jokingly recalls:

“Angie was the first person who pushed me to think about gender and the international division of labor, and U.S imperialism...when we broke up, I started dated a Nicaraguan girl that I met at Berkeley, she was an anarchist, and she opened my eyes even more on issues of race, gender, sex, sexuality. I started to think about power differently, and was immersed in radical politics for a few years. I think I brought some of that skepticism about power and hierarchy in Sonke... I remember that I had a sticker on my car that read “Question Authority” (laughter)... So I had that sort of vanguard radical left political affiliation. Even the rhetoric of the ANC makes me uncomfortable. It’s very old school left for me.”

Although Peacock is proud that his organization is self-sustainable – through the use of commercial initiatives aimed at supporting the programs – he nevertheless expresses astonishment at being called a social entrepreneur. He admits:

“I was a bit taken aback when Ashoka offered me to become a fellow. I am not even sure what is a social entrepreneur...I would not call what I do ‘entrepreneurial’, it’s more like a life mission to me, but I guess that my organization falls under that category because the idea is innovative, and we were able to scale that idea pretty quickly... also, our network is extended, from governments to private companies, and we manage the organization in a very business-like fashion.”

My interviews with South African social entrepreneurs show the messiness of their ideological commitments and their imaginative experimentations with the tools at hand to produce the social change that they are most passionate about. The social entrepreneur's struggle to remain true to their social mission while building a sustainable organization able to withstand the caprices of a competitive and uncertain environment should not be automatically equated to capitalism. Environmental dynamics (i.e. 'smaller' government, increased competition to secure both government and foreign grants) have led the not-for-profit sectors to innovate in order to ensure independence and sustainability. Socially entrepreneurial NGOs have turned to the market in order to survive this tougher external environment and have proactively sought innovative solutions to complement their revenues. Social entrepreneurs, for the most part, are distrustful of governments' initiatives to fight poverty. For instance, Steinman argues:

“The government goes to previously disadvantaged areas and keep them dependent on grants, but they do not help them to get out of poverty that way. They are distorting the economy at the moment. Our government doesn't understand the logic of market economies and the principle of social entrepreneurship. It is important not to give handouts. They should not help people distort the market. They should help people stand on their own two feet. The government thinks social entrepreneurship is community entrepreneurship. It is not the same thing. Community entrepreneurship, they give handouts, and people are taking advantage of the whole thing. It is not creating the entrepreneurial spirit. I went on vacation to Kwazulu-Natal and there was a big billboard stating: “80% of the people from Kwazulu- Natal are on grants” and I wanted to cry. It's the tragedy of South Africa: people are all on grants. We must give people what they need: a chance, an opportunity to do what they want. This hand-holding is sickening.”<sup>29</sup>

Weerawardena and Mort (2006) argue that social entrepreneurs are unlike traditional entrepreneurs because their risk-taking behaviors are significantly constrained

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Susan Steinman in Johannesburg in February 2015

by their primary objective of building a sustainable organization, able to carry out their social mission. They conclude that conceptualizing social entrepreneurship as a “constrained optimization problem” (Weerawardena and Mort. 2006: 33) helps to clearly distinguish the model from for-profit entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneur Thokoza Mjo insists: “The whole idea was not to make money for myself. My main objective was to make the model sustainable so that I could scale it and reach more young black people. I looked to business solutions because I didn’t want to worry about the limitations of the lack of resources. I didn’t want to be dependent on handouts to do the work.”<sup>30</sup>

These statements speak to the insufficiency to fold social entrepreneurship into a neatly packaged capitalist model. Importantly, a large body of literature identifies the social mission to be the core of socially entrepreneurial ventures (Dees 1998b; Alvord et al. 2002; Sullivan Mort et al. 2003; Dees and Anderson 2006). In particular, Anderson and Dees (2002) vehemently refutes the idea that earned income is a key characteristic of social entrepreneurship. They emphatically state, “No! It is not. Social entrepreneurship is about finding new and better ways to create and sustain social value” (192). Yet, the authors’ use of the term ‘social value is not benign. This language is in and of itself profoundly neoliberal. Hence, the current debate within the literature over the importance of ‘the social’ versus ‘the market’ does not, in essence, unsettle the neoliberal foundations upon which the model is built. Regardless of their motivations, social entrepreneurs circulate a type of discourse that is inherently complicit with neoliberal conceptualizations of social change and social justice.

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with Thokoza Mjo in Johannesburg in May 2015

## **Who's Visible and Who's Not? The Intersectionality of Social Entrepreneurship**

Exploring the discourses of particular social ventures highlights social entrepreneurship's use of both disciplinary power – to produce certain bodies, desires and identities – *and* biopolitics that reproduces a privileged body politic, understood in relation to an excluded 'Other'. Applying these concepts to the Global South enables a more complex and nuanced understanding of the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality with power in contemporary neoliberalism. Even when the voices from below are included, we need to interrogate the kinds of strategies that are used to morally shape the bottom. Social entrepreneurship, while showcasing solidarity, sentimentality, and care, highlights the less visible, less flamboyant, workings of power in the globalization-from-below project. Identifying the actors that actually matter, Duran states that social change rests on “the trilogy of individual social entrepreneurs, transnational organizations such as Ashoka, and private companies.”<sup>31</sup> The current literature and popular discourses on social entrepreneurship give little visibility to how global processes are understood, lived, negotiated and contested in marginalized spaces.

The attractiveness of social entrepreneurship and its worldwide endorsement essentially obscure the inequalities that the neoliberal social and cultural forms are built upon, even making them seem anachronistic. It, then, becomes important to interrogate the construct of social entrepreneurship, examining its ideological, economic and social conditions of existence. The machinery of inequality, always reliant on power, requires us to explore the relationships upon which power can be exercised, and subsequently

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with Lorena Duran at Ashoka in Miami in September 2012

hidden. In practice, social entrepreneurship may open up new markets – in this case, South Africa – to globalized capital without guaranteeing that local *and* marginalized voices be included in institutional outcomes for all that.

Lack of attention to race, class, and gender, and sexuality is one of the greatest shortcomings of the current literature on social entrepreneurship. The success of the transnational model is largely attributed to its inclusiveness, irrespective of the positionality of the social entrepreneurs. In fact, Alvord et al (2002) state that “there are not immediately obvious and highly visible characteristics that distinguish [the] leaders by background, country of origin, gender, occupation, or even as individuals or groups” (11). My own research in South Africa leads me to vehemently disagree with this contention. Richardson’s recounting of his professional journey illustrates the particularly elitist background of many Ashoka Fellows. He started his career in the banking industry where he rapidly rose to a senior level, becoming the youngest general manager of one of the leading banks in South Africa. After graduating with an MBA, he was made some prestigious offers as a result of his research being published internationally. After leaving the bank at the age of 27, he ran a global consulting business with offices in 37 countries around the world, primarily in the area of people development. Likewise, Thokoza Mjofu fully acknowledges the role of her privileged background in leading her to social entrepreneurship: “I started leading training workshops for street kids when I was at the university. I did that because I had a passion for teaching, but most importantly because I

was very privileged: I had the time and access to resources that these young people did not have.”<sup>32</sup>

This research takes a transnational and intersectional level of analysis, which is well-suited for highlighting the asymmetries and unequal power relations that characterize global processes. Transnationalism, with its variety of traditions, discourses, and embodiments, underlines the emergence of new forms of governmentality, with their set of strategies and unequal outcomes that “become the conditions of possibility of new subjects” (Grewal and Kaplan 2001: 671). Drawing from this scholarship, I argue that the embodiment of actors of social entrepreneurship plays an important role in the way in which the model has been received, acclaimed, and promoted in powerful spheres. Problematizing the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality with social entrepreneurship is an endeavor that is virtually non-existent within the business literature. The existing literature fundamentally lacks a thorough examination of the ways social entrepreneurship is *lived* and experienced by its constituents. I contend that examining the workings of power within social entrepreneurship is a step toward making a cautious and truly transformative critique of the construct.

The Ashoka branch in South Africa, for the most part fosters the initiatives of already successful social entrepreneurs, many of them, members of the South African elite. With access to advanced education (sometimes in the West) and at least some capital, these entrepreneurs are very different from the beneficiaries of their ventures. In South Africa, many of the entrepreneurs featured on the Ashoka website are white males.

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Thokoza Mjo in Johannesburg in May 2015

Able to forge powerful alliances with foreign entrepreneurs, transnational organizations, governments, and multinational corporations, these entrepreneurs are themselves in no urgent need of poverty alleviation initiatives. Analyzing the paradoxical position of Ashoka, Thokoza Mjo notes that:

“Social entrepreneurship is not an easy path. You have to constantly grow your network. It is your network that gives you access to financial and also intellectual support. That’s why it is so important to be affiliated with organizations that understand and support social entrepreneurs. Social entrepreneurship is supposed to be about innovative ideas, regardless of your personal background...but I think Ashoka plays in a different league because the criteria to become a fellow are very high. For a lot of local social entrepreneurs who are in the startup phase, I don’t know that they can get any support from Ashoka. You must have some success before you can become part of Ashoka. This means that you must have tapped into some form of personal network and resources to begin with.”<sup>33</sup>

Recognizing the privilege of whiteness *and* masculinity in South Africa, a white South African woman, champion of social entrepreneurship in the country tells:

“Ashoka’s panelists are mostly white Americans, and I think it is really a disadvantage for South Africans. I also think that in terms of entrepreneurial thinking, the pendulum goes right to the whites who are seen as more entrepreneurial for many reasons that go right back to apartheid. However, if you go to the townships, you’ll realize that the talent is there. There are people in the township who do miracles. We do not hear of it. They don’t come to the fore. How do you know about Ashoka if you live in deep rural communities? You might do miracles for your community but how the hell would you know about organizations that support the change-making that you bring about every day? How do you market yourself in that way? How do you take advantage of business opportunities and ultimately foster that entrepreneurial spirit? If I look at the social entrepreneurs coming from the townships, I find a lot of the unique qualities that Ashoka is looking for in fellows, but they are not recognized or developed at all. As for gender, I had a study done in the township of Sasenburg, I found similar imbalances in terms of female entrepreneurship in both the black townships and white communities. So it is a problem that women have, regardless of whether they are black or white. The social entrepreneurship world is clearly predominantly male, at least in South Africa. Whites are more dominant than blacks, and both are more dominant than women.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Thokoza Mjo in Johannesburg in May 2015

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Susan Steinman in Johannesburg in February 2015

Further reflecting on the intersection of race and class with social entrepreneurship,

Thokoza Mjo adds:

“I think it’s a lot harder to get into the social entrepreneurship space when you are a black South African. You are already starting at a disadvantage because you come from an environment where you often do not have access to the networks that matter...you don’t come from a background where your parents are able to fund you while you are trying to start your company or organization. As soon as you finish high school or varsity, you are forced to work not only for your own survival, but also to provide for your family back in the village, which can be quite extended (laughs). Not having the financial muscle to go into social entrepreneurship is a pity because most of the challenges that we want to address is part of our daily lives anyways. It’s a bit of a paradox: we can best identify the problems because we live them every day, but we do not have the resources to tackle them, at least not with a model like social entrepreneurship, which requires you to have some type of capital to begin with, be it financial or social.”<sup>35</sup>

Incidentally, the success of the social ventures I look at for the purpose of this dissertation, lies with the staff activities and commitment. Both *Wizzit Int’l* and *Sonke Gender Justice* employ a mostly black staff at the operational level. Brian Richardson of *Wizzit Int’l* explains that he is very proud of the fact that his company has given employment opportunities to 8.5 thousands of locals in the Global South. He further notes that he heavily relies on his staff, who are members of impoverished communities, to remain in touch with the needs of the market his company seeks to tap into. Similarly, within *Sonke Gender Justice*, black South African men and women (the men trainers disproportionately outnumber women trainers however) are employed as trainers, to vehicle the messages of the organization during campaigns in the townships and/or poor rural communities. This is because, unlike the organization’s leadership, they are able to communicate with community members in both African languages (Zulu, Xhosa, and

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Thokoza Mjo in Johannesburg in May 2015



Tswana mainly) and Afrikaans (spoken mostly in the Colored communities).

Furthermore, members of these impoverished communities, often wary of sharing their experiences with whites, tend to build a trusting relationship with the black trainers, whom they believe share a common understanding of their realities and cultural values. Therefore, practically speaking, it is the staff, not the social entrepreneur himself that is able to infiltrate marginalized communities and potentially foster change. Virtually nothing is said, however, about the latter's passion, and hard work, but also their values and cultural beliefs.

Black trainers and staff have a lot to do with the transformation that happens on the ground. Although a quick perusing of the business literature would give the impression that, through the entrepreneurial spirit and vision of the social entrepreneur, 'previously disadvantaged' groups are, willingly or not, enrolled in a global movement, the reality is quite different. Global practices and discourses do not simply happen *to* local groups. Through their interactions with the trainers, community leaders and members actively (co)produce their own knowledge, which may be radically different from the one the social entrepreneur initially intended to spread. The inclusion of sexuality in Sonke's gendered discourse is an example. In theory, the organization is adamant about the promotion of equal rights for members of the LGBT community in South Africa. However, the dissemination of its sexed agenda is left to the mainly black, heterosexual male trainers. During one of Sonke's focus groups in an impoverished community, I witnessed the molding of the organization's official language to align with the trainers' understanding of masculinity and femininity. One participant, Joy, shared her life story:

“I was having relationships with women. I guess you could say that I was a lesbian. My mother told me that she will get rid of me if I didn’t change. At the age of 20 I changed from being a lesbian to being a straight girl. It was very hard because in 2011 I was raped by a friend of mine and I nearly died. I ended up hating men, to an extent that even sitting next to a men makes my blood boil, even today. Then around 2012, I became acquainted with Sonke’s work around gender issues. I just sat there and listened to them while the men were talking. It empowered me to heal from the rape. Today, I can really say that I am ok because I have even started dating men and I am straight even though I still love women, but I try to repress this side of me.”

Sitting next to the trainer, who incidentally was wearing that day a Sonke’s tee-shirt reading ‘Say No to Homophobia,’ I awaited the moment when he would tell Joy that she should not change her practices of desire to conform to the homophobic society, or at the very least take that opportunity to share Sonke’s homonormative narrative on sexuality with the participating men (Joy was the only woman attending the focus group). No such thing happened. Instead, all participants applauded and cheered Joy on her efforts to fight the evil of lesbianism, while the trainer opted against any type of intervention.

Another illustration of the trainers’ active role in co-producing Sonke’s discourses on the ground happened the next day, during a training session in another community of the Eastern Cape. While addressing the legacies and wounds of apartheid do not appear to be on Sonke’s official agenda, the trainers used the example of white oppression and brutality to draw parallels with men’s violence against women. In that session, the men present shared their vivid memories of oppression at the hands of the white settlers. Assuaged by the fact that the all-men audience (except for my presence) shared similar histories of dispossession and humiliation, they gradually acknowledged, with the help of the trainers, that they – black South African men – had become the oppressors in their violent treatment of women. Reluctantly at first, they ended up empathizing with the plight of black women. Notwithstanding its dangerous underpinnings (it entrenches

men's power while denying women's agency), the trainers' strategy appealed to the participants and was pivotal in winning their attention. But it was only possible because the participants felt like the trainers were "brothers in the struggle." In this particular instance, common experiences of racialized and classed discrimination were a powerful gateway to the discussion of gender equality and the emergence of compassion and empathy within the group of men.

The collusion of global discourses with local practices often shapes, in interesting ways, the social transformation that is happening on the ground. While questions on the extent to which social entrepreneurship empowers marginalized groups are clearly important, I insist that attention to the kind of social *and* moral reality that is being created through 'inclusive' globalization must be explored first.

## **Conclusion**

Postcolonial authors have examined the construction of racialized identities within capitalist globalization (Ferguson 2006; Hintzen 2014), contending that changes in the economic and technological system have rendered essentialist ideologies obsolete. The critical work of postcolonial and diasporic thinkers it engages and problematizes previously foreclosed subjects' inscription both in the modern nation state and in the global neoliberal world. This literature, attending to 'peripheral' subjects and spaces, not only extends but also reconfigures somewhat ahistorical accounts of neoliberal globalization. The idea that there is no longer an 'inside' differentiated from an 'outside', or a past cut from the present, requires scholars of globalization to rethink some of their key assumptions (Mbembe 2008). The current crisis of global capital has compelled a

complete change in the discourses about black people in general, and Africans in particular. The long-unrecognized entrepreneurial and innovative qualities of African people, significant markers of modernity and enlightenment, are now emphasized in an attempt to deepen the linkages and reach of global capital (Hintzen 2014). Hintzen (2014) warns against celebrating this shift, however. He posits that contemporary globalization deconstructs the historical distinction between tradition and modernity to enlist entrepreneurial and consumerist African subjects in the dynamics of the market and its logic of supply and demand. Indeed, a shift in colonizing epistemologies can lead to the re-establishment and reinforcement of capitalism (Hintzen 2014).

A close examination of social entrepreneurship's discourse and processes complements *and* complicates these arguments. Within the neoliberal project in which social entrepreneurship is inscribed, the practices and identities that get glorified and ascended to heroism are embroiled in power relations. While capitalism no longer gains from ignoring African entrepreneurialism, the latter is often relegated to the realm of 'survivalism, or 'communitarianism' at best. In contrast, social entrepreneurs, with their abundance of material and social capital and their access to global capital, are said to have visions and ideas that can 'change the world.' The implicit hierarchies of practices and agency are highlighted in Ashoka's differentiation between 'changemakers' and 'social entrepreneurs.' If Ashoka clearly states that every individual has the potential to become a changemaker, the rigorous and elitist process that one must go through to become an Ashoka's Fellow is an indication that some forms of identity are more valuable than others. In this case, the true agents -heroes- of social change are not only entrepreneurial and socially-minded; they are also networked, 'visionaries,' business

savvy, and global innovators. Although the literature insists on differentiating social entrepreneurship from other practices of social change on the basis of social entrepreneurs' so-called intrinsic and unique qualities, a critical analysis of its workings reveals other factors of *difference*. In the 'inclusive' neoliberal moment, access to the status of 'hero' is facilitated by privileges and faced with raced, gendered, and classed barriers that are not discussed in the literature on social entrepreneurship.

Interestingly, social entrepreneurs are not all made in the same cloth, as the literature would make them to be. Scholars have tended to focus on the most commercial aspect of social entrepreneurship. However, by doing so, they may have failed to grasp its more transformative – sometimes, subversive – discourses and practices. In this chapter, I have argued that social entrepreneurs exist at the frontier of capitalist and noncapitalist processes and representations. Consigning the model to its capitalistic representation not only silences the many voices rejecting this approach, but also ensures that the global rhetoric on social entrepreneurship trumps locally-based analysis. Such monolithic characterization obscures social entrepreneurs' diverse backgrounds, reaffirms their hierarchical positions in the globalization project, and (re)marginalizes *always-already* excluded subjectivities and identities.

Differences among social entrepreneurs do not, however, induce a complete reconceptualization of social entrepreneurship's complicity with neoliberal discourses. Although their ideologies and life experiences might be competing, social entrepreneurs' shared vision for an alternative development path keeps the movement cohesive. Key characteristics of social entrepreneurship – such as the cognitive abilities and personal qualities of social entrepreneurs are echoed from the North to the South. Furthermore,

only upon self-transformation and self-empowerment can individuals become innovative and global changemakers. Necessarily, such transformation must be aligned with contemporary neoliberal cultural demands.

While the role of social entrepreneurs occupies much space in the literature, little is said of the subjectivities and agency of the beneficiaries. This is surprising since the social entrepreneurs' attempt to "change the world" depends mostly on the beneficiaries' transformation, or at least willingness to be transformed. I therefore examine spaces of (im)mobility within social entrepreneurship. This exercise is useful to moderate the global celebration of the model and *necessary* for true social justice to happen. The role that social entrepreneurship plays in establishing and reinforcing power relations is often obliterated. In this chapter, I have used social entrepreneurship as a case study to emphasize the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality in constructing hierarchized identities within the contemporary neoliberal moment. While the social entrepreneurs are described as socially mobile and well-networked heroes, the beneficiaries – mostly blacks, in South Africa – are portrayed as eternal and helpless victims of their culture and/or socio-economic environment, and for the most part bypassed by modernity. As commentators view social entrepreneurship as an innovative and highly promising movement, it is important to analyze the extent to which the model can achieve "cosmopolitan social democracy" and include marginalized subjects in the global decision-making process.

In chapter V, I look at Sonke Gender Justice in particular as a social enterprise whose core mission is to transform the social, political and cultural system that (re)produces gender inequality and marginalization. This case offers valuable insights on

a non-commercial instance of social entrepreneurship. Most importantly, it allows me to underline the dynamic engagement of foreclosed subjects with social entrepreneurship in particular, and transnational neoliberal cultural forms in general.

## CHAPTER V

### Transnational Transformations: The Making of the New South African Subject

In chapter IV, I argued that social entrepreneurship is a transnational project that is complex and multi-dimensional. Sonke's mission to promote social change is one example of the diverse activities included under social entrepreneurship. Specifically, it is an example of the third form of innovation in Alvord et al.'s (2002) typology: building a social movement. It does not require marginalized subjects to be subjugated into the logic of the market nor does it encourage them to be consumers of global commercial products and services. It does, however, enlist them in the transnational neoliberal project in other ways. While I do not argue against the inclusion of marginalized groups in the global moment or romanticize the cultural values and practices of black South Africans, the terms of their integration are not unproblematic. Promoting change within an easily accessed and highly visible racial group is no doubt a lucrative endeavor. It ensures the financial sustainability of Sonke and the long-term relevance of its work notably due to the pervasiveness of HIV/AIDS in the black majority.

#### **Gender-Based Violence and HIV/AIDS: Legitimizing the Work of Sonke Gender Justice**

As South Africa recently celebrated its twenty-years of democracy, attempts to address gender inequalities has gained a political clout. Despite the country's more evident account of racial inequality, the need for heightened gendered democracy is at the forefront of political debates as South Africa struggles with one of the highest rates of HIV infection in the world (UNICEF 2008). Indeed, it is estimated that 4.2 million South



Africans live with the virus (UNICEF 2008). Other statistics are equally grim: at least one in three South African women can expect to be raped in their lifetime; and one in four will be beaten by her domestic partner (Moffett 2006). Surveys report that South Africa has higher levels of rape of women and children than anywhere else in the world not a war (Moffett 2006). It is widely recognized that South African women are more vulnerable to the AIDS/HIV and gender-based violence pandemic due to the entrenched patriarchies that hinder women's ability to ward off sexual exploitation and to affirm their intimate choices. Structural constraints such as the lack of control of economic resources intersect with gender discrimination to ensure that women bear the brunt of the societal stigma and exclusions that come with contracting the disease and/or being a victim of violent acts. Social acceptance of gender-based violence means that perpetrators feel safe to coerce, rape and beat women, which further drives the latter's loss of social and economic protection. Despite political gestures such as the passing of the South African Domestic Violence Act in 2009, cultural barriers and patriarchal power relations have ensured that physical violence towards women remains pervasive.

Typically, gender inequality is most visible in intimate spaces, such as the home. The separation of domestic relations from the public political arena is a testimony to the subordinate status of women in and beyond the democratic transition. There seems to be a dual citizenship for women in South Africa: one that is based on the Constitution and extends full rights and equality to women, and another that, relegated to the domestic sphere, is severely restricted by private patriarchies. The reality of many women in the post-1994 democracy is therefore that "their equality in the public domain does not translate into equality in the private domain (Moffett 2006: 142). In fact, violence against

women has become an intrinsic and widely tolerated feature of gender relations (Vogelman and Eagle 1991).

Given this sobering reality, it is not surprising that attention to South African masculinities have centered on issues of male violence (Vogelman and Eagle 1991; Moffett 2006; Morrell 1998; Shabazz 2009). It is in this context that the role of male-centered organizations such as Sonke Gender Justice is attracting attention and thus needs to be examined. Some issues must be explored: which men are included in the discourse on gender-based violence? What kind of discourse is being disseminated through the multi-leveled and multi-dimensional efforts by men to change ‘toxic’ masculinities? How successful are those institutions that seek to replace violent performances of masculinity? To what extent new forms of masculinity advance gender equality? To what extent alternative forms of masculinity destabilize cultural identities? I explore these questions using data from my ethnographic research with Sonke Gender Justice.

Highlighting some of the successes and limitations of the organization’s efforts to transform South African masculinity and gender norms allows me to theorize about the transnational collusion of identity scripts and the social reality that is being created as a result. Mainly, I argue that social entrepreneurship efforts can (re)produce and indeed freeze racial stereotypes in a way that hinders its very mission to promote greater equality and transform society.

### **The Transnational Project: Reconfiguring Hegemonic Masculinity**

In September 2015, after more than two years of negotiations, world leaders formally adopted the post-2015 sustainable development agenda aimed to continue and expand the

unfinished plans of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) drafted in 2000. The ambitious agenda boasts seventeen new development goals and was proposed with the objective to end poverty by 2030 and promote shared economic prosperity, social development and environmental protection for all countries.<sup>36</sup> In particular, to achieve concrete tangible results and commit governments to action, the new agenda features a transformative stand-alone gender equality and women's empowerment goal. Recognizing that comprehensive development is contingent on gender equality, the post-2015 framework proposes that gender-specific targets be mainstreamed to all other development goals, thereby giving visibility to gender issues and ensuring that governments be accountable for addressing the structural impediments to gender equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps paradoxically, the new focus on tackling the structural issues that drive inequality is paired with actionable targets and indicators (UN Women 2015: 15), leading feminist scholars and activists to question the conceptualization of 'empowerment' and 'gender equality' within bureaucratic institutions (Kabeer 1999, 2005; Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead 2007; Woodroffe and Smee 2012; Kabeer and Natali 2013; Cornwall and Rivas 2015). In particular Cornwall and Rivas (2015) argue that the instrumentalist rationalization of women's vital role in the development project may have turned the language of "gender equality" and "women's empowerment" into barren buzzwords that fundamentally fail to transform the embodiment of power and give women full agency over their lives and bodies.

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<sup>36</sup> UN Women (2015). "The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" Retrieved on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015 <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/post-2015>

<sup>37</sup> UN Women (2015). "A transformative stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment: Imperatives and key components."

Ultimately, the discourse continues to understand women in their capacity to further development rather than framing development as a project that works for women's own perceptions of their needs and oppression (Cornwall and Rivas 2015).

The post-2015 stand-alone goal, with its new focus on addressing structural issues and upon the insistence of feminist activists, has included indicators highlighting gender-based violence (UN Women 2015). Yet, despite the evident power relations that generate and *tolerate* violent acts committed against women, initiatives continue to frame the problem in a mutually-exclusive way. 'Women' and 'men' are understood as separate, descriptive – rather than analytical – categories, which hinders truly transformative reforms of both gender relations and global processes of power. The essentialist discourse that configures 'women' and 'men' as fundamentally – indeed biologically – different has given rise within developmentalist circles to the distinct themes of 'women and girls' and 'men and boys'. This is evidenced by the emergence of a body of work analyzing the role of men in pursuing and enabling gender equality (Connell 2005). Although the support of men and boys as well as the politics of the "men's movement" has gathered slow recognition in feminist circles (but see Bulbeck 1998; Marchand and Runyan 2000), in the last fifteen years, scholarly focus on men and boys has flourished and initiated a global discussion on the role of men in the pursuit of gender equality. This scholarship takes a "pro-feminist" approach to the study of masculinity in that it contributes to a broad research agenda on gender issues and the unequal distribution of power.

The growth of academic research has been paralleled by global discussions within the United Nations (UN). Thus, in the 2004 meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the centrality of men and boys to gender equality was highlighted,

culminating in the production of the first global policy document on the subject (UN Commission on the Status of Women 2004; Connell 2005). First articulated in ‘developed’ countries (Kaufman 1993; Connell 2000; Kimmel, Hearn, and Connell 2005) the debates on men and masculinities have extended to the Global South (Arihla, Unbehaum Ridenti, and Medrado 1998; Morrell 1998, 2001; Gutmann 2002; Roy 2003; Dworkin, Colvin, Hatcher, and Peacock 2012). Implicating men and masculinity in the discourse of women’s empowerment and women’s rights, scholars have discussed issues such as men’s understandings and changing perceptions of fatherhood and domestic life (McMahon 1999), men’s violence toward women (Hearn 1998), men’s sexual practices and illness (Altman 2001; Banda 2005; Walker 2005; Colvin, Robins, and Leavens 2010; Peacock, Khumalo, and McNab 2006), and the construction of masculinities (Fuller 2001; Connell 2003; Schrock and Shwalbe 2009; Shabazz 2009; Morrell 1998).

While some scholars assert that men as a group should be held responsible and accountable for the horrors they commit against women (Moffett 2006; Morrell and Ouzgane 2005), others have deconstructed the essentialist sex-role theory whereby men exhibit fixed, natural characteristics (Carrigan, Connell and Lee 1985). However, the feminist fear that the broader utilization of ‘gender’ as a tool to theorize power would be reduced to piecemeal initiatives for ‘men’ or ‘women’ is not unfounded. Cornwall and Rivas (2015) rightly note that “the result has been persistent recourse to essentialism: the implicit belief that there is some kind of pre-existing essence that constitutes ‘women’ and ‘men’ as separate and different [...] Thus male violence is naturalized as some kind of bodily property of all men, inherent in maleness itself [...] This is one of the frames through which ‘gender equality’ has come to be viewed: as not only about righting the

wrongs of patriarchy by realigning opportunities, resources and positional power for women, but also about containing, reforming and reorienting men-in-general away from the potential harms that they present to women” (6).

As the men and boys’ movement made it to the global arena, the integration of men in issues of gender equality has become a transnational affair. Connell (2005) argues that “the emergence of new arenas of social relationship on a world scale creates new patterns of gender relations” (1804). Contemporary globalization, which has so vividly impacted the composition of gender orders (i.e. gendered division of labor and feminization of poverty), has also allowed for issues affecting men to be widely debated and negotiated, thereby highlighting similar patterns and enabling the creation of transnational strategies for change. If Connell (2005) does not deny that different historical contexts collude with the process of globalization in the construction of different modes of performing masculinities, he nonetheless asserts that “local gender orders now interact not only with the gender orders of other local societies but also with the gender order of the global arena” (1804). This in turn may enable “support for gender equality [to become] hegemonic among men” (1818). This level of analysis changes how masculinity should be studied: “the old-style ethnographic research that located gender patterns purely in a local context is inadequate to the reality” (Connell 2005: 1805). Indeed, the transnational dimension of the rhetoric on gender equality has led scholars such as Kardam (2004) to explore the emergence of a “global gender equality regime.” Connell’s (2005) contention that worldwide masculinities and gender relations are evolving – although “not always in the same direction or at the same pace” (1804) – on

the basis of the emergence of a transnational model of manhood demands closer examination.

### **Toward A More Intersectional and Historical Transnational Approach to Masculinity**

Notwithstanding its importance, the above discussion is lacking an intersectional and historical analysis of gender violence, masculinity, and patriarchy. With the emergence of ‘men’ as an object of study, scholars have applied a transnational perspective to the study of masculinities. In particular, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), proposing the concept of *global hegemonic masculinity*, argue that hegemonic masculinity is best observed in the global arena. Emphasizing the transnational collusions that have shaped understandings of normative masculinity in relation to subordinated masculinit(ies), their work urges the application of a world-historical approach that examines the changing nature of masculinities at different historical moments. Colonialism and its aftermaths are such key moments that have shaped the type of gender hierarchies that can still be observed today.

The discourse that gender violence is enabled by ‘toxic’ masculinities needs to be contextualized more broadly in transnational and historical processes. Although ‘toxic’ forms of masculinity manifest themselves differently according to their cultural settings, they have been largely attributed to postcolonial nations. Positing ‘subaltern’ masculinities (plural) against a hegemonic masculinity (singular) is an exercise of power and hierarchy that has its roots in the colonial order. Consequently, the interconnections between race *and* gender/sexuality provided the pillars for the rationalization of colonial domination (Burton 1995; McClintock 1995; Patil 2009). The gendering of racialized

men not only positioned Euro-American masculinity as the norm to aspire to, but also, when overlapped with infantilization discourses, misrepresented colonial rule and plundering as protective and educating (images of a good father parenting a girl-child come to mind). Exploring the role of race and gender/sexuality in the decolonization moment, Patil (2009) further asserts that anti-colonialists' response has been equally gendered. She understands the construction of anti-colonialists' 'resistance masculinity' as a way to redress the emasculating narratives and practices of colonialism. Scholarly efforts to locate the etiology of post-colonial masculinities within the gendering tactics of colonialization and imperialism are well-documented (Holden 1998; Gouda 1999; Kondo 1999; Hodgson 1999; Kimmel 2003; Banerjee 2005; Morgan 2005; Woollacott 2006). For instance, Gouda's (1999) account of Indonesia's struggle for independence in 1945-1949 explores the reverse gendered strategies used by Indonesians to fight back their colonizers. Integrating the gender discourse of the Europeans that depicted them as 'feminine' and 'child-like', they resorted to hypermasculine and warlike behaviors as 'a calculated response to European labeling practices' (161).

In South Africa, the particular ways in which transnational histories of colonialism and imperialism constructed blackness in general, and African masculinities in particular are evidenced in analyses of apartheid. Robert Morrell (1998) identifies a range of masculinities that were socially constructed and transformed in the raced and classed context of colonialism. He argues that social factors such as race, class, geographical location are constitutive of gender identities and have created fluid gender regimes that have changed over time. If hegemonic masculinity is typically associated with that of the colonizer, Morrell suggests that it nonetheless did not lead to the



destruction of African masculinity, which continued to exist in domestic black spaces. This masculinity, strongly based on pre-colonial gender arrangements, was in turn challenged by apartheid and the creation of a young, urban proletariat. The “black masculinity” that emerged out of apartheid and the forced urbanization of black men was one in which “men lost jobs, lost their dignity and expressed their feelings of emasculation in violent ways” (Morrell 1998:630). Morrell’s account supports the idea that masculinity differs and is transformed across time and space. Taking a similar historical and geographical approach, Shabazz (2009) shows how practices of containment, surveillance, and incarceration that permitted and perpetuated the white domination of black people during apartheid shaped black male subjectivity. Through the oppressive spatial arrangement of the mining compounds, black males adopted a culture of prisonization and punishment that were determinant factors in their performance of “aggressive hypermasculinities” (Shabazz 2009:284). Shabazz writes that “loud talk, boisterousness, physical toughness, lewd remarks to women [...] physical violence [...] typified mine masculinity” (289).

The work of Sonke Gender Justice in South African marginalized communities is a clear indication that the scripts of hegemonic masculinity and resistance masculinity are still relevant today. Furthermore, with the shift to neoliberal globalization, racialized men and women are now faced with ‘new’ forms of subjugation and disenfranchisement. It is important to examine the (re)negotiations that take place when masculinity politics are (re)molded by contemporary development and modernization prescriptions. Patil (2009) writes that “we need more work exploring the interrelationships between different negotiations of development and the formation of masculinities and femininities” (213).

The next section – indeed, this whole dissertation – explores the negotiations and frictions between development practices within the neoliberal project, and racialized identity politics. Transnational feminists’ scrutiny of the interconnections between the global and the local gets a renewed importance in the context of the contemporary global men’s movement. If it is true that the global discourse on masculinities and gender relations has prompted changes in gender relations across the Global South, and the African continent in particular, there is still little research on how African masculinities and femininities have been implicated in the process. To what extent have conceptions of African masculinities and femininities been transformed? What have they been replaced with? What has been the effects of this renegotiation for gender relations, for women? Addressing these questions is not only good practice within the transnational feminist tradition, it is also crucial to ensure that racialized voices and agency are not erased in changing articulations of ‘development’. It is to this task that I now turn as I examine the work of Sonke Gender Justice in transforming black masculinity and gender norms in South Africa.

### **Transforming African Masculinity: Analysis of the Work of Sonke Gender Justice**

*“Gender-Based Violence Comes Into Families When There Are Misunderstandings over Who Is the Boss of the House<sup>38</sup>”*

South Africa’s violent past is closely related to the high incidence of gender-based abuse that is affecting the country today. Sifiso, a well-respected leader within Sonke, tells me:

“Just this morning I was asking on the radio: are we a violent nation? Is violence part and parcel of our DNA or are we socialized to be violent? Listeners overwhelmingly responded that apartheid ensured that violence became a norm in our society. The

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with Thuto in Bethlehem on April 9<sup>th</sup> 2015

oppressed majority used violence as a language that the National Party understood very well. Violence became a tool to liberate this country: it was violence against violence. The system made us believe that in order for one's voice to be heard, you'd have to respond in a violent manner. It explains why 20 years after democracy, we still have lots of violence in the country. The work of Sonke is to somehow undo what apartheid has done and continues to do.<sup>39</sup>

The violence that the previous regime was premised on has not only impacted public life, it has also made its presence felt in the more intimate spaces. Drawing parallels between apartheid and the current gender 'war', Moffett argues that women are kept in their place in the same fashion that the apartheid system kept blacks subjugated: through the constant violence unleashed onto them. Indeed, the forms of repression used against black South Africans during apartheid and the tactics of intimidation and containment that men *of all races* [emphasis mine] are currently employing on women to "keep them compliant with social 'norms' determined by hegemonic, powerful, yet threatened patriarchal structures" (139). The same impunity that enabled the 'white master' to beat, rape, and kill impudent blacks during apartheid applies to sexually violent men in newly-liberated South Africa. In other words, women are made the new "Other", which justifies the use of violence against them. This "kind of hierarchical thinking" (Moffett 2006:170) that has lingered from the country's colonial past, to the apartheid regime, to the now-democratic political system, offers women as the new agents to be contained. Thabisa, a woman Sonke trainer says it in her own words:

"Black men, you know, they like to cry that the white man is oppressing them and preventing them from gaining true power, but they do the same to us, women...they know the pain of discrimination because they went through apartheid, but they still do it to us. And now we suffer in the hands of an unequal system *and* in the hands of our black brothers.<sup>40</sup>"

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Sifiso in Johannesburg on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2015

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Thabisa in Johannesburg on February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015

Demonstrations of bodily force and assertions of patriarchal power become the tools that prevent women's emancipation in the home. As legislative measures are being taken in the public sphere to ensure that women have the same economic and political opportunities as men, women's political empowerment, growing social and geographic mobility, and economic independence are seen as a threat to the patriarchal status quo. Intimate domains, in contrast, remain spaces where men are free to discipline and police women. One respondent, part of the Community Action Teams (CATs) that are trained by Sonke, describes the phenomenon quite simply:

“Gender based violence comes into families when there are misunderstandings over who is the boss of the house. We see this a lot because wives are now working as domestic workers and making more money than their husbands, so they expect to be the boss. Men are used to their wives being subservient to them. So they are threatened by the power they now hold.<sup>41</sup>”

The men I interviewed in the Free State pointed to the alarming unemployment rate throughout the province as a key factor in the destabilization of their authority and *identity*. As contemporary neoliberalism brings about the feminization of poverty (Elson 2002; Kingfisher 2002; Benjamin 2007), women are more likely to find low-paid jobs than men. Men in the various focus groups I conducted were highly aware of the effect of women's greater economic autonomy on their authority. Khuthala, one of the participant, gave a telling example:

“Let's say Solly is in love with Mpho and Solly is normally the one who provides for Mpho, and it happens that Solly loses his job and Mpho now is the one providing for him... Things would take a dramatic turn in their relationship; he would soon be called names and made to feel useless because he cannot provide anymore.<sup>42</sup>”

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<sup>41</sup> Focus group in Bethlehem on April 9<sup>th</sup> 2015

<sup>42</sup> Focus group in Welkom on April 8<sup>th</sup> 2015

A wide consensus among the focus group's participants was that men are feeling "pushed into a corner" when women demonstrate a certain level of self-confidence and autonomy. As patriarchal structures are threatened, there is a recrudescence of domestic and sexual violence against women. Paraphrasing the contention from one gender-based survey conducted in South Africa, Moffett (2006) concludes that "violence arises when a chauvinistic citizenry is in a relationship with a liberated Constitution" (142). During participant-observation work at Sonke, I was able to witness the validity of this claim. At the beginning of community dialogues, Sonke trainers pass a copy of the Constitution to all participants in order to educate them about women's rights *and* most importantly, the legal, punishable consequences of domestic violence and rape. However, the message intended by the trainers was often misconstrued by their audience. In one of the community dialogues, one man exclaimed:

"We're told how to do everything! We get in trouble if we discipline our women and children so now they do whatever they like."<sup>43</sup>

The remainder of the session was spent with men strategizing over the precarity of their situation and the new-found boldness of women. One example discussed by the men caused a surge of raw emotions among the participants. Sonke trainers asked them whether they felt justified in having sex with a woman for whom they had bought alcoholic beverages at a tavern or a shebeen. The men responded passionately, and I got the impression that this subject was a highly contentious one because it was a recurrent theme in all focus groups throughout all the provinces. The majority of the male

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<sup>43</sup> Community Dialogue in Welkom on April 8<sup>th</sup> 2015

participants agreed that “when women come to the tavern moneyless, they know they have to pay in a certain way.” Bezile says,

“I am buying her beers because I must get something even though I don’t tell her but I think that she knows already that something must happen.<sup>44</sup>”

The men participating in the focus group are Community Action Team (CAT) members. They go out in their communities spreading what they learnt at Sonke’s trainings and challenging their peers to change their violent ways. One of them describes his work:

“What we are doing in our dialogues is we advise women and men about the dangers of tavern-related issues. We tell men that it is important to listen when a woman says no to having sex after a man has paid her drinks because nowadays you can end up in jail *just* [emphasis mine] for that. And we tell women that when they come to the tavern without any money, they are asking to be raped... The solution we give the men is when they go to taverns, they must take someone who is their girlfriend. That way you don’t have to pay and no one will go and say that you raped her. So it’s cheaper and safer.<sup>45</sup>”

Doubtless, Khuthala’s “ideal” solution is one that helps prevent a man from going to prison for rape. When asked how many of them ever found themselves in a situation where they forced themselves on a woman after buying her drinks at a tavern, nearly all the men in the room raised their hand, which occasioned much laughter among them. Sonke’s trainers of course did not share in the general hilarity and tried to problematize Khuthala’s solution. They told the young man that his approach is merely reinforcing men’s objectification of women. Khuthala and his friends defended themselves, saying that “some women nowadays, they ask to be raped.” When I prompted him to elaborate on his thought, a discussion started among the men and women participating in the focus

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<sup>44</sup> Focus group in Welkom on April 8<sup>th</sup> 2015

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

group. Bezile's comment that "a female wearing a mini skirt is an easy target" infuriated the women in the group. Mpho angrily asked, "what is the appropriate attire when you go to a tavern to avoid being raped?" She then added, "Are you aware that in our community, the women who are wearing long dresses are the ones that have been raped, not the ones wearing short skirts."<sup>46</sup>

This conversation demands some discussion. Control over economic resources goes a long way to ensure men's authority; however, it is not always a pre-requisite for their assertion of power. Connell (2005) recognizes that in post-apartheid South Africa, the high unemployment rate is a depressing factor for men's authority since they often expect – and are expected to – be the household's provider and breadwinner. While the author uses this fact as a rationale as to why men should espouse less rigid, more healing "multioptional masculinities" (Connell 2005: 1813), my interactions with the male participants show that despite the opening of alternative scripts of masculinity, the (re)objectification of women and intimate forms of violence remain frequently chosen options.

*"There is Women's Day and Children's Day, But for Men? There is No Attention Paid to Us"<sup>47</sup>*

The concept of 'rights' is central to Sonke's work. Trainers not only share legal information about human rights in general, and women's rights in particular, they also frame discussions of masculinity around it. In community dialogues and CATs trainings, Sonke trainers suggest that patriarchal visions of masculinity are undermining men's

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Focus group conducted in Bethlehem on April 9<sup>th</sup> 2015

unalienable *rights* to be who they truly want to be: respectful husbands, gentle, loving and involved fathers, and helpful community members. In one session, an experienced trainer asked the participants to write on a piece of paper the name of a man they admire and the reason why they have respect for him. Answers included statements such as “he listens to me”, “he has always been there for him”, “he has shown me love”, “and he has shown me right from wrong”. Interestingly, very few of the participants identified their own father as a role-model. In fact, many did not know their fathers. In the absence of a biological father, they often chose an older family friend, an older uncle, or even a political figure.<sup>48</sup> Thereafter, the trainer asked the participants to write down some of the attributes that need to be displayed in order to retain authority and respect within the family and the community. Men stated that being a man meant “to be strong”, “to be the breadwinner”, “to be the head of the household”, “to be tougher than women in raising children.” Equally important is the fact that the women present in the focus group had the same expectations of men’s roles.<sup>49</sup> The trainer then endeavored to convince the participants that their ideas of manhood was constrictive and that they, themselves, restricted their freedom to be better, more loving, more respected, men. Trainers paint a picture of gender inequality as a structure affecting men, as opposed to framing it as an injustice solely done to women or even as a human right violation.

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<sup>48</sup> Many mentioned Nelson Mandela as their role-model. Interestingly, they admired him for his resilience, strength and political power more than for his gentle ways, love of children, and peaceful political stance.

<sup>49</sup> Sonke usually only selects men to be part of its focus groups in an effort to ensure that men are comfortable discussing sensitive issues. In contrast, in the focus groups that I conducted through the organization, I specifically asked that both men and women be included. This is because my conception of gender is essentially relational. As such, I wanted to avoid a binary analysis dividing men and women. Instead, I strived to understand the socialization of both men and women around gender norms and social change.



This strategy, highlighting the disadvantages of patriarchal norms, roles, and duties *for men* usually succeeded in getting men's attention, and sometimes even drawing support from them. Connell (2005) suggests that this way of picturing inequality provides a multi-dimensional analysis of the problem. Understanding gender inequality from a men-centered perspective underlines the fact that looking at "each of the substructures of gender [reveals] a pattern of advantages for men but also a linked pattern of disadvantages or toxicity" (1808). While it is true that stressing the consequences of gender inequality for men is a useful and perhaps even a necessary technique, I maintain that it does not automatically bring about change in power relations, and as a result women's empowerment. Men's ability to make strategic changes to palliate the negative effects of patriarchy in their lives does not ensure that women will acquire "a collective self-confidence that results in a feeling of 'we can'" (Cornwall and Rivas 2015:9). For example, contrary to Connell's (2005) view of the current gender order as zero-sum game for men, I argue that men can build more intimate relationships with their young children while *still* benefiting from "women's domestic labor and 'emotion work'" (1809). Therefore, reforming masculinities, although a very important task, does not necessarily produce radical changes in gender relations.

In fact, there is a wide perception among the men participating in Sonke's trainings that women's rights are taking away from their power and inflict unjust punishment onto men. One of the unintended results of Sonke's focus on men is that the latter tend to view the trainings and community dialogues as initiatives specifically designed to further their rights. This view can be antagonistic to women's interests. The vast majority of the men I interviewed believed that women had more rights than they

had and were the powerful group because of legislative measures aimed at empowering them. They therefore welcomed Sonke's trainings as they thought the organization was seeking to redress the great injustice done to them: to promote women's rights at the expense of men. During a focus group conducted with the Community Action Teams (CATs) in Welkom, Free State, the male participants loudly cheered when a man remarked:

“When you talk about gender-based violence, the first thing that comes to mind is the man violating...but nowadays, it is vice-versa...even ladies they abuse, physically, sexually, emotionally...men are scared to report cases of abuse because people will laugh at them. With females, it is easy to lay a charge or report abuse, and the police will quickly jump without a second thought.<sup>50</sup>”

Clearly, the involvement of men in gender equality efforts does not always further the feminist agenda. Instead of a joint struggle, the participants tended to view gender relations as a zero-sum game. They welcomed interventions in their intimate world as a way to voice their frustration. In a way, the men's expressive backlash against women's rights is useful. It provides a fertile ground for Sonke's trainers to deconstruct adverse narratives on women's empowerment. In the next section, I discuss the extent to which this is achieved.

### **Successes and Limitations of Sonke's Work**

Working with men and boys toward gender equality and progressive gender norms is an ongoing and difficult process. Sonke trainers recognize that for every success story, there are countless disappointments. Still, they believe that men and boys benefit immensely

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<sup>50</sup> Focus group in Welkom on April 8<sup>th</sup> 2015

from programs that allow discussions around gender equality to take place in the community. However, some of the most constructive conversations that I witnessed during Sonke's community dialogues appeared to be accidental (and to some trainers' chagrin, "disruptive" to the flow and timeliness of the meetings). During the community dialogues, men often went beyond Sonke's agenda to discuss concerns that they viewed as related to issues of masculinity and gender equality. This was evidenced by their insistence on bringing up the subject of 'gangsterism.' In doing so, albeit unconsciously, participants disrupted Sonke's ahistorical narrative of violent African masculinity.

In her ethnographic study of masculinity, race and community in the townships of Cape Town, Elaine Salo (2007) indicates that "gang practices and colored men's gendered identities cannot be divorced from historical factors of racial and economic dispossession" (148). Others, proposing similar structuralist understandings of gang subculture in African contexts (Pinnock 1984; Owumi 1994; Glaser 2000), have linked the phenomenon to the wider socioeconomic and political structures. Pinnock in particular (1984) has argued that 'gangsterism' emerges as a means of survival and dissidence against the structural inequalities that reproduce poverty and marginalization in poor communities. Salo (2007) however, provides an analysis of gangging in the South African townships that goes beyond structural factors of racial and economic ostracism. She maintains that in a context where young black men lack the material resources and symbols that define heterosexual masculinity (formal education, a job, being the breadwinner and provider in the household), gang members use – indeed, *perform* - physical violence as a way to affirm their identity as heterosexual men. The irony of the situation was not lost on me as I listened to Sonke's trainers encouraging men to become

responsible, hard-working, and loving fathers and husbands, unaware perhaps that this very discourse could prompt feelings of hopelessness and frustration when these desirable qualities are deemed incongruous with unemployment and its ensuing displacements and dispossessions. Multicultural studies on masculinity and gender violence suggest that cultural competence must be displayed when supporting victims and educating perpetrators (Gondolf 1998; Almeida and Lockard 2005; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005). It requires an understanding of the structural issues and cultural barriers that different communities face. Had Sonke's discourse been textured enough to envisage the damaging consequences of perceived inability to access the material and symbolic capital needed to be 'a real man', the training sessions could have taken a truly radical – and more transformative- dimension. Instead its transnational discourse of benevolent masculinity thoroughly lacked any recognition of the intersectional factors that lead to marginalization and violence. As such, Sonke's discourse had little to do with the experiences of its 'clients.'

In an unforeseen and ever more ironic twist of events, when it became clear that "modern masculinity" could not solve the problem of ganging, the participants proposed that communities go back to traditional values and authority. A scenario that would surely be at odds with Sonke's modernizing project. The men's opinions on the role of culture in lessening violence against women point to Sonke's (and similar transnational men's organizations) simplistic analysis of culture as a negative force. The fact that racialized cultural practices can serve as protective factors against the battering of women (Kaufman et al. 1994; Dasgupta and Warriar 1996) is often denied by mainstream transnational discourses on masculinity. In fact, as some scholars have identified (Pratt

and Sokoloff 2005; Sokoloff and Dupont 2005), “when oppression and violence occur in communities of color [...], culture is often alleged to have a particularly influential explanatory power (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005: 46). The use of culture as a factor of oppression in turn ensures that the dominant, transnational, western form of masculinity is perceived as ahistorical, acultural, and unoppressive, which justifies its scientific, universal, and hegemonic nature (Volpp 2005). Yet, men voiced their concerns that the youth no longer paid respect to their elders and no longer partook in cultural customs and rituals. Dingani, a middle-age man from Matatiele, shares: “our youth are very rebellious...they don’t listen. They are not working, they drop out of school, and they are now even saying no to elders regarding cultural matters.<sup>51</sup>” Another participant acquiesced:

“I am saying that culture plays a vital role in our lives even though we cannot see...we have to involve older men because they, especially those from the rural area, know how to treat and respect women. If we were to go back to our real culture, there would be more of this thing of gender equality, and less violence too<sup>52</sup>”

The waning of respect was a central issues in all the communities I visited. In the face of hierarchical and generational changes, men sought to share tips and strategies to retain their authority in the home while adapting to changing power relations along gender lines. As Phadima explains:

“I joined Sonke’s network as a Community Action Team (CAT) member in Bethlehem because it is a program for men so that we as men can advise and rebuke each other in our deeds because usually our deeds cause us to end up in prison.” For the majority of the men, gender equality was one of the reasons they ended up in prison.<sup>53</sup>”

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<sup>51</sup> Focus group in Matatiele on April 21<sup>st</sup> 2015

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Focus group in Bethlehem on April 9<sup>th</sup> 2015

Phadima elaborates:

“Culture and tradition play a big role in this thing of shaping our minds as men because according to it, men are above. It means everyone should follow him, he takes decision on his own without consulting with women and children. But now, you have this thing of gender equality and it is a new day. Through Sonke’s training, I sorted out myself so I don’t end up in jail.<sup>54</sup>”

The fact that Sonke’s community dialogues and trainings inadvertently served as a cathartic space for men was sometimes profoundly transformative, however.

Participants shared stories of pain, dispossession, and abuse. Many had grown up seeing their mothers being beaten or raped by their partners and other male relatives. They also reported physical abuse done to them as children and how that had molded their notions of manhood. As they shared their stories, it dawned on some men that the way they choose to, or are expected to, perform masculinity, has had a great, sometimes tragic, impact in their lives and that of their loved ones. Lefa, a community facilitator in

Matatiele, illustrates:

“It was in 2010 just before the World Cup, my cousin-brother, whom we treated as gold because he was a good brick layer...he used to work all over the country. At one point he became very sick and lost a lot of weight. I asked his wife why she never mentioned that my brother was sick but she indicated that she could not do that as a woman as part of culture...I also learnt that he did not disclose his status to his wife or even seek help outside because he would be seen as less of a man or a weak man...If he did not stick to his manliness he probably would still be alive today. After his death, I advised his wife to get tested for HIV since her husband died of AIDS.<sup>55</sup>”

Joining the Sonke’s network is also a way to fight idleness. As most of the men participating in the trainings were unemployed, becoming a CAT member was seen as a

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Focus group in Matatiele on April 21<sup>st</sup> 2015

way to retain the respect of people in the community. No longer seen as jobless and poor, CAT members become well-respected in their neighborhoods. They go from door to door talking to men and women about gender-based violence and the work they do within grassroots organizations. They are often called on when discord strikes in the community and they revel in their roles of peace-makers. Doubtless, the respect they get from the community palliates the fact that they are not able to play the role of providers in their homes. In our conversations, many men pointed to their participation in grassroots activities as a way to feel good about themselves while being useful to the community.

One man says:

“This society tells you that without a job you are not a man. But because of the work I do, I am respected by my neighbors and people in the community. I am even respected by my wife even though she knows that I cannot provide for her.<sup>56</sup>”

However, I came to understand that participants also used Sonke’s trainings and workshops in a mere utilitarian way. In order to gather the men in the locale where such trainings occur, Sonke must pay for their transportation, food, accommodation, and even time. Many of the participants came to the trainings in order to have free lunches, dinners, and a space where they could socialize and have some fun after the events. Oftentimes, they would ask to be provided with alcohol after a day of training. The nature of the events required for men and (some) women to sleep in the same accommodation for several days, which provided opportunities for them to engage in brief romantic or sexual encounters. Outbursts of violence were also common place when Sonke’s trainers, often short of money, could not pay the full per-diem promised to the participants. In one

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

instance, the trainers were locked in one room, menaced and thereafter their personal belongings stolen.

Yet, while the men were cognizant of the personal material benefits of being part of community outreach programs, the vast majority also pointed to their resolve in helping out their ‘brothers and sisters’. The need to help and support one another was still very strong in the rural and marginalized communities I have visited. Traveling to Butterworth, a small town in the Eastern Cape Province, I met men who wanted to change the injustices they witnessed in their community. Mahlubandile was one of them. He became involved in the outreach programs because he wanted “to do something for his community and help people like him who are disadvantaged become empowered to make a change in their lives.<sup>57</sup>” Similarly, Lulama expounds: “in small communities like Butterworth, it is not people that you do not know that have to be helped; it’s your grandmothers, your mothers, your sisters that are victimized and I wanted to be a part of protecting them.<sup>58</sup>”

Men who have been trained by Sonke have adopted the stance of protectors of women and children. In general, they believed that it is through men’s actions that women can become empowered or given a voice. Therefore, they are able to decide the spaces in which women could be allowed to play a more visible role and which spaces need to remain closed to women’s participation. Nathi is a telling example of this paradoxical and partial understanding of women’s empowerment. He talked proudly of his work as a gender activist:

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<sup>57</sup> Focus group in Butterworth on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.



“I started in church telling the people there that they must break the silence because there are all kinds of violence happening and they keep quiet...After a year I got some reports that church members were empowering women... I have seen women take up leadership positions and we are able to make our leaders understand that women need to be empowered because they can also make contributions to our communities.<sup>59</sup>”

Despite his progressive work, however, the value of empowering women in other spaces (i.e. the home) was lost on Nathi. Not only was he the most vocal participant about the importance of gender roles, he also told me in no uncertain way when I tried to challenge him about some of his patriarchal beliefs:

“You see, that’s your problem. You will never marry because you are too smart, too independent and you can’t keep your mouth shut. No man will want you.<sup>60</sup>”

This remark points to some of the limitations of a strictly male forum. Men are able to discuss among themselves the value of opening up some space for women to feel included while also justifying among themselves the need to keep them “in their place” so that men can continue to gain from the unequal power relationships in places where it matters most. As a widely-respected trainer explained to me, the reach of Sonke is reliant on the men believing that the trainers ‘understand them’, which clearly prevents trainers from completely deconstructing the participants’ values and customs.

Furthermore, the shared discourse that ‘real men don’t rape’ or ‘real men protect our women and children’ is problematic in many ways. Not only does it reaffirms men’s superiority, it also objectifies women. As a man emphatically told his peers in one meeting: “This gender equality thing, it starts with us.<sup>61</sup>” Muzikayise, another participant,

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<sup>59</sup> Focus group in Bethlehem on April 9<sup>th</sup> 2015

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Focus group in Butterworth on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015

said: “We alert women on violence. We empower them.<sup>62</sup>” Bafana shared his experience as well:

“Before I really still had that mentality that I don’t have to follow a woman...the women must listen to my orders. I grew up with my father telling me that I don’t have to ever listen to a woman...if she doesn’t want to listen to the rules, he said, beat her up! Show her that you are the real man! But since I got involved with different awareness campaigns, I want to be part of that. I decided to say that a real man don’t abuse women, a real man empowers women and children.<sup>63</sup>”

While I appreciated his commitment, I questioned the deep meaning of his claim.

Leaving men in charge of empowering women reaffirms the latter’s dependence on them to have a voice. It also reiterates men’s authority regarding women’s choices. This was not lost on the few women present in the group. One raised her hand to ask: “does it mean that I cannot be free without you? I do not need you to alert me on abuse. I know all about it.<sup>64</sup>” Emboldened by that remark, another woman said: “I do not need you to protect me, I need you to understand that my body is my body and my decisions are my decisions...what I do with my body and with my life does not need to involve you. I am not a child, and I am not a sacred object.<sup>65</sup>” Yet a third woman reflected: “I feel strongly that traditional leaders must be mobilized to take gender issues seriously. We, women, are not allowed to be part of the Imbizos<sup>66</sup>.” Men in the room were deeply offended by their remarks. The erasure of women’s voice from powerful spaces became all the more

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Imbizos are Community Meetings in which traditional and community leaders come together with other men to discuss issues happening in the community.

evident to me in one of Sonke's trainings with traditional leaders. After engaging them around gender equality and gender-based violence issues, the trainers asked the community leaders how they were going to further gender equality in their spheres of influence. The leaders welcomed the training and the "much-needed knowledge imparted on them" and later concluded that "all of this is well and we will take it into consideration" before urging the audience of men to "keep this all-important learning to themselves and to never share it with the women."<sup>67</sup> Men's forum confirms men's agency at the expense of women. Easy stereotypical images of women as helpless and passively victimized reaffirm the need for men to protect and care for them, yet another patriarchal discourse. Collins (1998) reminds us that "while identifying patterns of victimization remains important [...], focusing on victimization can function as a mechanism of control" (928). The work of men's organizations such as Sonke Gender Justice recognizes and encourages men's agency, but also runs the risk of eclipsing women's power, actions, and desires.

A small-scale study conducted by Sonke revealed that 70% of men were against gender-based violence<sup>68</sup>. Yet, this statistic does not mean that these men agree to women's full exercise of their agency, in private and in public. In the same way, men's education on toxic forms of masculinity does not automatically translate into greater gender equality. The difficulty of Sonke's women trainers to be heard in men's audiences is one proof of that. Thabisa, one such trainer explains just how arduous it can be to talk

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<sup>67</sup> Training of traditional leaders in the Free State on April 24<sup>th</sup> 2015

<sup>68</sup> Thabisa, a Sonke trainer explaining the rationale behind one of Sonke's most recognized program, The "One Man Can" Campaign.

about gender equality, not only in community outreach programs but also in her own household. Although the men that she engages with on a regular basis, both at home and in the community, have learnt to respect her feminist stance, they are reluctant to take instructions or even advice from her. Thabisa believes that it is because men are socialized to think that women cannot be in positions of leadership. As a Christian and the wife of a pastor, she finds herself ostracized by church members and even mocked by fellow Sonke trainers for her progressive opinions, leadership qualities, and talkative nature. She develops:

“I often have to talk to myself, saying: ‘this is who you are. You don’t ever have to compromise. Even with my male colleagues here at Sonke, they sometimes think I am crazy...because I believe that there’s more to challenge than what they think.’<sup>69</sup>”

Indeed, while many of the male trainers focused on men becoming involved fathers, loving husbands, peaceful individuals, and responsible citizens, Thabisa and other women in the various communities I worked in identified many other culprits to their oppression. For instance, they addressed issues that they considered to be harmful to women, from traditional practices to poverty to capitalism. Thanduxolo is a Xhosa woman who lives in Butterworth, a small impoverished town in the Free State province, is the most outspoken of the group. A quiet person, she spent much time listening to her male counterparts before raising her voice, with a forcefulness that surprised us all. She listened as Mthokozisi complained about “fast-life young girls” who get “sugar daddies” to provide material things such as “the latest hairstyles and the latest cell phones.” She then challenged his quick judgement by explaining:

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<sup>69</sup> Interview with Thabisa in Johannesburg on February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015

“Poverty drives teenage girls to be involved with sugar daddies, and not just to pay for nice stuff, but also necessary stuff like school fees and school books and even shoes to go to school... because he provides for her economically, the sugar daddy expects to have sex with her without a condom. The girl does not have a choice but to accept because she depends on his money, even to help people back in the village. You can see this especially in rural areas where girls are less-informed than in the urban areas. Plus, clinics and hospitals are usually so far, they are not easily accessed for the poor. The combination of poverty, the place where you live, and men using our bodies for their pleasure is why we have so much HIV and AIDS in our communities.<sup>70</sup>”

Thanduxolo’s lucid grasp of the objectification and commodification of women’s bodies as consequences of both patriarchal and capitalist projects differed strikingly from the males’ participants’ usual complaints about the indecency of young girls nowadays.

Relating her discussion of poverty and gender inequality to cultural practices followed in the Xhosa community, she illustrates:

“Poverty is a powerful factor. Sometimes it can be more violent than men. I am thinking of ukuthwala<sup>71</sup>... these girls, they are not ready to become someone’s wife. They still want to continue with school and learn. But some families agree to the marriage because of poverty... and if that particular man is rich, then it is even easier. The family overlooks the fact that the man might be infected with HIV. If the girl refuses to be married or to sleep with the man, in most cases, she will be raped.<sup>72</sup>”

She goes on to discuss yet another cultural practice:

“In the area of Hlubisi, we practice what we call Uciyo<sup>73</sup>. I feel it’s good for our community because I also went through the same practice when I was growing up and it gives the girls a sense of pride in maintaining their virginity. In Mzongwana, we check them until they are old enough to get married. They have a special attire that they wear during that ceremony: short, traditional skirts that show the bum and they can’t wear underwear, and their breasts are also displayed as they walk around town for everybody to recognize that they are still pure. Everyone gets to see them naked, and I think we must review the dress code because then they become the prey of rapists and also men infected

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<sup>70</sup> Focus group in Butterworth on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015

<sup>71</sup> Abduction of girls to be married.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> A practice whereby a girl is periodically ‘checked’ to ensure that she maintains her virginity.

with HIV who think that they will be cured from the disease when they have sex with a virgin. I have myself seen it all the time.<sup>74</sup>”

Thanduxolo’s structural responses to men’s stories of self-transformation left many in the room flabbergasted. It was as if the men realized for the first time that it would take more than a change of script in their performance of masculinity in order to achieve the type of gender equality they were trained to advocate for. All of a sudden, the discussion did not just revolve around the role men can play in ensuring gentler and safer treatments of women, but included the structural forces and power relations that keep women’s agency in check. In an article published in the academic journal *Gender & Society*, Peacock et al. (2012) draw on data from focus groups that were conducted exclusively with men “to ensure that men were comfortable discussing highly sensitive issues with one another” (101). While men bonding and strategizing around issues of women’s empowerment and gender equality is highly beneficial to the feminist agenda, including women in strategic dialogues is essential to highlight the relational nature of gender and the complexities of structural power relations (Connell 2005).

The binary categorization of rights by gender – “men’s rights” and “women’s rights” – not only obscures the relational character of gender, but also may be counter-productive for the advancement of feminist initiatives. Peacock et al (2012) claim that their “own recent conversations with Sonke staff have revealed that [...] men are receptive, appreciate women’s points of view, and the inclusion of women helps to hold men accountable for the claims they make about gender equality in their communities and relationships.” While it is true that women’s experiences and voices contribute

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

immensely to the debate, my own interactions with men participants in Sonke's program lead me to take the authors' contention with some degree of skepticism (the author, Dean Peacock, is also the founder of Sonke Gender Justice). The male participants tended to view Sonke's trainings as a platform to express their grievances and their disillusion with a system that seems intent on weakening their control over women.

Above and beyond the practical limitations that dissociating development programming by gender encounter, the discourse of men's self-transformation is complicit with the neoliberal project that puts the blame on individuals rather than structures that reproduce the patriarchal relations from which heterosexual masculinities benefit and on which capitalism stands. Thanduxolo acknowledges the breadth of the fight for gender equality in one sentence: "It is great that men try to change themselves and their violent acts, but we need and fight for more than that."

In the next section, I discuss how transnational discourses that intend to create a more democratic society in South Africa need to go beyond the transformation of marginalized subjects to include a contextualized assessment of power-laden discourses and practices that (re)produce stereotypes and ultimately stifle black feminists' struggle for equality.

### **"We Know About Them but *They* See Us": Transformation at the Intersection of Race, Gender, and Sexuality**

During my year-long stay in South Africa, several judicial cases of domestic violence leading to the death of one spouse – usually the wife or girlfriend – shook South African society, creating a huge uproar throughout the country. On April 21, 2015, Jade Panayiotou was kidnapped and her body was found the next day. Chris Panayiotou was

soon accused of orchestrating his wife's violent death. This case gripped South Africans, who could still remember the sensational murder case against double-amputee Olympian Oscar Pistorius only a few months prior. In 2014, Pistorius was sentenced to 5 years in prison for the 'negligent' killing of his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp. The gruesome killings dominated the headlines for several months. The reason why these stories of gender-based violence were so poignant is because they challenged some common narratives about race, gender, and violence. Indeed, both the perpetrators accused of these gruesome crimes and their victims were white members of the middle-upper South African class. The initial stupor at knowing the offenders' identity was soon replaced with subsequent lively discussions focused on the connections between race and domestic violence. While whites were peculiarly silent about the cases, black voices exploded on popular radio shows and in the social media. Commentators used these tragic losses as a corroboration that 'they' (whites) *too* [emphasis mine] commit gender-based crimes. Furthermore, bets on how little jail time Pistorius would get "just because he is white"<sup>75</sup> became public jokes. As racial attitudes and animosity pervaded the debates, the much-needed discussion of the hegemonic patriarchal structures that make such killings possible *and* tolerated was virtually eclipsed.

The fact that any examination of systemic gender-based domination faded in favor to racial narratives certainly speaks volume about the tensions that continue to exist in post-apartheid South Africa. In turn, the racial legacies of the apartheid system, along with the humiliation and dehumanization of black people, ensure that gender issues get

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<sup>75</sup> On October 26, 2015, the Daily Mail reported that Oscar Pistorius had been released the week before after just a year in prison.



subsumed in discourses of race and class, and therefore, become contentious and emotionally charged topics for the black majority. Writing on rape and sexual violence in South Africa, Helen Moffett (2006) reflects that “narratives about rape continue to be rewritten as stories about race, rather than gender” (129). Investigating the relation between what she calls a “gender war” and the legacies of apartheid, she argues that racial accusations that strictly locate domestic and sexual abuse to poor, black, disadvantaged, and traditional groups serve to not only heighten racial stereotypes and barriers but also to mask the patriarchal strategies that are put in place to curtail women’s emancipation and gender equality.

Thus, racist assumptions carry dangerous implications for *all* women. In an effort to deconstruct racialized discourses about rape that are prevalent among whites but also disturbingly among blacks themselves, Moffett (2006) recalls: “my years as a hotline counsellor in the latter half of the 1980s rapidly disabused me of the notion that domestic and sexual violence were the province of poor, black, or ill-educated men. I received distress calls not only from women living in townships or ghettos, but from the wives of professional men living in Cape Town’s suburbs” (134). As long as criminal and barbaric proceedings continue to be an appendage of blackness, there will not be a truly transformative discussion of patriarchy at the local, national, regional, and importantly, global levels. I use my research within Sonke Gender Justice as a case study to extend Moffett’s arguments. I highlight the complex and contradictory ways in which transnational narratives on masculinities interact with localized gendered contexts to create outcomes that can be both liberatory and oppressing for racialized and gendered subjects in South Africa.

Sonke's work aims at fostering happier relationships between men, women, and children in South Africa and deepening democracy in the country. While these efforts are laudable, persistent questions come to my mind. In a country where most of the violence was historically perpetrated by white South Africans, why is it that 'violence' in general, and domestic violence in particular, has become constructed as an appendage of blackness in South Africa? I also became interested in exploring the ways in which black masculinity is isolated outside of morality, normality, and decency. In this sense, the gender performance of black South African men is always-already deviant and a threat to the fabric and well-being of the whole society. Popular images and long-held prejudices constantly reaffirm the African man's 'backwardness', which makes a mockery of modernity, his violence, which hinders democracy, and his sexuality, which endangers the very existence of the nation.

The work of Sonke in effect (re)ingrains, in the minds of white observers and black beneficiaries, the deviance and consequently the menace of black culture – and black men, especially – for the broader society. As the organization strategically functions in black- dominated spaces (the townships, the homesteads, the prisons), its dialectic is focused on black lives, black agency, and ultimately, black transformation. The result is the characterization and visibility of black spaces as "spaces of crisis" (Shabazz and Bailey 2014: 318), in which poverty, violence, immorality, vice, and disease reign.

In my interview with Dean Peacock, the founder of Sonke Gender Justice, I inquired about the rationale for his involvement in black communities alone and whether this could be counter-productive to the organization's mission to foster a more

democratic form of masculinity in the country. He noted that my remark was “somewhat unfair” since Sonke operates not only in black communities but also in colored communities. While his contextualization of blackness –South Africa’s conceptualization of blackness differs strikingly from popular ideas of blackness in the U.S. – is well taken, the point remains that Sonke’s lack of involvement in other racial communities takes away from its mission to promote a more democratic hegemonic masculinity in South Africa. Sonke, for all its progressive ideas on gender, has failed to address the white supremacist stare it imposes on black lives and the set of preconceived ideas about ‘black geographies’ that comes with it. Several Sonke trainers were struggling with this very aspect of their work. In particular, Sifiso, in charge of disseminating information about Sonke’s programs and ideas to the media, ponders:

“We do this work in black communities because of the history of this country, but to be honest, doing work only in black communities is a problem for me. I often ask myself: ‘are we not perpetuating the myth that HIV is only in the black communities? Are we not perpetuating the myth that it is only black men who do not know how to put up their zip? That it is only black men who are violent and can’t treat their women right? In fact, white people are the one murdering their spouses. Why don’t we work in Sandton or in other white communities in Cape Town? Are we not perpetuating these class and race inequalities? Class and race are huge factors: a lot of white women who are violated, they go to private hospitals because they have access to medical aid. So you wouldn’t know that they were beaten or raped. But the black woman from Soweto, you’d know because you’d see her in a taxi<sup>76</sup> going to a public hospital. And even though it is illegal, many white ladies force their black maids and nannies to take a HIV test before employing them. In contrast, that young white woman who’d been raped and gotten pregnant, she’d be taken to London for abortion and no one would know. You see, black life is made visible and accessible to all. We *know* about them, but they *see* us! Then, they believe that it has to be a race thing... they believe that it must be that black people are born violent and overly sexual... Pistorius’ trial and other incidents are proving to us that what

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<sup>76</sup> Taxis in South Africa are public transportation that resemble small buses. They are the cheaper alternative for a great majority of blacks. They are often overflowing with bodies, and there are long lines to access each passing taxi. The waiting lines as well as the taxis are often spaces where people are able to socialize after a long day at work.

I call toxic masculinities in fact knows no color, and no class. This is something that Sonke has not addressed.<sup>77</sup>”

Establishing some bodies, some lives, some social relations, and some intimate behaviors as deviant presents several problems. First, it freezes black experiences with violence and patriarchy outside of history, presenting them as an essential component of black African cultures instead of the historical legacies and continuous manifestations of an unequal, racist system. Second, it creates an essentialized black culture, seen as impermeable to progress and change at the same time as Sonke strives to transform black men’s subjectivities and performances of masculinity. This paradoxical exercise can be infuriating: one has the sense that fortunes are built on the backs of marginalized blacks; this time not to enslave them, but to save them. Yet, the result is the same: black spaces are pathologized and black people are ‘other-ed’. Sonke’s mission to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS in South Africa is concentrated in black spaces, yet little is said of the ways race, gender, class, and place determine and structure the disproportionate impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on black communities. Instead, change is placed squarely on the black man’s shoulders. Tacitly, the discourse is: “if you transform yourself and become a *real* man, you can save your life, your women, your children, your communities, your country, even your continent.” It is therefore not surprising that Sonke’s work to transform gender relations and masculinities has scaled to the continent so quickly. Despite widely different historical and cultural contexts and spatializations, the discourse can be applied to all African men because what is at stake is not the specific social, economic, and political environment of South Africa per se; but the ‘backwardness’ of all

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with Sifiso in Johannesburg on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2015

black Africans. This discourse is nothing new. Blackness has long been correlated with vice, unbridled sexuality, and traditional immorality. More importantly, linking race, gender, and sexuality with morality is a powerful fundament of black subjectivities, not only for the non-black, but also for blacks themselves. If disease makes the policing of black lives and sexualities seems almost necessary, projects such as Sonke's discipline black bodies as spaces of necessary surveillance and transformation, if not for themselves, for the very survival of the nation.

My contention here is not that educating men and boys on gender equality, patriarchy, and domestic violence is not important and necessary. Rather, I argue that focusing only on black and colored communities can work to (re)produce black marginalization. When misconstrued – as it often is – the discourse advocating self-transformation for blacks and colored only re-entrench popular ideas about blackness and serves to (re)instill fear, distrust, and contempt of black bodies and lives within other racial communities.

Rape, in particular, is a narrative that has long been used to exacerbate racial misconstructions (Davis 1983). The white fear of diseased-black men and boys is pervasive in the interviews I conducted among white South Africans (both Afrikaners and Europeans). One of my white South African informants expounded what many tactfully suggested:

“We cannot have gender equality in this country because the *majority* does not know what it means. Patriarchy is profoundly African...look at how they treat their women.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Interview conducted in Johannesburg on November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014

When I prompted her to expand on what she meant by ‘African’ – given that she was born and raised in South Africa and was therefore equally ‘African’ – she seemed to realize the potentially racist connotation of her claim, but still, yet more carefully, went on:

“You know what I mean. Yes, I am African, but *we* are not like *them*. It [supposedly violence and unequal treatment of women] is part of their traditions, so it is hard to change. Even our leaders are like that.<sup>79</sup>”

As a lower-class Afrikaner, whose father was “dispossessed” of his lands after the apartheid system was abolished, my informant was not in a financial situation to send her two daughters to private schools, traditionally attended by whites. Left with no choice but to send her children to free government schools, mostly attended by blacks, she says:

“I made the decision to homeschool my daughters instead of sending them to government schools. The government is tracking down on us, parents who opted for homeschooling, telling us that it is unconstitutional and illegal. Yet we do it. Because what is the other option? I didn’t want my daughters to be bullied by black kids because they are white, or worse...raped... who knows? ...with the rate of HIV/AIDS in this country... I considered moving out of Sandton<sup>80</sup> to afford sending the girls to private school, but where would I go? To the townships? (disillusioned laughter). Some might say that I am crippling my kids by homeschooling them, but I think that I am protecting them.<sup>81</sup>”

One of my informant’s daughter is 9 years old and cannot yet read or write properly. Yet, the alternatives seem too ‘dangerous’, and she rather remained homeschooled. Fear of blackness works in twofold ways. Not only does it limit black spatial mobility into white communities (which are safer and have better schools) as they are made to feel

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Sandton is a largely white, gated, community, although middle and upper-class blacks are increasingly moving there.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

unwelcome, it also bounds poor white South Africans into neighborhoods where they cannot afford to live and acts as a constraint to options they may consider to meet their needs. The idea that regressive gendered practices are essentially inscribed in black culture is shared even by the more progressive, educated, anti-racist white South Africans I have interviewed. For instance, an Afrikaner woman, well-respected within academia and activist circles exclaimed with great frustration:

“How do you want gender equality to exist in South Africa? Look at our leaders! Our president has 5 wives, and his best friend, Mugabe, still believes that women should remain in the kitchen! If we are to progress, *they* have to change!”<sup>82</sup>

While I agree with Moffett’s contention (2006) that racist biases too often eclipse the real issue of patriarchal power relations in the lives of women, I also wish to point to the valuable lessons that research on black masculinities and gender justice in South Africa can teach the international feminist movement. Western feminisms have informed the mainstream women’s movement in that full citizenship is associated with participation (McEwan 2001). If it is true that the west’s preoccupation with women’s integration in all aspects of political and economic life has influenced gender activism in most postcolonial states, the South African example is an ongoing testimony of the type of feminism that is organized during anti-colonial struggles. Women’s involvement in anti-colonial and nationalist struggles is well documented (Woollacott 2006). From “non-violent civil disobedience to terrorism and membership in armed forces” (Woolacott 2006: 105), women’s subversive activities were not only central to the fight for independence and/or liberation, it also laid the ground for their claims to greater gender

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<sup>82</sup> Interview conducted in Johannesburg on December 6<sup>th</sup> 2014

equality, political rights and inclusion, and legal and social rights. Before joining Sonke Gender Justice, Sifiso was a member of the South African Men Forum, a pre-1994 national platform that worked to ensure that women were included in the democratic process. Recognizing women as pioneers of the new South Africa, the Forum shed light on the outburst of violence that was inflicted upon them after apartheid was over. Sifiso recalls:

“The women played a critical role in the liberation of the country. There were fighting along the men...those who were not fighting kept families together while the men were away. The women provided emotional support for those who were fighting, but they were also soldiers. They were deep in the trenches and leaders in their own right while in exile in Angola, in Namibia, all over the world...They were truly heroines and South Africa has to acknowledge the role that they played.<sup>83</sup>”

Anti-colonial feminism differs fundamentally from western feminisms in that feminist politics is organized around multiple forms of oppression, which requires a multi-layered, overlapping agenda. In other words, the fight for equality is never about gender alone. The specificities of the South African context bear implications for western understanding of gendered citizenship and women’s empowerment. Discourses about the emancipation of African women that are not informed by the lived experiences and survival strategies of African women hold little value for the construction of a truly transformative gendered democracy in South Africa. The particularity of anti-colonial feminism is that it advocates for multilayered social change to happen simultaneously so that both black men and women can achieve full citizenship. When theorizing on, and experimenting in, South Africa, global discourses on masculinity and feminist praxis

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<sup>83</sup> Interview with Sifiso in Johannesburg on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2015



have to grasp, if not be informed by, the histories of black women in South Africa and their aspirations for racial democracy as well as gender democracy.

## **Conclusion**

Men and boys are important gatekeepers for gender equality (Connell 2005). No longer the exclusive dominion of women, men increasingly take joint responsibility in feminist interventions for gender equality and women's empowerment. Discussions of contemporary masculinities in the global arena have created a distinct transnational discourse of hegemonic masculinity that is assumed to lead toward a more democratic, less patriarchal gender system (Connell 2005). Institutions focusing on men to achieve new patterns of gender relations are a venue where negotiations between local societies and the global gender order happen and can be analyzed. Examining how the local and the global *interpenetrate* each other (Gibson-Graham 1996) to produce new discourses on masculinity can bring some much needed insight into the effects of transnational configurations on the intimate sphere of identity formation.

The solution proposed by Connell (2005) –a more democratic global construction of masculinity – strangely overlooks how multi-dimensional power relations between ‘the local’ and ‘the global’ shape global governance. In contrast, transnational feminist theorizing recognizes that global processes can collude with place-specific relations to (re)produce complex forms of inequalities and marginalization (Grewal and Kaplan 2001<sup>84</sup>; Pratt and Yeoh 2003; Mohanty 2003; Alexander and Mohanty 2010; Patil 2013).

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<sup>84</sup> This work is often referred to in its 1994 edition. Here, I use the 2001 edition. Grewal, Inderpal, and Caren Kaplan. 2001. *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

The asymmetrical power relations that are central to transnational processes are evident in the discourses and practices of Sonke Gender Justice. Today, we can see the legacies of historically problematic constructions of blackness in how Sonke focuses on black masculinities as problem masculinities. Sonke's exclusive attention to specific local communities, namely black (and colored) spaces, reinforces beliefs that violence is inherent to communities of color in general, and African cultures in particular. In this chapter, I warned against discourses that may further alienate racialized subjects and present marginalized communities in ways that reinforce negative stereotypes about them.

In addition, I endeavored, as did a number of critical scholars, to trace the problematic construction of gender and sexual identities in the contemporary capitalist moment. Queer scholars in particular have explored the inclusion of sexual 'others' within the present neoliberal project (Breckenridge and Vogler 2001; Duggan 2002; Bell and Binnie 2004; McRuer 2006; Eng 2007; Burns and Davis 2009). Unknowingly perhaps, Sonke illustrates how neoliberal processes operate to include the very subjects that are 'othered' in neoliberal transnational discourses. In other words, Sonke's targeting of black bodies and identities in its fight against gender-based violence, and ultimately the spread of HIV/AIDS, effectively creates a 'sexual other', who can only be (re)included in the new global order upon thorough self-transformation. Furthermore, these 'unsafe' or 'deviant' bodies can be policed under the guise of national and global health promotion programs (Bell and Binnie 2004). Social entrepreneurship focuses on certain 'social problems' that gained their salience within older and current power relations. HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence are undeniable and threatening issues in

South Africa. It is in this context that transnational organizations justify their focus on those with less power, enabling those with more power to evade their responsibility as part of these social problems.

Sonke's work in black communities is important in ways that are not stated in the organization's mission statement. More than creating masculinities that support women's empowerment and gender equality efforts, it also highlights how local experiences can inform global processes. The social construction of gender – and therefore masculinity – has been well-theorized in academic circles. Connell's (2005) contention that toxic masculinities can be transformed to give way to a women-friendly hegemonic masculinity is well taken. However, there is little work analyzing what it would take to construct a democratic, global, hegemonic gender script for men and boys in specific social locations. Too often, the western-centric assumptions present in the emerging literature on transnational masculinity go unchallenged and under-studied. Analyzing perceptions and performances of masculinities in South Africa can inform transnational studies of gender in important ways. Not only does it problematize the offering of some places and spaces as always-already defective and in need of transformation, it prompts a greater emphasis on the intersections of race and gender at the transnational level. The global movement toward a new hegemonic masculinity being promoted in South Africa circumvents spaces of privilege and whiteness. This is paradoxical given that hegemonic masculinity has often been thought of as a white, heterosexual, middle-class attribute. The case study of Sonke's actions in South Africa shows that racial inequality is a potent barrier to gender equality. Hence, the intersectionality *and* transnationalism of factors of oppression cannot be a side comment in the new masculinity discourse. Discussions of

race, class, sexuality, and gender in their historical contexts need to be fleshed out if patriarchal values and systems are to be changed.

However, privileging intersectionality in tackling gender equality demands that we resist simplistic ‘whites oppress blacks; and men oppress women’ narratives. Instead, following Patricia Hill Collins (1998)’s recommendation, the type of social movement that Sonke seeks to build *should* encourage every group in society (not just black men) to reflect on their responsibility for the suffering of others. Transversal politics that recognizes how the intersections of race, gender, class, and sexuality in the global arena perpetuate oppression constitutes the basis for the formation of a transformative social movement that challenges gender inequality and oppressive patriarchal norms. Abolishing transnational gender hierarchies is certainly one way that “a more humane, less oppressive means of being a man might become hegemonic” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 833).

## CHAPTER VI Decolonizing the Transnational

This dissertation examined transnational linkages through the study of an emerging global justice movement, social entrepreneurship. Transnational activism is a politically loaded term, as it is intended to problematize globalism, which assumes the inclusion of all countries and nations into circuits of capital, technologies, and knowledge. In contrast, the ‘transnational’ points to particular relationships between relevant actors within distinct nation-states. In this sense, it can be a subversive notion when opposed to the amorphous, disembodied, ubiquitous ‘Global’. Indeed, transnationalism emphasizes the common interests and actions of groups and institutions all over the globe. Thus, transnational advocacy networks strive to put back the ‘human’ at the center of globalization. Scholarship on transnationalism recognizes the continuing importance of national cultures and ethnohistories in political, economic, and social outcomes (Held and McGrew 2002). In Chapter II, I demonstrated the importance of reflexivity and the acknowledgement of one’s positionalities in the field. Drawing on feminist critiques of global processes, this chapter pointed to the type of analyses and knowledge that opens up when we take finer scales as our point of departure. As I gained access to the intimate spheres of invisibilized men and women and became subject to their prudence and perceptiveness, it became clear that the stories they shared with me, and their acceptance of my very presence, were facilitated and/or hindered by personal and contextualized experiences of power, gender, and race. Being cautious of the ways embodiment alters relationships and outcomes is crucial to establishing solidarity across different cultures and struggles. If the notion of ‘transnational agency’ does not create an opportunity for

the discussion and examination of difference, it essentially fails its inclusive purpose and egalitarian aspiration.

The emerging “transnational turn” in feminist studies has prompted scholars to better conceptualize the interrelationships between global processes and local embodiments and subjectivities. It has encouraged a more spatialized and relational inquiry of global processes, calling for more critical analysis of the multifaceted nature of globalization. Thus, Grewal and Kaplan (2001) have suggested that the transnational may be a better suited level of analysis for understanding the new ways in which people’s lives are impacted. The term transnational, as opposed to global, is better able to reflect and highlight the asymmetries and unequal power relations that characterize the globalization process. Transnationalism, with its variety of traditions, discourses, embodiments and family arrangements, allows for new understandings of forms of governmentality and the unequal outcomes that “become the conditions of possibility of new subjects” (Grewal and Kaplan 2001: 671). If anything, transnational feminism teaches us that the series of intersections leading to marginalization (gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class) have spurious borders. These intersections should be linked to processes across borders (Patil 2013). My focus on place-bound subjectivities and the social realities of South Africans, coupled with a critical examination of a transnational, neoliberal endeavor (social entrepreneurship) allowed me to demonstrate several things. First, I argued that the lack of attention that some actors of transnational social entrepreneurship gave to positionality is detrimental to the goal of greater global justice and collaboration. Second, I showed how multiple axes of power are redeployed at both the local and the transnational level, thereby exposing the limits of transnational

governance. This dissertation also stressed how unequal social relations that are assumed to exist within national boundaries, are in fact “embedded within, enabled by, and contributing to cross-border dynamics” (Patil 2013: 850). Chapters III, IV, and V reflected the impossibility to dissociate global phenomena from local outcomes and challenges.

Transnationalism presents its own challenges, however. As a descriptor of movements, the transnational needs to be scrutinized as it can easily go from a critical theoretical perspective to a merely useful descriptive word. Held and McGrew (2002) contend that more democratic, transnational governance is exercised through networks of political mobilization, surveillance, decision-making and regulatory activity.

Transnational solidarity may be an inclusive project, but is it certain that the voice of the “subaltern” is heard in such a setting? Does differentiating the ‘transnational’ and the ‘global’ enable substantial changes in the way power is applied and understood? Do transnational practices yield knowledge creation that is inclusive and democratic? Or is the term becoming increasingly devoid of its critical, academic genesis?

Recognizing the shift in the conceptualization of the transnational, this dissertation took a closer look at the “perils and possibilities” (Desai 2007) of transnational discourses and practices. Hence, I asked: What type of reality does social entrepreneurship create, and what does it mean for transnational discourses of justice and fellowship? The globalization-from-below movement is often accepted to be anti-globalization in essence. Activists have denounced the limits that global capitalism impose on national sovereignty and the havoc that the logic of global capital wreak in the lives of non-western subjects. However, the emergence of social entrepreneurship within

the globalization-from-below movement surreptitiously reintroduces neoliberal strategies and discourses at the heart of these circuits of social change. Social entrepreneurship as a transnational endeavor to make the world more equitable is a testimony of the multifaceted reach of global capitalism, which can, upon reinvention, be reproduced within transnational activism. During the contemporary neoliberal moment, transnational activism has become a normative, mainstream discourse, mostly perpetuated by international organizations. Transnational solidarity efforts such as social entrepreneurship, therefore, may well act as an imperialistic, colonialist project that compels subjects in the Global South to adopt identities and models that are not equipped to confront the depth of their experiences.

Scholars of emerging global orders have sought to illuminate the workings of neoliberalism in the new world arrangement. Ong (2006) in particular, has conceptualized neoliberalism as an effective “technology of governing” that yields reconfigurations in the way citizenship, knowledge and power, and territoriality are constituted. Borrowing her terminology, I proposed that social entrepreneurship constitutes a form of ‘neoliberalism as exception’ in that its governing activities are reformed as nonpolitical and nonideological; they are simply technical solutions to tangible problems. Transnational agents of social entrepreneurship often bound inequalities to the confines of the state. This localization of inequalities facilitates the ‘problem’ to be solved: the impact of global and transnational power relations is ignored, leaving neatly packaged local issues that can be tackled through the enrollment of marginalized subjects into the logic of global capital and neoliberal self-empowerment solutions. The model’s neoliberal core is evidenced through its strategies to transform political spaces and



populations. Ong (2006) points to two interrelated strategies of governmentality: ‘technologies of subjectivity’, which redistribute an array of imported knowledge and systems, and ‘technologies of subjection’, which regulate populations for optimal productivity. Social entrepreneurship is therefore a powerful tool in the neoliberal agenda that seeks to *remake* ‘citizen-subjects’ who are self-managing and self-enterprising social actors, with a particular subjectivity that is ultimately useful to –and reproductive of - the neoliberal project.

At a historical moment when the myth of the “Rainbow Nation” is collapsing, and South Africans are less and less willing to accept global capitalist ‘truths’ and forgive entitlement and privilege based on race, class, and gender, it seems relevant to interrogate the dynamics of a transnational movement that seeks to transform societies in the Global South while blatantly ignoring its own role in reproducing conditions and discourses of marginalization. While Chapter III put the current South African crisis into context, highlighting the growing frustration of South Africans with the intersectionality of capitalism, racism, and patriarchal structures, Chapter IV demonstrated the gendered, classed, and racialized politics of social entrepreneurship. As I discussed in Chapter III, both past and contemporary social movements have grown out of black South Africans’ struggle with racism and structural systems of oppression, disrupting the neoliberal discourse that development and opportunities inherently follow self-transformation and empowerment. This is in direct contrast with the idea of human rights and democracy promoted by global governance entities, which reassigns problem-solving authority to transnational actors, many of which rely on a preconceived imaginary of the African people. In a sense, social entrepreneurship is very much built on rigid assumptions of

African agency. The transnational chorus suggesting that a more entrepreneurial mindset will put Africans on the path to progress has been fine-tuned by authoritative trend-makers in general, and institutions such as Ashoka in particular. Clearly, South Africans are all too familiar with both entrepreneurship and socially-oriented perspectives; but, many of the social entrepreneurs that are funded and elevated to the transnational platform not only fail to represent the majority of the population, but are also reluctant to reflect on their structural privileges. If social entrepreneurship is no doubt a by-product of poverty and disempowerment, and in fact, has originated in the Global South, it has taken elitist dimensions when translated to the transnational level. Which begs the question: is social entrepreneurship truly *hearing* –and acting on – popular cries for justice expounded through local social movements, or is it merely fulfilling its neoliberal mandate in the Global South?

Chapter V demonstrated why social entrepreneurship's complicity with global authority bears lessons for configurations of the transnational. The latter, often in the same vein as globalist understandings, is portrayed as 'giver' or 'teacher,' while the local is reduced to its receiving role. This 'God-like trick' occurs without any ontological analysis of the spatial location of hubs of discursive power. Chapter V proposed that the dilution of a global gendered order with localized practices may have pathologized certain identities and knowledge. In the case of South Africa, concerns over the ravages of HIV and AIDS and rampant gender-based violence have rationalized the transformation of *black, traditional* social relations for less threatening *cosmopolitan, modern* understandings of gender norms. In this sense, freedom and inclusion in the global order are granted to individuals as long as they are willing to subject themselves to

the established transnational norms. Described as liberated and empowered, innovative and entrepreneurial, the New South African Subject ascribes to a form of politics that fits the demands of the neoliberal moment. This ‘modern’, transnational identity stands in opposition to the different ways in which gendered and racialized subjects understand cultural practices and the meanings they confer to them.

However, Chapter V also suggested that although spaces of ‘modern’ gendered practices flourish all over the world, it would be erroneous to think that there is a global gendered consciousness that is the same across societies and communitarian spaces. Therefore, I interrogated the extent to which the neoliberal rhetoric has translated into the production of its envisioned subject. One important critique of globalization has pointed to the need for a more grounded understanding of its mechanisms. In Chapter V, I complicated assumptions of a seamless flow of neoliberal ‘realities’ by discussing the disruptions and shifts that transnational discourses of the desired subject of modernity undergo at the community level. For the purposes of this dissertation, I focused on the gendered dimensions of identity construction. I took the work of Sonke Gender Justice, a social enterprise supported by Ashoka, as a case study for examining how a transnational discourse of masculinity unfolds and is confronted locally. My encounters with African men from different provinces suggested that Sonke Gender Justice’s dialogues became a space where men felt free to voice their frustrations with changing patriarchies, but also a society dominated by racist capitalist exploitation and its aftermaths. Both men and women pointed to sequels of the intersections of capitalist neoliberalization with race, class, gender, and sexuality: unemployment, violence, poverty, the feminization of poverty, the commodification of the African body, and the HIV-AIDS epidemic.

The tensions between neoliberal values, local patriarchies, and transnational feminisms constitute complex actualities of the South African context. While neoliberal disembodied narratives prevail at the global level, they are threatened by historicized accounts of oppression, theft, and discrimination. On one hand, the spread of feminist teachings has given local feminist movements the subversive vocabulary and concepts they needed to voice their struggles on the global scale. Thus, going beyond issues of gender-based violence and disease, black South African feminism envisions a society in which the woman's body is freed from capitalist greed, patriarchal constraints, racist prejudices, and neoliberal renditions of empowerment. The contemporary black feminist movement in South Africa has drawn lessons from various conceptualizations of gender inequality. While they uphold a liberal feminist notion of gender through their struggle for equal opportunities within public institutions (i.e. equal pay and representation at the state level), they also challenge cultural and societal patriarchal structures, in the same vein as radical feminism. Due to the persistence of rape and domestic violence in the country, an important strategy in the emerging South African feminist movement is to challenge men's oppression of women as tacitly acceptable in the culture. However, young black feminists also resist the assumption that all women experience the same type of discrimination. In this sense, the teachings of intersectional feminism resonate loud and clear. Looking at the ways different types of inequalities intersect in their lives, black South African women denounce the workings of a racist system, claiming alongside African-American women that "black lives matter." No longer apologetic about reinforcing their social location in the 'Rainbow Nation', the emerging black South African feminist movement understands their gendered struggle as indissociably linked to

the burdens of their ‘black brothers’. Furthermore, their anti-racist stance goes beyond national frontiers to include the racialized, classed, and gendered underpinnings of contemporary global capitalism and their neocolonial effects in South Africa. The complexity of this movement refutes simplistic, neoliberal, constructions of liberation and empowerment.

On the other hand, toxic elements of black masculinities continue to hold women’s bodies and subjectivities captive in their fight for freedom. As South African men experience violent forms of silencing and oppression in a context of white supremacy and capitalist accumulation, they tend to view gender equality as an additional dispossessing discourse. At the same time as they are able to utilize the commodification of the female body as a justification for invasion and exploitation, they re-construct South African women as the upholders and receptacles of culture and patriarchal traditions. For all these reasons the work of Sonke Gender Justice is important. It is worth repeating that the goal of this dissertation has not been to discredit the organization’s role in changing the South African culture of rape and gender-related abuse. I did, however, argue that social entrepreneurship would gain from embracing the dense dynamics of marginalization into its strategies for change. Sonke Gender Justice, in particular, as a progressive gender organization, should complicate its discourse by recognizing the geographical, historical, generational subtleties of black masculinity. Furthermore, it should encourage greater analysis of how in the context of South Africa, a racist, power-laden system of patriarchies may have insidious consequences for women’s well-being and safety. Demonizing black masculinity while paying scant attention to the ways factors of oppression intersect to manufacture a patriarchal, sexist, racist, homophobic

and transphobic society, simply cannot translate into healthier gender relations in the long term. Social entrepreneurship's unacknowledged yet blatant complicity with neoliberal cultural forms encourages the offering of neatly-packaged, piecemeal solutions to structural problems that continue to fester the lives of groups of people in the Global South. The prominence of such model may also invisibilize radical local movements that seek to empower populations beyond the neoliberal discourse of self-transformation and self-management. Lastly, it has the ability to reproduce a-historical, and a-geographical assumptions about the subjectivity and agency of the subaltern 'Other', which ultimately fails the subversive intent of the 'transnational'. Offering a critique of the knowledge-power present at the core of social entrepreneurship is one step toward decolonizing the 'transnational' development project always on the verge of losing its democratic and egalitarian purpose. It also frees up some imaginative space that allows us to be open to the unforeseeable, surprising outcomes of globalization-from-below type of projects, if only to argue – as I wished to do – that non-agents of power<sup>85</sup> cannot be so easily regulated and shaped.

This dissertation would have benefitted from the inclusion of queer subjects in its examination of transnational gendered discourses. The scholarship on contemporary forms of globalization, with all its emphasis on circuits of knowledge at the global, transnational, national and local levels, has been at a loss to conceptualize the effects of such configurations on the intimate spheres, the body, and practices of desire of dynamic subjects. If the attention given to heterosexual men and women here is valuable, it is

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<sup>85</sup> Here I draw on Althusser's concept of overdetermination. See Althusser, Louis. 1969. "Contradiction and Overdetermination." *For Marx* 114, and Hall, Stuart. 1985. "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 2(2): 91-114.

nonetheless incomplete without tracing the problematic construction of gender *and* sexual identities through the contemporary period. Queer theory is useful not only to highlight the embodied practices and desires of marginalized subjects but also to disrupt identity boundaries and norms. Not only revealing the subjectivities and practices that are made desirable in late capitalism, this body of work challenges its normative project by exploring the rich variety of situated, at times subversive, responses. Complicating mainstream renditions of gender equality and masculinity with stories of queer subjectivities is a necessary challenge that I shall take on in future research. Furthermore, due to its focus on the work of a men's organization (Sonke Gender Justice), the voices of men were heard louder than that of women. Although I strived to counteract this imbalance by insisting that women be present in the organization's trainings of and focus groups with its 'clients', I believe that a deliberate concentration on women's narratives would add greater depth to my work. Equipped with a wealth of stories from differently positioned South African women, I intend to resolve the present gap in subsequent publications.

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