Siphiwe Ignatius Dube

Dr SI Dube, Practical Theology, University of Pretoria, Hatfield Campus, Pretoria; E-mail: siphiwe.dube@up.ac.za

Race silence: the oversignification of black men in "the crisis of/in masculinities" in post-apartheid South Africa

The "crisis in/of masculinity" is a concept now used worldwide to draw attention to problems confronting men, despite its American origin focused on documenting the responses of men to changing work and family structures. In the context of South Africa, the concept has been further used, especially, in the analysis of such social phenomena as gender-based violence and unemployment. While this gendered lens has offered useful insights it has also relied heavily on a primary focus on the negative elements of masculine attitudes and behaviours. Moreover, in the South African context, the concentration on black men's experiences has given exaggerated emphasis to the destructive and anti-social aspects of such experiences, which have also been incorporated into both thin and thick descriptions of a general construction of "black masculinities". The result, as this article shows with regards to an analysis of certain South African research on "black masculinities", is that black men are held responsible for social ills. The article examines debates dealing with representations of "black masculinities" in

South Africa and urges for more complex analyses of such masculinities. Such analyses should take into account the nuanced ways in which both "hegemonic masculinities" and "black masculinities" are constituted and contested.

1. Introduction

The "crisis in/of masculinity" is a concept now used worldwide to draw attention to problems confronting men generally, despite its specifically American origin focused on describing the responses of men to rapidly changing work and family arrangements in a "modern" and "modernising" world. As such, the original term can be said to be rooted in the examination of shifting occupational and family structures. This use of the term demonstrates an intersectional approach that focuses on how gender relations are informed by and inform socio-economic structures and more. In the context of South Africa, the concept has been further used, especially, in the analysis of social phenomena seemingly most relevant to this country, namely gender-based violence, public health (specifically with regards to HIV/Aids), and male unemployment. While the gender-informed analysis focused on men who perpetuate violence, health, and unemployment in South Africa has offered useful insights with regards to documenting men's experiences of these phenomena, it has also tended to focus primarily on the negative elements of the masculine attitudes and behaviours. In focusing on an analysis of this tendency towards negative representations of masculinities the article does not seek to deny or diminish the value of positive work on masculinities in South Africa – such as that of Linda Richter and Robert Morrell (2006) on fatherhood or Dean Peacock's (2013) on gender transformation to reduce violence against women, just to name two. Rather, this particular focus aims to bring attention to how scholarly discursive practices have practical implications for what kind of knowledge gets circulated and consumed. While not novel, it is still important to point out examples of such scholarly instantiations as a way of keeping the epistemological practices of the "new South Africa" under a self-reflexive gaze.

In current studies of masculinities in South Africa there is a concentrated focus on "black masculinities", premised on a variety of reasons that will be outlined below. More importantly, the concentration on black men's experiences has placed exaggerated emphasis on the destructive and anti-social aspects of such experiences, and these descriptions have been incorporated into a particular kind of discourse on "black hegemonic masculinity". The result of this, as this article shows through an analysis of secondary research, is that black men are then held responsible for all kinds of social ills (the grounded facts of certain harms

due to men in this country notwithstanding). As part of a self-reflexive gesture about the role of academic scholarship in perpetuating particular discourses about "black masculinities", this article examines debates about masculinities in South Africa and urges a more complex analysis of "black masculinities" that takes into account the nuanced ways in which such masculinities are constituted and contested. To that end, the article draws on research that demonstrates how alternative experiences of "black masculinities" in various areas of social life contribute to gendered social transformation practices that challenge the generic discourse on "black masculinities". To reiterate, while the observations highlighted in this article may be deemed too critical and somewhat familiar, the author holds that their echo and belabouring are strategically necessary as part of re-inscribing and re-imagining representations of "black masculinities" in post-apartheid South Africa.

2. The ontology of the research context

This article locates its point of departure in an article by Claire Laurier Decoteau in *Men and Masculinities* (2013) that analyses how discussions of the prevalence of the discourse of a "crisis in/of masculinity" are used in both academic and popular analyses in South Africa to explain the high rates of violence against women and the stigmatisation of sexual promiscuity. Taking its cue from Decoteau's critique outlined below, this article examines a number of articles and book chapters dealing with masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa and demonstrates how despite talking of a "crisis in/of masculinity" broadly, the general trend within these studies is to racialise this issue as one afflicting black men in particular. Decoteau's critical observations raise "key questions about race, class, and nationalism – illustrating the way in which analyses of gender must be situated in broader contexts exploring the contingent relationship between structural forces and inequalities" (Decoteau 2013: 155). In other words, a broad conceptualisation of gender and its relationship to other institutions can provide a more holistic picture of how the supposed "crisis in/of masculinity" is not only about men and their sense of loss, but other intersecting issues as well, as this article argues with specific reference to the oversignification of a one-sided race discourse in discussions of masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa.

The term 'oversignification' is used here to connote negative overemphasis of the accepted meaning of a term or process, in this case "the crisis in/of masculinity". That is, while the accepted meaning of "crisis in/of masculinity" signifies a process of negative change adversely affecting men in general (perceived or real), the overemphasis on the negative traits of this change with particular reference to black men in South Africa is problematic given that similarly negative

responses from white men have also been part of the resistance to change and at a global level, in particular, the term has tended to reflect mostly white American and British men's experiences of trouble with change (RW Connell's reconceptualisation of crisis moments as an opportunity for both negative and positive change notwithstanding). Therefore, the article argues that as a result of focusing on the negative elements of the crisis and using data based on black men's experiences, the studies of the "crisis in/of masculinity" in South Africa participate in an oversignification of black men's experiences as the *sine qua non* problematic post-apartheid "hegemonic masculinity", especially at the level of academic discourse.

Such negative oversignification conflates difference and fails to account for the masculine power differential that still exists in post-apartheid South Africa due to continued persistence of unacknowledged and largely unexamined forms of "white masculine" privilege. In other words, there are two issues arising due to the negative oversignification: first, giving too much symbolic meaning to black experiences; and second, placing too much emphasis on the negative rather than the positive with regard to black men's experiences, articulations, and practices of masculinities. As such, this article's position is not so much an objection to the oversignification but, rather, to the emphasis on negative portrayal. This is not to deny or gloss over the reality of what goes on, but is a call to a more comprehensive analysis that also pays attention to the racialised context that frames much of South African experience at the same time.

3. Relationality

Such an effort of broad conceptualisation of masculinities that includes specifically racially aware discursive practices should demonstrate a willingness to focus on points of intersection rather than just divergence as some of the studies criticised in this article are shown to do. Relationality – a concept that I have shown to be useful in the context of understanding Canadian Christian masculinities for example – should be the central focus instead (Dube 2014, 2012). Richard Howson (2006) argues in support of relationality and posits that the kind of social imaginary that a relational emphasis provides is one that challenges the notion of masculinity as a social phenomenon that represents a coherent unified system that is reproducible across time and space. By emphasising relationality, Howson argues that we are able to see instead that "masculinity is defined by configurations of practice within a system of gender relations [and that] it is problematic to think about gender as representing a coherent social object" (Howson 2006: 53-55). This argument regarding masculine gender identity as situational is neither new nor meant to deny the persistent and problematic

nature of masculinity as the dominative gender order in a largely patriarchal society such as South Africa. Rather, the point of highlighting masculine practices as already relational is to illustrate that masculinities represent gender practices that are multiple, hierarchical, and unstable in nature despite all arguments to the contrary (Howson 2006: 59). Moreover, it is also to demonstrate how such an analysis is possible if we start at the point of intersection or relationality rather than determinism or essentialism.

Furthermore, Howson's emphasis on relationality as an analytical point of departure is so that he can draw a parallel critique of the concept of hegemony, especially "hegemonic masculinity". Howson argues that most understandings of hegemony are premised on the idea that "the powerful group must impose homogenisation through fragmentation and absorption upon others in an effort to control and take ascendancy or command within a hierarchical order" (Howson 2006: 43). However, as Howson contests, the hegemony as domination theory limits the active and progressive potential of hegemony because it represents only one side of hegemony, especially hegemonic masculinity, that privileges dominative forms of "hegemonic masculinities" rather than allowing for the possibility that hegemony is complex and offers sites of alliance in the political struggle for gender order transformation – as seen through concepts such as "alternative masculinities", "non-hegemonic masculinities", and "minority masculinities". That is to say, a relational understanding of power provides us with an opportunity to examine the discourse of the "crisis in/of masculinity" in South Africa not only in terms of its potential for reification of the normative and dominative "hegemonic masculinity" gender order, but also in terms of how resistance to that gender order is possible even within the hegemonic system itself as some of the studies analysed in this article demonstrate with regards to emphasis on the notion of "alternative masculinities".

4.   Binary racial discourse

Decoteau's response to the argument that South African men suffer from a "crisis in/of masculinity" is to critique the academic analyses in particular and offer an argument that shows up the ways in which the crisis discourse (in its varied forms) masks "a profound crisis of liberation" instead, where "the tropes of 'traditionalism' and 'modernity' are utilized as political weapons in contestations over hegemonic masculinity to manage anxieties associated with South Africa's national identity and position in the world system" (Decoteau 2013: 141). Decoteau offers a sobering critique of these discussions by arguing that while these studies are "laudable for the way in which they illustrate the multiplicity of masculinities at play in the postcolonial context, [...] they tend to homogenize and demonize 'traditional' masculinity by situating it firmly within the African population and by characterizing

it as violent and misogynistic" (Decoteau 2013: 141). That is, the argument that poor black men are more prone to gender-based violence is not the whole argument, according to Decoteau, but rather part of a broader and deeper "exasperation over the lack of delivery of human rights since the end of apartheid" that affects the whole South African society (Decoteau 2013: 154).

In other words, it is not only that "traditional masculinity" is demonised, characterised as violent and misogynistic, and situated within the "African population" as per Decoteau's argument above, but also that post-apartheid masculinities in general are imagined (in the sense proffered by Benedict Anderson) for the most part as homogenous, black, and problematic. This is nothing new in terms of defining "black masculinities" as violent in South Africa. Robert Morrell, for example, has observed how urbanisation from 1950s onwards resulted in a black youth masculinity that was defined primarily by violence. Moreover, "The old idea central to African masculinity, that being a man meant to be in control of oneself, not to resort to violence (the eschewal of which was learnt as part of the transitionary rite of passage by which boys became men) and to be wise was replaced with a tough masculinity that black consciousness captured in its early 1970s slogan, 'black man, you are on your own'" (Morrell 1998: 627). That is, "black masculinity" is a particular form of masculinity understood as appropriative of African masculinities (rural and traditional), but "no longer tied to the countryside, to chiefs, to the homestead. It [is] a masculinity in which men [lose] jobs, [lose] their dignity and express[] their feelings of emasculation in violent ways" (Morrell 1998: 630).[1] Of course in later work Morrell has moved away from such essentialist arguments, but the work cited here is highlighted to better situate (within a specific historical context) the argument regarding the construction of "black masculinities" as essentially violent. To that end, the violent response identified in the studies critiqued by Decoteau, including ones in this article, is nothing new and actually represents a cycle of historical repetition where change still puts men on the defensive as a result of losing a sense of themselves, whether as a result of urbanisation in times past or the institutionalisation of women's rights in the current context.

This latter reason is attested to by Rosemary Jolly who notes with regards to current research on masculinities in South Africa that, this research "suggests

---

1   It should be noted also that Morrell does not give black men sole responsibility for violence, as exemplified by the inclusion of Keith Breckenridge's piece, 'The allure of violence: men, race and masculinity on the South African goldmines, 1900–1950,' in the same *Special Issue of the Journal of Southern African Studies* (1998) which shows how both black and white men bought into racialised understandings of violence. Moreover, in his other edited collection, *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, Morrell does give voice to positive black masculinities.

that the most violent responses to change come from severely marginalized men who use violence against women as a way of breaching the gap between the masculine ideal and their lived realities" (Jolly 2010: 153). The severely marginalised men of these studies are primarily, if not wholly, black, both urban and rural, and supposedly caught between positive, individual resilience and negative, social prescription of violence (between individual action and social proscription). It is this particular idea of "black masculinities" that becomes oversignified in studies of post-apartheid masculinities and gets valorised as the new "hegemonic masculinity" that this article wishes to explore and analyse as a way of materialising what is discursively acknowledged but not always valorised – namely, the multiplicity and diversity of masculinities (even if just considering black masculinities) in post-apartheid South Africa.[2]

5. Oversignification of "black masculinities"

Decoteau's article itself highlights elements of this negative oversignification of "black masculinities" as the post-apartheid "hegemonic masculinity" par excellence, even while decrying this practice in other analyses. Granted, Decoteau's article's point is to clarify the ways in which gender, as a category of analysis in post-apartheid South Africa, needs to engage creatively and in complex ways with the tropes of "modernity" and "traditionalism" as not simply given. Nonetheless, the article relies on data analysing how both Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma, two black presidents, use "traditionalism" and "modernity" in ways that suit their agendas at any given point in time. From this analysis it is gleaned that, this "struggle between Zuma and Mbeki for national leadership represents a struggle over hegemonic masculinity" (Decoteau 2013: 148) between modernists and traditionalists. Moreover, the ethnographic research for the article is conducted on black informal settlements, from which it is gleaned that, through "defining progress and development as an abandonment of 'traditionalism' in the move toward liberal or constitutional definitions of gender and sexuality, an unquestioned cultural imperialism is at work in the popular, media discourses on masculinity" (Decoteau 2013: 153). While neither of these arguments is wrong *per se* and, in fact, are quite astute in their observations, they nonetheless draw national implications over "hegemonic masculinity" on the basis of a homogenous understanding of masculinities that privileges a racialised concept of "post-apartheid masculinity" as primarily black – even while being self-reflexive about

---

2   Of course one should acknowledge that there are scholars who have made it their life's work to address the complexities of black men in South Africa and disaggregate broad racial categories, including Mark Hunter and Kopano Ratele.

the extent to which such a perspective is limited in its understanding of the various masculinities at play.

In *Men Behaving Differently: South African Men Since 1994*, an influential book on masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa, Liz Walker and Graeme Reid, in support of the argument that the transition to democracy marks a significant challenge to masculinity in South Africa, argue that, "Men are centrally implicated in the shifting sexual landscape. The HIV/Aids epidemic is driven by men, and men are blamed for the prevalence of domestic violence and child sexual abuse, and more recently baby-rape." (Walker and Reid 2005: 9) While speaking generally of men, it is very clear from the analysis that follows in the chapters of the edited volume that the "men" are specifically black. For example, none of the chapters in this volume address white masculinities of any kind. Specifically, in Walker's article/chapter by the same name as the book aforementioned, where she argues that constitutional liberalisation of sexuality appears to be accompanied by an increase gender-based violence, she speaks of men in general but draws all her data from interviews with only black men.

As Walker notes in the methodological note, "All the men interviewed were black, lived in Alexandra, and were between the ages of 22 and 35" (Walker 2005a: 229). Although Walker is somewhat self-reflexive about the research being reflective of "only the views and insights of a small group of men" (Walker 2005a: 236) and also proffering alternative masculinities to the violent ones in particular (234-237), she does not delimit the reach of the research in then talking about post-1994 maculinities (both hegemonic and oppositional) in general terms that eschew the racialised nature of the research. In actuality, according to Walker: "The race and gender of the interviewers had minimal influence on the interaction with the men...In fact, the social distance between me as a white, middle class woman and the respondents seemed to facilitate the discussion rather than restrict it" (Walker 2005a: 229). In a context where the social capital of race still plays a significant role in terms of what kind of knowledge is made available to whom, such a statement seems to completely ignore the power dynamics at play between a white, female researcher and young, black men from eKasi. This point, however, is a topic deserving of its own in-depth analysis; the major contention of this article has more to do with the implications of sole reliance on interviews with urban black men but drawing conclusions about "black masculinities" in general.

Another similar example is that of the work of Joan Wardrop, who writes on the notion of threatened masculinities as a way of capturing the current uncertain state of being that seems to be propelling men in post-apartheid South Africa to violent actions. Wardrop notes that, "In foregrounding the violence perpe-

trated by men whose masculinity is in crisis, I read what is visible to me of their lives though the complex textures of mourning and traumatic memory, of unreconciled and disconnected narratives, of artistic representation at the margins of the representable…" (Wardrop 2009: 115). While Wardrop's reading is indeed complicated by an acknowledgment of South Africa's troubled history and problematic present, what is clearly unproblematic and uncomplicated about the narratives and artistic representations chosen are the characters on which she chooses to focus. On the play which she chooses as representative of the lives of young men in post-apartheid South Africa, for example, Wardrop writes: "This is a common pattern of behaviour that Wood and Jewkes, for example, found in an Umtata township where their fieldwork 'revealed violent male practices, in particular assault, forced sex and verbal threats, to be a common feature of young people's sexual relationships'" (Wardrop 2009: 118). Moreover, as she further argues, despite the optimistic tone of a recent volume on fatherhood in South Africa (Richter and Morrell 2006), "many of its papers convey disturbing narratives of dislocated, disempowered and dysfunctional masculinities" (Wardrop 2009: 122). Where, citing the work of Mark Hunter who does analysis of fatherhood in KwaZulu-Natal, the absence of fathers means a life of disconnection, uncertainty, and confusion manifesting as "fearful, threatened masculinities, mourning a lost, more certain past, longing for purpose, for some utopian past in which 'tradition' and 'culture' held clearly defined meanings" (Wardrop 2009: 122-123). While laudable for troubling the "traditional" versus "modernity" binary in similar terms to Decoteau, a question arises regarding the identity of the violent men identified by Wardrop, and the answer is clearly laid out in the examples chosen to represent these violent masculinities.

Specifically, as Wardrop argues, "In deciphering the cultural environment within which men, in large numbers, commit violent criminal acts, without remorse and seemingly with emotional impunity, no analysis can fail to be informed by the fractured lives of men as labour migrants (now for several generations), of men systematically humiliated and juvenilised, of traditional familial systems ruptured…" (Wardrop 2009: 127). In other words, this cultural environment is that of black men who deny their very ubuntu by "paradoxically inflicting a tsunami of violent crime on South Africans at the time when they have won political freedom of a sort for the first time in their history" (Wardrop 2009: 127). Nowhere does the analysis engage with research on non-black men or men as a diverse population group, even just within the labour migrant context which does include white men as foremen who oversee black workers, for example. There is no observation put forward concerning how the loss of power suffered by white men, whether perceived or real, has propelled them to violent behaviour as well. Here, racially motivated violent acts perpetrated on black domestic workers and

black students on university campuses by Afrikaner men at the University of the Free State, North West University, and Stellenbosch are just a few of the high profile cases that can be cited.

In a similar vein, albeit focused on rural men specifically, both Reshma Sathiparsad and Tina Sideris look at the ways in which men have and are responding to the "crisis in/of masculinity" by constructing and imagining so-called alternative masculinities. Sathiparsad's study, conducted in a rural area of KwaZulu-Natal called Ugu District, acknowledges that the "study sample was made up of male students attending public high school...In total, 30 male students, all isiZulu first-language speakers aged 16-24, participated in the focus groups" (Sathiparsad 2008: 349). From this study, Sathiparsad observes that the "fact that some participants contested hegemonic masculinities and demonstrated support for more equitable relationships with girls suggests that alternative forms of masculinity were operating around and within dominant forms" (Sathiparsad 2008: 350). Moreover, as Sathiparsad further notes, part of the solution to gender-based violence is getting men to realise the value of changing gender relations by emphasising that women's empowerment does not necessarily mean men's disempowerment (Sathiparsad 2008: 355).

Reiterating the same argument but in a different rural context, Nkomazi in Mpumalanga Province, Sideris notes the tension that "men experience when they confront the contradiction between embracing rights in the domestic arena and the widely held views that associate manhood with domination over women and children in the family" (Sideris 2005: 133). That is to say, she frames the "crisis in/ of masculinity" in post-apartheid South Africa as a struggle between the personal and the social, where individual men seek to effect change within a binding or restrictive social system. Therefore, "for men who embark on the journey for change, being exposed to these dimensions of their intimate relatiosnhisp is a primary source of their unease" (Sideris 2005: 134), leading the men to cast their anxieties in a debate between rights and culture as already noted by Decoteau above and Sideris in this present context (Sideris 2005: 112). Where, as noted already, "black masculinities" are thus defined through the binary discourse of "traditionalism" versus "modernity".

However, as in the other research identified above, while both Sideris and Sathiparsda speak of "rural men" in general, their focus is on black rural men. Moreover, both young (progressive) and old (conservative) rural men are appealed to as the prime signifiers of the moment of crisis by being cast in oppositional roles, and thus creating a hierarchy of preference for one group of men over the other. Nonetheless, all the men studied in both contexts are black and serve the purpose of signifying "the crisis" as acutely related to the

anxieties of black men with respect to the democratic transition in particular (Sideris 2005: 117). The above criticism notwithstanding, Sideris does note the complexities and diversities of the responses to the dilemma of change by noting that: "Mediated by race and class, men's practices and the meanings given to gender identity are being contested, defended and redefined, in institutions, interpersonal relationships and by individual men and women" (Sideris 2005: 118). Moreover, Sideris does provide an example of the conservative response to the crisis that emanates from white middle-class men in South Africa in the case of South African Association of Men, which fought against perceived feminist attacks on masculinity (Sideris 2005: 119).

Furthermore, it is important to note that Sideris does caution against equating individual men's positive responses to changing gender relations with a wider shift in "social structures that sustain relations of domination and subordination" (Sideris 2005: 135). In other words, while relying on the same tapestry of narratives that focus on black men as the *sine qua non* of the violent post-apartheid beleaguered man, Sideris also problematises this tapestry through a palimpsestic move of describing this material reality as more than simply about black men. However, this is done only in passing reference and without clear linkages between a broader description of "hegemonic masculinity" and its particular, instantiated, forms in racialised and classed contexts. That is to say, while the work cited above speaks of a "crisis in/of masculinity" in general, the observable trend is to racialise this issue as one afflicting particularly black men in South Africa, such that they are seen as responding in a particularly violent manner to the constitutional changes that have accorded women more rights. While the introduction of race analysis in these studies reflects a positive shift in terms of seriously engaging race as a category of analysis in studies of masculinities in South Africa, its oversignification misses the mark in terms of engaging a transformative discursive practice.

That is to say, in addition, seeing themselves represented this way in scholarly literature might foster a sense of mistrust in some black men who already view any talk of gender norms transformation as "the White Man's Agenda" as Kopano Ratele, Tamara Shefer, and Mbuyiselo Botha argue in their piece partly entitled as such. Specifically, they note that "the construction of gender work as white and foreign remains a significant discourse in South Africa, which at time is used to legitimate certain patriarchal practices and serves to diffuse and delegitimize gender activism" (Ratele, Shefer, and Botha 2011: 254). As a solution, the trio proffer that it is important that work on gender activism focused on men and boys mobilises them "in strategic ways that are sensitive to the complexities of constructions of race, culture, and gender in local contexts" (Ratele, Shefer, and

Botha 2011: 255). I would venture that race being first on that list of complexities is not by accident from the perspective of these scholars.

Such a shift in perspective and praxis needs to be grounded in intersectionality-based analyses of post-apartheid masculinities that bring into multiple foci the materiality of difference in the cultural practices of post-apartheid masculinities, while also both imbuing men with the need for critical reflection and equipping them with a healthy sense of responsibility for gender norm transformation that does not come from a solipsistic construction of "the crisis". The advantage of such an intersectional approach in this context would be to highlight the ways in which "the crisis in/of masculinity" has different locations within the same matrix of domination; where the identity politics of race in post-apartheid South Africa actually coalesce with those of gender transformation by being located in the matrix of a constitutive power dynamic that affects each person individually but also relationally as in rhizomatic nodes, where each point in the rhizome is intimately connected to another through a system of intricate links. In such a context the scholar figures as an important node as well in a matrix of knowledge production, marketing, and consumption. This strategic approach, as put forth by Ratele, Shefer, and Botha, can be seen in the work of both Russell Luyt (2003) and Ira Horowitz (2001), both of whom put forth examinations of representations of masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa that are descriptively thick. Interestingly enough, both Luyt's and Horowitz's work appear much earlier in the trajectory of the scholarship dealing with masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa than some of the work critiqued in this article so far.

While different in their foci, both Luyt and Horowitz ground their analyses in diverse representation of the masculine landscape of South Africa. Luyt notes for example that 77 individuals agreed to participate in his study, which was conducted in Afrikaans, English, and isiXhosa. The separate inclusion of the three languages acted "as a means by which to ensure cultural diversity in participant understanding. Moreover purposive sampling within the Cape Town metropolitan area along predetermined 'social class' criteria aided attempts to obtain rich participant variety" (Luyt 2003: 53-54). What such a methodological approach first acknowledges is that there are differences in experiences of masculinities and, moreover, discussion of social categories such as race and class in this research contribute towards what Luyt refers to as "qualitatively different material-discursive experiences of masculinity among South African men" (Luyt 2003: 65). This is not to say that this critique of monolithic representation is absent in the other studies referred to in this article, but rather that the praxis of the research does not match up with the theoretical foundation on which it is laid, as is apparent in Luyt's case.

Moreover, while the aim of Luyt's article is to highlight the significance of a material-discursive approach in the study of masculinities, it also serves as a good illustration of how "issues of 'race' and class surface as particularly salient features within a South African research context" (Luyt 2003: 53) and that they cannot be ignored as such. This is a point attested to by Horowitz when he writes, "This chapter will look at how he early experiences of some contemporary South African men have shaped their attitudes and behaviour...Particular emphasis will be placed on cultural practices, especially those of black people since they comprise over 80 per cent of South Africa's population and black men comprised the largest group at the workshops" (Horowitz 2001: 232). Although Horowitz also comes to a general conclusion that, "what is perhaps most striking about the data generated from these activities is the similarity between the rules across different cultures" (Horowitz 2001: 234), his conclusion is based on a comparative analysis of different cultural practices of masculinity even as he emphasises the experiences of black men.

As the following passage illustrates:

> Thus in every workshop, regardless of the composition of the participants, there were always rules to the effect that the man had to protect others; be the breadwinner; be strong; ...The near universality of these rules was particularly noted in several workshops...Even when there were cultural variations in practice, the underlying messages were often similar. Thus, in a workshop held in a government agency, an Afrikaner man indicated that he was taught, 'ladies first'. An African man who came from the Xhosa community then said in his culture, the rule was 'men first'...In the discussion of these apparently opposite rules, it was noted that both are based on an assumption that women are weaker and need either protection or assistance. (Horowitz 2001: 234)

In other words, the "crisis in/of masculinity" is not valorised only through the experiential knowledge of black men in vacuum, but in relation to other groups of men. Also, where their experience is highlighted, it is clearly stated that this is due to their large representation in the workshops and also the researcher's clearly stated bias towards reflecting the cultural experiences of black people in South Africa as a result of their demographic representation in population numbers.

Furthermore, even though Horowitz also identifies the resistance to change argument in his study, the comparative analysis allows him to draw his conclusions not only on the basis of a conservative evaluation of only "culture" but also

religious belief as another important normative value through which masculine socialisation occurs (Horowitz 2001: 239-240). In this sense, it is not simply traditional (as opposed to modern) black men who are bent on resisting change and acting on this resistance in violent terms, but men from varied cultural and/or religious backgrounds who hold on to similar beliefs of anti-femininity, entitled individualism, and homophobia as grounds of masculinity, even across racialised lines. Moreover, and importantly so, the impetus for change does not lie solely on the shoulders of black men who now have to bear the burden of the patriarchal dividend by themselves as studies that focus on the archetypal violent black man of the constitutional post-apartheid era would lead us to believe. That is, white South African men cannot be left to stand by and watch the country go to waste while waiting to play the saviour role after the fact. The culpability of men in the violence that is gripping the country is not only a result of black men's anger, but the anger and threatened sense of belonging of all men in a context that has challenged and changed not only the racial order but the gender order as well. Related, then, the sources of and inspiration for change will also be diverse and multivalent, informed by a variety of experiences based on ability, ethnicity, class, race, and sexuality among others.

In fact, the analysis of this article so far has shown that masculine identity in South Africa intersects with many other identity markers, corresponding especially at the macro-level with the institutions of racism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity as "interlocking systems of oppression". Therefore, while the relative significance of particular experiences of masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa is important to outline (as per the focus on black men's experiences by the studies highlighted in this article), it is also equally important to understand how these experiences figure in the broader practices of masculinities and gender, including how they reinforce one another. After all, proponents of intersectionality acknowledge that there is an advantage to paying particular attention to each of these dimensions as distinct entities, mocking simplistic claims of a universal humanity with neatly aligned motivations, interests, and goals – an intersectional approach starts from the position of difference, not reductionism, however. Assuming that scholars are attempting to capture the complexity of the social world through synthetic approaches and studies, problems of reductionism need to be taken seriously. As Patricia Hill Collins (2000) argues, oppression is so full of contradictions – whereby people see only their own victimisation rather than that of others as well – that it is important that each person self-scrutinises and examines their own position.

Tracy Ore puts it another way when she notes that, in order to fully understand the process of transforming difference into inequality, it is actually necessary to recognise the interrelationships between inequality and equality, between

difference and the desire for sameness (2009). The simultaneous importance of exploring commonalities and differences in the experiences of masculinities in a post-apartheid context is very important for challenging the universalism of patriarchy in particular that is assumed by the assignment of primacy to exploring a singular aspect of a multidimensional reality. In particular, thinking about one's privilege is a major part of how we might begin to engage intersectionality in our everyday realities as scholars – applying the methodology of thinking about connections at the individual level, and then applying how this relates to the institutional level, and how the relationship between these levels allows us to then carry symbolically valuable privileges without even thinking about them sometimes. The significant point is that an intersectional approach to masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa would also try to contribute to less partial and less distorted scholarship in addressing inequalities. From an intersectional approach, focus should not only be on the negative elements of difference, but also on the way in which differences and domination intersect and are historically and socially constituted. To put it another way: "In order to appreciate the systemic and structured nature of intersecting multiple dimensions of inequality, it is important to examine complexity as a feature of relationships between as well as within all categories of the dimensions of interest" (Siltanen and Doucet 2008).

As such, what the studies critiqued for their oversignification of black men as violently reacting to constitutional changes that are in support of new gender norms would highlight, is simply just one aspect of a multidimensional reality that is intimately connected to the Volkstaat movement that uses fear to intimidate white women into regressive nationalism, which in turn is intimately connected to a masculine imagination of nationalism in general that assumes a public domain without women or only women who serve men in the private sphere. The point being that on the conservative side, the "crisis in/of masculinity" represents a meandering back into very uneven balances of gender power that link to other forms of inequalities. On the positive side, "the crisis in/of masculinity" is an opportunity for men (not just black men) to reflect critically about the social construction of masculinities, including the assumption and performance of power as masculine, and to transform this hegemony for another one that privileges a positive relational understanding of power.

6. Locating the limits of critique

Admittedly, there are many possible explanations for why scholars have turned the gaze on black masculinities, including the need for academic scholarship to pay more attention to black life studies, reflecting the reality that blacks in South Africa constitute the majority of the population, as well as a host of other

similarly ethically driven reasons. Moreover, because calamities such as gender-based violence are so distressing, especially if put up against the backdrop of global hope for the rainbow nation, they have attracted the most interest and analysis and have effectively overshadowed progressive and positive shifts. However, this is not good enough ground to justify the minimal engagement with white masculinities in these studies. This is because such minimal engagement erases the violence performed by/through/in the name of "hegemonic white masculinities" at the psychological, physical, emotional, material, political, economical, and spiritual levels. This argument is not meant to be a rendition of the "let's blame the white man for everything" perspective, but rather an attempt to bring recognition to the observation that elision of the examination of white experiences of masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa (a country defined by racialisation in so many ways – issues of the fetishisation of race notwithstanding) further contributes to the sense and feelings of alienation/isolation/exclusion from the institutions of the "New South Africa" that some white groups have expressed in the most recent past.

Such an approach to studying masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa, if not well monitored, has the potential to leave the impression that only "black masculinities" inform the current "hegemonic masculine identity" in post-apartheid South Africa and, moreover, the men who subscribe to this form of "hegemonic masculinity" are also violently resistant to change, insecure, and problematic as a collective. This is not to mention how such a focus also misrepresents the actual material power dividend that black men have, or share in, as a collective in post-apartheid South Africa outside the context of number dynamics. Also, such a heightened sense of non-participation of white men in the social fabric of the "New South Africa" through scholarly studies can inadvertently contribute to nurturing the dream of an all white Volkstaat as a desirable alternative. That is, lack of representation has the potential to galvanise a sense of white men's isolation, leading further to insularity. This is a very different argument from the one that most, if not all, of the scholars examined so far are trying to put forth (viz., to point to the complexity, fluidity, and contradictory practices or ways of doing/performing masculinities in contemporary South Africa). However, in highlighting the subject of post-apartheid masculinities as primarily black, violent, and resistant to change, the nuances of these arguments are lost through a focus on this one figure of resistance – the black man who resisted apartheid and now ironically resists gendered human rights change.

Furthermore, given the problem of knowledge diffusion defined by unbalanced power relations in a post-colonial and post-apartheid context, the prevalence of white researchers "representing" black experiences of masculinities through text is mildly troubling in a country where race still matters in terms of the hierarchy

of knowledge production. That is, where the ontology of knowable things is primarily constructed on the prevalence of white institutional knowledge, the absence of discourses on white masculinities might have the unintended outcome of reifying the very colonial discourse it seeks to challenge to some degree. In fact, while such scholarship has the potential to subvert the previous racialised and hierarchised institutional practices of taking white men's experiences as normative by refocusing the lens elsewhere, unchecked, this scholarship might serve as fodder for the problematic colonial and apartheid discourses about the "dangerous and violent black man".

7. Conclusion

In other words, instead of positing "black masculinities" in post-apartheid South Africa as hegemonic in the sense of mutual exclusivity from the potential for social transformation, highlighting relationality in positive terms is a way of foregrounding Howson's observation that, "to confine hegemonic masculinity to a theoretical singularity, that is, as always negativity, will ensure that the politics of gender continues to operate conceptually around the mutual exclusivity of hegemony and social justice" (Howson 2006: 7). While it is important to pay attention to the experiences of black men as racialised in response to their particular historical construction by the discourses of apartheid, it is also important not to be too exclusive about their experiences in ways that overvalues their experiences in defining post-apartheid masculinities. What is required, instead, is a complex analysis of hegemonic masculinity that takes into account the nuanced ways in which multiple racialised discourses of masculinities are at play and how these inform requisite multiple social transformation practices, including religious ones. Therefore, the singular models of masculine identities privileged by the studies cited above (through an oversignification of "the violent black men") are questionable as grounds for thinking that can entertain and sustain alternative gendered performances of masculinities in a contemporary, post-apartheid South Africa.

Bibliography

Decoteau L C (2013) The crisis of liberation: masculinity, neoliberalism, and HIV/AIDS in postapartheid South Africa. *Men and Masculinities* 16(2): 139-159. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1097184X13488865

Dube S I (2014) The promise keepers: Canada and Christian relational masculinities. Religion and masculinity [Special Issue]. Religious Studies and Theology 33(2): 173-192. http://dx.doi.org/10.1558/rsth.v33i2.173

Dube S I (2012) Masculinity and religion. In: Laker J (ed) *Canadian perspectives on men and masculinities: an interdisciplinary reader*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Hill-Collins P (2000) *Black feminist thought: knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*, 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.

Horowitz I (2001) Cultural practices of masculinity in post-apartheid South Africa. In: Pease B and K Pringle (eds) *A man's world? Changing men's practices in a globalized world*. London and New York: Zed Books.

Howson R (2006) *Challenging hegemonic masculinity*. London and New York: Routledge.

Jolly R (2010) *Cultured violence: narrative, social suffering, and engendering human rights in contemporary South Africa*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Kimmel M (2013) *Angry white men: American masculinity at the end of an era*. New York: Nation Books.

Luyt R (2006) Rhetorical representations of masculinities in South Africa: moving towards a material-discursive understanding of men. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 13: 46-69. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/casp.706

Morrell R (1998) Of boys and men: masculinity and gender in Southern Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24(4): 605-630. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03057079808708593

Ore T (2009) *The social construction of difference and inequality: race, class, gender, and sexuality*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Ratele K, T Shefer and M Botha (2011) Navigating past 'the white men's agenda' in South Africa: organizing men for gendered transformation of society. In: Ruspini E, J Hearn, B Pease and K Pringle (eds) *Men and masculinities around the world: transforming men's practices*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan. http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9780230338005_18

Reid G and W Liz (eds) (2005) *Men behaving differently: South African men since 1994*. Cape Town: Juta.

Sathiparsad R (2008) Developing alternative masculinities as a strategy to address gender-based violence. *International Social Work* 51(3): 348-359. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0020872807088081

Siltanen J and A Doucet (2008) *Gender relations in Canada: intersectionality and beyond*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.

Sideris T (2005) 'You have to change and you don't know how!': contesting what it means to be a man in a rural area of South Africa. In: Reid G and Walker L (eds) *Men behaving differently: South African men since 1994*. Cape Town: Juta.

WALKER L (2005) Men behaving differently: South African men since 1994. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*. 7(3): 225-238. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/136910504100 01713215

WARDROP J (2009) Notes from a tense field: threatened masculinities in South Africa. *SocialIdentities* 15(1):113-130. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13504630802693307