Destined to Come to Blows?

Race and Constructions of "Rational-Intellectual" Masculinity Ten Years After Apartheid

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In 1994, a democratic government came to power in South Africa for the first time in the country's history. But political transition is never a single event or moment. Rather, it is a continuous process that faces setbacks and contradictions. One of the questions we might ask about a society in transition is to what extent its gender order has changed or is changing. The present paper sets out to read the country's transformation drama through the lens of contested conceptions of South African masculinity. The article is focused on one particular version of masculinity which it terms "rational-intellectual man," and the argument is that a legacy of racism and the persistence of racialized modes of reasoning continue to marginalise black men from this and other powerful, high-status forms of hegemonic masculinity.

Key words: middle-class masculinity; race; South Africa; democratization; hegemonic masculinities

The context for this article is that of a society in transition. It has been ten years since South Africa saw the advent of a newly-elected democratic government and the end of apartheid. What the article is involved in illustrating, however, is that "the transition" from apartheid did not simply take place in 1994 but rather continues to take place in multiple locations and microcultures throughout the society. The process of contestation, accommodation, transgression, and resistance over the construction of dominant norms of masculinity is a prime example of how the transitionary moment continues to transpire.

There have been a number of studies of marginalized South African masculinities—those who have been left behind in some way by the transition and whose masculinities are the responsive, antagonistic masculinities of outsiders. In contrast, the focus for the present article is on those who, through various routes of fate and circumstance, have managed to position themselves in a relatively privileged place. So it is about men at the center but

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even then, variously at the center rather than homogenously occupying that space. The article aims to contribute to our understanding of what role diverse constructions of masculinity play in this process of occupation.

> In my university residence one of my fellow housemates highlighted the fact that I was pink and not welcome in his country; that this was in fact the land of his ancestors and I was not one of "his" people and thus should leave the country. My reaction [was] to punch him with every bit of hate a man could have for another. For some reason, the only thing I could think about when I hit him was that he was black and I needed to defend my whiteness. I asked myself why we were *destined to come to blows*. Although I have tried to bury all the stereotypes that I picked up during school, they rushed back in anger and vengeance. The fact that there were four other guys in the room made me feel I had to save face. The fact that they were white made it all the more important to me. My schoolboy images of what it meant to be male and how males defend themselves also crept back into my mind. My brother's constant reinforcing of what it meant not to be a "fag" and to be a man, how to stand up for myself, even if it meant being beaten to a pulp by the schoolboy bully. I felt I had to prove that I was a man and that if I had walked away I would be associated with a female attribute and thus would be seen as weaker than him. I felt that class was also implicated. He came from a working-class home and I middle class. His ideology is one of black radicalism while mine is white colonial. We have both been brought up to believe that the "other" is wrong. (Graham, exam 2003, emphasis added)

Political change is interpreted in this story as a collision between antagonistic discourses and a contestation over subjectivity. These ideas are echoed in a somewhat overlooked aspect of the work of Jacques Lacan. Affirming the idea of transition as multiple rather than a single event, Lacan has suggested that transition can be understood in terms of a clash of discourses in which the established bonds, ties, and pacts that bind us together come up against new commitments and new modes of speech and action. The clash of discourses in which different subjects are positioned means that the subjects so imbricated are, for Lacan, at some point likely to "come to blows." Since, in Lacan's terms, "all treaties are not signed simultaneously," social conflict can be understood as concerned with which treaty will ultimately be regarded as binding (1988, 197; cited in Cash 2002, 88).

Seen in this way, social and political struggle is at its most basic level a struggle over subjectivity—about which particular forms of subjectivity and intersubjectivity will come to count as the proper forms. In this process, which is often violent, some versions will prevail while others will inevitably be displaced (Cash 2002, 88).

Stephen Frosch, in his account of petty racisms among London schoolboys, has argued that in order to engage seriously with racism we need an account which offers some understanding of the intertwining of personal race consciousness and social forces (2002, 102). One of his key insights is to show how young masculinities are racialized as part of the process through

which they are created. Similarly, Kimmel (2001, 337) has pointed out that gender, class, and race are "fundamental axes around which social, economic, political and personal power is organized." Central to the project of reconfiguring their meanings in order to create a more egalitarian society is being able to render visible the ways in which these axes of power overlap and inform one another. In the case of the present article, the focus is on particular aspects of the interaction between race and masculinity. The article asks to what extent dominant, high-status norms of masculinity remain "white" norms, revealing the extent to which white men by virtue of their possession of "white masculinity" continue to occupy a position of privilege and power despite apartheid's formal demise. Is this hegemony being challenged, accommodated to, or appropriated by young black men? Are there differing versions of masculinity vying for dominance—"coming to blows"—in the process and if so, which is gaining the upper hand?

THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The research upon which this article is based took place in 2003 and 2004 with two groups each consisting of between seventy and eighty students studying undergraduate humanities subjects in a privileged tertiary education environment. The students were all registered for a course in Political Sociology with the author. Conventional research methods such as questionnaires, interviews, and surveys assume much about a person's capacity to know, remember, and tell about themselves. Ethnographers, participant observers, interviewers, and others in the qualitative tradition all assume that their participants are "telling it like it is," that participants "know who they are and what makes them tick" (Hollway and Jefferson 2000, 1). In contrast, the starting point here was the assumption that experience is open to contradictory interpretations. The individual is the site of multiple and competing discourses so that subjectivity is shifting and contradictory, not stable, fixed or rigid. As Richardson has argued, research can be understood as a process of "continual co-creation of Self and social science; they are known through each other" (Richardson 1994, 518).

The research method therefore departed entirely from a framework of attempting impartially and objectively to observe or record the research subject or "object of inquiry" without "contaminating" the "data" by influencing what is said or how it is said.

Eschewing the atemporal view from everywhere, the goal of the article is to try to find ways of sharing local stories—the stories of some students at a good South African university, studying humanities subjects, ten years after apartheid. The stories are not part of a "sample" and there is no attempt to record the "demographic data" of the subjects—how many were women, men, rich, poor, gay, straight, black, or white—because it seems to make little

sense to talk, for example, of the multiplicity of masculinities and femininities and then record how many "men" and how many "women" participated in the study as if the binary were to be regarded as quite unscathed after all.

The research process was one of engaging quite consciously in a process of intervention over time with a set of research participants who were also students taking a regular university course with the author. This approach of combining teaching and research is influenced by the writings of Frigga Haug (1992) who delineates as inseparable the process of research and the process of education. The class of students was transformed into a set of "collaborative inquiry group[s]" (Pease 2000, 143) which replaced conventional tutorials and in which processes of personal transformation, education, and critical social and political inquiry were linked. The aim of such a procedure is to transform the learning community "into a critical community that subjects its own values and practices to scrutiny" (Pease 2000, 143). The process is one which involves "dialogue, discussion, argumentation, critical reflection and theorizing from experience" (Ibid.).

Throughout the research process the participants told stories in various forms—in large group (lecture) settings, in smaller (tutorial) groups, in writing (in what were formally termed "essays" and "exams" in the institutional setting but were in reality incorporated as part of the research process). The telling of social stories in a shared group setting as well as their analysis in this group environment enables participants to recognize patterns of experience which help to locate the individual in history and in social structures. Participants were asked to write a story in which they experienced themselves as "raced" or "gendered"; these are quoted in this article as "Race Stories" and "Gender Stories."

The research method also contained mentoring and teaching components as participants were exposed to secondary literature on race, class, and gender, much of which employed qualitative, storytelling techniques. In this way participants were given both conceptual tools and research tools which enabled them to sift through the events of their lives and begin to make meaningful choices about how to interpret those events and about which of these they regarded as significant enough to want to insert into an account of their lives. For this reason many of the stories contain an analytical as well as a narrative dimension.

This is in fact not a particularly uncommon feature of conventional research processes. Research subjects frequently report that the process of answering a questionnaire "got me thinking" and that the answers they gave on the particular day of the interview would not be the same answers they would give some days, weeks, or months later, partly because the process of being researched provoked them to think about themselves or their lives in ways that they had not previously done or had not done for many years. The difference is that it is difficult to capture this evolving thought process by using conventional research methods.

Finally, the invitation to participants to tell their stories had nothing to do with assuming that they are in possession of an objective interpretation of "what really happened" which they then make available as research material. As we all know, "individuals twist and turn, reinterpret and falsify, repress and forget their experiences in pursuit of a construction of their personality to which the past has to be subordinated" (Haug 1992, 20). What Haug does with this so-called problem of subjectivity is to suggest that it is precisely the object of our research. The ways in which people "alter, falsify and distort their everyday world and why" is clearly part of their identity. We construct narratives of our lives in such a way that the contradictions are ironed out at least in our own minds and memories. Haug suggests, then, that what we can investigate is not "how it really was," but how individuals construct, change, and reinterpret their identities and what benefits they derive from so doing. "In short, we can explore how they inscribe themselves in the existing structures"(Haug 1992, 20-1). It is in fact only by examining subjective memories, then, that we can achieve the aim of trying to make sense of the way in which "everyday life is analyzed in such a way that individuals reproduce society as a whole over and over again" (Haug 1992, 20-1). As with Lacan, the aim is to bring the historical process of social and political change into connection with an account of the making and remaking of subjectivity.

RACISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF WHITE MASCULINITY

> White men's masculinities . . . are constructed not only in relation to white women but also in relation to black men . . . Similarly, it is impossible to understand the shaping of working-class masculinities without giving full weight to their class as well as their gender politics . . . . To understand gender, then, we must constantly go beyond gender. (Connell 2001, 37)

> In South Africa I have had an exclusive upbringing that has been predominantly white. I have been to schools that had black people but very few and I had mostly white friends. This is how I see myself in the world. When I go to town or lectures because I am a white middle-class male I don't care what I look like, nor do I care for the beggar on the street. When I see a wrong I blame it on a black person yet I do not think of myself as racist. I think it is impossible not to think of myself as superior although I know it is wrong. Up till standard five, I had a garden boy called Lazarus and he was my friend, yet I treated him as my property although he was older than me. (Paul, exam 2003)

For most of its history, dominant South African masculinity has been white masculinity and white masculinity has been racist masculinity. With the coming to power of Afrikaner nationalism in 1948 a specific version of white masculinity was also in the process of being forged as hegemonic. Du Pisani has argued that hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity was "essentially puritan in nature" (2001, 158). Its dictates included an "unyielding Protestant

view" based on "rigid austerity and strictness in conduct and morals" combined with "heterosexuality and political conservatism" (Du Pisani 2001, 159). Afrikaner nationalism constructed a dominant form of white masculinity in direct contrast to black masculinity. Black men are called "boys," white employers refer to black employees as "my boy," the black gardener is "the boy." In this discourse of racist masculinity white men are men because they are not boys and black men can never be men because they are boys.

The idea of hegemonic masculinity signals the fact that at any given social moment, some men are in a position to impose their particular definitions of masculinity on others in order to legitimate and reproduce the social relations that generate their dominance. The concept also provides the important insight that although large numbers of men benefit from an unequal gender order, they do not benefit equally. Given the political and economic dominance of western cultural norms, middle-class, white, heterosexual masculinity is, in many societies, the marker against which other masculinities are measured (Pease 2000, 32). In South Africa, white men held state power for fifty years, and this political dominance was associated with the hegemony of a particular form of (white, puritan, Afrikaner, heterosexual) masculinity. To ask to what extent this has changed is to hint at a complex story about the tentativeness of hegemony, of how it both constructs and is constructed in the scripts of individual social actors, and of how it can mutate and lag at the same time.

Frosch attempts to offer an account from psychoanalysis of how "Otherness" operates in the "subjective geography of the racist psyche." Traditionally, the argument proffered by psychologists for how black people "in general" can come to represent the "Other" in the white subject's struggle for identity is one in which irrational, defensive processes are at work: "The paranoid nature of racist thinking is apparent in conspiracy theories and fantasies of being flooded by waves of immigration or of being infected by immigrant-borne diseases, or poisoned by alien foods, smells and culture—fantasies present only just below the surface in the discourse of many" (Frosch 2002, 63).

As Michael Rustin points out, racial categories are useful precisely because they are fundamentally empty categories:

> Virtually no differences are caught by "black" or "white" . . . This is paradoxically the source of racism's power. It is the fact that this category means nothing in itself that makes it able to bear so much meaning—mostly psychologically primitive in character—with so little innate resistance from the conscious mind. (1991, cited in Frosch 2002, 63)

The empty categories of race remain a currency that is much traded and exchanged in postapartheid South Africa. Far from simply eliminating racism, the transition from apartheid has created the conditions for the

flourishing of defensive racism. The postapartheid moment is one in which many white South Africans are experiencing real or assumed losses: of power, of status, of economic, social, and political advantage. As Kovel argues, it is at those moments and in those spaces where identity is most under threat of dissolution that it most needs its defense against Otherness provided by racist ideology. The racist needs the Other as a repository of all that she or he has lost and fears losing further (cited in Frosch 2002, 107).

While hegemonic South African masculinity under apartheid was racist white masculinity, it is also important to point out that dominance is never total or complete. Even in the context of apartheid there were many different masculinities which were involved in processes of contestation with the politically and militarily dominant white Afrikaner form (see for example, Morrell 2001). In the contemporary period, the new political and social dispensation in South Africa is mirrored by larger changes—globalization, economic restructuring, the positioning of men as consumers, changes in family structure, and feminist, gay, and postcolonial political counter-discourses. Together these have provided the conditions under which shifts in the dominant forms and constructions of masculinity might be anticipated. While elements of the previously hegemonic Afrikaner nationalist idea of what it is to be a man remain influential, the transition period has created a much more fluid situation in which the precise outlines of the hegemonic norm are difficult to distil. A rhetoric of gender equality along with a set of institutions and practices which foreground women's rights have taken occupation at the center of the state's new gender discourse. At the same time liberal rights talk coexists with material practices which perpetuate a sexual division of labor and an overarching violent and unequal gender order.

As Robert Morrell has pointed out, in a transitional society, "the question of which discourse is hegemonic is a complex one" and "struggles over masculinity are ceaseless" (2001, 25). Morrell argues that white masculinity is "formerly hegemonic" but that now, urban black and rural African masculinities are "jostling for ascendancy" (Ibid.). In many senses this is to oversimplify, however. For one thing, there is no singular white masculinity that can easily be pointed to. Ethnicity (English- versus Afrikaans-speaking) as well as class are deeply implicated in constructs of white masculinity. Moreover, there are large areas of overlap between black and white conceptions of generic maleness. Both, for example, would include heterosexuality, sexual prowess, courage and strength in their armory, and both would define themselves in opposition to that which is perceived as the "feminine."

Finally, it may be that Morrell underestimates the power of whiteness and middle-classness to continue to control the hegemonic center even in the transitionary context. In a higher learning environment—where the masculine norm is constructed around notions of the rational, competitive individual—dominant white heterosexual men continue to be very obviously in the privileged position of never having to think about their gender, race, or

sexuality. In contrast, black men report feelings of inadequacy about their intelligence, of having to reinvent their style of dress, mode of speech, and relationships to women—essentially of having constantly to be aware of themselves as in the process of construction while white men experience themselves in the privileged position of being "free to be me."

> I am unshaven and wearing slippers [in an exam]. Why? Because I can and I am comfortable in my identity because I know I am beholden to nobody to tell me what to do. When I look at lower class whites on the streets or in town, I can detect they do not belong even though I may be dressed worse than them. But I immediately turn away in disgust. (Ray, exam 2003)

Richard Majors, in his study of black masculinity and sports, refers to what he calls "cool pose" as a set of lifestyle behaviors "often developed and used by black men as a response to the limits that institutionalized racism places on their other opportunities for self-expression" (Majors 2001, 209). Majors argues that the construction of conspicuous styles of demeanor, speech, gesture, clothing, walk, stance, and handshake help to "offset an externally imposed invisibility." This "cool pose" is essentially a survival strategy, an attempt to carve out an alternative path to achieve the goals of dominant masculinity (pp. 211-2). Participants in the present study discussed the possibility that the inattentiveness of dominant white males to their clothing or appearance is a mark of their social power. They assume, and expect others similarly to assume, that they occupy positions of social privilege and status. They do not need the outward accoutrements of style to prove the point. In contrast, black males entering what they experience as a "white" middle-class environment feel the need constantly to affirm their middle-class status and the legitimacy of their presence. They do so in part through their dress.

> I am a black male who went to a public school. When I first came here to university where the majority of people are middle class and white it was a very different situation to where I came from where the majority of people are black. I was allocated a room in a residence where many of the students were white males from private schools. I started to realize that here people are preoccupied with how others perceive them, what kind of clothes you are wearing and so on. There is so much pressure and people are confirmed by many things, for example, what kinds of shops you buy from. (Mvuso, exam 2003)

> At home I had no particular significant fashion taste, be it for clothes or hair. Once I got to university I realized a world where black students wear brands that are popular and vogue hairstyles like dreadlocks. I then started to buy expensive brands . . . . (Phila, exam 2003)

In contrast to the characteristic attention to questions of style, self-presentation, and clothing paid by black men in the study, many of the white participants appeared to take a certain pride in their slovenliness, often without

quite realizing why. The right to be unkempt emerges as a privilege which those occupying black bodies can seldom attain. To be black in a predominantly white middle-class intellectual environment is to occupy a curious dual space of hypersurveillance and invisibility. Black professors and students on campus report routinely being mistaken for messengers or workmen—impostors in the world of academia and intellectual work of one kind or another. Moreover, while white bodies occupy the unconscious norm, black people are also engaged in a process of mutual surveillance in which complex codes operate to signal to one another not only class and origin but also ideology. In this context, it is not surprising, then, that for black men questions of style and dress emerge as important while for dominant white men absence of style is, ironically, a mark of status. Indeed, to be too conscious of style or clothing places the occupier of a heterosexual white body under suspicion.

> Now my gender to me doesn't seem strange. I dress how I like and feel. Like open sandals with trousers which I'm told by other people is a definite no-no. I wear glasses that are not plain but trendy. I like to look good. This is normal to me but to other people like in the science departments I am a feminine dresser or a girlie boy because their dominant discourse is one where a man should walk barefoot, drink a lot of beer and go fishing. Although I like fishing they assume I don't. Just because of the way I look and dress I can't possibly fish therefore I am strange. So my time here has been a time of feeling alienated. I couldn't understand why people still judged others. I am forbidden from certain parties—and from fishing. (David, exam 2003)

These processes demonstrate very vividly the ways in which the political is also personal. They provide the backdrop against which we can understand specific manifestations of masculinity and the racialized contestation that takes place for membership in high-status versions of masculinity. The remainder of this paper is concerned with one such high-status version of masculinity which it terms "rational-intellectual man." It argues that the contest over who qualifies for this as with other versions of high-status masculinity is heavily influenced by the broader racialized context.

STUDYING TO BE MEN

> He is a man and he is proud. He believes in strength, keeping one's problems to oneself, and he has no problem with using force. He despises weaknesses and "feelings" and emotions which are not necessary. He does not like effeminate males. They annoy him very much. A man should be strong and should act like a man. As a "strong" man, he does not fear those who he considers weaker. He respects men who are strong, who can handle pressure and cope with difficulties. He believes himself to be one of those people. He can't overemphasize how much he admires strength. This is what he tries to defend. He sees a seemingly unending attack on "strength" (or the ideas behind it) across the world.

> He tries to be as strong as possible, in the face of criticism from a world that glorifies weakness. He tries to be a man, a man who understands the danger in carrying such a belief too far, but a proud, strong man nonetheless. He is merely reacting to a world that seeks to destroy him and his beliefs. He is a man, and that is what a man does: defends his beliefs and what he cares for. (John, 2004)

There are many compartments within the broad category of powerful masculinities. One such compartment is that of the middle-class educated man who gains his approbation as a man not from physical labor or sporting prowess, but from intellectual dexterity and mental strength. Rational-intellectual middle-class masculinity is constructed in contrast to versions of dominant masculinity which rely more on physical than on intellectual muscularity. The core precepts of dominant masculinity remain present but are expressed through different means. In this compartment of dominant masculinity, strength, control and reliability are manifested through career success, manners and deportment, self-confidence in verbal expression, effortless academic achievement, and estrangement both from the feminine world of the body, emotionalism, and feelings and from the workaday world of manual labor. On this terrain, which has historically been occupied and controlled by white men and white masculinity, black men find themselves competing on highly unequal terms.

The channeling into different streams of dominant masculinity—to put it blandly, into "jock" or "swot"—begins, as many commentators have pointed out, at school, where those who are seen as in the top academic set are singled out for differential treatment, shaping a particular middle-class version of "academic masculinity" defined by an emphasis on individualism, intensified peer competition, sporting excellence, personal ambition, and overt careerism. Very few actual men perfectly or effortlessly embody this norm—for most the mantle of legitimacy which it confers comes at a price.

> Success, so difficult to gauge. Especially as a boy or rather man in a modern world. Success is expected of you, especially when your father was successful, is successful. He pushed and pushed and urged success onto me. Nothing was ever good enough for my father. Not five A's, nor my first team rugby jersey, not even being head prefect of my school. I often wished I was not at an all-boys school where things mattered so much. I wished my life was different, without the expectations of what ambitious, successful men should be. (Paul, 2004)

For those seeking membership at the dominant core of this version of masculinity, outsider status can arise from doubts about a man's intellectual prowess in much the same way as those who are "bad at games" can quickly be alienated from a different ("jock") version of dominant masculinity.

> From an early age I remember my father always saying to me "work hard and play hard." He always encouraged me to play sport like rugby. I see him as a real man's man, last of the great white hunters. Now although I played rugby at

> school, making first team eventually I never really got into it like the others. Like at warm up for example, they [my teammates] would become all aggressive and I would laugh because of the absurdity of it and how funny they looked . . . I am heterosexual and I feel I have a balance of emotions which let me enjoy the things I like. I have gay friends and straight and have been accused of being gay more than once. At school boys had to have short back and sides and dress neatly, and always play contact sports. This seemed strange to me so after school I went in search of my own identity. I went overseas, I think because of the stereotypes which said if I was not part of the rugby, private school, group mentality then I must be strange and a loser. (David, exam 2003)

David attributes his rejection of a potentially powerful place in the halls of masculinity, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, to his dyslexia which meant that he was regarded by his parents and peers as disqualified from the "normal" middle-class route: "you know, once you leave school, you go to university." His parents did not expect him to follow this path: "purely because of my dyslexia . . . so they said 'why don't you get a job where you can use your hands' and that infuriated me and that's probably why I left—to do this all by myself" (David, interview 2003). David's dyslexia threatened to disqualify him from earning the all-important middle-class badge of rational intellectualism. In response, he determined to earn a university degree to retain his claim to middle-class intellectual masculinity which presents the ideal man as the rational quick thinker rather than conceding to the devalued path of manual laborer.

In the same way as David faced potential exclusion from this form of dominant masculinity, because of the ways in which race has historically been constructed, black men find themselves at a particular disadvantage when contesting their exclusion from those forms of hegemonic masculinity based on intellectual prowess and rational individualism. In South Africa, schooling was racially segregated with very deliberate ideological intent. Apartheid planners made it quite clear that the objective of black schooling was to prepare black people for useful participation as low-status functionaries in the white-owned economy. Black pupils were considered ill-suited to abstract subjects such as mathematics, and resources were massively skewed in favor of white schooling. Schooling then, has always been about much more than simply a process of acquiring knowledge of school subjects. While schools are by no means the only locations where young masculinities are created and contested (other social and cultural sites include the family, labor markets, media representations, cultural technologies and the legal system), Haywood and Mac an Ghaill suggest that contemporary schooling is perhaps "the most strategic site, as it offers a condensed range of experiences in a sustained and mandatory fashion" (2003, 80). For many middle-class South African boys, it is through the immersion in the single-sex private school milieu that their masculinity is most profoundly and indelibly drawn.

> School was a big influence in identifying with my gender and class in particular. Being at an all-boys boarding school, discipline was very aggressive and occurred within the classroom and without; by teachers, peers and elders. It seemed as though it (discipline) was a source of entertainment because by doing the slightest thing wrong you would be met by a smiling teacher wielding a cane. Nightly lashings by fag masters were not uncommon and became almost part of the daily routine. I remember being told once to "shut up . . . it's character building." In my opinion, it felt more like character breaking. To this day I do not ask questions in lectures because of being shut down and shouted at, at school. (Peter, exam 2003)

The objective of black schooling in contrast, was to prepare the black child for certain forms of manual labor as apartheid ideologue Hendrik Verwoerd explained in his justification for the introduction of "Bantu Education" in the 1950s. These stark racial inequalities in schooling which touch teaching, curriculum, facilities, and ethos continue to exist in the present period. The content of the black male experience in the government school system is therefore very different to that of the private, historically predominantly white middle-class school, having distinct raced and classed as well as gendered dimensions.

> Growing up as children we were taught to behave like men. At school we were given heavy manual work such as preventing soil erosion and building dams. It was claimed that these duties would make us strong men of the future. (Thami, exam 2003)

For those black men who are defined as academic successes at school, a particular form of masculine power is on offer, through access to higher education, entry into the professions, and a secure place in the middle class or better. However, black men from poorer government schools who are the academic stars of their school environment frequently find themselves marginalized and potentially disqualified from embodying rationality and intellectualism upon entering racially "mixed" environments where racialized patterns of reasoning entail the hierarchical privileging of whiteness.

> I feel uncomfortable even in tutorials because of having internalized an ideology that black people are stupid and they do not think as a white person. Although there is talk of a rainbow nation there will always be a great divide between black and white. (Sizwe, exam 2003)

> White people set the standards. That is why they always excel at everything. For instance, my friend is doing Pharmacy and he once got 97 percent in chemistry and the white people could not believe that he got this mark. It is because they think it is only they who can reach these standards that they have set for themselves. (Ayanda, exam 2003)

> My gender story depicts me as superior compared to women but my race experiences indicated that I was inferior to other people (whites). I was victimized and terrorized on many occasions by white people because of my race. On

> starting at university I became aware of how I was different from other people who belonged to different races. The feeling of inferiority grew within me particularly because every time I was walking along I would come to a group of white Afrikaners who used to tell me about my blackness and the fact that [their university] was no place for baboons. (Sizwe, exam 2003)

Almost by definition black manhood is disqualified from occupying a position of dominance in a masculinity defined primarily by intellectual prowess, as Fanon has so powerfully described:

> Negroes are savages, brutes, illiterates . . . It was always the Negro teacher, the Negro doctor . . . I knew that if the physician made a mistake it would be the end of him and all who came after him. What could one expect, after all, from a Negro physician? As long as everything went well, he was praised to the skies, but look out, no nonsense, under any conditions! The black physician can never be sure how close he is to disgrace. I tell you, I was walled in: No exception was made for my refined manners, or my knowledge of literature, or my understanding of quantum theory." (Fanon 1992, 225)

Black men have historically been denied access to the full range of privileges of control, authority, and power accorded white men. This is likely to give rise to specific forms of contestation, resistance, and accommodation as these men encounter the raced and classed nature of hegemonic (white, middle class) masculinity. But in attempting to give content to the idea of a subordinated "black masculinity" we need to take care to avoid a totalizing oversimplification. Kopano Ratele argues that with the borders and practice of black masculinity closely policed there is an urgent need to surface varied blacknesses and masculinities as a liberatory project: "In other words, there is a need to reveal the available repertoire of gendered and African stylistic options that are, or should be, open to every African male and female in South Africa" (2001, 244). Whitehead (2002, 195) similarly has pointed out that it is important to problematize the notion of a singular black masculinity, not least because this idea suggests "natural" or essential differences between black and white men: "As with all subjects, black men materialize with multiple bodies, not one." The black male body may appear singular, as might its expression of masculinity, but it is multiplied and complicated by class, age, sexuality, disability, history, nationhood, and culture. Morrell, for example, argues that we need to make a distinction between rurally based African masculinities and urban-based, oppositional masculinities, as they historically emerged from and were sustained in different settings (2001b, 153).

Nevertheless, dominant discourses, precisely by virtue of their dominance, are powerful in their ability to frame the terms of reference within which marginalized subjectivities are formed. Hooper (2001, 72) points out that the twin themes of effeminacy and pathological deviance recur in the delineation of subordinate masculinities, with a racist colonial discourse positioning indigenous men either as effeminate and therefore deviant or

hypersexual—and therefore deviant. The interplay of gender with other structures such as class and race creates further relationships between masculinities. In an institutional and social setting in which white middle-class men predominate in positions of power and in which "whiteness" occupies the privileged position of "normal," black masculinity by definition occupies a marginal status.

> I grew up having in my mind that a man must have a deep voice, be strong and should not be controlled by women . . . . Growing up we were forced to deepen our voices when we spoke as a sign of manhood but when I arrived at university I felt very ashamed when I found people speak with low, soft voices. So I had to acclimatize with the new environment in order to fit in. (Thabo, exam 2003)

White middle-class men evincing the characteristics of dominant masculinity find much in a social institution such as the university that is continuous with their school experience—single-sex residences, sport, academic classes, drinking and girlfriends.

> He had been to boarding school but it was an elite private school. Although there were plenty of black people they had always been in a minority and had never seemed a threat as it were. Now he didn't know what it would be like living somewhere where his race was a minority…. His fears and worries turned out to be totally unfounded. Life in [his university residence] turned out to be very much like life in boarding school. White boys seemed to be the only ones who really stuck together. There was no black "popular group" which everyone tried to fit in with. Instead, he ended up having the same color friends, and ran around the residence getting drunk and having fun as if he owned the place, just as he would have had he been in a predominantly white residence. (Race stories, April 2004)

In contrast, black men frequently comment on feeling the need to change themselves in some way on entering this environment. This perceived need is either accepted and the change undergone with the attendant pain that capitulation or accommodation entails, or consciously rejected and the consequences of difference then need to be negotiated and adapted to. As Robert Morrell has commented, "There are powerful integrative forces at work in South Africa [whose] influence in racial terms at present is primarily felt in the middle classes" (2001b, 154).

> I am a thirty-two year old male. I was born in a rural area, just a few kilometers outside town. Like any young male in Lesotho I have been made to believe that males do certain things, like working in the fields, looking after the cattle, attending circumcision school at a certain age and later getting married are all part of being male in a remote village in my country. (Tshepo, exam 2003)

In a country deeply divided by social boundaries of all kinds including racial, class, ethnic, and rural-urban, the precise content of the norm or

hegemonic form of masculinity changes vastly with context. Those whose life's trajectory takes them across barriers of geography and class are required to negotiate the shift from being dominant in one context to being marginal in another. Rather than being evident only in the form of large-scale political or ideological motifs, what emerges is that the feelings of dislocation provoked by integrationist pressures are experienced in terms of the minutiae—a mode of speaking or smiling, one's style of dress, or sport of choice. Experiences which are the making of a man in one cultural or social setting are a currency of little value in a world where the center is held by the private-school educated, sports-loving, beer-drinking heterosexual white man.

CONCLUSION

Despite institutional change and the influx of black students into the historically white South African universities, the majority of black students, as well as black lecturers, continue to report experiencing the "institutional culture" as profoundly "white" in its orientation. One of the challenges of the present moment is to attempt to specify the content of this "culture of whiteness" in all its variation and multiplicity and to try to understand how and why it is able to maintain its hegemony despite the wider context of political change. It is particularly difficult in this context of overwhelming dominance for various subordinated forms of masculinity to offer resistance. Nevertheless the context is not unvaried or lacking in contradiction—liberal social values, the elevation of free thought and ideas to a position of eminence in a university with a strong liberal tradition, help to create possibilities, for example, for questioning of ideas around homosexuality, racism, and sexism, so that many men in this study report seeing themselves as much more "open-minded" than they were at school or as compared with school friends who did not attend university. The context then is highly contradictory—opening up spaces for resistance and for alternative versions of masculinity to thrive but at the same time offering extreme pressure for conformity.

Male peer group networks generate many different masculinities in the sphere of education. Using ideas about what it means to be male and informed by institutional processes, male and female students legitimize and regulate meanings of masculinity. In the current South African context, which remains even ten years after the end of apartheid a transitional context, various social institutions are involved in creating the conditions under which differing meanings of maleness compete for ascendancy. Social institutions, school, university, sport, the media, and peers all provide young men with a range of resources with which to construct their masculinities. At the same time, some forms of masculinity are more socially powerful than others, not least because they are regarded as economically successful.

Norms of appropriateness are highly context-specific, so that even such minutiae as voice modulation, bodily comportment, clothing, and choice of sport or course of study need actively to be negotiated by those coming into a particular context from a different cultural and social space. The decision whether or not to undertake this process of learning is, of course, profoundly political. Some eschew it, evincing resistant styles of masculinity, some of which remain in the dominant frame of heterosexual masculinism and others of which are more challenging to the core dominant norms, for example in the case of profeminist or gay men. Others embrace it, no doubt as a strategy for gaining access to the perceived and evident privilege of dominant masculinity, but at the same risking other forms of social condemnation—as is seen in the label of "coconut" (black on the outside, white on the inside) which serves socially to sanction those black men who succeed in evincing the norms associated with dominant white masculinity.

To be "male" is thus to occupy multiple discursive universes. For all its parading as inherently tough and impermeable, the exoskeleton of dominant masculinity is itself a highly fragile, contextually contingent, ambivalent social construction. The question to ask then is how it comes to be represented as stable, unitary, and fixed in meaning in the lives of particular men (Mac an Ghaill 1994, 9). Hegemonic masculinity is produced not only discursively but also materially and institutionally, for example in relation to schooling, sport, and clothing. Individuals therefore negotiate their identities in relation to practices and relationships informed by the range of gender models on offer. But these various models are not on an equal footing with one another: "The more that individual men publicly identify with hegemonic masculinity, or collaborate with such public images, the more they help to boost their own position" (Hooper 2001, 56). Rather than the existing hegemonic norms of masculinity "coming to blows" with new forms of (once) subaltern masculinity, there are, therefore, large incentives as well as deterrents in place which both push and pull individual men towards compliance with hegemonic norms. In this sense, large-scale political processes are experienced also as personal narratives. There is no doubt that young men recognize very clearly the requirements of hegemonic masculinity and experience painfully the costs of rejecting its tenets in whatever form. Contestation or "coming to blows" thus seems less likely than accommodation, which raises serious doubts about characterizing the current period as unproblematically or wholly transformative or even, less ambitiously, "transitionary."

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