

Hegemonic and shamed masculinities: Implications of traumatic historical impacts on black men in a post democratic South Africa

Abstract

The landscape of post-Apartheid South Africa is characterised by high levels of male perpetrated violence against women, children and other men with blame often attributed to victims rather than perpetrators (Hayes & Abbot, 2016). The aberrant behaviours and attitudes of men (also referred to as toxic masculinity) has been central to the notion of a so-called contemporary 'crisis in masculinity' with violence and risk taking behaviours (alcohol, substance abuse, sexual risk taking) embedded in male culture. While previous explanations of the 'modern day crisis' among men can be largely attributed to South Africa's history of violent and traumatic struggles of domination over place, ideology and bodies, there is a paucity of work theorising this crisis from a socio-historical and psychodynamic trauma paradigm. In this vein, this paper delves into key periods of our history (referred to as 'chosen traumas') that have had persistent disruptive influences on particularly, black masculinity, which have collectively contributed to the modern day crisis. Our argument relies on the idea that unresolved historical traumas have a transgenerational 'haunting' effect on contemporary identities (Gordon, 1997; Layton, 2019). Focusing on black men who were subjected to a violent and repressive past, we have argued that ghosts of the pre-Apartheid to post-Apartheid modern day South Africa continue to have cumulative impacts on the black male psyche. It is suggested that these past traumas, together with contemporary representations of black masculinity, have led to a deep sense of unresolved shame, the dynamics of which we have attempted to

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illuminate using psychodynamic and masculinity theory. The paper concludes with some recommendations on dealing with unresolved traumas and violence.

Introduction

"All the rage and trauma woven into their DNA ..." (Thandi Ntuli, *Setting the tone for exile*)

The subject of men and masculinities in South Africa has been gaining increasing attention within feminist and gender studies (see Morrell, 1998; Morrell et al, 2012). This attention has been driven, in part, by the recognition of the interconnections between masculinities and femininities and the manner in which historically situated masculinities are connected to the troubles of men in modern day South Africa (Morrell, 2001; Xaba, 2001). Most of this conversation refers to black men¹.

The central thesis of men being "in trouble" (Viljoen, 2008) with codes of masculinity based on risk-taking, lack of help-seeking behaviours and health related problems (le Grange, 2004; Lindegger & Durrheim, 2003) might be seen as a manifestation of contemporary responses associated with processes of social change (Walker & Stephenson 2010). Violent behaviours (interpersonal and or self-inflicted forms of violence), readily associated with masculinity in a contemporary South African context, might also be considered associated with such "troubles". In this regard, Ratele and Suffla (2008) assert that the high levels of male perpetrated violence against women, children and other men can be attributed to the reproduction of sex and gender-based hierarchies.

In our context, violence has also taken on distinctly racialized connotations and has come to be seen, particularly, as a problem of black men (Buiten and Naidoo, 2016; Langa, Kirsten, Bowman, Eagle and Kiguwa, 2020). Yet such racialized representations of violence tends to neglect a deeper analysis of the phenomenon. Superficial racialized representations neglect an analysis of the localised and historically contingent discursive formations that link violence to race and gender in a way that exposes complex embedded historical, social and psychological dynamics (Morrell, 2007).

The confluence of these influences has resulted in South Africa having one of the highest incidences of reported rape in the world, with over a million rape cases reported in a year (Statistics SA, 2018). Moreover, the high level of tolerance of rape, with coercive or economically exploitative sex in many of communities, has translated into blame often being attributed to victims rather than perpetrators (Hayes & Abbot, 2016).

¹ The term 'black' is a racialized classification of people according to skin colour that was used by the socio-political system of Apartheid. The term, African, is used in an ethnic sense to denote indigenous black people living in South Africa during the colonial and pre-colonial period.

Morrell (2001) has argued that the “crisis” in masculinity in post-apartheid South Africa was shaped by the historically interventionist nature of the racist state and subsequent post-apartheid occurrences (i.e., disillusionment and resultant behaviours associated with a democratic state that could not fundamentally alter the persistent and insidious effects of poverty and economic inequality). From this point of view, it could also be argued that the “crisis”, largely a product of systemic violence (economic, social and political) and historical trauma, has left indelible inscriptions on the male psyche².

Even though debate concerning how masculinities respond to social change are complex (Morrell, Jewkes, & Lindegger, 2012; Buiten and Naidoo, 2013), the notion that masculinities *are responding* and that identities are sites of perpetual contestation is an important consideration; it recognises the variability of masculinity, its complex hierarchies and the ongoing project of meaning-making as competing versions of masculinity are reproduced and revised (Govender, 2011). In this vein, the current paper offers an account of black masculinities that have been impacted by many historical events in South Africa. It explores masculinities as a socio-historical project through different epochs in the South African landscape that includes the colonial period, through to apartheid and post-apartheid contemporary South Africa. The paper claims that discourses of race, class and masculinities are tied to our socio-historical context, particularly Western notions of morality, industrial capitalism, apartheid and post-apartheid social conditions; all appear to have had a hand in producing protracted identity struggles in men who are faced with social change in a changing gender landscape during contemporary times. It is asserted that black men bore the brunt of and systematic brutalisation through these periods (physical, structural and economic) are also seen to face particular challenges in responding to these wider social processes of change in modern day post-apartheid South Africa³. The paper isolates various epochs that appear linked to particular traumas that have impacted future generations.

Although much has been written about the transgenerational effects of trauma (for example, Layton, 2019; Apprey, 2014; Bodnar, 2004; Faimberg, 2005; Gentile, 2014; Gump, 2010; Gordon, 1997), this paper attempts to isolate particular impacts on black masculinities and explores putative underlying structural and psychological dynamics that may assist in moving us closer to understanding specific drivers of this modern

² The ‘modern day crisis of masculinity’ theme has not been spared criticism because of its tendency to depoliticise historical aspects of masculinities while casting current disruptive social processes associated with the challenges of patriarchal power as being problematic to all men (Morrell, Jewkes, & Lindegger, 2012). The ‘crisis’ discourse has also at times been used to turn back the gains made by women as a result of their feminist struggles (Kimmel, 1995). This paper instead uses the term ‘crisis of masculinity’ in a historical sense and within the context of prevailing gender inequalities.

³ While it can be said that both black men and women suffered through historical different regimes that has characterised our colonial and post-colonial history, the focus on black men is viewed as a point of entry to understand the relationship between masculinities, violence, the subaltern status associated with race and the psychodynamics of trauma.

day crisis. Of particular interest, this paper employs an interdisciplinary framework that focuses on the interplay between the social historical and personal registers of experience and explanation drawing on aspects of masculinity theory and subjectivity as well as psychoanalytic theory.

Theoretical concepts: masculinities, subjectivities and psychoanalytic insights

There is an extant literature on documented effects of historical trauma. However, most of this literature privileges psychological or psychiatric models of pathology that centre around immediate family rather than sociocultural and historical contexts (Gottschalk, 2003). Historical trauma is defined as cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations (Brave Heart, 2003). It is the legacy of numerous traumatic events that a community experiences over generations and encompasses the psychological and social responses to such events (Brave Heart, 2000). In exploring socio-historical traumas, we draw on the notion of hegemonic masculinity, disrupted subjectivities and the putative role that unconscious processes play in contributing to a particular kind of subjecthood that has translated into violent expression.

Hegemonic masculinities and disrupted subjectivities

In exploring “disrupted subjectivities” in the lives of black men, historical or cumulative trauma can be understood as an outcome of a configuration of practices coalescing around power, gender, class and race as they occurred through particular periods of our history. In asserting the centrality of institutional power in the construction of identities, Raewyn Connell, the most widely cited social construction theorist of masculinity, combines a critical analysis of capitalism with a deconstruction of patriarchy, premised on the view that gender occurs as a core quality of production through the benefits men accrue through the subjugation of women (Connell, 1987). Thus, economic power is intrinsic to gender relations, and it is shored up in practices of hegemonic masculinity⁴, which serve to create the cultural capital to sustain patriarchy. Hegemonic masculinity is foremost the practice of masculinity which is considered ‘acceptable’ and the ideal, against which other less dominant forms of masculinity are measured, a cultural or social narrative of exemplary masculinity (Donaldson, 1993). Morrell (2001c), adds that the notion of hegemonic masculinity has proved particularly useful for disaggregating the modernist feminist idea that collectively all men hold the same power over women.

⁴ Hegemony is one of the central concepts used in theorizing masculinity and its oppressive forms. The term originates with Gramsci (1971), and it is used to define the maintenance of social power by certain groups, through persuasion and other means. Unlike ideology, however, hegemony invokes power by *consent* rather than by *coercion*. In 1985 Carrigan, Connell and Lee wrote a seminal paper on ‘hegemonic masculinity’ which introduced the concept that remains highly influential to this day (cf Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

In this way, hegemonic masculinity is constructed against rival (and less dominant) versions of masculinity indicating that power is exercised differentially among men and within specific configurations of the gender order. As Foucault (1980: 119) asserts, however, power “needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, [and is therefore] much more than ... a negative instance whose function is repression”⁵. From this perspective, influential groups do not simply arrive at their position because they have power; they become influential as a result of the contingent workings and, at times, tactical usages of discourses, which he conceptualized as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak (Foucault, 1994). Discourses, accordingly, are understood as shaping and constraining perceptions of reality, including understandings of ‘self’ and ‘other’. Importantly, as Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2003) point out, discourses (in this sense) become essential for understanding constructions of masculinity, where the agent is simultaneously constructed as active and also conventionalized in specific ways at particular historical moments and in particular institutional contexts.

Nonetheless, one is still left with the question of how the self (or subjectivity) carries this historical baggage and the nature of its influence on present day masculinities. Moore (1994: 115), from a poststructuralist position, writes that the thwarting of subject positions, or the “inability to sustain or properly take up a gendered subject position”, can precipitate a crisis of identity. From this point of view, the crisis is precipitated by conflictual self-representations and confusion around the social demands of such changes. Furthermore, failures (real or imagined) in the social, political and economic spheres appears inextricably linked to one’s perceived loss of power. It follows that ruptures in the perceived positive representations of self are closely linked to a consequent reactive need to reinstate a sense of power. This allows us to envision how violence is enacted as a performance in response to a reassertion of a ‘lost’ identity (Campbell, 1992). The links between loss of power and its reassertion using violence appears associated with an attempt to reverse accumulated humiliation and vulnerability linked to disrupted subjectivity. We believe the complexity of this process is usefully elucidated using psychoanalytic theory. From this perspective violence is understood not only as an attempt to assert dominance and eliminate perceived threat, it also constitutes an attempt to attack and annihilate unwanted aspects of the self.

Underlying unconscious processes

The conflicts and losses referred to above, and the disruptions to subjectivity, do not

⁵ Violence, in its numerous forms, is seen as, in part, linked to enactments of unresolved identity conflicts internalized across generations in such a way that their ‘origins’ become largely unconscious.

simply have a conscious impact on the self. There appears to be a number of implicit or unconscious processes that require consideration if we are to better grasp the deeper implications of disrupted and violated subjectivities in the South African historical context. Attending to such influences also appear essential for generating interventions that attend to the idea that cumulative historical trauma has produced a version of black masculinity that coheres around reactive states produced by oppressive and dehumanising historical contexts⁶. Psychoanalytic theory offers some useful insights regarding the continuous subjugation of subjectivities over time, as well as the processes that may account for particular outcomes or motivations. Such processes also help conceptualize cumulative trauma as an ongoing traumatising process. For this purpose, there are a number of core concepts that require some explanation. The concepts we have found useful include “normative unconscious processes”, “splitting and projection identification”, “chosen traumas” and “toxic shame”. These concepts also shed some light on how particular historical dynamics prevent “working through” and the mourning of original traumas.

Psychoanalyst, Lynne Layton (2002), argues that the inequities of societies, and the coercive ideologies that maintain them, produce narcissistic wounds in oppressed communities. Continuous “wounding” is maintained by “unconscious normative processes” (Layton, 2002; 2004) that confer power relations on social groups where certain subject positions are idealized while others are devalued. This is made possible by “splitting human capacities and attributes and giving them class or race or gender assignments” (Layton, 2006: 240) which, in turn, leads to the persistent internalization of denigrating and idealizing attributions. As Layton points out, such acts of internalization remain sites of ongoing conflict because hegemonic ideals work to split human capacities into good and bad qualities. This often leads to an implicit valuing of the ideal, generating an unconscious pull that dissociates individuals from their social history and context. Because this wounding process is “outside” the normative gaze, the trauma and conflict it causes goes unspoken but is passed on across generations (Apprey, 2014; Layton, 2002; Volkan, 2004).

In the South African historical context, although this process of subjugation employed very explicit devices and inflicted obvious trauma during apartheid, it can be argued that the “silent” workings of normative unconscious processes further impacts the social system at a deeper level. It contributes to another level of

⁶ It is important to note that we are not adopting a position that aims to pathologize black masculinities. Rather, the focus is on the confluence of sociohistorical practices of violence and trauma together with the importation of racialized discourses on violence that have produced unconscious processes that is linked to modern day identities. See previous work by the first author that has sought to problematize constructions of race, masculinity and heterosexuality among indian and black learners in schools contexts (Govender, 2011; Govender, Tucker and Coldwell, 2019).

conflict, shame and humiliation that conditions feeling, thoughts and behaviour. For this reason, identities of oppressed or marginalised groups are in constant conflict (Layton, 2006). On the one hand, they have to bear the narcissistic wounding created by implicit normative injunctions, on the other hand, they are destined to struggle and defend against such wounding.

Because identity positions are inextricably linked to culture, race, gender and so forth, assaults on identity impacts the collective, not just individuals. As Volkan (2001, 2004) points out, impingements on identity are often internalized outside of awareness as defining “ethnic markers” (Volkan, 2001). In this way, large groups carry shared representations of traumatic pasts where the group identity has suffered loss or humiliation (Volkan, 2001). In terms of intergenerational transmission, Volkan argues that unresolved attacks on group identity become unspeakable and unbearable and thus become “deposited images” passed forward to future generations. Such “chosen traumas” are reactivated by contemporary threats that are often amplified by past projections. By using the term “chosen”, Volkan is referring to the unconscious choices made to use particular wounds to “mark” the very essence of a particular group’s identity. Shortly, we isolate and explore three “chosen traumatic eras” and their associated conflicts and dynamics. All three appear to have significantly marked South African black masculine identity in particular ways that are typified by: (1) The Colonial invention of racialized bodies, (2) Apartheid humiliation and subjugation, and (3) the displacement of masculinities due to post-democratic imperatives. Although we are referring to particular eras in history, as opposed to isolating specific traumas (for example, the Sharpeville, forced removals of Sophiatown), we retain Volkan’s idea of “chosen trauma” as the putative dynamics remain similar. A focus on particular traumatic eras, as opposed to events, is more in keeping with the concept of “continuous and cumulative traumatic stress” (Stevens, Eagle, Kaminer, & Higson-Smith, 2013) where impacts cannot easily be explained by discrete occurrences.

The dynamics of white oppression that are so present in the first two periods presented below, might be understood as being organised around the projection of disowned aspects of white identity. Fanon (1956) wrote eloquently about “the psychic life of the colonial encounter” (Hook, 2004: 115) and the “desire to be white” due to its links to power and associated socio-political conditions. Alongside this, however, is the continuous traumas amassed as a result of existing in a black body. Fanon’s main argument regarding racism involved the need to use “blackness” as a scapegoat, or receptacle, for unresolved aspects of the white colonising population. In particular, this occurs through the projection of their own “savagery” and “badness” onto the black populace, thereby justifying control over the “savage” and removing guilt. A reasonable amount has been written about the use of projective identification to explain racism

and colonialism (for example, Frosh, 2013; Keval, 2018; Mintchev, 2018). A lot less, however, explores the consequences of what it means to bear such projections. Greater attention to this dynamic appears to better highlight the gravity of an ongoing traumatising process where projections not only efface the group's identity but are also forced to be borne by the oppressed group.

This underlying psychological dynamic can be usefully understood using the concept of projective identification. The concept emphasises a two-step process. Firstly, unbearable aspects of the ingroup are projected onto the outgroup. Secondly, the outgroup is manipulated, sanctioned, or restricted in a way that justifies the projected attributions. The latter appears to explain much of the implicit manipulation that acts as an additional traumatising agent.

The role of shame in this traumatizing process also deserves greater emphasis. Shame-affects encompass a range of emotional experiences including embarrassment, failure, weakness, disgrace, betrayal, abandonment, humiliation, disgrace and mortification. All are associated with threats to the social bond and to one's group identity. Shame is associated with painful self-consciousness states (Spero, 1984; Goldberg, 1989) linked to a sense of inadequacy and human deficiency in the eyes of others or the group (Wurmser, 1981; Lewis, 1971; Lansky, 2005). In healthy social systems, when shame is bearable, it acts as a social regulator of human relationships, encouraging self-control, self-correction and reflection on one's personal short comings as well as one's positioning in the group (Gilbert & Andrews, 1998; Pines, 1995; Kaufman, 2004). Although shame may trigger many different responses such as contempt, envy, embarrassment, anger and depression, violence occurs when the very existence of the self is felt to be under attack (Morrison, 1989, 1999; Gilligan, 2000).

When shame and humiliation stem from persistent attacks on aspects of group identity, it takes on toxic qualities that are internalized. Given that shame is linked to unbearable threats to a core sense of identity and belonging, it is often denied or occurs out of awareness (Lewis, 1971). Additionally, one of the core difficulties in identifying or working with shame is that groups or individuals who have been traumatised or shamed often feel "shame about shame". This leads to toxic internalized states that cannot be worked through. Given the above difficulties, it is no surprise that shame had received relatively little attention in psychological and sociological literature until relatively recently (Scheff, 2000; Lansky, 2005). Some additional points about shame and violence are worth mentioning. Helen Lewis' (1971) seminal work found that unacknowledged shame often precipitated anger and associated behaviours linked to risk-taking and violence. She thought that such experiences led to "shame-anger cycles" where experiences of anger and its expression leads to

further shame, in turn, perpetuating a cycle until shame is explicitly acknowledged. This is particularly relevant to understanding men and violent behaviour. Gilligan's (2000, 2003) ground-breaking work on shame-states in violent men convincingly demonstrates how men would rather suffer violence or act out violently than suffer vulnerable attacks to their masculinity. As Gilligan (2000: 110) puts it: "I have yet to see a serious act of violence that was not provoked by the experience of feeling shamed and humiliated, disrespected and ridiculed, and that did not represent the attempt to prevent or undo this "loss of face" – no matter how severe the punishment, even if it includes death".

Applying some of these insights to the social history of black South African men, may prove useful in illuminating the complexities of a traumatizing process as it has been passed forward across generations. Within this process, it could be argued that a sense of shame and humiliation is ever-present in the histories of black men brought about by systematic oppression and humiliation and perpetuated by unconscious normative processes and projective dynamics that, in turn, generate ongoing identity conflicts across generations.

As alluded to above, this paper formulates three "continuous traumas" that appear to have significantly marked the identities of black men: (1) The Colonial invention of racialized bodies, (2) Apartheid humiliation and subjugation and, (3) the displacement of masculinities due to post-democratic imperatives; all having their own specific implications. We consider these sociohistorical periods, through a deployment of an interdisciplinary lens of subjectivity, masculinity and psychoanalytic theory, using some of the concepts discussed above to explore putative lasting influences on the narratives of masculinity within South Africa's violent body politic. It should be noted that each of these periods are characterized by numerous events and occurrences of relevance, not all could be mentioned. Rather, those mentioned have been selected as representative prevailing themes of the time.

Colonialism and the intrusion of racialized bodies

European settlement in 1652 was characterised by a history of brutal and violent struggles for domination of African people through possession of land and military expansion inland fuelled by the desire for mineral wealth. While physical violence was the main instrument of oppression, the 'indigenous' body was configured as the symbolic and material site for the intersection of discourses of difference and otherness.

The Dutch Reformed Church in the Cape made the initial historical imprints of ideological assimilation through segregation in schools during the early settler period. Segregation was on the basis of one's position in society enshrined in the

difference between “free” children as the children of masters and the “not free”, the children of slaves. The class and social division created through a symbolic system of colour relegated the indigenous inhabitants of the Cape to the subaltern category of the primitive or “savage”. Discourses of redemption emerged through the advent of mission schools dating back to the beginning of the eighteenth century. Hlatshwayo (2000) indicated that by 1909, African learners, particularly young men, were receiving education in South African mission schools. Evangelization was the primary objective of these schools and the first generation of black elites tended to embrace, without question, concepts of civilization as defined by the missionaries and, concomitantly, the educational notions necessary for the redemption of the “noble savage.”

In commenting on the new disciplinary regime of power, Butchart (1998) asserts that the Western notion of civilization is intimately bound up with the disciplinary regime of sanitary science that marked the mid-1800s in Europe. This led to rituals around sanitary practices that took on moral and religious overtones to regulate and control the African body. The protection of this “moral” space demanded that prohibitions be set in place as a protection from corrupting influences and missionaries had formidable moral and ideological weapons to ensure this. As one interviewee in Hyslop’s study of the history of missionary schools during the 1940s and 1950s stated: “...being a good boy was paramount. Even though we may have had complaints, we never exposed them, because...you are marked as a...bad Catholic or something like that” (Hyslop, 1999: 108).

All the above narratives and the positioning of “the savage”, “the noble savages” and the “the good boy” sketch out the dominant colonial narrative of the time constructed to justify a “civilized noble cause” using “the savage” as justification for subjugation and humiliation of black people. As proposed earlier, from a psychoanalytic point of view, the splitting of human capacities in such a way (the noble and the savage) allowed the black populace to become the receptacle of white, disowned, barbaric intentions. Given the colonial intentions of the time, and perhaps due to the African oral tradition, there are few first-hand African accounts of this experience available. The implications, however, appear twofold if understood through the process of projection identification at a societal level and the work of conscious and unconscious normative processes (Layton, 2002). First, there is the subjugation and humiliation of “blackness” as a human, embodied, cultural and subjective entity. Secondly, in addition, “blackness” becomes “owned” as a receptacle for white anxieties and insecurities.

These underlying dynamics might be understood to have had particular impacts on black men. The 18th Century rise of industrial capitalism in Southern Africa necessitated conditions for the development of a massive male workforce and

introduced further forms of prohibition for African men. The notion of difference (and otherness) among white colonialists was central to creating a large black working class through maintaining discourses of race purity in order to preserve the western notion of civilization” (Matambo & Ani, 2015; Weeks, 1989). The coming together of white and black men in a common sphere with the growth of the mining industry fuelled anxieties of “blood mixing” among colonialists which precipitated conditions for the beginning of segregationist policies invoked through the concept of “race”. Skin colour became an important signifier of *difference* as “black” became synonymous with unskilled and underpaid male labour along with justifications related to poor intelligence and uncivilized behaviours, while white workers’ class and employment interests became synonymous with privilege and superiority. In addition, “race” as a “scientific” concept emerged at this time, through disciplines such as Eugenics and Physical Anthropology (Butchart, 1998). These events appeared to lay the way for associating “race” with class consciousness and associated ideological imperatives; both were key elements in constituting segregationist discourse during this period. In sum, the construction of black masculinities during this era are steeped in justifications of inferiority opposite a civilised, “scientific”, authoritative white worldview.

The nature of the traumatic acts outlined above appear best understood by the intrusive annexation of the black male body, in turn, producing a racialized body fit for colonial imperatives. Under these imperatives, the invented black male body becomes the receptacle of projected disowned aspects of “civilization” in all its forms: the savage, feared amoral sexual contamination, ignorance, disease and menial work.

The Apartheid era: legitimizing, dehumanization and the emergence of oppositional masculinities

The presence of a more dominant and interventionist state with an ambitious economic expansionist agenda and its regulating social effects was already evident in the late 1930s. The National Party which emerged victorious in the 1948 election legitimized this process through its own distinctive project of modernising racial domination (Posel, 1999). A stronger, more interventionist and regulatory state as the agent of large scale social transformation fashioned a social order where the construct of race had an all-embracing and controlling effect on the polity.

For example, the apartheid state produced a formidable armoury of regulations and prohibitions to control the practice and transaction of sex, its public representations and performances, while producing docile bodies by keeping every race in their “proper place”. However, rather than concealing and repressing the African body, it is precisely through the concept of “race” that social bodies were organised for the purpose of regulation. With the rapid scale of urbanisation of young black people, in

the 1950s, there was a need for the appropriate socialization of potentially troublesome and idle male youth. Bantu Education (1953) was an ideological expression given to apartheid policy in the arena of schooling. At its core, apartheid education structured and reproduced inequality by producing a sufficiently fragmented consciousness of subservient men to simultaneously counter colonial anxieties about expressions of unbridled black sexuality while being able to meet the labour needs of the expanding capitalist class.

A related and key instrument of control was the enactment of the doctrine of Christian National Education, a cornerstone of National Party ideology that formed the blueprint of a racialized, gendered and sexualised system of education. Niehaus (2000) provides a descriptive account of the highly regulated gendered condition of schools during the period of Bantu Education. Boys were instructed to do menial jobs that downplayed individual prowess or achievement. Sexual interaction and diverse expressions of sexuality were prohibited because of Christian puritanical agendas about sex, while ideas of sexual pleasure that had broad and public acceptance in many black communities were repressed (Erlank, 2004).

All the above regulations legitimized assaults on blackness, with a particular focus on the African male body, in turn, setting up unbearable states of systematic dehumanization and humiliation. But discourses of historical trauma invariably contain multiple ambiguous meanings, simultaneously being the site of both decimation and resistance. The rapid expansion of the education system together with poverty, resettlements, over-population, drought and unemployment in the 1970s were the main ingredients of a rising ideological challenge from the youth. The 1970s emergence of Black Consciousness (BC) was also the moment where disciplinary fabrication of the African colonial personality found its “site of rebellion”. BC emerged out of the black university campuses in the late 1960s, with Steve Biko as the founding member. Groups which utilized the school for political space were exemplified by the South African Student Organization (SASO). One of its organizing principles involved rejecting all value systems that sought to make the black man a foreigner in his own country (Shelby, 2002). Black Consciousness was essentially an inward-looking process. As Butchart (1988) puts it, through a recursive mechanism that refracted the psychological gaze through a revisionist history of the past, Black Consciousness invented the concept of Blackness as the outcome of their own subjugation and a resurgent black masculinity was at the forefront of change.

Black Consciousness rejected racialized divisions and called for a “black” cultural identity, psychological liberation from notions of inferiority, and the unity of all blacks including “coloureds” and “indians”. According to van Kessel (1993), these experiences

created a “generational consciousness” where the most prominent political activists were young unmarried men, whose social status had become marginal within the household and chieftdom. These young men, equipped with a sense of belonging to a wider struggle, asserted the need for a distinct political identity divorced from the corrupting influences of apartheid. In addition, Black Consciousness enabled the recognition that black people were suffering from an inferiority complex as a result of 300 years of deliberate oppression. However, just as the African identity had emerged under the colonialist and Apartheid era to invent the African as a dangerous and inferior individual, it was now the identity of the white bourgeois that was the source of danger, corruption and inferiority. In other words, these reactive identities served to reverse or return historical projections of hate and inferiority during this period. Importantly, however, as noted by Morrell (2001), these newly spawned black oppositional masculinities, were still entrenched in gendered roles which incorporated work and physical strength as central features of identity.

In terms of Volkan’s idea of “chosen traumas”, these were the sites around which a necessarily reactive identity could begin to cohere. In other words, reactive identities always, to some extent, remain bonded to their traumatogenic origins as a source of motivation and coherence. The implication of this is that some degree of trauma is always carried through in newly formed identities, even if it is motivated by absolute rejection of the persecutor. This often manifests in the reversal of persecutory and oppressive dynamics, where the persecuted become the persecutors. This is a common dynamic identified in psychoanalytic psychology as “identification with the aggressor” (Allyne, 2004) where it is easier and less painful to identify with the past persecutor than it is to explore and come to terms with the real impacts of trauma and humiliation.

The emergence of reactive masculine identities continued in the 1980s, while the apartheid system was collapsing on multiple fronts, including education. Mass movements such as the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) had irrevocably altered the political climate and openly advocated in terms of a “rights-based” discourse. Xaba (2001) refers to this period as a period of “struggle masculinity” associated with growing political militancy that was often linked to an anti-authoritarian position. With this, political activism was often intertwined with delinquent or criminal behaviour (ibid). In this way identity positions were often blurred and ambiguous, and political links between learners and gangs were often informal and spontaneous, and centred around their common hatred of the police and the subordination of women primarily into a reproductive and child caring role.

Drawing on the above narratives, one could argue that hegemonic masculinities depicted here were founded on past “chosen traumas” and in so doing, take on

defensive, hyper-aggressive qualities particular to the historical context and the associated traumatizing process. In other words, they are founded on reactive states in defence of past humiliation and dehumanization. While the emergence of reactive hyper masculinities might be understood to have a necessarily liberating function, its emergence against a background of unresolved trauma and reactivity appears to explain the complex and contradictory nature of these states.

In psychoanalytic terms, rejecting and disowning aspects of the self or group identity often requires a process of locating such disowned aspects in others and dealing with them vicariously. The binary dynamic between hypermasculine power and vulnerability/shame appears, in part, to explain how some of the identity struggles evident in black men manifest. Evidence of this dynamic and its manifestation in contradictory states can be found in a number of examples related to violence, sexuality and gender relationships.

For instance, oppositional politics was often accompanied with heightened paranoia of “the-enemy-within” as a consequence of increasing repressive forces of the state. People were labelled as “agents of the state” and “sell-outs” that led to corresponding gruesome and excessive displays of violence (Marks, 2001). In many of these cases it appears that threatening or vulnerable community members were scapegoated as a means of managing and attacking signs of vulnerability in the system.

Violence, in a Fanonian sense (1956, 2008), was the source of liberation of the violent subjugation of the masculinity of ‘the Native’. In this context the liberation movement occupied contradictory positions. It was simultaneously a source of dehumanising subjugation and the means of escaping subordination. In this way, overcoming the apartheid state was a site for the configuration of complex oppositional masculinities that were invoked through the enactment of specific violent practices inscribed in the panopticon of “struggle” ideology. From this perspective liberation was, in part, founded on the celebration of the capacity for personal violence as a key element of masculinity.

These contradictory states were also evident in the paradoxical treatment of sexuality within opposition politics where it was both subject to repression and simultaneously celebrated. For instance, in the realm of education, there was often a clear condemnation of the sexual exploitation of female learners by educators, while Comrade leaders were themselves entrenched in oppressive gendered discourses where women were frequently sexually exploited or simply valued for their child bearing capacities. The pro natal strategy during this period coalesced with the celebration of vivacious young heterosexual hyper-masculinities and repression of

what was considered to be “perverse” forms of sexuality (for example, homosexuality) (Niehaus, 2000). Similar contradictions were later evident more generally in the country’s adoption of a radically liberal constitution, on the one hand, but overwhelming evidence of conservative, oppressive and violent discontents towards vulnerable out-groups, on the other.

“Displaced” struggle masculinities in post democracy South Africa

Post 1994 South Africa was characterised by a sudden and intense disruption of norms and identities that was brought about by the dismantling of apartheid and adoption of a neoliberal order (Sideris, 2013). With increasing globalisation, this period was associated with the emergence of modern styled masculinities and femininities, particularly in urban settings, enmeshed within the powerful discursive regime of asserting sexual rights, acquiring commodities (cars, designer label clothes, cell phones) and the erotization of identities. Alongside this, the emergence of a public gay movement in the wake of the constitutional protection afforded to sexual orientation in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution in 1996, was emblematic of this period (Croucher, 2002). The attention to the issue of female agency was also brought into the spotlight where opportunities opened up for women’s organizations to take up issues that were outside the conventional definitions of political and state action which involved regulating and mitigating men’s power (Organizations such as Networks Against Violence Against Women and the Reproductive Rights Alliance) (Hassim, 2006).

Such changes appeared to set up a discursive complex involving traditional and “struggle” masculinities trying to re-assert control against those newly forged models of manhood. This appeared to mark the emergence and a struggle of a different order, in turn, testing the fragile foundations on which masculinity rests (Frosh, 1994). In post democratic South Africa recognition of previous struggles and their cumulative impact on masculine identity still remained unresolved and unvoiced (Mathews, Jewkes and Abrahams, 2011). Using the transgenerational model of trauma, these sociohistorical traumatogenic periods remain largely unresolved, limiting open and accessible appropriation of masculinities that are responsive to historical developments. This possibly describes the difficulties encountered in post democratic South Africa for black men, through characterisations of being displaced, once again and unrecognised. However, this cannot go without reaction, at least if understood through a psychoanalytic lens. The response, we would argue, is an attempt at recognition through the appropriation of hegemonic masculine identity positions, used to embolden and defend against vulnerabilities of persistent unresolved traumas.

This argument is supported by Moore’s (1994) notion that the thwarting of traditional African masculinity (as head of household) as a consequence of previous oppression

has rendered the cultural ideal of masculine power precarious in modern times. The intensified anxieties associated with this form of emasculation (together with importations of the racialization of violence) is offered as an explanation of the reported high levels of violence perpetrated by men in modern day South Africa. In addition, one might argue that this comes with a significant contributory historical dynamic concerning the repetition of a thwarting of an ideological or liberatory identity in the face of the demands of a new democracy. In other words, masculine identities of previous eras are yet again subjected to marginalized and displaced economic and social positions within a changing order (ibid).

Clearly such struggles for recognition in a new order did not occur in isolation of persistent features of colonialization and apartheid. Here, the intersections of class, race, gender and political dynamics make the analysis much more complex. In terms of intersectionality of race, class and gender, limited racial integration, and distinctive gendered ideals for black and white men and women further contributed to the complexity of the problem. Jewkes and Morrell (2010) assert that while white men aspired towards professional and material values and white women towards autonomy in public life, the majority of black men and women were constrained by material challenges of life associated with an underclass status. For black men, aspirations to achieve material and professional status were often untenable, which increased the likelihood of finding masculine affirmation in antisocial behaviours (criminal and misogynistic behaviours).

If one accepts the above arguments, men's inability to cope with an ascendant African feminism and a push towards gender equity, poses a threat to society that has not been without political backlash. This has taken the form of some political leaders and social commenters pointing out that gender empowerment discourses take second place to discourses of systemic racism and political patronage (see P Nutli, 2017's analysis of ANC women's league unwavering support for Jacob Zuma's during the rape trial). It has also been viewed as "against our culture" or as a ploy by white western feminists to degrade African culture while maintaining racism (Morrell & Moletsane, 2002). This backlash is also exemplified by political leaders like Jacob Zuma and Julius Malema who portray black masculinities associated with heterosexual dominance and the control of women.

From a psychoanalytic point of view, the anxieties to which Moore (1994) refers have particular persecutory and annihilatory qualities associated with humiliating assaults on black masculinity. Still further, as Layton (2004) points out, continuous "wounding" maintained by "unconscious normative processes" (Layton, 2002, 2004), make issues associated with black masculinity hypersensitive sites of self-denigration, shame and

idealization. Faced with the promise of post-democratic validation and recognition, but met with the reality of the ever-changing demands of newly forged forms of masculinity, appears to mark the re-emergence or confirmation of past annihilatory forces. As discussed earlier, because shame threatens the very existence of identities, reactive hegemonic attacks on perceived threats constitute the most viable response to the re-emergence of unresolved trauma.

Clearly, masculinities can be characterised as complex in a modern day South Africa (there is no single form and dominant masculinity that serves all men). However, it could be argued that hegemonic versions of black masculinities, subject to generations of shame, threat and humiliation, foster rigidly prescriptive ways of being a man that legitimate gender-inequitable practices. Hegemony of this kind has been associated with the normalisation of violent masculinities, the trivialisation of gender based violence, risk taking behaviours (substance abuse, alcohol abuse, HIV risk) and access to and control of women (Buiten and Naidoo, 2013, 2016).

This perspective is supported by the current South African landscape where conservative discourses of gender exist very comfortably alongside overwhelming evidence that South African women are disempowered and exploited (Gqola, 2007). Rape and other gender-based violence statistics, rampant sexual harassment at work and public spaces, might also support this claim. Such trends point to a privileging of hegemonic masculinities and an invalidation of alternative masculinities that challenge positions of dominance and its links to male entitlement and violence.

It is worth asking why women, children and 'other' black masculinities are the target of most of the 'defensive' violence being referred to here. Why are white men, as the primary protagonists in South Africa's oppressive history, not the primary targets? Although this may be linked to various external social and economic factors in South Africa, and the 'close proximity' of the ingroup, the psychoanalytic view suggests an additional perspective motivated by the propensity to attack others more closely associated with personal vulnerability. Here, 'familiar' others represent reminders of their own historical shame and vulnerability, in turn, eliciting a defensive response.

To return to our central argument in this section, it appears that recognising past assaults on black masculinities and the social disruptions brought about by post-democratic changes led to a further entrenchment of hegemonic masculinities and the continuation of a traumatising process that essentially exacerbated past historical threats to black group identity.

Conclusion

This paper has used a socio-historical and psychoanalytic lens to examine historical trauma and its impacts on black masculinity. Our argument relies on the idea that unresolved historical traumas have a transgenerational “haunting” effect on contemporary identities (Gordon, 1997; Layton, 2019). We further assert that the racialization of masculinities are embedded in deeper and implicit social-historical processes that contribute to how hegemonic aspects of masculinity are maintained across generations. Focusing particularly on black masculinity, we have argued that ghosts of the pre-apartheid to post-apartheid modern day South Africa continue to have cumulative impacts on the black male psyche. We have suggested that “chosen traumas” from three historical periods have persistent disruptive influences on black masculinities that have fuelled ‘reactive’ positions which has led to a deep sense of unresolved shame; the dynamics of which we have attempted to illuminate using psychoanalytic theory.

Interventions that attempt to address historical trauma and its impact on identity and behaviour, face formidable challenges. Often this is related to entrenched historical, social, economic and political dynamics that help drown out the real implications of historical trauma on identity. Interventions that focus on psycho-social education principles also often fail to engage the implicit and underlying perpetuating dynamics outlined in this paper. The psychoanalytic insights put forward in this paper suggest the following need to be targeted in interventions strategies: (1) the insidious and unconscious impact historical trauma on black masculinity, (2) how unresolved past ‘chosen traumas’ perpetuate an ongoing traumatizing process, (3) the link between shamed masculinity and unconscious normative processes and (4) the reactive nature of masculinity that can take on hegemonic qualities.

The above suggests that interventions need to open up spaces that facilitate thinking and expression of vulnerabilities and threats associated with hegemonic forms of masculinity. This should take the form on focusing of past assaults on masculinity, particularly through consciousness raising interventions and the use of situated historical narratives that allow for a more reflective view of shame, humiliation and their historical location. It should be noted that apartheid and colonialism has provided fertile ground for the construction of masculinity that endorsed and legitimized the use of violence in a variety of public and private contexts.

Such interventions therefore need to help uncover the nature of the ongoing traumatizing process that keeps past traumas active across generations. Drawing on psychoanalytic insights, this constitutes a drive towards the symbolic representation of “chosen traumas” rather than reacting to, or “acting out” past traumas in

hegemonic ways. Interventions of this nature should also draw on gender and cultural resources which challenge gender, race and class injustices that were likely lost in the traumatizing process and are in need to be reclaimed and celebrated.

Attempts to address shamed aspects of black masculinity require that the normative pressures placed on black men be made explicit. Proposed interventions should also provide opportunities for dis-identification of prevalent social norms while supporting processes that are likely to forge more progressive and non-violent masculinities. This approach can be criticized for its phallogocentric tendency (MacCleod, 2007) and in doing so will harm feminist goals of ending the oppression and subordination of women.

Fundamentally, however, new spaces for thinking about masculinity in familial, social and organizational realms, requires interventions that target structural factors (gender and economic) in present day South Africa that reproduce inequality (oppression) and perpetuate systems of domination and submission. In this regard, we see a broad alignment with feminist, anti-racist and anti-classist groupings in the pursuit of social justice, including the dismantling of patriarchal privilege (Morrell, 2007).

Finally, this paper has attempted to take the debate about historical trauma forward by considering masculine identities as sites of perpetual negotiation and consternation that have very real implications for action and behavior. Therefore, we advocate for interventions to focus on the impacts and implications of the subjective and historical qualities of identity. Raising awareness of the links between gender, race, class and history can be a means of facilitating access to less hegemonic and dysfunctional narratives about masculinity, transgenerational trauma and associated vulnerabilities. A *valued* approach to vulnerability (through a process of reflection and change) is what is essential here, as opposed to a notion of a fixed and unbending masculinity that denies or destroys vulnerability. An approach that embodies these imperatives aims at working through past traumas that are inaccessible to men invested in hegemonic masculine practices.

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