



The topography of masculine normativities in South Africa

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THE TOPOGRAPHY OF MASCULINE NORMATIVITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Abstract

In this paper, we examine representations of masculinity in the English-language South African print media. Using both quantitative and qualitative techniques to interrogate a large corpus (18 million words) of English-language newspaper articles on masculinity that appeared in South Africa between 2008-2014, we investigate the ways in which different South African masculine types are positioned with respect to one another in the media and examine how these positionings draw on broader tropes of gender, race and social class that circulate in South African society. Ultimately, our goal is to provide a more nuanced picture of gender/sexual hegemony in South Africa that goes beyond a simple opposition between dominant versus subordinate forms of masculinity to explore the range of competing normativities in the region. In doing so, we also aim to contribute to debates about the role of norms and normativities in the theorizing of masculinity more broadly.

Keywords: masculinity, South Africa, print media, hegemony, normativities, corpus-assisted discourse studies

Introduction

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has been a cornerstone of research on men and masculinities over the past three decades (e.g., Connell, 1987, 1995). Recently, however, Connell's formulation of the concept has come under sustained critical scrutiny. These critiques have focused primarily on two components of the theory. The first involves the way in which Connell's conceptualization maps the ideological field of masculinity, and particularly her claim that the field is buttressed by two independent axes that can be separated analytically: *hegemony-subordination*, an ideological schema internal to the gendered order that hierarchically ranks different articulations of masculinity with respect to one another, and *authorisation-marginalisation*, an external schema that ranks types of men according to other locally meaningful criteria (e.g., race, social class). While agreeing with the basic principle that an analysis of masculinity requires consideration of both of these axes, recent studies have argued that *hegemony-subordination* and *authorisation-marginalisation* are not as independent as originally claimed. Baker and Levon (2016), for example, offer convincing empirical evidence that representations of masculinity in the British press always also involve simultaneous representations of race and class, thus demonstrating how *hegemony/authorisation* (and *subordination/marginalisation*) are often linked in that context. Based on these findings, Baker and Levon (2016) argue for the importance of more in-depth investigations of the intersectional and mutually constitutive relationship between the two axes rather than an *a priori* assumption of their independence.

The second major critique of hegemonic masculinity involves the theory's somewhat simplistic and undifferentiated treatment of power. Christensen and Jensen (2014), for instance, note how Connell's formulation conflates the power that certain articulations of masculinity may have over other men (what they term *internal hegemony*) and the power associated with the maintenance of patriarchy (or power over women, i.e., their *external hegemony*). Christensen and Jensen (2014) argue that numerous studies have demonstrated that internal and external hegemony need not go hand-in-hand, since some articulations of masculinity can subordinate others while not necessarily perpetuating patriarchy (cf. Hearn & Morrell, 2012) while certain forms of subordinated masculinity can nevertheless reap a patriarchal dividend (cf. Milani, 2013; Baker & Levon, 2016). In another critique, Ratele (2014) describes how most uses of hegemonic masculinity conflate the existence of power

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3 across different levels of social organisation, assuming that “powerful” men in one sphere are
4 also powerful in others. According to Ratele (2014, pp. 38–39), this leads to:

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6 an upside-down world (Ahluwalia, 2003). In such a world, marginal masculinities
7 are mistaken for hegemonic ones. In such a world, ‘traditional/ist men’ are not
8 necessarily hegemonic, and indeed may be marginal alongside poor and
9 unemployed men, young men, gay men, and disabled men. In this world ... while
10 there are exalted hegemonic notions of masculinity, these are complicated by the
11 fact of marginalisation which characterises the lives of the majority of men’s and
12 boys’ conditions. Therefore, the best we can speak of are marginal hegemonies, or
13 hegemonies within marginality, as opposed to hegemonic masculinity *tout court*.
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16 In order to overcome this, Ratele argues for a suppler understanding of power and hegemony,
17 one that locates individuals within the full complexity of their lived experiences.

18 The upshot of these various critiques of the theory of hegemonic masculinity is that
19 while the concept has been an analytically very useful one to date, current research needs to
20 develop a more sensitive and fine-grained perspective for analysing the ways in which
21 gender articulates with other axes of social differentiation, and thus produces different and
22 often conflicting power configurations. And though this critique is relevant to a wide range
23 of ethnographic contexts, it is particularly important in South Africa, a society that has
24 undergone wide-ranging social and political upheaval in the past twenty years resulting from
25 massive attempts to realign racial and socioeconomic orders. These changes have coincided
26 with concomitant shifts in masculine gender norms, with scholars documenting a move from
27 an idealised *puritan masculinity* under the apartheid regime (e.g., du Pisani, 2001), to the
28 *heroic masculinity* of the struggle against apartheid and the early democratic dispensation
29 (e.g., Unterhalter, 2000), and the *strong masculinity* that has emerged more recently,
30 embodied in particular in the political figures of the current president Jacob Zuma and the
31 leader of the opposition party EFF, Julius Malema (e.g., Ratele, 2006, 2008). Given these
32 shifts, Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger (2012) argue for the need to reinvigorate the study of
33 hegemonic masculinities in the South Africa context. Though they recognise the problems
34 with the concept, they argue that it ‘still retains utility both for academics and activists ... [if]
35 the realms (in relation to race, class and age) and levels (i.e., global, national, or local) of its
36 use [are] specified and observed’ (p. 25). In other words, Morrell et al. do not argue for
37 abandoning the concept of hegemonic masculinity, but rather for a more fine-grained and
38 empirically nuanced analysis of its various manifestations in South Africa.
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42 In the current article, we provide a first attempt at this type of more granular analysis
43 by examining the representation of different types of men and masculinities in a large corpus
44 of South African print media. In doing so, we illustrate differentials in representational power
45 that are linked to the ways in which the media imbue certain masculinities with positive
46 values and others with negative ones. We begin in the next section with a brief overview of
47 prior research on men and masculinities in South Africa. We then go on to detail the data and
48 methods of the current analysis, before turning to a discussion of our findings and their
49 implications.
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52 **Men and Masculinities in South Africa**

53 Since South Africa’s turn to democracy in the early 1990s, there has been an upsurge of
54 academic work on men and masculinities. This growing scholarly interest has been explained
55 by some (e.g. Morrell et al., 2012) as a result of the enshrinement of gender equality in the
56 new democratic dispensation, and the concomitant emergence of discussions about crises of
57 masculinity. Of course, as feminist scholars have warned in other contexts (e.g. Johnson,
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3 1997), one should be wary of references to “masculinity crises” and other troubles in a
4 context of social transformation. However, there is no doubt that the official recognition of
5 gender equality as one of the anti-discrimination pillars of the new Constitution entailed the
6 beginning of a series of (re)negotiations of masculine norms and roles in the “new” South
7 Africa. As a large body of anthropological and sociological research has convincingly
8 illustrated, such pushes and pulls of masculinities took very different guises depending on the
9 specific context of investigation and the intersection of race, class, and age (see e.g. Sideris,
10 2005; Walker, 2005; Decoteau, 2013; Luyt, 2013).

11 Whether reproducing or contesting the *status quo*, these negotiations of masculinity at
12 the grassroots did not take place in a vacuum but happened in the context of a broader shift of
13 masculine ideals as personified by black male politicians. The first democratically elected
14 president Nelson Mandela embodied a “new” form of egalitarian masculinity that could
15 promote gender equality without for that matter being perceived as “un-African” because of
16 his heroic credentials in the struggle against apartheid. In contrast, his successor Thabo
17 Mbeki, and subsequently, Jacob Zuma typified a counter-tendency to Mandela’s gender
18 egalitarianism. Zuma in particular, epitomizes a self-styled return to “traditional”
19 masculinity, one that is unashamedly “heterosexist, patriarchal, implicitly violent and that
20 glorified ideas of male sexual entitlement, notably polygamy, and conspicuous sexual success
21 with women” (Morrell et al., 2012, p. 17; see also Oostendorp, 2015 for a multimodal
22 analysis of media representations of Jacob Zuma).

23 Obviously, it is not only male heads of state that promote through embodiment certain
24 models of masculinity. South African mainstream media also play a key role in circulating
25 specific representations of men, and thus contribute to solidifying specific masculine “types”
26 in the national imaginary. It is beyond the scope of this article to offer a comprehensive
27 overview of the research on masculine representations in all media discursive outputs such as
28 film (e.g., Stadler, 2008), advertisements (e.g., Milani & Shaikjee, 2013) and online news
29 (e.g., Disemelo, 2015). Because of the focus of the present article is on print-media, we focus
30 in this section on a few key studies on national dailies and magazines.

31 Perhaps one of the first attempts at mapping a topography of masculinities in the
32 South African print media is offered in a study of masculine ideals in the context of the
33 growing men’s lifestyle magazines (Viljoen, 2008). Through a qualitative analysis of five
34 “glossies” (Men’s Health, FHM, GQ, Maksiman, and Bl!nk), Viljoen concludes that, despite
35 attempts to appeal to a broader audience across races, the three successful magazines (Men’s
36 Health, FHM and GQ) promote a masculine ideal that is globalised, cosmopolitan, but
37 racially white. And whilst there are more vernacular masculine types promoted by the
38 Afrikaans-medium Maksiman and the mainly black-targeted Bl!nk, “the financial failure of
39 both of these magazines does seem to indicate that South African men still prefer to buy into
40 a globalised and two-dimensional image of masculinity in the form of mainstream men’s
41 lifestyle magazines, as opposed to a more authentic, vernacular image of masculinity”
42 (Viljoen, 2008, p. 336).

43 A complementary picture of the racialization of masculinities in print media emerges
44 from a qualitative analysis of selected articles from the tabloid *Sunday Times* (Buiten &
45 Naidoo, 2013), which is mainly aimed at black audiences. Despite the newspaper’s overt
46 commitment to gender equality, Buiten and Naidoo illustrate the ways in which masculinity
47 is constantly represented in conjunction with (hetero)sexual prowess and success with
48 women, who are in turn portrayed as sexual objects for the actualization of manhood (see also
49 Luyt, 2013). These problematic representations of men’s sexualities go hand in hand with
50 trivializations and even normalization of gender-based violence. This does not mean that
51 there were no alternative discourses of masculinity in the newspaper. Men advocating for
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3 women's rights were indeed given space in the tabloid but were quantitatively in the
4 minority.

5 By the same token, through content analysis of news reportage about men's health in
6 the daily *Sowetan*, which targets primarily working-class, black audiences. Khunou (2013)
7 show how such news reports promote the idea that masculinity is violent and hegemonic;
8 working class black men are generally represented in a negatively homogenous way as either
9 ignorant or avoiding health issues altogether. But it is not only black working-class
10 masculinities that are depicted in a negative light; their middle-class peers are too, as emerges
11 from a study critically investigating news representations of the so-called "new" black
12 middle-class (Iqani 2015). Here black men are problematically portrayed as "suffering from a
13 moral hollowness: they are materialistic, selfish, greedy, have betrayed the struggle, and
14 cannot be trusted with a social democracy. They are consumers, not citizens" (Iqani, 2015, p.
15 12).
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17 Read together, these studies give an indication of the pecking order of masculinities in
18 the South African print media. While white masculinities seem to be paradoxically presented
19 as the aspirational ideal in a non-racial South Africa, black men are consistently associated
20 with problems such as ill health, heterosexual gender violence, or moral decadence in the
21 context of conspicuous consumption. That being said, the qualitative nature of this
22 scholarship does not lend itself to draw definite conclusions about the political economy of
23 masculine representations and their values in the South African mediascape. It is precisely
24 with a view to offering a more comprehensive picture of the intersections of masculinities
25 with race and social class in the media that we decided to build and analyze a large corpus of
26 newspaper articles from the South African mainstream press. It is to such corpus that we now
27 turn.
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32 **Data and Methods**

33 In order to understand competing normativities in masculine representations in South Africa,
34 we make use of a mixed-method approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative
35 techniques through which we interrogate a large corpus of South African newspaper articles
36 on masculinity. To do so, we first built a reference corpus of all articles that appeared
37 between 2008-2014 in twenty South African English-language broadsheet publications, using
38 the online news database Lexis-Nexis.¹ This database contains a variety of South African
39 titles with an emphasis on quality broadsheets rather than tabloids. Most of these publications
40 belong to two of SA's leading media conglomerates: Independent Newspapers Group and
41 Avusa (TMG). All in all, the corpus is representative of English-language broadsheets
42 published in the country that target a variety of constituencies across racial, geographic and
43 social lines. Lexis-Nexis archives all types of articles in the publications, including news
44 stories, editorials, letters and arts and culture pieces. The resulting corpus contains over
45 700,000 unique articles, totalling just under 142.8 million words.
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48 In order to allow us to examine representations of men and masculinity specifically,
49 we next extracted a masculinity sub-corpus from the larger dataset. This was done by
50 identifying those articles from the full corpus that contained at least one of the search terms
51 (or their plural counterparts) listed in (1). The words in (1) include both common address
52 terms for men in South Africa (e.g., *boet*, *bro*, *bru*) and different masculine person-types that
53 exist in the South African popular imagination (e.g., *guy*, *oke*). They were chosen based on
54 our own experiences of these terms being perceived as relatively "neutral" terms of male self-
55 and other-identification and representation, and based on discussions with undergraduate
56 students at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. We did not
57 include words such as *tsotsi* (thug), which while typically male-gendered, carry overt
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3 negative connotations. By using these terms to build our sub-corpus, we are able to hone in
4 on discussions of masculinity in our dataset and explore the ways in which different types of
5 men are represented and positioned (cf. Baker & Levon, 2015, 2016). The resulting sub-
6 corpus contains approximately 90,000 articles with a total of 18.4 million words.²
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9 [INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

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11 The masculinity sub-corpus was subjected to two types of corpus-based analysis:
12 keyword analysis and collocation analysis. Both keywords and collocates provide a method
13 for identifying implicit meanings within a body of texts. Keyword analysis is a statistical
14 procedure that locates the words that are significantly more (or less) frequent in a given
15 corpus than in some other corpus. In this way, keyword analysis provides a comparative
16 measure of the “aboutness” of a set of texts (Scott, 1999), identifying what it is about their
17 lexical content that makes them in some way distinctive (e.g., Xiao & McEnery, 2005) and
18 allowing analysts to extrapolate dominant discourses within the texts (e.g., Baker, 2004b).
19 For example, in his examination of speeches made in the UK House of Lords both *for* and
20 *against* equalising the age of consent for heterosexual and homosexual sex, Baker (2004a)
21 identifies terms such as *convention*, *rights* and *human* as key in the speeches of those
22 parliamentarians who support the equalising of consent, and terms such as *buggery* and *gross*
23 *indecent* in the speeches of those who are against it. Based on these findings, Baker is able
24 to argue for the existence of distinct discourses in the *for* versus *against* corpora, with
25 proponents of changing the law drawing on discourses of human rights and equality while
26 those against it rely instead on discourses of homosexual sex as dangerous, unnatural and
27 criminal. As this example demonstrates, keyword analysis is a useful tool for identifying
28 subtle differences in the lexical profiles of two corpora, and thus the ideological and/or
29 attitudinal differences these profiles reflect.
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32 As Baker (2004b) cautions, however, keyword lists only provide an initial indication
33 of quantitative patterns of difference between texts. Interpreting those differences
34 appropriately often requires further examination using other quantitative and qualitative
35 methods. Principal among these other methods is collocation analysis, or an examination of
36 the “characteristic co-occurrence patterns of words” (McEnery, Tono, & Xiao, 2006, p. 56).
37 The idea underlying collocation analysis is that the occurrence of a particular word-form is
38 rarely, if ever, haphazard. Rather, the appearance of a particular word can often predict the
39 local appearance of another based on structured patterns of lexical and semantic preference
40 (Sinclair, 1998; Stubbs, 2009). For example, Sinclair (1998) describes how the word *budge*
41 tends to co-occur with an implied or grammatical negative element to its left (*wouldn't*
42 *budge*, *refused to budge*). This semantic preference is important because it demonstrates how
43 the putative meaning of the word (i.e., to move) is not actually what the word is used to mean
44 in practice. Instead, *budge* tends to be used to refer to those people or things that refuse to
45 move (or be moved), and to evaluate that lack of movement negatively. This negative
46 evaluation inherent in the use of the term *budge* represents the word's semantic (or discourse)
47 prosody, i.e., the attitudinal meaning that the use of a particular word conveys (Stewart, 2010;
48 Stubbs, 2009; Xiao & McEnery, 2006). Similar to keyword analysis, the semantic prosodies
49 revealed by collocation analysis (normally in conjunction with the inspection of expanded
50 concordance lines) provide an indication of the dominant ideologies operating within a
51 particular set of texts. The primary difference is one of scale: in keyword analysis, we get
52 insight into the overall structuring discourses of a corpus, while with collocation analysis we
53 can observe the discourses associated with particular lexical items. Together then, keyword
54 and collocation analysis provide a powerful toolkit for uncovering the ideological
55 frameworks that inform the texts under consideration.
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3 In the current study, keyword and collocation analysis were conducted in WordSmith
4 Tools 6.0 (Scott, 2012). Two types of keyword analysis were performed. For the first, the
5 masculinity sub-corpus (18.4 million words) was compared to the full reference corpus
6 (142.8 million words) in order to generate a keyword list for articles on masculinity as
7 compared to all English-language newspaper articles that appeared during the period. In
8 addition to this “master” keyword list, individual keyword lists were also generated for each
9 of the address terms in (1), above, by comparing only those articles containing the relevant
10 word to all articles in the masculinity sub-corpus. Generating these additional lists allows us
11 to examine potential differences in “aboutness” among articles that mention the different
12 address terms. For all keyword analyses, frequency differences between the target corpus and
13 the reference corpus were examined using the log-likelihood statistic with the p-value
14 threshold set at $p \leq 0.000001$. Following Gabrielatos and Marchi (2012), identified keywords
15 were then ranked by effect-size for analysis. For collocation analysis, DICE coefficients were
16 calculated using WordSmith’s default 5-word span on either side of the target word. In
17 keeping with Baker and Levon (2015), DICE coefficients were chosen because they tend to
18 favour medium-frequency collocates that are “content” words (e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives),
19 as opposed to other measures that favour high-frequency “function” words (e.g., log-
20 likelihood) or low-frequency words (e.g., Mutual Information scores). Finally, it is important
21 to note that, unlike previous studies of representations of masculinity (e.g., Baker & Levon,
22 2016), we intentionally avoid searching for collocates of specific demographic categories
23 (e.g., “black man”, “working-class man”). We do this so as to escape the imposition of any
24 racial or class-based interpretations, preferring instead to allow the intersections between
25 gender and other relevant social categorisations to emerge “bottom-up” from the data. We
26 return to this point in our discussion below.
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30 Results

31 *Masculinity in (Anglophone) South Africa*

32 We begin with a first keyword analysis of the entire masculinity sub-corpus. The top 75
33 keywords (as determined by the percent difference effect-size measure; Gabrielatos &
34 Marchi, 2012) are presented in Table 2.³ There, we see that articles within the masculinity
35 corpus tend to focus on three main themes, or semantic domains: sports, violence and crime,
36 and kinship. Subsequent concordance analysis of these keywords, however, reveals that the
37 terms in the kinship domain are in fact also related to the theme of violence and crime (with,
38 for example, *girl* collocating predominantly with terms like *rape*, or *male* collocating with
39 terms like *suspect*). What emerges, then, from an initial examination of keywords for the
40 masculinity corpus is a bimodal conceptualisation of men and masculinity in South Africa.
41 On one hand, there is the image of the South African sportsman, a highly salient cultural
42 figure in the local cultural imagination. Among the Sports keywords in Table 2, we find
43 names of popular rugby (e.g., *Springbok*, *Stormers*, *Cheetahs*) and football [soccer] (e.g.,
44 *Sundowns*, *Pirates*) teams, as well as terms associated with these and other sports (e.g.,
45 *wickets*, *goals*, *side*, *game*).
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53 The centrality of sports to normative articulations of masculinity has been well
54 documented (e.g., Burstyn, 1999; Connell, 1995; Messner, 1992), including in South Africa
55 specifically (e.g., Bhana, 2008; Mager, 2005). It is therefore not surprising to find keywords
56 relating to sports featuring so prominently in our corpus. The same can be said for the other
57 primary semantic domain we identify: violence and crime. Argued to be a hallmark of
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dominant conceptualisations of contemporary masculinity (Messerschmidt, 1993; Newburn & Stanko, 2013), topics related to violence and crime also feature heavily in our South African corpus, with keywords such as *rape*, *magistrate*, *robbery* and *suspect* all identified (cf. also Pearce, 2008). What is, however, somewhat surprising about the keywords we identify is the lack of any reference to positions of (political) power or status, the lack of reference to sexuality or romance (except when in conjunction with violence, i.e., *rape*), and the general lack of any positive or valued personality characteristics (such as *honesty* or *intelligence*; cf. Romaine, 2001). Terms related to power/status, (heterosexual) romance, and valued character traits have been consistently identified in research on masculinity in North American and Northern European contexts (e.g., Baker, 2010; Caldas-Coulthard & Moon, 2010; Romaine, 2001). The lack of such terms in our top keyword list thus provides a preliminary indication of an important difference in how masculinity is conceptualised and discussed in South Africa (though we concede there are limitations to how much information a keyword analysis can provide in this regard).

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]

This difference is further illustrated by an examination of the top collocates in our corpus of general terms relating to masculinity in the sub-corpus (see Table 3). Beginning with *masculinity*, we find fairly standard collocates of similarity (e.g., *man*) and opposition (e.g., *femininity*). We also find collocates, like *violence*, that are reminiscent of the general patterns identified in Table 2. But what is interesting about the results in Table 3 is the way in which the top collocates include a recognition of masculinity as something that is variable, associated with different *notions* and cultural *constructions*. An examination of individual concordance lines demonstrates that these *notions* and *constructions*, while often highly problematic, are not natural but are instead cultivated and perpetuated, as illustrated in (2):

- (2) Drawing from Xhosa and Western dress, he creates his sculptural rubber artworks with pink ribbon trimmings to engage with the visual structures that perpetuate **notions** of masculinity. (*Sunday Independent*, 2009)

The impetus of his work lies in the deconstruction of regimes of truth, in **notions** of masculinity, the environment or belief itself, in order to access the real. (*Business Day*, 2011)

We have all experienced this form of socialisation, this pressure to conform, to adhere to toxic **notions** of masculinity. (*Mail & Guardian*, 2012)

The challenge then becomes how to move the debate on gender-based violence from being one about women as victims and keeping them safe, to one that deals with the **constructions** of masculinity that make violence possible. (*Cape Times*, 2014)

In addition to the idea that masculinity is itself a *construction*, the collocates in Table 3 and the brief extracts in (2) also highlight how masculinity is generally perceived in fairly negative terms in the sub-corpus, associated with *issues* and *crisis*, many of them related to specific cultural traditions and beliefs. From a comparative perspective, the view of masculinity that emerges in South Africa is one that is both more nuanced and more negative than that which has been found in other contexts (cf. Baker, 2010; Caldas-Coulthard & Moon, 2010).

In contrast to *masculinity*, collocates for *manhood* reveal a more physical dimension to the concept, and specifically point to the practice of ritual circumcision. This practice is evoked by terms like *passage, rite, initiation, transition*, and it is associated specifically with Xhosa men (and *boys*). While perhaps seemingly innocuous, inspection of references in the corpus to *rites of passage into manhood* reveals that these rites are often depicted as backwards and potentially dangerous:

- (3) It is important to speak out against the high number of deaths and genital amputations that have become a common feature of the annual rite of passage to **manhood**, due mainly to unhygienic and inhospitable conditions. (*Sunday Times*, 2010)

At the same time, initiation rites are also described as crucial to the achievement of successful (black) masculinity:

- (4) When a boy turns 18, he is considered ready to go to initiation school - it is his passage to **manhood**. There he gets taught how to behave like a man ... For Xhosa people, circumcision represents manhood. An uncircumcised male cannot be heir to his father's wealth, cannot marry or officiate in tribal rituals. Therefore, it is a huge celebration because the son is no longer a boy but a man and this, by all means, needs to be celebrated. It is a time to celebrate a new life because the life the son previously lived should be forgotten. (*The Herald*, 2014)

The semantic prosody of *manhood* in the corpus is thus an ambivalent one. Its collocates reflect both a concern with the *unhygienic* nature of this pre-modern *ritual* while simultaneously promoting the notion of *initiation* as a crucial *passage* on a boy's *journey* through life. Yet abstracting away from their content, what the collocates of *manhood* succeed in doing is placing an emphasis on the physical characteristics (and alterations of those characteristics) of black male bodies. In doing so, discussions of *manhood* in the corpus reproduce common tropes of black masculinity (in South Africa and elsewhere) as being focused on the body, and more particularly the penis (e.g., Milani, 2013). In other words, whether ritual circumcision is portrayed in a positive or a negative light, we see that manhood is understood as a physical phenomenon and that this physicality is associated exclusively with black men.

Our examination of the top keywords in the masculinity sub-corpus and the top collocates of the general terms *masculinity* and *manhood* help us to uncover the basic contours of the ideological field of masculinity in the South African context (Baker & Levon, 2016). We find that, as a concept, *masculinity* is seen as something variable and subject to change, with a clear indication that it is connected to some troubles. A clue as to the kinds of problems involved is apparent in the prominence of terms linked to violence and crime throughout the sub-corpus, while the pervasive references to sports serve to reproduce a familiar association between masculinity and physical power. Interestingly, explicit references to embodied physical masculinity only appear in the context of the term *manhood*, where this concept is also overtly racialized as pertaining exclusively to black men. Overall then, what emerges is a general picture of South African masculinity as an articulated and contingent concept, one that varies across cultures. Moreover, and somewhat surprisingly given previous research, it is not a concept that is associated with overwhelmingly positive traits, and, as both the keyword and the collocation analyses demonstrate, is instead depicted as a frequent source of conflict and tension.

Types of South African Men

In this section, we turn to an examination of how different types of South African men are representationally positioned within the ideological field of masculinity described above. Drawing on the method developed in Baker and Levon (2016), we do this by examining labels and address terms for different culturally recognised types of men within the sub-corpus.

Table 4 presents the top collocates of the three most common male persona types in the data: *man*, *guy* and *bloke*. Of the three, *man* functions as the most generic term. It predominantly collocates with words referring to what van Leeuwen (1996) terms “identification categorization”, or those processes through which individuals are classified according to their group memberships, their relations to others and their physical characteristics. In the current dataset, these include terms like *old*, *young*, *black*, and *white* (what van Leeuwen 1996 would call “classifiers”); forms such as *family*, *boys*, and *woman* (van Leeuwen’s “relational” markers); and a sole instance of a “personal” qualifier: *good*. The categorization of *man* (and, hence, men) in terms of their age, provenance and race parallels what has been found in other contexts. Caldas-Coulthard and Moon (2010), for example, found that in the UK print media, men were most often described in terms of their age (e.g., “young”, “old”) and status (e.g., “poor”, “rich”). They also, found, however that men in the British press were consistently described in terms of various positively valued behavioural characteristics, such as “compassionate”, “charming”, “generous” and “brave”. Similarly, Baker (2010), in his diachronic investigation of four corpora of British English from the 1930s to the 2000s, finds the term *man* consistently associated with such positive adjectives as “celebrated”, “distinguished”, “wealthy”, and “famous”. In Table 4, the only potentially positive adjective is the fairly neutral *good*. Instead, and unlike the results of these previous studies, we find top collocates referencing criminal behaviour (*killed*, *allegedly*, *arrested*, *shot*) as well as some generic references to sports (*match*, *squad*). Examining the collocates of *man* in our corpus thus supports our arguments above regarding the differing conceptualisations of men and masculinity in South Africa versus other locations examined in the literature.

[INSERT TABLE 4 HERE]

This is not to say that positive traits are never associated with male types in our corpus. Instead, we see in Table 4 that they are restricted to *guys* and *blokes*. Of the two, *guy* is the broader term, collocating with more general categorization terms (*white*, *black*, *little*, *old*) and more specific appraisals (*funny*, *great*, *tough*). For *bloke*, appraisals predominate, and all of them reflect socially valued characteristics: *nice*, *uncomplicated*, *ordinary*, *easygoing*, *salt-of-the-earth*:

- (5) Thursday was the time of Johnson, a quiet, **unassuming bloke** from Townesville, deep in northern Queensland - "real cowboy country" was how one local described it, the last place you'd expect to find a future fast bowler. (*The Star*, 2008)

Arthur is a **down-home bloke** whose metier is coaching. By all accounts he doesn't play the political game very well because he's not well versed in it. (*Sunday Times*, 2008)

To take on board the idea that he is not, after all, a culturally charged Zulu warrior but just an **ordinary bloke** in a grey suit is not going to be easy. (*Pretoria News*, 2009)

1
2
3 I played with Ackies here at the Sharks and he is a **salt-of-the-earth bloke**. (*The*
4 *Mercury*, 2013)
5

6 The example extracts in (5) demonstrate how in the corpus, a *bloke* is most often represented
7 as an “authentic” or “natural” type of man. He is not someone who stands out in a crowd (*just*
8 *an ordinary bloke in a grey suit*) or who engages in strategic or manipulative behaviour (*he*
9 *doesn't play the political game*). Apparent in the examples in (5) as well is a racialized
10 component to this characterization. Three of the four extracts refer to sports figures, and more
11 particularly to rugby and cricket. In the South Africa context, rugby and cricket are both seen
12 as associated with white communities (Afrikaans and English, respectively), whereas football
13 is stereotypically the “black sport”. The preponderance of the term *bloke* in reference to
14 rugby and cricket, therefore, has the effect of racializing the term, of restricting the perceived
15 reference of *bloke* to white South African men. And it is this form of white masculinity that is
16 depicted as being *nice* and *ordinary*, as *salt-of-the-earth*. This racialization is apparent in the
17 example from *Pretoria News* in (5), where the *ordinary bloke* is juxtaposed with the figure of
18 the *culturally charged Zulu warrior*, the ideological opposite of default white “normality”.⁴
19 While more perhaps implicit than in other contexts (cf. Baker & Levon 2016), our analysis of
20 *bloke* and *guy* in the corpus reveals a distinct racial element, and highlights the tightly
21 imbricated nature of representations of gender and race in South Africa (see also Viljoen
22 2008 for the connection between whiteness and ordinariness; and Milani & Shaikjee 2013 for
23 the racialization of sport in South Africa).
24
25
26

27 [INSERT TABLE 5 HERE]
28

29 This imbrication is also apparent when we examine the use of various address terms
30 in the sub-corpus. Because of their relatively infrequent occurrence in newspaper discourse
31 (appearing predominantly in letters, opinion pieces, and reported speech), address terms are
32 examined via keyword, rather than collocation, analysis (as described above, keyword lists
33 were generated by comparing only articles containing the address terms to the entire
34 masculinity sub-corpus). Table 5 presents a keyword analysis of the terms *boet*, *bru* and *bro*
35 in the dataset. *Boet* and *bru* are colloquial address terms widely used in South Africa that are
36 derived from Afrikaans words for “brother”. *Bro* is a similar type of word, derived from
37 English. Despite their differing origins (i.e., Afrikaans versus English), all three terms are
38 very common in South Africa, and are used frequently when speaking (or writing) in English.
39 In Table 5, we see that both *boet* and *bru* tend to appear in more light-hearted pieces,
40 particularly those involving sports and other kinds of leisure events. *Rugby*, *stadiums*,
41 *competitions* and *Springboks* (the South African national rugby team) are all keywords, as are
42 terms like *braai* (outdoor barbecue), *weekend* and *farm*. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the
43 Afrikaans origin on the word, there is a definite Afrikaans flavour to the text, evoked by
44 either explicit reference, e.g., *Afrikaans*, *howzit* (an Afrikaans-derived salutation) or more
45 implicitly, e.g., *farms* and other canonical Afrikaans cultural references. The same can be said
46 for texts containing *bru*, where we find consistent reference to a variety of pleasurable
47 activities (*theatre*, *surfing*, *festivals*) and to specifically Afrikaans exclamations of approval
48 (*lekker*).
49
50
51

52 In contrast, *bro* appears almost exclusively in texts dealing with more “serious”
53 issues, including the economy (*growth*, *economy*, *sector*, *budget*, *businesses*), politics (*Mbeki*,
54 *election*, *commission*, *policy*) and national infrastructure (*investment*, *Eskom*, *electricity*). This
55 is unexpected, given the term’s very colloquial and informal connotations. As in the US, one
56 would not normally expect to be called “bro” in the context of a more formal discussion
57
58
59
60

about politics or the state of the economy. To try and understand why *bro* appears in these contexts, it is useful to examine representative extracts from articles where it occurs:

- (6) Greg Mills' article on graft in Kenya smacks of a typical Western journalist who jets into an African country for a week, suddenly becomes an expert, and then, unfortunately, influences millions of his readers back home. I was expecting something different from an African journalist. The column reads as if Kenya had made little or no progress over the past 50 years. I'll be the first to admit that what you wrote was correct, but I would also have liked you to give a more balanced perspective. You made no mention of the strides that the country has made or are taking with themselves into the election. As Africa, we have enough enemies without; we don't need any more within. C'mon, **bro**, get on our side - objectively. Tell the balanced truth. (*Sunday Times*, 2013)

But the masterpiece [of unwitting racism] is from David Bullard's apology for his racist column: "the use of the term 'simple tribesmen' was never intended to imply stupidity but to suggest an uncomplicated lifestyle." Yeah, right, same difference. My advice is: get a personal editor, **bro**. Writing sensibly about race is tricky business, as you would have noticed. (*Business Day*, 2008)

Both of the extracts in (6) feature readers addressing columnists directly, and criticizing some aspect of the columnists' work. In both cases, moreover, what is criticized is directly relevant to racial differences between the columnists referenced (who are both white South Africans) and the authors of the letters (who elsewhere in their letters make clear that they are black South Africans). In the extract from the *Sunday Times*, the letter writer makes clear that he is displeased with Greg Mills' representation of the situation in Kenya, arguing that Mills provides an external (i.e., un-African) perspective. He concludes his comment with the imperative *C'mon, bro, get on our side*, establishing an explicit contrast between that which is truly African and that which is not. Similarly, in the extract from *Business Day*, the letter writer decries instances of casual and unwitting racism, including David Bullard's repeated conflation of traditional "tribal" lifestyles with lack of intelligence or access to modernity. She, too, concludes her comments with an imperative instruction to *get a personal editor, bro*. The term *bro* in these extracts thus functions as a tool for dismissing or demeaning the individual interpellated by the form. In essence, the authors of the letters are drawing on the connotations of informality associated with the term to position themselves as authorities on the topic, able to instruct someone less knowledgeable in appropriate forms of behaviour. We argue that it is not incidental that, in these and other cases, *bro* is also consistently used by black South African authors to address white interlocutors in this kind of dismissive fashion. In effect, we suggest that what the authors are doing with *bro* is instrumentalizing the stereotypical connotations of the form as an element of black vernacular speech (a connotation that exists in South Africa, like in other English-speaking locales) and using it as a way to distinguish between themselves – insiders – and their white addressees, who by implication are positioned as outsiders. Ultimately then, *bro* ends up labelling a form of white subjectivity in the corpus, but a very different one than the more "ordinary" (hegemonic) articulation referenced by *guy* and *bloke*.

Summary and Conclusion

Our goal in this article has been to provide an initial empirical examination of different forms of masculinity within the intersectional reality of contemporary South Africa. Our examination of how men and masculinity are represented in the English-language South

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3 African print media reveals that masculinity as a general concept is perceived as somewhat
4 more variable and potentially problematic in South African discourse than what has been
5 reported for other (predominantly European) sites (e.g., Baker, 2010, 2014).⁵ In particular,
6 characterisations of masculinity as related to status, prestige and other positively valued traits
7 are largely absent in our sample. Instead, we find a focus on violence, crime and (via the
8 prism of sports) physical toughness. This variability in conceptualisations of masculinity is,
9 moreover, stratified in terms of race, with white masculinities (GUY, BLOKE, BOET, BRU)
10 associated with “ordinariness” and culturally valued characteristics (“laid-back”, “salt-of-the-
11 earth”) and black masculinities (MANHOOD) associated with problems and “traditional”
12 ritual practices (see also Khunou, 2013). While this racialization of masculinity is more
13 implicit in our data than in other contexts (cf. Baker & Levon, 2016), its effect is to reproduce
14 long-standing South African racial hierarchies, with white masculinity positioned at the
15 normative moral centre and black masculinity on the potentially deviant periphery.

16
17 Overall, we find compelling evidence for the tight imbrication of masculinity and race
18 in English-language South African media discourse, and for the hierarchical representational
19 ranking of racialized male types in relation to one another. This finding resonates with claims
20 made in earlier studies about the impossibility of examining the *hegemony-subordination* axis
21 of masculinity on its own since *authorisation-marginalisation* always also plays a role (e.g.,
22 Baker & Levon, 2016). In addition, this finding underscores Ratele’s (2014) arguments about
23 the need for a more nuanced and articulated understanding of hegemonic power. The negative
24 representation of black masculinities in the corpus as being both physically threatening and
25 morally deviant is not new (see Buiten & Naidoo, 2013; Khunou, 2013), and is a clear
26 illustration of Ratele’s concept of *marginal hegemony*, where power in one domain is clearly
27 circumscribed and constrained by the lack of power in another (cf. also Christensen & Jensen,
28 2014). It is interesting that we find no real evidence for competing conceptualisations of
29 (hegemonic) black masculinities in our data, such as the *urban black man* or *rural African*
30 *man* described by Morrell (1998). This could be due to the quantitative method employed in
31 the current analysis (which tends to highlight more dominant discourses in the data; see
32 Baker & Levon, 2015), and the fact that we only consider the English-language press.
33 Analyses of masculinity in other languages, particularly isiXhosa and isiZulu, could provide a
34 more comprehensive picture. For the moment, however, our analysis of English-language
35 media demonstrates that dominant ideas about masculinity in South Africa remain tightly
36 intertwined with ideologies of race. Are we stating the obvious? Working on discourses of
37 unemployment, Mautner (2009, p. 128) argues that

41
42 Detractors of corpus-based methods could argue, of course, that one hardly needs a
43 huge database of text and sophisticated software to ‘prove’ that being unemployed is
44 not a pleasant thing. On the other hand, we should not forget [...] that a fair proportion
45 of any empirical work is devoted, precisely, to finding evidence for the intuitively
46 obvious.

47
48 Thus while perhaps obvious, our findings on the basis of corpus linguistic techniques
49 provides part of the quantitative, empirical detail necessary for understanding how hegemonic
50 masculinity operates in present-day South Africa (cf. Morrell et al., 2012), and helps to reveal
51 the latent ideologies that undergird it. Theoretically, these results also point to the necessity
52 of an intersectional approach not only to the analysis of gender and masculinities in
53 particular, but also to critical discourse studies more broadly, pointing to the mutual
54 constitution and imbrication of different social categories in the (re)production of specific
55 representational power relations.

Notes

- 1 The 20 publications are: *Business Day*, *Cape Argus* (and *Cape Argus Weekend*), *Cape Times*, *Daily Dispatch*, *Daily News*, *Mail & Guardian*, *Post*, *Pretoria News* (and *Pretoria News Weekend*), *Sowetan*, *Sunday Times*, *Sunday Tribune*, *Sunday World*, *The Herald*, *The Independent on Saturday*, *The Mercury*, *The New Age*, *The Star*, *The Sunday Independent*, *The Times*, *The Weekender*. For the *The New Age*, data is available from 2011-2014; for *Mail & Guardian*, data is available from 2010-2014; for *The Weekender*, data is available from 2008-2009. For all other publications, data is available throughout the study period (2008-2014).
- 2 It is important to note that our analysis of different “types” of South African men that follows is necessarily restricted by the fact that we consider only the English-language print media. We are currently conducting similar research on representations of masculinity in both the Afrikaans and isiZulu press. For the moment, however, our results are confined to the Anglophone print media in South Africa.
- 3 Only the top 75 keywords are chosen in an effort to restrict our analysis to those terms that occur with at least a minimum amount of frequency in the corpus, and thus enhance the representativeness of our interpretations.
- 4 Keyword analyses of the terms *bloke* and *guy* further understood the racial connotations of both words. In both cases, *bloke* and *guy* appear overwhelmingly in the context of articles about rugby and cricket, with top keywords including TEST, CRICKET, GAME, BOKS, BLACKS, BALL, PROTEAS, etc.
- 5 A reviewer notes that in comparing our results to those found in Europe, we may inadvertently perpetuate a view of Northern understanding of masculinity as normative. We take the point. Nevertheless, we think such a comparison is important given the predominance of Northern perspectives in masculinities research, and the assumption that these perspectives are in a certain sense universal. We hope that highlighting differences that exist in our data serves as a useful corrective to this universalizing tendency.

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Table 1. Query terms for building masculinity sub-corpus

| | | | |
|-------------|---------|----------|-------|
| masculinity | manhood | man/men | bloke |
| boet/boetie | boy | bra(h) | bro |
| brother | bru | chief | dude |
| guy | hunk | lad | mate |
| oke | ou | stallion | stud |

Table 2. Top 75 Keywords in Masculinity Sub-Corpus

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Sport | AUS, FRA, SUNDOWNS, VILLIERS, CHAMPIONSHIP, OVERS, GER, WICKETS, STORMERS, BOWLING, RUS, FINALS, INNINGS, CHAMPION, SPRINGBOK, ZEALAND, RACING, GOALS, USA, LEG, CELTIC, CHEETAHS, SINGLES, RUGBY, COACH, PIRATES, ROUND, AUSTRALIA, CRICKET, SQUAD, CAPTAIN, CHAMPIONS, PLAYER, PLAYERS, WIN, PLAYING, GAME, SIDE, SPORT, PLAY, ENG, RSA |
| Violence/Crime | RAPE, MAGISTRATE'S, ROBBERY, SUSPECT, SHOOTING, GANG, ARMED, SHOT, KILLED, DEAD |
| Kinship | GIRLS, GIRL, WOMEN'S, SISTER, MALE, FATHER, SON, FAMILY |
| Ambiguous | INJURED, SCORED, INJURY, FAVOURITE, RAN, FALL, BEAT |
| Misc. | COLLEGE, LOOKED, ARTICLE, MISSING, OLD, PISTORIUS, TOUGH |

Table 3. Top Collocates of General Masculinity Terms in Sub-Corpus (DICE coefficient)

| Search Term | Frequency | Collocates |
|-------------|-----------|--|
| masculinity | 702 | men (71), notions (31), South African (33), identity (26), crisis (26), violence (35), Africa (19), issues (21), women (23), white (17), culture/al (31), associated (17), boys (15), gender (26), constructions (17), black (15), femininity (15), positive (13), social (19), racial (21) |
| manhood | 647 | passage (66), rite(s) (32), boyhood (21), ritual(s) (25), initiation (26), proving (15), circumcision (20), teachings (10), define (9), transition (10), boy (7), definition (8), Xhosa (12), myth (8), people (6), journey (17), redefin(ing) (12), childhood (10), navigate (6), symbols (6) |

Table 4. Top Collocates of Most Frequent Male Types in Sub-Corpus (DICE coefficient)

| Search Term | Frequency | Collocates |
|-------------|-----------|---|
| man | 43,722 | woman (1476), old (1765), young (1463), match (303), squad (275), black (622), white (577), South African (834), African (492), group (410), family (284), killed (365), named (172), boys (278), made (277), allegedly (872), arrested (2025), good (245), shot (674), life (217) |
| guy | 4,493 | nice (135), big (100), white (95), tough (68), good (120), bad (64), black (79), little (60), -looking (49), funny (27), girl (34), type (28), called (37), know (48), chief (33), great (44), see (42), old (45), fall (26), say (33) |
| bloke | 576 | crikey (8), deaf (11), nice (32), yelled (7), uncomplicated (6), ordinary (13), thoroughly (7), people (5), suit (11), remark (6), old-fashioned (6), distinguished (6), Aussie (6), easygoing (4), salt-of-the-earth (6), appoint (5), unassuming (4), fearsome (4), demonstrate (4), intact (4) |

Table 5. Top Keywords of Address Terms in the Sub-Corpus

| Term | Frequency | Top Keywords |
|------|-----------|---|
| boet | 233 | HOWZIT, BOWLS, RUGBY, LADY, MARKER, STADIUMS, HANDICAP, CANDID, WHITES, TRIPS, WINE, MORNINGSIDE, AFRIKAANS, RACISM, SRPINGBOKS, COMPETITION, BRAAI, FARM, WEEKEND, CAMPAIGN, MUNICIPAL, FLASH |
| bru | 180 | COFFEE, LEKKER, OOSTERBROEK, BEANS, HEY, HOWZIT, WINE, THEATRE, SURFING, SHOW, BEER, VUVUZELA, PHOTOGRAPHER, CALL, FESTIVAL, BEACH, MUSICIANS, MUSIC, WILDLIFE, FACEBOOK, BRIGHT, SEA, PERFORMERS, DOCUMENTARY, JAZZ |
| bro | 71 | MBEKI, GROWTH, ECONOMY, SECTOR, ELECTRICITY, PRICES, FINANCE, TRADE, POLICY, INCREASE, INVESTMENT, DISPATCH, LEADERSHIP, ESKOM, BILLION, CRISIS, INFRASTRUCTURE, COMPANIES, COSATU, DEMAND, GLOBAL, BUDGET, LABOUR, ELECTION, DELIVERY, BUSINESSES, ENERGY, INCREASED, SUPPLY, COMMISSION |