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Tamara Shefer & Kopano Ratele

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South African critical masculinities studies: a scan of past, current and emerging priorities

Tamara Shefer ^a and Kopano Ratele ^b

^aDepartment of Women's and Gender Studies, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa;

^bPsychology Department, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

Introduction

Depending on the position from which it is read, and what is regarded as the beginning of the history of the field, South African critical studies on men and masculinities have a relatively estimable though comparatively short history. There exists a significant and steadily expanding body of diverse empirical and theoretical work on boys, men and masculinities which speaks to the particular geo- and socio-political spaces. In the main, South African researchers of boys, men and masculinities address themselves to domestic affairs, with some of the work evidencing direct and necessary links to community engagement and activism. There is, however, a vein of scholarship directed towards transnational interests and theoretical issues.

It is always difficult to identify key moments – including the beginning – for any body of scholarship work within a particular context. Posed in question form, what was the inaugurating moment of critical studies on men and masculinity (CSMM) in South Africa and what have been the important milestones from which we can learn if we desire to sustain and develop the field? These are interesting points of reflection since there was work on men and masculinities in South Africa in earlier years that was not located in CSMM (e.g. see Campbell, 1992; Lemon, 1995; Meintjies, 1991; Moodie, 1988). But we ought not to minimise the fact that, like other aspects of South African life, and perhaps of all our disrupted and entangled lives under coloniality – knowledge production was almost exclusively produced by white academics, with black people excluded or severely hindered from educational opportunities. Be that as it may, the inauguration of studies on masculinities in South Africa can be dated to 1997, three years after the advent of consitutional democracy. In July of that year the International Colloquium on Masculinities was held at the then University of Natal (now University of Kwazulu Natal) – a gathering which, arguably, has a claim to be the avowed beginning of CSMM in South Africa. Since then we have borne witness to and been part of a steadily growing turn to boys, men and masculinities (see Morrell, 2020). A notable range of books, journal special editions, and other scholarly work, in general, has since been generated in this particular nation-state which can be used in marking scholarly time (to cite a few of the special editions, volumes and books: Langa, 2020; Mfecane, 2018; Morrell, 2001a; Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005; Ratele, 2016, 2022; Shefer, Ratele, Strebel, Shabalala, & Buikema, 2007; Swartz & Bhana, 2009).

CONTACT Tamara Shefer  tshefer@uwc.ac.za; Kopano Ratele  kratele@sun.ac.za

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In writing this locating piece which responds to an invitation to engage with the articles published in *NORMA* by South African scholars, we took the opportunity to attempt to map some key milestones (see Table 1), or at least highlight moments in the development of a local body of work. It was an irresistible opportunity to survey

Table 1. Selected key moments over the previous decade-and-half in the development of critical studies on South African, boys, men masculinities.

1997	<i>International Colloquium on Masculinities</i> , Durban
1998	Publication of Morrell, R. (1998b) (ed). Special on Masculinities in Southern African Studies. <i>Journal of Southern African Studies</i> , 24(4)
1998	Publication of Morrell, R. (1998a) (Ed). Special issue on The new man? <i>Agenda</i> , 14(37)
2001	Publication of Morrell, R. (Ed.). (2001). <i>Changing men in southern Africa</i> . Zed.
2001	Publication of Morrell, R. (2001). <i>From boys to gentlemen: Settler masculinity in colonial Natal, 1880-1920</i> . Pretoria: University of South Africa.
2004	Symposium on <i>Manhood and Masculinity: Struggles with Change</i> , Braamfontein, University of the Witwatersrand
2004	Publication of Waetjen, T. (2004). <i>Workers and warriors: Masculinity and the struggle for nation in South Africa</i> . University of Illinois Press.
2005	Conference on <i>From Boys to Men: Masculinities and Risk Conference</i> , Bellville, University the Western Cape.
	Publication of Ouzgane, L. & Morrell, R. (2005) (Eds) <i>African masculinities: men in Africa from the late nineteenth century to the present</i> . New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
2005	Publication of book: Reid, G., & Walker, L. (Eds.). (2005). <i>Men behaving differently: South African men since 1994</i> . Juta Double Storey.
2005	Ouzgane, L., & Morrell, R. (2005). (Eds) <i>African Masculinities: Men in Africa in the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present</i> . Palgrave Macmillan.
2006	Publication of Richter, L., & Morrell, R. (2006). <i>Baba: men and fatherhood in South Africa</i> . HSRC Press.
2007	Publication of Shefer, T., Ratele, K., & Strebler, A. (Eds.). (2007). <i>From boys to men: Social constructions of masculinity in contemporary society</i> . Juta and Company Ltd.
2008	Publication of special issue: Eagle G., & Hayes, G. (2008) (Eds). Special issue on Masculinity in transition, no. 1. <i>PINS (Psychology in Society)</i> , 35.
2008	Publication of Shefer, T., Bowman, B., & Duncan, N. (2008) (Eds). (Eds). Special issue on Masculinity in transition, no. 2. <i>PINS (Psychology in Society)</i> , 36.
2009	Publication of Swartz, S., & Bhana, A. (2009). <i>Teenage Tata: Voices of young fathers in South Africa</i> . HSRC Press.
2010	Publication of Shefer, T., Stevens, G., & Clowes, L. (2010). Special edition on The social construction of masculinities <i>Journal of Psychology in Africa</i> , 20(4)
2010	Publication of Mager, A. K. (2010). <i>Beer, sociability, and masculinity in South Africa</i> . Indiana University Press.
2015	Publication of special issue: Hearn, J., Ratele, K., & Shefer, T. (2015) (Eds). Special issue on Men, masculinities and young people: north-south dialogues, <i>NORMA, International Journal for Masculinity Studies</i> 10(2).
2015	Publication of Gould, C. (2015). <i>Beaten bad: The life stories of violent offenders</i> . Institute for Security Studies.
2016	Publication of Ratele, K. (2016). <i>Liberating masculinities</i> . Cape Town: HSRC Press.
2018	Publication of Hackman, M. (2018). <i>Desire work: Ex-gay and Pentecostal masculinity in South Africa</i> . Duke University Press.
2018	Publication of Van den Berg, W. & Makusha, T. (2018). (Eds). <i>State of South Africa's Fathers 2018</i> . Sonke Gender Justice & Human Sciences Research Council
2018	Publication of Mfecane, S. (2018). (Un)knowing MEN Africanising gender justice programmes for men in South Africa. CSA&G Press, Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender, University of Pretoria.
2020	Publication of Langa, M. (2020). <i>Becoming men: Black masculinities in a South African township</i> . Wits University Press.
2020	Publication of Gottzén, L., Mellström, U., & Shefer, T. (Eds.). (2020). <i>Routledge international handbook of masculinity studies</i> . Routledge.
2020	Publication of Tshabalala, M. (2020). <i>Magenge: We need to talk</i> . NB Publisher.
2020	Publication of Medzani, J. (2020). <i>Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered – young men and masculinity</i> . Pretoria: CSA&G Press, Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender.
2021	Publication Van den Berg, W., Makusha, T., & Ratele, K. (2021) (Eds). <i>State of South Africa's Fathers 2021</i> . Sonke Gender Justice, Human Sciences Research Council & Stellenbosch University.
2021	Publication of Andrews, G. (2021). <i>Stories of fathers, stories of the nation: Fatherhood and paternal power in South African literature</i> . UKZN Press
2021	Release of Fathers Matter Film Series (six different films set in various contexts around South Africa) by Heartlines: The Centre for Values Promotion. https://www.heartlines.org.za/fathers-matter/films
2022	Publication of Ratele, K. (2022). <i>Why men hurt women and other reflections on love, violence and masculinity</i> . NYU Press.
2022	Publication of Jansen, S. (2022). <i>Masculinity meets humanity: an adapted model of masculinised psychotherapy</i> . HSRC Press.

the local body of work and to reflect on what others and ourselves might learn from considering such a sketch of moments. We also sought to apprise ourselves with the current state of interests as well as emerging priorities, using moments where people gathered (for example, conferences and symposia) and special issues of journals and books (monographs and edited volumes) to mark time. This rapid appraisal is undoubtedly not a comprehensive review of CSMM in South Africa. However, we thought it could be helpful as a preliminary scan of some important signposts and contributions over the past 15 years which, at the same time, also gives some sense of the preoccupations, productivity and direction of South African critical masculinities work. We hope that a more comprehensive genealogical account will be generated in the near future and that work on those areas that are yet to be studied will have emerged.

Regarding the roots of men and masculinities studies in South African and continental histories, Shefer, Stevens, and Clowes (2010, p. 511) summed up in a special edition of the *Journal of Psychology in Africa* over a decade ago:

Reflecting international trends, the 1990s saw a growing focus on men and masculinities in research on the African continent as well. In Southern Africa for example, The *Journal of Southern African Studies* produced a Special Edition on masculinities in 1998 (volume 24, 4), and *Agenda* followed suit later on in the same year (volume 37), and studies focusing on masculinities in Africa began to appear regularly in both local and international journals – far too many to begin listing them here. In addition, over the last decade the continent has seen the publication of several edited collections. (see for example, Gibson & Hardon, 2006; Lindsay & Miescher, 2003; Morrell, 2001a; Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005; Reid & Walker, 2005; Richter & Morrell, 2006; Shefer, Ratele, et al., 2007)

Notably, CSMM from South Africa is well represented in the international space. For example, the most recent international handbook of masculinities (Gottzén, Mellström, & Shefer, 2020) includes a South African scholar as editor and three chapters that clearly emerge from South African empirical contexts and thinking (Bhana, 2020; Boonzaier & Van Niekerk, 2020; Ratele, 2020). South African scholars have further had long and close collaborations with foundational scholars like Jeff Hearn and Raewyn Connell. Jeff Hearn for example, who attended the first scholarly event in the field, the colloquium mentioned earlier, described how this was ‘a personal–political–theoretical turning point’ (Hearn, 2015, p. 46, cited in Shefer & Hearn, 2022, p. 33).

The development of this now large body of work, and the particular turn to boys, men and masculinities in this context, may link to the complexities of this postcolonial, post-apartheid space for rethinking gender and gender justice. In this respect, Kopano Ratele, who continues to situate his critical and decolonial thinking within South Africa and the African continent, argues that the country’s context, given its complex raced, gender and sexual history, may be ‘considered as a real-life test laboratory for insights from studies of masculinities studies’ (Ratele, 2014, p. 30). As signalled above, it is not only scholarship that has proliferated in South African contexts, but also a wide range of NGO, activist and community-based initiatives that operate in South Africa, such as Sonke Gender Justice but also through international collaborations and networks, such as MenEngage, Pro-mundo and Equimundo.

Work on masculinities in South Africa has been viewed as located in the imperative to focus on boys, men and masculinities since early work was primarily directed at girls, women and femininities. The sudden growth of research directed at gender and sexuality

was related to the emergent emphasis following the new democracy of 1994 on gender justice as a key component of democratisation. Research, policy and practice proliferated in this rights-based and transformation context, initially largely framed within the imperative of the growing, largely heterosexual HIV pandemic, in which young poor women were (and remain) at the largest risk for infection, and the increasing acknowledgement of very high rates of gender-based violence, both domestic violence in homes and sexual violence at home and public spaces. It is not surprising that it became important for the lens to shift onto boys, men and masculinities in acknowledging the co-construction of gender and its attendant terrains of power, abuse and violence. As Shefer, Ratele, et al. (2007, p. 2) pointed out some years ago in the introduction to one of the earlier volumes on men and masculinities, ‘much of the research and intervention in both of these priority areas [HIV and GBV] in the early post-1994 years tended to focus on girls and women and inadvertently ignored boys and men’.

In response to this neglect, there arose a focus on men in relation to HIV/Aids, specifically men living with HIV who were unable to practice successful (hetero)sexual predatory masculinity in relation to women, seen as key to successful performance of masculinity (for example, Mfecane, 2008). Attention to health issues – including and going beyond HIV/Aids – have endured (e.g. Gibbs, Jewkes, Sikweyiya, & Willan, 2015; Ratele, 2008b; Viitanen & Colvin, 2015).

Another key rationale for focusing in more nuanced ways on boys, men and masculinity was the concern around the binary and deterministic representation that was emerging within mainstream scholarship which positioned men as inherent perpetrators (Pattman, 2007; Pattman & Bhana, 2009; Ratele, 2014, 2016; Shefer & Hearn, 2022). It was hoped that the critical masculinities engagement with gender and sexuality-related inequalities would open up more nuanced understandings of the performance of gender and sexuality towards gender justice and diverse sexualities.

This early work was highly intersectional since the colonial or raced regime of gender and sexuality have long been understood in South Africa as key to the way in which masculinities are experienced and practised, as we elaborate later. This attention to intersections of masculinity and race persists. As an example, early on and currently, researchers have explored the way in which racial capitalism, poverty, disenfranchisement, displacement and migrancy undermined Black men’s capacities to ‘live up’ to dominant forms of masculinity and expectations of patriarchy, such as being a successful breadwinner and provider, but also how these conditions influence unsafe sexual practices (for example, Campbell, 1997, 2001; Morrell, 2006; Wilson, 2006). Yet while race-capital complex, colonisation, and decolonisation have been a theme of the work, recently decolonial thought has offered scholars a new lenses, that is, coloniality and decoloniality, to examine men and masculinities.

In terms of content focus, South African masculinities studies have been taken up with a number of key concerns since the early 1990s which are still salient in contemporary times, notwithstanding some extensions in research which we elaborate on below. While overlapping and possibly not representative of all areas of scholarship, the following themes may be teased out from the last 30 years of research on boys, men and masculinities in South African contexts. We update some of the themes identified by Shefer et al. (2010) and add some of the more contemporary preoccupations and shifts in thinking.

Doing masculinities and boyhood

A focus on the social construction of masculinity and how boys become men has constituted a large amount of CSMM scholarship in South Africa. Many scholars have worked in schools and within communities, using ethnographic, participatory, qualitative and quantitative methods, to document and interrogate how boys negotiate masculinity within cis- and hetero-normative contexts. Much local scholarship has foregrounded the importance of gender as constantly in tension, always in the process of being formed and re-formed and co-constructed by boys and girls, men and women (Bhana, 2016, 2018; Langa, 2010a; Lesch & Brooks, 2019; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Ratele, Shefer, Strelbel, & Fouten, 2010). The intersectionality of such gendering has also been strongly theorised in the work of those engaging with boys and young men (for example, Pattman, 2007; Pattman & Bhana, 2010). Further, as exemplified in Govender and Bhana's article in this special edition, there has been much emphasis on the challenges of 'achieving' successful masculinities for many boys and young men and the challenges, punishments and othering that goes with non-heteronormative or feminised performances of masculinity (Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007; Helle-Valle, 2004; Ratele et al., 2007; Shefer, Ratele, Strelbel, & Shabalala, 2005). Some scholars have also argued the importance of speaking about and working with male vulnerability towards the making of positive gender just masculinities (Clowes, 2013; Shefer, Kruger, & Schepers, 2015).

Fatherhood and being fathered

Fatherhood has long featured as an important theme in the African and South African context of research on boys and men (see, for example, Richter & Morrell, 2006; Swartz & Bhana, 2009). The centrality of the role of breadwinner and head of the family and home as key marker of masculinity was highlighted in many earlier empirical studies on boys and men (for example, Mfecane, 2008; Morrell, 2007; Silberschmidt, 2001). This research emphasised the way in which poor Black men in South African apartheid and racial capitalist contexts were unable to live up to these expectations. This focus is still taken up in contemporary contexts where the absence of biological fathers is still noteworthy in many South African follows. More recent emphases have been on young fathers (Swartz & Bhana, 2009), and a focus on young men and boy's attitudes about and experience of being (un)fathered (Clowes, Ratele, & Shefer, 2013; Langa, 2010b; Ratele, Shefer, & Clowes, 2012; Sathirparsad, 2010).

Sexualities

A focus on male sexuality, heterosexuality in particular, was accelerated by the imperative to challenge the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa and many other African contexts. The centrality of sexuality in the construction of masculinity as articulated through practices of hyper-(hetero)sexuality, multiple partners and casual sex with women was a key focus in earlier research on boys and men in South Africa and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa (for example, Dunkle et al., 2007; Lau & Stevens, 2010; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; MacPhail & Campbell, 2001; Mager, 1996; Pattman & Chege, 2003; Ratele, 2006; Shefer &

Foster, 2009). A plethora of research has explored the significance of heterosexual prowess, male physicality and violence in performances of hegemonic masculinities among young men in diverse South African communities, and within the context of South African colonial and apartheid histories (Campbell, 2001; Hunter, 2004; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Mankayi & Shefer, 2005; Ratele et al., 2007; Shefer et al., 2005). Empirical studies have also illustrated a strong association between certain assumed measures of 'hegemonic masculinity' and sexual violence, and a large percentage of men admit to perpetrating rape or sexual coercive practices (Abrahams, Jewkes, Laubscher, & Hoffman, 2006; Jewkes et al., 2006, 2009, 2010, 2011).

Research also flags how 'successful' manhood is represented as synonymous with heterosexuality and multiple sexual partners in these studies, with those who do not conform facing punishment and stigma (Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007; Graaff & Heineken, 2017; Lesch & Brooks, 2019; Oxlund, 2012; Ratele, 2016). Alternative sexualities and genders, including gender-nonconforming, gay, trans- and queer men, are shown to remain stigmatised and 'othered' in South African communities (Anderson, 2010; Henderson, 2015; Lynch & Clayton, 2017; Mashabane & Henderson, 2020; Msibi, 2012).

Focus on sexual risk-taking, such as resisting condom use during the pandemic, extended to a larger focus on young male risk-taking and an appreciation of how masculinity is not only troublesome for women and children, but also a problem for men themselves (see for example, Hearn, 2007; Ratele, 2008aa). In South Africa, studies on the relationship between hegemonic forms of masculinity and male risk-taking and risk have also constituted a relatively large body of work, including a focus on substances, multiple sexual partners, fighting or 'dicing' with motorcars (for example, Clowes, Lazarus, & Ratele, 2010; Mager, 2010; Reddy et al., 2003; Salo, 2007).

It is also notable that scholars have also increasingly critiqued the way in which this particular focus on young poor men and sexual and other risk-taking, in both theory and practice-based interventions may have reproduced some problematic racist and classist tropes and an outsourcing of patriarchy to poor, young, Black men (Ratele, Shefer, & Botha, 2011a; Shefer & Hearn, 2022).

Violence

Violence has been a particular preoccupation in South African critical scholarship. This emphasis is understandably linked to high rates of criminal violence and the endemic nature of gendered violence in South Africa, what well-known feminist scholar, Pumla Gqola (2015, 2021) has called 'rape culture', resulting in the 'female fear factory'. The complex enmeshment of interpersonal violence with masculinity, and their entanglement with poverty and other forms of structural violence, has been theorised in multiple ways in South African studies over the last few decades. Many scholars have pointed to the ways in which hegemonic forms of masculinity serve to facilitate, encourage and legitimise violent practices by men towards other men, women and children (see, for example, Clowes, Lazarus, & Ratele, 2010; Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007; Jewkes & Morrell, 2012; Morrell, Jewkes, & Lindegger, 2012; Ratele, 2006; Rosenkrantz Lindegaard, 2009).

It is also noteworthy, in considering the role of dominant forms of masculinity in male violence against women, that men themselves are frequently victims of male violence. As

Ratele has long pointed out, young poor Black and coloured men in South Africa are by far the group at greatest risk of being victims of male violence (Ratele, 2008a, 2014; Ratele, Smith, Van Niekerk, & Seedat, 2011b). Additionally, the invisibility of men in South African violence prevention policy has been flagged (van Niekerk et al., 2015).

Resistance and agency

There has been a relatively long focus on men who refuse or transgress masculinity in South Africa, as elsewhere, which emphasise agency and resistance, and that speak to practices and identities that queer dominant gender performances. Speaking of boys and men who do gender differently, or engage in practices or professions that are non-stereotypically male, and who resist normative and toxic practices of masculinity, have all been increasingly documented within the global critical masculinities literature and in local South African contexts (see, for example, Anderson, 2010; Davies & Eagle, 2010; Langa, 2010b; Lynch, Brouard, & Visser, 2010; Pattman & Bhana, 2010).

There is a current turn to the value of symbolic and material resistance, both in scholarship, activist and artistic terrains, that challenge normative masculinities through pedagogical, artistic and creative modalities. Scholars have increasingly focused on media, social media, artistic and artistic-activist representations which destabilise normative gender and hegemonic masculinities, as is taken up by Grant in this special edition. A focus on men and resistance to masculinity in South African contexts has also included reflections on advocacy and community-based work with men and masculinities that has raised some of the challenges of this work and how it might reproduce some of the gender binaries and stereotypes it hopes to challenge (Christofides et al., 2020; Dworkin, Fleming, & Colvin, 2015; Graaff, 2021a; 2021b; Mfecane, 2019; Ratele, Verma, Cruz, & Khan, 2019; Taliep, 2015; Traves-Kagan et al., 2020).

Affect

A current emerging theme in South African scholarship, also reflecting international emphases and the growth of Affect theory, has been a focus on embodiment and affect. Half-a-decade ago, Reeser and Gottzén (2018) wrote about men and 'affective intensity'. While their focus is on moments of unexpected tenderness between adult males, and thus distinguishing between affective intensities and emotional intensities with the aim of moving critical studies of men and masculinity from emotions to affects, the two authors state that:

there is nothing new about scholarly work that thinks about emotions and masculinity. Probably because so many men have a rather ambivalent relationship to their own and to others' feelings, at least in certain cultural contexts, masculinity studies has been interested in emotions for decades. (p. 146)

The subject of men and emotions, specifically tender emotions like shame and love, has, however, received little attention in studies on African-Black boys, men and masculinities. A result of following a group of boys over twelve years, the book by Malose Langa, while focused on boys becoming men, touches emotions. Langa wrote: 'I bore witness to emotions—of hurt, shame, humiliation, for example—which I understood

would not be easily shared with anyone and I treated these intimate sessions with respect.’ Another book, *Why Men Hurt Women and Other Reflections on Love, Violence and Masculinity* (Ratele, 2022) focuses more intensely on love, connecting the emotion to men’s violence against women. Ratele’s book is evidently influenced by the feminist work of African American cultural theorist bell hooks (2004). Similarly, Shahieda Jansen (2022) takes up the subject of emotions and healing, arguing for the imperative of male affect for gender transformation.

Transnationalism

While there was international collaboration from the very start, there appears to be more and more intensified efforts by South African masculinities scholars to work collaboratively and in principal roles with other scholars across diverse contexts (e.g., Gottzén, Bjørnholt, & Boonzaier, 2021; Gottzén et al., 2020; Ouzgane, & Morrell, 2005; Shefer et al., 2007). Remarkably, there is a relatively disproportionate number of collaborations with scholars in the Nordic countries given the size of these countries. Alongside the imperative to internationalise in higher education, scholars of gender and masculinity have taken up the project of intentional transformative transnational dialogues, arguing the value of collaborative thinking with others across nation-states and across cultural terrains. A special edition of *NORMA* in 2015 (Hearn, Ratele, & Shefer, 2015), which show-cases research on boys, men and masculinities in Finnish and South African contexts, is an example of such global North–South border-questioning, border-crossing, and border-changing dialogical work. While clearly holding some challenges (see Shefer, Hearn & Ratele, 2015), these authors argue that intentional transforming dialogues between the global South and global North around masculinities can be fruitful without losing local specificities and critical and self-critical perspectives. Such transnational engagements are not necessarily only about experiential and empirical context-based exchanges but also about crafting tools and methods and interrogating hegemonic theories and concepts, for example, hegemonic masculinity.

Decolonisation and decoloniality

In recent times, the intersectional lens with respect to gender, in general, has been complicated by a decolonial turn, globally and especially locally following student activism from 2015. While South Africa has a history of decolonising higher education and society in general, in recent years there has been an addition of a new vocabulary particularly influenced by Black, Latin American and South African scholars such Quijano, Lugones, Maldonado-Torres, Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Mignolo, Walsh, and Wynter. While decolonisation, the overcoming of colonial *rule* which continues to shape knowledge, is a much more familiar discourse in South African public life and universities, decoloniality, which refers to an active, political, cultural, epistemic, interpersonal and subjective undoing and unlearning of the persistence of colonial logics that permeate the globe, has offered additional tools for unthinking, thinking about, and rethinking masculinities, gender and gender justice. Decolonial theory-method, or better a decolonial attitude, is actually a re-turn, in the South African context, to key texts such as Fanon and Biko, which has allowed for a deepening of analysis within critical masculinity

studies as evidenced by the work of scholars like Ratele (2020, 2021) and Boonzaier and associates (2021). These scholars have opened up the difficult conversation about Black men's relationship to masculinity when in colonial and continued racist global contexts, they have been denied access to humanity.

This special issue

The articles in this special both touch on and extend earlier trends but also speak to new emphases and emerging critical areas of local and global significance.

Diloshini Govender and Deevia Bhana report on an empirical study of young masculinities investigating the role of the family in participants' subjective narratives on men and masculinities. Drawing on rich narratives with 25 respondents and a number of focus groups, the authors explore the key role of the family in regulating these boys' ideas and reported practices of masculinity. Emerging narratives include emphases in families of being a breadwinner and provider and the importance of heterosexual prowess for the making of successful masculinity. On the other hand, they also argue that while the family is influential, boys also actively resist, challenge and transgress the prescribed norms. As mentioned earlier, Deevia Bhana is a key scholar of early childhood development who has interrogated the making of gender binaries and normativities while also appreciating agency and resistance among young people as they negotiate their own subjectivities. This paper speaks well to the project of appreciating the multiplicity of male performances, at all ages. It also politically acts to disrupt the dominant unitary picture of boys and masculinities, particularly those from historically disadvantaged communities which tends to dominate in the global and local imaginary of South Africa. As elaborated, many local scholars have argued the way in which young Black poor men, for example, have been over focused on, resulting in a punitive, othering discourse on such communities and groups of men. This article contributes to the growing critique of such dynamics and the turn towards also documenting positive, resistant and alternative masculinities, boys and men.

The article by Pablo Aguera Reneses and Tanja Bosch on networked masculinities in South Africa opens a door to work on African masculinities on/and social media. As these researchers argue the role of what they call 'digitally mediated networked publics' in the negotiation of contemporary masculinities has not been widely researched in an African and indeed South African context. The authors rightly see social media, with specific attention to what is called 'Black Twitter', as a critical vehicle in the reproduction and contestation of hegemonic masculinities. Focussing on the humorous '#mensconference', a hashtag that trended in South Africa in 2019 and 2020 during the pre-Valentine's Day period, Reneses and Bosch contend that beyond the humour, the hashtag broached online (and offline?) public discussions about men, masculinity and love. Deploying a critical masculinities analytical frame, the researchers engage a qualitative thematic analysis of selected tweets on this Twitter site. They document a range of discourses that reflect and reiterate sexist and misogynistic narratives. However, they also highlight alternative, resistant and what may be seen as pro-feminist narratives on masculinity. They argue that such online platforms are productive in providing a space for men to express themselves and thus are also important spaces for the policing and contestation of hegemonic forms of masculinity and gender binaries. The

study flags the importance of current forms of social media in both the reproduction of dominant forms of being a man in South Africa, while also potentially offering a space for the resistance and reimagining of masculinities. This is a welcome contribution to current masculinities studies in South Africa since increasingly online modalities are key to communication, representation and the reproduction of dominant forms of masculinity. It also speaks to the emerging thematic of affect and emotion that we identified earlier.

Through a reading of the 2018 film *Die Stropers* (Afrikaans for The Harvesters) Grant Andrews focuses on the continued power of the patriarchal white Afrikaner male as a central figuration in apartheid histories that bleeds into contemporary imaginaries of white identities in South Africa today. Andrews sets the scene by elaborating how idealised white masculinity, embodied by the figure of the authoritative patriarch, is marked by heteronormativity. Such a figure gestures to a rigid and highly policed binary gender and sexuality articulated through the rejection of same-sex sexualities, since non-binary sexual and gender identities pose a threat to the nuclear heterosexual family around and conservative Christian moralities. The film by Etienne Kallos is about queer sons in a rural farm setting, a context strongly coloured by Afrikanerdom, whiteness and privilege. As the author convincingly illustrates, the film *queers* such masculinities and ‘offers possibilities for disentangling white masculinities from heterosexist ideologies’. This article is important in its contribution to the productive conversation between queer studies, postcolonial theory and critical masculinities scholarship and the ways in which race, gender and sexuality and other forms of social identity are entangled in the reproduction and legitimisation of power and privilege. Andrews concludes that films like *Die Stropers* ‘can be important in refiguring white Afrikaner masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa and can bring to light narratives and realities of sexual diversity that are marginalised, invisibilised and resisted by conservative patriarchal structures’. While there is a growing body of queer scholarship in South Africa (e.g. Francis, 2019; Livermon, 2014; Matebeni, 2021), as mentioned, and some work on queer masculinities (e.g. Msibi, 2018; Reddy, 1998), this paper adds to the growing focus on representation in popular culture, social media, art and aesthetics (see for example, add), in particular how art and media as we have earlier outlined, may be deployed to transgress dominant narrative and open up alternative imaginaries of genders and sexualities.

From debates about the crisis of masculinity, that figured in the early days of critical masculinities studies (see Macleod, 2008; Morrell, 2008), we have moved to debates about environmental crisis and the acknowledgement of anthropogenic damages and how that is entangled with patriarchy. In an article on climate change and its impacts on men from two Global Southern countries, Bangladesh and South Africa, Anisur Rahman Khan, Kopano Ratele, Isaac Dery and Shahriar Khandaker engage with the critical issue of the interrelations between hegemonic masculinities and anthropogenic climate change. This article highlights the impacts of climate change on men from two countries from the Global South, namely Bangladesh and South Africa, as they reflect on climate change as a major consideration in critical work on the un/making of dominant and marginal masculinities. The authors argue that climate change is intersectionally gendered so that women and men are being and will be affected differently. The same applies of course for class and geopolitical location, since those disadvantaged already and living in disadvantaged parts of the world will be affected more by such changes

than those privileged and protected by their privileged spaces. Yet, much of the research on climate change has focused on women, with little research on the impacts of climate change on men. In this paper, we draw attention to men and issues related to masculinities in the context of climate change discussions related to these two countries. The paper points to several climate-induced impediments such as drought, floods, salinity, lightning, high temperatures that challenge the fulfilment of men's socially prescribed roles and responsibilities. The article is important in bringing a critical masculinities lens to the subject of environmental crisis.

Whilst research on masculinities has grown exponentially over the last 20–30 years in South Africa, these authors note that there has been little work that engages with men, masculinities and climate change. The same could be said for research on climate change and environmental concerns in other contexts. While there is a growing body of work from ecofeminists, decolonial scholars, eco-critical and other scholars that engages with the Anthropocene, the dominance of humans and human influence on the planet, and its damages to humans, other species and the planet, there is only a small amount of local work that engages a critical masculinities lens within this critical terrain of scholarship (see Shefer, Sabelis & Wels, 2023). Thus this paper signals an important and gratifying shift in critical masculinities studies in global Southern context and in South Africa. However, even while the article acknowledges 'forms of masculinity themselves as sources of planetary destruction', since global policy is dominated by privileged men and 'power games between large economies and multinational corporations punting environmentally friendly cars and carbon-offsets' (Terry, 2009, p. 1–2), the article addresses rather the more humanist focus of the impact of such change on men themselves. The article does however gesture to and thus open up an important terrain of scholarship that clearly needs to be pursued in South Africa in recognising the entangled history and present of colonial, capitalist and patriarchal logics and imaginaries in current global and local human and planetary challenges.

Going forward and new directions

The moments we have highlighted in this brief scan of the South African CSMM field by way of introducing the current special edition of *NORMA*, are undoubtedly partial and we take responsibility also for our own subjective situatedness. However, we feel it is of interest to note that in doing a retrospective of this nature they key moments appear to hinge around particular events, the coming together of people in symposia, conferences and other academic forums and/or in collaborative research projects and publications. Dialogue and networking thus emerge as key practices for the emergence, growth and sustaining of scholarly fields like this and it is evident too that transnational dialogue has been important for the development of South African masculinities scholarship. In this regard, we would argue the priority of continued and further collaborative engagement in this and other scholarship as we face global challenges that expose every more clearly our interconnectedness – wars, climate change, pandemics, right wing swings and 'Putin gender ideology' backlash against feminist and critical thinking in general flag the importance of not only acknowledging and working with our relationalities and shared challenges but also our collective response-abilities and solidarities. More

intra-continental work and solidarities are also important, especially as transnational collaborations in the field of CSMM appear to be primarily with global Northern scholars rather than with other African and global Southern scholars. As South African scholars, historically isolated from other African countries by apartheid and now by global inequalities that continue to privilege global Northern scholars, we are particularly aware of the need to further efforts to find creative ways of collaborating in this field through South-South exchanges and collaborations.

In terms of new directions going forward, it is encouraging that the papers in this special issue point to a number of emerging, yet still relatively marginal, directions in South African CSMM. In particular, work that explores the way in which art and activism are shifting thinking and practices around masculinity, gender and sexuality through queer, feminist and other disruptive engagements is especially satisfying and hopefully will be a growing space of scholarly and public engagement. It is also welcomed and encouraging to see the emerging focus on climate change as part of the larger imperative to address anthropocentric damages. Such work is happening at a transnational level (for example, the new volume by Mellström & Pease, 2023), and also being taken up in many spaces in South African scholarship and activism. It is our hope that critical masculinities scholars will also prioritise the generation of CCSM scholarship that is embedded in our relationalities and response-abilities with/for each other, other species and the planet for our shared hopes for a liveable future.

ORCID

Tamara Shefer  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1201-8043>

Kopano Ratele  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1688-5136>

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