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A Hermeneutic Analysis of the Representation of Masculinities in *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005) and *Inxeba* (Trengrove 2017)

By
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ABSTRACT

Popular media influences the ways in which we relate to the world. Film, in particular, can be used to push narratives as to the ways women and men are meant to look and behave in society. Masculinity in film typically favours the macho ideal of what a man is supposed to be – how he behaves and how women and other men react to him. In film, as in real life, there are different types of masculinities who interact and are dependent on each other – some who are deemed as more desirable whilst others are seen as Other. Films such as *Tsotsi*, directed by Gavin Hood (2005) and *Inxeba (The Wound)*, directed by John Trengrove (2017) are excellent examples of black South African masculinity as represented in their respective settings. *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005) takes place in a township and portrays gangster masculinity along with other types of masculinities whilst *Inxeba* (Trengrove 2017) portrays Xhosa masculinity in a traditional setting. As such, the focus of the study is on Black South African masculinity.

The study investigates the ways in which the films represent the varying masculinities including hegemonic, hyper-, hybrid and subordinate masculinities, how these masculinities relate to each other, and how gender relations (male and female) reinforce these masculine ideals.

Keywords: Masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, subordinate masculinity, hypermasculinity, hybrid masculinity, patriarchy, gender

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Gender in the media

Access to media has never been easier, whether it be through your phone, laptop or tablet. Media is available at the tip of your fingers across different platforms and affects all of us daily. The media presents messages and representations of gender and racialised bodies that are often narrow and stereotypical. Soraya Giaccardi, L. Monique Ward, Rita C. Seabrook, Adriana Manago and Julia Lippman (2016:151) assert that "mainstream media are communicators of cultural norms and values" when it comes to gender. These stereotypes are considered real and true, influencing audiences in how they think about themselves and others in terms of gender and race. Whilst the following arguments relate to the media in general, for the purpose of this dissertation, I will be focusing on film.

Michael Morgan, James Shanahan and Nancy Signorielli (2015:681) reference the term "cultivation theory" (coined by George Gerbner), which proposes that "the more time a person spends watching television and being immersed in this entire mediated world, the more likely their views about reality will reflect the images that are seen". George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan and Nancy Signorielli (1986:21) assert that "cultivation theory" is "based on the persistent and pervasive pull of the television mainstream on a great variety of currents and undercurrents", such as the current cultural climate. According to Gerbner et al (1986:21), "culture cultivates the social relationships of a society", while "the mainstream defines its dominant current". Whilst "cultivation theory" is proposed in relation to television, the same can be said for media in general. What one is exposed to through the media (whether it be through platforms such as TikTok or film) influences how the one perceives the world. For example, if a Black man is represented negatively in the media, particularly so in the United States, unarmed Black men come to be seen as a threat based on their skin colour and one particular representation.[1]

Indeed, Janelle Goodwill, Nkemka Anyiwo, Ed-Dee G. Williams, Natasha C. Johnson, Jacqueline S. Mattis and Daphne C. Watkins (2018:288) describe how participants in their study on Black male representation in popular culture "provided descriptive accounts of how the portrayal of Black male popular culture figures within mainstream media informed their

[1] *The Guardian* reported 73 cases (6%) of unarmed Black people killed in America in 2023 alone during incidents in which "no offences were alleged" (Levin 2024:1).

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own perspectives concerning what it means to be a man". Thus, the representation of gender in the media is important as it shapes how people act in various societies.

According to Aimée Vega Monteil (2014:19), "the media reproduces sexist stereotypes" by associating male identity with "violence, domination, independence, aggression and power", whereas women are presented as "emotional, vulnerable and sensitive" and dependent on males. Additionally, Monteil (2014:19) asserts that women are predominantly stereotyped as "sexual objects" for "male consumption".[2] Boys and men are more likely to be shown in the media as active, "aggressive and as dominant"; however, these roles may "vary across media (e.g., TV programs vs. video games), across genres (e.g., TV comedies vs. TV dramas), and across time" (Giaccardi et al 2016:152). Black men, in particular, are often depicted in media through stereotypes of violence, criminality and hypersexuality (Goodwill et al 2019:289).

A pivotal debate relates to the portrayal of masculinities in film. Australian sociologist, Raewyn Connell (1995:2001), asserts that masculinities can be defined as practices that people engage in that position gender and the effects of gendered experiences in society. Masculinities is used in the plural to emphasise the complexity of men's gender constructions and "highlight the fact that gender is neither one-dimensional nor stagnant" (Goodwill et al 2019:289). In other words, gender is "an on-going, never entirely fulfilled practical 'accomplishment'" (Mfecane 2018:35). Masculinity is achieved through social interaction and is dependent on the existing norms in specific social settings in any given historical period. As a result, "manhood identities are negotiable and contestable, at any given time, because they have no biological origin or concrete physical attributes. They are merely social constructions and performances" (Mfecane 2018:35). Mary Vavrus (2002:353), however, contends that there are implications for media studies in viewing masculinity as a social construct, as "the media representation process plays an integral part in extending, containing and promoting particular ideals as appropriately masculine".

The present study is concerned with how two South African films problematise the representation of masculinity, with the focus being on Black South African masculinity. The films *Tsotsi*, directed by Gavin Hood, and *Inxeba* (*The Wound*), directed by John Trengove, represent multiple forms of masculinities that I seek to analyse as challenging the fixedness of

[2] An example being "female nudity in magazine articles" (Monteil 2014:21).

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Black South African masculinity. In *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005), this is achieved by presenting the protagonist as having a hegemonic and dominant masculinity juxtaposed with a softer, more caring side. *Inxeba* (Trengrove 2017) presents the conflict faced when being presented as a hegemonic and dominant man with rejecting the heterosexual hegemonic norms and occupying (or embracing) a subordinated, gay masculinity due to the fact that "oppression positions homosexual masculinities at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men" (Connell 2005:78).

Robert Hanke (1998) contends that popular culture tends to showcase hegemonic masculinity[3] (such as the 'macho man') to subordinate alternative forms of masculinity, such as gay masculinity and 'soft' masculinity. Vavrus (2002:352) suggests that by portraying men in more subordinate positions, the media "challenge some traditional notions about men". Vavrus (2002:352) further adds that representations of 'softer' men combined with heterosexual masculinities challenge the portrayal of hegemonic masculinities in visual media. In this study, I will explore how Vavrus's contention may apply to *Tsotsi* as the main character, Tsotsi, encompasses both hegemonic and 'softer' – feminised – masculinities through his discovery of his nurturing abilities. In *Inxeba*, the character Xolani is a representation of both hegemonic and subordinated masculinities.

Tsotsi and *Inxeba* have been chosen because they generated an interesting conversation surrounding Black South African masculinities which, according to Moolman (2023:96),[4] have been categorised as "dangerous, hypersexual monsters". For example, *Tsotsi* received an Oscar for Best Foreign Feature in 2006 and was commended by Nelson Mandela for "putting South Africa on the map" (Dovey 2007:143). However, real South African *tsotsis* argued that while Chweneyagae, who plays the character Tsotsi, was a good actor, they thought that "he looked too 'sloppy' and 'soft' to be a *tsotsi*, and that his 'taal [dialect]' was 'off'" (Dovey 2007:153). *Inxeba*, on the other hand, sparked controversy in the Xhosa community for its portrayal of *ulwaluko* – an initiation ritual that is traditionally a well-kept secret from outsiders, boys and women – which led to the film being "banned from cinemas" (Siseko Kumalo & Linokhule Gama 2018:1).

[3] Hegemonic masculinity refers to the 'ideal' form of masculinity in a given society and will be elaborated on in later chapters.

[4] Moolman herself does not view these men in this way, it is how they are categorised according to the crimes that they have committed.

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Tsotsi (Hood 2005) and *Inxeba* (Trengrove 2017) have been chosen to demonstrate that masculinities in male dominated spaces are nuanced and that the traditional assumption of their being only one way to be a man is a false narrative pushed by the patriarchy, when masculinities are in fact fluid. Together, they represent a number of different masculinities, namely hyper-masculine gangster and caring masculinities in *Tsotsi* and hegemonic and subordinate and homosexual masculinities in *Inxeba*. Moreover, these films juxtapose more 'manly' masculinities against 'softer' masculinities. Certain characters present more visibly hegemonic and hyper-masculine masculinities, whereas some present subordinated masculinities and others represent the notion that masculinities are not fixed and thus change in presentation according to context. The films generate an additional conversation about how these masculinities are situated within their specific contexts – the hyper-masculine gangster masculinities of the urban South African township in *Tsotsi* and the strict hegemonic masculinities that are not only found but also expected in rural South Africa in *Inxeba*, particularly within the context of male initiation ceremonies. Furthermore, both films still carry relevance in the current climate with the masculinities represented in both films still being perpetuated today, almost 20 years and a decade later.

1.2 Background and aims

Through conducting a literature review on the representation of men and masculinities in popular visual culture, focusing on film, this study describes and explores the portrayal of Black South African masculinity in the South African films *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005) and *Inxeba* (*The Wound*) (Trengove 2017). I achieve this by analysing the films using a hermeneutic interpretative approach. The objective is to explore how masculinities are represented in these films and how they both subvert and reinforce the notion that men must be dominant and hegemonic in order to be seen as 'real' men. Additionally, I will explore how the main characters interact with each other and how other men in the individual films relate to the main characters, as well as how these masculinities contribute to the storyline. This will be achieved through a visual analysis of selected images to provide evidence for how particular masculinities are represented in the films.

A central theme relating to both movies that will be analysed is the intersection of masculinity and men's roles and the connection they have with violence, as some of the drivers of violence include the construction and practices of masculinity – which relate to what it means to be *indoda/mmona* ('real' man) – that are linked to power and dominance. With this in mind, other

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themes that will be analysed include the construction of masculinities, the relationships men have with each other, tensions relating to brutal confrontations versus having a caring nature and subordination by hegemonic masculinities, and societal and/or cultural norms.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions I explore relate to how the characters and stories develop, with the main focus being on race and gender.

- What masculinities are represented in *Tsotsi* and *Inxeba*?
- How do the time periods over which the films take place affect character progression?
- What is the significance of the deaths in the films in relation to story progression and development of other characters?
- What role do the female characters play in constructing the masculinities represented in each film?

1.4 Literature review and theoretical framework

The main theoretical framework is gender studies in South African films, namely *Tsotsi* and *Inxeba*, with a particular focus on the representation of masculinities. Judith Butler (1988:523) suggests that "the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time". In other words, one does not act in a masculine or feminine manner because one is male or female, but rather to be seen by others as male or female. The implication of Butler's notion of gender as a public act is that performativity requires an audience, suggesting that gender performativity is not only to be viewed, but needs to be understood and judged by spectators.[5] According to Brickell (2005:29), "Butler's performativity usefully suggests that masculinities appear within language and society as effects of norms and power relations rather than prosocial biological essences", which spearheaded the importance of language and discourse in the production of masculinity.

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[5] This is not to say that one has no gender in private, but rather that "performativity" is a "culturally-scripted character of identity" that is "generated by power through repeated citations of norms and their transgression" (Geoff Boucher 2006:113).

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The literature explored in this study relates to men and masculinities and their position in society, including gang culture and in cultural situations such as initiation. The literature review also considers gender-based violence, particularly in South Africa, and the subordination of men and women by hegemonic men. Additionally, the positioning of homosexual masculinities in a hetero-patriarchal context (both in gangs and in *ulwaluko*) will be explored and analysed. Further themes explored are the hierarchies of masculinities in which men are positioned in the social context, as well as how masculinities are portrayed in the media and popular culture. What follows is a brief overview of the literature that is elaborated on in Chapter 2.

1.4.1 Gender and Performativity

Judith Butler (1988:523) asserts that gender is a performative task by an individual to enact the gender that is assigned formally and culturally as presumably fitting with the individual's sexual (genital) configuration. Gender performativity is therefore a matter of repeating norms to which one is assigned and is not a construction of a gendered self. The implication of the notion that gender is a public act is that an audience is required, which further suggests that gender performativity is not only to be viewed, but also needs to be determined and understood by spectators. The performativity of masculinities is thus to appear within language and society as the product of norms and power relations conferred upon by society, rather than prosocial biological reality. Due to the belief in "the performative nature of gender behaviour as though it were a true, stable, and universal indicator of the sex of the subject", people are required to "pass" as male or female (David Buchbinder 2013:55). Buchbinder (2013:55) asserts that "culture requires men and women to perform this act of passing on a daily basis", at the risk of consequences such as "marginalization, ridicule, and humiliation through verbal or physical abuse, even, in a worst-case scenario, death".

1.4.2 Masculinities

Masculinity, according to Buchbinder (2013:25), can be defined as the "social and cultural expectations of a man and the manner and degree to which he acknowledges and lives up to them". Buchbinder (2013:146) describes masculinity as "conferred upon the individual male by other men" and may be revoked by them if he is thought to have "deviated from or to have fallen short of the recommended/required practices of that masculinity". In other words, according to Buchbinder (2013:25), masculinity relates to the set of social and cultural

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practices that are associated with being a man, as well as how and the extent to which the man achieves these expectations of 'manliness', which can result in him being stripped of his awarded status. Masculinity is defined by Connell (1995:71) as a simultaneous "place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture". Buchbinder therefore asserts that masculinities have to do with men and their relation to other men, while Connell proposes that masculinities correlate with men and women and how they are affected by their position in how they relate to each other.

Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelhan (2004:82-83) assert that masculinities are referred to in the plural because this recognises "that ways of being a man and cultural representations of/about men vary … between societies and different groupings of men within any one society". Furthermore, Rachel Jewkes, Rober Morrell, Jeff Hearn, Emma Lundqvist, David Blackbeard, Graham Lindegger, Michael Quayle, Yandisa Sikweyiya and Lucas Gottzén (2015:113) state that "masculinities are multiple, fluid and dynamic". In other words, there are many types of masculinities within a given society at any one time. The fluidity of masculinity means that instead of possessing or having 'a' masculinity, "individuals move through and produce masculinity by engaging in masculine practices", as maintained by Mimi Schippers (2007:86). There are different hierarchies of masculinities in which men (subconsciously) compare themselves with hypermasculinity at one end of the spectrum, and subordinate masculinity at the other (Parrott & Zeichner 2003:70). However, because masculinities are fluid, men can move within these spaces. In other words, the hierarchy is produced and maintained through social and cultural practices and not dictated by force.

The most desired form of masculinities is hegemonic, which is defined by Connell (1995:10) as embodying the "dominant position of men and subordination of women". In other words, hegemonic masculinity refers to that which constitutes a 'real man' or a form of 'successful masculinity' which has become the dominant form of masculinity accepted in a particular social and cultural group. The notion of hegemony derives from Antonio Gramsci's "analysis of class relations and refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life" (Connell 2005:77). With regard to cultural currency, hegemonic masculinities are not only distinguished from marginalised or subordinate masculinities, but also from hypermasculinity, due to not necessarily being maintained through the use of violence and domination. Hypermasculinity is "a personality trait that predisposes men to

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engage in behaviours that assert physical power and dominance in interactions" (Mosher & Shirkin 1984:152). A key aspect of hegemonic masculinity is that it creates a subordinate masculinity, as it "combines several features: a hierarchy of masculinities … and the interplay between men's identity, men's ideals, interactions, power, and patriarchy" (Hearn & Morrell 2012:40). Hegemonic masculinity cannot exist without subordinated others. This results in hegemonic masculinity upholding power and status inequalities, both between men and women and among men.

Subordinate masculinity is defined by, and in opposition to, hegemonic masculinity in a society. According to Messerschmidt (2019:29), subordinate masculinities – such as feminised men – are "constructed as lesser than, or aberrant and deviant to, hegemonic masculinity".[6] Subordinate tropes of masculinity are therefore positioned outside the legitimate form of maleness and are controlled, oppressed, and subjugated. Subordinate masculinities subvert hegemonic masculinity; however, they do not necessarily alter heterosexually contoured gender power. Gay masculinities (considered a form of subordinate masculinities) are a visible form of ostracised and subjugated manhood which, concerning Africa in the last few years, have "particularly troubled hetero-patriarchal politics" (Ratele 2013:252). This means that their existence is seen as a form of contestation of hetero-patriarchal societies and is often viewed as abhorrent.

The term "'hybrid masculinities'" refers to a blurring of gender differences and boundaries that do not present a threat to inequality (Demitrou 2001:384). It enables hegemonic men to have a 'softer', more 'sensitive' side to them, without falling out of the bounds of the constructed hegemonic masculinities that they have achieved. According to Brian Donovan (1998:826), hybrid masculinities incorporate aspects of "'sensitive' and 'tough' men", which results in "innovative forms of power that shore up male authority" (Donovan 1998:820). Thus, they are seen by other men as combining toughness and tenderness without the threat of inequality.

1.4.3 Black African Masculinities

A central form of masculinity explored in this dissertation is African masculinity. According to Jewkes and Morell (2010:1), the ideal of Black African manhood emphasises toughness and

[6] An example of a subordinate masculinity that is constructed as "deviant" to hegemonic masculinity, as argued by Connell, is "effeminate men" (Messerschmidt 2019:86).

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strength, as well as the expression of remarkable sexual success. In South Africa, there are multiple definitions of masculinities, as well as dynamic hierarchies of identity where different masculinities do not hold equal social respect. Research conducted by Jewkes and Morell (2010:5) demonstrates that Black South African dominant and hegemonic masculinities value "physical strength, courage, toughness and an acceptance of hierarchical authority" and, most importantly, men are required to be able to exercise control over women as well as over other men.

In most South African societies, hegemonically masculine men are expected to be in control of women and dominant over women and other men with violence used to establish this dominance, as violence serves to reproduce and reinforce power inequities (Mazibuko & Umejesi 2019:54). Despite hegemonic masculinity not being a product of violence, it can be maintained through domestic violence relating to a woman's status, as it is characterised by a desire to uphold inequality and results from a man's desire to exercise power and control over female partners (Mazibuko & Umejesi 2019:54). In South African communities, this behaviour has been legitimised and justified within the cultural framework of patriarchy in which "men exert control over women" (Mazibuko & Umejesi 2019:52). Gender-based violence is constructed as inevitable within a discourse that positions women as responsible for gender-based violence and, as such, are expected to establish and follow precautionary strategies.

1.4.4 Masculinities in the Media

Media studies that have focused on the portrayal of men and displays of masculinity generally demonstrated that a particular kind of masculinity is most often presented, namely the "dominant and culturally ideal, hegemonic masculinity" and, in doing so, "subordinate alternative forms of masculinity" (Soulliere 2006:2). Soulliere (2006:2) asserts that dominant hegemonic masculinity is associated with many characteristics that appear consistently in media presentations of men, such as "violence and aggression, emotional restraint, toughness, risk-taking, physical strength, courage, power and dominance, competitiveness, and achievement and success"; however, this is not necessarily the case off-screen.

According to Kenneth MacKinnon (2003:73), because it is fluid, masculinity "can increasingly redefine itself in terms of its sensitivity, emotional expressiveness and nurturing qualities", as well as in terms of its "openness to improving interpersonal relations". Part of contemporary

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television's representation of masculinity includes images of men's 'softer' sides. It has become more common to see men who express their feelings and care for others over choosing violence to solve their problems. MacKinnon (2003) further argues that the appeal of 'soft masculinity' could be seen as underlying the penetration and parodies of conventional masculinity. This is the kind of man that can be related to on a more personal level by men who reject hegemonic masculinity.

1.5 Methodology

This dissertation uses a hermeneutic interpretative approach to analyse the films *Tsotsi* and *Inxeba*. In order to apply a hermeneutic approach, this study draws on prior knowledge of masculinities gained from the literature review to interpret the different masculinities that are portrayed in *Tsotsi* and *Inxeba*. Hermeneutic philosophy centres around "interpretation of understanding" (Arnold & Fischer 1994:55). German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1998:295) asserts that hermeneutics is founded on the "position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond with the subject matter that comes into language through the traditionary text and has, or acquires, a connection with the tradition from which it speaks". The subject matter of this dissertation has been chosen based on my curiosity about the representation of masculinities in these two specific settings (gangs and *ulwaluko*), as they both challenge and reaffirm stereotypes surrounding what it means to be 'a man' in these settings. According to Arnold and Fischer's (1994:55) chapter entitled 'Hermeneutics and Consumer Research' in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, hermeneutics investigates how the "subject-object dichotomy may be bridged by an interpreter engaging the 'other' through a reading that is grounded in, but not determined solely by, the interpreter's [pre-]understanding". In other words, it is the object – in this case the films – that can be interpreted based on the subject's pre-understanding.[7] Nicholas Davey (1999:10) argues that "hermeneutic reflection articulates and inhabits the space between meaning and utterance", meaning that an image is interpreted through an analysis of the meaning provided by the image,[8] rather than through an analysis of that image.[9] Davey (1999:10) continues to state that "far from subordinating image to word, hermeneutical aesthetics is concerned with the sensitive use of words to bring forth what is

[7] Pre-understanding relates to what one already knows of the topic through previous exposure.

[8] What the image explicitly tells the viewer. For example, a man holding a gun to a woman tells the viewer that he is using violence towards the woman.

[9] What can be deduced through analysing the image further. For example, the way in which the man is holding the gun to the woman could show whether he is going to shoot her to kill her or if he is merely using the weapon as a threat.

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held in an image", reaffirming the argument that hermeneutic analysis relates to the meaning of an image, rather than the image itself.

In terms of the films, the approach to the analysis will be to look at how the different characters' masculinities are represented and how these representations give meaning to the overall plot. I thus discuss the changing representation of the character David (Tsotsi), the male protagonist in *Tsotsi*, to understand how his character (and his masculinity in particular) develops and possibly changes according to his circumstances and the people he interacts with. Furthermore, I explore the representation of the characters Xolani, Vija and Kwanda in *Inxeba*, in order to understand how Xolani and Vija can hold the positions of dominant and hegemonic masculinities while being subordinate and to understand the interaction being *indoda* (a 'real' man), particularly relating to violence and homosexuality. I will analyse specific scenes in each film relating to the characters' representations of masculinity and address how they are often portrayed according to the stereotypical norm, as well as how they challenge the stereotypical notions of what it means to be masculine.

1.6 Overview of chapters

Chapter 1 has laid the basis for the study by presenting the research aims and objectives and the research questions. It also explained the theoretical framework and methodological approach of the study. The next chapter (Chapter 2) is a discussion of the literature that grounds this study. It broaches the topics discussed, such as masculinities (hegemonic, subordinate and hybrid), as well as the hierarchies in which they are positioned, in further depth. Additionally, the literature on African masculinities and masculinities in gang culture, namely *tsotsis* (South African gangsters), and the role of homosexuality in *ulwaluko* are explored. Chapter 3 analyses the film *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005), in which the themes of gangsterism in South Africa, gang masculinities – including hardened versus softer masculinities – and violence are explored, alongside the role that women play in gangs and the representation of the masculinities that are portrayed. Chapter 4 analyses the film *Inxeba* (*The Wound*) (Trengrove 2017), which takes place in the mountains of the Eastern Cape in South Africa during *ulwaluko*. The chapter explains the concept of *ulwaluko*, looks at the themes of masculinities and *indoda* (the Xhosa word for a heteronormative man) and examines homosexuality and homophobia in *ulwaluko*. Additionally, the relationship between *ulwaluko*, manliness and violence and, finally, the representations of the masculinities that are portrayed are also explained. The final chapter

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(Chapter 5) provides an overview of the main outcomes of the study. It reflects on the limitations of the research and provides suggestions for further research.

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CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

People are influenced by what they hear and see in the media and often "display attitudes and beliefs that closely resemble depictions within media content" (Giaccardi et al 2016:153). Giaccardi et al (2016:160) further state that media exposure contributes to both beliefs about what men and women should do and how they should act. Representations of masculinity therefore impact people worldwide and vary from culture to culture. Masculinity is not stable, nor is it linear or culturally specific, which means that while it may differ from culture to culture and may be different in the different spaces that men occupy, it is always a central feature of society and is fluid. It is also performative, as masculinity is displayed to, and affirmed by, other men. In other words, to be 'seen' or acknowledged as masculine, one must act in a certain way that is recognised as 'masculine'. This is because, in a wider sense, gender itself is performative, as asserted by Judith Butler (1988:522).

Media studies that have focused on "depictions of men and displays of masculinity" generally indicate that primarily the "dominant, culturally ideal, hegemonic form of masculinity" is portrayed. According to Soulliere (2006:2), dominant hegemonic masculinity is associated with several characteristics, including violence, aggression, emotional restraint and toughness. These are coupled with "risk-taking, physical strength, courage, power and dominance, competitiveness, and achievement and success", all of which are portrayed in the media (Soulliere 2006:6).

This literature review explains how gender is performative. The literature also explains the hierarchies within the concept of masculinities. Hegemonic masculinities, as argued by Raewyn Connell (2005:77), are the most revered and desired in the hierarchy, while subordinate masculinities, as argued by James W. Messerschmidt (2018:29), are at the opposite end of the spectrum. Furthermore, the literature explains the notions of hybrid, as argued by Steven Arxer.

Bridges (2004:69), and soft masculinities and how men can move through these masculinities. I will also explain the discourse of Black masculinities in South Africa, both in the context of gangs as well as in the process of becoming a man through *ulwaluko* (a Xhosa initiation ritual), as these are central concepts in the analyses of the films in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

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2.2 Gender and Performativity

Gender, according to Butler (1988:523), is a "performative undertaking by an individual to formally and culturally enact the gender that is culturally assigned as fitting with the individual's sexual (genital) configuration". Butler (1988:523) asserts that "the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time". In other words, one does not act in a masculine or feminine manner because one is male or female, but rather to be seen by others as male or female. Gender is further understood as "the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (Butler 1988:519). Thus, gender is part of a process of a "performative set of acts within a highly regulated frame". Indeed, Butler adds that "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender" because that identity is "performatively constituted" by the resulting expressions (Butler 1999:25). The implication of Butler's notion of gender as a public act is that this performativity requires an audience, suggesting that gender performativity is not only to be viewed, also needs to be understood and judged by spectators. Similarly, Connell (2005:7) defines gender as a social practice, referring to "bodies and what bodies do", and not as a social practice that is reduced to the body[10] and asserts that gender relations play a pivotal role in social structure as a whole.

Gender performativity is thus a matter of repeating norms that are assigned and not a construction of a gendered self.[11] Butler (1993:21) argues that gender is performative to the extent that it is "the effect of a regulatory regime of gender differences in which genders are divided and hierarchized under constraint". She further argues that "social constraints, taboos, prohibitions, [and] threats of punishment operate in the ritualized repetition of norms, and this repetition constitutes the temporalized scene of gender construction and destabilization" (Butler 1993:21). Geoff Boucher (2006:115) asserts that the implication is that gender (as theorised by Butler) "is not the expression of an 'abiding substance,' but a naturalised social ritual of heterosexuality, masquerading as an expression of natural sex". According to David Brickell (2005:29), Butler's argument around performativity suggests that masculinities "appear within language and society as effects of norms and power relations rather than

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[10] In saying this, Connell is referring to how bodies (people) act as masculine or feminine and not merely whether or not the body (person) looks masculine or feminine according to a given society.

[11] One does not construct a gender for oneself but, in order to be perceived by others as a given gender, through enacting gender norms.

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prosocial biological essences." Butler's view spearheaded the importance of language and discourse in the production of femininity and masculinity, with masculinity being the topic of this dissertation.

2.3 Masculinities in the Media

The portrayal of masculinity in television shifts with the understanding of masculinity in a social context, meaning that representations of men in television vary according to where the content is made and often reflect predominant masculinities of particular social groups. This means that, should the socio-cultural understanding of masculinity accept a 'softer' and more sensitive masculinity, that is what will be more prominently portrayed. Thus, the representation of masculinities in contemporary television – such as the portrayal of men's 'softer' sides[12] – can adhere to, negotiate, or challenge the hegemonic hierarchy. There is also "evidence that depictions of masculine gender roles on television vary by genre, as do the implications of such depictions" (Scharrer & Blackburn 2018:154).

Aristides Gazetas (2003:190) proposes that the narratives of feature films are a key source of information, as well as an expression of the world in which we imagine ourselves. Gazetas (2003:190) believes that these narratives are firstly a way to symbolise events in which the viewer is situated in different 'space-time perspectives', and secondly become 'experiences of experiences', giving expression to different cultural identities or representations of the 'Other'. Lastly, Gazetas (2003:192) states that film narratives "can become important ideological weapons for other film-makers". Therefore, Gazetas (2003:192) states that film narratives enable us to "revisit and recapture the past, re-evaluate the present and project into the future world that imaginatively extends our abilities to function as human beings".

According to Jordache Ellapen (2018:243), the film *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005) depicts the "Back African masculine as dangerous, deviant and on the fringes of society", and relies on stereotypes that "perpetuate the colonial and apartheid gaze of Black African identity". Most "post-apartheid films" depict Black African masculinity through the image of the "gangster", situating Black masculinity within the township (Ellapen 2018:243). As such, the township space and the *tsotsi* appear synonymous with "authentic" depictions of "Black African masculinity" in South Africa (Ellapen 2018:244). Ellapen (2018:251) argues that the perceived Black African identity, particularly masculinity in a township setting, appears to be "fixed,

[12] The discussion of men's 'softer' sides will be explained further on.

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static, and unchanging through time and space". However, in my discussion of selected male characters in the film, I show that representations of Black African masculinities in *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005) are far more complex than this narrow view. For example, the film provides a representation of a young man who negotiates his hegemonic masculinity as a gangster and gang leader, alongside a 'softer', more caring side that he ignites by caring for a baby. Similarly, the 2017 film *Inxeba* (Trengrove 2017) is an example of a battle between the hegemonic and dominant masculinities that are culturally expected of men who also occupy the position of subordinate masculinities. Thus, I analyse both films to show how they negotiate the complex interplay of Black masculinity in South Africa.

2.4 Masculinities

Brickell (2005:32) asserts that "the masculine self can be understood as reflexively constructed as performances". This is to say that "performances can construct masculinity rather than merely reflect its pre-existence and socially constructed masculine selves act in the social world and are acted on simultaneously". Buchbinder (2013:25) reiterates Butler's argument and defines masculinities as the expectations placed on being a man, both social and cultural, as well as the manner and degree to which he acknowledges and fulfils them. Kalle Berggren (2014:8) introduces theorist, John Stoltenberg (2000), who describes men as "being torn between two different modes of relating", termed "'manhood'" and "'selfhood'". The discussion of "selfhood" comprises elements such as "vulnerability, reciprocity, and justice in relating to others", whilst the ''manhood'' discussion proposes "hierarchy between men and women, being strong and scary, and treating women as objects" (Berggren 2014:8). Stoltenberg (2000) concludes that those who have been "'raised to be a man'" possess traces of being "positioned by these incompatible but competing discourses" (Berggren 2014:8). Thus, Berggren (2014:9) asserts that, when applied to "post-structural feminism", Stoltenberg's (2000) masculinity theory can be understood as men being "complex and contradictory, positioned by discourses that construct them as both oppressors and equals".

Buchbinder (2013:146) asserts that masculinity is granted to the individual male by other men and may be overridden by these men at any time if the individual is believed to have "deviated from or to have fallen short of the recommended/required practices of that masculinity". Connell (1995:71) however, defines masculinity as not only a position in gender relations, but also as "practices through which men and women engage that position in gender, and the effects

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of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture." In other words, masculinity relates to the set of social and cultural practices that are associated with being a man,[13] as well as how and the extent to which a man achieves these expectations of 'manliness'. For example, Berggren (3-4:2014) states that in the 1970s, masculinity had to do with "distancing from femininity and being emotional". Instead, one was required to strive for "success through competition", be "in control" and act "aggressively" (Berggren 2014:4). Jamison Green (2005:297) defines masculinity as a "socially negotiable quality" that can be perceived through established symbols and signals[14] that together "inform other people in that context concerning the individual's status in a given group".

Power is a key aspect of masculinity which can include "both physical strength and symbolic power in the form of social status" (Justice Medzani 2020:13). Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelhan (2004:82-83) assert that 'masculinities' should be used in the plural because it recognises "that ways of being a man and cultural representations of/about men vary … between societies and different groupings of men within any one society". In addition, Jewkes et al (2015:113) state that "masculinities are multiple, fluid and dynamic" with Keketso Matlebyane (2020:126) adding that masculinities are "multiple in nature". In other words, there are many types of masculinities circulating within a given society at any one time. The fluidity of masculinity means that instead of possessing or having 'a' masculinity, "individuals move through and produce masculinity by engaging in masculine practices", as asserted by Mimi Schippers (2007:86). Schippers (2007:86) adds that "masculinity is an identifiable set of practices" occurring "across space and over time and are engaged in and performed conjointly by groups, communities, and societies". Thus, masculinities are fluid gender representations and practices that vary across cultures, are situated in relation to women as well as other men, and are context specific. In this study, I use the term masculinities in the plural to acknowledge the different and complex forms masculinity may take.

Connell (1987:110) asserts that hierarchies of masculinities consist of at least three elements: "hegemonic masculinity, conservative masculinities … and subordinated masculinities". *The International Encyclopaedia of Men and Masculinities* (2007:254) states that "hierarchical ranking is a process in which men compare themselves and others actively and incessantly to

[13] Masculinity relates to the set of social practices that are associated with being a man in relation to men and women, as well as between powerful and 'subordinate' men.
[14] The signs and symbols Green (2005:297) is referring to include "clothing, behaviours" and "occupation".

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their general or contextual ideal type". It should be noted that the hierarchy of masculinities is a "pattern of hegemony", and not a "domination of force" (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005:846). In other words, the hierarchy is produced and maintained through social and cultural practices and not dictated by obvious force. However, even though Connell's notion of hierarchy allows for the movement between different masculinities, it does not account for the fact that it is possible to be situated in more than one form of masculinity simultaneously. According to Robert Morrell, Rachel Jewkes, Graham Lindegger and Vijay Hamlall (2013:5), there is the possibility of hegemonic masculinity to operate overtly in one specific case, while a "different arrangement can be held elsewhere". In other words, it is possible for a man to be hegemonic in one aspect of his life and subordinate in another. Furthermore, Linda Mshweshwe (2020:3) suggests that there can be multiple hegemonic masculinities in a given society "developed amongst marginalised men" and emphasising "power and force". The selected films illustrate this notion of men being hegemonic in once instance and subordinated in another, through the positioning of the main characters Tsotsi and Xolani in *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005) and *Inxeba* (Trengrove 2017) respectively. This dissertation intends to draw on the hierarchies of masculinities within specific contexts – gangsterism in the township in *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005) and the mountains in which *ulwaluko* takes place in *Inxeba* (Trengrove 2017), as well as the concurrence of hegemonic and subordinated masculinities.

2.5 Hegemonic Masculinities

The concept of hegemonic masculinity, as defined by Connell (1987:183), relates to what is always established in relation to various subordinated masculinities and women. Connell (1995:77) states that hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the "configuration of gender practice … which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women". In other words, hegemonic masculinity refers to that which constitutes a 'real man' or a form of 'successful masculinity' which has become the dominant form of masculinity accepted in a particular social and cultural group. According to Christian Groes-Green (2009:295), "hegemony is based on stability, complicity and some degree of consent between the stronger and the weaker part in a specific power structure" with force, coercion or violence used when "'naturalized' power is undermined". Therefore, hegemony does not denote obvious or physical violence; instead, it is supported by force, meaning that domination is achieved through "culture, institutions, and persuasion" (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005:382). This is reaffirmed by Morrell et al (2013:12), who state that

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violence is not typically used as an initial means of achieving control and dominance by hegemonic masculinity, but can be used to maintain the dominance and control.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity draws from Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony. In this definition, "hegemony" requires the "hegemonic class" to take the "interests of the classes and groups over which it exercises its "hegemony" into consideration (Encyclopaedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line 1982). Similarly, hegemonic masculinity has sustained the most social approval and offers a man great power if he is seen by others, particularly other men, to be the living personification of this way of being male.[15] This relates to Gramsci's notion of men adopting a principle (the superiority of hegemonic masculinity) that is unified into a collective of new will – men desire to attain hegemonic masculinity to be seen as the 'ultimate man'. Hegemonic masculinity also entails standards and norms of masculinity or masculine behaviour that are always culturally informed or bound. This is reiterated by Peter J. Kareithi (2014:30), who asserts that the function of hegemonic masculinity is to "legitimate the social ascendancy of men over women in all aspects of life", apparent in "many societies all over the world". Kareithi (2014:30) also states that hegemonic masculinity "emphasises the superiority of 'manly' men over the 'not-so-manly' men". According to Shelly Patcholok (2009:474), certain masculinities are deemed "culturally superior to others", and hegemonic masculinity is the "most honoured or desired at a particular time and in a particular setting".

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005:198) affirm this statement by arguing that hegemonic masculinity is "culturally honoured, glorified, and extolled situationally – such as at the broader societal level (e.g., through the mass media)." Kareithi (2014:30) introduces theorist Trujillo (1991:291-2), who expands the definition of hegemonic masculinity through the identification of "five major features" defined when "masculinity was hegemonic in US media culture".[16] The five features are (1) power defined "in terms of physical force and control' (particularly in the representation of the body)", (2) hegemonic masculinity defined through "occupational achievement in an industrial, capitalistic society", (3) hegemonic masculinity "represented in terms of familial patriarchy", (4) hegemonic masculinity "symbolized by the daring, romantic frontiersman of yesteryear and of the present-day outdoorsman", and (5) "when hetero sexually defined and centred on the representation of the phallus" (Karethi 2014:30).

[15]Morrell et al (2013:5) define the Gramscian model of male dominance as grounded in consent.
[16] Kareithi's use of past tense does not mean that hegemonic masculinity is no longer present in US mass media but that these features happen to be more prevalent pre-2000s.

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A key aspect of hegemonic masculinity is that it creates and requires subordinate masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity "combines several features: a hierarchy of masculinities, differential access among men to power (over women and other men), and the interplay between men's identity, men's ideals, interactions, power, and patriarchy" (Hearn & Morrell 2012:40). Benita Moolman (2015:96) asserts that "the power and privilege of hegemonic masculinity" in Africa are "legitimised through the simultaneous existence of a dual ideological space, modernity and its binary, tradition, often coexist".

As well as oppressing women, hegemonic masculinity subordinates other masculinities, and positions these concerning itself so that the values expressed by these other masculinities do not have legitimacy. Thus, hegemonic masculinities present their version of masculinity – how 'real men' should and do behave – as the cultural ideal. A key feature of the construction of hegemonic masculinity, as stated by Jewkes et al (2015:113), is heterosexuality; therefore, it is "constructed in a gender position that is as much 'not gay' as it is 'not female'". Morrell (1998:607) states that subordinate and subversive masculinities, which I discuss in more detail later, exist among marginal or dominated groups and may be "oppositional to the dominant masculinity" (for example by factors such as age or ethnicity). Despite these hierarchical relations appearing rigidly structured, they are, as are masculinities in general, continuously open to challenge and change (by both men and women). This means that the dominance of hegemonic masculinity is susceptible to the challenges of subordinated and marginalised masculinities and femininities. Indeed, Morrell et al (2013:10) state that Mfecane (2008) associates hegemonic masculinity with "power over other men", as well as the endeavour of "the subordination and marginalisation of other men/masculinities and the attempt to make them invisible". This, in turn, creates ongoing contests between men and the inclination to position themselves in line with "hegemonic ideals in order to maximise their own power" (Morrell et al 2013:11).

In popular culture, according to Antonia Randolph (2006:204), "rappers typically construct a hegemonic masculinity of male dominance".[17] Furthermore, there is the potential to be positioned as subordinate[18] by hegemonic masculinities while still drawing on dominant masculinities and assuming a dominant position over other men. The result is hegemonic masculinity upholding power and status inequalities – both between men and women and

[17] According to Tea Torbenfelt Bengston (2015:415) male dominance relates to the "unquestionable right to have (heterosexual) sex or to defend themselves violently if they are not respected or feel threatened of assault".
[18] Subordinate masculinities will be discussed in detail further on.

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among men. Hegemony is then an "achievement", as well as an "expression of social power", that is awarded rather than forcefully taken (Connell 1987:107). It is important to keep in mind that, as Connell (1995:77) notes, "the most visible bearers of hegemonic masculinity are (not) always the most powerful people".

Depictions of men and masculinity in the media often fall within the bounds of hegemonic masculinity. The media's depictions of men represent the importance of "status and accomplishment within masculinity through the placement of male characters in positions of power and leadership" (Giaccardi et al 2016:152). Additionally, male characters across media formats are often depicted as "aggressive, dominant, and violent" and as "engaging in high-risk behaviours" (Giaccardi et al 2016:152). This is reaffirmed by Aimée Vega Monteil (2014:19), who states that the media reproduces sexist content in which male identity is associated with "violence, domination, independence, aggression and power". Giaccardi et al (2016:152) further add that hegemonic masculinity in the media depicts the stereotypical male sexual ideal, in which men are portrayed as being preoccupied with sex and their sexual urges.[19]

2.6 Subordinate Masculinities

Erica Scharrer (2012:159) asserts that the concept of hegemonic masculinity "includes such characteristics as emotional toughness, exercising power over women and heteronormativity", and in American culture, characteristics include "physical force and control, familial patriarchy and heterosexuality". Models of masculinity are not "fixed" since there are "many different styles and forms of masculinities" that vary "across cultures and historical periods" (Arxer 2011:391). There are types of masculinities, however, that are discriminated against by other men (Arxer 2011:391). As I have argued above, the existence of dominant and hegemonic masculinities not only demands the existence of subordinate women, often through gender-based violence, but also creates subordinate masculinities. Subordinated masculinities include the beliefs, values, behaviours, and attitudes which fall outside the predominant meaning of what it is to be 'masculine' in any given society. Therefore, subordinate masculinity is defined by, and in opposition to, hegemonic masculinity. According to Messerschmidt (2018:29), subordinate masculinities are "constructed as lesser than or aberrant and deviant to hegemonic

[19] The preoccupation with sex relates to whether they are always ready for sex or that they take pride in their sexual capability.

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masculinity, such as effeminate men". Generally, this form of masculinity includes a range of masculine behaviours that do not fully match the 'macho' ideals of hegemonic masculinity, as defined above. Subordinate modes of masculinity are positioned outside the legitimate form of maleness and are controlled, oppressed, and subjugated. Tim Coles (2008:246) asserts that men who are subordinated by hegemonic masculinity reformulate what masculinity means to them by affirming themselves as masculine to "accommodate for their differences from the cultural ideal". In this way, Coles (2008:246) argues, they can "feel that their masculine identities are valid in the context of their everyday lives".

Since masculinity is fluid, it can progressively redefine itself regarding its "sensitivity, emotional expressiveness and nurturing qualities", as well as in terms of its "openness to improving interpersonal relations" and characteristics of subordinate masculinities (MacKinnon 2003:73). Part of contemporary television's representation of masculinity includes images of men's 'softer' sides. It has become more common to see men who express their feelings and care for others rather than choosing violence to solve their problems. We see this in *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005) when the character Tsotsi shifts from being a violent criminal to becoming a caring father figure to the baby boy. Soft masculinity is a subordinate form of masculinity. MacKinnon (2003:71) argues that the appeal of 'soft masculinity' could be seen as underlying the penetration and "parodies of conventional masculinity". This is the kind of man that can be related to on a more personal level by men who reject hegemonic masculinity. For example, as previously mentioned, violence and aggression are representatives of the dominant masculinity in 'gangsta' rap, whereas 'playa' rap promotes "a traditionally feminine interest by focusing on how to spend money rather than on how to make it" (Randolph 2006:210). 'Playa' rap centres around "sensuality" and can be appreciated as Black men reclaiming bodily autonomy (Randolph 2006:211).

Gay masculinities are a variation of ostracised and subjugated manhoods. Anathi Ntozini and Hlonelwa Ngqangweni (2016:1311) argue that while homosexual men defy certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity, they still have to "negotiate their identities concerning dominant ideas of what it means to be a man within a particular cultural context". Ntozini and Ngqangweni (2016:1311) state that homosexuality is generally viewed by heterosexual men as a "negation of masculinity", with the characteristics of male homosexuality being conflated with women and femininity. Gayness, according to Connell (1993:78), is the representation of what is "symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity", ranging from "fastidious taste in home

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decoration to anal pleasure" and is thus the most conspicuous of the subordinated masculinities. Interestingly, MacKinnon (2003:57) asserts that in film, gay men and women have become a conflated category and are depicted as "nurturing and domesticated" and goes on to state that gay men are made "asexual, uninterested in having sex themselves but concerned with the love lives of heterosexual women in particular". Over a decade later, Trengrove negates this image of gay men in *Inxeba* (2016) because the whole film is centred around the relationships of gay men in a predominantly hetero-patriarchal context.

2.7 Hypermasculinity

Hypermasculinity takes hegemonic masculinity to the extreme and is a trait present in men who are typically susceptible to "engage in behaviours that assert physical power and dominance in interactions, primarily in interactions with women" (Dominic Parrot & Amos Zeichner 2003:71). It is also an "integral driver of physical and sexual aggression" (Parrott & Zeichner 2003:71). These behaviours act as a way of upholding the so-called 'macho' personality presented by hypermasculine men. According to Erica Scharrer (2005:354), "hypermasculine males exhibit extreme and exaggerated forms of masculinity, virility, and physicality". Dennis E. Reidy, Steven D. Shirk, Colleen A. Sloan and Amos Zeichner (2009:1) assert that hypermasculinity represents an extreme form of conformity to the masculine gender role, encompassing harsh sexual attitudes towards women as well as beliefs that violence is "manly and exciting". Reidy et al (2009:1) further state that "hypermasculine men are particularly prone to anger and aggression in response to violations of traditional male gender role norms". Gay men are seen as representing this violation: Ratele (2014:118) adds that "the 'homosexual' is what a real African man is not".

Indeed, Lanice Avery, R. Monique Ward, and Dailara Üsküp (2017:24) claim that hypermasculine messages are more common in rap/hip-hop music than in other genres of music, with these messages often characterising Black men as "materialistic, competitive, sex-focused, and risk-taking". For example, "Gangsta rap", a sub-genre of hip-hop, "is characterised by the violent masculinity of its lyrics, the urban wear of its artists, and the realism of its videos" (Antonia Randolph 2006:206). Additionally, the imagery that 'gangsta' rap music videos seek to portray "the look of decay and neglect" distinctive of "Black working-class" neighbourhoods (Randolph 2006:211). Interestingly, Annael Le Poullennec (2012:116) states that, in a South African context, *Tsotsi* has been criticised for "endorsing crime as 'cool'"

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with regards to the 'kwaito' music[20] that plays during the gang's escapades of theft and violence and for "showing the townships as a locus of crime and violence". According to Historian Clive Glaser's (1992:48) description, tsotsis also display gender-based violence, which comprises maintaining the ideals about male identity and power and is linked to social problems like racial discrimination, leading to poverty, unemployment, and the limitation of choices. Therefore, tsotsis, the title and subject of the film *Tsotsi*, are an example of hypermasculine men.

Men who have sex with men and women are also examples of hypermasculine men. Kristin Dunkle, Rachel Jewkes, Daniel Murdock, Yandisa Sikweyiya and Robert Morell (2013:9) report that men who have sex with men more frequently recount experiences of "male-on-male sexual violence victimisation and perpetration than men who do not have sex with other men". In their study, Dunkle et al (2013:9) found that the rape victimisation that is reported by men who have sex with men is "comparable to the prevalence of rape victimisation reported by South African women" and that men with current male partners, as well as men with both male and female partners, are more likely to report having perpetrated sexual violence against men. The character of Vija in *Inxeba* (Trengrove 2017) is a representation of a hypermasculine man who has sex with men and women and will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

2.8 Hybrid masculinities

Coles (2008:235) asserts that while men may be subordinated by hegemonic masculinities, they may "assume a dominant masculine identity in an alternate subfield in which the capital that they own is valued". Coles adds that while being subordinated by hegemonic masculinities, some men "do not necessarily reject it" altogether, focusing on those elements that privilege them and rejecting those that they are unable to conform to. Additionally, Coles (2008:246) asserts that men who are subordinated by hegemonic masculinities often look for "reassurance in themselves as masculine by reformulating what masculinity means to them" to "accommodate for their differences from the cultural ideal".

The term 'hybrid masculinities' refers to "gender projects that incorporate aspects of marginalized and subordinate [masculinities] and, at times, femininities" (Tristan Bridges 2014:59). Although hybrid masculinities is a contested term, Bridges (2014:61) opines that

[20] Kwaito is a South African style of music that incorporates "elements of hip-hop into house music", emerging from the 1990s (Le Poullennec 2012:13).

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hybrid masculinities entail the blurring of gender differences and boundaries without presenting any real challenges to inequality. Demetriou (2001:351) illustrates that hybrid masculinities can be understood as "contemporary expressions of existing forms of inequality" by focusing on the incorporation of gay male culture, stating that "new, hybrid configurations of gender practice … enable [heterosexual men] to reproduce their dominance ... in historically novel ways".

Messner (1993) contends that "hybrid masculinities represent highly significant (albeit exaggerated) shifts in cultural and personal styles", with these changes not necessarily contributing to the "undermining of conventional structures of men's power". Moreover, Bridges (2014:59) asserts that, in order to distance themselves from stigmatised stereotyped masculinities, men who enact hybrid masculinity adopt "gay aesthetics" without identifying as gay.[21] Messner (1993) further states that although 'softer' and more 'sensitive' styles of masculinity are developing among some privileged groups of men, this does not necessarily contribute to the "emancipation of women". Messner (2007:466) theorised a "culturally ascendant hybrid masculinity" that combines 'toughness' with 'tenderness' in ways that work to "obscure power and inequality". Messner (2007:466) cites hybrid masculinities as maintaining the "toughness, decisiveness, and hardness" that are central features of hegemonic masculinity, "linked with situationally appropriate moments of compassion" and, occasionally, "vulnerability".

Messner (2007:447) uses Arnold Schwarzenegger's image of "hardness and violence" mixed with "compassion and care" as an example of hybrid masculinities. Messner (2007:467) coined the term "Kindergarten Commando" regarding Schwarzenegger's films *Kindergarten Cop* (Ivan Reitman 1990) and *Jingle All the Way* (Brian Levant 1996), referring to Schwarzenegger's "hard guy image" alternating with "an image of self-mocking vulnerability, compassion and care, especially care for kids". Messner (2007:467) goes on to state that in Schwarzenegger's "Kindergarten Commando", there is an "appropriation and situational display of particular aspects of femininity, strategically relocated within a powerfully masculine body".[22]

[21] "Gay aesthetics", according to Bridges (2014:62), relate to "interests, material objects… language, opinions, clothing and behaviour".
[22] The "aspects of femininity" that Messner (2007:467) is referring to are "compassion and care".

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Bridges (2014:60) suggests that "a central issue in research on hybrid masculinities is whether they challenge and/or perpetuate systems of inequality". One argument queries the "extent of hybridization". Connell and Messerschmidt (2005:845) acknowledge that "specific masculine practices may be appropriated into other masculinities". Bridges (2014:60), however, asserts that Connell and Messerschmidt are unconvinced that "hybrid masculine forms represent anything beyond local subcultural variation". According to Bridges (2014:60), Anderson (2009) theorises "inclusive masculinity", in which modern changes in men's behaviours and beliefs are viewed as prevalent and serve to "undermine gender and sexual hierarchies and inequality".

Bridges (2014:61) also states that literature on hybrid masculinities focuses on the integration of aspects of cultures and performances that are associated with various marginalised and subordinated 'Others'. "Hybrid hegemonic masculinity", according to Arxer (2011:398), "captures how masculine power can be composed of any number of social attributes, not the least of which are those conventionally perceived as "feminine". Bridges (2014:76) concludes that the men in his study utilised gay aesthetics to fill the "perceived emptiness of straight masculinities" while maintaining a heterosexual identity, thereby continuing to benefit from the "privileges associated with heterosexuality". As discussed, hybrid masculinities incorporate elements of subordinated masculinities into a hegemonic identity of masculinity. The incorporation of hybrid masculinities into South African film, particularly representations of Black African masculinities, will be further explored in the following chapters.

2.9 Masculinity in Gang Culture

Within gang culture, hypermasculinity is dominant because gangs "'make' particular spaces by dominating them" (Maringira 2020:2). Maringira (2020:2) asserts that "the domination of such spaces is power" and "power is gained and maintained through violence". John M. Hagedorn (1998:329) further states that male gang members tend to "display an aggressive masculinity expressing values of respect and honour" and condone violence as a way of settling disputes. During the 1940s, a new type of gangster emerged in South Africa amongst the urbanised Black population of the Witwatersrand – tsotsis. According to Rosalind Morris (2018:88), the tsotsi became synonymous with "masculine violence, personal autonomy and unfettered mobility".[23] Glaser (1992:47) affirms five key elements in the identity of tsotsi

[23] Thus, the term tsotsi became "associated with criminality and violence" (Morris 2010:89).

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gangs: "race, class, geographic location, generation and gender". In other words, tsotsis are Black, generally working class, urbanised, young males. In the pursuit to be a 'real man', gang members are encouraged to be violent,[24] as well as "untouchable, emotionless, destructive and 'blood-thirsty'" (Glaser 1992:48). Glaser (1992:48) states that in the tsotsi subculture, the tsotsi masculine identity is centred around "fighting skill, independence, daring and law-breaking, stylishness and success with women", which are all also typical displays of hegemonic masculinity. Thus, hypermasculinity in gangs is characterised not only by violence but also by being 'street smart', physically strong and successful with women.

In addition, to be seen as a 'man' in the subculture, a tsotsi had to "be 'with it'" – in other words, he had to "speak and dress stylishly, he had to hold his liquor well and smoke dagga and he had to be seen at the right places" (Glaser 1992:49). A key element to the tsotsi subculture during the 1940s and 1950s was that the tsotsi had to speak tsotsitaal,[25] which Morris (2010:105) asserts, became trendy through its use in films as "the mark of township authenticity". Tsotsi gangsters generally regarded women as their property, as women were considered status symbols. According to Glaser (1992:49), "the beauty and quantity of a tsotsi's girlfriends were indicators of his success in other fields of masculine accomplishment". Glaser (1992:51) states that, despite a tsotsi being a man, his masculinity was seen as unconvincing if he did not have a woman to dominate.

A way to earn respect was by breaking the law (for example stealing), which became a status symbol because it meant that the gang member was independent and daring – in other words, not controlled by anyone. Therefore, the maintenance of power and dominance over their communities and rival gangs was an important quality of manhood among gang members. Jeremy Seekings (2001:635) asserts that "there were different degrees of gang membership rang[ing] from notorious criminal gangs to groups of adolescent boys based on every street corner". Seekings (2001:635) further asserts that the larger gangs were extremely violent, earning high incomes from assaulting workers, with the many smaller street-corner gangs largely playing social roles. The character Tsotsi's gang in the film *Tsotsi* falls into the latter category as his gang only comprises four members, with him as the leader. As such, within the tsotsi subculture, he and his gang would occupy a subordinate position in relation to the character Fela's much-bigger gang, as Fela not only has a larger gang, but it is more successful

[24] Violence primarily enacted towards "township blacks and migrating labourers" (Morris 2010:101).
[25] Tsotsitaal is the slang spoken by tsotsis in the townships.

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and better established.

2.10 South African Context

2.10.1 Black South African Masculinities

According to Denise Buiten and Kammila Naidoo (2013:197), a "key theme in South African literature" pertains to the "crisis of masculinity". As a result, "male sexualities" in the South African media have been "problematised as violent and irresponsible" (Buiten & Naidoo 2013:198). Furthermore, "masculine sexual prowess" is associated with the "consumption, and the proliferation of sexualised images of women in media products released into (and generated within) the South African media market post-apartheid" (Buiten & Naidoo 2013:199). Buiten and Naidoo (2013:199) further assert that in the *Sunday Sun* newspaper, first launched in 2001, "powerful constructions of hegemonic masculinity are explicitly and implicitly embedded in various news spaces".

In acknowledging that masculinities is a complex cultural concept, Mfecane (2018:291) cautions against defining African masculinities through a "Western lens", arguing that to fully account for the complex lives of African men one must "develop theories based on African conceptions of reality". Masculinity should therefore be treated as both socially constructed and influenced by particular accounts of personhood, as articulated in traditional African views which are, admittedly, wide and valued. For example, in many communities in Africa, traditional circumcision and initiation – the main theme in the chosen film *Inxeba* – play a pivotal role in influencing gender relations and gender roles, as well as the behaviours and attitudes of men. In America, the definitions of manhood of Black men are grounded in "their relationships with both themselves and others", particularly relating to "their commitment to their families" (Goodwill, Anyiwo, Williams, Johnson, Mattis & Watkins 2019:289). In the media, Black men are subject to restrictive stereotypes, often depicted as "violent, criminal and hypersexual" (Goodwill et al 2019:289). Furthermore, there is a narrowing stereotype that "equates Black manhood with absence from and failure to assume responsibilities within families" (Goodwill et al 2019:293).

Jewkes and Morell (2010:1) state that, while there are diverse gender identities in South Africa, the "dominant ideal of black African manhood emphasizes toughness, strength and [the]

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expression of prodigious sexual success". Additionally, they maintain that because South Africa is a "highly gender-inequitable country", hegemonic masculinity "mobilizes and legitimates the subordination and control of women by men" (Jewkes & Morell 2010:3). According to Mfecane (2018:7), research conducted on Black South African men suggests that the majority of the social problems created by men, for women as well as themselves ("gender-based violence, rape, crime, alcoholism and ill-health) are founded on "these hegemonic constructions of masculinity".[26]

South Africa has multiple definitions of masculinity, with dynamic hierarchies of identity and where different masculinities do not hold equal social respect. For example, some masculinities (such as homosexuality) are actively dishonoured, some are archetypal (such as sporting heroes), and some are socially marginalised (such as men from poorer socio-economic backgrounds). Xavier Livermon (2012:299) asserts that, although important, especially when "state actors invoke culture to exclude black queers, black queer struggles for recognition and respect have less to do with challenging the state", their struggles challenge "how black subjectivity is performed and imagined as heteronormative in the public sphere".

Hegemonic masculinity is, therefore, a "necessary and integral element of patriarchy", the "social organization that allocates, distributes and secures the power of men over women" (Jewkes & Morrell 2010:3). In other words, South African masculinities all place value on the "physical strength, courage, toughness and an acceptance of hierarchical authority", much like hegemonic masculinity as already discussed above (Jewkes & Morell 2010:5). Most importantly, in the hegemonic regime, men are required to be able to exercise control over women as well as over other men. It should also be noted that in a broader sense, the notion of hegemonic African masculinity is problematic and perhaps untenable "within the context of hegemonic capitalist patriarchal whiteness" (Kopano Ratele 2013:252).

Ratele (2014:118) asserts that "African masculinities, in other words, are hegemonic and subordinate at the same time, a logical contradiction that is difficult to resolve". In other words, African masculinities are hegemonic within their cultural spaces, however, they are subordinate in the grand scheme of "patriarchal whiteness" (Ratele 2013:252). Ratele (2013:253) further states that hegemonic African masculinity discourses comment on the

[26] This is not unlike other countries; however, the problem is greater in South Africa.

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socio-political powers of male heterosexual desire and the aspirations of "hetero-masculine power" simultaneously. Ten years ago, Ratele (2013:253) noted that "black young men seem[ed] to fulfil an important criterion of subordinate masculinities: generally, they [did] not have social power and wealth". While this may still be the case in many Black African societies today, and despite the dominance of white masculinities in South Africa ten years ago, hierarchies of masculinities still exist among Black South African men.

As I have already argued, hierarchies of masculinities are established and maintained through social and cultural practices in which hegemonic masculinities dominate and thus subordinate women, as well as other forms of masculinities. As such, every member of a particular social grouping is required to conform to an existing hierarchical order, "regardless of age, gender, religion, or education" (Sakumzi Mfecane 2018:41). Because power – both overt and covert – is central to the construction of dominant forms of masculinity, theorists such as Connell (2005) and Hearn (2004) maintain that there is a "hierarchy within masculinity whereby certain forms of masculinity (hegemonic masculinities) are considered more honourable and dominant than others" (Ntozini & Ngqangweni 2016:1311). The acquisition of honourable masculinity is especially evident in the Xhosa practice of *ulwaluko*.

2.10.2 *Ulwaluko*/Becoming a Man

In many cultures, boys undergo a rite of passage in order to become a 'man'. Mashabane and Henderson (2020:163) state that, as a rite of passage in some cultures, "male initiation processes often include rituals where boys are expected to bear physical pain without showing emotions". According to Anele Siswana and Peace Kiguwa (2018:4), initiation is a space that may inadvertently "promote and normalise heteronormative identity as the only possibility for men". This occurs when the concept of manhood becomes "conflated and linked to sexual identities that cater both materially and discursively for heterosexual-identified and identifying men" (Siswana & Kiguwa 2018:4).

Interestingly, within the context of *ulwaluko*, the masculine hierarchies that *indoda* commands are not "based on sexual orientation, but on circumcision status" – a male-presenting person is not considered 'a man' unless he is circumcised and is also addressed as 'boy' until he is circumcised (Mfecane 2016:8). Mfecane (2016:8) further states that "this status [*indoda*] can also be equally assigned to gay men on condition that they undertook *ulwaluko*". This means

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that the most subordinated forms of masculinity in Xhosa culture are not necessarily gay men, but uncircumcised adult men and men who have been medically circumcised. The hierarchy is further established through the use of language, with the initiates being spoken down to and made to feel less than until they have earned the status of being 'a man'.

Ulwaluko is the transition from boyhood to manhood and is a cultural practice that teaches young Xhosa men about the socially expected behaviours and morals of being a 'real man' in a heterosexual society. As a rule, *ulwaluko* is exclusively reserved for men and is "aimed at sustaining identities that are fixed, unchanging and violent" (Kumalo & Gama 2018:4). The shift in status from boy to man occurs after the removal of the foreskin, when the initiate shouts "*Ndiyindoda*" ('I am a man'). However, while he is no longer an *inkwenkwe* (an uncircumcised boy), he is not completely regarded as *indoda* (a man) until the ritual has been fully completed. Mfecane (2018:37) asserts that *indoda* is "an achievement and a 'performance'", and not merely the "concrete presence of a traditional mark of manhood on the penis, which itself symbolises manly attributes".[27]

Ulwaluko is dominant in the lives of Xhosa men, with the theme of hegemony expressed through "the power of older men, and punishment for non-conformity" (Magodyo, Andipatin & Jackson 2017:348). Thus the "traditions and customs of the ritual are enforced and ingrained within the initiate" and, in turn, aid in the construction of his perception of masculinity (Magodyo et al 2017:348). Christopher P. Mason (2006:96) asserts that it is "believed that without the initiation ritual process, young men are unable to transition from boys into manhood" and that they are "unable to experience the transformation needed for heroic consciousness to develop as real men". This is clear in *Inxeba* (Trengrove 2017) when Xolani expresses to Kwanda in the seclusion hut that the medically circumcised boys do not know what it is to be a man. Ntozini and Ngqangweni (2016:1310) state that "reintegrating the initiate into the community" now requires him to "reason and behave like a man while also spending time with other men developing his dignity, gracefulness and self-control". This is shown in *Inxeba* when the initiates give their speech about how they have become men and what they have to do to uphold the status of being a 'real man', and when the chief elder tells the newly initiated men about their responsibilities as a man.

[27] Resilience and toughness are associated with 'manly' attributes.

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2.10.3 South African Gender-Based Violence

In the previous section, I addressed hypermasculinity which, as stated above, is a driver of gender-based violence. According to the United Nations (2003), South Africa has one of the highest rates of violence against women globally. Nokuthula C. Mazibuko and Ikechukwu Umejesi (2015:6586) quote Hamber (2000:5), who "argues that South Africa is characterised by a 'culture of violence' – a community which endorses and accepts violence as an acceptable and legitimate means to resolve problems and achieve goals". Mazibuko and Umejesi (2019:52) add that, in South Africa, there are communities (such as in gangs) where "patriarchy is culturally entrenched, and where men exert power and control over women", which has undoubtedly led to an increase in domestic violence in South Africa.

In most South African societies, hegemonically masculine men are expected to be in control of both other men and women, and physical violence may be used to establish this control. Violence serves to reproduce and reinforce power inequities. Domestic violence is characterised by inequality and relates to perceptions about a woman's status often manifesting as an "intrinsic, pervasive facet of gender relations" (Mazibuko & Umejesi 2019:54). Therefore, domestic violence results from a man's desire to exercise power and control over female partners, a behaviour that has been legitimised and justified within the patriarchal system. Furthermore, the shaping of the uneven distribution of power between men and women reinforces gender roles associated with domestic violence by the broader patriarchal structures and institutions.

Gender-based violence in South Africa has been constructed as inevitable and, as a result, women often anticipate the danger that they believe men represent. Women position themselves in this 'waiting game' in which they feel it is inevitable that they will become victims. Gender-based violence has been referred to as the "possibility that 'something' may happen" (Gordon & Collins 2013:98). There is a discourse that constructs women as "responsible for gender-based violence and suggests that they are expected to develop and follow precautionary strategies" (Gordon & Collins 2013:98). Furthermore, Morrell et al (2013:16) assert that there is an increasing acknowledgement among academics of the role that women play in "legitimating and maintaining oppressive versions of masculinity". The following section will explore the role that women play in regards to the masculinities in the given contexts of the films.

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2.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided a literature review that will inform my analysis of *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005) and *Inxeba* (Trengrove 2017). I have described how Butler holds the idea that gender, and thus masculinity, is performative and is informed based on how others perceive the individual. This is coupled with the notion of hegemonic masculinity which is also awarded to men by other men based on their ability to be perceived as hegemonic. As hegemonic masculinity is so desired, the media push this narrative of men being strong and taking risks, all of which are stereotypes awarded to hegemonic masculinity. As stated above, it is important to recognise that masculinities are fluid and that men can hold one masculinity in one instance and another in a different setting, as that is a key idea that will be analysed in the films. Furthermore, the notion of hierarchy in masculinities is also important, particularly with regards to the fluidity of masculinities, as a man can be hegemonic in one context and simultaneously subordinated in another, should he not uphold the desired masculinity. Central to the analyses of the films are hegemonic, hyper-masculine, hybrid and subordinated masculinities and their representations. Because hegemonic and hyper-masculinities are grounded on the subordination of women, violence against women and the roles that women play in upholding masculinity are also to be analysed in the films, particularly in relation to gang masculinities in *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005) and the influence that the character Miriam has on the main character, Tsotsi, in terms of the fluidity of his masculinities.

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CHAPTER 3. GANGS UNPLUGGED

3.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses and discusses the portrayals of masculinities in gang culture, as well as the role that women play in these gang contexts. The portrayal of masculinities in gangs is discussed with reference to the film *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005). Athol Fugard wrote the novel *Tsotsi* in 1980. Like many contemporary South African film adaptations, *Tsotsi* revises and re-historicises the novel on which it is based in order to critique contemporary violence in South Africa. Lindiwe Dovey (2007:151) argues that in its modernisation of the novel, the film focuses on certain forms of contemporary violence.[28]

This chapter provides a synopsis of the film and a background on gang culture and gangsterism in South Africa, as well as the use of violence in gangs. The focus of this chapter is masculinity, particularly in gangs, as well as how they are represented in *Tsotsi* as harder and softer masculinities, through the analyses of certain images taken from core scenes of the film. Furthermore, the role that women play in gangs is addressed, along with how the different characters, namely Tsotsi, are influenced by the women they encounter throughout the film. The use of images throughout this chapter serves to provide an analysis of the literature that relates to the film.

3.2 Synopsis

The film *Tsotsi* follows a young gangster, David aka 'Tsotsi' (Presley Chweneyagae), who hijacks a car and finds a baby boy in the back seat, whom he then takes home and cares for. With the aid of various secondary characters and flashbacks to Tsotsi's childhood, a clear shift in Tsotsi's mentality from 'hardened' petty thief to someone who is caring and who has a fond attachment to the child is portrayed as the film progresses. While the main focus is on the relationship between Tsotsi and the child, there are several social aspects highlighted, including gangsterism in Soweto (the township in which Tsotsi lives) and his interactions with his fellow gang members – Boston aka 'Teacher Boy' (Mothusi Magano), Aap (Kenneth Nkosi) and Butcher (Zenzo Ngqobe) – and with a young woman, Miriam (Terry Phato), who has a baby of her own and to whom he takes the child for feeding. Also highlighted are the interactions

[28] The contemporary violence that is discussed in the film includes domestic abuse and "violent crime" such as "hijacking and burglary" (Dovey 2007:151).

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between Tsotsi and Fela (Zola), a more respected gangster in the township, as well as the role that women – Soekie (Thembi Nyandeni), the shebeen (tavern) owner and Miriam – play in Tsotsi's life and the township as a whole.

3.3 Gangsterism in South Africa

It is widely acknowledged by anthropologists and sociologists that gangsterism serves as a way out of poverty for many, as well as a way of acquiring some form of social status (Decker, Melde & Pyrooz 2013:377). This notion is supported by a study conducted by Catherine L. Ward and Karlijn Bakhuis (2009:56) on youth participation in gangs in the Western Cape, wherein both male and female participants described joining gangs for "access to both protection" and "material goods", which is understood as "being attractive in the context of deep poverty" (Ward & Bakhuis 2009:54). The girls in Ward and Bakhuis' study (2009:56) stated that they gained access to material goods and protection through "romantic liaisons with gang members".

Wage labour was frowned upon and young men working from nine to five were believed to be weak (Glaser 1992:48). "Stealing and gambling" were seen as the only "acceptable" ways of obtaining money, the result being that stealing itself became a "status symbol" (Glaser 1992:48). Law-breaking was admired, and while "pickpocketing and mugging" were the norm for tsotsis, "armed robberies, murder and fighting with police" were highly respected activities due to the fact that a 'real' tsotsi was not scared of the police (Glaser 1992:48). In Ward and Bakhuis' (2009:56) study, participants noted "tension between two kinds of respect: gang membership being sought to gain 'respect'" versus "respect from community members for children who are not gangsters".[29]

A key feature of the film *Tsotsi* centres around Tsotsi's gang juxtaposed with Fela's gang. Tsotsi's gang is comparatively smaller and less successful, as they take part in petty crime. As such, they do not have the 'with it' style that Glaser refers to above. As shown in Figure 1, Fela and his gang wear flashy clothes, with his gang members wearing leather jackets and Fela, in the middle, wearing a suit. In comparison, Tsotsi wears a black hoodie and jeans, Aap wears overalls, and Butcher is the only one who wears a leather jacket. The difference in clothing is

[29] Ward and Bakhuis (2009:56) found that this was gendered with boys referring to "seeking 'respect' through gangsterism".

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a visual representation of how different the gangs are, despite living the same lifestyle. As Fela's gang is more successful, due to their speciality in scrapping cars for metal, they can afford better-looking clothes, which accentuate their status. Tsotsi's gang wears comparatively scruffy clothes as a visual representation of their inferiority and shows that they more likely resort to petty crime, such as mugging, out of desperation, especially given that Tsotsi and his gang live in shacks (shanties). According to Decker et al (2013:375), gang members often publicly display their identity using "signs, symbols and clothes to demarcate membership status", often used to "intimidate others". Additionally, Morris (2010:103) asserts that South African street gangs are "identified by their style of clothing and music", which is depicted through Fela's gang dressing well to distinguish themselves from other gangs.

Figure 1: Fela heckling Tsotsi, *Tsotsi*. 2005.
Screenshot by author.

Despite masculinity being a shifting concept, with prestige and status being defined in different ways according to culture and era, key features of masculinity are "male assertiveness and inter-male competitiveness" (Glaser 1992:51). In addition, most forms of masculinity in gang culture involve the "need to control" and be 'in control', both "intellectually or physically" (Glaser 1992:51). This is also evident in Figure 1, in which Fela refers to Tsotsi as "the little gangster" (which he does many times in the film) as a way of asserting his dominance as a more successful gang leader. Furthermore, possession of women is a vital "status symbol" and the beauty and number of a tsotsi's girlfriends indicates his success in all "fields of masculine accomplishment" (Glaser 1992:51). Fighting victories inevitably attract women, which leads

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to furious competition over 'beautiful women' and often results in the harassment of attractive women (Glaser 1992:51).

Figure 2 shows Butcher (the central figure) harassing Miriam, who is getting water from the tap outside Tsotsi's house (which is happening out of the frame) and carrying her baby on her back. In this way, Butcher is displaying the fact that he has a form of power over Miriam and is verbally harassing her. Glaser (1992:49) states that it is incredibly important for a gang leader to have a girlfriend who is not only attractive but also sought-after, and that it is also prestigious for tsotsis to have children, which are considered a "sign of their manhood" (Glaser 1992:49). Butcher represents the idea that men in a hetero-patriarchal society have the right to possess women, despite not being a woman's partner, her baby's father or the leader of the gang.[30]

Figure 2: Butcher harassing Miriam, *Tsotsi*. 2005.
Screenshot by author.

Miriam represents the desired would-be girlfriend, and her baby represents the prestige that is brought to gang leaders by having children. Butcher looks animated as he harasses Miriam and makes crude hand gestures whilst Aap laughs at the interaction and makes his crude gestures (both gestures are happening out of frame). Tsotsi, on the other hand, crosses his arms over his chest as if to distance himself from the situation and looks at Miriam with disdain. This scene establishes the characters, with Tsotsi appearing as the distanced gang leader who cannot be

[30] Glaser (1992:49) asserts that "as in all male-dominated cultures, possession of women represented a crucial status symbol".

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bothered with the antics of his gang members, Butcher as the hypersexual, hypermasculine with exaggerated virility (Scharrer 2005:354), and Aap as the childish subordinate who is going along with Butcher's actions.

3.4 Violence

Violence is integral to life in a gang, with gang members engaging in more violence than other youths (Maringira 2020:2).[31] Violence is not only about inflicting pain and "invoking emotions", but also exercising power in and around places in which gangs operate (Maringira 2020:2).[32] Violence is therefore linked and related to "power, domination and ideologies", with power dictating who certain people are in differentiated spaces (Maringira 2020:2). Violence also creates "hierarchies of social communities", as well as sub-cultures within communities – in this case, gangs (Maringira 2020:2).

Gang violence centres around a power struggle which is mediated by violence, with the ultimate victor being the most violent (Maringira 2020:3). Violence is used as a means to discipline and, at times, "control, gang members both *in* and out of the gang membership" (Maringira 2020:10). Kristy N. Matsuda, Chris Melde, Terrance J. Taylor, Adrienne Freng and Finn-Aage Esbensen (2013:441) assert that "the rate of individual offending increases during gang membership". They claim that "delinquency and violence are not solely related to characteristics of individuals" who join gangs but "result from membership in the group" (Matsuda et al 2013:441). According to "the code", one must "think of themselves first, fight when challenged and that the toughest will prevail" (Matsuda et al 2013:442).

Figure 3 is a scene in *Tsotsi* that deals with this kind of power struggle. The figure depicts Tsotsi and Aap in a car that was stolen from the baby's home. During this robbery, Tsotsi finds a gun in the house and kills Butcher after he attempts to kill the baby's father. This figure is a clear depiction of the ready use of violence that is perpetrated by gangs to control gang members who have overstepped a line. Tsotsi never intended for the baby's father to die, but Butcher proposes that he should be killed before the robbery begins. Butcher's attempt to shoot the baby's father before they leave, despite Tsotsi telling him that he should not, is a

[31] Maringira (2020:3) asserts that "gang relations make violence, and violence makes gang relations".
[32] An example of Butcher exercising power in the film relates to Figure 1 which is sexual harassment, a passive form of violence.

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representation of the hierarchy within the gang being threatened. The argument between Tsotsi and Aap in the getaway car ensues as Aap struggles to realise that Tsotsi has killed their fellow gang member and friend. Tsotsi justifies his action by retorting that Butcher only ever wanted to kill people and, in killing him, Tsotsi wins the power struggle.[33] In addition, as Butcher directly defies Tsotsi's orders not to kill the baby's father, he disrespects Tsotsi, who has to 'defend' it, as respect is "both a prized commodity and allows one to navigate public life safely" under the "code of the street",[34] as proposed by Anderson (1994, 1999) (Matsuda et al 2013:442).[35]

Figure 3: Tsotsi and Aap in a car after a robbery gone wrong, *Tsotsi*. 2005. Screenshot by author.

Martín Sánchez-Jankowski (2003:210) asserts that gang violence results from the dynamic combination of three interrelated conditions: "Material conditions of scarcity (encouraging competition over what little exists)", a culture that allows "physical force as a primary means to realise goals", and an "available economy that has no formal state-authorised agency capable of monopolising behaviour of the individuals and organisations involved". In the context of *Tsotsi*, the film takes place in a township so the "material conditions of scarcity" would relate to wealth and poverty (Sánchez-Jankowski 2003:210). People who live in townships are generally less well-off and Tsotsi's gang falls into that category as they steal for money. Gang

[33] As noted in Chapter 2, hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily denote violence, however, violence can be used in order to maintain power, should that power be "undermined" (Groes-Green 2009:295).
[34] The "code of the street" will be elaborated on further in the discussion.
[35] Matsuda et al (2013:460) further assert that "without a violent response, an individual [in a gang] is likely to feel shame as a result of losing respect of one's peers".

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culture permits and encourages physical force to attain what they want, as Tsotsi and his gang are often seen doing – Butcher kills a victim that they intend to rob and Tsotsi kills Butcher to save the baby's father. Finally, Fela's gang's scrap metal business relates to the "available economy" that Sánchez-Jankowski mentions (2003:210).

Gang identities are created and sustained through acts of violence, including murder. The creation and perpetration of violence is seen as a way to be 'a man', and young gang members view themselves as different from others because they do not kill (Maringira 2020:10). Violence is unavoidable for young men and is intrinsic to "their sense of self and belonging to particular groups"; therefore, violence and its perpetration provides them with social visibility in the neighbourhood (Maringira 2020:10). Young gang recruits are often beaten up by their commanders or are "given a gun to kill in order to test their commitment and prove their allegiance" (Maringira 2020:11). The threat of violence is also important within gangs because it presents consequences for future violence (Maringira 2020:11). Threat plays a role in both the origin and growth of gangs, as well as in their daily activities and belief systems (Maringira 2020:9). Threat, in a sense, helps to convey to "rival gangs, the community, and social institutions" that they are not to be trifled with (Maringira 2020:9). Threat also contributes to the growth of gangs through the "construction of cohesiveness" and through "contagion" (Maringira 2020:9). Threats of physical violence increase the solidarity or cohesiveness of gangs within, as well as across, neighbourhoods. Matsuda et al (2013:443) state that "gangs have been found to provide a semi-structured social setting (i.e. a 'crowd') in which the value of violence, or the threat of violence, is learned, enacted, and reinforced".[36]

An example of the threat of violence in *Tsotsi* is evident in Figure 4, in which Tsotsi is seen pointing a gun at the woman he intends to hijack and from whom he steals the car with the baby inside it. Tsotsi stands in the rain with his black hood up and the arm holding the gun outstretched, with a determined look on his face. As such, the threat present is two-fold: there is the physical threat of the gun being pointed directly at the baby's mother (and, more importantly, the viewer), as well as the psychological threat that stems from the menacing look on Tsotsi's face. Furthermore, the scene takes place at night, making Tsotsi a representation of the monsters that lurk in the dark. Interestingly, in townships, the ownership of guns is "closely associated with being a man", and ownership of a gun is affiliated with status (Maringira

[36] Threat is therefore a "resource for and within the gang group" (Maringira 2020:9).

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2020:4). Thus, guns are "embedded in the everyday life of a black man in the townships, some of whom then resort to gang violence" (Maringira 2020:4). Although it is never clear in the film if Tsotsi would shoot the women that he threatens, he uses the threat of violence as a means of coercion and a means to exert power over these women (Mazibuko & Umejesi 2019:52). A further example of Tsotsi using the gun as a threat and means of coercion is found later on in the film during a few of his interactions with Miriam. He not only threatens her with the gun as he forces her to help him with the baby, but he also constantly reminds her that the baby belongs to him and he threatens to kill her should she reveal his secret.

Figure 4: Tsotsi points a gun at the baby's mother, *Tsotsi*. 2005.
Screenshot by author.

3.5 Gang masculinity

Gang members have diverse motives, behaviours and socialisation experiences and, as I already argued, it is widely understood that gangsterism has served as a way out of poverty and a means of acquiring a certain social status (Decker et al 2013:277). Additionally, gender relations were strictly maintained with the knowledge that 'tsotsi' was a name reserved for males, despite the emergence of females in gangs (Glaser 1992:54). In research on female participation in gangs, Vuninga (2018:32) notes that many men join gangs to be "cool and loved by women" and, as a result, would join gangs to impress women or to commit crimes as

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a means to acquire material goods to be a man that women are attracted to. However, further research shows that, despite the desire of male gang members to be attractive to women, many women do not entertain this, fearing these men or finding them vain, and in many cases are ashamed to even be greeted by a known gangster (Glaser 1992:54).

Interestingly, street gangs are no longer characterised by youngsters hanging around the streets of their local communities in order to 'defend' the community against rival gangsters (Kinnes 2000:1). Instead, they are developing into "organised criminal empires", a phenomenon emerging around the world (Kinnes 2000:1). According to Matsuda et al (2013:442), gangs operate based on the notion of the "code of the streets", which governs a set of "informal rules" that include the creation of interpersonal relationships, as well as violence. The "code" is a social resource which draws on "different gangs and social characters" of the streets, blurring both 'good' and 'bad' young men (Matsuda et al 2013:442). Since gangs and their members try to simultaneously emulate and oppose the dominant masculinity of the "white, upper/middle class man", violence and displays of physical 'manly' strength are used as a means of establishing alternative masculinity (Matsuda et al 2013:442). The physical displays of manhood symbolise the key values of "strength, dominance, power, control, conquest, achievement and bravery" (Moolman 2004:112-113).

The notion of "code" in the streets in which gangs operate reveals the street not as a fragmented space, but rather one in which "life is coordinated by those who live in it" (Matsuda et al 2013:442). The streets are institutional, as well as "socially structured and differentiated in particular social categories" (Maringira 2020:7). Furthermore, there are those "who speak on behalf of others" (known as commanders or 'Generals'), who "tell others what to do and what not to do" and, in turn, there are "those who listen" (Maringira 2020:7). Tsotsi is a commander who delegates "what must be done at particular times and to particular people". Again, an example of this is Tsotsi killing Butcher for disobeying his order. Tsotsi also calls the shots as to when and where their petty theft will happen, and when Butcher tells him that Boston cannot work with them anymore, Tsotsi asks if it is him (Butcher) who has decided this or if Boston made the decision. Aap is a clear representation of someone who listens because he always asks Tsotsi[37] what the gang is going to do that night. Throughout the film, Aap is also generally happy to go along with Tsotsi's plans and frequently says that they are good. This shows that

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he represents subordinate masculinity when compared to Tsotsi, as he is a subordinate in the gang while Tsotsi is the leader. Within the hierarchy of masculinities, Tsotsi is the gang leader and thus occupies a hegemonic position. As mentioned in the literature review, hegemonic masculinity is awarded to the individual by other males (Buchbinder 2013:146) and, in the context of *Tsotsi*, Tsotsi is elected gang leader. Hegemonic masculinity, however, creates and requires subordinate masculinities, as represented by Aap (Buchbinder 2013:146). Tsotsi, however, is subordinate in comparison to Fela, who is the leader of the more successful gang. Fela has what Maringira (2020:8) refers to as "General masculinity", which is a masculinity that is "dominant in both the street and in the communities in which they operate".

A key element in the world of gangs is the notion of loyalty,[38] which the film depicts in two ways. First, there is the physical loyalty of the members of Tsotsi's gang and second, there is the recurring motif of the dog that Tsotsi had as a child. As the original first additional member of Tsotsi's gang, Aap is fiercely loyal and defends Tsotsi when he feels someone has overstepped their bounds. He also goes back to Tsotsi after Boston leaves the group and Butcher considers leaving, despite Tsotsi telling him that the gang and their escapades are over. That being said, the trust is broken after Tsotsi kills Butcher and Aap asks Tsotsi when it will be his turn to be attacked (like Boston was) or killed (like Butcher was) by Tsotsi and he tells Tsotsi that the gang is indeed over. Butcher, on the other hand, is less loyal: as he, Boston and Aap spend more time with Fela after Boston is attacked, Butcher suggests to Aap that they should leave Tsotsi and join Fela instead. The gang eventually breaks down with the initial departure of Boston, followed by Butcher's death and Aap leaving with Tsotsi alone.

[38] Maringira (2020:9) refers to loyalty as "a price to be paid to the gang leader".

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Figure 5: Tsotsi and Aap arguing, *Tsotsi.* 2005.
Screenshot by author.

Figure 5 depicts both Aap's subordinate position in the gang and his loyalty to Tsotsi. This particular screenshot takes place during an argument that Tsotsi has with Aap about Butcher. Aap goes to Tsotsi's house to inform him that Butcher is upset that Tsotsi did a "job" alone and that Butcher wants to join Fela, to which Tsotsi responds by asking Aap what he is doing at his house. Aap then tells Tsotsi that they have been friends for years (since childhood) and that they started the gang together, which is why he does not want to leave. A visibly angry Tsotsi then steps out of his door towards Aap and makes a point that all he does is follow Tsotsi around and agree with whatever he says while he taps Aap on the head three times (this is happening out of frame) and asks him why he cannot make his own decisions.

3.6 Role of women in the film

Toril Moi (2015:202) asserts that feminist studies assume that women share "some common features", but "feminists say 'individuals with feminine body signs'" to avoid the word 'women'. Moi (2015:202), however, claims that "no one feature is shared by all women". Connell (1987:184) proposes the existence of "multiple femininities", stating that one form of femininity is defined around complying with the subordination of women by hegemonic men and "orientate to accommodate the interests and desires of men", which she refers to as "emphasised femininity". Other forms of femininity proposed by Connell (1987:185) are defined by "strategies of resistance and forms of non-compliance" and there are those who are

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"defined by complex strategic combinations of compliance, resistance and co-operation". It is true that, throughout the film, only four female characters are identified: Miriam, Soekie, Tsotsi's mother (in his flashbacks) and the baby's mother, Grace, and all of them share nurturing characteristics. According to Glaser (1992:54), within gang culture, some women are described and seen as victims, while others assert agency and control over the men. The film illustrates both representations: Soekie, who owns the shebeen in the township, represents the latter and asserts her agency over men and is not to be trifled with, whilst Miriam is a victim in the film. The two women I will focus on now are Miriam and Soekie, as they are important in the township and to the story in general.

Figure 6 is of Soekie in her shebeen. She is placing beer bottles on the table around which Tsotsi and his gang are seated and warns in a low voice, which commands respect, that she will not have anybody causing trouble in her establishment. This takes place after Boston tries to pick a fight with Tsotsi over killing the man on the train, demanding to know Tsotsi's real name and whether or not he knows the meaning of 'decency'. As Boston is talking, Tsotsi is visibly seething and, through her action, Soekie obscures most of Tsotsi's face and body, which shows that she is acting as a barrier between Tsotsi and Boston whilst Aap and Butcher both look at her in surprise. Soekie also represents the few tough women in the townships who manage to "forge themselves a certain amount of respect", assuming a form of 'masculine' or tough feminine identity to do so (Glaser 1992:60).[39] Soekie's respect also stems from her age, as Vetten (2000:[np]) asserts that within gangs, "more powerful women" are cited to be "between their late 20 and 40s" and the greater status held by women stems from "confidence and experience associated with age". I argue that Soekie falls into the latter definition of femininity as argued by Connell (1987:185), as she does comply with the gangs' requests, co-operates with them as they relax in her establishment, and even protects Tsotsi from Boston. That said, she bans Tsotsi from her shebeen after he beats up Boston and is the one who informs the police of where Tsotsi lives after seeing his photograph in the newspaper and realising that he is wanted for a crime, which is a sign of her resistance.

[39] It is clear in the film that the people who frequent Soekie's shebeen, particularly both gangs, deeply respect her.

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Figure 6: Soekie warns the gang against causing a scene, *Tsotsi*. 2005.
Screenshot by author.

Soekie's no-nonsense personality is juxtaposed by Miriam, who is a more stereotypically feminine woman than Soekie as she is helpful and kind. Miriam falls into Connells' category of "emphasised femininity", as she submits to Tsotsi's threats (Connell 1987:185). Although Miriam is a victim who is abused and exploited by Tsotsi as he forces her to help him feed the baby, once she and Tsotsi become more comfortable around each other, a friendship is established despite his antagonistic personality.[40] Another attributing feature of Miriam's kindness is that she not only offers to give the baby a bath when Tsotsi takes him to her to feed it, but she also pleads with him to give her the child so that she can look after him. Miriam also keeps allowing Tsotsi to visit her with the baby, even after she realises that the baby is not his, and towards the end of the film, she offers to take the baby back to his original parents for Tsotsi. Tsotsi's hardened exterior becomes softened as he gets to know Miriam better, and he exhibits a vulnerability around her that is not shown to his gang members.

During their final interaction, as shown in Figure 7, Miriam indicates to Tsotsi that he is allowed to come back and visit her once he has taken the baby back to his parents; however, she does this nonverbally with the smallest of smiles and a hint of sadness in her eyes. The way the light shines on her face emphasises her soft features, while her head covering and shawl being lightly coloured with flowers are an indication that she has become a glimmer of hope in Tsotsi's eyes and represents all things that are good to him. However, she is standing in the

[40] Vetten (2002:[np]) asserts that one of the "traditional roles" held by women in relation to gangs and masculinity is that of the victim.

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doorway of her shack, which is a sign that, while she has grown to know Tsotsi and understand that he is no longer going to harm her, she still needs some form of comfort and protection that the walls offer her, and she partially hides behind the wall to physically distance herself from him. A further interesting note is that even though they have become friends, no physical contact (such as a hug) is given, which could mean that she is still shy or that she knows that there is a possibility that Tsotsi will not come back (hence her sad eyes).

Figure 7: Miriam smiling at Tsotsi, *Tsotsi*. 2005.
Screenshot by author.

3.7 The representation of masculinities

The film centres predominantly on the lives of male characters, so there are inevitably different masculinities portrayed. As discussed, while the hegemonic, subordinate and violent masculinities are portrayed by Tsotsi, Aap and Butcher, other masculinities are also evident. Tsotsi, who is the gang leader, is placed in a position of hegemonic masculinity by his gang members as a dominant position over the other men. However, Tsotsi is a representation of the fluidity of masculinity as argued by Jewkes et al (2015:113), as his hegemonic status as gang leader was stripped from him. Furthermore, whilst he is a gang leader, his gang is smaller and less successful than Fela's, which places Tsotsi in a subordinate position to Fela. It is through the positions of simultaneous hegemonic and subordinate masculinities that the fluidity of masculinity is emphasised. Additionally, Tsotsi lives the duality of being a secret caretaker of

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a baby and an outward gang leader, and he has to cope with the responsibilities that come with both of these roles. As mentioned in the literature review, Ellapen (1018:251) argues that Black African masculinities in townships are perceived as "fixed", making Tsotsi's character significant as we see him demonstrate fluidity as he moves between his roles and embraces them.

Throughout the film, whenever Tsotsi's gang come to his place to discuss what they are doing that night, or whenever Aap comes to Tsotsi about how the gang feels relating to Tsotsi's leadership, he keeps his door closed as much as possible and comes out to the balcony to talk. When he first brings the baby boy home and Aap and Butcher come to his place, he lies to them to cover up the smell of the baby's dirty nappy by saying that he has a bad stomach. These are all examples of how Tsotsi hides and covers up the fact that there is a baby in his shack. When the baby first comes into his life, he puts the boy in a brown paper bag under his bed as he is not sure what to do. Figure 8 shows a different side to Tsotsi as he starts putting the baby to sleep on his bed and covers him up properly with blankets.

Despite Miriam's kindness beginning to rub off on Tsotsi, he becomes even more determined to look after the baby boy, even though she urges him to take the baby back. Instead, he breaks into the baby's house to steal clothes, stuffed toys, formula milk and bottles. It is only after his gang breaks down and he goes back to Miriam's house to give her money (which she rejects) that he finally agrees to take the baby back. This shows that he does care for the baby, even if it is in his way. It also shows Tsotsi's dual roles, as he chooses the baby's house to rob so that he can steal supplies but also takes his gang with him. In doing so, he is not only keeping up appearances as the tough gang leader, but also doing it to assume his newfound role as a caregiver.

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Figure 8: Tsotsi tucking the baby into bed, *Tsotsi*. 2005.
Screenshot by author.

Butcher is a representation of hypermasculinity who, as shown above, asserts “power and dominance in interactions”, primarily with Miriam, as is shown through his lewd actions and comments towards her (Parrott & Zeichner 2003:71). Butcher is incredibly violent: from stabbing the gang’s first victim in the film, to informing Fela that if he needed anything, he (Fela) should just ask, to finally attempting to shoot the baby’s father. Butcher’s violent nature relates to the assertion that Reidy et al (2009:1) hold that hypermasculine men are “prone to anger and aggression”. Aap, on the other hand, is Tsotsi’s loyal friend and is always situated as subordinate to Tsotsi and even to Butcher. He has an eager-to-please personality and is arguably just a gang member because Tsotsi is his best friend and is thus defined by, and constructed in opposition to, Tsotsi’s hegemonic masculinity which, as Messerschmidt (2018:29) notes, is “culturally honoured” and “glorified”. Additionally, a dominant hegemonic masculinity is represented by Fela, who commands attention through his occupation in a “dual ideological space”, as presented by Moolman (2015:96), because he blends “modernity” and “tradition”.

3.8 Conclusion

In gang culture, and particularly amongst South African tsotsis, hegemonic masculinity is characterised by violence and being ‘street smart’ and physically strong. Law breaking is a status symbol, and maintaining power and dominance over communities and rival gangs are essential qualities of manhood. Whilst hegemonic masculinity is not obtained by force, it can be maintained by force, whereas hypermasculinity is driven by physical and sexual aggression.

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Hypermasculinity is an extreme form of conformity to masculine identity, with the beliefs that violence is 'manly' and the maintenance of harsh attitudes towards women (Reidy et al 2009:1). This is even more so due to the culturally entrenched patriarchy, a system of social organisation that privileges men.

Tsotsi is a film in which the different masculinities in gang culture are explored. This is done through the characters of Tsotsi, the gang leader who straddles both hegemonic and subordinate masculinities through being appointed gang leader. However, when he is later rejected as gang leader, he is stripped of his hegemonic status and is also subordinate to Fela, who is a more affluent gang member. A further illustration of him straddling this tough-gangster-meets-caring-man identity is his living a double life as the head of a gang but also as caretaker of a baby boy (who, granted, he stole). Other masculinities that are depicted are subordinate masculinities (represented by Aap) and hyper-masculinities (represented by Butcher). In addition to the depiction of masculinities, the role of women in gangs and the role that these women play in Tsotsi's life are also illustrated. This is done through the characters of Soekie, who has a tough female identity and is unafraid of the gangsters who frequent her shebeen, and Miriam, who has a softer, more feminine identity and teaches Tsotsi the value of caring through her good nature alone.

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CHAPTER 4. CONSTRUCTING MASCULINITY ONE SCAR AT A TIME

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses masculinities and homophobia in the context of the Xhosa initiation ceremony *ulwaluko*. This analysis is applied to a 2018 film by John Trengrove about Xhosa's initiation in South Africa. Titled *Inxeba (The Wound),* the film sparked a major outcry from the Xhosa community, as it depicts not only *ulwaluko*, a shrouded initiation ceremony, but also a queer discourse within this sacred heteronormative space (Manona & Hurst 2018:11). This resulted in a petition to ban the film from commercial venues because, according to the Film and Publications Board, it "challenges the power base of traditional cultural leaders by opening the *ulwaluko* rites to general public scrutiny and comment" (Strydom 2018:2). However, Manona and Hurst (2018:8) argue that the reason it was banned is that it depicts an entrenched cultural tradition in a way that subjects the heteronormative ideal of Xhosa manliness (*indoda*) to controversial critique from the perspective of diverse homosexual masculinities. As such, the film was deemed pornographic, given an X18 rating and delegated to only being featured at designated adult premises (Pieterse 2019:378). [41]

Further outcry stemmed from the fact that the film, which is about Black bodies and experiences, was directed by Trengrove, a white South African. Andrews (2020:57) explains that when a white person depicts an important ritual such as *ulwaluko*, it is seen as an "imposition on the Xhosa culture", which presents a discussion centred around whether or not white people should be allowed to show the ritual as a film, as they are not part of the culture and so do not have a personal relationship with the ritual.[42] On the other hand, Kirby-Hurst and Karam (2019:89-90) assert that Trengrove and his production team interviewed many gay individuals about their experiences not only whilst undergoing the initiation ritual, but also in terms of their "lived socio-economic realities in South Africa". For these theorists, this indicates that Trengrove had no intention of attacking the ritual or culture as a whole, but wanted to shed light on these experiences and explore the point of view of the marginalised.
Inxeba specifically challenges dominant forms of Xhosa masculinities by going to the crux of the construction of dominant Xhosa masculinities – *ulwaluko*. With this in mind, the film further draws into question both aspects of Xhosa culture and the men who see themselves as

[41] The Film and Publications Board banned the film from being screened in commercial venues, hence being delegated to 'adult premises' - buildings used for the distribution of adult films and publications, i.e., films not suitable for children under the age of 18.
[42] And should that be the case, is the film a form of exploitation or disrespect.

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those who uphold Xhosa cultural practices. Furthermore, the film speaks to the realities of some queer Xhosa men and creates a space for a discussion around the "intersection of queerness, Xhosa masculinities and Xhosa culture" (Scott 2020:27). It also confronts Xhosa culture itself by questioning the stance that Xhosa culture takes towards same-sex intimacies, which not only exist but are present in the most sacred and hyper-masculinised of Xhosa cultural spaces – *ulwaluko*.

However, Moraka (2018:1) argues that, instead of seeing *Inxeba* as a "gender progressive representation of African queer identity" against an ostensibly hetero-patriarchal African culture, the film inadvertently impresses colonial gender language into the rites of passage. Moraka (2018:9) asserts that the film's gender narrative results in the endorsement of a polarity between African hetero-patriarchal masculinity and contemporary African queer masculinity, the former being representative of the normative African gender embodiment against which the non-conforming queer masculinity is to challenge and liberate itself from. The film and its representation of Afro-masculinities can thus be read in many different ways. One such way is that of Rory du Plessis (2018:2), who reads the film as exhibiting "phallocentric scripting" in which the sequencing and representational sex scenes "privilege the erect penis in the act of penetration", which runs parallel to the hetero-patriarchal norms that are under contestation in the film. Du Plessis (2018:2) describes the first two of the three sex scenes in the film (both of which lack emotional intimacy) as perpetuating a "narrow phallocentric ideal of sex that runs parallel to hetero-patriarchal standards", instead of exploring alternate and demonstrative expressions of homosexual sex acts. Thus, the film has been criticised on several levels. In this chapter, my focus is twofold. First, I aim to discuss the process of *ulwaluko* and the association between *ulwaluko*, masculinity and violence. Second, I aim to analyse the gender relations within the space of *ulwaluko* and how they are represented in the film. This chapter will build on existing research by offering a visual analysis of the film. Before analysing specific scenes from the film in more depth, I provide a brief synopsis of the film.

4.2 Synopsis

Inxeba (The Wound) (Trengrove 2017) is essentially a film centred around a complicated gay love triangle. The film carries a violent undercurrent and is set in the mountains of the Eastern Cape over three weeks, during the Xhosa initiation ceremony *ulwaluko*. *Ulwaluko* is a rite of passage that is implicitly a heterosexual practice that prepares young boys (*abakhwetha*) for

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manhood through a set of rituals. The rituals involve the endurance of pain and teach independence and responsibility for the self and others, as well as other core functions that are considered essential for manhood. During this period, the initiates are looked after by *ikhankatha* (traditional caregivers/instructors) as they move toward becoming *amakrwala* (new men) (Siswana & Kiguwa 2018:2).

The film itself is centred around three men, two of whom, Xolani (Nakhane Mahlakahlaka) and Vija (Bongile Mantsai), are instructors tasked with looking after their initiates during this period of *ulwaluko*. The men have a secret sexual relationship that they engage in every year only during this time. The third man is initiate Kwanda (Niza Jay Ncoyini), who is far more embracing of his sexual identity than Xolani and Vija are in that he fully embraces his queerness as an openly gay man. Throughout the film, Kwanda is constantly silenced for criticising Xolani and Vijas' hypocrisy such as the two men having a gay affair whilst Vija has a wife and children at home, as well as their blatant homophobia directed towards Kwanda. As such, Kwanda's actions and comments during his initiation pose a threat to the institution of *ulwaluko*, as well as a challenge to Xolani and Vija when he discovers their relationship. It is Kwanda's actions and comments that ultimately lead to his untimely demise.

The story begins with Xolani shown working in a factory and then being driven to the mountain where the initiation is to take place. Kwanda's father is shown in his car asking Xolani to be his son's instructor and he gives Xolani money. Thereafter, one of the elders gives a speech asking for a blessing on the initiation and the circumcision takes place. Next, Xolani is seen with Kwanda in his hut, where he gives Kwanda a run-through of what will happen during the initiation. He also offers him a warning about the secrecy of the ritual; the adage 'what happens at the mountain stays at the mountain' is prominent. The rest of the film portrays the fraught sexual relationship of Xolani and Vija, as well as various ways in which the men (the initiates and their instructors, as well as the elders) enact their masculinities throughout this period.

A pivotal scene in the film is when Kwanda discovers Xolani and Vija cuddling naked post-coitus next to a waterfall. Kwanda provokes Vija, asking if his wife is aware of his love affair, before running away, with Vija in hot pursuit. Kwanda manages to escape Vija, spraining his ankle before falling asleep in the woods in a ditch, where he is discovered by Xolani the following day. The rest of the film centres around the troubled relationship between the three men. The film ends with the newly initiated men and elders rejoining the community in celebration whilst Xolani and Kwanda walk towards a road, seemingly to join the others. Xolani then leads Kwanda away from the road and onto a gorge, where he unexpectedly hits

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Kwanda over the head with a rock and watches as his body falls into the river below. The final scene is one in which Xolani is sitting in the back of a *bakkie* (a pickup truck) that is heading towards Johannesburg and a new life.

4.3 *Ulwaluko* explained

Ulwaluko is a Xhosa word referring to a rite of passage which transforms boys into men and aims to establish "good moral and social values", with circumcision being the most important ritual performed during this initiation (Magodyo et al 2018:344). According to Magodyo et al (2018:345), the initiation begins with the seclusion of the initiate from his immediate surroundings in a temporary hut that is built out of grass. Outside this hut, he is circumcised (which entails either the partial or full removal of the foreskin of the penis). The initiate is then educated by an assigned caregiver or instructor on courtship, social responsibility, and marital practices, as well as sexual education and adult life and the responsibilities that come with it (Magodyo et al 2018:345). Finally, the initiate is welcomed back into the community, and the ritual is concluded with a celebration of his newly acquired manhood status and integration back into the community.

The ritual of *ulwaluko* is a hetero-patriarchal practice, with the process of becoming *indoda* (a 'man') beginning, and being synonymous with, the removal of the foreskin. The Xhosa have a specific way of understanding and practising certain rituals and, according to Kiguwa and Siswana (2018:4), *inxeba* (a wound) is a powerful cultural-symbolic representation of an essential physical attribute of masculinity and what it means to be a Xhosa man. Kiguwa and Siswana (2018:4) state that the resultant wound is also referred to as *isiko* because the cut represents a fundamental foundation of one's being and identity. According to (Siswana 2015:165), *isiko* is a long-standing cultural tradition that remains fixed and therefore cannot be easily modified to meet "societal changes or the influence of changing times". The cutting of the foreskin also has a deeper meaning within *isiko* in which the initiate is traditionally received – his identity is acknowledged and he becomes "connected to his genealogical clan" (Siswana 2015:165). The symbolism of the cut results in its meaning being extended into a "religious and spiritual introduction if the initiate to *iminyanya/izihlwele* (the ancestors)" which further connects him to his clan and wider community (Siswana 2015:165).

There is significance in declaring "I am a man" (as shown in Figure 1) after the removal of the

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foreskin, as it marks a shift in the initiate's social status: he is no longer an uncircumcised boy (*inkwenkwe*), but he is also not fully *indoda* until he has fully completed the ritual (Mfecane 2016:4). In this scene, Kwanda is also situated outside his grass hut and holding his staff with the initiate's blanket around him, which is symbolic of the journey to manhood that he is about to embark on. He is made to repeat the phrase twice[44], which could hint at the fact that Kwanda is not seen by his peers as a 'man' because of his sexuality and is perhaps an indication that he is an important character whose manhood is to be a focus. In this shot, Kwanda's eyes are closed, which could be a sign that he wants to distance himself, or he is positioned to distance himself from his peers both during the initiation process and throughout the film.

Figure 9: Kwanda repeats, *Inxeba*. 2017.
Screenshot by author.

It should be noted that in the Xhosa culture, there is a distinction between men who are circumcised in the bush and those who are circumcised in hospital, with the latter being regarded as 'less than' and embodying subordinate masculinities, and who are "victims of stigma and discrimination by *indoda*" (Mfecane 2016:204). Xolani voices this to Kwanda in the hut, while telling him that he must stay in during his isolation (Figure 2), when he says, "They [men circumcised in a hospital] do not know what it is to be a man". The implication is that, because they were not circumcised in what is culturally deemed as the 'proper way', they are not 'real men'. The medically circumcised men could also not be seen as 'real' men due to

[44] The second time he is made to repeat the phrase is much louder than the first - a sign that he is supposed to be strong.

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the use of anaesthetics and other medication, as being a 'real man' is related to the endurance of pain and suffering. During this scene, Kwanda is sitting in the seclusion hut after his circumcision with white clay on his face. In addition to telling Kwanda about the importance of being circumcised in the bush, he explains the seclusion process and the rule of *ulwaluko*, which is to not tell anyone about what happens at the mountain. It is a very intimate scene, not only because the hut is small and dimly lit, putting the men in close proximity, but also because Xolani is changing the bandage on Kwanda's penis. Throughout the scene, Kwanda is very submissive and vulnerable and does not speak until Xolani loses his temper when he is not addressed properly.[45] The closeup of the shot is of Kwanda looking down, physically looking at Xolani changing his bandage and visually representing both his position as a subordinated masculinity and his immanent transition into manhood.

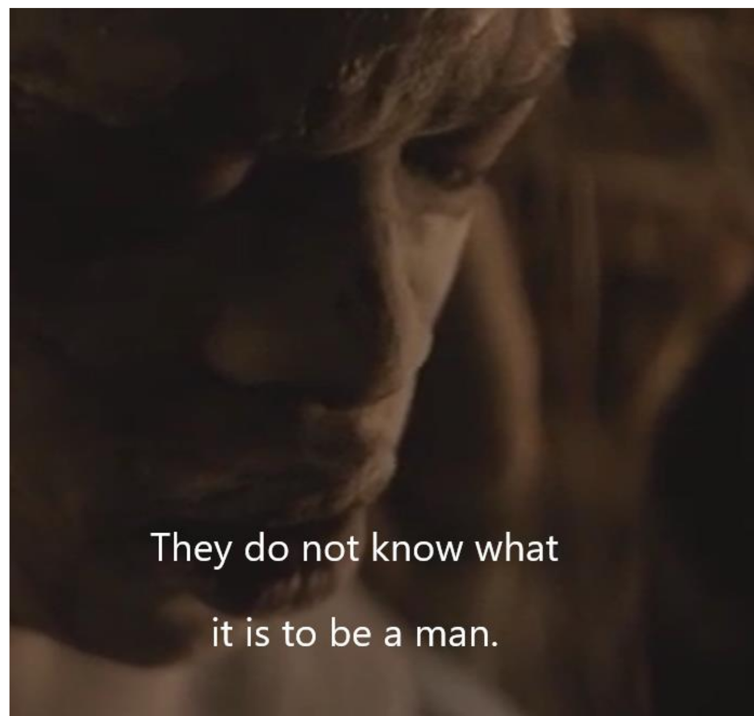

Figure 10: Xolani to Kwanda in the hut, *Inxeba*. 2017.
Screenshot by author.

Ulwaluko, it is believed, gives circumcised men power that is associated with greater rights and responsibilities, as well as a higher standing in society and the "power to appease ancestral

[45] Kwanda is looking down and quiet and the camera is zoomed in on his face.

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spirits", because "only 'men' can speak to the ancestors" (Magodyo et al 2016:345). Furthermore, it grants authority over decision-making processes, as well as legitimacy to become an ancestor and to communicate with the ancestral spirits (Mavundla et al 2010:2). In this regard, the ritual carries both social and cultural significance, and is primarily understood as an instrument of socialisation in which initiation is seen as the formal integration of males into Xhosa religious and tribal life.

Ulwaluko is also constructed in Xhosa culture as 'natural' and 'the normal thing to do', which positions participants as 'powerless' and having 'no choice' but to perform the ritual. Mavundla et al (2010:937) note that it is believed that men should be circumcised because it is "just the way things naturally should be". Punishment for non-conformity assumes various forms that can be witnessed through both physical manifestations and language (Magodyo et al 2016:349). Punishment is a way in which *ulwaluko* asserts dominance, maintains conformity and subjugates other masculinities, such as queer masculinities (Magodyo et al 2016:349). This, in turn, leads to the creation of hierarchies, in which men position themselves in relation to one another, as well as the formation of hegemonic standards of gender, with the elders and initiated men at the top of the hierarchy and uninitiated boys and women at the bottom (Magodyo et al 2016:349). The result for uninitiated men is varied access to hegemony, as well as a lower position in the social hierarchy.

While the term 'boy' has been used as an insult by European men towards African men throughout history, it is also used by African elders to "keep the younger generation of men 'in their place' and further entrench the power of *ulwaluko*" (Magodyo et al 2016:349). This is emphatically demonstrated in the film, where the elders and caregivers often refer to the initiates as 'boys' or 'little ones' when talking amongst each other, and Kwanda is often referred to as 'boy' when he refuses to co-operate with aspects of the ritual. *Ulwaluko* further maintains hegemony by stripping initiates of their decision-making power. Older males are viewed as 'powerful' because they have the authority to make decisions concerning the time frame of the ritual and its proceedings, as well as the 'good' moral values that are taught and the mentorship, provided both during and after the ritual (Magodyo et al 2016:349).

Despite there being other important rituals within *ulwaluko*, learning the *isikhwetha* vocabulary is significant as it is an integral aspect of the cultural socialisation of initiates (Mfecane 2016:5). This vocabulary is both a way of defending manhood and a way of acquiring social identity

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and belonging. An initiate is expected to graduate from his initiation competent in *isikhwetha* vocabulary, which he is expected to use when communicating with other initiated men both within and outside initiation school (Ntozini & Mgqangweni 2016:1310). Traditionally, it is believed that if the initiate fails to respect this custom by not using the *isikhwetha* vocabulary, “his circumcision wound will not heal or some misfortune might befall him” (Ntozini & Mgqangweni 2016:1314). The only example of this that is seen in the film takes place in the hut after the circumcision, when Xolani instructs Kwanda on what is to happen and tells him that he has to refer to him as *ikhankatha.* According to Mfecane (2016:207), this special language excludes men circumcised in hospital and from what Connell (1995:79) refers to as the “circle of legitimacy”.[46] Initiates are therefore required to memorise this language, as it serves as “admission criteria into ritual spaces” (Mfecane 2016:207).

A key aspect of the practice of *ulwaluko* is secrecy, and there are certain parts of the ritual that men who have performed the ritual are not allowed to divulge to ‘outsiders’.[47] Maintaining secrecy is related to the sacred nature of the practice and is constructed as a means of preserving the ritual (Magodyo et al 2016:350). In the film, there are two occasions where Xolani tells Kwanda about the importance of secrecy. The first instance is at the beginning of the movie, where the two are in the hut and Xolani is educating Kwanda on what is to happen during his initiation period. Figure 3 shows Xolani telling Kwanda, “When you come home, do not say anything about what happened here”, as Kwanda looks solemnly down at the floor. The second instance is at the end of the movie, while they are walking back to the village where the families are waiting to welcome the newly initiated men. Xolani walks Kwanda over to a gorge and tells him, “You cannot talk about what happened at the mountain”, before hitting him over the head with a stone, killing him (Figure 4).

[46] Connell’s (1995:76) “circle of legitimacy relates to those who are not recognised as a “real man” (Mfecane 2016:6).

[47] ‘Outsiders’ refers not only to people who are not part of the Xhosa culture, but also to Xhosa women, boys, and uninitiated men.

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Figure 11: Xolani to Kwanda in the hut (secrecy), *Inxeba*. 2017.
Screenshot by author.

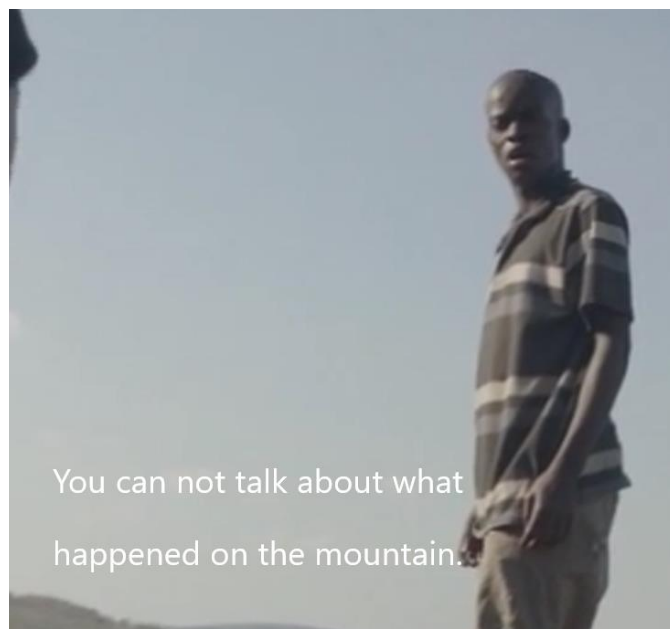

Figure 12: Xolani to Kwanda on the gorge, *Inxeba*. 2017.
Screenshot by author.

The fact that Kwanda is looking down and averting his eyes in the dark lighting of the hut in Figure 3 indicates that he is shrouded in secrecy. In Figure 12, however, he is standing at full height on higher ground than Xolani (out of shot) and in full light, which shows that he is determined to tell the secret. What is interesting about these two incidents is that in the first

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instance, Xolani – as Kwanda's initiation instructor – is inadvertently setting the scene of the film and what is to follow – a complex story about the duality of subordinated masculinities (queer sexuality) versus hegemonic and heteronormative masculinities. In the second instance, Xolani is issuing a warning to Kwanda that he is not allowed to tell anyone about what happened at the mountain, both in general (as is customary) and regarding his sexual relationship with Vija. Here again, Xolani is setting the scene for what is to follow – Kwanda's imminent demise. Through killing Kwanda, several things happen: one is that secrecy is ensured and the other is that it can be argued that Xolani is expressing his internalised homophobia by killing "the queer inside himself", as Lwando Scott (2021:34) suggests.

An additional nod to the notion of secrecy occurs when Kwanda confronts Xolani about his sexuality and relationship with Vija. Xolani tells Kwanda to drop the subject and Kwanda storms off back towards the camp, telling Xolani that his secret is safe with him, which can also be read as foreshadowing his death because the secret is indeed kept safe when he dies. A noteworthy element to the sequence of events that build up to Kwanda's death is that he not only educates Xolani about homosexual African history and attempts to pressurise him into coming out and being openly gay, but also proposes that they should expose Vija for being a "liar and a hypocrite". All of this seems to aggravate Xolani and prompt him to act against Kwanda.

The film also explores some ritual challenges that the initiates face. These challenges emerge because "the 'ideal *ulwaluko* man' is constructed concerning a 'morally upright' character that may be burdened by the 'ideal *ulwaluko* man'" (Magodyo et al 2016:349). The guardian of the initiate, for example, should be an embodiment of what is seen as culturally accepted masculine decorum. As such, he is viewed as the 'ideal *ulwaluko* man' and is expected to be responsible, selfless, and respectful of his family and elders and society at large (Mdyogo et al 2016:351). With this in mind, Xolani is put in the difficult position of having to portray hegemonic masculinity since he is a caregiver and the ideal *ulwaluko* man (Magodyo et al 2016:349), whilst also being homosexual and therefore ascribed the status of subordinated masculinity. The film emphasises his struggle to balance these identities, which offer social commentary on what it means to be *indoda*.

Mfecane (2016:7) asserts that to shout "*ndiyindoda*" immediately following the circumcision

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means that the initiate has accepted a challenge to prove his manhood[48] through *ukusebenza* (hard work) that is centred on the penis and personal discipline. With this in mind, a further feature of the film, as identified by Du Plessis (2018:2), is the "phallocentric scripting" of the sex acts portrayed, as well as the importance of the phallus in *ulwaluko* and all that it represents. This aligns with Kumalo and Gama's (2018:8) assertion that in *ulwaluko*, the rite of passage is equated to the ritual of circumcision which, in turn, allows for the close association of the tradition with the phallus while "eliding the broader social implications of *ulwaluko* i.e. inculcating morally virtuous values in young men". For example, after the circumcision is performed, the elders inspect the cut to see that it is done properly, as demonstrated in the film (Figure 13), and they perform a final inspection of the fully healed scar before the newly initiated men leave the camp. The head elder remarks, "We [the elders and the newly initiated men] play in the same yard now" (Figure 14), which is also a reference to being a 'man' now that the young men are circumcised. The positioning of the characters in the two figures differs, showing how the positioning of masculinity has also changed. In Figure 13, the focus is placed on the initiate, whereas in Figure 14, the focus is on the elder. The initiate is being spoken to as an elder would talk to a child in Figure 13, with the elder kneeling, whilst in Figure 14 he is standing and talking to the initiate like he would a fellow man, showing the shift that the initiates have made from subordinated masculinities to hegemonic masculinities.

Figure 13: Elder asking to see the cut, *Inxeba*. 2017.
Screenshot by author.

[48] According to Mfecane (2016:7), the initiate's masculinity is an extension of his manhood.

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Figure 14: Elder about new masculinities, *Inxeba*. 2017.
Screenshot by author.

A further example of the emphasis on the phallus in the film is when a group of initiates in the camp are comparing their circumcisions amongst themselves. They comment on how desirable their newly circumcised penises will be to women and ask to see Kwanda's scar because the elders have deemed it "the most beautiful", saying that they will show him theirs in exchange. This penis admiration is inherently sexually performative, which adds another layer of complexity to the film, because despite the space being heteronormative, there is a strong sense of male-male intimacy. However, when Kwanda is invited to show his scar by one of the initiates, the other initiates cover themselves up because Kwanda is a "faggot"[49] and should not be looking at other young men's penises.

There is a duality at play in this scene. The context in which this is taking place, *ulwaluko*, makes it easy for the initiates to overlook the homoeroticism of penis comparison. *Ulwaluko* is a predominantly heteronormative space, but the boys together inspecting each other's genitals is a form of homoerotic action. The duality lies in the queer figure that Kwanda represents: he is believed by the other initiates to have the ability to disturb the meaning of the

[49] Kwanda is referred to in this derogatory manner by a few characters in the film.

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inspection of their penises and, by extension masculinity, by making it overtly queer.[50]

4.4 Xhosa masculinities and *indoda*

As I have already argued, masculinities refer to practices that are associated with being a so-called 'real' man and are achieved through established 'manhood acts', which are socially read as representing manliness in a particular setting. Connell (1995:71) asserts that gender is performed through social practices that are read by others. Hegemonic masculinity, according to Connell (1995:77), can be defined as the "configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which guarantees or is taken to guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women". It is the most respected way of being a man and gains dominance through influence and force, thus becoming a model used to judge what it means to be a 'real' man. A key element of the construction of hegemonic masculinity is heterosexuality, resulting in hegemonic masculinity being constructed as a gender position that is neither gay nor female. Segal (1993:635) argues that hegemonic masculinity is a system of masculinity that acquires its symbolic force and accustomed status from a series of hierarchical relations that it can subordinate. The notion of *indoda* provides an interesting contribution to masculinity theories, as hegemony in the *indoda* discourse is mostly achieved by having a "traditionally circumcised penis" (Mfecane 2016:7). With this in mind, medically circumcised men are not considered as part of "the circle of legitimacy" (Connell 1995:76) and represent cowardice (*ubugwala*), which is an 'unmanly characteristic' and their 'medicalised' penises are a sign of their 'unmanly' character (Mfecane 2016:7).

While it is more accurate to describe the variety of masculinities that exist in the plural, within the Xhosa culture, there is one ideal masculinity which is embodied in the notion of *indoda* – a traditionally circumcised man. Mfecane (2016:204) maintains that "*indoda* is the most 'honoured' form of masculinity" in Xhosa culture. Traditionally, a circumcised individual is regarded as *indoda*, a 'real' man, regardless of his sexual orientation or class. It is *indoda* that grants him certain rights and privileges. It is important to note that, despite a gay man being considered *indoda* after undergoing *ulwaluko*, gay men are often discouraged from participating as the "practices and beliefs are based on hegemonic masculinity" (Mashabane & Henderson 2020:164). This means that gay men are rejected because it is believed that "'real

[50] Because Kwanda is gay, his presence makes their penis admiration a 'gay act'.

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men' cannot be gay" (Mashabane & Henderson 2020:164). Mashabane and Henderson (2020:165) note that while gay men might consider themselves "masculine", they are nonetheless rejected by "heterosexual men during *ulwaluko*". The representation of the responsibilities that Xhosa men are required to uphold is portrayed in the film during the speech that the initiates give to the elders. The initiates begin by greeting the elders and proceed to declare their names, which families they belong to and how they will improve their families as newly initiated men. In one speech (Figure 15), an initiate tells the elders, "They [the family that he is from] will not perish and their house will not be barren" because he is now a man, the implication being that he now has the responsibility of looking after the family and fathering children. Once the initiates are ready to leave the camp and rejoin Xhosa society, the elders give a speech about their new roles.

Figure 16 is an extract from the speech that is given over a scene in which someone is burning down a seclusion hut that an initiate would have stayed in during this period. The act of burning the huts could symbolise the initiates being 'real' men, as the huts being burned down is the final act before re-entering society (Chris van Vuuren & Michael de Jongh 1999:146).[51] This could also symbolise that the initiates' temporary house during their transition from boyhood to manhood is ready to transform into a permanent place for them to begin their adult lives. The significance of these images is that in Figure 15, the initiate is telling the elders that he knows what is expected of him as a man, and how to continue to prove this. There is determination in his eyes which is emphasised by the lighting on his face. Figure 16 is that of the elder reminding the initiates what they have to do to be a man, which is to build an enclosure that will not be empty, as they perform this final act of essentially 'burning' the remnants of the boy they used to be.[52]

[51] Traditionally, the huts are made of grass, but nowadays they are constructed out of metal and plastic sheets (van Vuuren & de Jongh 1999:146).
[52] When the elder refers the enclosure , he is referring to the man's status as the head of the household.

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Figure 15: Initiate speech for elders, *Inxeba*. 2017.
Screenshot by author.

Figure 16: Speech given to initiates by elders, *Inxeba*. 2017.
Screenshot by author.

4.5 *Ulwaluko*, manliness and violence

According to Louise Vincent (2008:436), the purpose of *ulwaluko* is to build specific

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characteristics such as "forbearance, courage, fortitude and strength" (Vincent 2008:436). These virtues are taught through "exposure to deprivation and a harsh regime of punishments and criticisms". As such, a central feature in the formation of masculinity during *ulwaluko* is the relationship between manliness and the use of violence. Furthermore, Vincent (2008:437) asserts that due to the instruction of *ulwaluko* itself being "backed up with a regime of violence and brutality … one of the most problematic features of dominant masculinity in South Africa" is reinforced. This use of violence as punishment is generally accepted as "part of the process", despite it contradicting a key feature taught during *ulwaluko* – "respect for others and non-violence" (Vincent 2008:438).

While there is a strong correlation between manliness and violence during *ulwaluko*, Mfecane (2016:3) asserts that masculinities can be achieved through conventional acts of manhood which are read "socially as representing manliness" in a particular social setting. Therefore, in the Xhosa culture, even a so-called 'weak' man (such as someone who is homosexual or, in Kwanda's case, someone who grew up rich in a fancy house) can be seen as 'manly' through involvement in *ulwaluko*. Furthermore, it is common for Xhosa boys to be forced to take part in *ulwaluko* against their will because of the threat of violence and social ostracisation resulting from undertaking medical male circumcision or remaining uncircumcised. The risk of "ostracism", as asserted by Vincent (2008:440), is further extended to the family of the uncircumcised man who "fear social exclusion if their son has not been to initiation school". This fear of ostracisation can be seen at the beginning of the film, when Kwanda's father tells Xolani that he is glad that his son has come to the mountain when his mother wanted him to be medically circumcised, because even though Kwanda's father sees him as 'weak', he will become 'a man'.[53]

Within *ulwaluko*, being *indoda* signifies hegemony, as it is the most honoured way of being a man. As Mfecane (2016:8) asserts, "being *indoda* is generally characterised by dominance and oppressive practices towards other masculinities". The scene shown in Figure 17 takes place with the elders and instructors sitting around a fire, with an intoxicated Vija telling the group about an incident that took place during their initiation.[54] The intimacy portrayed as Vija tells

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[53] Kwanda's father tells Xolani that Kwanda is weak because his mother spoils him and allowed him to bring some of his friends home and lock themselves in his room. He further tells Xolani that there is something wrong with "Joburg rich people".

[54] The incident that Vija is referring to happened while he and Xolani were initiates, when a dog entered Xolani's hut.

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Xolani that he is "the boss", as well as his boastful recital of the tale, show the amount of respect that he has for Xolani. It also reinforces the notion that to be 'a man', one has to prove one's toughness.[55]

Figure 17: Vija to Xolani around the fire, *Inxeba*. 2017.
Screenshot by author.

It could also be argued that the killing of Kwanda is a display of manliness, not in the sense that the act itself is manly, but that his death is the preservation of manliness. Xolani kills Kwanda after telling him that he cannot tell anybody what happened on the mountain. This is because it is culturally taboo to tell anyone what happens on the mountain, but also because Xolani does not want Kwanda to tell anybody about his and Vija's relationship and sexualities respectively. Therefore, killing Kwanda has a dual purpose: it keeps the secret concerning the cultural aspect of *ulwaluko* and the social aspect of manliness is preserved through his silence (death).

4.6 Homosexuality/Homophobia in *Ulwaluko*

The normalisation of heterosexuality is at the core of the portrayal of non-normative sexualities and gender expressions that fail to conform to the norm.[56] According to Ratele (2013:134), "the opposition of queer to 'the traditional' inadvertently reinforces the view of only some prevalent practices – what people do, rather than what many possibly could do were they not

[55] Xolani's toughness stems from him being able to defend himself by beating and killing the dog in his hut.
[56] It is important to note that not all portrayals or non-normative sexualities in visual media aim to normalise heterosexuality; however, traditionally, hegemonic masculinity (and by extension heterosexuality) is "always constructed in relation to subordinate masculinities", which includes homosexuality (Connell 1987:183).

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fearful – as belonging to tradition." While there are certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity that they transgress, homosexual men are still required to negotiate their identities concerning the dominant notions of what it means to be a 'man' within a particular cultural context. Having undergone *ulwaluko*, gay Xhosa men are culturally entitled to be referred to as *indoda* and to receive the same treatment as heterosexuals (Mashabane & Henderson 2020:173). This is because, culturally, there is no differentiation between sexuality when *ulwaluko* is conducted. In other words, in *ulwaluko*, there is no 'heterosexual' or 'homosexual', there is just 'male', and while homosexuality is frowned upon, in essence, one's sexual orientation does not matter as long as you have undergone the ritual (Mfecane 2016:10). Although gay men breach certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity, they are still required to "negotiate their identities in relation to dominant ideas of what it means to be a man within a particular cultural context" (Ntozini & Ngqangweni 2016:1311). Therefore, by undergoing traditional circumcision, their presumed status as 'not man enough' is mediated to some extent, and they can gain access to contexts where men are respected and granted authority (Mashabane & Henderson 2020:172).

Kiguwa and Siswana (2018:6) assert that any configuration of gender, sex and sexual orientation that fails to meet the binary mode of heterosexuality (according to which there are two sexes and two genders) is considered to be unnatural and deviant. However, despite the identification of the participant as gay being unchallenged, for the most part, when undergoing *ulwaluko*, their credibility as men both socially and culturally is repaired through the process of achieving "normative social manhood" and they are "given the 'respect they deserve' as 'men of the community'" (Lynch & Matthew Clayton 2016:288). According to Mfecane (2016:11), "being gay on its own does not lead to a lower social placement in Xhosa masculine hierarchies".[57] Nonetheless, the 'othering' of gay men within the rite of passage is common as it is seen as "predominantly a heterosexual rite of passage" (Mashabane & Henderson 2020:173).

Mfecane (2020:9) states that "non-conforming gay Xhosa men" are labelled "criminals" according to the principle of *indoda* manhood. This is represented throughout the film when Kwanda, and to an extent Xolani, are subject to ridicule, hostility and insults that question their status as men due to their perceived sexual orientation and gendered presentation. An example of this is shown in Figure 18, where Xolani is confronted by two initiates in the bush who tell

[57] The most important thing is that the person "must be seen to conform to the expected social conduct of "*indoda*" (Mfecane 2016:11).

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him that what he does (being gay) is wrong and 'unmanly', leading to an altercation in which Vija attacks one of the initiates. As you can see, the initiate talking is the central figure in the shot and is shown to be looking down on Xolani (out of shot) and, by extension, his sexuality. Interesting to note is that the homophobia in the Xhosa community can be so severe that Nakhane Touré was forced to emigrate following harassment and "ongoing death threats from amaXhosa men for portraying an openly gay Xhosa man" (Mfecane 2020:9).

Figure 18: Initiates confronting Xolani, *Inxeba*. 2017.
Screenshot by author.

It is common for gay men to challenge some of the aspects of *ulwaluko* that they do not identify with, such as taking part in cultural meetings or purposefully participating in the ritual to undermine the normative notions of masculinity (Ntozini & Mgqangweni 2016:1311). Within the context of *ulwaluko*, gay initiates are often considered as "vulnerable" and therefore occupy a subjugated position of masculinity (Ntozini & Mgqangweni 2016:1316). These men are at risk of being persecuted by not only their heterosexual counterparts, but also by the instructors involved in the ritual. In a study conducted by Ntozini and Mgqangweni (2016), they found that participants viewed *ulwaluko* as an opportunity to disprove notions that homosexual men are "unable to withstand the pressures of the initiation rite" (Ntozini & Mgqangweni 2016:1316).[58] They viewed *ulwaluko* as an opportunity to "undermine the notion of the alleged superiority of heterosexual men" (Ntozini & Mgqangweni 2016:1316) The study showed that

[58] This is important with regard to Kwanda being regarded by his father as weak.

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by participating in the ritual, the homosexual men felt a sense of 'equality'. Additionally, these men felt obliged to prove that they could undergo the ritual just as successfully as heterosexual men could (Ntozini & Mgqangweni 2016:1317). In other words, they partook in the initiation to prove their "manhood" and to prove their "physical and emotional strengths, irrespective" of their sexuality (Ntozini & Mgqangweni 2016:1317).

With Ntozini and Mgqangweni's (2016) research in mind, the character of Kwanda is interesting in that he is used to challenging not only the heteronormativity of *ulwaluko*, but also the ritual in general. Ntozini and Mgqangweni (2016:1311) assert that "homosexual men have little power within these hetero-patriarchal contexts".[59] However, as shown in Figure 19, Kwanda refuses to engage with the elders over a declaration of manhood by simply stating, "I do not want" with a passive face. Interestingly, there is good lighting while the other initiates give their leaving speeches (such as in Figure 15), but Kwanda is in darker lighting in this shot, which adds to his character's identity as an 'Other'.

Kwanda is an interesting character because, for most gay initiates in Ntozini and Mgqangweni's (2016:1317) study to be fully accepted, they either "had to pretend or had to deny who they were" or they withdrew from certain aspects of the ritual. Kwanda falls into the category of those who were "openly resistant" and asserts his agency by openly challenging select practices that occur during *ulwaluko* (Ntozini & Mgqangweni 2016:1317).[60] As a result, Kwanda's death is all the more symbolic or meaningful for the prospects of gay men being accepted in *ulwaluko*. In other words, although the ritual itself does not discriminate against gay men (as argued above), the actual social practices of the men in the ritual do discriminate. Furthermore, Kwanda's death, as a queer man, at the end can be seen as a statement about the (non)acceptance of queer masculinity in this highly masculinised ritual.

[59] In these contexts, homosexual men hold little power by virtue of the fact that they are marginalised and subordinated.
[60] It should also be noted that Kwanda's mere presence challenges the hetero-patriarchal nature of the initiation.

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Figure 19: Kwanda refuses, *Inxeba*. 2017.
Screenshot by author.

There is an expectation in Xhosa families and communities that gay men will return from their initiation having changed their sexual orientation (Ntozini & Mgqangeni 2016:1310). This derives from the notion that the initiation would be so influential that it would eliminate any homosexual thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Families hope that portrayals of manhood at the school would be so appealing to initiates that they would "reject earlier notions and beliefs they had regarding homosexuality and thus 'choose' to be heterosexual" (Ntozini & Mgqangeni 2016:1315). This hope held by the families relates to Ratele's (2013:145) assertion that men learn about masculinity by "being addressed by others, by comparing themselves with others, and by comparing themselves with an image of themselves at an earlier point in their lives".[61]

Ironically, the sexual relationship that Xolani and Vija have in the film only occurs during the initiation period, with Xolani confessing to Vija that the only reason that he keeps coming back to the mountain to be a caregiver is so that he can see and be with him. In fact, after their first sexual encounter in the film, while catching up, Vija tells Xolani that his wife gave birth to their third child. There is a silence before straight-faced, Xolani tells Vija that he is happy for him, as shown in Figure 20, and that he (Vija) must be satisfied, to which Vija shakes his head and says that he will have to work harder and that he should not even be at the mountain, all of which bears a tone of resentment. What we see here is that Vija is keeping up appearances by

[61] The "others" that Ratele (2013:145) is referring to are other men.

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having a wife and children and presenting as a hetero-normative patriarch in his community while he hides his secret. His telling Xolani that he should not be at the mountain perhaps carries a double meaning: he should not leave home or work to be there, at the mountain, so that he can look after his family, and that he is at a 'father' stage in life and should not be seeing Xolani anymore, the implication possibly being that he feels their relationship is childish or a waste of time.

Figure 20: Xolani to Vija about the new child, *Inxeba*. 2017.
Screenshot by author.

4.7 The representation of masculinities

It has been proposed by theorists that initiation is a space that inadvertently promotes and normalises heteronormative identity as the only option for men, occurring at a time when manhood becomes "conflated and linked to sexual identities that cater both materially and discursively for heterosexual-identified and identifying men" (Siswana & Kiguwa 2018:56). Since *ulwaluko* as a practice restricts the negotiation of non-heterosexual identities, the construction of initiation poses a problem for men who have non-heterosexual identities and sexual practices. *Ulwaluko* therefore becomes problematic in its promotion of heterosexist practices and its rejection of the realities and experiences of self-identifying gay Xhosa men, even though the ritual does not discriminate against homosexual men, as argued earlier.

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Xolani has a 'softer' masculinity that is separate from Vija's, which conforms to hegemonic and even hypermasculine traits of strength and toughness. Finally, there is the openly homosexual masculinity that is represented by Kwanda, who goes directly against Xhosa culture by being homosexual and challenging the other masculinities. It is interesting to note that Kwanda's character evolves into a strong masculinity, which challenges the held assumption that all gay men are 'weak'. A key feature in the conception of *ulwaluko* is the correlation between manliness and violence. A man has to present himself through strength and toughness to be seen by others as *indoda*.

Vija embraces this view as a way to negate the fact that he is homosexual by picking fights with Kwanda and other initiates. One example is around a campfire when, as already mentioned, Kwanda comes to sit with the elders and caregivers and questions what more there is to do while at the mountain. Vija loses his temper and picks a fight with Kwanda over a staff that Kwanda is holding, asserting his dominance through violence and verbally belittling him. He takes the staff and begins to shove Kwanda around saying, "Show me your strength, kid" (Figure 21), and the skirmish results in Vija's arms locked around Kwanda's torso from the back with the staff used to trap him in place. A further example is when Vija attacks one of the initiates who confronts Xolani about being homosexual. The fight is broken up by the caregivers and elders who discover the scene and pull Vija off the initiate. Vija also resorts to violence when Xolani asks him if he is not tired of hiding that he is homosexual and tries to force him to come to terms with his sexuality, as well as when Vija steals a goat and makes Kwanda kill it, which Xolani inherently disagrees with. Vija, therefore, uses violence as a way to prove to himself (and to others) that he is a 'proper man', even though his sexuality is seen as 'improper'; thus, his violence is performative, and even over the top, to cement his hegemonic masculinity more strongly.

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Figure 21: Vija challenging Kwanda, *Inxeba*. 2017.
Screenshot by author.

The notion of violence and woundedness in the film has a symbolic element that demonstrates both conscious and unconscious formations of subjectification. The psychological constructions of shame, fear, anxiety, denial, and anger are also intrinsic to the aforementioned formations of subjectification and influence the performative practices of masculinity. In the film, fear and shame form the basis of Vija's overtly macho performances of heterosexual masculinity, and these feelings function as tools which constantly remind him that he could be found out and punished. Thus, the recognition of the prevalence of violence results in the denial of the Other (homosexuality) as part of the heteronormative social order.

On the other hand, Xolani, while having internalised feelings of homophobia, is a non-violent person and is easily overpowered by Vija during fights. One fight scene ends with Vija pushing Xolani away and storming off, while another, ends with Xolani lying face down on the ground with Vija's hand on his head to keep him there. Another scene which portrays Xolani's near defencelessness against Vija is when the two of them go for a walk: instead of kissing Xolani back, Vija pushes him to his knees and forces him to perform oral sex. This is not only a further representation of Xolani's subordination (he is neither the dominant partner in the relationship nor is he heterosexual and is thus subordinate in the hierarchy of masculinities), but it also represents the power that Vija has over Xolani both physically and mentally. However, there is also a part of Xolani that presents his softer, more caring side, which is brought about by Kwanda, who tries to defend him against both Vija and the elders. This again shows how Xolani struggles with and negotiates his masculinity in an overtly masculine space.

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4.8 Conclusion

I have shown how the film *Inxeba* (*The Wound*) directed by John Trengrove (2017) presents viewers with a glimpse of the Xhosa initiation ceremony *ulwaluko*. The discussion also investigated how the film addresses and challenges the discourse surrounding the hetero-patriarchal hegemonic masculinities that are predominant in Xhosa culture. Whilst the patriarchal hierarchy of masculinity is fluid, subordinate masculinities are viewed as opposite to hegemonic masculinities. These men are seen as not embracing the ideal machismo of hegemonic masculinity and are often equated with women, and gay men especially so. However, they also reinforce the hegemonic representation of gender as they maintain and normalise the patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. Gay men are often ostracised, but are still expected to negotiate their identities in relation to the dominant hegemonic discourse of what it means to be a man in a particular setting. In the context of *ulwaluko*, homophobia extends to the would-be initiates who often do not partake in the rite of passage for fear of ridicule and exclusion. However, their families will sometimes force them to undergo *ulwaluko* in the hopes that they will become 'real men' and default to heterosexuality, despite the beliefs of *ulwaluko* being heterosexual in practice and rejecting gay men for not being 'real men'. These beliefs also position men in a gender hierarchy, with the gay initiates situated as lesser and the heterosexual or 'real men' as the dominant masculinities. Hybrid masculinities, on the other hand, are subordinated by hegemonic masculinities but do not reject them. Instead, they incorporate gay culture through being soft and caring and combine it with toughness to maintain an outward heterosexual identity and, in doing so, are granted access to heterosexual privileges.

Xolani occupies both subordinate and hegemonic masculinities as he negotiates being gay and being a heterosexual-presenting caregiver. This is also achieved through the representation of Kwanda, who is subordinate in the literal sense of the ceremony as well as in the hierarchy of masculinities, and who openly challenges the elders, and by extension culture, and their ways of being 'men'. A key element to the representations of manliness in the film is the association with violence that is portrayed through Vija, who uses his violence to perform hypermasculinity and therefore affirm hetero-patriarchal masculinity. The film also challenges stereotypes of masculinities in its portrayal of these male characters, with Xolani occupying a hybrid masculinity of being homosexual and being an appointed caregiver. Kwanda, although a subordinate, challenges the idea that gay men cannot be strong. My main aim was to address

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the complex relationship between masculinity and gender representations through the characters of Xolani, Kwanda and Vija in their experiences during the initiation period.

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CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the visual analysis of the masculinities in two South African films, *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005) and *Inxeba* (Trengrove 2017). I first present a summary of the definitions used throughout the chapters, as well as the representations of masculinities in the media. Next, I explain my findings during my analysis and explain how the representations of masculinities differ and relate to each other. I then reflect on the contribution of the study, as well as potential gaps in the research. Finally, I provide a brief overview of possible future research that could be conducted about analysing masculinities in South African film.

5.1. Masculinities in the Media

The media holds strong control over people who consume it and can influence, change and progress in society. Male characters in film are often portrayed as having status and levels of accomplishment and are depicted as dominant, aggressive, and powerful, along with the male stereotype of taking pride in their sexual prowess. In other words, they are usually depicted as the culturally ideal, hegemonic masculinity. These depictions are reflections of social practices that hold hegemonic males in high esteem. However, this portrayal is shifting towards depictions of hybrid masculinities, where the man is at once tough with a softer and more sensitive masculinity.

5.2 Findings

In Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 I analysed the masculinities portrayed in the selected films, particularly the hierarchies of masculinities and how the different masculinities interact with each other in their respective settings. The key features in the films relate to defining the various masculinities, as portrayed through different characters in hegemonic masculine spaces where being seen as tough is extremely important. Additionally, the films progress over different periods and involve the deaths of significant characters which contribute to the progression (or lack thereof) of the main characters' masculinities. A further feature of the films involves the relation of gender and how the women in the films influence the masculinities that are portrayed, as well as how they contribute to the story arc. There is also an interesting argument to be made regarding the representation of masculinities in the films and the reception of the films based on race.

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5.2.1 Masculinities

Both films depict the masculinities of Black South Africans in their respective settings. *Inxeba* is a portrayal of the masculinities that are present within the context of the Xhosa hetero-patriarchal space of the mountains in the Eastern Cape during *ulwaluko*. It is not only a portrayal of the hegemonic masculinities that are present and respected within this space, but also the subordinate queer masculinity of Kwanda, as he is seen as the intruder who is 'infiltrating' the sacred space. Vija, who is heterosexual with a wife and family at home but also engages in gay sex with Xolani (albeit exclusively during this period at the mountain), represents hypermasculinity. Last is Xolani's simultaneous subordinate and hegemonic masculinity, as he is Kwanda's chosen instructor who is closeted, only coming to the mountain to see and be intimate with Vija.

Tsotsi, on the other hand, represents the gender structures in gangs in the township of Soweto. It has representations of subordinate masculinities through Aap, hypermasculinities through Butcher, and the hybrid masculinity of Tsotsi, the gang leader and caregiver. However, it also has representations of the women within the gang space through Miriam as the initial victim of gender-based violence and Soekie as the respected elder woman. *Tsotsi* recognises and illustrates that gender is relational, whereas *Inxeba* takes place in a space that is exclusive to men, and which women are forbidden to enter. Even the mention of a woman's (Kwanda's mother) request is overridden by Kwanda's father, who insists that Kwanda participate in *ulwaluko*. Overall, I have found that the characters of Tsotsi (*Tsotsi* Hood) and Xolani (*Inxeba* Trengrove) are excellent representations of the fluidity of masculinity and how a man can hold simultaneous masculinities depending on the context in which he is situated.

5.2.2 Period and character progression

Interestingly, although the story that is told in *Inxeba* unfolds over four weeks, there is more character progression in *Tsotsi*, which takes place over just a few days. While both films focus on multiple characters, *Tsotsi* has character progression in three significant characters – Tsotsi, Miriam and Aap. The character Tsotsi starts off as the hardened gangster and leader of his gang, as discussed in Chapter 3; however, with the baby boy as the catalyst and as he gets to know Miriam, he embraces a softer side as the vulnerable caregiver. In this way, he represents Messner's (2007:467) "Kindergarten Commando" mentioned in the literature review, with his "tough guy image" combined with this "compassion and care" for the baby boy.

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The next character who experiences major progression is Miriam. Mazibuko & Umejesi (2019:52) state that in South Africa, particularly in gangs, "patriarchy is culturally entrenched" and "men exert power and control over women". This claim relates to Miriam, who begins as a victim of Tsotsi's abuse, as he uses his gun and the threat of violence as a means to make her do his bidding – in this case, breastfeed the baby boy. Miriam's character serves as a potential love interest for Tsotsi; however, they remain friends, and she manages to persuade him to take the baby boy back to the child's parents. Miriam's character development lies in the confidence that she grows in herself as she learns to value herself, and Tsotsi learns to value her in her care for the baby, which extends into other realms. Furthermore, she evolves from her position as a victim of gender-based violence to learning that she can trust Tsotsi and she becomes his friend and confidant. They develop a mutual understanding as she reveals small parts of her life to Tsotsi, such as her husband dying in a mine collapse, and that she makes suncatchers from shards of glass to reflect different colours when she is happy and from rusty metal when she is sad as a means of income.

Aap also exhibits character progression, though minor in comparison to Tsotsi and Miriam. For the majority of the film, Aap maintains his position as Tsotsi's subordinate in masculinity and as a fellow gang member. Tsotsi reveals that Aap has been following him for years and berates him for it out of frustration. Following Butcher's death, Aap finally has the resolve to leave Tsotsi, for fear that he will either get beaten up like Boston or get killed at Tsotsi's hands. He is able to assert his agency when he decides to leave and that he will no longer be Tsotsi's 'yes man'. This is yet another example of the fluidity and nuance of masculinity and demonstrates that a man's masculinity can shift depending on the situation. In this instance, Tsotsi's hegemonic masculinity is stripped by Aap for a violent act that in some cases would validate one's hegemonic masculinity however, Aap takes away Tsotsi's position out of fear.

In comparison, *Inxeba* does not show character progression so much as glimpses into the characters' true natures. Kwanda is unashamedly gay and proud of his sexuality. Xolani, on the other hand, is deeply closeted, and Vija is a man who has sex with women and men. It is important to note that Vija also maintains the violent personality associated with hypermasculinity throughout the film, including an incident where he beats up an initiate who confronts Xolani about his sexuality and when he chases after Kwanda after finding Vija and

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Xolani cuddling post-coitus.[62] Their relationship predominantly takes place either in the dark or in secluded spots away from others, lest they get caught. Each of these characters is hyper-aware of where they stand within the hetero-patriarchal hierarchy, although it is met with resistance by Kwanda, which is why Xolani and Vija keep their intimate relationship a secret – they risk ostracisation similar to that Kwanda faces and the loss of respect from the rest of the men in the space.

5.2.3 Significance of the deaths

Each of these films has the death of an important character, each with its significance. The death of Butcher in *Tsotsi* at Tsotsi's hand plays a part in Tsotsi's character progression. Not only is Butcher's death a way for Tsotsi to assert his position as the gang leader, as discussed in Chapter 3, but it is also the turning point at which Tsotsi's hegemonic masculinity is stripped of him by Aap, who decides to leave the gang, rendering Tsotsi to a subordinate position.[63]

By contrast, Kwanda's death in *Inxeba* is associated with silencing and resolution. Through killing Kwanda, Xolani ensures that his relationship with Vija is kept a secret from the community, as well as from Vija's family. In ensuring this secret, Kwanda's death serves to hinder the potential character progression that would stem from their secret being revealed. Xolani and Vija do not have to face the embarrassment and humiliation that comes from being gay in their society and Vija's family remains protected from knowing that he has sex with men. Kwanda is only killed by Xolani because he threatens potential change – he threatens to out Vija for his hypocritical behaviour and Xolani makes sure that this does not happen. This could reflect an uncompromising attitude towards gay men, not only in the space of *ulwaluko*, but in South African culture in general.

5.2.4 The role of women

Women play an important role in *Tsotsi*. For example, Miriam helps Tsotsi to break down his walls and become more vulnerable, while Soekie takes a protective stance over Tsotsi at first, but then directs the police to where he lives. In comparison, there are no women in *Inxeba*, as *ulwaluko* is a culturally masculine space in which women and children are not welcome –

[62] These incidents correlate with the assertion by LaPollo, Bond and Lauby (2014:364) that Black men who have sex with men and women are influenced by "hypermasculine ideals".

[63] As mentioned in the literature review, hegemonic masculinity is awarded to the individual by other men, which means that it can also be stripped of the individual if he is not seen as fit for the title (Connell 1987:107).

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except for the young boys who bring supplies like extra food to those at the mountain.

In *Tsotsi,* all the women provide a caregiver role in one way or another. Tsotsi's mother, for example, tried to protect him from his abusive father, which we see in Tsotsi's flashbacks, while the baby boy's mother, Pumla, is desperate to find her son. Soekie protects Tsotsi from a potential assault by Boston, and later nurses Boston after Tsotsi beats him up in the shebeen. Miriam has her son (Isiaih) to look after, but also helps Tsotsi with the abducted baby boy and, in a sense, looks after Tsotsi by providing compassion and understanding. In comparison, as women are not allowed in the *ulwaluko* space, there was nobody in *Inxeba* to provide care, apart from the instructors who taught the boys the ways of manhood and showed them how to clean their circumcision wounds. Even looking after the circumcision wounds only happens on the first night – thereafter, the boys are expected to change their bandages, as no one is allowed in the huts during the isolation period. The women who are mentioned are disregarded, including Kwanda's mother, who wanted him to be circumcised in a hospital, and the girls that the initiates objectify. These examples demonstrate that the women are not as inconsequential as one might assume, and that women are important to the formation and withholding of beliefs surrounding masculinity.

5.2.5 The perceptions of race and masculinities

According to Jane Stadler, South African media appropriates and reworks messages about Black identities in innovative and knowing ways, which leads to the emergence of "terminology and texts that both acknowledge and resist the homogenising influences of globalisation and racial assimilation" (Stadler 2008:343). Although *Tsotsi* is not an example of "self-representation of blacks by blacks", it is "nuanced and compassionate" and has been adapted by a "white South African and his multicultural cast and crew" with skill and integrity (Stadler 2008:346). *Tsotsi* is a depiction of the "ultra-violent 'tough guise' of black masculinity", which is embodied in the figure of the tsotsi and enhanced with the use of 'kwaito' music and "new extremes of black-on-black violence" (Stadler 2008:347).

Black masculinity, the 'tough guise', is stereotypically synonymous with Black South African neighbourhoods and townships represented as "being populated with gun-toting, drug-dealing, car-thieving criminals" (Stadler 2008:357). *Tsotsi*, however, provides what Stadler (2008:358) refers to as a "redemptive narrative and anti-violence message", while still working with the integration of "working-class black culture and criminality". I do not agree with Stadler

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(2008:347) regarding "extreme" black-on-black violence, nor do I agree that the film offers an "anti-violence message". I think that violence is unfortunately commonplace in South Africa in general, and particularly in townships as discussed in Chapter 2. However, I do agree with Stadler's (2008:358) position that there is a "redemptive narrative" in Tsotsi's character development as he shifts from a man who is prone to enacting violence to one who realises that he has to do what is right (taking the baby boy back to his parents) through spending time with Miriam and taking on that caregiver role, despite a crime being the reason he takes the baby.

An interesting aspect of *Inxeba* is that not only does it depict Xhosa masculinity in the *ulwaluko* space as directed by a white South African man, but the screenplay was co-written by novelist Thando Mgqolozana, the author of *A Man Who is not a Man* (2009) (Siswana & Kiguwa 2018:1). Mgqolozana's novel investigates "botched circumcision and the gendered implications of this for meanings about masculinity" and provides an "insightful reflection of the psychosocial pressures that young boys face when things go wrong in a ritual that is meant to confer masculinity on them" (Siswana & Kiguwa 2018:1). However, Moraka et al (2018:1) assert that *Inxeba*, being a Black film directed by a white man, reinscribes (albeit inadvertently) "colonial gender grammars into an African cultural praxis", undercutting "African cultural autonomy for self-progression on its terms" in the process, despite the fact that the screenplay was co-written by Mgqolozana.

Furthermore, Moraka et al (2018:1) argue that the film's "thematic treatment" of not only a purported "African hetero-patriarchal masculinity" but also an "African Queer masculinity" could be seen as "mimicking western/colonial gender embodiment discourse". The "contemporary queer masculinity" and the "historical hetero-patriarchal masculinity" that is portrayed in the film are, according to Moraka et al (2018:11), gender identities that have been "structurally inscribed onto the colonised" as a means to "inhabit the colonial order of social relations" that have been imposed onto the "colonised". I do not agree with this position, as the literature I have read largely affirms the masculinities that are portrayed in the film, as does Mgqolozana's book, which I have read. I am of the opinion that the gender identities portrayed clearly show the nuances of masculinities.

5.2.6 White directors and reception

Both *Tsotsi* (Hood 2005) and *Inxeba* (Trengrove 2017) are stories about Black African

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masculinities directed by white South African men. *Tsotsi* is an adaptation of the novel by the same name, written in the 1980s by a white South African playwright, that portrays the struggles of South Africans. The novel itself has strong Christian undertones, evident in the names of the characters David (Tsotsi), Miriam and her son Isiaih, and is a story about Tsotsi's journey "from the goodness and lightness of his first ten years to the pure evil and darkness created by the police raid on his home followed by a journey toward goodness and light" (Post 1983:421). Hood adapts the novel to represent South African post-Apartheid politics under President Thabo Mbeki.

According to Daniel W. Lehman (2011:90), Hood transfers the novel's "most chilling apartheid-era scenes" into the contemporary South African "black economic empowerment", as seen in the characters of the baby boy's parents, John and Pumla Dube, who live in a large house with a big gate and drive fancy cars. However, Hood also creates a duality through the portrayal of the poverty that is faced by millions of South Africans. Another aspect that Hood focuses on in the film is twenty-first-century violence in South Africa, in scenes with realistic depictions that "resonate strongly in a nation deeply concerned by street violence and hijackings" (Lehman 2011:90).

Despite the differences in storyline, the ending being a main difference, both the novel and the film however portray how "caring for the abducted baby boy" enables Tsotsi to "recover his humanity and his former identity as David, a child who feared his father's violence and who mourned the loss of a mother" (Lehman 2011:91). Hood's film ends with Tsotsi being arrested by police after having safely returned the baby boy to his parents, whilst the final chapter of Fugard's novel ends with Tsotsi dying in his attempt to save the baby – who he kept - from bulldozers knocking down his house. Both stories have a clear redemption arc however Hood's version shows Tsotsi committing an almost 'selfless' act in giving the child back before answering for his crimes whilst Fugard's work depicts Tsotsi as 'paying for his sins' in death.

Ultimately, Gavin Hood's 2005 *Tsotsi* adaptation won a 2006 Academy Award for the Foreign Language by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which I think was deserved. I am of the opinion that Hood was able to approach a sensitive topic in South Africa and turn it into a timeless film which still resonates today.

John Trengrove's 2017 *Inxeba*, on the other hand, sparked nationwide controversy, first

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surfacing with the social media release of screenshots of the "film's trailer on YouTube.com", leading to protestors attempting to "bar the film's release in Eastern Cape cinemas" and the actors receiving "death threats" (Manona & Hurst 2018:2). The majority of those opposed to the film are Xhosa men who view the film as an "attack on culture" through the depiction of *ulwaluko*, claiming that "the film challenges the power base of traditional cultural leaders by opening what are supposed to be private (secret) rites to general public scrutiny" (Manona & Hurst 2018:2). Many complaints were voiced, with "a perceived European influence and visual-technological encroachment on a cultural issue that many hold as one of the last remaining traditional practices that Xhosa people can claim as their own" cited as one (Manona & Hurst 2012:8). A further complaint indicated "cultural appropriation", directly relating to Trengove being a "white man" (Manona & Hurst 2018:8) and overlooking the fact that the screenplay was co-written by a Xhosa man, which complicates the "cultural appropriation" claim. One other major reason for the outrage that the film generated is concerned with it challenging the "power base of traditional cultural leaders by opening the *ulwaluko* rites to general public scrutiny and comment" (Manona & Hurst 2018:8). This concern, however, disregards the numerous news publications about deaths caused by botched circumcisions during initiations, which can be found on news websites such as *Daily Maverick, News24* and *The Mail & Guardian*.

Inxeba depicts part of this practice, which is something seen by many of those who "identify with Xhosa culture and even broader African cultural practice as being [deeply] offensive" (Manona & Hurst 2018:8). As a result, the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa and the Men and Boys Foundation approached the Film and Publications Board (FPB), petitioning for the film to be "reclassified from a 16 SNL classification to a no under-18 classification" (Manona & Hurst 2018:13).[64] This led to the reclassification of the film, which was given the "same classification as hard-core pornography", effectively banning the film from public viewing (Manona & Hurst 2018:13). However, after "legal contestation by the filmmakers", this classification was overturned (Manona & Hurst 2018:13).

It is interesting to note the amount of controversy that *Inxeba* sparked verses how praised *Tsotsi* was, and arguably still is considering that both directors are white men. Gavin Hood is rarely criticised for his position as an educated white man telling a story that intersects Black

[64] In film classification, the abbreviation SNL stands for sex, language, and nudity.

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masculinities and gangsterism in a post-Apartheid township despite not being that best placed to do so. This possibly has to do with the topic dealing with a wider issue instead of a cultural-specific one.

5.3 Contribution of the Study

This study has contributed to the analysis of Black African masculinities in South African film. Building on existing studies, it has provided a new visual perspective of the representation of Black African masculinities, with examples selected from the chosen films. The visual analysis of the films has shown that masculinity is fluid and that hegemonic masculinity – being the ‘ideal man’ – can be awarded and stripped should that individual not be seen as upholding the ideals. The analysis has also illustrated how the films challenge popular assumptions about masculinity in gang culture, on the one hand, and in *ulwaluko* on the other. Tsotsi’s character (*Tsotsi* 2005) challenges the notion that gang leaders are hardened and violent as he juggles being the gang leader who resorts to violence with being a caregiver who will do what it takes to look after the baby boy. *Inxeba* (Trengrove 2017) highlights the complications of being homosexual in a hetero-patriarchal space and how Xolani will go to extreme lengths to maintain his and Vija’s secret to avoid ostracisation within the community. The representations of masculinities that are presented in the films offer an idea of the masculinities that can be found in their real-life contexts. According to the research presented, gang masculinities are almost always going to be hypermasculine, and gay masculinities are always going to be subordinated by hegemonic masculinities. They also provide an opportunity to think about the fact that there are different forms of Black South African masculinities and to reflect on the idea that not all masculinities are clear cut, but rather fluid and dynamic.

5.4 Limitations of the study

While there are extensive studies conducted on both the films that I have chosen and on masculinities as a whole, I was limited by the fact that only two films were used for my study, which provided a smaller sample for analysis. Additionally, the availability of literature dealing with the representation of Black masculinity in South African films made by Black male directors is scarce, which created another limitation. Most literature on Black male representation in the media also largely provided me with the same information and focused predominantly on African American men. As such, I struggled to find literature on Black South

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African male representation, aside from articles on *Inxeba,* which also largely provided similar information regarding the representation of masculinities in the mountain, making it difficult to find a new angle to look at. Furthermore, as *Tsotsi* was the only film with prominent female roles, it was more difficult to show the extent to which gender is relational.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

Doing research for my study has shown that many areas of the films have been studied, from the impact of *Tsotsi's* soundtrack to the exploration of the intimate scenes in *Inxeba*. It would be interesting to see more visual analyses of the films' key concepts and a comparison of how the concepts concur with, and differ from, other films that enforce the notion of hegemony in their specific settings in South Africa. The film *Moffie* (Oliver Hermanus 2019), which is about homosexuality in the South African military, for example, could also be studied, as it challenges masculine stereotypes within the hetero-patriarchal space of the military. Further research could also be done on the representation of Black masculinity in South African films made by Black male directors, about which there is very little available literature, as I mention above.

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