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Developing future men : exploring teenage boys' perceptions of being a man in a contemporary society

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ABSTRACT

Hegemonic masculinity beliefs, such as toughness, dominance over women and acquisition of multiple sexual partners is prevalent amongst men and boys in societies worldwide and including South Africa. Subsequently issues such as domestic violence, substance abuse, HIV infections, and crime develop as some of the outcomes of these beliefs in turmoil. The aim of the study was to explore teenage boys' perceptions of being a man in a contemporary society. The study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study as a research design. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling from a teenage boys group at Sophiatown Community Psychological Services (SCPS). Data was collected through individual interviews and focus group. A key informant was interviewed for triangulation purposes. Data analysis was done using thematic content analysis. An interesting finding was that women are the main agents in gender socialization of teenage boys in the study. In addition, they seem to be torn between traditional masculinity beliefs and modern masculinity beliefs. Lastly, their masculine ideals with regard to what makes a man were divided between the present; to be achieved in their current stage of development; and the future; to be achieved later in their lives.

Key words: contemporary society, masculinity, perceptions, socialization, teenagehood