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**MASTERS RESEARCH DISSERTATION**

Exploring young black and white boys' social construction of  
masculinity in a private multi-racial school

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# **DECLARATION**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Community-Based  
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The author hereby declares that this whole thesis or dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is her own original work.

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**Masters in Community-Based Counselling Psychology**

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## ABSTRACT

*This study explored how adolescent boys of different races negotiate multiple voices of masculinity in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. Research has shown that masculinity is not a fixed, homogenous and innate construct, but is rather fluid, relational, contextual, constantly being negotiated (Connell, 2000, 2005; Segal, 1993; Shefer, 2006). Morrell (1998) and Shefer et al. (2007) contend that in the area of research, a focus on boys, men and issues concerning masculinity remains relatively under-researched. In terms of the South African context, few studies have been undertaken in relation to the topic of young masculinities (Davies, 1997; Davies & Eagle, 2007; Langa & Eagle, 2008; Morrell, 2001; Reid & Walker, 2004; Shefer et al., 2007). The rationale for this study therefore stemmed from the lack of South African research on adolescent masculinity, and aimed to explore the role of the social context, in this case a private multi-racial school, in the construction and the negotiation of masculinities. Due to the significance of race in the South African context, the study aimed to assess whether the construction of young masculinities would differ in terms of race.*

*In investigating the research aims, eight adolescent boys (four white and four black), age between 15 and 18 attending a private multi-racial school broader area of Johannesburg, Gauteng participated in this study. The research methods utilised included auto-photography; semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group with all eight participants. The participants' responses were recorded and then analysed utilising content analysis. Various themes, such as what it meant to be a boy; boys and risk taking behaviour, alternative masculinities, and the role of context and class in the shaping of masculinity were explored. In order to develop a sense of the role of race in constructing the boys' understandings the themes focussed on these issues. From the analysis what became evident was the pressure that boys experience within society and the school context to fit into popular or hegemonic constructions of masculinity. However, as much as some of the accounts were in line with hegemonic constructions others indicated alternative and opposing positions. It seems that even though society constructs masculinity and race in certain ways, masculinity is not fixed but rather boys hold multiple and conflicting masculine positions throughout their life experiences. Moreover, this study gives evidence to the internal complexity and contradictory nature of masculinity.*

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**CHAPTER 1**  
**INTRODUCTION**

## 1.1 Introduction

According to Freud (1953, cited in Connell, 2005) masculinity is a complex and confusing concept. This quotation highlights the complexity of the construct ‘masculinity’. Research has shown that masculinity is not a fixed, homogenous and innate construct, but is rather fluid, relational, contextual, changing and constantly being negotiated (Connell, 2000, 2005; Segal, 1993; Shefer, 2006). In light of this, it can be argued that particular understandings of masculinity are constructed and influenced in relation to the socio-historical context. Within the context of South Africa, it becomes evident that multiple forms of masculinity exist, and that new forms of masculinity have been emerging since the end of apartheid (Reid & Walker, 2004).

What also becomes evident when reading literature on the topic of masculinity is the gap in research regarding young or adolescent masculinities. Shefer, Ratele, Strebel, Shabalala and Buikema (2007) contend that there is a growing interest in research on adolescent boys in the South African context, and the rest of the world (especially in the United Kingdom and Australia) (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2003<sup>1</sup>, Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Pascoe, 2007). Weaver-Hightower (2003) sees the development of research on young masculinities as the “boy turn” (p. 471). Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) contend that, within the context of South Africa, there is a growing interest in adolescent school-going boys. Problems identified in this group include violence, sexual harassment, abuse, decreasing educational achievements, homophobia, substance abuse and other risk-taking behaviours. One could therefore argue that “these concerns suggest that the adolescent boys could validly be regarded as being in a state of crisis and in need of attention” (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007:94). However, the researcher is also in agreement with the argument put forth by MacPhail and Campbell (2001) that “much research into adolescent sexuality has treated adolescents in a stereotyped way with inadequate attention to young people whose views and behaviours challenge dominant stereotypes” (p.164). In light of the above argument, it can be concluded that there is a need for research on young adolescent masculinities to explore multiple voices of masculinity that are non-risking, non-violent and non-sexist.

## **1.2 Research Aim**

The research aim of the study is to therefore explore how adolescent boys of different races negotiate multiple voices of masculinity in the context of post-apartheid South Africa.

## **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the aim of the proposed study, specific research questions have been posed,

- Does the construction of young masculinities differ in terms of race?
- Do black and white boys negotiate multiple voices of masculinity differently?

## **1.4 Research Rationale**

There is much debate regarding the concept of masculinity. What is masculinity? Is masculinity inborn or is masculinity a construct that is constantly changing and being negotiated depending on the particular context in which a man/boy finds himself? According to Connell (2000) there is no single set or prescribed script for masculinity; rather there are multiple discourses of masculinity that are constantly changing in relation to the context in which boys and men find themselves. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) contend that in order for one to develop a holistic understanding of masculinity, one must take into account the role of the institutionalisation of gender inequalities, cultural conceptualisations and the dynamics of race, class and social context. Studies conducted by Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner (1999) as well as Tillner (1997, in Connell, 2000) provide evidence in support of the argument that within multicultural societies there will be multiple definitions and complexities of masculinity. Similarly, Frosh et al. (2003<sup>1</sup>), argue that even though dominant discourses of masculinity exist within society, masculinity is constantly being negotiated and new ideas of what it means to be a boy are emerging. Shefer et al. (2007) contend that this focus on men illustrates a change in the focus of research as in the past, “like whiteness, heterosexuality and middle-classness, masculinity has not been scrutinised in the same way as femininity” (Shefer et al., 2007, p. 2). Similarly, Morgan (1981, in Coltrane, 1994) contends that research on men has had a long history; however, the focus on men as gendered individuals is a new development.

Focusing specifically on the context of South Africa, Pre- and Post-Apartheid, it becomes apparent that much change has taken place, “while South Africa’s political and economic systems have been changing, there have also been changes in gender relations” (Morrell, 2001, p.3). It can be argued that during Apartheid, a hierarchy of race existed in which the white race group was seen as superior to the subjugated black race group. However, within the context of Post-Apartheid South Africa, there has been a move towards equality across all the different race groups (Morrell, 2001). Morrell (1998, 2001, in Reid & Walker, 2004) argues that there is no single type of masculinity, but rather different forms which change constantly. From this it can be argued once again that masculinity is not fixed but is rather constantly negotiated and changing.

In light of the above, it can be argued that the rationale of this research is to explore the role of the social context – in a private multi-racial school in post-apartheid South Africa, and how adolescent boys from both the white and black race groups negotiate their masculinities within this context. According to Haywood and Mac an Ghail (2003, in Govender, 2006, p.146) “schools do not exist on their own for the creation and contestation of masculinities, but rather in complex interrelationships with other social and cultural sites (e.g. family, labour market, media)”. It can therefore be argued that the school context provides one with a site in which masculinities can be played out and negotiated in the framework of the overarching social environment in which they are found. The study, like Frosh et al’s (2003<sup>1</sup>) study, aims to move beyond the problematic understandings of masculinity, and to promote the expression of healthy voices of masculinity that go beyond hegemonic understandings of such. By healthy voices, it is meant accounts of masculinity that include non-risk taking behaviours (Frosh et al., 2003<sup>1</sup>). Morrell (1998, in Govender, 2006) contends that societal issues, class or race differences pervade and influence the school environment and in turn mould masculinities in particular ways. It thus becomes vital and relevant to explore issues of masculinities within the context of schools, and how adolescent males of different race groups negotiate their masculinity in post-apartheid South Africa.

Morrell (1998) and Shefer et al. (2007) argue that in the area of research, a focus on boys, men and issues concerning masculinity remain relatively under-researched. Many studies on young masculinities have been conducted in the United Kingdom (see, for example, Frosh et al., 2003<sup>1</sup>), Australia (for example, Connell, 2000; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998) and the United States of America (for example, Pollack, 2005). In terms of the South African context, few

studies have been undertaken in relation to the topic of young masculinities (Davies, 1997; Eagle & Davies, 2007; Langa & Eagle, 2008; Morrell, 2001; Reid & Walker, 2004; Shefer et al., 2007). Imms (2000) contends that little work and research has been conducted with regard to the notion of multiple masculinities in the school context. The rationale of this study therefore, is to contribute to knowledge production with regard to the relationship between race and young masculinities in the South African context. The study aims to explore whether adolescent boys' understanding of their masculinity plays out in similar ways as in these above-mentioned studies, or do unique forms of masculinity emerge? Shefer et al. (2007) argue that South African research reflects quite a few similarities with international research in terms of men/boys being viewed as active, dominant and engaging in heterosexual behaviour. However, it should be noted that as much as these universal understandings exist, within them nuanced accounts emerge that are shaped by their particular contexts. The study also aims to unpack the specific dynamic of race in the context of Post-Apartheid and how adolescent boys are negotiating their masculinity fourteen years into democracy.

According to Weaver-Hightower (2003), most research tends to focus on women and girls, as opposed to men and boys. However, what has since taken place is a shift in the focus of research which has resulted in the 'boy turn'. It is also hoped that by shifting the focus of research onto boys and men, the emergence of new conceptualisations of masculinity will be encouraged. Shefer et al. (2007) contend that research with regard to "boys and men and their particular vulnerabilities have been ignored or obfuscated in the dominant view of men as perpetrators" (p.3). In light of the above, it can be argued that there is a growing need to explore understandings of men and masculinities that go beyond these dominant and monolithic arguments. One can therefore argue that this growing need will result in the expansion of understanding of masculinity to incorporate the existence of multiple and contradictory masculinities that are actively constructed and constantly negotiated.

## **1.5 Structure of the Report**

This report has been divided into five chapters. Chapter Two aims to provide a detailed account of the literature on the topic of masculinity, focussing specifically on the area of young masculinities as well as research that has been conducted on the topic internationally and in South Africa.

Chapter Three details the research methodology of the study. This includes an outline of the research design and procedures utilised, as well as an account of the method of analysis and ethical considerations. This chapter will also provide an explanation of the researcher's reflections regarding the research process. Chapter Four will provide a detailed description and discussion of the findings of the thematic analysis. Finally, Chapter Five discusses the limitations of the study and implications for future research.

**CHAPTER 2**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **2. 1 Gender Roles – The Specific Case of Masculinity**

Is Masculinity something boys and men are born with, or is it socially and culturally constructed? According to Nelson (1988), there is a difference between one's biological sex versus the notion of gender. Sex is a biological term that distinguishes males from females, whereas gender is a psychological and social term. Ratele (2008) critically argues that males are not by nature men but rather through the process of socialisation are turned into boys and finally into men. Similarly, MacInnes (1998; Martin, Woods & Little, 1990) argue that that gender has both a social and biological dimension, that is, both masculinity and femininity are socially constructed categories that are based on the existence of natural, biological differences. Miller (1991) critically contends that sex and gender tend to be confused. Sex is biologically determined, gender and gender roles are socially constructed differing from one culture to the other. According to MacInnes (1998) the connection between the natural and biological component is what allows for the uncritical acceptance of the construct of masculinity and how it plays out in society. For example, in the case of the division of labour, the work performed by men and women tends to be based on the virtue of the biological differences between men and women. MacInnes (1998, p. 2) therefore contends that the ideology of gender is one which "depends on systematically confusing sexual genesis with sexual difference: confusing the fact that we are all born as a man or a woman with the fact that we are all born of a man and a woman."

Witt (1997) contends that boys and girls earliest exposure to gender-role expectations stems from their caregivers. The family is the most significant institution in shaping the beliefs, attitudes and values of children, attitude and values which tend to feed into socially-based sex role stereotypes. Girls are required to be caring and sensitive, whereas boys are expected to be strong, brave and unemotional. For instance, a little boy who wants to play with dolls soon realises that type of behaviour is viewed in both the eyes of his father and society as not normal for a boy (Martin et al., 1990; Vogelmann, 1990). Boys are therefore socialised into isolated and independent ways of being and tend to replicate the aggressive and power-seeking nature of adult males (Corey, 2005). Men are also taught that they should not cry, and are encouraged to be independent, successful, competitive and strong (Holland, Ramazanoglu & Sharpe, 1994; Seidler, 1989). In such a way, women often grow up learning to care for others, and relationships with others tend to form the core of their identity. On the other hand, Seidler (1989) contends that based on this process of gender role socialisation,

“for men, identity often involves an externalised relation to self, in which men learn to measure themselves against individual success and achievement” (Seidler, 1989, p. 143)

It can therefore be argued that the power and pervasiveness of gender categories stems from their basis in biological differences. In other words, through the constant process of gender role socialisation, commencing at home and perpetuated by societal influence, boys and girls learn what behaviour is natural for a boy and what behaviour is normal for a girl. History and tradition therefore enforce the roles of men and women in their everyday lives (Sideris, 2005). According to Walker (2005), gender roles are therefore both socially developed and expected. By this it is meant that men are expected to perform and display those dimensions of being a man that are dictated by society (Walker, 2005). According to Butler (1999) gender is something that is performed.

“Various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions obscured by the credibility of those productions ... the construction ‘compels’ our belief in its necessity and naturalness” (Butler, 1999, p. 178).

## **2.2. Masculinity – Attempting a Definition**

Masculinity is a concept which is extremely difficult to define (MacInnes, 1998). Similarly, Smith (1996) contends that masculinity is something which is invisible within society and is therefore extremely difficult to account for. Definitions of masculinity range from those that view masculinity as biological, having a penis or being in possession of testicles which produce sperm (MacInnes, 1998) to those which take into account societal gender roles. Pascoe (2007) contends that one needs to be critical of those definitions that define masculinity as something men do. The problem with this definition is that it reifies categories of male and female, categories that may not be as discrete as previously thought. From this perspective, the biological basis of masculinity is problematically and uncritically argued.

On the other hand, a social constructionist perspective defines masculinities as “configurations of practice within gender relations, a structure that includes large-scale institutions and economic relations as well as face-to-face relationships and sexuality. Masculinity is institutionalized in this structure, as well as being an aspect of individual

character or personality” (Connell, 2000, p. 29). This definition alludes to the fluid and multiple faces of masculinity and therefore moves away from the problematic definitions that promote its innateness (Pascoe, 2007). In such a way, distinct types of masculinity will be found in different settings, such as the school, army or organisation. According to Smith (1996), as much as these institutions may hold varying assumptions regarding masculinity, they tend to reflect more general cultural and political understandings of what constitutes a man. In terms of the personality dimension of masculinity, masculinity has a subjective component. It represents an attempt by the individual male to reflect a particular presentation of the self (Pascoe, 2007).

The social or collective dimension of masculinity is provided by Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) who contend that “masculinity is not a property of men, but a socially constructed phenomenon, an everyday system of beliefs and performances that regulate behaviour between men and women, as well as between men and other men” (p. 25). In other words, masculinity is something that goes beyond the level of the individual to become defined collectively in culture and sustained in institutions (Connell, 2000; Smith, 1996). A further understanding or definition of masculinity is provided by Craig (1992, in Prusank, 2007) who argues that “masculinity is what a culture expects of its men” (p. 161). This definition alludes to the naturalised or assumed role of men in society. In such a way, this view of men in society makes it difficult to question and be critical of the domination and exploitation of women and other men that are equated with the construct (Prusank, 2007). However, on a more critical note, MacInnes (1998) states that because masculinity exists not as a property of individuals but rather as a social construction, attempting to find a definition of this concept is a ‘fruitless’ task. Rather, masculinity exists based on particular ideologies created by men and women in order to make sense of their lives. Based on the above arguments, what becomes evident is the lack of agreement with regard to the concept of masculinity. One can conclude that masculinity represents a “set of lines and stage direction which males find hard to learn to perform” (Edley & Wetherell, 1996, in Imms, 2000, p. 154)

### **2.3 Masculinity versus Masculinities**

Is masculinity constant and unchanging, or is it fluid and dynamic? Connell (2000) argues that most people assume that masculinity is a natural and innate quality that, “men behave the way they do because of testosterone, or big muscles or a male brain” (p. 57). These

assumptions stem from mass culture or common understandings of men as ‘natural men’ or ‘real men’ (Connell, 2005). From this perspective, masculinity is seen as fixed and static. Shefer (2006) contends that for years masculinity has been described as if it were a single identity. It was assumed that masculinity is something that is innate, consisting of bodily drives or types of expression derived from the male body. Examples of these beliefs are depicted in the following statements; “men are naturally more aggressive than women; rape results from uncontrollable lust... men naturally do not take care of infants; homosexuality is unnatural and therefore confined to a perverse minority” (Connell, 2005, p. 45).

Understandings of the male body, as argued by Connell (2005), tend to consist of two opposing understandings. On the one hand, there is the biological view of the male body, which tends to encapsulate the dominant ideology of masculinity as fixed. This conceptualisation is one that views the body as a natural machine which generates different gender, namely males and females, through hormones, genetic programming and different reproductive roles. This view is one that reflects the essentialist view of masculinity in which masculinity is viewed as an innate and unchanging quality found within men (Imms, 2000). On the other hand, there is the argument that the body is a neutral surface onto which social constructions are placed (MacInnes, 1998). According to Butler (1993) the body in and of itself is a mere object. However, this object becomes transformed in the presence of societal discourses. Importantly, the process of acting out these discourses and repeating them is what enforces the naturalness of them. One could therefore argue that the meaning attached to the body will change depending on the particular discourse in question (Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007; MacInnes, 1998). According to Gutterman (1994) what it means to be a boy in one context or culture will be different in another context or culture. This understanding of the male body alludes to the social construction of gender (Davies, 1997). By this it is meant that society creates ‘regimes of truth’ or discourses with regard to what is true and what is false pertaining to, in this case, masculinity (Foucault, 1980, in Davies, 1997). At birth, individuals are ascribed certain gender roles, roles which are defined by a particular society or culture as appropriate for the members of each sex (Shefer, 2006).

In order to find a link between these two polarised arguments, Connell (2005) notes the development of a combined biological and social understanding of the body. Connell (2005) is critical of all three understandings. In terms of the first, Connell (2005) argues that there is little evidence to support the significant differences between males and females that this

understanding postulates, and that it merely acts as a means of justifying oppressive conditions. Social constructionist understandings on the other hand, are effective in taking into account the role of culture and society in constructing the male body, but fail to account for the biological dimension of the body. Finally, the third attempt, a combination of the two understandings is insufficient, as a combination of two incorrect understandings will result in the development of a further incorrect argument (Connell, 2005).

Connell (2005) argues that in order to overcome this problem, it is essential that one firstly acknowledges, “that, in our culture at least, the physical sense of maleness and femaleness is central to the cultural interpretation of gender” (p. 52). In such a way, one’s bodily experiences tend to play an important role in how one understands oneself. In other words, one’s understandings of self tend to consist of an intricate interplay of the body with social process. For example, in the case of sport, one’s success as a male depends on the integrated performance of the whole body, which in turn results in one being accorded a certain status. This status allows a male access to certain social processes, namely increased hierarchy among men, and the domination of women. This status reflects the hegemonic form of masculinity that will be discussed in great detail later.

It can be argued that as much as masculinity has both biological and social dimensions “they come into existence as people act” (Connell, 2000, p. 12). For example, the development of adolescent masculinity depends on the intricate interplay of peer groups and peer relations, classes, and adult-child relationships. One’s activity as a male is to a large extent shaped by the particular context in which one acts. For example; if the development of masculinities takes place within a context of female oppression, men will tend to behave in ways that sustain the patriarchal divide (MacInnes, 1998). According to Morrell (2001, p. 208) “mostly, however, men ... ‘perform’ masculinity in terms of a set of gendered ideas, norms and values which have been fashioned to constitute their own gendered identity.” When discussing the issue of gender, Connell (2000) contends that one needs to look beyond biological differences to examine the social domain and social practice. In such a way, the roles that women and men take on have been provided by the particular social context in which they are found.

One particular view of men that tends to be naturalised is that men are innately violent - whether it is violence against other men, women or larger society. According to Stanko (1994) the relationship between young men and violence is a complicated one. When reading

reports of masculine-based violence, the accounts that are provided assume violence as a natural part of being a man, “the contribution of biological or psychological aberration to men’s violence and aggression lingers uncomfortably in portrayals of violent acts with regularity” (Stanko, 1994, p. 39), i.e. men cannot control themselves and are the victims of their hormones. Connell (2000) contends that there is a view that men have a particular hormone which causes them to be aggressive and therefore cannot be changed. However, on a more critical note, Stanko (1994) contends that it is the relations of power and gender in society that reinforce the violent acts of men. For example, certain masculinised institutions such as the army promote the practice of masculine violence (Langa & Eagle, 2008). Similarly, soldiers are expected to repress any feminine aspects of themselves and those who fail are called derogatory names such as sissy boys and wimps. However, Connell (2000) critically argues that the problem of this overly deterministic view is that it fails to take into account those men who do not perform violent acts and do not commit violence against women.

### **2.3.1 Multiple Masculinities**

It is evident in recent social and cross-cultural research that there is not one set or prescribed script for masculinity. Rather, there are multiple discourses of masculinity that are constantly changing in relation to the context; “We need to speak of ‘masculinities’, not masculinity. Different cultures, and different periods of history, construct gender differently” (Connell, 2000, p.10). Kimmel (1996, in Mills & Lingard, 1997) also argues for the term masculinities rather than the essentialist notion of masculinity. Seidler (1989) and Segal (1993) postulate that masculinity is a historically-emergent experience. Similarly, Ratele, Fouten, Shefer, Strebel, Shabalala and Buikema (2007) argue against the view of a single masculinity, but rather that within any historical or social context there exist competing forms of masculinity. Due to the reality that masculinity is a social construction, many forms of masculinity tend to be found in a particular social or cultural context, and what is currently considered as masculine will not necessarily be the same from one period of time to the next (Prusank, 2007). Importantly, masculinity is both embedded within and disseminated across these different social, cultural and historical contexts (Ratele, 2008; Smith, 1996).

Research has shown that masculinity is not a fixed, homogenous and innate construct but is rather fluid, relational, contextual, changing and constantly being negotiated (Connell &

Messerschmidt, 2005). It is becoming apparent that there are multiple forms of masculinity within one setting or context, for example, within one school there are different understandings of masculinity, different methods of learning what it is to be a man as well as different ways of using the male body (Connell, 2000, 2005). One of the fundamental reasons why masculinities are not fixed is due to internal complexity and the presence of contradictions. For example, accounts of masculinity reflect contradictory desires, conduct and arguments. In such a way, masculinities are not homogenous or singular, but rather complex, fluid and contradictory in nature. Masculinities are multiple and are shaped by the interplay between gender, race and class. One can therefore argue that masculinities be black as well as white, working class as well as middle class, and heterosexual as well as homosexual (Connell, 2000; Connell, 2005; Shefer, 2006; Smith, 1996). Smith (1996) contends that the degree of power that a man holds tends to differ in terms of class, nation, race, sexual preference and the like.

## **2.4 Hegemonic Masculinity**

According to Connell (1993) masculinities are arranged hierarchically and always compete for power and legitimacy. By this it is meant that within masculinity there are relations of alliance, domination and subordination, which include and exclude different types of men (Connell, 1993; 2005). One dominant understanding of masculinity that is found at the top of this hierarchy is hegemonic masculinity. The concept of 'hegemony' was developed from Antonio Gramsci's investigation of class relations (Davies & Eagle, 2007; Donaldson, 1993). Hegemony refers to a cultural dynamic in which a particular group develops and maintains a position of power and leadership in social life. It should be noted that the establishment of this social position does not necessarily depend on active force, even though violence may form an aspect of it. Rather, this discourse is maintained through its pervasiveness in all aspects of society (Connell, 1987). In such a way, hegemonic masculinity can be defined as, "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 2005, p. 77).

Hegemonic forms of masculinity therefore present an idealised version of masculinity and dictate what it means to be a real man and how real men should behave (Shefer, 2006). With regard to the relational dimension, what becomes evident is that hegemonic masculinity

involves both the subjugation of women and subordination of other forms of masculinity (Demetriou, 2001; Miller, 1991). In terms of the former, hegemonic masculinity involves the power over women, whereas the latter refers to internal hegemony or hegemony over other masculinities, that is the social ascendancy of one group of men over another, for example the oppression of homosexuals and black masculinity by hegemonic forms of masculinity (Demetriou, 2001). Hegemonic masculinity therefore rests on the process of 'othering'. That is separating those men that fall within the category of hegemonic masculinity and those that do not, such as homosexual men. In such a way, the discourse of hegemonic masculinity is one which polices men. Due to the fear of not meeting this idealised version of masculinity and not being real men, men constantly experience the pressure to perform the form of masculinity that is socially desired (Mills & Lingard, 1997).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity was formulated approximately two decades ago in relation to the issue of social inequality apparent in a study conducted in Australian High Schools (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). It should be noted that 'hegemony' does not mean the total disappearance of opposing discourses, but rather these discourses are in a subordinate position to this dominant conceptualisation. Connell (1987) contends that "Hegemonic masculinity" is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women" (p.183), which means that power tends to be divided in such a way that men have been able to dominate women. Simultaneously, it should be noted that power is not evenly distributed amongst men. According to Jefferson (1994), Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity is one that encapsulates the varieties of masculinities as well as their hierarchical ordering. Connell (2000) argues that masculinity is organised on a hierarchy in which some types of masculinity are viewed as superior and dominant, while others are viewed as subordinate. Even though most men do not reach the top of the hegemonic hierarchy, Connell (1995, in Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007) contends that most boys and men tend to take up particular subjective positions in relation to this dominant discourse of masculinity, positions that tend to embody this discourse and conform to it so as to be viewed as 'real' men and 'real boys.' Kaufman (1994) argues that this pressure to conform stems from the powerful impact these discourses have on men and boys in their daily experiences.

Due to the reality that power is not evenly distributed amongst men, Connell (2000) contends that three other forms of masculinity exist within society. These alternative forms of

masculinity fall under the heading of what Donaldson (1993) refers to as counter-hegemony. Complicit masculinity can be defined as a type of masculinity that does not always comply and agree with the dominant forms of masculinity. This type of masculinity can easily conform to dominant, hegemonic forms of masculinity or the opposing protest forms of masculinity. The submissive type of masculinity on the other hand, can be defined as always complying with dominant or more powerful type of masculinity within a particular context. Finally, the oppositional or protesting type of masculinity is one that is constantly in opposition or conflict with the dominant or hegemonic forms of masculinity (Shefer, 2006). Shefer (2006) critically argues against the attempt to classify men into these exclusive categories as “any one man may position himself in different masculinities in different relationships and contexts, and masculinity as a social construct is thus always prone to internal contradiction and historical disruption” (Shefer, 2006, p. 32).

Besides these different forms of masculinity within society, there are also the more marginalised and subordinated types of masculinity. Paulsen (1999) contends that even though marginalised masculinities, for example, oppressed ethnic, religious or racial male groups, may not be at the bottom of the masculine hierarchy, they do not share all the benefits afforded to those men who meet the criteria of hegemonic masculinity. Subordinated forms of masculinity as argued by Connell (1993; 2000) are found at the bottom of the masculine hierarchy. Examples of this subordination are reflected in the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men, as well as effeminate heterosexual men (Paulsen, 1999). Rubin (1975, in MacInnes, 1998) postulates that gender and the notion of hegemonic masculinity acts as a means of institutionalising heterosexuality and connecting gender to sexual reproduction. In other words, sexual reproduction is required for the survival of the human species and thus homosexuality is deemed unnatural and immasculine. Besides the argument that gender allows for the continuation of the human species, Rich’s (1986, in Pascoe, 2007) notion of ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ also provides another forms of justification. According to Rich (1986, in Pascoe, 2007), heterosexuality allows for the reproduction of men’s social power over women. Imms (2000) highlights that when boys don’t conform to hegemonic standards marginalisation (the ‘othering’ of some boy’s experiences), oppression and dominance (restricting some boy’s participation and acceptance into peer groups) tends to transpire.

In terms of the issue of homosexuality, Glick, Gangl, Gibb, Klumpner and Weinberg (2007) contend that heterosexual men's hostile attitudes towards gay men in general stems from the need within men to demonstrate and defend their masculinity. However, their study found that heterosexual men's negative attitudes towards gay men increased when they perceived these men to be acting in effeminate ways. According to Glick et al. (2007) gay men seem to violate two types of gender norms, namely those of sexuality (preferring male partners) and those of personality as evident in the stereotype that gay men are effeminate, "an effeminate gay man (EGM) violates norms of sexuality and personality, whereas a masculine gay man (MGM) violates norms of sexuality, but not of personality" (p. 55). It can therefore be argued that in order to defend their own, in some cases fragile, sense of masculinity, heterosexual men will 'other' and possess hostile attitudes towards homosexual men, especially those who present more feminine traits.

Connell (2000) argues that men are becoming increasingly critical of the dominant, hegemonic views of masculinity. For example, the development of 'anti-sexist' groups as well as the International Association for Studies of Men provides evidence for the ability of men to resist dominant forms of masculinity. One can therefore argue that as much as there are hegemonic forms of masculinity within society, other diverse forms also exist - forms of masculinity that go beyond and challenge the gender order.

#### **2.4.1 A Critique of the Notion of Hegemonic Masculinity**

On a more critical note, Demetrious (2001) contends that as much as one cannot question the significant contribution of Connell's formulation of hegemonic masculinity, it is not a monolithic category only encapsulating white or heterosexual configurations of practice. Connell's understanding of hegemonic masculinity is one that does not take into account the dialectical and reciprocal relationship between hegemonic masculinities and marginalised forms of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is therefore understood as "an essentially white, Western, rational, calculative, individualistic, violent and heterosexual configuration of practice that is never infected by non-hegemonic elements" (Demetrious, 2001, p. 347). Rather, in terms of class hegemony, Gramsci (cited in Demetrious, 2001) argues for a dialectical relationship in which hegemonic groups are influenced and draw on elements of subordinated groups so as to promote their position of power and dominance.

The notion of ‘masculine bloc’ is one that allows for diverse forms of masculinity, straight and gay, as well as black and white, that represent masculine power. This concept is derived from Hall’s understanding of ‘historic bloc’ which takes into account the diversified ways in which social forces and movements promote the position of those in power. According to Demetrious (2001), the diversified nature of the masculine hegemonic bloc and its constant appropriation of diverse elements from a wide range of masculinities, is that which allows the hegemonic bloc to adapt to the specificities of a particular context and historical period. The development of the notion of ‘hegemonic masculine bloc’ therefore moves away from the dualism between hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities as argued by Connell. Rather, from this perspective, hegemonic masculinity “is not a purely white or heterosexual configuration of practice but it is a hybrid bloc that unites practices from diverse masculinities in order to ensure the reproduction of patriarchy” (Demetrious, 2001, p. 337). This understanding therefore takes into account the manner in which black and/or homosexual men are able to take on hegemonic forms of masculinity in relation to other black and/or homosexual men, in turn promoting the reproduction of patriarchy within society.

Wetherell and Edley (1999) also argue that one reservation about Connell’s work is that it does not provide an adequate understanding of how boys and men negotiate their masculine identities. They also argue that Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity only allows for boys and men to position themselves in line with either hegemonic and marginalised masculinities. Rather, Wetherell and Edley (1999) argue for a more complex understanding of this process in which boys and men use imaginary positions and discursive practices to make sense of who they are in terms of hegemonic masculinity. In such a way instead of constructing themselves as either in line with hegemonic or marginalised masculinities Wetherell and Edley (1999) argue that boys and men constantly maintain multiple and opposing positions simultaneously in their lived experiences.

#### **2.4.2 The Price of Hegemonic Masculinity and the Vulnerability that Men Face**

“Man, that plausible creature whose wagging tongue so often hides the despair and darkness in his heart” (Wrong, 1961, in MacInnes, 1998, p. 45).

According to Jefferson (1994), as a result of the hierarchical ordering of masculinity, a great deal of pressure is exerted on boys and men to live up to this ideal. It can be argued that the

price of living up to this ideal stems from the internalisation of this pressure, that is, “once the ‘pressure’ has become internalised, a part of one’s sense of self, then failure to live up to the ideal can have painful, even catastrophic consequences” (Jefferson, 1994, p. 12). This pressure to be masculine, both at an internal and external level, is one that makes men quite vulnerable. By vulnerable it is meant that men have to constantly ensure that they act in a manner that represents their masculinity. On a similar note, Seidler (1989) argues that “an internal hierarchy is set up which takes the form of a relation of domination, whereby that part identified with reason dominates emotions, feelings and desires” (p. 7). Besides this process of rationalisation, men tend to mask their feelings of hurt and sadness with the more socially acceptable feelings of anger and irritability. In such a way, men battle to openly express themselves and their feelings, but rather communicate with the aim of defending their masculine identity. It can be argued that entering into an intimate relationship is in contradiction to the notion of hegemonic masculinity which requires a man to be independent and self-sufficient (Seidler, 1989).

This dominant form of masculinity is one that results in the suppression of other dimensions such as emotions, needs, possibilities for nurturing, empathy, sadness, and compassion (Kaufman, 1994; Seidler, 1989, 1991).

“So as small boys, we pride ourselves in learning not to feel scared or not crying when we have had a fall. We learn to make ourselves invulnerable, and place our experience at a safe distance from ourselves” (Seidler, 1989, p. 147).

In light of this, one can argue that it is not the category of masculinity that is problematic in and of itself, but rather that this category normalises a distorted idea of what it means to be a man, in turn preventing or distancing men from the capacity for a fuller, more authentic experience (Seidler, 1989, 1991). Jefferson (1994) critically contends that the social construction of masculinity, as evident in masculine sex-role models seen in the home, school and the media, is one that neglects the difficulties that men do face. Moreover, the social construction of masculinity is overly deterministic and therefore does not allow much space for the development of alternative views of masculinity, that go against hegemonic constructions such as gay culture or the ‘cool pose’ of some young black men (Majors, 1989, in Jefferson, 1994). By ‘cool pose’ it is meant groups of black men with unique and expressive styles in the form of clothing, hairstyle, walk and handshakes. For example, Majors (2001) notes the way in which black men construct positive positions of masculinity

through the development of these ‘cool pose’ which provide an escape from the limits imposed on them due to poverty and racism.

The intense pressure faced by boys and men to assert their masculinity can be argued to stem from the idealised and externalised image of masculinity. According to Seidler (1989) men constantly struggle to aspire to this idealisation. In this sense, masculinity is something that men constantly have to work towards and assert. It is at this juncture that the importance of work becomes significant. That is, by performing a ‘man’s job’, men are able to feel secure in their identity (Seidler, 1991). Based on this argument, work plays a central role in the affirmation of a masculine identity, “It is as if as men, we do not have an identity which belongs to ourselves, but an identity which is externally defined and only exists as a reflection of a working situation: so when men lose their jobs, they often lose a sense of themselves” (Seidler, 1989, p. 152). Based on these arguments, it can be postulated that within contemporary society in which women are taking a more active role in the work force, men’s already vulnerable sense of masculinity will be further challenged. MacInnes (1998) contends that with changes in society, law, economy and politics, men’s material privileges are increasingly coming under scrutiny. That is; the boys of contemporary society can no longer assume the privileges that their fathers and past generations took for granted and saw as natural. Similarly, those roles that were assumed to be natural are being challenged, with men becoming more involved in childcare and domestic labour.

## **2.5 Masculinities within the Context of South Africa – past and present**

Within the context of Apartheid South Africa, ‘hegemonic masculinity’ can be argued to have been reflected in Afrikaans-speaking white men who displayed an authoritative, punitive and unforgiving form of masculinity (Morrell, 2001). During this era, constructions of masculinity were intertwined with inequalities and injustices. For example, there existed high levels of violence against women; domination of certain spheres of public life – corporate, state – to the exclusion of women; as well as violence against minority groups, homophobic, xenophobic, racist and ethnic violence, in which black men were the victims (Morrell, 2001; Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). This construction of ‘hegemonic’ masculinity pervaded all aspects of social life, for example all-white schools were the norm, and sports such as rugby and cricket were viewed as sports played by white men (Morrell, 2001). During this era, hegemonic masculinity was “defined as that of a white, educated heterosexual, Christian male type” (Shefer, 2006, p. 29).

During the Apartheid regime, it can be argued that black men and black masculinity fell under the category of what Connell (1993; 2005) refers to as non-hegemonic masculinity. By non-hegemonic it is meant “minorities, defined in terms of race, class, ethnicity or sexual orientation, all characteristically understand what a man means differently from members of the ruling class or elite or from each other too” (Morrell, 2001, p.7). Within this context, white and African masculinities were related to each other in a hierarchical manner, where the term ‘boy’ was used to denote this difference. The use of the term to refer to African men is one which “captured a condensation, a refusal to acknowledge the possibility of growth and the achievement of manhood amongst African men. Servitude was combined with denial of adulthood and thus became a feature of black masculinity” (Morrell, 1998, p. 616). This term was used primarily in the context of the menial work undertaken by African men that required strong and energetic bodies. Black, or African men’s masculinity was therefore associated with work and ethnicity, as seen in the studies done in the Gold Mines (Campbell, 2001). However, Morrell (1998) contends that during this period, as much as black men were emasculated in certain respects, contact with their homesteads in which men took on dominant roles and women played subservient roles, ensured that African masculinity remained hegemonic. Similarly, violence can be argued to have been used as a means by which black workers were able to affirm their sense of manhood as well as take revenge and act against the power inequalities of the era. These developments reflect the reality that other forms of masculinity exist within the context of hegemonic forms (Connell, 2000).

With the transition to democracy and a ‘non-racial’ South Africa there has been much debate with regard to which discourses or understandings of masculinity can be defined as ‘hegemonic.’ The dominant masculinity in Apartheid South Africa, ‘white masculinity’, can be still seen to play a pervasive role in the media and organisations. This influence is accounted for in Morrell’s (2001) explanation that “since all masculinities influence one another and are never discrete and bounded entities, elements of white masculinity can still be seen in many other masculinities, primarily in the emphasis on achievement and appearance, which are features of a commoditised society” (p. 25). However, with changes in the political and economic structures of the country, what has also emerged is the ascendance of the previously non-hegemonic forms of masculinity.

One of the most powerful discourses of masculinity within contemporary South African society is that of ‘heroic masculinity’ epitomised by Nelson Mandela. What is becoming

evident therefore is the emergence of a new form of masculinity in the South African context. According to Morrell (2005) this form of masculinity is one that encompasses patience, peace, domestic responsibility, compassion, democracy and introspection. Nevertheless, what is also rising in the country is a more violent form of masculinity, illustrated in high incidents of rape and violent crime, that Morrell (2001) argues can be understood as a social attempt by men to deal with loss of status and power. Miller (1991) postulates that with the increasing loss of men's power in society, men may turn to violence in an attempt to assert their threatened sense of manliness and power. Morrell (2005) contends that due to high rates of unemployment in the South African context, men tend to cope with these challenges through the consumption of alcohol and the exploitation of women. Based on these arguments, what becomes apparent is that despite the political endorsement of equal rights for men and women, contemporary South Africa is plagued with high levels of domestic violence and practices that affirm gender asymmetries (Sideris, 2005).

Even though prevailing gender norms and dominant views of masculinity still exist within South African society, Sideris (2005) contends that men are starting to redefine and rework their gender practices in the private dimensions of their lives. Research conducted by Sideris (2005) with seven men from primarily violent communities in the Nkomazi region in the south-east corner of Mpumalanga, found that these men openly reject violence against women and children. According to Morrell (2005), this new model of masculinity has been argued to have developed out of a combination of social, political and personal dimensions. In terms of the personal dimension, what is becoming evident is the increase in challenges and anxieties that men have to face, from death to stress in the workplace. Specifically, what is also becoming apparent is the increasing role of these young men in caring for sick family members, as well as taking care of their siblings in the event that their parents have died or are absent. The development of new laws and policies that promote gender equality also places a great deal of social pressure for the constructions of masculinity to change. Sideris (2005) argues that social and political changes in post-apartheid South Africa have placed increased pressure on already present tensions that characterise gender relations.

Similarly, changes in the domestic arena, such as the division of labour at home, require further changes in what it means to be a man (MacInnes, 1998). Men are becoming increasingly more involved in family life as well as in the lives of their children, whether this is in the context of a nuclear or extended family. It should be noted that this increased

involvement is not dependent on a biological connection, and that many men are taking on the responsibility of caring for children that are not their biological offspring (Lemon, 1995). Barker, Bartlett, Beardshaw, Brown, Burgess, Lamb, Lewis, Russell and Vann (2003) contend that these developments reflect a change in the view of fatherhood as opposed to motherhood, and what is transpiring in South African society is a construction of masculinity that places the needs of the child first, i.e. for one to be a man, one needs to care for one's child. In such a way, these developments provide a challenge to hegemonic constructions of masculinity and reflect the changing and fluid nature of masculinities (Shefer, 2006).

In terms of men's responses to changes within the South African context, what becomes clear are the different and contradictory nature of these responses. Sideris (2005) contends that as much as new forms of masculinity, that reflect less authoritarian and violent practices, have emerged in society, it seems that these are not stable but rather indeterminate. A further theme that becomes evident is the increasing pressure that men in contemporary society have to face. Drawing on both international and local research, it has been argued that masculinity is currently in crisis (Walker, 2003, in Sideris, 2005). That is due to the influence of feminism and global struggles for gender equality it seems that the previously unchallenged place of men in the gender order is experiencing a form of legitimacy crisis (Whitehead & Barrett, 2001). It should be noted that by using the term 'crisis' it is not meant to assume a homogenous account of men's experiences, but rather aims to highlight the current dilemmas men are facing in terms of role confusion and experiences of uncertainty pertaining to identity. Secondly, by arguing that within contemporary society there exists a 'crisis in masculinity', one must not make the mistake of neglecting the political dimensions of gender relations and what men do to maintain power (Chadwick & Foster, 2007; Whitehead & Barrett, 2001). In order to understand changes in male practices we need to take into account the struggles pertaining to the exercise of power in gender relations (Sideris, 2005). On a critical note, Lemon (1995) contends, with specific regard to the South African context, that this crisis seems to pertain more to the legitimacy of the continued dominance of white, heterosexual men. Rather, Lemon (1995) argues for this crisis in, "that for the ideal of a new non-racist, non-sexist democracy to become a reality, and for the radical of South African society to be possible, the very foundation upon which the apartheid system was built, namely the unquestioned rule of white, heterosexual men, must be challenged" (p.68).

## 2.6 The Case of Young Masculinities

*“[W]e need to recognise the variety of forms of being boys and young men – ‘macho’, academic achievers, new enterprisers, middle class, conformists, innovators, retreatists – rejecting school, subversive not aggressive, rebels”* (Mac and Ghail, 1994, in Shefer, et al., 2007, p. 25).

Kimmel and Traver (2005) contend that within contemporary society, boys are viewed as being in trouble. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2003<sup>2</sup>, 2005) note the mainly negative perceptions of boys in society. Boys are perceived as problematic, as potential delinquents, sexual abuse perpetrators, criminals, low academic achievers and the like. Other identified problems include homophobia, substance abuse and other risk taking behaviours. It is also evident that a clear model or models of masculinity that boys can look towards and aspire to is nonexistent. Frosh et al. (2003<sup>2</sup>) note a potential developmental crisis for boys. For example; with the changing nature of men’s roles at work and in the home, it is becoming apparent that boys need to develop more flexible masculine identities. The complexity of young masculinities is further increased by the effects of race and class (Frosh, et al., 2005). In such a way, what becomes evident is the need for research to examine the complexity of masculinity and to provide insight into boys’ vulnerabilities, which have been obfuscated due to the dominant view of men or boys as perpetrators (Shefer et al., 2007). In summary, one could argue that the source of the crisis of masculinity is a crisis of identity (Nayak & Kehily, 2008). Similarly, MacInnes (1998) contends that with changes in the public evaluation of masculinity, masculine virtues such as heroism, independence, strength, rationality, power and the like; have been transformed into vices such as abuse, aggression, detachment, isolation, as well as an inability to communicate, care and be supportive.

Frosh, et al. (2005) critically argue that even though there is much literature on hegemonic masculinities, there is little information on how boys negotiate the constraints and freedoms these dominant males discourse present them with, “how then do boys negotiate the emotionally charged contradictions that are part of the current ways of ‘doing boy’ within the context of their everyday lived experience?” (Frosh, et al., 2005, p. 38). More importantly, how do adolescents negotiate their masculinity in light of the pressures of normative masculinity? This process of negotiation is commented on by one of the respondents in the Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) study:

Boys have to face not looking like a fairy, not being too dumb, not being too smart, every pressure available, fitting in the right groups (p. 4).

Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) argue that individual boys, in the process of socialisation and development especially during adolescence, take up particular subject positions in relation to these dominant hegemonic standards, with some boys submitting to the pressure of conformity to these hegemonic standards more than others.

Brannon (1967, in Brannon, 2008) contends that the male sex role consists of four major dimensions, namely “No sissy stuff”; “The big wheel”; “The Sturdy Oak”; as well as the “Give ‘Em Hell”. These four dimensions align with the concept of hegemonic masculinity in their construction of masculinity being associated with toughness, power and authority, and competitiveness. It is useful to provide a brief explanation of these dimensions as such stereotypes still appear to be dominant representations of masculinity in society, especially in the current African tradition.

‘No Sissy Stuff’, refers to the extent to which women and men express their emotions. Based on this argument, women are expected to show their emotions, be good listeners and express humility, whereas men are supposed to think rationally, be good talkers and display high levels of confidence and assertiveness. By ‘The Big Wheel’ it is meant that men are expected to be successful, high achievers and to be looked up to, whether in sports or in business. This continuous striving for success underscores the importance of competition in men’s lives (Solomon, 1982). According to Seidler (1991, p. 61-62) “from our earliest days as boys, we are in competition with others... as boys, we are brought up to feel good about ourselves when we do *better* than others.” This need to compete can be argued to be reflected in the ways in which boys at school constantly compare themselves with each other in terms of sport, girls, risk-taking behaviour such as smoking and drinking, as well as physical strength and invulnerability (Blackbeard & Lindegger, 2007; Wood & Jewkes, 2001<sup>1</sup>).

The third dimension is that of the ‘Sturdy Oak’ which refers to the social expectation that real men must be strong, confident and independent (Solomon, 1982). Seidler (1989) contends that men equate strength with the belief that they do not need anyone, are self sufficient and do not require support. Finally, “Give ‘Em Hell” refers to view that men are natural risk takers. Boys are socialised to use violence as an acceptable means of problem resolution and

are always expected to fight in order to protect an external part of one's masculinity (Solomon, 1982).

In their study among 11 to 14 year old boys in the United Kingdom, Frosh et al. (2003<sup>1</sup>) examined dimensions of young masculinities that had become important within contemporary society, at both an individual and social level. The study also aimed to move beyond generalised views that paint masculinity as problematic. In their study, Frosh et al. (2003<sup>1</sup>) argue that “teenage boys have a troublesome reputation, making them the central figures in contemporary moral panics. Media and government, teachers and police; all focus on boys mainly as potential problems” (p. 84). Rather, Frosh et al. (2003<sup>1</sup>) argue that this generalised view is problematic and that it cannot be assumed for all boys. Their research was therefore able to highlight the complex understandings of masculinity and the many contradictions that exist within the negotiation of masculinity. For example; many of the boys in the study reflected the hegemonic view that masculinity and school achievement are mutually exclusive; and yet, they simultaneously noted their desire to learn and achieve academic excellence. Similar contradictions were found in relation to the view that boys must be tough, and what also became apparent was the emotional desire within the boys to have a close relationship with their fathers. Finally, this research was able to illustrate the complexity of masculinity, and provides hope for new forms of masculinity to emerge; that is, even though hegemonic forms of masculinity exist, the contradictions in the boys' accounts of masculinity indicate the emergence of new discourses of masculinity (Frosh et al., 2003<sup>1</sup>).

Research done by Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) provides similar evidence of the pressure boys feel to present themselves in a particular manner in a public arena. For example; what became apparent were the discrepancies in the accounts given in the context of individual interviews and focus groups with regards to issues pertaining to sexual activity and the number of girls they had slept with. Importantly, this study found that, unlike in the case of Frosh et al. (2003<sup>2</sup>), the accounts that the boys gave in the individual interviews reflected a sense within the boys that their secret or private lives are a deception and provide evidence of their failed masculinity. In such a way, this research provides insight into the difficulty boys experience in negotiating their masculinity publically, and how powerful hegemonic forms of masculinity are. In the event that boys do not act according to these hegemonic forms, they are pervaded with intense feelings of guilt that they have failed and are not 'real' men.

A study conducted by Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) also found that boys experience an immense pressure to look a certain way. One respondent, a thirteen year old boy named Michael, stated that, “to be masculine you have to be strong and big and muscular” (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003, p. 18). That is, the more muscular a boy, the higher up they are placed on the masculine hierarchy. The result of this pressure is that in the event that boys could not live up to this ideal, they would feel high levels of inadequacy. In the case of less muscular or disabled boys, what became evident in the study was the way in which these boys would overcompensate in terms of displaying overt forms of heterosexuality. That is, if one was not manly enough in the physical sense, the boys tended to feel compelled to demonstrate their manliness in other ways. Importantly, this study was able to provide evidence of the embodiment of masculinity; for example, in terms of muscularity, physicality and body deportment. It is these embodiments that Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) argue play a role in constricting the actions of boys, by acting as a means of surveillance through which boys learn to regulate themselves and categorise other boys.

Pollack (1998) contends that there is a need to explore and understand the multiple voices of boys and men. He contends that many boys feel a sense of loneliness and isolation, feeling disconnected from their parents, siblings and peers. Pollack’s (1998) study “*Listening to Boys’ Voices*” conducted in the United States of America, explored the way in which boys are placed in a “gender straitjacket” (Pollack, 1998, p. xxiv). By this it is meant that the discourses regarding masculinity constrain and limit boys to develop their own sense of who they are and what it means to be a boy. One could therefore argue, as indicated in the research, that society has constructed a particular view of masculinity that falls under the heading of the ‘boy code.’ Shefer et al. (2007) also note the immense social pressure on boys to be and act in a certain way. According to Pollack (1998) “the code is a set of behaviours, rules of conduct, cultural shibboleths, and even a lexicon, that is inculcated into boys in our society – from the very beginning of a boy’s life” (p. xxv). The boy code therefore prescribes a particular view of masculinity that is associated with hegemonic forms of masculinity, in which boys are constructed as tough, strong, violent, not emotional, and the like.

The research conducted by Pollack (1998) aimed to highlight the problems that arise from this ‘boy code.’ By wearing this mask of masculinity, men’s true feelings such as anxiety, and pain and fear, remain hidden behind a mask. A statement made by one of the respondents, Dirk, age seventeen, summarises this reality, “sometimes just because you’re a

guy, people treat you like you're a little hoodlum. I think if they opened up their eyes, they'd see that most of us are actually pretty good people" (Pollack, 1998, p. 52). One could liken this to the metaphor of a pot about to boil over. In a similar way, due to this construction of masculinity, men deny and attempt to bury their 'true' selves. However in time, these feelings come to the surface in the form of aggression, violence and risky behaviour. What this research highlights is the need for the development of spaces in which boys can express their deeper feelings and insecurities before the pot boils over. Pollack (1998) contends that by listening to the multiple voices of boys, one can develop an understanding of the true nature of masculinity and boys. Similarly, Frosh et al. (2003<sup>1</sup>) argue for the importance of giving boys a place to talk and express their feelings and thoughts.

### **2.6.1 Boys and School**

Gilbert and Gilbert's 1998 study entitled "*Masculinity goes to school*" provides evidence of the important role that school plays in the construction of masculinity. According to Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) "the school as an institution, which historically reproduced rules, routines, expectations, relationships and rewards, and its deployment of artefacts, resources and space, actively shapes what happens within it, for all its inhabitants" (p.114). They conducted their research in Australia with groups and individual boys, regarding the role of teachers, curriculum, school cultures and the like in the construction of the boys' masculinities. Similarly, Mills and Lingard (1997) argue for the role of curriculum choice in the perpetuation of dominant discourses of masculinity.

Gilbert and Gilbert's (1998) study also highlights the complexity of masculinity, and the manner in which boys negotiate their understandings of being a boy in relation to those constructed by the school. For example; even though toughness and competitiveness are associated with 'macho' popular boys, in the context of school work, it is seen as feminine and not a representation of masculinity to achieve academically. Likewise, boys will, in most cases, select subjects that will guarantee them financial success which is harmonious with hegemonic masculinity, rather than satisfying their personal interests. According to Gilbert and Gilbert (1998), contradictions between achieving and not being manly; choosing what interests one rather than being seen as macho, highlight the many contradictions and opposing forces in masculinity. This study was thus able to highlight the complexity of masculinity and the difficult task of negotiating a form of masculinity that fulfils both individual and social needs. However, Mills and Lingard (1997) note the harassment that

boys who do not conform to hegemonic masculinist practices tend to experience within schools.

Connell (1989, 2000) also argues for the important role of the school in the 'making' of masculinity. By this it is meant that the context of the school has the potential of acting as a vehicle for the perpetuation and promotion of certain gendered identities (Wright, Weekes, McGlaughlin & Webb, 1998). What became evident in Connell's (2000) research was a view of the school system as authoritarian, "a violent discipline system invites competition in machismo. More generally, the authority system of the school becomes the antagonist against which one's masculinity is cut" (p.135). It should be noted within this context that trouble was equated with sexuality and gender; that is, to act or talk sexually became a form of manhood in the context viewed as equally important as the peer group activity of smoking and moaning about teachers. What also became evident in this study was the hierarchy of masculinity with the school, namely cool guys were found at the top of the hierarchy with 'wimps and swots' found at the bottom. Within this context, masculinity was equated with being a cool guy, with boys who valued academia being viewed as effeminate and homosexual (Connell, 2000). Feminist research has also found that within education, the ethos of individualism, competition and differentiation is one which is harmonious to the social construction of masculinity (Askew & Ross, 1988, in Wright et al., 1998).

Similarly, Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) found that the cool boys in the school were those who were thin not fat; sporty not nerdy, and popular with the girls. Within this particular context, belonging to the cool group was equated with passing an exam and in turn reflects the immense pressure placed on boys to fit in. However, this research also found that there are boys who question these social norms and constantly feel torn between being critical and desiring social inclusion. One way in which these boys negotiated this pressure was to develop their own groups, groups seen as 'Other' to the central groups. This development was referred to by one of the respondents, Luke, a 19 year old boy, who explained how his group of friends comprised of unpopular boys who were perceived as misfits in the sense that none of them fitted neatly into the categories of masculinity prescribed by the school (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003). Both Connell (2000) and Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli's (2003) studies provide evidence of the complexity of making sense of and negotiating one's masculinity in the school context. The studies reflect the social and collective process of the differentiation of masculinities. By this it is meant that one's place

on the masculinity hierarchy is not only determined by individual differences, but also is influenced by the organisation of peer group relationships. The peer group that one belongs to will determine one's place on the masculinity hierarchy. Those non-hegemonic forms of masculinity, namely non-normative sexuality, ethnicity and disability, place one, as a boy, on the borders of these peer groups, and are in turn influenced and nuanced by these border positionings (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003).

Research has also found that relationships between boys and teachers play a role in the development of certain masculine practices within the context of schools. Frosh et al. (2003<sup>1</sup>) found that at times teachers battled to contain and control unruly boys, and that boys preferred teachers who were firm with them while being simultaneously able to joke with them. In terms of race issues, their research found that at times, teachers would pick particularly on black boys and many of the boys reported being unhappy about this.

#### **2.6.1.1 Boys, Race and Schooling**

Research has also provided evidence of the relationship between race and masculinity in the context of schools. Wright et al's (1998) study discovered a view of black masculinity that was inferior to white masculinity in the context of schools. What emerged was a stereotypical and homogenous view of black males as aggressive, sexist and violent. This view incorporates the notion of machismo, which "subjectively incorporates attributes associated with dominant definitions of manhood – such as being tough, in control, independent – in order to recuperate some degree of power or active influence over objective conditions of powerlessness created by racism" (Mercer & Julien, 1988, in Wright et al., 1998, p. 78). However, Wright et al. (1998), argue against the homogenisation of black masculinity which perpetuates the belief that all black males are aggressive, sexist and violent.

Wright, et al's (1998) study found evidence with regard to the manner in which gender and race are infused in the context of schools and how, through the process of exclusion, black masculinity is positioned within discourses of conflict, cultural misunderstanding and isolation. Black masculinities in this context are positioned in opposition to white masculinities and tend to result in the process of "over masculinising' the identities of young black boys" (Wright et al., 1998, p. 75). This study was conducted with African Caribbean youth with the aim of exploring the process by which young black boys are excluded from the school system - either for a fixed period or permanently. Importantly, within this context,

not all forms of masculinity are approved, but rather are based on the binary oppositions of success and failure which are both class and race specific. For example, “streaming and “failure” push groups of working class boys towards alienation, and the state authority provides them a perfect foil for the construction of a combative dominance-focussed masculinity” (Connell, 1989, in Wright et al., 1998, p. 77). In such a way, in order to defend against not fitting into the dominant definitions of masculinity as prescribed by their schooling, through their academic failures, black boys tend to take up alternative forms of masculinity evident in sporting achievements, physical aggression and sexual conquests. This process is one in which black males attempt to regain a sense of masculinity through the exertion of power over others (Wright et al., 1998). This tends to result in the oppression of black women, children and black men as this construction of masculinity is one that entails self-destructive acts and attitudes (Mercer & Julien, 1988, in Wright et al., 1998).

Nevertheless, Sewell (1995) critically contends against the homogenisation of black masculinity, arguing that not all black males aim to ‘mimic’ white patriarchy. Wright et al. (1998) argue that this homogenisation is problematic for black boys as it tends to influence the way in which other boys relate to and view them. In such a way, the manner in which these boys are responded to in school is influenced by the wider understandings and social constructions of black masculinity. Likewise, this homogeneous view of black boys as embodying exaggerated heterosexuality and conflict leaves little space for a discussion of the difficulties these boys face and tends to pathologise their identities, implying that they are to blame for their positioning.

“Most studies have, however regarded Black masculinity as an alternative to social status, rather than an extension of it. ‘Black macho’ has been portrayed therefore, as differing in kind rather than degree from the wider gendered power relations within Society at large... It is however, only within the context of wider power relations – and as an extension of them – that Black masculinity can be fully understood ... Black masculinity is then best perhaps understood as an articulated response to structural inequality, enacting and subverting dominant definitions of power and control, rather than substituting for them. Rather than a hostile and withdrawn entity [black masculinity] can be seen as a base for integration and negotiation with wider society” (Alexander, 1996, in Wright et al., 1998, p. 85).

Govender (2006) explored the construction of racialised masculinities among black and Indian boys in a school context in relation to HIV/AIDS. According to Govender (2006) masculinity is influenced by gender constructions as well as relations of class and race. The

study was conducted with 40 Indian and Black youth from two schools in the working class community of Phoenix in KwaZulu-Natal. In this study, focus groups and individual interviews were conducted. It should be noted that the researcher conducted focus groups in which the different race groups were mixed as well as not mixed. What the research found was that the manner in which the boys made sense of their masculinity depended on the particular context. That is, within this context, masculinity took on a racialised dimension in which issues of race became intertwined with understandings of what constitutes masculinity. For example, the boys used race as a site of shared solidarity in the group discussions to assert their masculinity. What emerged from the Indian boys was a 'responsible agent subject position' in which racialised conceptualisations of the 'Other' (the black boys) as promiscuous and irresponsible were developed. What emerged from the accounts of the black boys were major resistances to the historical view that black males are the diseased racial Other (Govender, 2006). In the mixed race group discussions, race became reified as a marker of identity, and sexual risk practices were associated with the 'other'. By 'other' it is meant boys from other African countries (Govender, 2006).

Finally, in the individual interviews, the boys were more critical of the previous group discussions and displayed a more vulnerable and ambivalent sense of identity. For example, Govender (2006) notes that "at one level there was a need to perform the role of the strong black heterosexual male. At another level, these boys at times also internalised the spoiled identity position as a function of hegemonic racist discourses that represented the black male as sexually excessive" (Govender, 2006, p. 145). The significance of this research is twofold. Firstly, the research highlights the importance of exploring masculinity in the context of schools, in which boys constantly negotiate, reject and accept different notions of masculinity. Secondly, this research provides evidence for the reality that masculinity is not fixed, but that various masculinities exist and are negotiated differently in different contexts.

### **2.6.2 Boys and Violence**

It can be argued that the "heightened politicisation of adolescents during the period 1970-1990 in South Africa offered a temporary reprieve for certain black adolescents from the extremely negative impact of the South African society" (Stevens & Lockhat, 2003, p.130). Within the context of Apartheid, it can therefore be argued that a common social identity was reflected in the formation of the 'young lions'. In this context, fighting and violence in opposition to the oppressive government were viewed as legitimate forms of masculinity.

During the 1980s, the presence of security forces and the high rise of violence in townships resulted in a high percentage of youth becoming actively involved in the violent fight against the oppressor. In this context, “guns provided the power to express social antagonisms in violent ways” (Cock, 2001, p.43). During Apartheid, guns were used as a revolutionary tool; in contemporary South African society they are associated with crime and violence. For example; during Apartheid, the AK-47 represented a “mythic icon, a powerful symbol, a ‘marker’ of group identity” (Cock, 2001, p.45) for black youth. Guns were also an important symbol of hegemonic masculinity for the Afrikaans group during Apartheid. According to Cock (2001), guns are a major dimension of hegemonic masculinity.

However, issues of guns and gun violence are still real issues in contemporary South Africa, even though they are conceptualised more negatively. In this context, it can be argued that black adolescent males are suffering from an identity crisis (Freeman, 1993), that is; these males can be argued to be displaced in the new constitution in which their role as comrades is no longer needed. In contemporary South African society, the importance of being a comrade during Apartheid is now of little significance. “The African township youth, the ‘young lions’ or ‘the foot soldiers of the revolution’ have become marginalised and some have become full-time gangsters” (Xaba, 2001, p. 107). Freeman (1993) contends that during the Struggle, the youth gave up their education and career opportunities and are referred to in contemporary society as the ‘lost generation’. By lost generation, it is meant that these men have lost interest in politics. These young people are more concerned with material things and have turned to violent criminal activities to reach these needs.

According to the Gun Free Newsletter (1998, in Cock, 2001, p.43) “every day 32 people are murdered in South Africa.” This statistic reflects the manner in which guns are used as a means of livelihood through criminal violence in contemporary South Africa. Xaba (2001) argues that there are different levels of criminality, that is groups consisting of former ‘exiles’ and ‘comrades’; groups of a purely criminal nature, as well as others which are completely criminal gangs. These boys, who modelled their masculinity in relation to the Struggle, find themselves dealing with the reality that what made them heroes now equates them with criminals. In turn, these men tend to be viewed as criminals even if they are not. Langa and Eagle (2008) critically argues that the role of the media plays an essential role in the stigmatisation and over-generalisation of former combatants as violent criminals. By former combatants it is meant those men, with specific regard to the South African context, who

fought against the Apartheid Government. Within this study it was found that fighting both represented a form of initiation into manhood as well as a form of comradeship (Langa & Eagle, 2008).

One could argue within the contemporary South African context that these men have become scapegoats who are constantly blamed for the high levels of violent crime (Langa & Eagle, 2008). However, as argued by Xaba (2001), “it is no secret that the knife-edge life of violent crime is eminently more remunerative than the palliatives offered by the Adult Basic Education and Life Skills Programs in which the former ‘comrades’ and ‘exiles’ are expected to enrol” (Xaba, 2001, p.119). What this research illustrates is the strong relationship between masculinity and guns in both pre- and post-apartheid South Africa. What it also highlights is the problem that men are now faced with in South Africa, where during Apartheid one was seen as a hero if one held a gun; in contemporary South Africa the opposite applies. One therefore needs to ask where these men fit now? According to Langa and Eagle (2008), post-1994, these combatants were expected to renounce their former powers and develop a new sense of masculinity with no sense of support or intervention.

### **2.6.3 Boys and Gangs**

According to Pinnock (1997), boys require rituals or events to take place that will symbolise their becoming a man. However, Pinnock (1997) contends that if society does not provide them with this, they will create their own. One manner in which boys have been able to create their own rituals for becoming men is through the formation of gangs. According to Pinnock (1997), the development of gangs stemmed from the need for male adolescents to form a defence against the personal pain and isolation that the Apartheid Government inflicted. Ganging, as argued by Pinnock (1997), is a rite of passage that is required to become a ‘real’ man. Moolman’s (2004) study entitled “*The reproduction of an ‘ideal’ masculinity through gang rape on the Cape Flats*”, explores the role of gang membership in the construction of masculinity. Moolman (2004) examined how the political and economic impoverishment of coloured men during Apartheid played a role in the development of a violent and sexualised discourse of masculinity that was enacted in gang membership. The study involved the conducting of focus groups with individuals who lived in the Cape Flats. The findings of the study firstly reflected the influence of the South African political economy in gang dynamics. In order to exert some degree of power, masculinity became associated with ownership of land and bodies - women’s bodies.

Within this study what also emerged was the conceptualisation that gang rape acted as a means of men having control over women's autonomy. Moolman (2004) reflects on the manner in which masculinity was associated with uncontrollable sexual desires. It appeared that many of the participants held that view that being a 'man' and in order to be accepted as a part of a gang, one had to perform violent acts such as gang rape. What thus becomes obvious from this study is the way in which this idea of hegemonic masculinity in the South African context, including heterosexual, dominant and violent forms, played out in the particular context of gang rape. This pervasive pattern of gang-related violence was also found in a study conducted by Shefer (2007) with adolescent boys in the Western Cape. In this study what became evident were the underlying reasons for why boys become involved in gangs. Examples of reasons include peer pressure, boredom, poor self-esteem, an attempt to escape from bullying as well as poverty and economic needs.

Salo (2007) also explores the importance of gang membership in the masculinity discourse in relation to boys/men who live in the Manenberg Township on the Cape Flats. Salo (2007) argues "how the Rio street community in Manenberg draws on the very physical, historical, social and economic processes of Apartheid that marginalized it to create this alternative moral universe of meaning" (p.165). Within this context, in which 80 000 people comprise the population of the township, men's roles as 'ouens' play an essential role in dissecting this population into different communities; that is, men's gang affiliation is a key marker of local communities. Examples of gangs are Hard Living, the Americans, Young Dixie Boys, Clever Kids and the like (Salo, 2007).

The role of gang members is to act as protectors of the local residents as well as to defend the community's reputation. However, besides acting as gate keepers, by projecting the image of and acting like gang members, men are identified as men by other men. One way in which these men can illustrate their manhood is to demonstrate to the local men their ability to withstand emotional and physical torture. They also have to display loyalty to the gang as indicated in being able to endure severe beating and painful tattooing. On the other hand, men who put their own needs first are referred to as 'skollies', are viewed as strangers and do not have relationships with the adult women in the community (Salo, 2007). It can thus be argued that being part of a gang is viewed as a superior status in certain communities. In these contexts, being a gang member who drives an expensive car, has money and can therefore afford to attract beautiful women, denote key markers of masculinities.

## 2.6.4 Boys and Sexual Relationships

*“Even if a man has never made love to a woman, there is enormous pressure to pretend that he has”* (Seidler, 1989, p. 23).

This statement highlights the pressure men face to prove their masculinity and engage in sexual relationships. This pressure can be understood in relation to what Pascoe (2007) refers to as ‘compulsive heterosexuality’. By compulsive heterosexuality it is meant the process by which boys engage in public practices of heterosexuality, in turn affirming their sense of power and domination over others, in most cases over women. The term has been developed from Rich’s (1986, in Pascoe, 2007) concept of ‘compulsory heterosexuality.’ According to Rich (1986, in Pascoe, 2007, p. 86), “heterosexuality not only describes sexual desires, practices and orientations, but is a ‘political institution.’” That is, practices of heterosexuality, even though they may be personally meaningful, can also act as a mechanism of oppressing women. Importantly, in order to maintain a sense of power, through their behaviour towards girls, ritualised sex talk and objectification of women, boys are able to recreate and maintain the notions of masculinity and femininity (Pascoe, 2007).

Similarly, Seidler (1989) contends that sex is often equated to notions of power and conquest. By this it is meant that sex is learnt during early boyhood as a means of increasing one’s status within the ‘pecking’ order of masculinity. Sex is therefore equated with being a real man and through the process of engaging in sexual practices, one becomes a man. This conceptualisation of masculinity, in terms of heterosexuality and sex, is one that is performed. This notion of performance is one which Butler (1995, in Pascoe, 2007) refers to as “gender performativity” (p.86). The idea of sexuality as a performance creates the perception that sex is something men need; and that women are merely an obstacle in a conquest in which an orgasm marks the end goal.

### 2.6.4.1 Sexual Violence

Wood and Jewkes’s (2001<sup>1</sup>) study was conducted with young African men living in a working class Eastern Cape township in which their experiences such as practicing violence, for example assault and coercive sex, were strongly associated with notions of masculinity. What was found that violence ranged from “slapping, ‘persuading’ a woman to have sex, threatening to beat, hitting with sticks and other objects, pushing, assaulting with fists, violent

rape, stabbing with a knife and public humiliation” (Wood & Jewkes, 2001<sup>1</sup>, p.319). One of the reasons for this violence against women stemmed from the men’s need to prove to their peers that they were tough, masculine men. However, what also became apparent was that violence as a component of masculinity moved beyond the heterosexual relationship to include non-heterosexual relationships, as well as professional ones (Woods & Jewkes, 2001<sup>1</sup>). This study was able to highlight the dimension of violence in South African hegemonic masculinity, violence that pervades all interpersonal relationships.

Macleod (2006) comments on scenes from a comic book entitled Heart to Heart. The scenes reflect the manner in which constructions of ‘love’ can be used in a coercive manner. What emerged were constructions of masculinity that allowed or entitled men to define conditions and time of love-making; that is, men felt that because they had given the woman clothes and money, that they were entitled to sex, which in turn links with the notions that when a girl says ‘no’ she means ‘yes’ (Macleod, 2006). Similarly, Kaufman and Stavrou (2004) contend that the power dynamics in relationships is often underpinned by gift giving. According to Wood and Jewkes (2001<sup>1</sup>, 2001<sup>2</sup>), young men tend to hold a particular idea of exchange or ‘contract’. This involves ideas of female duty. In exchange for gifts (presents, money, being visited frequently and taken out) many young men believe they have the right to expect sexual relations whenever they want it. Sexual refusal on the part of girls that contradicted this ‘contract’ is therefore seen as a catalyst for sexual assault. Most young males believed that if girls did not want to have sexual relations then they should not have accepted the ‘love proposal’ at the outset (Wood & Jewkes, 2001<sup>1</sup>, 2001<sup>2</sup>). Kaufman and Stavrou (2004) state that most people are aware of the symbolic meaning of gifts, possibly because gifts are so frequently used as a means of achieving sexual goals. Importantly, this symbolic meaning is one which tends to be widely accepted and rarely questioned.

What also became apparent in a study conducted by Ratele, Fouten, Shefer, Strebel, Shabalala and Buikema (2007) is the notion of ‘*ilobola*’ (bridewealth) and the function it serves for men. One of the interviewees stated that ““She is obliged to do everything for me because I have paid *ilobola*”” (Ratele et al., 2007:115). This cultural understanding of relations between men and women once again highlights the construction of masculinity as having power over women and entitling men to dictate the conditions to women. Shefer (2006) also found the practice of *ilobola* assumed men to have certain rights and power over

women; “She is obliged to do everything because I have paid *lobola*” (Respondent B, in Shefer, 2006, p. 63).

#### **2.6.4.2 Boys, HIV/AIDS and Condom Use**

Shefer (2006) contends that South Africa has one of the highest rates of HIV/Aids infection in the world, with the majority of these infections transpiring during adolescence. Research indicates that levels of heterosexually transmitted HIV are the highest amongst the youth in the South African context, with approximately 18.9% of 17-20 year olds and 43.1% of 21-25 year olds being infected (Macphill & Campbell, 2006, p. 1613). One particular argument for the higher risk of HIV infection in adolescence is that adolescents are still negotiating their gendered identities and exploring their sexualities (Morrell, Moletsane, Karmin, Epstein & Unterhalter, 2002, in Shefer, 2006); that is, as adolescents seek to develop their own sense of self, they tend to experiment, and in such a way place themselves at great risk of HIV/Aids infection. Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) further argue that “as HIV/Aids has been increasingly recognised as a gendered disease; the role played by the construction and performance of masculinity in the HIV/Aids pandemic has been foregrounded” (p. 95). It therefore becomes relevant to explore this area in relation to understandings and constructions of masculinity.

Campbell’s (2001) conducted a study on a Johannesburg gold mine in 1995 under the Epidemiology Research Unit, with the main aim of exploring the relationship between the mine workers’ conceptualisations of masculinity and safe sexual behaviour. What was found was that the unsafe context in which the men worked, the mines, created a sense among the men that masculinity included the concepts of bravery, fearlessness and persistence in the face of the demands of underground work. However, one other dimension of masculinity that emerged was, “There are two things to being a man: going underground and going after women” (Campbell, 2001, p. 282). What also became apparent was that having multiple partners, having flesh-to-flesh sex and an uncontrollable sexuality was associated with virile masculinity. The study argued that the construction of masculinity within the context of the mines resulted in risk-taking behaviour, which exposed men to HIV/AIDS infection, which in turn increased the unsafe context in which they existed. MacPhail and Campbell (2001) extend on this notion of flesh-to-flesh contact by exploring South African male adolescent attitudes towards condom use in their study entitled “*I think condoms are good but, aai, I hate those things*’: condom use among adolescents and young people in a South African

*township.*” What became apparent in this study were the boys’ negative attitudes to condom use, for example, boys felt that condom use took away their pleasure, that it was a waste of sperm cells, and that you cannot eat a sweet with its cover on (MacPhail & Campbell, 2001).

Lindegger and Maxwell’s (2007) study stemmed from the Targeted Aids Intervention (TAI) project and consisted of focus groups and individual interviews conducted with six different schools, that is two farm schools and four rural schools in South Africa. An ignorance regarding HIV/Aids knowledge, as well as a belief that it is not the responsibility of men to protect their wives from being infected emerged in the study. What also became apparent was that risky behaviour in the form of multiple sexual relationships and unsafe sexual practices were justified through metaphors such as, “we cannot eat one kind of food” (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007, p.102). A study conducted by Shefer (2006) with adolescent boys in the Western Cape found that there was a high correlation between masculinity and risky behaviour.

As in the case of the study by Lindegger and Maxwell (2007), what became evident in this study was the view that young men have a natural need for sex and that there exists much ignorance and misconception regarding the HIV/Aids virus. For example, Shefer (2006) found that as much as the young men were aware of the importance of wearing condoms, they simultaneously saw them as unsafe and argued that girls did not like them. This is evident in a statement made by one of the respondents, Respondent A, “in most relationships, girls prefer not to use condoms, since they associate condoms use with eating a lollipop with a cover on” (Shefer, 2006, p. 72). A belief that women are the primary carriers of the virus became evident in the study. This belief therefore allowed the young men to distance themselves from being held responsible for being infected (Shefer, 2006). However, what became evident was that even though many of the boys’ accounts were harmonious with hegemonic masculinity, that alternate and competing forms also emerged. For example, in Lindegger and Maxwell’s (2007) study, what became apparent was a significant reduction in the number of sexual partners as an alternative construction of masculine behaviour. Similarly, a study conducted by Harrison, O’Sullivan, Hoffman, Dolezal and Morrell (2006) found that more frequent condom use took place in the contexts of romantic relationships, indicating an increased level of respect for their partners in younger generations of men. In cases when condoms were not used, this seemed to stem from the belief that there was no risk in having unsafe sex in the context of committed relationships. The findings of this study

indicate that changes are taking place in the South African context with regard to masculine behaviours. According to Harrison et al. (2006, p. 719):

“For many South African men, identities of manhood remain tied to control over gender relations and dominance in sexual relationships. While there are clearly challenges to these normative views, they remain entrenched, particularly in rural settings. However, the patriarchal norms that guide men’s sense of self may be shifting, and younger men in particular continue to seek ways to shape new masculine behaviours.”

Shefer’s (2006) study also found a more vulnerable or fragile side in the stories of the young men; that is, some of the participants argued that at times women abuse men, and that they also feel pressured to have sex with women out of the fear of being ostracised or ridiculed by their friends if their girlfriend was to leave them for another man. Similarly, Gibson and Lindegaard (2007) found accounts of masculinity that went beyond hegemonic forms. One example of such an account is provided in, “I do not sleep with my girlfriend, the boys...call me a sissy... Her boyfriend thinks he is a man because he has sex with her and he has a child, but what kind of a man is he, he does not even look after his child. I want to keep healthy and plan for the future” (p. 140).

### **2.6.5 Boys and Class**

“Obviously, our differing class, ethnic and racial backgrounds affect how we come to terms with our masculinity, but our grasp of class relationships can shift as we learn what conflicts and tensions we have shared with other men. We learn to bring together issues of class and masculinity and of how we share a relationship to women which cuts across our different stories” (Seidler, 1991, p. 18).

With changes in South African society since democracy, it has become evident that black adolescents have been forced to become ‘young entrepreneurs’. By this it is meant with the existence of ‘racialised’ capitalism, many black roles are prescribed roles which tend to be unattainable as a result of Apartheid’s racist legacy. According to Majors (2001) due to the dominant goals of hegemonic masculinity being unattainable for black males as a result of structural inequalities many black males have become obsessed with proving their manliness to themselves and to others. One way in black males have done this is by channelling their creative energies into their attire and the attainment of material goods. A study conducted by Shefer (2007) with adolescent boys in the Western Cape found that young males equated the possession of material goods and masculinity; “this meant wearing fancy clothes in order to

be seen as 'cool', being '*die ou*' or being 'fresh', as they described it" (Shefer, 2007, p. 62). Similarly, Stevens and Lockhat (2003) contend that black adolescents are torn between the identity of being a 'Young Lion' or comrade against Apartheid and a new more individualised, capitalist identity (Stevens & Lockhat, 2003, p.143).

"In Apartheid South Africa, it was partly due to a shared political consciousness that many adolescents were able to develop a collective identity that resisted and challenged pervasive racist ideology. The new role models, economic structures and dominance of Western ideologies, however, have now encouraged an ideological shift from collectivism to individualism."

This individualistic culture has been deemed the 'Coca-Cola' culture which encapsulates the importance of looking out for oneself. An article entitled '*Ticket between two worlds*' (Sunday Times, 2002, in Stevens & Lockhat, 2003, p.143) refers to the identity struggle faced by black students from townships or disadvantaged communities who go to schools in the suburbs, be they government or private schools. What the article argues is that these students are torn or straddled between two worlds, "pupils find themselves embroiled in a different kind of battle – an emerging class divide that goes beyond the general race paradigm commonly used in South Africa to explain economic inequalities" (Sunday Times, 2002, in Stevens & Lockhat, 2003, p.143); that is, on the one side, one will find the 'Comrades' who remained behind in the townships, and the 'AmaBhujwa', 'AmCoconuts' and the 'Cheese Boys', who left their historical communities for schooling in the economically advanced, mainly white, suburbs.

These boys have to contend with hostility from other black youth who see them as traitors, white on the inside and privileged, whilst fellow blacks are starving. These boys speak English with an American accent, wear labels and play 'white' rugby as opposed to 'black' soccer. One can argue that they have internalised their inferiority of being black as opposed to being white (Durrheim & Mtose, 2006). However, what becomes even more problematic for these black students is that even though they possess these 'white' or 'westernised' qualities, they cannot become completely a part of the white cultural group either, as argued by Durrheim and Mtose (2006). What this situation highlights is the double bind experienced by black adolescents. These boys can therefore be argued to be torn between aiming for a 'better' life as prescribed by western ideology with the consequence of becoming alienated

from their roots; or on the other hand, remaining a comrade at the price of their own advancement.

“In townships being a young man was complicated – it involved behaving in different ways in various contexts... But being a young man was also about being perceived as one; accordingly, it was fluid and dynamic and was particularly complex when trying to be non-violent and to practise safe sex” (Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007, p. 139). This statement alludes to the complex nature of masculinity and how issues of race and class play an important role in how masculinity is negotiated. Looking specifically at the context of townships, Bhana (2005) contends that in this context there is a strong connection between violent masculinities and schooling. In Bhana’s (2005) study conducted in Durban with young-black Zulu speaking boys (aged six to ten) in a working class township school, what became evident was how violent masculinity was viewed as a form of hegemonic masculinity within this context. However, it can be argued that the case of young black men is even more complicated and challenging. According to Gibbs and Merighi (1994, p. 69), “sometime between early adolescence and young adulthood, many black males face the painful dilemma of either challenging these barriers with only a slim chance of success or of seeking alternate illegitimate routes to mobility, which pose a high risk of danger and criminal prosecution.” By this it is meant, especially in the case of low-status black males, that as a result of inadequate models of identification pseudo-masculine behaviours may develop with the aim to overcompensate for their feelings of racial inferiority (Gibbs & Merighi, 1994).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This review has aimed to provide a comprehensive account of the information and research in the area masculinity within contemporary society. By focussing on issues of gender and the social construction of masculinity it has aimed to lay the foundation for a more critical exploration of this seemingly natural concept. Due to the focus of the research being that of young masculinities the researcher aimed to sufficiently cover recent developments and arguments in this area. The researcher also aimed to include both South African and international studies on the topic of masculinity with specific reference to young masculinities so as to provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding. In order to focus the literature review to meet the needs of the current research the researcher focussed on the areas of school, race, class, sexual relationships, and violence in relation to masculinity.

# **CHAPTER 3**

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The focus of qualitative research is on understanding dimensions of human behaviour instead of explaining and predicting behaviour (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006). This form of research involves the collection of data in the form of written or spoken language, or even through observation. The advantage of qualitative research is that it allows for a deep and detailed exploration of the particular problem or issue by the researcher (Durrheim, 2006). According to Durrheim (2006, p.47) “if the research purpose is to study phenomena as they unfold in real-world situations, without manipulation, to study phenomena as interrelated wholes rather than split up into discreet predetermined variables, then an inductive, qualitative approach is required.” In light of this it becomes apparent that the use of qualitative methods and analysis, to unpack the constructions and understandings of masculinity that emerge in the data, is vital. Working from a qualitative perspective, Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim (2006) contend that one needs to take participants’ subjective experiences seriously; make sense of and understand what participants tell researchers as well as make use of qualitative research methods to collect and analyse the information collected. These requirements fit well with and have guided this research as the main aim of this research was to explore the subjective accounts of the black and white participants’ understandings of masculinity.

However, not only did this research aim to establish a sense of the participants’ subjective understandings of masculinity but it also wanted to show how these experiences were influenced by larger societal discourses of masculinity. Based on this, the research drew on the social constructionist paradigm to critically unpack the seemingly natural accounts of masculinity that emerged in the data (Kelly, 2006). Social constructionist approaches to research argue that individuals’ thoughts, feelings and experienced are informed and shaped by the particular social context in which they reside and in such a way the meaning of these experiences exist at a social rather than an individual level” (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). By collecting data in context, that is in the relevant ‘real life’ setting one could argue that a rich quality of data was collected (Kelly, 2006). This data in turn was critically explored and dissected, which assisted the researcher in achieving the aim of the research.

### 3.2 Participants

The population under study were adolescent boys from a private multi-racial school in broader area of Johannesburg, Gauteng. The school is internationally recognised as one of the top academic schools in the country offering a well-rounded educational system to a cross section of pupils. It is a boy's only school whose students tend to excel at a national level in academic, cultural and sporting competitions. Currently the school has approximately 700 boys enrolled. The racial distribution of the students is provided in the table below (see Table 1). The school offers a number of scholarships with one category developed for previously disadvantaged students who perform well academically. Working within this particular school context the researcher was interested in exploring how class and race influence adolescent boys and their behaviour in negotiating multiple voices of masculinity. Morrell (1998) contends that these different dimensions play an important role in moulding masculinities.

<b>Race group</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
White	74.7
Black	10.8
Indian	10.4
Coloured	1.3
Other	2.6

*Table 1: Estimated percentage of boys currently enrolled at the school according to race*

In order to meet the aim of the research, to explore how adolescent boys of different races negotiate multiple voices of masculinity in the context of post-apartheid South Africa, a sample of eight students was selected through the process of voluntary participation. Of these eight adolescent boys, four white<sup>1</sup> boys and four black boys were selected. The selection of this sample was motivated by the rationale of this study, that race, especially within the context of South Africa, plays an influential role in social construction of masculinity. This research is guided by Morrell's (1998, in Govender, 2006) argument that societal issues, class and race differences, pervade and influence the school environment and in turn mould

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<sup>1</sup> In adopting the labels of 'Black' and 'White' the researcher does not support the existence of such constructs but simply uses them as a means of providing terminological consistency in the writing of her report (Stevens, Franchi & Swart, 2006).

masculinities in particular ways. In terms of the age of the boys, boys who fell into the category of adolescence between the ages of 15 and 18 were selected. The decision to focus on this age group was based on two main arguments. Firstly, there has been much argument that adolescent school-going boys are in trouble and have therefore become a focus of much concern (Kimmel & Traver, 2005; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Frosh et al., 2003<sup>1</sup>). Secondly, Pascoe (2007) contends that whether or not the stage of adolescence is universal, this life stage is one in which boys tend to develop a more stable sense of identity as they move towards adulthood. This particular period of development is also when boys begin to engage in masculinising activities that distinguish them from girls (Pascoe, 2007).

### **3.3 Sampling Method**

Non-probability purposive sampling was utilised as a means of selecting the eight boys from the study (Durrheim & Painter, 2006). This method is utilised by *'researchers who rely on experience, ingenuity, and/or previous research findings to deliberately obtain units of analysis in such a manner that the sample they obtain may be regarded as being representative of the relative population'* (Welman & Kruger, 2002, p. 63). For the purpose of this research the particular school in question was purposively selected for the following reasons. Firstly, being a private school the researcher was able to gain easier access than would have been allowed in the case of a government school. Secondly, the school provided the researcher with access to the specific sample required, that is adolescent black and white boys.

Based on the motivation of this research, to provide insight into the experiences that boys' have in their daily lives, and prioritising the meaning that boys attach to their actions, the sample is not required to be an accurate reflection of South African society. Rather, this sample has been selected because it is information rich and will provide the researcher with insight into the complex phenomenon of masculinity, and is therefore not aimed at developing an empirical generalisation from sample to population (Patton, 2002). A snowballing sampling technique was also utilised when it became evident that the researcher needed to ask participants who were already selected if they could assist in recruiting black boys. The difficulty the researcher faced in recruiting black boys will be discussed in the next section.

### 3.4 Procedure

The first step in the data collection process was gaining informed consent from the school principal (see Appendix B). Once informed consent was received from the school principal, the researcher worked closely with the school's guidance teacher, who is a qualified Educational Psychologist, to advertise the research and what was expected from the boys. The researcher explained the aims of the project to the school's guidance teacher informing her of the need to select eight students, four black and four white, approximately between the age of 15 and 18, with the majority of boys being younger than 18. The researcher initially spoke to the grade 10 and 11 classes explaining the aims of the study; what participation would involve, and gave them subject information sheets (including parent/guardian consent forms, see Appendices C, D, E & F).

From this above process only a few boys came forth, and based on the selection of the boys on a first come, first serve basis, the researcher was able to organise a few participants. This difficulty can be argued to stem from the initial decision to approach the grade 10 and 11 classes. Out of the three classes the researcher approached there were few black learners. Due to the difficulty faced with attracting the black participants the researcher asked the already selected participants if they knew of any black adolescent boys at the school who would be interested in participating in the research.

Based on this process the researcher was fortunately able to select four white and four black boys. Importantly, the researcher stressed to all the interested participants as well as those boys who were finally selected that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that any time during the process they were free to leave if they no longer wanted to participate. Even though the researcher was aware that the selection of the candidates on a first come, first serve basis may limit the extent of the diversity of the sample, by virtue of selecting boys from two different race groups one can hypothesise that a level of diversity in responses would be gained. However, as previously mentioned the aim of the study is not to generalise findings to the broader South African context, but rather to examine the process through which class and race shape and influence boys' understandings of masculinity in their day to day experiences.

### 3.5 Data Collection Methods

Two data collection methods were used, namely individual interviews and focus groups. The first step in the data collection process involved meeting with all eight participants individually and giving them a disposable camera. Each boy was asked to take twenty seven photographs guided by the theme “My life as a boy” (see Appendix J)<sup>2</sup>. The boys were also given a sheet of paper with written instructions on how to use the camera, so as to minimise the amount of incorrectly taken photographs, as well as a reminder concerning the aim of taking the photographs.

The use of photography as a research practice is formally known as auto-photography. According to Noland (2006) auto-photography involves the process of allowing participants to take photos which best represent themselves. In this case the boys were given the freedom to take any photos that they felt best represented their identity as boys. The strengths of this approach is that it allows the generation of more authentic data as through the photos the researcher is giving insight into to the participant’s world through the participant’s eyes. In such a way, “auto-photography allows participants the freedom to use their actual surroundings, to pick and choose the people who are important to their self-concepts, and to decide what issues and what objects are the most salient to their constructions of self” (Noland, 2006, p. 3).

Once the photographs were taken the researcher made arrangements with the boys to collect and develop them. On the day of the interview the researcher returned the photos to the boys and asked them to discuss the photos they had taken and how these photos best represented their lives as boys. Noland (2006) contends that in the case of qualitative research researchers use the participants’ descriptions of the photographs as data. In this case the process of asking the participants’ to describe the photographs and ask them questions in relation to the photographs taken is reflective of what Collier and Collier (1986, in Noland, 2006) refer to as “photo-elicitation” (p. 4). Another, advantage of this approach is that it provides participants with time to think about the photographs they want to take and what they are trying to represent, rather than expecting them to come up with on-the-spot answers.

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<sup>2</sup> The methodology used in this study has been adopted as part of a bigger research project on young masculinities funded by SANPAD and NRF under supervision of Malose Langa.

### 3.5.1 Individual Interviews

The aim of the individual interviews was to obtain a sense of what it meant to be a boy and young masculinities. The researcher decided to conduct the individual interviews before the focus group so as to provide an opportunity for the participants to become more comfortable and feel more relaxed with the research process. According to Kelly (2006) individual interviews provide the researcher with an opportunity to know participants quite closely so that one can begin to understand how they feel and think. Each individual interview lasted approximately one hour and was arranged at a time that was convenient for both the researcher and participants. Most of the interviews took place on the school premises in the guidance teacher's counselling room. In all cases the researcher ensured that the environment was quiet and private, with as little interruption from noise and disturbance as possible. It should be noted that before each individual interview commenced the researcher reminded the participants of issues pertaining to anonymity as stipulated in the consent and assent forms (see Appendix D & F). Finally, before the interviews commenced the researcher informed the participants that the interviews would be recorded and obtained the required permission (see Appendix H).

Besides, utilising the photographs as a point of discussion, further information was elicited through the researcher drawing on questions obtained in a semi-structured interview adapted from Frosh et al's (2003<sup>1</sup>) study (see Appendix A). This interview covered a wide range of issues namely: boys' self-definition as male/masculine; role models; relationship with other boys and girls; intimacy and friendships (Frosh et al., 2003<sup>1</sup>). In order to explore the relationship between race and masculinity extra questions were included in the interview schedule to tap into this area, such as, "What does it mean for you to be a black or white boy? What are the differences between black and white boys?" (see Appendix A). Frosh et al. (2003<sup>1</sup>) found that the use of individual interviews as a data collection tool provided them with rich data as the boys discussed sensitive, more personal issues, which they did not disclose in other settings. The researcher therefore took on facilitative role, picking up on issues the interviewees raised and encouraged them to develop and reflect upon them. According to Frosh et al. (2003<sup>1</sup>, 2003<sup>2</sup>) talking to boys about which masculinities they find desirable and why, is very useful. The researcher also explored with the participants the difficulties involved in negotiating the different ways of being masculine. The relationship between personal life and external structures constantly emerges as a key issue in the framing

of masculinity and in such a way the boys were given a space to comment on their perceptions of the social context that gives rise to different forms of masculinity (Frosh et al., 2003<sup>2</sup>).

### **3.5.2 Focus Group**

The second data collection tool that was utilised was a focus group which took place on the school premise. Only one focus group was run and all the participants that were involved in the individual interviews took part in the focus group. The group was therefore a mixed race group with four white and four black boys. Govender, 2006) contends that one cannot understand masculinity within the South African context independently of issues of race, class, and difference. Based on this argument the motivation to have a mixed race group was to create a context in which boys of different races would be able to discuss issues of masculinity. That is the researcher was interested in exploring the impact of racial differences, especially in light of South Africa's apartheid history, on the boys' ability to express their thoughts on masculinity. In Govender's (2006) research what became apparent in the mixed race groups was the difficulty the boys experienced when discussing issues relating to race, male sexuality and HIV/AIDS risk. The researcher was therefore interested in exploring whether this similar dynamic would take place between the black and white boys, or if alternative ways of discussing issues of masculinity in a context of difference would emerge.

Frosh et al. (2003<sup>1</sup>) found that in their study the manner in which the boys constructed their masculinity differed in relation to the situation or context in which they were in. The researcher was therefore interested in examining whether or not different narratives developed in the focus groups as opposed to the individual interviews. According to Connell (2000, p. 12) "masculinities are neither programmed in our genes, nor fixed by social structure, prior to social interaction. They come into existence as people act. They are actively produced, using the resources and strategies available in a given social setting." From this argument, one can argue that by utilising a focus group as a data collection tool, a specific social context will be generated in turn producing unique forms of masculinity.

A South African study conducted by Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) exploring issues of masculinity and HIV/Aids highlighted the way in which "complicity and resistance can be mixed together" (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, in Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007, p.109). The changing accounts that the participants provided in the context of the focus groups as

compared to the individual interviews highlights the enormous pressure on boys to conform to dominant views of masculinity in the public domain. What also became evident was that in more private contexts such as in the case of the individual interviews, some of the boys began to question, “the validity and extent of practice of these hegemonic standards, some evidence that the boys not only do not necessarily conform to all these hegemonic standards, but that they have a strong suspicion that their peers do not actually conform either” (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007, p.110).

The focus group was facilitated with the boys with the intention of identifying their prevailing views of masculinity and the dominant masculinities to which they publicly subscribe. The focus group took place in the same room that most of the individual interviews were conducted in, that is the guidance teacher’s counselling room and lasted approximately 90 minutes. Once again the researcher ensured that the environment was quiet, with as little interruption from noise and disturbance as possible. In terms of finding a time and date that all participants could meet, the researcher experienced much difficulty. After much organisation the researcher was finally able to arrange a suitable date and time for all the participants. However, even though the boys were informed of the starting time many were late and as a result some of the boys had to leave the focus group before it ended. That is by the end of the 90 minutes only four boys from the original eight were left, two white and two black boys. The researcher is aware that this could negatively influence the accuracy of the data collected but due to the participants only leaving towards the end of the focus group it can be argued that this will be a minimal one.

Before the focus group commenced, the researcher discussed issues pertaining to confidentiality and the provision of assent for taking part in the focus group. The participants then signed both the confidentiality agreement as well as focus group assent forms (see Appendix I & G). The participants were once again informed that the group interview would be recorded and the required permission was obtained (see Appendix H). The researcher handed the original copies of the photographs to the participants for them to keep as well as a certificate (see Appendix L) acknowledging and thanking the boys for their participation in the study. Photographs were also used as a spring-board for the focus group discussion. In this case the boys were asked to select three photographs, from the original 27 that they had taken, that they thought best represented what it means for them to be a boy and would like to share with the group. The group discussions were guided by the semi-structured interview

schedule that was utilised in the individual interviews (see Appendix A) as well as questions and points of discussion that the researcher felt had been neglected in the individual interviews. For example in the focus group issues of race and racial difference as well as the boy's ideas of homosexuality were explored in more detail.

During the focus group it was possible to observe the boys interacting with each other and with boys of different races. By observing the boys' interaction with each other the researcher was able to observe which boys took up the more dominant roles in the group; which boys remained quite silent, speaking when only spoken to and the like. Importantly, observing the interaction of the boys, also provided the researcher insight into how the boys provided mutual recognition of each other's experiences and how diverse their experiences were, "drawing upon and collectively constructing common cultural stories as well as managing differences" (Frosh et al., 2003<sup>1</sup>, p. 36). The role of the researcher was to facilitate the conversation between the boys. That is in this case the researcher took on a less active role and at times would attempt to focus the group on a specific content area by asking the boys to explain some of their photos; introducing new topics; asking for clarification and trying to include those quieter boys. However, it is important to note that as much as the researcher aimed to facilitate and not lead the discussion, issues of inconsistencies in procedure as well as power dynamics cannot be ignored. Working from a constructionist perspective one is aware that these factors are never possible to completely eradicate. These issues are discussed in more detail in subsection 3.6, The Researcher's Experience.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

It was decided for the purpose of this qualitative study, that thematic analysis of the data would be most appropriate. This form of analysis involves the sorting or 'encoding' of information into themes (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Hayes, 2000). A theme, as argued by Boyatzis (1998, p. vii), "is a pattern found in the information that at the minimum describes and organizes possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon." Similarly, Braun and Clarke (2006) contend that a theme encapsulates the important aspects of the data in relation to the research question as well as reflects the some degree of shared and/or common meaning across the collected data. According to Hayes (2000) themes can be developed in two ways. Firstly, 'deductive' thematic analysis includes the use of predetermined themes (which are formed by drawing on already existing literature around the topic). 'Inductive' thematic analysis on the other hand, includes emergent themes

(those that are newly generated during the course of data collection) (Hayes, 2000). According to Boyatzis, (1978) it is essential when commencing the process of thematic analysis that as a researcher one is able to effectively ‘sense themes’. By this it is meant that even though one may have developed a set of pre-determined themes, it is important that one is open to all information. For the purpose of this research both forms of analysis were drawn upon.

Working within a social constructionist paradigm, analysis goes beyond the subjective understandings and experiences of individuals and groups, but rather aims to explore how “understandings and experiences are derived from (and feed into) larger discourses...treat people as though their thoughts, feelings, and experiences were the products of systems of meaning that exist at a social rather than an individual level” (Terre Blanche, et al., 2006, p. 278). Similarly, Braun and Clarke (2006) state that when working from a constructionist perspective the researcher is interested in understanding the role of the social context in shaping the particular individual accounts found in the data. This paradigm also highlights the importance of language as an object of study and how broader patterns of social meaning are encoded in language. In relation to the topic of masculinity, one could therefore argue that society provides particular versions of masculinity or discourses that influence how individuals understand this concept and how they act in relation to it. The researcher was therefore guided by these arguments when conducting the analysis and aimed to look beyond the subjective experiences of the participants, to examine the particular social discourses and arrangements that influenced their realities and experiences. Working from a social constructionist paradigm the researcher aimed to “‘de-centre’ the masculine subject” (Frosh et al., 2003<sup>1</sup>, p. 50). By this it is meant that the accounts given by the boys regarding their personal experiences were placed in the foreground with the objective of gaining insight into the social constructions of masculinities.

Steps in thematic content analysis (adapted from Hayes, 2000; Braun & Clarke, 2006)

1. Due to time constraints the researcher’s supervisor hired someone to transcribe the audio-recorded data, transforming it into a means by which the research could commence analysis. The researcher was guided by her supervisor throughout this process ensuring all ethical issues were accounted for.
2. Before developing the themes the researcher familiarised and immersed herself in the data. According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (2006) this step is essential in

the data analysis process as it ensures that the researcher knows their data well enough to know what information was found across the transcripts and even which participants said what.

3. The researcher then developed themes (deductive analysis) from theory and research previously conducted in the area of study. The particular themes developed as well as the number of themes were also guided by the researcher's aim to keep the research focussed and manageable.
4. The next step, which can be argued to be an extension of stage two, involved the development of specific codes or categories that guided what data should be included and/or discarded from analysis. The aim of working in this manner was to keep the research as focussed as possible. It should be noted that at this point themes were developed both deductively and inductively. According to Zhang (2006) it can be difficult in reality to develop clear separate categories and therefore fuzzy boundaries between categories are allowed. The researcher was therefore aware that certain data may simultaneously fit in two or more categories, however aimed to place the data into themes that best met the aims of the study.
5. The researcher constantly revisited and developed the themes so as to ensure that a more focussed and elaborate analysis of the data was achieved.
6. The next step involved making sense of the data found within the deductive and inductive categories. According to Bradley (1993, in Zhang, 2006) activities that can be performed include exploring the properties of the categories, identifying relationships between categories, as well as uncovering patterns or underlying meaning.
7. Once the researcher completed the interpretation of the data and was satisfied, the researcher commenced the writing up of the discussion section as well as the drawing conclusions based on the analysed data (Zhang, 2006).

Due to the subjective nature of qualitative analysis steps were taken by the researcher to ensure that the credibility of the results produced by the thematic content analysis (Zhang, 2006). By credibility it is meant that results provide an accurate representation of the social world under study. In this case the researcher immersed herself in the data, continually checked and rechecked the categories, and worked closely with her supervisor to ensure that any gaps in the analysis were accounted for. Finally, drawing on Govender's (2006) argument the researcher played close attention to role of the particular social context, that is

individual interviews and focus group, in influencing the boys' narratives. According to Govender (2006, p. 116) "talk does not occur in a vacuum" but is shaped by class, race and gender differences.

### **3.4 Ethical Considerations**

Due to working with human subjects as well as minors the researcher was extremely attentive to all potential ethical issues that might arise. After obtaining ethical clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee, the researcher was able to proceed with the research process. The first step involved obtaining written consent from the school principle (see Appendix B) which in turn allowed the researcher to conduct the research at the school and with the students. On meeting with the students and introducing the aim of the research to them those interested students were provided with the necessary participant information sheets, consent and assent forms as previously mentioned (see Appendices C, D, E & F). The information sheets briefly explained the purpose of the research as well as what steps needed to be taken to become involved in the research. It also stressed that the process was completely voluntary and issues pertaining to anonymity and confidentiality were explained. In terms of the focus group the researcher highlighted the limits of confidentiality to both the participants and parents, in the information sheets, but stressed that in the final write up of the report all names would be changed. The researcher also emphasised to all the students that were interested in becoming involved in the research that in order for them to be able to participate they were required to get their parents to sign the consent form (see Appendix D) and sign the assent form themselves (see Appendix F). The participants and their parents were also informed that the data collected, namely photographs, audio recordings as well as transcriptions, would be kept in a safe and secure location with restrict access to only the researcher and her supervisor.

Before each interview was conducted the researcher reminded the participants that the process was entirely voluntary; that they did not have to answer any questions that they did not want to answer, and that their anonymity would be maintained by means of utilising pseudonyms. In terms of the focus group the researcher ensured that all the participants signed the focus group assent forms and the importance of keeping what was said in the group confidential was also raised (see Appendix G). Each participant also signed a confidentiality agreement before the process commenced (see Appendix I). In order to

facilitate the development of a relaxed and respectful environment the researcher discussed the importance of giving each other the opportunity to comment on a particular topic and not interrupt each other.

Due to the potential sensitive nature of the topic the researcher also arranged with the school's guidance teacher to provide the boys with debriefing after the individual interviews and focus groups. During some of the interviews what emerged were some difficult feelings and experiences. However, even though this was offered to the participants it seemed that as much as they may have felt upset talking about certain topics that they deemed talking to a psychologist as far too feminine. This once again highlights the pervasive effects of what Pollack (1998) refers to as the 'boy code' in which boys are expected to be strong, brave and unemotional.

Finally, the outcome of the research will be made available at the request of the school, parents and participants in the form of a one page summary. The data collected in the study is most probably going to be used as part of a larger study conducted by the researcher's supervisor and will therefore only be destroyed once this is completed and accepted for qualification. All raw data (transcripts, tapes and photographs) will therefore be kept in a safe and secure location in the psychology department with restricted access to only the researcher and supervisor until it is destroyed.

### **3.6 The Researcher's Experience**

According to Boonzaier and Shefer (2006) it is essential for researchers to practice reflexivity if qualitative research methods are utilised. Reflexivity can be defined as the "process whereby a researcher continually reflects upon the entire research process and his or her role in the shaping thereof" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, in Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006, p. 5). Reflexive researchers therefore are continually aware of the potential impact their values and life experiences can have on the research process. The researcher was therefore aware of how her race and gender could influence the participants. It is possible that the boys may have battled to disclose accurate and honest accounts of masculinity due to the researcher being a woman. The researcher was also aware that as a white female some of the black boys may not have felt comfortable talking to her about issues of racism in the school. On the other hand, the researcher was alert to the probability that the white boys may over-identify with her

because of the sameness in terms of race, and the possible negative impact this could have had in the focus groups. The researcher was therefore vigilant in relation to these potential problems and in so doing attempted to minimise their negative effects on the accuracy of the data collected.

Based on these above issues the researcher aimed throughout the data collection process to be sensitive to these matters as well as vigilant about not imposing her worldview or assumptions onto the participants. In order to encourage an open atmosphere, the researcher attempted to engage with the participants in an open, relaxed and informal manner. That is the researcher intended to convey to the participants that she was interested in understanding their lives and daily experiences as boys and in no way was trying to impose her preconceived ideas onto them. In such a way the researcher aimed to create a non-judgemental and encouraging atmosphere. It should be noted that during the focus group the researcher was even more aware of creating a relaxed atmosphere in which each boy felt able to disclose personal information to both the researcher and the other participants. Importantly, it appears that this informal and open way of being with the participants encouraged honest participation from the participants. That is the researcher was happy to observe the relatively quick development of rapport between herself and the participants in the individual interviews, as well as the ability of the majority of the boys to speak quite easily and openly in the focus group.

In terms of the potential issue of talking to a female researcher what became evident was that the majority of the boys found comfort in talking to a female rather than a male researcher. Participant P6B<sup>3</sup> stated that, *'I find it easier actually to express myself to a woman because a guy knows everything you are gonna say.'* Participant CW also mentioned that if the researcher had been, *'some big butch guy I would have kind of sunk in my seat.'* Both Participants P6B and P3W's comments indicate that talking to a female was relieving for them as it provided them with an opportunity to talk about issues of masculinity and their daily experiences without worrying what the researcher was thinking or whether they were conforming sufficiently to societal constructions of masculinity. That is the presence of a male researcher would most probably have resulted in them feeling like they had to prove

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<sup>3</sup> Pseudonyms in the form of three letter codes have been utilised to ensure the anonymity of the participants. In order to indicate racial categories, the third letter of the code is either 'B', for black participant, or 'W', for white participant.

that they were ‘manly’ enough and may have caused them to display more hegemonic constructions of masculinity in their responses.

Some of the participants stated that it would not have mattered whether the researcher was male or female as they felt confident in their views and would not have changed them. From these comments it can be inferred that the researcher was able to develop a sufficiently open and relaxed atmosphere in which the boys’ could disclose their thoughts openly. In retrospect it can be argued that by attempting to remain neutral and open to the views of the boys, that is not becoming shocked by what they said or responding on issues related to women, the researcher employed what Pascoe (2007) refers to as “my least-gendered status” (Pascoe, 2007, p. 181). This ‘least-gendered status’ was most evident in the focus group, in which the boys tended to include the researcher in their discussions on women, drinking, being boys and the like. For example when discussing what they liked about being boys it seemed like they incorporated the researcher in their discussion,

**P8B:** *Like girls have to give birth and go through all these things\ and you guys have mood swings\ shopping sprees\ the thing about shoes*  
**Researcher:** *The issue is with the shoes*  
**P8B:** *And handbags*

However, even though the researcher attempted to remain gender neutral and understand the participants’ realities as boys in an unaffected manner, it seemed that there were boys who would have felt more comfortable if the researcher had been a male. For example participant P8B stated in response to the question of whether it would have been different if the researcher had been male, ‘*I do think so. Or maybe some of the things that you talk about; maybe I would have – felt free to talk about.*’ From this it can be inferred that at times some of the participants may have felt unable to talk more deeply about some issues and experiences as they may have felt uncomfortable to discuss these matters with a female. Secondly, another boy, Participant P1B, seemed, especially during the individual interview, to worry if the researcher would think less of him if she thought he engaged in ‘risky’ behaviour, ‘*firstly I must say\ don’t get the wrong idea about me\ I don’t do that \ but definitely the drinking especially now it’s holidays Monday mornings are like\ but it doesn’t get much worse than cigarettes.*’

In terms of being white, the researcher was concerned that the participants may respond to the researcher in different ways, especially in terms of the focus group. That is the researcher was apprehensive with regard to the possibility of the white participants feeling like the researcher was on their side and in turn causing the black participants to feel marginalised. However, the researcher was relieved to observe that this was not the case as evident in the black participant's abilities to talk about issues of racism and the particular challenges they face at the private, mainly white, boy's school that they go to. For example one of the black participants, namely P6B, disclosed to the researcher that, *'there are racist guys here. Even the parents, some of the women, the wives, the way they look at you, it's just // even when you say; good morning, they walk past and they ignore you. The most racism we've got here is from the white mothers.'* This ability to disclose his own experiences of racism indicates that the researcher was able to develop sufficient rapport with the participant and did not appear judgmental. This was also evident in Frosh et al's (2003<sup>1</sup>) research in which the black and Asian boys were open to talk about issues of race and racism with the white interviewer. However, it can be postulated that part of this ability to talk freely was based on the participants being aware that what was being said would remain anonymous and in such a way provided them with a platform to disclose their feelings and thoughts on experiences they may not like to share with other boys.

Similar to the research approach adopted in Frosh et al's study (2003<sup>1</sup>), the researcher in this study reflected on and recorded her impressions of the interview process (for example, whether it was an 'easy' or 'difficult' interview, whether there were surprising aspects of the interview etc). It was also important for the researcher to explore her 'countertransference' feelings and reactions to the boys. This form of reflection was guided by Frosh et al's (2003<sup>1</sup>) argument that reflection on researcher countertransference feelings will help the interviewer to develop an understanding of the boys' emotional concerns. Importantly, the participants' responses were therefore viewed as the end product of a combination of the participant and researcher's backgrounds and understandings, interconnected by the emotional reaction to what is discussed.

With regard to the researcher's emotional reactions in response to the individual interviews with the boys, her feelings fluctuated from interview to interview. For example in some of the interviews the researcher reported feelings of attachment to the participants especially those boys who discussed their views on sexual relationships and risk taking behaviour that were

similar to hers. The researcher was therefore aware in these cases not to seem like she was colluding with these boys but rather aimed to remain neutral. In some of the individual interviews, especially with the black boys, the researcher felt emotionally impacted by what the boys had disclosed, especially in relation to the racism they still experience at school as well as the guilt they feel for being privileged while the majority of black children are still underprivileged in South Africa.

Besides, experiencing these more positive feelings, at times the researcher felt more contradictory feelings towards the boys, especially when issues of promiscuity and the importance of being with a 'hot' woman were discussed. The reason for the researcher's change in feelings stems from her negative views of promiscuity and the objectification of women. What became evident in the context of the focus groups was the way in which this support of promiscuity as well as needing to be with a 'hot' woman became even more apparent. It seemed that the boys were performing and aiming to present a type of masculinity that made them appear 'manly' in the context of the group and possibly in relation to the researcher, herself. In the case of Pascoe's (2007) research she describes the ways in which the boys would position her as a potential sexual partner and constantly allude to her femininity, "it was as if, by making me concretely feminine, they could assert their masculinity as a socially dominant identity" (p. 183). In the case of this research none of the boys directly engaged in such processes but rather subtly communicated the acknowledgment of her femininity. Nevertheless, by being aware of these negative reactions the researcher was careful not to express these feelings to the participants, both in the individual interviews and focus groups, and was therefore able to facilitate an open discussion of these more contentious issues.

The researcher also became aware of the manner in which the boys' levels of comfort fluctuated throughout the individual interviews as well as the focus groups. That is where some boys seemed confident to discuss their views on sexual relationships, risky behaviour, substance abuse and the like; others appeared quite unsure throughout the interview process. The majority of the boys seemed quite uncomfortable to discuss issues pertaining to sexual relationships and sex in the individual interviews, however in the focus groups it appeared like they became focussed on presenting themselves as masculine to each other and therefore forgot about the presence of the female researcher. Nevertheless, there were some boys that

became quite removed from the focus group and tended not to challenge the views of the more dominant boys' in relation to issues of masculinity.

When discussing the experience of being interviewed all of the boys stated that they enjoyed the process, with some commenting on how the use of photographs to stimulate the discussion was effective. Some of the participants also stated that the interview represented for them the first time in which they had reflected on issues of masculinity and being a boy. One of the boys mentioned that the interview process was actually quite difficult as it required him to think about what to say and whether or not what he was saying was what the researcher wanted. Another boy, Participant P5W, stated that, '*it was a nice chance to express what you really think, which today you can't really do.*' From these comments it can be inferred that the participants tend not to discuss their issues, thoughts and challenges in relation to the topic of masculinity and therefore the interviews and focus group provided them with a platform to reflect on these issues. This finding is congruent with the findings of Frosh et al's (2003<sup>1</sup>) study with regard to the matter of getting boys to talk about their experiences, the challenges they face and the like.

These findings therefore provide evidence against the view that adolescent boys lack the capacity to articulate their thoughts and engage in sustained discussion on the topic of relationships and reflective thought. That is even though the boys may have struggled at times to express their emotions by becoming actively involved in the interview process they were able to provide nuanced accounts of themselves and their experiences. According to Frosh et al. (2002, p. 24), "despite their own views of what might be appropriate to 'masculinity', most boys were eager to accept the offer of a non-judgemental, open interview which gave them a chance to think creatively about their experiences in the presence of a supportive...adult."

**CHAPTER 4**  
**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

## 4.1 Introduction

In order to provide a rich account of the qualitative data collected, the analysis and discussion sections have been combined. In such a way, the findings will be presented in conjunction with the existing literature on young masculinities. This literature will act as a means of providing the reader with greater insight into the findings, and may even at times be refuted by the research findings. It should be noted that the discussion will be informed by the objectives of the research project, which is to explore how adolescent boys of different races negotiate multiple voices of masculinity in the context of post-apartheid South Africa.

In order to make sense of the data, this discussion has been divided into four main sections derived from the four dominant and encompassing themes that arose through the process of thematic analysis, namely:

- 1) On being a boy
- 2) Compulsory heterosexuality and the male sex drive
- 3) Talking about girls
- 4) Racialised masculinities

It should be noted that within these overarching themes, sub-themes exist, and will be organised for each theme in relation to the thematic categories of pre-determined and emergent themes. Finally, due to the large amount of data collected, only sections of the data that the researcher felt were most appropriate and that contributed significantly in establishing the objectives of this research were drawn upon. Direct quotes from the transcribed data have therefore been presented in order to substantiate and represent the themes and general findings that emerged from the analysis of the data.

Prior to commencing, it is necessary to provide the reader with a background of the participants. This will provide a contextualisation of the analysis to follow.

## 4.2 The Participants

As previously mentioned eight individual interviews were conducted with all eight participants and of which four were black and four were white. The next stage in the data collection process involved the conducting of one focus group with all of the boys who took part in the initial individual interviews.

Participant P1B, who was 16 years old at the time of the research, presented as friendly, open, and confident in both the individual interview and the focus group. It seemed that his responses were consistent in both the focus group and individual interviews, however did go into more in-depth in the individual interview. Participant P1B was involved in a relationship at the time of the interview and even though the majority of the boys in the focus group were arguing that sex is expected in heterosexual relationships, he was able to hold his own and confidently state that he was not having sex.

Participant P2B and participant P3W, who were both 15 years of age at the time of the research, were the youngest participants. During the individual interview P2B seemed quite shy and a lot of the time would talk with his hand over his mouth. When it came to issues of what girls should look like he appeared to be very uncomfortable which was conveyed in his concern that I might be offended by what he was saying. Nevertheless, as the interview progressed and rapport developed he became more open and was able to talk about issues such as sex and the biological need for men to be sexually satisfied. As much as participant P2B became progressively assertive during the individual interview, he appeared extremely anxious and shy during the focus group and did not contribute much to the discussion. What the researcher found significant was his decision to use his traditional name in the context of the focus group. This decision seems to reflect the pressure experienced by P2B to present an authentic black identity to the group of boys, but most importantly to the black boys taking part in the focus group.

For example during the focus group he was not able to state that it was okay for a boy to cry, a comment that he had made during the individual interview, *'I think it's okay for guys to cry/some people it's girly but that's their problem.'* This discrepancy between the private and public accounts of masculinity is reflected in Frosh et al's (2003<sup>1</sup>) study. These differing presentations of masculinity therefore provide insight into the, "different manifestations of

masculine identity construction – different ways of ‘doing boy’” (Frosh et al., 2003<sup>1</sup>, p. 32). Similarly, participant P3W seemed to present a more mature view of himself or what he perceived to be viewed as more ‘experienced’ in both the individual and focus group. However, this need to appear in a particular way seemed more evident in the focus group in which he tended to laugh quite a lot and would talk about drinking and being with girls. That is the researcher got a sense that he was trying to impress the older boys in the group.

Participant P4W, who was 16 years old at the time of the individual interview and focus group, appeared quite confident and sure of himself in both the individual interview and the focus group. It seemed that he was comfortable to communicate openly with the researcher and a level of rapport was quickly established. What became evident was that he held views pertaining to sex as well as drinking that were quite different to the rest of the participants and was able to communicate them to the group, *‘Okay, I’m going to wait for marriage.’* This ability to communicate this to the group does not mean that P4W did not experience some anxiety when stating this differing opinion to the group. That is the researcher observed the manner in which he hesitantly stated that he was not going to have sex until he is married. Based on the researcher’s own personal views on these issues she was vigilant not to appear biased towards him and in such a way judgemental of the other participants. Participant P5W was also 16 years old. He came across as extremely anxious and nervous in the individual interview but did seem to relax as the interview progressed. Towards the latter part of the interview it appeared like he was finding his own voice as evident in his statement pertaining to society’s view of boys and men as always being the problem, *‘we’re just always looked at as a source of a problem; which I get quite annoyed with actually.’* This comment made by Participant P5W is one which is reflective of Shefer et al’s (2007) argument by viewing boys and men as perpetrators and the main source of problems their particular vulnerabilities tend to be ignored. During the focus group he appeared far more relaxed, and seemed to be feeding off the ideas of the other boys.

Participant P6B, a 17 year old black boy, also came across as confident, especially in the focus group, taking up a lot of space. He was very proud of being a black boy and the majority of the photographs (Photograph O, Appendix K) that he took were representative of black culture, *‘black boys, even in this school, I have noticed, black boys they seem to just have culture, they just seem to be more free, they seem to be more diverse.’* This positive sense of self was evident in the focus group in which he was able to assertively state his

views on apartheid and black 'hurt' in a seemingly unapologetic nature. However, the manner in which he spoke about issues of racism in the focus group was in a way that distanced him from any personal experiences of racism, experiences that he had mentioned to the researcher in the individual interview. This lack of disclosure concerning personal experiences of race and racism can be argued to reflect three possible things. Firstly, it appears that discussing issues of racism in a group in which white boys are present may be something he experienced as difficult. However, more significantly this lack of disclosure with regard to the emotional impact this had on him can be argued to reflect the pressure boys experience to conform to hegemonic masculinity that require boys and men to be strong and unemotional (Jefferson, 1994). Thirdly, his reluctance to admit to experiences of racism may be related to the emotional invulnerability of hegemonic masculinity as a very common reaction by minority group members trying to live and succeed in potentially racist environments. It can therefore be argued that believing in full intergroup permeability is essential for buying-into, and succeeding in the realm of the dominant group.

Participant P7W, who was 18 at the time of the research, was the oldest boy who took part in the study. During the individual interview he spoke openly and seemed quite reflective on issues affecting boys. For example in relation to the issue of sexual relationships and peer pressure he stated that, *'I think other guys feel under pressure having to – oh! I must equal this guy or something.'* However, during the focus group as much as he remained confident it seemed like he too was aiming to present a more 'manly' self as evident in his statement that he does not know many boys who are able to wait for marriage before they will engage in sexual relations. Participant P8B, a 17 year old black boy, presented as calm and confident in both the individual interview and focus group. Even though he did not dominate the focus group conversation it appeared that he was not anxious but rather did not feel the need to shout out and state his point. During the individual interview it seemed that he was able to be critical of black boys at the school stating that, *'I think like, oh! I am black, I have made it, I am now equal with white people or whatever. And they tend to be a bit arrogant about that. Whereas whites are more down to earth'.*

### 4.3 On being a boy

It is evident when reading the participants' narratives that definite ideas emerged about what it means to be a boy. These ideas reflected the powerful influence of hegemonic discourses in shaping boys' understandings of what constitutes being a boy. However, as much as some of the boys positioned themselves in line with hegemonic ideals, other boys embraced alternative voices of masculinity. The latter narratives therefore provide a level of resistance to hegemonic masculinity, critiquing macho styles and rejecting risk-taking behaviours associated with norms and practices of hegemonic masculinity. Despite racial differences, social discourses play a significant role in shaping boys' construction of masculinity. According to Lindegger and Maxwell (2007), masculinity is socially constructed and regulates the behaviour of men, and in this case, young adolescent boys. Boys in this study seemed to construct multiple and contradictory identity positions, depending on the context in which they found themselves. The researcher is therefore going to draw on examples illustrating this argument in terms of the sub-themes that follow. Finally, where racial differences became evident in terms of understanding what it means to be a boy, these too will be highlighted. The following themes '*On being a boy*' will be discussed:

- Boys should be strong
- Boys don't cry
- Boys must play sport
- Boys are naturally competitive
- Risk taking as part of being a boy
- Boys, Aggression and Violence

### 4.3.1 Boys should be ‘strong’

One of the key themes that emerged in the interviews was that a boy needs to be strong. It should be noted that the term ‘strong’ can have multiple meanings, namely physical, mental and/or emotional strength. All the participants alluded to the pressure that they are expected to be strong. Seidler (1989) contends that men equate strength with the belief that they do not need anyone, are self-sufficient and do not require support. Drawing on this understanding of strength it is important to understand that the boys were talking about a quality that went beyond physical strength. This need to be brave and not require support is evident in the following extract:

**P6B:** *Guys are just seen to be able to be // like to be able to deal with scary things and be macho about it easily*

The above extract indicates a construction of masculinity that is in line with hegemonic masculinity. It reflects a stereotypical and naturalised belief that men should be strong and brave. Conforming to these conventional views of masculinity can be argued to make it extremely difficult for boys to negotiate successful alternative positions. The heroic masculine position therefore promotes the view that to be perceived as masculine a boy is required to be strong and brave (Wetherell & Edley, 1999; Schneider, Cockcroft & Hook, 2008). According to Schneider et al. (2008), the media plays an influential role in promoting a heroic image of men. Boys who lack these ‘natural’ qualities are ostracised and seen as not ‘real’ boys. However, the use of the word “seen” also implies that the participant was subtly distinguishing between the appearance of being strong and the lived experience of vulnerability. This difference once again reflects the complexity of masculinity as it indicates that the external and internal worlds of boys are not the same. However, as stated in the extract what is important is that a boy is seen as strong even if at an emotional level they feel quite helpless.

The naturalised view that boys need to be brave and strong appeared to be perpetuated and supported by comments made by boys’ parents:

**P3W:** *If I get pissed off with a friend or something, my mom would be like; don’t be such a girl*

The extract highlights the role of parents in the socialisation of boys. According to Gilbert and Gilbert (1998), the family context plays a key role in the constant reaffirmation of gender roles. Importantly, the home is a site in which boys learn about the gender differences, constructing themselves in opposition to girls and anything that represents femininity. In this case P3W's mother's response to his more emotional and vulnerable side reflects the way in which hegemonic masculinity does not allow for or tolerate emotional invulnerability. P3W is therefore not allowed to become 'pissed off' or upset as the construction of what it means to be strong does not provide room for this. Rather, positioning him within the context of heroic constructions of masculinity, he is expected to prove that he is strong and brave. This need to prove that he is tough and unlike a girl is reflective of what Pollack (1998) refers to as the 'boy code.' This code, as argued by Pollack (1998), prevents both boys and their parents from behaving in a manner that comes naturally to them. Rather boys, with the help of their parents, are expected to be tough and to fulfil the stereotype of the macho and dominant male.

Another dimension of being strong that became evident in boys' accounts was with regard to boys' physical appearance. It seemed that many of the boys equated physical strength with masculinity. That is, if a boy is physically stronger than another boy, then he is viewed as superior to the other boy. Some of the narratives pointed to the way in which boys are judged and compared to one another in terms of their physical appearance:

**P7W:** *Like if you are a stronger guy, people aren't going to cause trouble with you as much*

**P1B:** *It's sort of like this whole masculine bad boy type\ he's my size\ but this is sort of like competitive like who has got the biggest abs like who is stronger*

These extracts indicate that across the different race groups, boys are expected to be strong and muscular with big muscles. A photograph taken by P1B exemplifies boys focus on having big biceps (Appendix K, Photograph A). Boys who are bigger and more muscular are viewed as 'bad boys' and are feared because, "*people aren't going to cause trouble with you.*" Even though some boys in this study emphasised a normal or average self, and did not view body building and going to the gym as a priority, it seems that boys still experience some degree of pressure to look a particular way. These narratives provide a more ambiguous picture of complying with hegemonic ideals of masculinity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). P1B stated that '*there's definitely a way that you should not look.*' P1B asserts that boys should

achieve an 'ideal' body image. This ideal body image is communicated by P7W in the statement that a boy should not be *'like 200 hundred pounds.'* Fat boys seem to be perceived as lazy and weak. They are viewed in opposition to hegemonic attributes such as being strong and muscular. These extracts therefore reflect an internalisation of hegemonic ideals in terms of physical appearances.

Nevertheless, a more progressive account did emerge from the boys' narratives with regard to the issue of physical strength. This reframing of self reflects a disavowal of the celebration of the hegemonic male body image:

**P4W:** *You see that depends on what type of a person he is in his mind, and how he treats himself because of that. You get a lot of guys that are really, really small, but they are just strong in their minds*

It seems that P4W views strength in a way that is in contradiction to dominant discourses of hegemonic masculinity. For P4W, it is far more important for a boy to have a strong mind. He implies that some boys may be very muscular, but not very intelligent. P4W appears to have reconstructed the hegemonic ideal of physical strength as insufficient when determining one's masculinity. This quotation also alludes to the fluid nature of masculinity as what is considered as strong will fluctuate depending on the context in which boys find themselves. For example; within the classroom context, boys who may be physically strong and superior on the sports field, are placed in an inferior position in relation to boys who may be physically smaller, but intellectually more competent. However, on the sports field, intellectually gifted boys are teased, bullied and perceived as weak. It seems that as much as some boys may attempt to resist hegemonic standards of masculinity by criticising muscular boys and boys who play sport, they appear to also envy these boys, that is; envy is evident in the way in which most boys feel pressured to achieve an ideal boy image:

**P7W:** *Some guys just physically try to push themselves as far as they can*

It seems that some boys will push themselves to look big and muscular. Boys will resort to body enhancing behaviours, such as excessive exercise and drinking protein shakes, to achieve this ideal body image. Photograph B taken by P3W of different types of protein shakes reflects this pressure and what boys will do to gain bigger muscles (Appendix K). This driven behaviour highlights the powerful effect of what Pollack (1998) refers to as the 'boy

code'. The problem with this code is that it denies and disavows the anxiety that boys experience to look a certain way.

### **4.3.2 Boys don't cry**

One dimension of being strong and brave that became evident in the boys' accounts in both the individual interviews and focus group was with regard to the perception that boys do not cry. Some of the accounts given by the participants' spoke of the perception within society that boys are not meant to cry, but must be brave and strong. For example, P1B stated that, '*guys aren't really allowed to cry and this is like kind of hard to be a guy\ I don't remember seeing any of my friends crying\ this is really something that doesn't happen much.*' P1B seems to be conflicted. It seems that at times he may wish to express his emotions, for example cry, but society does not allow him to do this. He admits that it is hard to be a guy as boys are not allowed to cry. This statement reflects the difficulties that boys experience and the heavy price that they have to pay to meet the standards of masculinity set by society (Pollack, 1998). It also talks to the distorted view of masculinity that society has constructed, that is; to be a man, one is required to suppress one's emotions, sadness and pain (Seidler, 1989, 1991). This disownment of emotions was apparent in P5W's statement that, '*men do not like to show signs of weakness and all that*'. P5W seems to be expressing a view that if boys express their emotions, they will be acting in contradiction to the expectation that, boys must be strong.

However, some of the boys in the study reflected a more progressive view of this issue. By progressive, it is meant a more critical view of masculinity that encompasses a rejection of hegemonic forms of masculinity. Within the individual interviews, many of the boys regardless of race, stated that there was nothing unmanly about crying.

**P6B:** *No, there is nothing unmanly about crying in my opinion*

**P2B:** *I think it's okay for guys to cry but some people think it's girly, but that's their problem*

The above quotations highlight a form of resistance to the notion of hegemonic masculinity. By aligning themselves with more feminine qualities and acknowledging their emotional sides, it seems these boys were rejecting hegemonic norms of masculinity that boys should

suppress their feelings and emotions. P2B was adamant that emotional expression in the form of crying does not make one a girl. His statement thus distances him from dominant narratives and therefore illustrates a more progressive view. By virtue of being black boys, both P6B and P2B are seen to be defying the stereotype that black men are tough and not at all in touch with their feelings (Schneider, et al., 2008). These findings therefore challenge the essentialist argument that boys are naturally hard and self-reliant (Dover, 2005). This construction of black masculinity was confirmed in Adomako, Ampofo and Boateng's (2007) study on the exploration of the multiple meanings of manhood among adolescent boys in Ghana. These boys were discouraged from showing 'feminine emotions' such as admitting to fear or pain, and were ridiculed if perceived as being effeminate, not aggressive, or if they became emotionally expressive in public. In such a way, the findings of this research therefore indicate other facets of black masculinity which challenge and move beyond these stereotypical constructions. Unlike findings in Adomako et al's (2007) research, the boys in this study did not appear to be ashamed of admitting their emotional side, arguing that crying is in no way unmanly.

Within the context of the focus group, when the topic of crying was brought up, two significant trends emerged; namely, justification of crying in certain contexts, as well as the communication by the boys that they do not cry. Firstly, it seemed that one way in which the boys were able to justify crying was to link it to a specific context.

**P6B:** *You know like when a girl breaks up with you then you're a pussy*

**P1B:** *I was talking about a soccer match from last season where Chelsea lost and Man U won, I wouldn't consider you a fag if you cried in that situation*

It appears that the context plays an important role in determining if crying is acceptable or not. For example, it is manly and acceptable to cry if one's sports team wins i.e. '*Chelsea has lost and Man U won*', but in other contexts a boy who cries is seen as a 'pussy' or a 'fag' (Pascoe, 2007). For example, P6B feels it is unacceptable for a boy to cry because a girl has ended the relationship. Such boys are regarded as 'sissies'. It seems that besides boys needing to present themselves as tough, one possible reason for why crying at the end of a relationship is frowned upon is that it expected the boys should be more emotionally invested in sport than in girls with whom they are expected to have transactional relationships.

In the case of sports on the other hand, when their team loses or wins it is deemed acceptable for boys to cry. It appears that this form of emotional expression reflects a type of male bonding; that is, sports such as soccer and rugby provide men with a legitimate space to bond and be vulnerable. This form of emotional expression in response to teams losing or winning also reflects the serious manner in which boys view sports. It seems that for boys winning is so important that if they lose it is emotionally devastating for them. This finding is consistent with Seidler's (1991) argument that boys are socialised to feel good about themselves when they perform better than others. In such a way, boys constantly feel the need to prove themselves and therefore tend to feel inferior when others perform better than them or are viewed as more successful.

Within the context of the focus group, the researcher became aware of the way in which the boys needed to make it explicit that they themselves did not cry. It seems that in the context groups, boys feel pressurised to comply with hegemonic norms of masculinity, but privately, in individual interviews, they acknowledged their own vulnerabilities. It is clear that public performance is an important part of being a boy (Butler, 1990); that is, as much as the boys seemed to be able to engage with the topic when it did not directly involve them, as soon as the researcher asked them if any of them cry, the majority of the boys shouted no and stated, *'I don't cry!'* The researcher's perception of these comments by the majority of the boys is that this shows a need within the boys to ensure that they were not perceived as unmanly or possessing feminine qualities. This more defensive reaction to the question illustrates the constant need within both men and boys to ensure that they act in a manner which represents their masculinity. It appears that the boys experienced internal pressure to prove to each other that they were 'real' boys who did not experience feelings of fear, vulnerability and dependency (Seidler, 1989).

When considering subjective positioning, the different accounts and attitudes held by some of the participants in the period between the individual interview and the focus group, illustrates the internal complexity and contradictory nature of masculinity (Connell, 2000; 2005). This difference in accounts is understood by Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) as an outcome of the pressure boys experience to present themselves in a particular manner in a public context. These findings are similar to those of Frosh et al. (2003<sup>1</sup>) as well as Govender (2006) who found that within the context of the focus groups, the boys tended to experience pressure to assert their masculinity by avoiding discussions pertaining to their feelings.

One final theme that became evident within the boys accounts regarding the issue of crying was in relation to the way rational thought was valued over emotional expression. For example, P6B stated, *'I try to figure out why, and if I find the reason – I would say okay. I do not cry about it or get sour about it or emotional about it. I just got to move on.'* This statement highlights what Seidler (1989) refers to as an 'internal hierarchy' in which the, "part identified with reason dominates emotions, feelings and desires" (p. 7). In such a way, as evident in this study, boys in general will attempt to understand an issue in an emotionally detached way, viewing any form of emotional reaction as both unnecessary and unmanly.

### **4.3.3 Boys must play sport**

One particular activity that was viewed across the majority of the boys' accounts as a manly activity that boys engage in, was sport. According to Gilbert and Gilbert (1998), an examination of sport provides insight into the powerful effects of hegemonic masculinity, "in many respects, men's sport is the archetype of institutionalised masculinity, and the images of men which dominate its ideology are the quintessential manifestation of the masculinist ethos" (p. 60). When asked about the importance of sport in their school lives, the participants were unanimous in perceiving it as a key dimension of their experiences. The superior position that sport held in this school reflects the way in which the school context can act as a means of perpetuating hegemonic standards of masculinity (Connell, 2000; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998). Even though the school does offer non-sport cultural activities, such as music and drama, it seems that unlike sport these activities are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy with respect to boy status. This once again suggest the way in which subtle nature of school culture can promote the assumption that certain activities and sports are masculine and others are feminine.

**P6B:** *Not liking sport as a guy is not just a right kind of // you have to like a sport of some kind'*

**P1B:** *I love my sports\ I know something just about every sport\ that's what we do\ guys watch soccer and they watch sports and they like to be sporty and this is all\ they like to be competitive*

**P5W:** *And sport, for most boys it's a large part of life. Likewise for myself*

The above extracts highlight the importance of sport in the construction of masculinity. It appears that playing or liking sports is an important and natural component of being a boy,

irrespective of race. These narratives therefore construct sport as being an important masculine pursuit (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998). For P6B, a large dimension of his identity as a male stems from his involvement in sport. It seems that for him, boys who don't play or like sport must have something wrong with them. This highlights the way in which this dimension of masculinity has been naturalised to the point that boys who do not conform to this view are seen as inferior and immasculine. With specific reference to black masculinity Dworkin and Wachs (2004) note the way in which black males have been naturally assumed to enjoy and be good at sport. It seems that for both P6B and PL2B as black boys this assumption applies as evident in both their statements that not liking and playing sport is problematic if you are a boy. However, it also seems that playing sport provides a space in which boys can actively perform and defend their masculinity. According to Dworkin and Wachs (2004) sport plays a powerful role in the socialising of masculinity privileging the male and stigmatising marginalised masculinities, that is, men who are not athletic and/or homosexual males.

Within the context of the school, the researcher became aware of the popularity of some sports as opposed to others. Irrespective of race, most of the boys commented on how certain sports achieved a higher and more popular status than others. It seemed that certain sports were viewed as being more masculine than others. The sports that boys play therefore contributes significantly to the way others view them and their degree of masculinity. For example, rugby was unanimously described as the dominant masculine sport within the school. Photograph G, taken by P5W, of a Springbok rugby flag highlights the centrality of rugby as a sport not only within the school context but in the country as a whole. It seemed that playing rugby and being in the First Team was perceived as a means of setting boys apart from the rest. This was evident in P8B's statement that, *'I mean at school when you are in the first team you get a striped blazer, you get a white scarf and stuff like that. And so that sets you away from other people. And it's like something special being in the First Team.'* Within this boys-only school, playing sport and being on the First Team forms an important dimension of being a 'real' boy. It seems that making the First Team is something that boys, irrespective of race, aspire to. Being in the First Team affords boys a privileged status and exemplifies an ideal image of masculinity. Once again, this ritualised practice reflects the way in which the school can promote adolescent masculine practices. In such a way, awarding boys who make First Teams with special blazers reflects what Pascoe (2007) refers to as a masculinity process; that is, a process which supports and perpetuates hegemonic standards of masculinity.

In addition, another predominant reason for why boys play rugby was because of its violent nature. This violent dimension of rugby is evident in the following extract:

**P5W:** *One; it's worldwide. It's far more popular than maybe sports I perceive as less superior. The contact, the violence*

Based on this extract, it appears that the popularity of rugby as a masculine sport stems from the opportunity it provides boys and men to engage in violent behaviour. It seems that engaging in this type of sport allows boys to prove their strength and dominance on a physical level. This is unlike those sports which are viewed as less masculine, for example, badminton:

**P3W:** *Like playing badminton definitely you wouldn't be seen like somebody who plays First rugby, you would be in a different league... You know guys won't be able to come up to me and like; hey how was your badminton game*

This statement once again highlights the hierarchical nature of different sports, with rugby perceived to be the ideal male sport and badminton viewed as an inferior sport. The perceived superiority of rugby as a masculine sport can also be postulated as stemming from its unfeminine nature. For example, P7W stated that rugby *'is basically a manly game. Whereas football, even women can play that – as well. You do get women who do play rugby but they are just basically men. They are a lot more masculine than a lot of guys I know.'* It appears that in P7W's mind, the superiority of rugby stems from the fact that it is a masculine sport and that those women who do play the sport are more masculine than many boys he knows. Girls who do play rugby are perceived to be *'basically men'* and therefore are not seen as a threat to boys' masculinity. Secondly, these girls are viewed as unattractive and not seen as potential girlfriends. These findings are similar to those in Pascoe's (2007) research in which boys who played sports which had been constructed as masculine were referred to as masculine or, "girls who act like guys" (p. 115). Playing rugby therefore not only acts as a means of proving one's masculinity, but it also separates boys from any form of sport that is feminine in nature, or that is perceived as inferior. In such a way, the sexually exclusive nature of rugby acts as a means of setting men or boys apart from women or girls (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998). Finally on a critical note, the superior status that rugby is afforded in this school reflects the way in which racist discourses are still evident in contemporary South African society. During the Apartheid regime, rugby was constructed as a superior sport that only white men were allowed to play (Morrell, 2001). In such a way, it seems that even

though this school appears to be open to diversity by virtue of educating different races, on a more subtle level, racist discourses still appear to be very much active.

The researcher also became aware of the racial component of the boys' discussions on the topic of sport. It appeared that certain sports were perceived as white sports and others as black sports. This was evident in a photograph taken by P1B, a black boy, of a soccer jersey that he described as being one of his most prized possessions (Photograph H, Appendix K). For example P8B, a black boy, argued that, '*in South Africa rugby [is a sport for white boys]. And football would be the sport for black boys.*' It appears that for P8B he believes that in the South African context rugby is a sport that white boys play. This comment highlights the perception that sport in contemporary South Africa is still racially segregated. The powerful nature of this comment is evident in the way it naturalises the racial dimension of sport. Within the context of the school, this racial segregation in terms of sport is also evident. Most of the boys stated that most white boys play rugby and black boys, soccer. Although none of the black boys explicitly stated that they felt excluded from being a part of First Team rugby at the school; the fact that only a small minority of black boys play rugby implies that the majority of black boys feel excluded from this prestige. In such a way, the majority of black boys are indirectly prevented from ever reaching the idealised form of masculinity of the white First Team rugby player with his striped blazer. If black boys are included in rugby teams they tend to fill one position:

**P1B:** *Black boys we do play rugby but um I suppose it's about having a high position like a black guy is the fastest and you put them on the wing and that's just the way it is\ it's like that for every team*

This extract reflects a level of resentment on the part of P1B that black boys continually get selected for rugby teams as a result of their ability to run fast. Black boys become stereotypically placed in certain positions with little option of negotiating other options. The placement of these boys in a peripheral position translates into the way in which black boys are seen as peripheral in the white-dominated sport of rugby. This process of positioning black players in peripheral positions is known as 'stacking' and is a well-known occurrence in professional South African rugby (Desai & Nabbi, 2007). It also seems that where white boys are selected for rugby teams by virtue of being white, black boys are expected to prove their athletic ability. This finding is supported by Gavin Rich, a journalist for the Sunday Independent Newspaper, who wrote that, "the fact that not everyone in South African rugby is

racist does not change my perception that a Black player has to conquer many negative mindsets to be recognised for his true value” (1999, in Desai & Nabbi, 2007, p. 406). It seems that in 2008, black boys still experience these discriminatory practices and are required to conquer many obstacles before they are recognised for their true value.

However, on a more critical note, P4W talked about the role of the country’s history in this process, *‘I think black guys do play certain sports and white guys do play others. But I mean it is also mainly because of the separation and the oppression that we had in the country’*. This quotation provides evidence of the participant’s insight in acknowledging the legacy of Apartheid; that is, instead of making the essentialist argument that different race groups play different sports, he critically comments on the impact of Apartheid in promoting racial segregation of school sport, and the sporting profession as a whole. According to Desai and Nabbi (2007), the twentieth-century history of ‘white’ rugby was one with the primary agenda of promoting Afrikaner Nationalism. However, with the commencement of South African democracy came the need to provide those race groups who were previously excluded due to their race the opportunity to play the sport. Even though over a decade has passed since the commencement of democracy, the Springbok rugby team is still not sufficiently representative of the country’s racial demographics. Nevertheless, with the institution of the quota system, more non-white players are being given the opportunity to play rugby at both provisional and national level. On a critical note, and as evident in the context of the school in which this research was conducted, the racial segregation of the Apartheid regime is still evident. As critically argued by Desai and Nabbi (2007), the increased representation of rugby at a national level is able to cover up the lack of fundamental change at the lower levels. However, it can also be argued that the apartheid argument has been subtly used by P4W as a means to defend the idiosyncratic white South African sports status hierarchy.

However, some of the boys’ involvement in sports that are predominantly viewed as not belonging to their race group, reflects a move away from the assumption that a boy’s race determines the sport that he should play. This was evident in the following extracts:

**P6B:** *I just like sports irrelevant of colour*

**P4W:** *But black guys and white guys can play any sport they want and be equally good at them*

Both these extracts represent a move away from the belief that different race groups should play different sports. It appears that P6B, a black boy, wants to play any sport irrespective of his skin colour. He seems to be rejecting racial stereotypes that black people cannot swim or play rugby. P4W's argument that all boys, irrespective of race, should be able to play any sport that they choose is indicative of the rainbow nation metaphor coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu at the commencement of Democracy. This metaphor is one which promotes the idea of South Africa as consisting of diverse cultures and races that live in harmony with one another (Habib, 1996). As a white boy, P4W rejects the racial stereotype that white boys are more competent than blacks in rugby. He asserts that boys are equally capable of playing different sports and that race does not play a role. Both race groups therefore, appear to hold more progressive views of the issues of sport and race, unlike the racist beliefs promoted during the Apartheid regime. Importantly, these extracts do not reinforce the view held by others that black boys who play 'white' sports have internalised an inferiority due to being black (Durrheim & Mtose, 2006). Rather, they reflect a shift in the concept of masculinity within the South African context - one which does not judge a boy depending upon the particular race group to which he belongs.

#### **4.3.4 Boys as naturally competitive - The Clothing, the Cash and the Car**

One dominant theme that became evident in the boys' accounts was with regard to boys' being naturally competitive and the value that is placed on being successful. The need to be better and more successful than other boys is illustrated in the following extract:

**P6B:** *Being above the norm is nice. It is not nice to be normal; you have to stand out in whatever way you choose*

The above quote alludes to the importance that boys place on being successful and better than other boys. It also indicates the pressure that boys experience to 'stand out'. By utilising the words 'have to' P6B seems to hold the view that it is not a choice to be above the norm, but that it is compulsory. According to Seidler (1991), from childhood, boys are socialised to feel good about themselves when they perform better than others. In such a way, boys constantly feel the need to prove themselves and therefore tend to feel inferior when others are viewed as more successful. Seidler (1991) contends that for boys, happiness is tied up with success and in such a way; one's happiness is dependent on one's perceived success. The constant

comparison with other boys and the need to be superior was evident amongst many of the boys interviewed in the study:

**P1B:** *I think it's more like human nature\ it's like a guy thing\ everyone wants to do the best and guys are just more aggressive about it and they make very clear but I think everyone wants to be the best and we just do it differently*

**P4W:** *'I think it just comes down to, again competition. ....So maybe it's all healthy competition that one day we may achieve more*

For P1B, being competitive is part of 'human nature' for boys. By equating competition with being natural, it becomes unquestioned and extremely difficult to challenge. This competitive nature was accounted for across both race groups, as evident in P4W's statement. In the case of P4W, it seems that the way in which he attempted to make sense of boys' constant competitiveness was by constructing it as healthy. By constructing competition as healthy and as a vehicle to assist boys in achieving greatness when they are older, the negative impact of this competition is negated. However, his use of the words 'maybe' and 'may' suggests that he is not completely convinced by his own argument. It seems that he is not convinced that being competitive will result in boys achieving more or that it is the only manner in which boys can become successful.

This need for competition was reflected in the boys' discussions pertaining to clothing, money and cars.

#### **4.3.4.1 Everybody wears Mr. Price**

In terms of clothing, what became evident was manner in which clothing is seen as a marker of status and success.

**P8B:** *I think Mr. Price, everybody wears it. So when you walk down the street like seeing someone with the same thing... I like being different, like wearing some labels... Ya; just standing out and being different*

**P2B:** *People are always trying to come to school with fancy wrist watches and/show off/like saying I'm better than you, I'm more rich than you*

Both of these extracts highlight the importance that black boys place on dressing in a way that sets them apart from other boys. Clothes can therefore be argued to be used by boys to show

off or differentiate themselves from other boys. It seems that black boys have internalised a culture of materialism. On a critical note it can also be argued that P2B's comment is also quite a deprecatory one. It appears that P2B sees through the attempts made by boys to gain status by wearing expensive watches rather than respecting them as genuine markers of success. However, this said, he does also imply that relative richness is one axis on which boys in the school compete for dominance. One of the photographs taken by P8B was of a Paul Smith Wallet (Photograph C, Appendix K). When showing the researcher he communicated a sense of pride that he owned the wallet stating that Paul Smith was an expensive brand that most people in the country do not own. This need within P8B to wear branded clothing indicates the effects of consumer capitalism in the development of a 'branded masculinity' (Alexander, 2003). Alexander (2003) contends that power of this branded form of masculinity is through its ability to generate insecurities in men and boys about their bodies and consumer choices. Based on this insecurity boys look to the brands to shape their fashion sense and to meet the expectations of what is required of educated, middle-class men in contemporary society. According to Stevens and Lockhat (2003), during Apartheid, black adolescents were exposed to the imagery of personal success and progress, but were simultaneously refused access to the material resources required for this.

Even though the majority of black communities are still struggling as a result of the deprivation caused by the oppressive practices of Apartheid, there are some black individuals who have financially prospered since the commencement of Democracy. In such a way, more black adolescents are being given access to these material resources, and by attending elitist schools it seems that they have internalised a 'Coca-Cola' culture (Stevens & Lockhat, 2003). This culture reflects one of American individualistic and competitive values as well as aspirations (Stevens & Lockhat, 1997). For example, the wearing of designer label clothing by black boys reflects the internalisation of this culture. The importance of wearing label clothing was also evident in P1B's photograph of clothing that he wears when he goes out, namely a Quiksilver jacket (Photograph D, Appendix K). In the case of this study, many of the black boys come from rich middle-class families and therefore their parents can afford to buy them expensive items.

In the case of P8B, it seems that he has embraced this 'Coca-Cola' culture in which all about money and wearing expensive clothes (Stevens & Lockhat, 1997, 2003). He appears to have invested in being different and successful. One way in which this need to be better is evident

is in his argument that he likes to wear labels that other boys do not have. It appears that he is quite serious about showing himself as being different to other boys, and one way in which he feels that he can guarantee this is if he wears designer labels. P2B's reference to the way in which boys will view themselves as superior if they are wearing expensive watches, reflects the role of class in the perception of a boys' identity. That is, those boys who are perceived to hold a superior class status tend to be placed in a higher position within the hegemonic masculine hierarchy than others (Connell, 2000). Importantly, the lack of emphasis that the white boys placed on wearing designer labels suggest that they do not experience the same pressure to prove that they are successful and wealthy that black boys do.

**P3W:** *Well, I don't know. Some guys take pride in what they wear and they would get the whole – La Coste and stuff like that. I suppose for me it's just if it looks good it's good, and I'll wear it*

This extract highlights that most white boys do not place as much emphasis on wearing labels as black boys do. This is not to say that no white boys wear designer labels but rather that, as in the case of P3W, they are not that focused on wearing expensive clothing. It can be critically argued that, especially in the context of the school, the white boys had never experienced material deprivation, and having benefited from Apartheid policy, they thus feel that they have nothing to prove; that is, white boys and men exemplified hegemonic masculinity during Apartheid and are still found in superior economic positions, as evident in this research. Based on this, white boys have always benefited and in a way comprise this 'Coca-Cola' culture, unlike black boys who have only had access to its benefits since the commencement of Democracy approximately 14 years ago.

#### **4.3.4.2 The nicer the car, the more popular the boy**

The competitive dimension of masculinity as well as the importance of success also emerged in the boys' discussions about cars. It seemed that car a man drives represents an important sign of one's status:

**P8B:** *A lot of people judge you by what car you drive or your parents drive*

**P5W:** *Of course the nicer the car, the more popular you are gonna get. People think you are cool, rich*

The use of the word ‘*judge*’ highlights the importance of the car a man drives in influencing the way in which society views him. In terms of the former extract, it appears that P8B is highlighting the difficulties that boys whose parents do not drive expensive cars experience. Once again, these extracts illustrate the competitive nature of masculinity and the way in which a car acts as important marker of one’s class. On observing the boys being collected from school by their parents or drivers, the researcher became aware of the expensive cars the majority of the boys were collected in. It appeared that this time of the day, as well as when dropping the boys’ off at school, was when parents, irrespective of race, could see who was driving the most expensive car and where their own car was placed in the car hierarchy. In such a way, the parents’ car, especially in this school, reflect the particular class of the boy and his parents. Based on the researcher’s observations portraying the image that one is upper class is very important in this school and hence both P8B and P5W’s comments are not surprising. For example, P5W comments on how boys who drive expensive cars are viewed as both popular and cool. This statement illustrates the effect of the Triple C syndrome - Cell phones, Cars and Clothes (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007). Boys who have cars are able to attract girls. They are seen as cool. It can be argued that within the context of a private school, the importance of class and status can become exacerbated. Within this context, boys are constantly exposed to parents and men who drive expensive cars.

In terms of the boys’ thoughts pertaining to the car that they want to drive when they are older, what emerged across the race groups was the idea that driving an expensive car is something that they strive for. Photograph M (Appendix K) taken by P2B of a car that he would like to drive, highlights the way in which boys idealise luxury cars like Mercedes Benzes.

**P8B:** *I would like, not necessarily a Mercedes, but a prestigious car. It’s something I wanna work for*

**P5W:** *A good BMW or a good Mercedes. Almost like a status car.’*

Both these extracts refer to expensive cars which are perceived to reflect both wealth and status. It seems that driving these types of cars is something that boys strive for and constantly work towards. These narratives once again highlight Seidler’s (1991) argument that men constantly need to prove to themselves and others that they are successful. It reflects the way in which success and happiness are derived from an external source and thus prevent boys and

men from experiencing intrinsic forms of satisfaction. Besides being status cars, these cars are high performance vehicles. It seems that for boys it is not only important to drive an expensive car but also a car that they can drive fast. This need was expressed by P4W when discussing a photograph that he had taken of a car magazine (Photograph N, Appendix K). P5W also communicated the desire to drive both a fast and expensive P5W,

*Just, fast, crazy, powerful, just // you know you just wanna go like // I mean I am all for // I mean I see a point in hybrid cars, but I –know I could possibly never ever buy one. You know I want that fuel guzzling V8, I want that sense of being a bit more wilder than the next guy who is driving his Toyota or whatever*

An article in the Sunday Independent (2007) stated that the most common cause of car accidents and the subsequent death of drivers and passengers is due to the high speed at which people drive. According to Langa (in Sunday Independent, 2007) the main reason why men speed and drive while drunk is due to their belief that this type of risk taking behaviour is a part of constructing hegemonic masculinity. In order to prove their masculinity men compete on South African roads about who can drive the fastest. The man who speeds more feels more masculine and in the process emasculates the slow driver (Sunday Independent, 2007). This need to prove that he is the fastest drive is evident in P5W's statement that he wants to be wilder than the next guy who is driving his Toyota. In this way a fast car acts as a means of assisting boys to in positing themselves in line with hegemonic standards of masculinity.

Nevertheless, P4W provided a more progressive account which critiqued the view that the car that one drives reflects the degree of success a man has achieved.

*P4W: If you are a type of person that you are worth as much as you have achieved or something like that; if you look at that person in an old beat-up car, you would look at him as an old scruffy person that has not achieved anything; purely because you are a type of a person that believes driving a Mercedes you have achieved a lot in life*

This extract challenges the assumption that a man is worth as much as he has achieved. For P4W, success and achievement as a boy or a man should not be determined by the things that one has. Rather, for P4W, ones' masculinity goes beyond ones' material successes. It seems that P4W has positioned himself in terms of an 'ordinary' construction of masculinity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). By this it is meant that he has not conformed to the ideals promoted by hegemonic masculinity, but rather has provided a rich understanding of masculinity. It appears that he has constructed those boys who judge men who do not drive

expensive cars, in a simplified and one dimensional manner. It appears that for P4W these men and boys do not exemplify masculinity but rather are superficial and not worth more than the car that they drive.

#### 4.3.4.3 Money and power

Another facet of the competitive nature of boys became evident in participants' discussions of money. It appeared that money reflected a sign of success and power as a man. This was evident in P3W's acknowledgement that: *'powerful I suppose is money. I hate to say that but it is true...So I suppose money is a big issue today.'* It seems that for P3W, as much as he does not want to admit it, one's masculinity is inextricably linked to the amount of money that a boy or man has. Within the context of the school, it seems that money is also associated with popularity and being perceived as a cool boy. During the individual interview with P4W, he stated that the cool boys in the school are those boys who, besides other factors,

*you know they show off a lot about their clothes, their cash*

However, as much as this seems to be quite a dominant construction, some of the boys' narratives reflected a more progressive view. For example, P2B stated that he did not think that boys who do not have a lot of money should be viewed as inferior.

**Researcher:** *So those guys who don't have that kind of money/ are they viewed as less of a man/ coz they don't have the coolest watches?*

**P2B:** *No*

These extracts reflect a difference in the views held by the white and black participants. Where P3W acknowledges the role of money in shaping masculinity, P2B on the other hand does not believe that the amount of money a boy has effects his masculinity. It can be argued that these different views reflect the effects of individualistic versus collective discourses in shaping boys' ideas pertaining to masculinity. With specific reference to P2B, it appears that he may be attempting to find a way to successfully negotiate the class position in which he finds himself. Unlike the majority of black boys in South Africa, he has access to schooling in a predominantly white and upper class suburb. By arguing that boys without money should not be viewed in an inferior manner, it seems that he is defending those boys who are less privileged. This extract therefore highlights the complexity of masculinity which is further exacerbated by the effects of race and class (Frosh et al., 2005).

Besides the importance that clothes, cars and cash play in positioning some boys as superior than others, the researcher also became aware of the way in which material consumption is used within the domain of masculine competition for girls. It appeared that there was the perception that by having money, wearing expensive clothes and driving an expensive car, a boy would not only be superior to other boys, but would also use these them to increase their chances of gaining access to girls. As previously mentioned, this perception is reflective of the Triple C syndrome as argued by (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007). A study conducted by Varga (2003) found that traits embowered with respectability vary between peer groups but tend to include demonstrating material wealth by driving expensive cars, using cell phones, wearing flashy clothes and jewellery.

**P8B:** *And with cars and material things and like that, I think they are trying to sell themselves maybe to girls*

This quotation provides another example of the value that boys and men place on possessing material objects. These are objects that will afford them a higher status amongst other boys and in such a way, place them in superior masculine positions. This extract also highlights the pervasive effects of hegemonic masculinity which creates a pressure within boys to achieve an ideal masculine status (Connell, 2000). It seems that for P8B, some boys feel that they need to possess material objects to prove themselves to girls. In such a way, these material objects act as a means of reinforcing boys' sense of masculinity (Seidler, 1989). It also seems that P8B is quite critical of those boys who act in this way. He seems to be disavowing and distancing himself from individualistic discourses that place a boys' class status within the centre of their masculinity. However, on a critical note it can also be postulated that this extract also problematises the way in which material consumption is used by boys to compete for girls. It seems that for P8B this attempt represents a vain effort on the part of boys and one that is somewhat demeaning as it requires that boys sell themselves.

#### **4.3.5 Risk taking as a part of being a boy**

Another theme that emerged in the boys' accounts in relation to ideas about being a boy was the dominant view that boys must indulge in risk-taking behaviours. By risk-taking it is meant engaging in activities that are illegal, like drinking under age, or engaging in activities that place boys at risk of suffering negative consequences, such as getting into trouble or

driving cars under the influence of alcohol. Many boys see risk-taking as a natural part of being a boy. For example, P6B commented on the way in which society views boys' 'naughty' behaviour as due to the fact that *he is a boy!* It appears that for P6B, society has constructed a view of masculinity that is extremely difficult for boys to escape. It seems that this construction does not allow more legitimate reasons for why boys engage in dangerous and destructive behaviour (Frosh et al., 2003<sup>2</sup>). By viewing the cause as stemming from boys being naturally risky and problematic, the problem remains at the level of the individual and the role of society in this construction is ignored. The normalisation of boys as risk-takers is also evident in the following two extracts,

**P6B:** *I don't know, guys are just known to be risk-takers*

**P5W:** *Also another case maybe it's just in a boy's nature to*

It appears that this view of boys as being 'risk-takers' goes beyond racial differences. Both P6B and P5W's statements reflect the way in which risky behaviour has become constructed as a natural dimension of boys. P5W's comment that, *'maybe it's just in a boys nature to'* indicates a predominant way of understanding the reason why boys continually engage in activities that put them in danger.

The researcher became aware of the way in which the majority of the participants constructed their risk-taking behaviour positively. By positively, it is meant that the boys viewed this type of behaviour as differentiating them from girls and locating them in a superior position. This was most evident in P6B's statement that risk-taking behaviour includes, *'stuff that you do not normally find girls doing'*. What this statement points to is the view amongst boys that getting involved in risky behaviour separates them from feminine qualities. It appears that once again, feminine qualities are viewed as inferior to masculine ones. Importantly, the use of the word 'normally' illustrates the subtle nature of gender discourses that naturalise which behaviours are viewed as masculine as opposed to feminine (MacInnes, 1998). On a similar note, P7W's argument that, *'I think it's a lot more risk-free for men'*, reflects the perception that boys biologically indulge in risky behaviours more often than girls. The comment once again reflects the position that boys are naturally more superior to girls.

Another aspect of risk-taking was related to the previously mentioned theme of competition. The participants spoke of the *'natural want'* within boys to be better, more hardcore and in

such a way, more masculine. One way in which a boy can show that he is a man is if out-perform other boys and by so doing, show other boys that he is tough and what P1B refers to as *'hardcore.'*

**P7W:** *Well there is an element of; I can out-drink you! No you can't! I'll prove it to you and then I will drink ... and stuff*

This extract reflects the need within boys to prove to their peers that they can engage in risky behaviour. In this case, boys feel the pressure to literally out-drink each other even if it means them feeling sick from drinking too much alcohol. Boys would rather feel ill than be made to look bad in front of their friends. In such a way, boys who indulge in risk-taking behaviours are accorded a status of being a 'real' boy. What this extract also implies is that boys prefer to drink in groups as opposed to on their own. A photograph taken by P3W of a table of drinks, beer, on a night also provides evidence of the social natures of drinking (Photograph E, Appendix K). It can be argued that the masculinising effects of engaging in risky behaviour, for example drinking copious amounts of alcohol, is only effective if done in the presence of other boys who can witness the behaviour. According to Caparao (2004) research has shown that in the history of their drinking men drink in the company of other men. What this finding, as well as is evident in this research, is the way in which drinking represents a symbol of masculinity and in such a way men drink to prove their manliness (Caparao, 2004). It seems that for boys, what is more important is communicating to their friends that they are brave and better than the rest, than actually showing that they drink alcohol. Drinking alcohol under age is deemed a risky behaviour, but what is perceived as more masculine is being the boy in the group who can withstand the effects of alcohol when the rest of the boys have passed out or are vomiting.

The boys also alluded to reasons behind the need for boys to engage in risky behaviour. Besides competition, issues such as needing to be 'cool', providing a means of expression and peer pressure were noted.

**P6B:** *Like drugs and gang behaviour and all that stuff. For some people it is a way to be admired, to be cool. And then the other people just a way of expressing yourself. Then the other people just don't know what they are doing, they just follow the crowd, so to say*

This statement provides quite a critical view of those boys who engage in risk-taking behaviour for no apparent reason. For example, by stating that, *'for some people'* it seems that P6B is distancing himself from those boys who engage in this type of behaviour to be admired

or cool. It appears that he has located himself in a more superior position to those misguided boys who lack direction and therefore engage in risk-taking behaviour in order to impress their friends.

The researcher also became aware of the pressure that boys experience from their peers to prove that they are a man.

**P7W:** *There's a lot more pressure on you to equal them in terms of drinking and stuff*

**P5W:** *Like the first time I was trying a cigarette // okay, not the first time, but the first time I got drunk, it was peer pressure from a friend, first time I had more than one cigarette it was a friend*

**P4W:** *I've [heard] a lot growing up – you know you would go to a party, people say have a beer, and they'll say don't be a loser*

**P1B:** *Like every guy knows that drinking is not good for them but they'll still drink\ like binge drinking and don't really take care of ourselves'*

These extracts, in varying ways, highlight the pressure that boys experience to engage in risk-taking behaviour. For example, in the case of P7W, he refers to the pressure to be equal to other boys in terms of drinking and other forms of risky behaviour. It seems that he experiences the need to prove that he is equal or even better than other boys. In this case, boys are required to drink and engage in other forms of risky behaviour so as to assert their masculinity. P7W's statement therefore highlights the way in which boys' sense of masculinity constantly needs to be proven and performed (Walker, 2005). These findings are similar to those of Lindegger and Maxwell (2007). In their study, adolescent boys reflected on the pressure they experience to smoke, take drugs and drink alcohol. The negative consequences that boys experience when they do not conform to normalised masculine practices are highlighted by P4W. That is, boys who do not conform are discriminated and belittled. To be included and accepted, boys are expected to conform, and if they don't, they have to pay the price. It seems that for P4W, when he was 'growing up' he was informed of this pressure. Once again, the role of parental influence in constructing masculinity becomes apparent. It seems that in this case, P4W's parents played quite a protective function informing him of these pressures so that when faced by them he would be able to successfully resist them.

However, the extracts also reflect a lack of agency on the part of boys. It seems that P7W, P5W and P1B blame external factors (i.e. peer pressure) for their risk-taking behaviours. The lack of responsibility is evident in P1B's personal account of engaging in binge drinking even though he knows it is not good for him. He does not want to disappoint his friends. He wants to be seen as a 'real' boy. By positioning themselves in this way, boys construct themselves as victims who are unable to resist peer pressure. This mitigation and justification of their decision to drink, highlights Kaminer and Dixon's (1995) argument that due to most boys drinking alcohol it becomes normative male adolescent behaviour. Due to the defensive function of this normative masculinity repertoire boys who deviate from this norm become marginalised, as evident in P4W statement that boys who don't drink are called losers. This fear of marginalisation can therefore be argued to play a part in why boys would rather engage in potentially harmful behaviour, such as binge drinking than risk the chance of being ostracised or viewed as a 'loser'.

#### **4.3.5.1 Girls and cocktails, Boys and beers**

In terms of drinking, the researcher noted the way in which the boys constructed some drinks as more manly than others. It seems that drinking alcohol in itself is not sufficient to prove one's masculinity, but rather the type of alcohol that one drinks. For example, where beer was equated with being masculine, drinking cocktails was viewed as a feminine, '*women just...drink their stupid cocktails and laugh at guys getting drunk*' (P7W). The use of the word '*stupid*' highlights the view that besides beer being a more manly drink, the drinking of cocktails is viewed as feminine and therefore inferior. Once again, it seems that boys experience the need to not only perform their masculinity, but to also position themselves in opposition to femininity. This negative view of women's drinks highlights the way in which drinking has been constructed as male dominated, centered and identified (Capraro, 2004). It seems that P7W has positioned himself in line with the view that men are the experts in the drinking arena and in such a way is able to look down upon those individuals, in this case girls, who are perceived as amateurs.

However, as much as the majority of the boys held this view within the context of the focus group, P4W questioned this notion.

- Researcher:** *And are some drinks more manly?*
- P5W:** *Yeah – a drink is manly\like drinking cider\ it's just like you were not supposed to drink that, it's a women's drink, like you are drinking juice*
- P4W:** *What makes it a woman's drink?*
- P5W:** *Like it's like all men drink beer\that is how it is*
- P7W:** *There's nothing wrong with drinking cider*
- P5W:** *No there isn't\ I'm not focusing on cider particularly\ like when we go out\ and this one guy doesn't drink beer\ like all men drink beer\I'm not saying you have to conform but just like you must have it every now and again*
- P4W:** *I tried to drink a beer the other day and it didn't work\it's dry and it made me thirsty*
- P6B:** *Give it some time\ you will learn to like it*

This extract highlights multiple issues. Firstly, by asking boys why some drinks are viewed as more masculine than others, it appeared that the boys felt the need to defend this position. In the case of P5W, his response that all men drink beer and that is how it is, reflects the view that because the majority of men engage in this behaviour it should not be questioned. This comment draws on a mostly unreflexive and conventionally masculine self (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). What this indicates is the subtle pressure that boys experience to conform to socially accepted behaviour. According to Schneider et al. (2008) the media, especially men's magazines, play an influential role in constructing boys' understanding of socially acceptable men's drinks. For example Men's Health magazine depicted the ideal man as a beer drinker (Schneider et al., 2008). That is, beer has come to represent a socially constructed masculine drink and therefore it becomes expected that all men should drink beer. This was evident in a photograph taken by P7W of two cans of beer namely Windhoek and Castle Lager (Photograph F, Appendix K). Salisbury and Jackson (1996) also note the way in which beer advertisements promote hegemonic masculinity; that is, as much as the immediate function of these advertisements is to increase the sale of beer, they create a certain image of the ideal man and the masculine role as physically strong, competitive and hardworking. Beers like Amstel and Black Label are advertised as masculine beers. Men drink these beers after having worked hard in the mines. According to Strate (2004) in the "world of beer commercials, men work and play hard" (p. 534). Drinking beer, within these advertisements, also reflects a way in which boys can become men. That is after engaging in activities, such as taking risks, meeting challenges and facing danger, these boys are rewarded for all their masculine efforts with a beer (Strate, 2004; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996).

However, P5W's second statement that '*I'm not saying you have to conform*' illustrates the contradictory nature of masculinity. It seems that as much as it is fine for boys to drink cider

and not drink beer all the time they at least need to drink the occasional beer. It can be argued that drinking the occasional beer is perceived as a way in which boys can prove their masculinity. From the researcher's perspective, it seemed like P5W was battling to justify his assumptions and argument. It seems that he is not that certain about why men drink beer and that as much as boys don't need to conform; they still need to drink beer every now and again. This contradiction on the part of P5W reflects the difficulty the boys experience to comply completely with hegemonic ideals.

Finally, within the context of the group, the researcher noted P4W's ability to stand his ground despite the rest of group members having opposing views. This occurrence reflects the development of alternative forms of masculinity despite dominant forms and constructions (Connell, 2000, 2005). P6B's statement that you will learn to like beer reflects a contradiction. It seems that drinking (in this case, beer), is not as natural as previously argued but is something that boys have to learn to enjoy. This contradiction once again reflects the fluid and complex nature of masculinity. It appears that masculinity is not an innate characteristic but becomes reinforced through repetitive behaviours and actions, in this case drinking.

#### **4.3.6 Boys, Aggression and Violence**

According to Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) popular beliefs pertaining to aggression are ones that view aggression as instinctive and thus had a biological component. That is, men are naturally violent as a result of the hormone Testosterone, "it is this force that pushes boys to be aggressive" (Elium & Elium, in Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998, p. 40). These essentialist and biologically-based arguments were apparent in some of the boys' understandings of aggression. For example, P5W uncritically noted that '*it is just in our nature to be more aggressive.*' It seems that for P5W, boys are naturally aggressive and therefore have no control of their potentially destructive actions. This view indicates the way in which society constructs understandings of masculinity. For example, by constructing aggression as natural, violent actions of men and boys are legitimised. In such a way, boys are not held responsible and do not become accountable for their actions. Men are therefore able to continue being aggressive to others due to the belief that men or boys cannot help themselves as it is a part of their biology.

The naturalisation of boys' aggressiveness can be argued to create problems for boys. P1B's statement that, '*to be more of a man I guess\ to be this sort of stereotype that I have to be aggressive*' highlights the problem that the stereotype that real men are aggressive sets up for boys. The naturalisation of aggression makes it extremely difficult for boys to develop other legitimate forms of masculinity. The quote from P1B suggests that he is de-essentialising the link between aggression and masculinity. It seems that P1B feels that he has no other choice and has to act aggressively in order to be viewed as a man. This problem is referred to by Seidler (1991) who argues that the idea that all men are violent creates a problem for men in that it makes it difficult for men to change and produces, "a sense of despair, guilt and a paralysing self-hatred" (p. 131). P7W also refers to the way in which society tends to view men as the main cause of problems based on the assumption that men are naturally more aggressive and violent than women.

*P7W: Because if we explode we're just viewed as an irresponsible person. And then this whole negative feeling about the male comes through*

In the extract above, P7W highlights the difficulty that boys and men experience. The use of the word 'explode' highlights the perception the boys' anger is uncontrollable and can only be expressed in a heightened manner. It seems that boys who express their anger in an explosive manner are perceived as irresponsible and out of control. What this suggests is the way in which society has constructed the expression of anger, especially by boys and men, in a negative way. It appears that the possibility of males expressing their anger responsibly is negated. The researcher also became aware of the despairing manner in which P7W discussed this issue. It seemed that he found it personally upsetting to always be viewed as the problem. In terms of expressing their emotions, the researcher found that boys feel it is more acceptable for a boy to become aggressive rather than to cry. The expression of aggression was perceived as masculine as opposed to showing that one is hurt or upset.

**P6B:** *I would be angry, yes, I am not denying that the thing; if it hurts or if it makes me angry, if it is humiliating; in that moment I would act out but I can't think about it the next day*

The extract suggests that the way in which boys deal with hurt, that is becoming angry and 'acting out', is viewed as a legitimate form of emotional expression. Becoming aggressive seems to hide any form of humiliation and hurt the boy has experienced. It appears that he is able to defend his masculinity by becoming aggressive and physically illustrating his

strength. This finding is supported by Seidler's (1991) argument that in order for men to dispel their feelings of vulnerability, they tend to become angry and aggressive, hiding any signs of perceived weakness. However, it seems this form of emotional expression is only legitimised for a short period of time. That is, as much as it is acceptable to be angry momentarily because boys are not allowed to feel this way '*the next day.*', it can be argued that to continue to be upset in this manner would signify weakness and a lack of self control; qualities that boys constantly feel that they need to defend against (Seidler, 1989).

One form of engaging in aggressive behaviour that emerged in the boys' accounts was that of fighting. A photograph taken by P4W of boys wrestling and 'play' fighting provides evidence of the centrality of fighting in boys lives. That is boys appear to enjoy enacting fights in their leisure time (Photograph L, Appendix K). It seemed that the majority of the boys held the view that fighting was a natural part of being a boy, '*fighting again, it's a guy thing basically*' (P7W). The problem of this essentialist argument is that it once again legitimises the engagement of boys in this type of behaviour. Another dimension of fighting that emerged in the accounts was one that equated fighting to an easy option when dealing with issues, '*I don't know, guys fight because they just get angry. Sometimes it is easier to fight than to sit down and talk. It just takes less effort*' (P6B). These statements highlight two main issues. Firstly, by naturalising the view that boys are aggressive, it tends to remove any form of responsibility for acting in this manner. That is, boys are viewed as not being able to control their aggressive nature and therefore can't stop this type of behaviour. On a critical note, Stanko (1994) contends that this naturalised view legitimates the relations of power and gender in society, in which men are afforded more powerful positions. However, by stating that it is easier to fight than to talk, it appears that talking does not come naturally to P6B. Rather, by fighting, a boy is able to maintain his sense of masculinity without having to emotionally engage in the issue. It can be hypothesised that by talking about the issue, the more vulnerable dimension of boys becomes exposed, a side that they constantly defend.

In addition to the above views, engaging in fights provided boys with an opportunity to prove their masculinity to others. According to Seidler (1991) boys and men constantly have to defend and prove their masculinity. The need to prove one's masculinity was highlighted in P8B's statement that getting involved in fights is, '*to show other people that you are strong. It's like just to show that you are strong and you deserve a bit more respect and you shouldn't be looked down on ... That is what they fight for.*' In such a way fighting provides

an example of how boys constantly need to prove their masculinity, that they “are as much a man as everyone else” (Seidler, 1991, p. 132). This need to show others you are strong is evident in P7W’s photograph of a knuckle duster (Photograph K, Appendix K). He explained to the researcher how boys will wear a knuckle duster when they are in fights so as to ensure that they will win. However, some of the accounts alluded to the more vulnerable aspects of masculinity, providing an example of the underlying reasons for why boys get involved in fights. Some of the reasons included the need to prove that one is manly in front of one’s friends; the possibility that a boy is quite empty and has to fight in order to feel worthy; as well as the need within boys to prove that they are in no way like girls.

**P4W:** *That’s just guys wanting to say hey I have something to show off about. Because maybe that’s all they have*

**P1B:** *Well I mean if someone punches you\ the idea is that you should retaliate right because and I guess you’ll be disrespected... \ then you get the whole thing that you’re pussy so generally guys don’t just walk away*

The use of the words ‘*weak*’ and ‘*pussy*’ indicate that boys who choose not to engage in fights will become sissified. It appears that boys constantly experience the pressure to prove their masculinity and in some cases have no choice but to engage in behaviours that have been socially constructed as masculine. These extracts speak to the pressures that boys’ experience to represent a strong and masculine self and how at times, this behaviour merely hides their true feelings and anxieties. These findings are consistent with those of Langa and Eagle (2008) who found that when men do not successfully repress all feminine traits, they are referred to as sissy boys and wimps. By constantly needing to prove their masculinity to themselves and others, boys are unable to show their fears, anxieties and vulnerability (Seidler, 1991). However, what also became significant was the manner in which the boys tended to distance themselves by talking about boys that were involved in fights in a way that excluded them from the same pressure. It seemed that the boys have quite a derogatory opinion of those boys who engage in fights for these above-mentioned reasons. By distancing themselves, they have positioned themselves as superior to other boys. It seems that once again, boys experience ambivalence in relation to hegemonic ideals of masculinity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). For example, in terms of a personal self, boys may not believe that getting involved in fights is a legitimate expression of masculinity. The individual interviews can therefore be argued to have provided them with a space in which they could share their more private accounts of masculinity (Frosh et al., 2003<sup>1</sup>).

In the context of the focus group, the researcher became aware of the racialised dimension of boys' narratives in relation to the issue of fighting. The researcher observed the boys as they discussed and compared different race groups, namely white, black and coloured, in terms of strength and violent behaviours they perform. In conclusion, coloured boys were collectively viewed as the most violent and scary of all the different race groups.

**P6B:** *Blacks are stronger*

**P8B:** *Whites are more afraid of blacks sort of like*

**P1B:** *No, I'm more afraid of coloureds*

**P8B:** *If I walk right? I see 8 big black guys\ then I'd worry like especially being white\ If I was a white guy\and I walked into a group of 8 black guys\ drunk\ then I wouldn't feel safe*

In this case, the black boys seem to be promoting and perpetuating a generalised view of both black and coloured boys as naturally violent. In the case of black boys arguing that white boys are more afraid of blacks, they are reinforcing the stereotype that black males are violent and dangerous. According to Connell (2001) white fears of black men's violence have a long history in both colonial and non-colonial situations. It seems that the black boys have internalised the racist discourses which construct black men as criminals by nature and a threat to the safety of the white race group (Saint-Aubin, 2005). However, P8B's comment, that if he was a white boy he would be scared, reflects a construction of white masculinity as weak and afraid. As much as the stereotype of black masculinity as violent is problematic, in this context, P8B has managed to negotiate a positive implication of this stereotype; that is, he has positioned the black man as superior and strong, towering over the poor and defenceless white man.

However, as much as the boys constructed black males as violent, in comparison to coloured boys they came across as quite vulnerable; that is, they were promoting a stereotypical view that coloured boys are dangerous. The use of race as a site of shared solidarity and difference reflects the pervasiveness of racist Apartheid discourses within contemporary South African society (Stevens, 1998). Because there were no coloured boys included in the study, it appears that the boys were able to 'other' the coloured race group. The use of race as a signifier can therefore be argued to build the cohesion and identity of the group as different from its out-groups (Govender, 2006). The manner in which the boys talked about this issue of race and violence was once again distanced and disconnected from themselves; that is, it

appeared that they positioned themselves as neutral observers, belonging to no particular race group; merely pointing out what they observed.

The boys also engaged in a more political discussion pertaining to the underlying reasons for why different race groups would get involved in violent behaviour. For example, the boys argued that one reason for engaging in violent behaviour could be due to the anger and hurt experienced as a result of discriminatory practices of the Apartheid regime. In the case of P6B, he aligned himself with the black race group by arguing that *'if the reason was being angry then I think black people have more reason to be angry'*. This alliance with his race reflects the important role that race plays in constructing boys' sense of masculinity. It seemed that P6B was rejecting racist discourses pertaining to the black race group by legitimising the groups' discriminated status due to the effects of external structures (Govender, 2006).

P5W on the other hand, argued on behalf of coloured boys, that they should be most angry due to being rejected by both the white and black race groups, *'cause, think about it, blacks are in this population and whites but coloureds are on the fence.'* Within this discussion, he took on quite a contentious role, siding with the coloured race group and denying the hurt of the black race group. However, it seems that by using laughter and not reflecting on their personal experiences of racism and discrimination, the boys were able to engage in an unemotional and detached manner. None of the black boys appeared to become angry or upset with P5W's comment. Rather, the researcher observed a type of discussion in which the boys were trying to convince the rest of the group of the legitimacy of their argument. In this discussion, the value of having a mixed group became evident; that is, if the group had comprised only of black boys, black boys would not have been made to defend their position as is seen in the focus group. It seemed that in the focus group, the black boys, as evident in Govender's (2006) research, positioned themselves as black in the presence of the white boys. This loyalty to their race group would most probably not have taken place in the context of an all-black group.

However, as much as some of the boys' accounts legitimised getting involved in fights, when it came to engaging in more serious forms of violence, the boys unanimously argued in opposition to this behaviour. Based on the accounts of the boys in this study, it appears that where violence used to ascertain a certain status or when communicating bravado is partially

legitimised; violence aimed at women or the domination and humiliation of others is viewed as cowardly and immasculine. For example, both P6B and P1B described boys and men who engage in violence for the sake of it or to take advantage of weaker individuals, as cowardly.

**P6B:** *Being violent isn't for me, being violent is not being a man, that's being a coward. A violent man is a coward...Violence is beating and just getting angry for no reason and hitting people. There is nothing manly about hitting people because you can*

**P1B:** *I think ... you're a coward ... if you need to hit something go and hit a bag. I mean like, I don't really like fighting like other guys do\ you even like other times pick on other guys that are a little bit smaller than them and that's a cowardly thing to do. You don't hit someone who is smaller than you\ you don't hit a woman*

In both of the above extracts, P6B and P1B position themselves in opposition to stereotypes of men being violent. This form of masculinity reflects a level of responsibility. In such a way, instead of viewing violent men as powerful, these boys have constructed them as cowards. It seems that in both extracts, P6B and P1B are referring to the responsibility that comes with being a boy or a man. Instead of legitimising the subordination of others who have been constructed as weaker, these quotations argue against those boys who take advantage of their superior positions. It appears that boys and men should be able to control their anger. Both these accounts also present opposing views to the common assumption that black men are naturally violent (Wright et al., 1998). In a country where violence against women is quite common and is an example of men attempting to display power, these narratives present a hopeful picture. In such a way, these narratives demonstrate openness to new ways of thinking and being as boys. They also reflect a move away from those writings that reduce the relationship between male aggression and women abuse to one of monolithic essentialism (Wood & Jewkes, 2001<sup>1</sup>). Rather, these accounts reflect progressive accounts of masculinity which deny and resist any attempt to legitimise the violence against women which occurs in the context of heterosexual relationships.

#### 4.4 Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Male Sex Drive

One dominant perception of masculinity that cut across the boys' narratives in both the context of the individual interviews and the focus group was that pertaining to compulsory heterosexuality. By this it is meant that most of the boys viewed heterosexual relationships as a natural part of being a boy. One important dimension of these relationships, be they casual or serious, was the need within most of the boys to be sexually fulfilled. These narratives reflected the biological discourse of the male sex drive that needs satisfaction (Hollway, 1989). The boys' heterosexually-based discussions and practices were not focussed particularly on having sex, but rather seemed to represent the need within the boys to affirm not only their masculinity but their ability to dominate others, in this case women (Pascoe, 2007; Schneider et al., 2008). These practices of compulsive heterosexuality (Pascoe, 2007) reflect Butler's (1993) notion of gender performativity. The researcher became aware of the way in which the boys' narratives, especially in the focus group, seemed to represent the reinforcement of certain gender dynamics in which women are constructed as sexual objects to satisfy boys' sexual desires. However, as much as the majority of the boys supported the above discourse of masculinity, some progressive accounts also did emerge. The narratives also seemed to support the view that heterosexuality is opposed to homosexuality. That is homosexuality was constructed as inferior and unnatural. It seemed that not only did the majority of the boys condemn homosexuality, but they appeared extremely vigilant to not be perceived as gay; that is, boys constantly experience the need to assert their masculinity and dominance to ensure that others perceive them as masculine, and in this case, not gay. The following understandings on '*Compulsory heterosexuality and the male sex drive*' will be discussed hereunder:

- Boys need sex
- Girls are required to give boys sexual pleasure
- 'Mostly one-night-stands' versus girlfriends
- Homosexuality and the use of the word '*fag*'

#### 4.4.1 Boys need sex

One aspect that became evident in the boys' narratives was the view that sex and/or sexual activities are a big part of being a boy.

**P6B:** *Just being a guy comes with wanting sex*

**P5W:** *Guys are always striving to have sex, especially at this age; where their hormones are at [full tilt]*

The biological understanding of the need for adolescent boys to have sex is evident in the above extracts. These quotations reflect the way in which having sex and experiencing sexual release are viewed as natural parts of being a man. It appears that the male sex drive discourse is one that equally influences both white and black boys. These findings are similar to previous research in which men were constructed as needing sex, as always being open to having sex and having no control over their hormones (Shefer & Ruiters, 1998). Both statements highlight the perception that boys are at the mercy of their hormones and therefore require sexual satisfaction. These essentialist arguments make it extremely difficult for boys to negotiate and critique these practices. Both P6B and P5W appear to position themselves in line with hegemonic standards of masculinity (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007). Their narratives also reflect the transformation of sex into performance. By this it is meant that by engaging in sexual activity, boys or men prove their masculinity (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998).

Even though the majority of the boys stated that having sex was a natural part of being a boy, when asked whether or not they were currently engaging in sexual practices, the majority said no. The boys argued that it was the norm for the boys they knew and boys in the school to start having sex around the age of sixteen and seventeen. This average age was stated by most of the boys, irrespective of race. It seems that where being with girls, that is kissing, is quite a common practice among adolescent boys, engaging in sexual intercourse was quite rare.

**P1B:** *With girls it starts from as soon as we get to high school\ maybe from the beginning of standard 7. I mean being with girls and like having girlfriends, but actual sex\ gees I don't know\ ja\ it's like 5 or 6 guys I know who have actually had sex. They do kiss and stuff but I think maybe when we get a little bit older it'll be something that happens*

It seems that in terms of the school context, it is more common for boys under the age of sixteen and seventeen not to engage in sexual intercourse. Where it is normal for boys to start sexually experimenting with girls from the commencement of high school, it seems that boys

do not experience the pressure to have sex until much later. This finding is unlike other current research findings in which the age young adolescent boys are starting to have sex has been found to be getting younger and younger. For example in a study conducted with adolescent boys between the ages of 15 and 19, most of the boys stated that sexual activity starts at an early age for boys (Dahlbäck, Makelele, Ndubani, Yamba, Bergström, & Ransjö-Arvidson, 2003). A study conducted by MacPhail and Campbell (2001) with men between the ages of 13 and 25 in South Africa also found that for young boys having sex was closely related to their sense of masculinity and something that they actively aspired to. It seems that within this context boys' focus on other things like sport, money, clothing and cars in constructing their sense of masculinity. It can be argued that due to the boys' within the studies higher economic status, that they have alternative outlet to assert their masculinity, unlike in the case of some poorer men who perceive having sex as way of asserting their dominance (McPhail & Campbell, 2001; Ratele, 2008). This finding therefore also suggests, unlike the male sex drive discourse, that boys are able to delay their sexual debut (Hollway, 1989). As much as this discourse constructs boys as having uncontrollable hormones from the commencement of puberty, it seems that in contexts where sex at a young age is not prescribed, that boys experience no need to act upon them. This statement by a black boy, PIB, that not many boys are currently having sex also challenges the stereotype that black males engage in sexual activities at an early age (Staples, 2004).

On a critical note, it can be hypothesised that in order to defend against their inability to satisfactorily negotiate sexual intercourse, some of the boys perhaps felt that it was less vulnerable to state that they had not yet engaged in sexual intercourse. This hypothesis is based on most of the boys' levels of discomfort when asked by a female researcher if they had had sex or not. This silence provides insight into the potential difficulties that boys may experience in this area. According to Schneider et al. (2008), the male sex drive discourse is one which constructs male sexuality as unproblematic and trouble free, and therefore any problems in this area are negated. This discourse therefore does not provide boys with a legitimate space to voice their concerns, and may therefore cause them to remain silent in this area or provide false information in order to defend against their vulnerabilities. Secondly, due to the researcher being a female, the boys may not have felt comfortable to discuss their possible sexual difficulties or experiences with her. According to Nicholas, Durrheim and Tredoux (1994), it is not uncommon to find research subjects, especially in the area of sexuality, providing inaccurate information when asked sexually-based questions.

However, even though the majority of the boys positioned themselves in line with hegemonic standards, P4W positioned himself in opposition to these standards. P4W was the only boy in the individual interview and the focus group who stated that he was going to only have sex after he was married.

**P4W:** *I'm going to wait for marriage [pause] only because of religion*

P4W's disclosure represents his aim to claim authenticity as an autonomous heterosexual boy. What is meant by this is that by stating his own view in the context of the focus group, he was able to bring a unique dimension to a hegemonic view of masculinity that has been taken for granted. According to Wetherell and Edley (1990, in Govender (2006)), this process of distancing oneself from macho stereotypes and making a stand represents one of the most effective ways of being a man, or in this case, being a boy. Nevertheless, it seems that P4W was still affected by the pressure to present a certain masculine image within the context of the group; that is, by stating that the reason for not having sex was due to religion, it appears that he was able to legitimise his decision.

This finding is similar to that of Govender's (2006) research in which Indian boys were able to delay their sexual debut due to religious reasons. In both cases, it appears that religion serves as a good protective factor against hegemonic discourses of masculinity that promote the belief that boys need sex despite the risks of this behaviour, especially in the context of South Africa. It can therefore be argued that a simple dichotomy between resistance and complicity is not sufficient to take into account the complexity of masculinity (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). It seems that the use of religion as a reason for not having sex reflects the attempt to find a middle ground between compliance and resistance. In such a way, boys who are perceived to have a legitimate reason for not engaging in sex are not viewed as less of a man, as opposed to boys who are not having sex because they cannot get a girl. This was evident in the individual interview with P3W who stated that, *'it depends whether he is actually getting girls or not. Because then you would think that okay; that is actually his choice and he has thought about it'*. What this quotation implies is that it is important for boys to have the power to actively choose to engage in sexual relations. This finding supports Pascoe's (2007) argument that boys' discussions on heterosexuality provide researchers with insight into the power dynamics that shape masculinity and the ability of boys to assert their dominance over girls.

#### 4.4.2 Girls are required to give boys sexual pleasure

Another prominent feature of the boys' narratives was the view that women, in this case girls, are expected to provide boys with the sexual pleasure that they need. These narratives reflect the compulsory heterosexuality discourse which affords men a dominant position over women; that is, the boys seemed to position themselves in line with the view that boys are driven by the physiological need to actively seek and initiate sex, while girls or women are expected to be passive and disinterested in sex (Schneider, et al., 2008).

**P5W:** *If a girl doesn't want to do anything\ like if she just wants to kiss\ then that's good for her\ then she's just not going to find a lot of guys ... and relationships are about give and take*

**P2B:** *She says no\ you're going to get like pissed off*

These extracts reflect a view that boys are entitled to receive sexual pleasure in their relationships with girls and if they don't, they will become extremely angry. Besides anger, boys would end up breaking up with that girl who only wants to 'kiss' but does not want to have sex. P5W seems to occupy the opinion that men have a sexual drive that needs to be satisfied and the role of the woman is to satisfy this need. This is in line with Hollway's (1989) male sexual drive discourse, which states that women's role in relationships is to satisfy boys' sexual desires (Macleod, 2006; Shefer, 2006). These views regarding the role of girls or women were also shared in the focus group. It seems boys were taking pride and bragging about girls as their 'conquests'. It also appears that within the context of the group, the boys tended to engage in practices of compulsive heterosexuality, positioning girls as resources to be arranged for their own masculine projects (Schneider et al., 2008).

Even though within the context of the focus group, P2B did not put forth his opinions, during the individual interview he stated that he would be angry if he did not receive the sexual pleasure he demanded. This potential anger can be argued to stem from the anxiety that boys experience when they are unable to enact their heterosexual performance. That is, when boys and men experience sexual failure, their sense of self as masculine becomes questioned (Schneider et al., 2008). P2B's inability to take this stand within the context of the focus group highlights the way in which boys' masculine presentation tends to change depending on the context in which they find themselves. It is obvious that P2B did not want to be seen as an outsider of the group. He was conforming to hegemonic voices of being a 'real' boy, which also involves having sex with multiple girlfriends.

However, as much as most of the boys positioned themselves in line with dominant hegemonic discourses, P8B positioned himself in opposition to this construction of masculinity.

**P8B:** *I think it is possible. I think in the relationship...I think the guy would be willing anytime. But it is possible for some guys. I mean if a girl does not want to and they do like her; I think they won't*

This extract reflects a contradictory view of the assumption that girls are expected to give boys the sexual pleasure they need. Rather, it appears that as much as P8B will be willing to have sex anytime, if the girl does not feel comfortable and he likes her, then he will respect her and wait. It seems that as much as P8B complies with the hegemonic position that boys always want to have sex, he simultaneously disavows the belief that boys will not cope if the girl they are with does not want to have sex. This quotation also provides an alternative view to the stereotype that black men are sexual predators (Wright et al., 1998). According to Saint-Aubin (2005; Staples, 2004) black men have historically been constructed as primate sexual beasts having large penises and an unending sexual appetite. These cultural narratives of black men as, “a slave to his sexual passions” (Saint-Aubin, 2005, p. 33) developed by Europeans, that is white colonisers, acted as a means of social and political control. This extract therefore challenges this take-for-granted view that black men are slaves to their sexual passions, providing insight into a more progressive form of black masculinity. It seems that for P8B, remaining in a relationship with a girl he likes is far more important than gaining sexual pleasure. This extract therefore reflects a more progressive masculine position which is less resistant to emotional connection in relationships. These findings also once again highlight the fluid nature of masculinity in the sense that masculinities are constantly changing. According to Morrell (2001) masculinities are socially and historically constructed in a process in which different and conflicting understandings of what it means to be a man or a boy.

However, P8B's inability to make this comment in the focus group indicates the pressure that boys experience to present a complicit form of masculinity within a social context. Within the context of the focus group, it was far more acceptable for boys to defend against their dependency and equate intimacy with receiving sexual pleasure (Seidler, 1989, 1991).

#### 4.4.3 'Mostly one nightstands' versus girlfriends

A theme that emerged in the boys' narratives was the need for boys to constantly ensure that their heterosexuality is secure.

**P8B:** *Like if you haven't gotten a girlfriend, or maybe been with a girl or kiss a girl for a while; then there's like a bit of pressure. Guys would like; you are having a drought or whatever. Like they make it a joke like you are turning gay*

This extract illustrates the continuous need for boys to prove their masculinity. It highlights the pressure that boys experience to assert their masculinity. It seems that boys are required to engage in public practices of heterosexuality so as to defend against emasculating insults such as being referred to as a fag (Pascoe, 2007).

One way in which boys seemed to defend their sense of heterosexuality and masculinity was by engaging in mostly one-night-stands. By one-night-stands it is meant either when a boy and girl kiss all night or have sex without any strings attached. For example, P3W stated that, *'normally a relationship at this age does not last that long. You know you are just kind of experimenting and stuff. You will get the occasional deep relationship where they really like each other and stuff, but it is mostly one-night-stands.'* What this suggests is that at this age, boys are more interested in proving their masculinity to each other; that is, instead of forming emotional connections, boys are more focussed on achieving sexual satisfaction (Schneider et al., 2008). By isolating the physical aspects of sex, male sexuality is divorced from an emotional dimension. Even though boys experience excitement and enjoy being with different girls, P5W talked to the pressure that boys experience to live up to this ideal form of masculinity:

*There's far more pressure to be with lots of girls. Guys are always keeping score, trying to see who they can get with, how many they can get with*

This quotation once again indicates the competitive nature of masculinity and the need for boys to constantly prove their masculinity. It seems that what is most important is that boys position themselves in ways that secure their heterosexuality. By keeping 'score', it appears that girls are viewed as objects that boys use to compete and to prove that they are better than the next guy. This narrative reflects the way in which the notion of compulsive heterosexuality reinforces gender inequalities by eroticising male dominance and ensuring

female compliance (Pascoe, 2007). By keeping score in this way, it seems that having multiple partners is something that boys strive for; that is, the more girls a boy is with, be it merely kissing or having sex, the more popular the boy is perceived to be. On a critical note, having multiple partners is not restricted to one race. This finding is therefore in conflict with discourses which construct black masculinity as promiscuous and highly sexualised. Rather, it seems that irrespective of race, boys who accumulate numbers, that is have multiple partners, are positioned as real men. The problematic nature of these narratives is that boys seem to value their sexual reputation over their health. The boys did not seem to worry that having sex with multiple partners exposed them to a greater risk of being infected with HIV/AIDS. This lack of concern was evident in P2B's statement that,

**P2B:** *No\ {pause}I guess AIDS is one too\ you never know if he has AIDS or she has AIDS, coz most guys just don't use a condom*

This extract indicates boys' casual attitudes to the possibility of being infected with the HIV/AIDS virus. His comment that most guys don't use condoms reflects the lack of responsibility boys take when engaging in sexual intercourse. For example, the use of the word 'just' when referring to boys not wearing condoms reflects a perception that this lack of responsibility is common practice among boys. Boys are constructed as lacking agency and 'just' forgetting to use condoms. In such a way, this narrative prevents boys from having to account for their decision to not wear condoms and the possibility of infecting others with HIV/AIDS. It seems that condoms are perceived by black boys as unimportant and one could even argue that they are a way of gaining sexual satisfaction. This low use of condoms by adolescent boys was also evident in a study conducted by MacPhail and Campbell (2001). However, an alternative view of condom use was evident in P5W's statement that,

*I do not think it's much of an effort. Condoms are free, everyone knows AIDS is a huge problem, people that do not have safe sex are [retards] I think*

This extract reflects a lack of tolerance for boys who 'just' forget to use condoms. P5W therefore positions himself in opposition to constructions of masculinity that negate any form of responsibility on the part of boys. He acknowledges that HIV/AIDS is a huge problem within the South African context and perceives both males and females who do not have safe sex to be retards. This account therefore challenges the assumption that boys have an uncontrollable sexual drive and are more concerned with having sex with many girls, than

with their own health. Rather, it provides a progressive account of masculinity which allows for the development of alternative sexual norms that do not endanger young peoples' sexual health.

The researcher also became aware of other progressive narratives which highlighted the importance of intimate relationships as opposed to having sex with multiple partners,

**P1B:** *A lot of guys just have 1 girlfriend\there's only 3 or 4 guys who like to mess around but generally guys like to sort of be like this is my girlfriend and whatever\ and they are pretty loyal for the most part*

**P8B:** *I would say trust; and being able to speak to the person. If you can trust the person, I think that is like the most important thing. Because if you cannot trust them, and you cannot speak to them, then your relationship is just gonna crumble. Like you are gonna keep your emotions in and not say what you think. And one day you would just burst, and your relationship would like finish or something like that*

Both of these extracts reflect progressive constructions of masculinity that are in contrast to dominant hegemonic forms. It appears that for P1B, being in an intimate and committed relationship with a girl is far more important than having multiple one-night-stands. Similarly, P8B argues for the importance of trust and being able to communicate his emotions in a relationship. In both cases, P1B and P8B disavow constructions of masculinity that promote male promiscuity and detachment in relationships. Rather, they present positive constructions of black masculinity in opposition to stereotypes of black males as tough, independent and sexual predators (Wright et al., 1998). These findings are in line with Redman's (1998, in Frosh et al., 2003<sup>1</sup>) study. By taking up 'romantic masculinities' boys are able to construct positive selves even though they are acting in opposition to dominant hegemonic standards. It can therefore be argued that romantic, heterosexual relationships provide boys with an opportunity to indulge in extended conversation and vulnerability. In such a way unlike the construction of boys and men as suspicious of emotional intimacy due to the threat of their own vulnerability being exposed (Kerfoot, 2001) it seems that this is not the case for all boys. Once again these findings highlight the argument that there is not just one type of masculinity but rather multiple and contradictory forms (Connell, 2001).

#### 4.4.4 Homosexuality as something dirty

Within the context of the individual interviews and the focus group, the researcher became aware of the way in which the boys would use the words ‘fag’ and ‘gay’ to refer to homosexual boys or ‘straight’ boys who fail to comply with hegemonic norms of masculinity. In relation to heterosexual boys, it appeared that when boys were deemed to have behaved in an unmanly manner, these words would be drawn upon. The use of the word ‘*faggot*’ by P6B to refer to a boy who others perceive as cool, provides an example of this fag talk in Pascoe (2007).

**P6B:** *He is seen as cool by other people, but to me and my friends we say he is just a faggot, he is just an idiot, he is an idiot because he thinks he is so cool*

The use of the word ‘*faggot*’ in the extract above seems to be aimed at degrading this boy. It seems that by demoting this boy to a lower status, P6B was able to defend his own sense of masculinity because homosexuality is constructed by boys as contaminating (Pascoe, 2007). Simultaneously, this example of fag talk represents a discourse which causes boys to constantly discipline and police their actions for fear of being labelled with the “fag identity permanently” (Pascoe, 2007, p. 54).

The need to defend their sense of masculinity was evident in the way in which the boys discussed issues of homosexuality in both the context of the individual interviews and the focus group. For example, as much as P3W stated in the individual interview that he had friends who were gay, he quickly stated that, ‘*it depends again where you are. You know if I go to a club and he is not trying to mack on me.*’ By mack, P3W was meaning to hit on or try engage in some sexual behaviour with him. It appears that as much as P3W seems open to friendships with gay males, he simultaneously feels the need to protect his masculinity from homosexual males. It seems that being friends with and interacting with gay boys potentially places heterosexual male boys in jeopardy of being emasculated. This was also evident in P7W’s comment that there was nothing wrong with homosexual males but being friends with them is ‘*suspect.*’ It appears that at a distance, homosexuality is viewed as unproblematic for P7W; however, when the issue is focussed a little closer, he naturally feels the need to defend his sense of masculinity.

Within the context of the focus group, the boy's need to defend their sense of masculinity became heightened. The researcher became aware of their need to make it explicit that they were in no way homosexual.

**P2B:** *If you see a gay coming then you say alert, run run!*

**P5W:** *I really don't see any reason why homosexuality is around and I wouldn't tolerate it if I was like Mbeki, like I wouldn't allow gay marriages it's just morally wrong to me*

These extracts highlight the negative perceptions boys have towards homosexual males. It seems that boys, irrespective of race, experience an intense anxiety when they perceive their masculinity to be easily threatened. These feelings of anxiety reflect the powerful influence of heterosexual discourses which stigmatise and label any form of sexual orientation other than heterosexual relations as perversions (Schneider et al., 2008). In the case of P2B, the fear is so great that he feels the need to literally run away from homosexual boys. However, what also became evident to the researcher is the view that male homosexuality is like a disease which can infect other boys. P5W on the other hand, reflects the internalisation of hegemonic masculine discourses that construct homosexuality as unnatural; that is, by constructing homosexuality as biologically and morally wrong, its legitimacy becomes challenged. In such a way, these discourses are able to promote the further domination of heterosexual men (Paulsen, 1999). These narratives also highlight the power of (hetero)sexuality discourses in ensuring the perpetuation of the system of sexuality and the maintenance of gender categories. Gutterman (2001) critically contends that due to this system being hierarchically and oppositionally structured any attempt to deviate from the norm is met with attempts to either silence or destroy the difference. This attempt to destroy difference was most evident in the boys' talk on the problem and unnaturalness of homosexuality.

In addition to the negative view held by most of the boys in relation to homosexual males, the researcher also became aware of the further subordinate position of effeminate homosexual males.

**P6B:** *A moffie is a guy who is like a woman, he relaxes his hair, he speaks like; hey doll... You can be gay and like sports and play rugby. That's // you are still a guy though... You are a guy first and foremost, but just because you are gay it does not mean you must be a woman*

This extract reflects P6B's critique of homosexual boys who act in effeminate ways. It appears that for him, being gay is not necessarily the problem. This suggests the potential for boys to be both gay and masculine. His comment that 'you are a guy first and foremost'

reflects the way in which gender categories are assumed to be as natural as the biological differences between males and females. This extract therefore reflects the power of gendered discourses which promote and naturalise masculine and feminine qualities (Miller, 1991). In such a way, for P6B, being gay and acting like a woman is seen as far more problematic. This extract therefore highlights the argument that homophobia is not equally applied to all boys (Pascoe, 2007). Rather, gay males who are perceived as behaving like women, for example straightening their hair, speaking in a high tone and not playing sport, are looked at with great disdain. It seems that for P6B, being and acting like a woman is far worse than being a gay male. By positioning himself in line with hegemonic standards of masculinity, both homosexuality and femininity are subordinated and perceived as problematic (Connell, 2000). However, in this context, femininity seems to be even further subjugated and is seen as inferior to the already subordinate position of homosexuality. This finding is similar to that of Ratele et al's (2007) research in which 'camp' behaviour, that is gay boys who openly express their gayness, was perceived as problematic. In both cases, what becomes apparent is that these narratives provide more insight into understandings pertaining to gender and sexuality, not only about heterosexuality and homosexuality; "it reflects the continued and entrenched binarism of masculine and feminine and the imperative to prescribe all human identity and practice within such an understanding" (Ratele et al., 2007, p. 116).

Even though the boys seemed to view gay males as immasculine, when it came to the issue of lesbian relationships, the boys presented a more positive view. At the conclusion of the focus group, when the researcher asked the group if they had any more thoughts or anything they wanted to share, P7W stated, *'lesbians are good.'* In response to that, P4W argued that one can understand why a woman would become lesbian, *'because chicks are hot.'* These positive views of lesbians as opposed to homosexual men, reflect what Pascoe (2006) refers to in her research as the gendered nature of homophobia. By this it is meant that the fag discourse is not equally applied to all individuals; that is, where male homosexuals' are viewed negatively, female homosexuals are lusted over and constructed as a good thing by heterosexual males. According to Lo (2005), when examining the history of the film industry since the 1960's, movies with lesbian scenes were included to appeal to straight men's sexual fantasies. Similarly, Swedberg (1989) contends that lesbian sexuality appears, "almost not at all in the culture outside pornography, but is and has always been a dominant feature of representations of women's sexuality within pornography" (p. 603). In such a way, unlike homosexual males, lesbian women do not threaten boys' sexuality, but rather contribute to their sexual fantasies

and domination of women. As much as the boys seem to hold a more positive view of lesbians, it seems that this form of sexuality is only legitimate to the extent that it satisfies boys' sexual desires (Smyth, 1990). The boys' narratives therefore are promoting the further oppression of females by constructing lesbian sexuality in a purely pornographic manner.

#### 4.5 Boys talking about girls

Another dominant theme that emerged in the boys' accounts during both the individual interviews and the focus group was with regards to talking about girls. It seemed that a large emphasis was placed on girls; the importance of dating a hot girl; as well as highlighting the differences between boys and girls. According to Frosh et al. (2003<sup>1</sup>), boys' accounts of girls and women play important roles in the process through which boys construct their masculine identity. In such a way, by comparing themselves to girls and in opposition to femininity, it appears that the boys were continually striving to develop a sense of who they were as boys. Besides comparing themselves to girls, what also became apparent was a need for the boys to prove their manliness in front of other boys and that being with certain types of girls played an important role in how other boys perceived them. Another issue that emerged was that of double standards. For example, where boys were allowed to drink, girls should not drink too much; and where it is a sign of masculinity to be sexually adventurous, such girls were seen as sluts or whores. Due to the internal complexity and contradictory nature of masculinity, it can be hypothesised that depending on the context, different forms of masculinity emerge (Connell, 2000, 2005; Shefer, 2006). Based on this argument, extracts will be taken from the boys' accounts which highlight the multiplicity and fluidity of masculinity in terms of the particular theme in question. Finally, where racial differences become evident in terms of the way in which boys talk about girls, and the particular views that boys hold of girls from different race groups, these too will be highlighted. The theme of '*boys talking about girls*' will be discussed hereunder:

- Boys as different to girls (masculinity in opposition to femininity)
- The objectification of women's bodies – what a girl should look like
- Good girls vs. whores
- Issues of race and multiracial relationships
- 'Girls are players'
- Gender roles

#### 4.5.1 Boys as different to girls (masculinity in opposition to femininity)

When talking about girls, boys seemed to constantly differentiate themselves from girls and highlighted things they like about being boys. What became significant was the way in which boys viewed masculinity and being a boy as being far superior to femininity. This was evident in P4W's statement that what he liked about being a boy was '*being probably the opposite of a girl.*' This quotation reflects the power of gender discourses which construct masculinity and femininity as different; that is, it is taken for granted that P4W draws on gender stereotypes which have constructed females as being inferior to males. The following extracts also provide examples of boys positioning masculinity as superior to femininity.

**P3W:** *Like sitting at break it's a lot cooler, some guy calls me an asshole, I laugh it off and we go clubbing that night. Whereas if a girl – there are a lot of issues; that I am fat or whatever... They would freak out if their hair is wrong*

**P5W:** *I mean obviously I can't say what a girl feels like, but I don't know for me it seems like we're just so free, we can just do what we want, we do not have to consult anyone, we seem more independent, more relaxed, just easy going, loving life. There is nothing I do not like about being a boy*

Both these extracts highlight the assertion of male superiority. It seems that both boys perceive being a boy as being free, as compared to femininity which is seen as being full of issues and problems. By arguing that there is nothing he does not like about being a boy, it seems that P5W has quite a one-sided view of masculinity; that is, to be a boy means to be problem free and superior. These narratives also reflect the internalisation of hegemonic discourses which construct femininity as being inferior to masculinity (Connell, 2000). In the context of the focus group, there was a definite sense of male camaraderie among the boys. The researcher observed the way in which racial differences did not appear to matter, but rather how the boys became united by the biological fact that they were all boys.

**Researcher:** *Is there anything you don't like about being a guy?*

**P3W:** *It's pretty sweet*

**P8B:** *It's actually pretty cool\ and your parents are not that protective over you like if you were a girl\ it's actually pretty cool\ I wouldn't like to be a girl*

**Researcher:** *Why not?*

**P8B:** *Life's hard, like girls have to give birth and go through all these things\ and have mood swings\ shopping sprees*

Within this extract, both P3W and P8B view being a boy in a positive light. It seems that when required to defend their masculinity, boys will unanimously highlight all the positive

dimensions of being a boy whilst neglecting to mention any challenges they face. These findings are similar to that Dahlbäck et al. (2003) research with Zambian adolescent boys. In this study the boys commented on how happy they all were that God had made them boys. It seems that in both studies boys have positioned themselves as the ‘privileged sex’ and superior to girls. On a critical note, these beliefs can be argued to have the potential of reinforcing and perpetuating gender inequality. The derogatory comment made by P8B that girls have mood swings, highlights the view that rationality and logical thinking are superior to emotional expression (Seidler, 1989). In such a way, by stating that he wouldn’t like to be a girl, P8B appears to be divorcing himself from female qualities. He was able to maintain the view that the expression of emotions and feelings are burdens that women experience and not experiences that boys have to deal with. However, this entirely negative view of femininity was not presented by P8B within the individual interview. During the individual interview, he mentioned that he had close friendships with girls. When referring to these friendships he stated that,

**P8B:** *They’re friendly, they are funny, they like going clubbing and dancing on tables. And, ya just having fun I guess*

This more positive view of female qualities which is contradictory to P8B’s account in the focus group reflects the way in which boys may maintain multiple and opposed masculine positions in their lived experiences (Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

#### **4.5.2 The Objectification of Women’s bodies – what a girl should look like**

The manner in which the majority of the boys talked about girls was in a way that objectified them. The boys expressed their views on how they thought girls should look, descriptions which reflected a view that both girls and women were objects that they both admired and desired. Photographs taken by both P8B and P7W of beautiful women with physically toned and curvaceous bodies points to the way in which boys objectify women (Photograph I & J, Appendix K). For example when seeing the photograph taken by P8B (Photograph I, Appendix K) in the focus group all the boys became quite excitable shouting out how hot she was.

**P6B:** *Curvaceous, ya. Nice arse, nice tits and long straight hair, I like straight hair. That is about it. And the personality comes into it later*

**P5W:**        *Gorgeous body\ nice tits\ sex appeal\ good figure\ have a nice face\ just physical beauty*

Both P6B and P5W's use of words such as 'nice arse', 'tits' and 'sex appeal' to describe women that they were attracted to, highlights the view among boys that women are objects used to satisfy boys' sexual desires. It seems that in both cases, the physical appearance of a girl was perceived as being far more important than her personality. These extracts reflect the subtle forces of gender discourses which place females in a subordinate position to males. The researcher also became aware of the way in which boys disguise these sexist and subordinate views of women in the veil of care and concern. This was most evident in P1B's statement that,

*I don't like bimbo's and tart's there's this sort of girls that are sort of wearing like micro-mini skirts in the middle of winter and you're thinking she must be freezing hey\ so ja like I mean\ it's not like I don't like girls to be pretty-I do\ and I am into the whole nice leg, big boobs\ I just think girls got to respect themselves*

In terms of this extract, it seems that as much as P1B argues that girls need to respect themselves, he is simultaneously belittling girls; that is, he has made an association between girls wearing miniskirts and having a lack of respect for themselves. In such a way, girls should portray to others that they respect themselves and therefore wear for example; long dresses or they will be perceived as bimbos or tarts. On a critical note, this position once again maintains male privilege by locating the problem with girls who wear revealing clothing. This view that females who wear revealing clothing do not respect themselves was also evident in Kann's (2008) research. Within this research, what became evident was the way in which the male participants placed the blame for being raped on females who were perceived as wearing provocative or revealing clothing. These findings were in line with Hollway's (2001) notion that once aroused; a man has no control over his sexual impulses. This notion therefore makes it the girl's or woman's responsibility to ensure that she dresses in a respectful manner so as not to give the impression that she is a bimbo and deserving of being raped.

The researcher also became aware of the way in which the objectification of girls' bodies serves as a mechanism in the promotion of male superiority. By this it is meant that most of the boys described the pressure they experience to be with girls who look a certain way.

**P2B:** *It actually does\ you wouldn't go for fat girls\ if you do people make fun of you\ like 'hey how's your overweight girlfriend buddy'*

**P3W:** *Let's say one night you kiss...you might think it wasn't that pretty... maybe the friends would be like you shouldn't have touched that or ya the jocks would absolutely ridicule...like absolutely undermine him*

Both of these above mentioned extracts highlight the way in which the objectification of females assists boys in reaching a certain heterosexual status (Pascoe, 2007). That is, by kissing or going out with a beautiful girl, boys become admired and viewed as superior to other boys. The use of the words 'it' and 'that' by P3W to describe girls who are perceived as physically unattractive, reflects the importance that boys place on physical attributes. It appears that if a boy goes out with a girl that has been socially constructed as unattractive, their masculinity will be questioned. P3W's comment that those boys would be ridiculed reflects the difficulty that boys face. In such a way, boys are forced to be with girls that look a certain way or they will have to endure negative consequences. This pressure was also referred to in the context of the focus groups where many of the boys admitted that if it wasn't for this pressure and the reactions that they received from their friends, they would not decide to be with a girl purely based on her looks.

However, one other reason for this difficulty stems from the essentialist belief that boys are naturally attracted to good looking women.

**P4W:** *I think it's just a natural thing that we are attracted to a woman because she's healthy ... if you go back to like nature\ you want to pick up the best match\ so you can have healthy children\ you won't go for someone that's unhealthy\ or fat*

This extract highlights the perception that good looking, healthy females are one and the same. In such a way, girls and women who are perceived as unhealthy or fat are problematically constructed as being unnatural. Similarly, boys who date women that are fat will be perceived in a similar negative light. In such a way, the objectification of women remains perpetuated and unchallenged. It seems that P4W has constructed the primary role of females as being that of reproduction. This reduction of women's sexuality to the level of reproduction is reflective of the male sex drive discourse (Hollway, 1989). This discourse is one which promotes the view that having sex purely for pleasure is a natural part of being a man, but for women sex is only equated to the biological need to reproduce. By referring to nature, P4W has drawn on essentialist assumptions that reduce a woman to the level of

biology. This essentialist argument once again highlights the powerful impact of gender discourses in the perpetuation of male dominance over females (MacInnes (1998). Drawing on this extract, one gets the sense of men hand-picking females as if they were some type of animal, yearning to be chosen. In such a way, men are constructed as active and dominant, and females as passive and subservient.

### 4.5.3 Good girls vs. whores

The researcher became aware of the double standards in the boys' accounts. For example, where the majority of the boys stated that they would not stay in a relationship with a girl who would not satisfy their sexual needs, they simultaneously agreed that they would not want to be with a girl who had kissed or had been with too many boys. This double standard was also evident in Varga's (2003) study it was found that an overwhelming majority (93%) described a girl with more than one sexual partner as as 'bad', 'promiscuous', 'misbehaving' or an *isifebe* (loose woman or whore). It was however found that in contrast to girls, boys have much greater social latitudes in terms of acceptable sexual behaviour and are encouraged (or even expected) by peers to engage in practices considered inappropriate for girls. This perspective was held by the majority of boys, irrespective of race.

**P3W:** *If she goes further then you start thinking 'wow dirty' if a girl you know kissed a guy then if you think if it went beyond kissing then you're like no*

**P1B:** *There's one girl that's in my grade\ she like\ she kisses a lot of guys\ but she doesn't do anything else but she's like\she kisses far more guys than other girls do stuff with\ so I'm like\ I don't know what makes it worse*

**P5W:** *Well maybe\ you see I'm not exactly the sharing type\so we don't like to get with a girl whom everyone knows what she's like\getting hot girls is that downside because you don't want to share*

**P8B:** *You just want to be the first one there*

These above extracts reflect the contradictory nature of boys' expectations of girls. It appeared that the boys expected to be *the first one there* as stated by P8B. This desire to be "*the first one there*" is akin to a pioneer mentality in which the conquest will be used, discarded and quickly forgotten. It seems that for boys, being the first one there reflects a sense of accomplishment and/or conquest. It also once again highlights the competitive nature of masculinity in which boys seem to constantly need to prove that they are better than the rest. In this way, being the first boy to have ever kissed or slept with the girl communicates a

message to other boys that he is superior to the rest of them. P5W's statement that he is not *the sharing type* speaks to the same issue. In both cases it appears, irrespective of race, that the boys view girls in quite a territorial manner. This need within boys to behave in this territorial manner and be the first one there reflects the internalisation of the assumption that men are in charge of the domain of sexuality (Shefer & Potgieter, 2006). Emerging out of the construction of men as highly sexual is the expectation that men should be in control of sexual relationships and assist women in this area. It seems that both P8B and P5W have positioned themselves in line with these discourses and therefore experience the need to reach these socially constructed expectations of men. Girls that do not wait for boys to "show them the ropes" (Shefer & Potgieter, 2006, p. 113) therefore can be argued to challenge a boys' sense of masculinity.

The boys also appeared to have quite a critical view of girls that were known to have kissed or dated a lot of boys. This was quite evident in both P3W and P1B's comments. For example, in the case of P1B, it seemed that even a girl who is not sexually experienced but has kissed lots of boys, and more importantly likes to kiss lots of boys, is viewed just as critically. Similarly, P3W explained how if a girl is open to do more things than kissing during the first time you are with her, then she is viewed as being *dirty*. It seems that for boys, irrespective of race, it is not correct for girls to be sexually adventurous and/or enjoy kissing lots of boys. These comments can therefore be argued to strip away any form of agency from the female body and is constructed as a territory for male recreation.

These narratives also give evidence to what Hollway (1989) refers to as the have-hold discourse. This discourse is not equally applied to men and women and therefore acts as a means of controlling girls' sexuality. The discourse promotes the view that for girls and women, sex should only take place in the confines of a committed heterosexual relationship. Shefer and Potgieter (2006) also argue that female sexuality has been constructed around relationships and love. Female sexuality is therefore only viewed as legitimate in connection to these. In such a way, both P3W and P1B's critical view of girls who are sexually experienced and who engage in sexual behaviour outside of committed relationships, reflects the power of these discourses in the subjugation of females who act in contradiction to this discourse. This negative perception of girls who are seen to step outside of prescribed feminine sexuality is understood within the confines of the Whore-Madonna dichotomy. According to Shefer and Potgieter (2006) women, and in this case girls, who are perceived as

promiscuous or sexually open, are constructed as unclean as compared to the clean and good girl who is asexual and passive in heterosexual relationships.

Once again, it also appears that the manner in which the boys describe girls and their expectations of girls reflects the objectification of females. By objectifying girls they seem to be afforded a lesser status with fewer choices and rights. This degradation of girls who are viewed as promiscuous was presented in P6B's comment that, '*she's just a friend then\ as opposed to being my lady.*' In this case, it seems that P6B has divided girls into different groups; that is, girls who are more sexually experienced are classed as friends, whereas girls who are inexperienced are perceived to be ladies. This differentiation reflects the perspective that girls who are sexually open are whores, dirty, and no longer perceived as ladies, whereas boys who act in this manner are perceived to be cool and masculine. According to Shefer (2004), gender has historically, and as is evidenced in this finding, is still constructed as comprised of difference. That is, through discourses, male and female categories are constructed as binary opposites. On a critical note, the problem with this difference discourse is that it fuels broader gender inequalities. In such a way, where it is perceived as the normal of boys to be sexually active due to girls being constructed as the binary opposite of boys, this behaviour is perceived as abnormal for them. These findings therefore highlight the double standard of sexuality in which, "men are encouraged to actively pursue sexuality and take multiple partners, while sexually active women are punished by being constructed as 'loose' and promiscuous" (Shefer & Potgieter, 2006, p. 113).

#### **4.5.4 Issues of Race and Multiracial Relationships**

In terms of this theme, it seemed that the boys also held different ideas pertaining to girls of different races. In most cases, it appeared that the boys were quite open about dating girls from different races. For example, P6B stated that, '*it doesn't matter what race*' in terms of girls he would date. Similarly, the researcher became aware that both P5W and P1B were in multiracial relationships at the time of the study. These accounts reflect a change within society quite unlike the past, especially during the Apartheid regime, where laws were in place to prevent mixed racial marriages from taking place. This statement by P6B also provides evidence of the colour-blind discourse. Childs (2002) notes that this discourse serves to de-emphasise the power and social importance that race holds, arguing that what is more imperative is the role of the individual. Similarly, the fact that both P5W and P1B

openly stated that they were in interracial relationships, indicates the way in which dating a girl from a different race group is a normal experience for them. These narratives and disclosures therefore collectively promote the view that interracial relationships are in no way different same race relationships (Jardine, 2003; Ratele, 2003).

However, as much as most of the boys in the study appeared quite open to the idea of multiracial relationships, it became evident that this is not the case in the school as a whole. This hypothesis was made based on the following statement made by P1B:

**P1B:** *When I got here the thought of a white guy being with a black girl\was like\ no one even thought about that and I was a little confused cos I didn't really get what the big deal was about*

It appears that for the majority of white boys in this school, going out with, kissing or sleeping with a black girl is not considered. The view that a white guy would never be with a black girl highlights the issue of race; that black girls are perceived as less than white girls. The power of these discourses surrounding the issue of dating a girl from a different race group is evident in his statement that *no one even thought about that*. It can be argued that these white boys have internalised the discourses during the Apartheid regime which cemented racial differences and positioned the white race group as superior to all the other race groups (Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

Even though the majority of the boys gave quite democratic or positive responses to the question on multiracial relationships, reflecting the colour-blind discourse (Childs, 2002) previously referred to, P3W provides an opposite view.

**P3W:** *But personally I think mixed relationships are kind of gross in a way. I just find it really gross. Like if a girl kissed a black guy, I am not gonna eject her from society but I am gonna be...I will be friends, and I will be best mates, and I will lend her money or something – getting involved with a girl who has been around the block is just not right*

Within this extract, P3W's conveys the belief that a multiracial relationship is *kind of gross*. It seems that P3W has positioned himself in line with essentialist assumptions that construct the various "race" groups as being innately and essentially different from each other, and in turn cementing the belief that people from different "race" groups should not engage in intimate or sexual relationships with each other (Jardine, 2003). In this way, he supports the view that where same-race relationships are normal, interracial relationships are not (Ratele,

2003). His statement that he would not date a girl who had kissed a black guy reflects the utilisation of a blatant racist discourse. Besides, indirectly stating that the black race group is gross, he seems to hold the assumption that the black race group is far more promiscuous than the white race group (Saint-Aubin, 2005). This perception reflects the subtle forces of racism still apparent in Post-Apartheid South Africa, as well as the role of race in constructing masculinity and femininity (Govender, 2006). As much as P3W appeared quite confident in his view concerning the issue of multiracial relationships, when it came to the context of the focus group, he remained silent on the issue. It can be hypothesised that within the context of the focus group in which black boys were present, he did not feel comfortable making this statement. This fluctuation in subjective positioning once again reflects the fluid and contradictory nature of masculinity. It seems that in the public arena of the group, P3W experienced less power and therefore positioned himself in a more politically appropriate manner.

**P8B:** *I think white girls in South Africa are\ they don't really hook up with blacks\ like at you know these places where there are a lot of white guys you \ you try talk to a white chick, you don't get anywhere*

This extract reflects the view held by black boys that white girls, especially in the South African context, represent a restricted category that only the privileged are allowed to access. It seemed that getting with or going out with a white girl was something the boys, particularly the black boys, strived for. Drawing on the arguments of Fanon (1986), this yearning and desire by black boys to date a white girl reflects the unconscious need to erase their black skin colour. Fanon (1986) contends that black men have internalised the racist discourses developed by white oppressors and in such a way believe themselves to be inferior. One way in which the black man can feel equal to the white man is by engaging in an intimate relationship with a white woman, “I wish to be acknowledged not as *Black* but as *White*... who but a White woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of White love. I am loved like a White man” (Fanon, 1986, p. 63). This construction of White girls also represents the internalisation of racist discourses that were promoted in Apartheid South Africa. However, besides the internalisation of these discourses this extract highlights the way in which racial differences still play an active role in South African society. In such a way, these extracts reflect the complex relationship between masculinity and race (Morrell, 2001).

#### 4.5.5 'Girls are players'

A different view of girls became evident in the boys' accounts. When examining literature on the topic of masculinity, what becomes evident is the stereotypical view of men as promiscuous. Females, on the other hand, are positioned as victims at the mercy of boys' exploitive behaviours. The boys in this research provided a different picture of these stereotypical views referring to the difficulties they experience finding trustworthy girlfriends.

**P6B:** *In this day and age\ um\ finding a girl who is loyal is very difficult\ like here in Jo'burg finding it's really hard. There is this thing that if she is loyal then she is...white girl she is more loyal, care about you, give you a hug when you are down. But black girls will be like why is this guy crying? White girl is there will tie your shoe laces for you*

**P8B:** *I think black chicks these days are dodgy\ black chicks are players\ they'll just play you man*

**P5W:** *Well, everyone seems to place the blame on the guy these days; everyone says it is normally the guy that cheats. But from my experience, girls do just as much as guys. Maybe even today, maybe even more so!*

It seems that, irrespective of race, boys perceive girls as difficult to trust in relationships. These extracts reflect a more vulnerable position of masculinity in contrast to hegemonic constructions which position boys as detached and independent (Seidler, 1991). Both P6B and P5W position themselves as victims of female betrayal and disloyalty. It can be argued that these quotations illustrate the way in which boys can become the victims of the hierarchical gender system which provides them with many advantages (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007). Due to hegemonic assumptions that boys and men are powerful, independent and afforded superior positions, little space is allowed for boys to receive support and understanding. That is, in most cases boys are assumed to be the ones who cheat in relationships and not girls. These extracts also highlight the perception held by black boys that black girls are 'dodgy' and 'players.' It seems that both P6B and P8B view black girls in a negative light arguing that unlike white girls they are difficult to trust in relationships. This perspective held by the black boys regarding black girls as disloyal can be argued to perpetuate the view that the black race group is promiscuous and a slave to their hormones (Saint-Aubin, 2005). As also seen in the previous theme, *Issues of Race and Multiracial relationships*, black boys perceive white girls as superior to black girls. On a critical note one

can argue that this negative perception of black girls and in turn idealisation can be understood in terms of the effects of psychological effects of racism (Fanon, 1986, in Hook, 2004<sup>2</sup>). By this it is meant that as a result of the internalisation of racist discourses the black individual aims to and dreams of being white. In such a way by perceiving black girls in this way it can be argued that the black boys are denying their blackness and attempting to become white.

#### 4.5.6 Gender Roles

In terms of gender roles, even though some of the boys referred to the effects of changes in contemporary society on traditional gender roles, most of the boys drew on essentialist arguments. These arguments are evident in the following two extracts:

**P8B:** *Okay black people who are older; I would say the woman in the relationship is maybe not as powerful. I think the man is the one who is supposed to work or something like that and the woman is supposed to stay at home*

**P7W:** *A woman is expected, or not expected but is supposed to stay home and look after the children and the man is supposed to go out and earn money*

Both extracts reflect the view, irrespective of race, that men are expected to be providers and breadwinners. Here it appears that P8B's beliefs have been influenced by those of his family and community who feel that it is very important that the man is the breadwinner of the household. It seems that in the case of the older generation of the black race group women have been afforded a less powerful position. Nevertheless, irrespective of race and cultural influence, it seems that both these boys perceive the natural role of males as financial providers (Morgan, 2001). In terms of these extracts, masculinity is primarily constructed as that of the material provider for their partners and for their families. These narratives therefore highlight the way in which patriarchal discourses which construct the role of the man at the top of the family hierarchy (Morgan, 2001) are still evident in contemporary South African society. In such a way, for a man to be perceived as masculine, he needs to be able to meet these hegemonic ideals (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Ratele et al., 2007). However, due to changes within contemporary South African society, men's abilities to reach these standards have become challenged. These changes are apparent in the following extracts:

**P8B:** *But nowadays I think that is changing because women are starting to work, and becoming powerful and equal. So I think that is like going away a bit*

**P5W:** *So I think for a high powered male executive to lose his job to a woman is...but emotionally can really dent his pride. It's a problem for [a man]*

It seems that P8B is quite open to the women taking on more active roles in society. This lack of apparent resistance to the changes in gender roles provides a different construction of black masculinity in which, as a result of cultural tradition, women have historically been subordinated to inferior positions. P5W on the other hand, speaks to the way in which men's dominant and privileged position has become undermined and challenged with changes in contemporary South African society. Women are seen as usurping roles that were previously held by men, thus creating feelings of insecurity and anxiety. This anxiety experienced by men illustrates what Walker (2005) refers to as the crisis of masculinity characterised by instability regarding gender roles and work.

However, the researcher did become aware of progressive accounts that reflected a form of masculinity that was in opposition to hegemonic constructions that did not allow space for men to be open to the ideas of others or take part in duties designated to the role of women.

**P6B:** *Just because you are confident and you are a man and you are big, does not mean that you can't accept other people's input, or listen to other people at some stage, or do what other people want for a change. That does not make you less of a man*

**P2B:** *I think the husband should also help out\ around the house\ like also be a caregiver and things*

In both these extracts, P6B and P2B position themselves in opposition to some feature of hegemonic masculinity; that is, it appears that P6B has internalised those constructions of masculinity which expect men to be big and confident. However, he simultaneously argues that it is important as a man that one listens to the opinions of others, and at times does what other people want. It seems that he is quite irritated with those men who assert their masculinity in a way that does not leave space for the needs of others. These extracts reflect what Butler (1993, in Pascoe, 2007) refers to as "doing gender differently" (pg. 151). That is, by boys acknowledging that gender roles can become more flexible and overlap, gender norms become destabilised. In such a way, these extracts challenge, "the naturalness of the categories of masculinity and femininity by destabilising the association of these identities with specific bodies" (Pascoe, 2007, p. 151).

## 4.6 Racialised Masculinities

The final theme that will be explored is that of racialised masculinities (Frosh et al., 2003<sup>1</sup>). The main purpose of this section is to explicitly explore the role of race in the shaping of boys' masculinities. It is evident in the interviews that race plays a role in the participants' masculinity. That is, as in the case of Motesemme's (2000, in Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007) research, the importance of boys' race in shaping their masculinity fluctuated from context to context. For example, where in certain cases boys did not see race as an important part of who they were, in other contexts, race became a strong sense of identity or the target of other boys' criticisms. Unlike in the case of white boys, there was a definite sense of pride associated with being a black boy. This lack of apparent focus on being white speaks to the way in which whiteness becomes a norm that is almost invisible (Donnelly, Cook, Van Ausdale & Foley, 2005). The importance placed on the boy's race and cultural roots seemed to stem from the conflict they experienced due to attending an affluent school. It appeared that the black boys in the study had managed to construct a positive sense of masculinity, in opposition to the non-hegemonic and subordinate position of black masculinity during the Apartheid regime.

Besides the internal conflicts black participants seemed to experience, what also became evident were the day-to-day challenges they faced as a result of their race. One of the main challenges was that of racism. However, it seemed that at times, white boys also had to endure the difficulty of racism as a result of being perceived as racists. This focus on race, especially in the sense of grouping boys, reflects the role of race in Post-Apartheid South Africa. That is, even though structural forms of racism no longer exist in the country, the manner in which boys are understood and treated as a result of the racial group, reflects the powerful influence of racist discourses in contemporary South African society. The following themes in terms of '*Racialised Masculinities*' are going to be discussed:

- Just being a boy irrespective of race
- Being a black boy and the invisibility of the colour white
- Cheese boys and Wiggers
- Racist!

#### 4.6.1 Just being a boy irrespective of race

When asking boys whether race played a role in defining who they were as boys, many of the participants interviewed implied that race did not matter. It seemed that for some boys they positioned themselves as boys, not as black or white. These boys seem to be drawing on what Childs (2002) refers to as the colour-blind discourse. As previously mentioned, colour-blindness or as Frankenberg (1993, in Childs, 2002) critically refers to it, colour-power evasiveness, refers to the process where race is viewed as insignificant and the importance of the individual is emphasised. This colour-blind discourse is evident in the following extracts,

**P6B:** *It just does not make sense because they are all the same, and they don't like // ya, it is all about getting drunk on the weekend and getting girls*

**P1B:** *I don't think it's a huge deal\ I see myself as a boy just as any other Indian or white boy\ so that's my opinion*

**P4W:** *Well to me it does not make a difference. If you ask me, what do you like about being a black guy, if I was black then I would also have a lot to tell you. I would have a lot to tell you about that. So I don't think white guys are better than being black. It's just different growing up // different cultures and stuff like that. I would not say it is better*

In these extracts, P6B, P1B and P4W provide non-judgmental views of different race groups. It seems that for all three boys, the race group to which they belong does not play a significant role in how they see themselves as boys. In the case of P6B, he seems to have positioned himself in line with hegemonic constructions of masculinity that promote risky behaviour and getting girls. It seems that for P6B, boys indulge in risk-taking behaviours irrespective of race. Both black and white boys drink and chase after girls. P1B seemed to provide quite a progressive account, describing himself just like any other Indian or white boy. P4W also provided quite a politically correct perspective. That is, by utilising the words 'different' instead of 'better' it seems that he is quite aware of not being perceived as racist. It seems that especially within the context of the focus group, none of the boys wanted to be perceived as racist. However, on a critical note, the problem with colour-blind discourse is that it ignores the power and privilege which has characterised race relations in this country. Drawing on Guinier and Torres's (2002, in Childs, 2002) argument, with specific relation to the context of South Africa, it is impossible to be colour-blind in a colour-conscious society like South Africa. It seems that with specific reference to the focus group, by attempting not to appear racist, issues of race were ignored in hope of providing socially accepted views to

the group. As much as these narratives appear to be progressive on the surface by ignoring race altogether, the positive aspects of the boys' race in shaping their masculinity, such as their culture, are also lost. Finally, the way in which both P1B and P4W have drawn on categories of race to describe different boys, reflects the process whereby pre-existing essential differences between racial groups produce different types of masculinities (Govender, 2006).

During the focus group, P5W talked to the way in which he and P6B were similar due to their shared class status. That is, instead of focussing on race as playing a part in identity construction; he argued that due to them going to the same school, their racial difference did not matter.

**P5W:** *Well there are similarities between me and {P6B} we're both privately schooled so\ I suppose when we speak of our specific generation there are similarities\ coz we're both being educated in the same way\ or mostly the same way\ so our actions and stuff like that will be pretty similar*

This extract highlights the role of class in the construction of masculinity. That is, where boys come from similar class backgrounds, racial difference seems to be unimportant. In such a way, P5W perceives himself to be similar to P6B, due to them sharing the same education and class position. This finding is in line with Motesemme's (2000, in Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007) argument that the importance of race in shaping masculinity fluctuates from context to context. That is, as evident in this extract, the fact P5W is a white boy and P6B is a black boy is inconsequential. However, on a critical note, this extract also highlights the previously mentioned colour-blind discourse (Childs, 2002), as much as racial differences seem not to matter, within a context like South Africa in which race has been and still is constructed as extremely significant, this narrative seems problematic.

Even though some of the boys presented more politically correct views pertaining to racial difference, others were more explicit in communicating their thoughts on the differences between race groups.

**P6B:** *It is different because white guys are different to black guys in – especially in South Africa*

**P5W:** *You know black people there's a lot of things that they believe in that we deem ridiculous. But obviously...we can't voice our opinions about that. So there's a big difference culturally*

Both extracts reflect the way in which society has constructed race groups in particular ways. That is, it seems for P6B, black and white boys are different, especially as a result of the impact of South African society, both past and present. Even though he did not go into detail or explain in what way black and white boys are different, based on the history of the country, it can be argued that these boys experienced extremely different situations, standards of living and opportunities as a result of the colour of their skin. Where black boys were ostracised, disadvantaged, stigmatised and had to endure structural inequalities, white boys enjoyed the privileges and the opportunities that came with being white (Duncan, 2003). His comment that white and black boys are very different can be argued to be quite an honest one. That is, instead of attempting to deny the realities of racial difference, he non-defensively communicated the realities of the South African situation.

P5W, on the other hand, appears to have positioned himself in line with hegemonic standards of masculinity in which white boys are perceived as exemplifying an ideal form of masculinity. The use of the word '*ridiculous*' when describing the beliefs of the black race group reflects the internalisation of racist attitudes promoted during the Apartheid regime. That is, during this time, black masculinity was constructed as a non-hegemonic and subordinate form of masculinity. P5W appears to view black people's cultural practices as barbaric, uncivilised and out-dated. He wants to criticise black people's cultural practices, but is afraid that he is going to be perceived as racist. It can be argued that the school culture is one which does not condone racist discourses. This argument is based on the school principles initial concern that communicating to the boys that the researcher needed specifically black and white boys would facilitate the awareness of racial difference. It seems that, especially within contemporary South African society, being perceived as racist is something that both white people and historically white institutions fear and attempt to avoid. The implications of being perceived as racist are evident in an article in the Weekend Argus (McIntosh, 2008). In 2004, due to expatriate Bronwyn McIntosh writing an internet article entitled Dangers of South Africa: Fear of Crime she was denounced as a racist by the former president Thabo Mbeki. In his ANC newsletter in October 2004 he drew further attention to the article by calling it racist. Similarly, the constitution of South Africa is one which contains a strong anti-racist component (Duncan, 2003). Post-apartheid South African society can therefore be

argued to be one in which no tolerance exists for people, especially white people, who are perceived as being as racist. However, his use of the word 'we' reflects an attempt to collude with the researcher, being white, which allows the derogation of black cultural beliefs as 'ridiculous.' In this way P5W also created a collusive position of racial superiority with the researcher.

#### **4.6.2 Being a black boy and the invisibility of the colour white**

When analysing the boys' narratives, what became evident was the important role that being black played for the black boys in shaping how they saw themselves as boys. However, in the case of the white boys, none of them referred directly to the importance of being white. This lack of reference to white provides evidence that to some extent being white has become normalised. That is, due to whiteness taking on such a normative permission, especially within the context of South African society, it seems to become almost invisible (Donnelly et al., 2005).

It seemed that being black provided a great sense of pride for black boys. These findings are similar to Sewell's (1997, in Frosh et al., 2003<sup>1</sup>) study in which many of the black boys located themselves in 'a phallogocentric framework.' That is, within this study, the black boys tended to position themselves as superior to white and Asian students in terms of creativity, style, sexual attractiveness and dress sense or style. Similarly, within this research, black boys communicate a positive sense of being 'black':

**P6B:** *Black boys, even in this school, I have noticed, black boys they seem to just have culture, they just seem to be more free, they seem to be more diverse. White boys are like the same, they just // it is like they are the same type of guy wherever you go*

**P8B:** *When I am older, I would like to be black and successful*

Both extracts reflect a positive construction of black masculinity. It seems that both P6B and P8B have positioned themselves in line with a new form of black masculinity, one which reflects a sense of pride due to being black. This positioning reflects a form of black masculinity which seems to reject the previously-held view within South African society that white masculinity reflected the ultimate form of masculinity. According to Duncan (2003) as much as racism has an extremely constraining influence on the human agency of the target

group, wherever it manifests itself opposing and anti-racist discourses will be found. In such a way P6B's statement that white boys are all the same and have no culture reflects a negative representation of the white other. It can be argued that by othering white boys and constructing them as inferior, black boys are able to defend against whites' attempts to demean and dehumanise them (Duncan, 2003). Unlike white boys, black boys are seen to have a rich sense of culture and diversity. It is these characteristics which appear to provide black boys with a sense of pride; that is, instead of positioning themselves in line with violent forms of masculinity, these black boys reflect a more positive development of black masculinity. This sense of pride was evident in the majority of the photographs taken by P6B. That is most of the photographs that he took were of people in his family, famous black men and traditional pots (Photograph O & P, Appendix K).

It also appears that both P6B and P8B are drawing on black consciousness philosophy and discourse by taking pride in their colour (Ratele, 2006). By black consciousness it is meant the process whereby black individuals come together due to "the blackness of their skin – and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude" (Biko, 2002, p. 49). That is, in order for political freedom to transpire, the black mind, as argued by Biko (1972, in Hook<sup>1</sup>, 2004), needs to be psychological and culturally liberated. The positive attitudes and the pride that both these participants communicate reflect what Biko (1978) refers to as the process of correcting false self-images. In such a way, unlike the findings of Sewell (1997, in Frosh et al., 2003<sup>1</sup>), instead of reinforcing white racist stereotypes of black men, these boys seem to resist them. This positive construction of black masculinity is evident in the above extract in which P8B states that he wants to grow up to be black and successful. It seems that for P8B, being black reflects a sense of success.

However, as much as the black boys communicated a positive view of black masculinity, they also highlighted the many obstacles and challenges they face due to attending an elite private school.

**P8B:** *I think you do feel like bad in a way, because they're not getting the same opportunity as you are. I feel sometimes bad that they are not getting the same opportunity as I am. And I just choose not to talk about // like when I am around people, even if they ask how much is your school; I say I don't know because I just do not wanna talk about it*

**P2B:** *It's like I don't even know my language/ it's disappeared coz I could get used to speaking than other people/there's nothing I could do about it*

**PIB:** *If I said in my English class there are three black people in the whole class, and personally as being a black South African, the pressure on me is higher to do well and to do better for myself because my parents, or the guy sitting next to me, his parents seem // their perceiving is that it might not be true, but they worked harder than the white guys sitting three tables down. If a black // even if Nelson Mandela or the black guy standing on the [road], walking to the [room], they expect something of me because I am a black South African boy, and I am a privileged South African boy*

All three extracts highlight the daily struggles that black boys who attend elite schools in the South African context endure. That is, as much as they appear proud to attend the school, they also experience negative feelings. Duncan (2003) contends that one cannot negate the destructive impact of racism on the social, political, economic and psychological reality of the majority of South Africans. Even though the black boys in the study have not experienced the economic hardships that the majority of South Africans have had and still have to endure as a result of apartheid, it can be argued that they still endure the psychological impact of these racist discourses. P8B appears to be experiencing a deep sense of guilt for attending such an elitist school when the majority of black boys in South Africa have not been afforded the same opportunities as him. One way in which he seems to cope with this guilt is to deny it. That is, when interacting with black boys who ask him the cost of his school fees, he chooses not to engage in such discussions. His inability to talk about the cost of the school fees, once again reflects the difficulties many black boys who attended privileged schools experience. It seems that P8B fears being seen as an ‘AmaBhujwa’, a term used to refer to black boys who attend Model C or private schools (Stevens & Lockhat, 2003). It appears that P8B does not want to be perceived by other boys as better than them because he attends a private school or judged because he comes from a rich family. In such a way, in order to defend against this, and to prevent this from transpiring, he is forced to present a certain image of himself in front of his black peers, an image of what he and other black boys perceive to be a ‘real’ black boy.

The quotation, including P2B’s comment that he does not know his home language, highlights one of the sacrifices black boys experience due to attending previously white schools. It appears that by integrating with white culture, many black boys may begin to lose a sense of their traditional culture and even their native language. In order to appease his guilt and shame, it seems that P2B’s inability to speak his home language is understood as something that he had no control over. By stating that it disappeared and that there was nothing he could do, he seems to be justifying his transition away from black culture. It can be

argued that P2B is struggling with a loss of identity. Drawing on the arguments of Fanon (1986, in Hook<sup>1</sup>, 2004), it seems as if P2B has become alienated and estranged from his own race. According to Fanon (1986), through structural oppression, the black individual's mind becomes colonised, resulting in constant feelings of inferiority and worthlessness. It can be argued that P2B has lost a sense of his blackness due to being unable to speak his traditional language, and in turn has positioned himself in closer proximity to the white race group. Fanon (1986, in Hook<sup>2</sup>, 2004) critically contends that through the process of adopting the culture and language of the white race group the black subject perceives themselves as both subjectively and intellectually white.

P1B talked to the expectations that society, especially other black people, have of black boys who go to privileged South African schools. It seems that privileged black boys are not only expected to be successful by virtue of being boys, but also because they are black. That is, privileged black boys are expected to work hard so as to make up for all the past inequalities that the black Nation experienced and still experience as a result of the Apartheid regime. It seems that for P1B he is determined to defy the stereotype of black people as incompetent and not good enough. He wants to prove that black people are good enough and are competent. The use of Nelson Mandela's image in this quote indicates the way in which the participant is positioning himself in line with a new form of 'heroic masculinity' in contemporary South African society. According to Morrell (2005), Nelson Mandela epitomises a new form of masculinity, one which encompasses patience, peace, domestic responsibility, compassion, democracy and introspection.

#### **4.6.3 Cheese Boys and Wiggers**

Research in the area of black boys who attend schools in white suburbs has explored the way in which other black boys or white boys have labelled these boys as sell-outs or as trying to be white. These boys, in previous research, have been labelled as AmaBhujwa', 'AmaCoconuts' and 'cheese boys' by black youth who see them as traitors (Durrheim & Mtose, 2006).

**P3W:** *Black on the outside and white on the inside*

**P5W:** *Even like the blacks here they seem to have fairly white characteristics because they are the upper class*

**P6B:** *I don't care. Like I said I don't really care. If people are gonna be sour because I have more money than them then they can kiss my ass... At the end of the day if I just look at it like; if one of them called me a cheese boy at the end of the day, their dad cleans my dad's car. I have no sympathy towards those people. I don't care*

**P1B:** *Ja\ gees this coconut thing\ it's so stupid\ like well ja I mean my accent isn't really the black sort of stereotype thing so people give me all that rubbish but I've really just learnt to get over that\ I mean you can't make everyone happy all the time*

These extracts highlight the way in which black boys who attend this elite school are seen as trying to be white. It seems that in this case, race and class are intertwined to influence black boys' sense of masculinity. For example, P5W describes the black boys at the school as having white characteristics due to being upper class. It seems that being white is equated with being upper class and being black with lower class. In such a way, race is seen as being associated with class. However, what also emerges is a sense that having white characteristics is far better than having black characteristics and that if a boy is upper class, irrespective of race, he will be assumed to possess white characteristics. These findings reflect the way in which white masculinity and hegemonic masculinity are perceived as one and the same within contemporary South African society. On a critical note it seems that black boys are expected to shift and embrace white culture, but not the other way round. Both P5W and P3W's comments reflect more subtle racist discourses. It seems that they have positioned themselves within the in-group, viewing the other, in this case black boys, as wanting to become like them. According to Duncan (2003) through this process the self is represented in the superior in-group while the other, in this case, the black boys, are seen as belonging to the fragmented and inferior out-group.

In terms of the black boys, these above-mentioned extracts reflect the boys' personal experiences of being ridiculed or perceived as traitors due to attending a previously white boys' school. Both P6B and P1B appear to be quite irritated and angry with being labelled 'cheese boys' and 'coconuts.' That is, both of them came across as quite defensive in the interviews, arguing that they have learnt to not be affected by these comments. In order to defend against these attacks, P6B appears to be quite uncaring, arguing that no matter what other black boys feel, he is still in a superior social position than they are. During the interview P6B came across quite arrogant in terms of not caring what other black boys think about him. Nevertheless, the researcher did get a sense that this arrogance was a defence against the pain he feels due to constantly being judged by other black boys. Similarly, P1B

argues that he cannot please everybody all the time. However, on a deeper level, it seems that as much as black boys argue that they are not affected by these attacks; their defensive and angry responses indicate that these experiences are not something that they enjoy. By stating that his accent is not the typical black accent, P1B also appears to be drawing on discourses which reduce individuals to their biological differences. That is, it is assumed that black individuals speak in a specific way, and that if a black boy does not possess the correct accent then he is no longer seen as an authentic black boy. In such a way, accent seems to represent an important part of identity and cultural capital for boys. According to Bourdieu (1985) cultural capital is knowledge, skills, education and advantages that people gain through the process of socialisation. In terms of language, Bourdieu (1985) refers to linguistic capital. By this it is meant as the mastery of and relation to language. In the case of P1B it seems that he is battling to develop a strong sense of linguistic capital due to the criticisms he receives for speaking with a white accent. This lack of cultural capital can therefore be argued for the reason that some black boys experience a loss of identity when speaking with a 'white' accent.

However, not only did the researcher become aware of black boys being perceived as trying to be white, but what also emerged was a sense that many white boys in the school were trying to be black. It seemed that black masculinity had become constructed as a popular form of masculinity that many white boys strived towards. The term used to refer to white boys trying to be black boys is that of 'wigger'. The term Wigger or wigga is the slang word given to a white person who emulates mannerisms, slang and fashion stereotypically associated with urban African Americans and urban black British and Caribbean culture (Stadler, 2008). According to P5W, a wigger is the name that one uses when referring to, 'A *white guy that is black.*' During the individual interview, P5W described the way in which, on more than one occasion, he had experienced being called a wigger due to his love of basketball, a perceived black sport.

**P5W:** *Ya...plenty of times, which is not helped by the fact that I play basketball. So it has happened plenty of times before, but for me it has never been a problem. Because it is what I enjoy, so I really couldn't care about what other guys think about it*

It seems that P5W is not that affected by being called a wigger as a result of him playing a sport that has been constructed as a black sport. However, his experiences highlight the way in which at times, race plays a central role in shaping boys' masculinity and everyday

experiences. That is, instead of being perceived as a boy who enjoys basketball, he is constructed as a white boy trying to be a black boy. On a critical note, it can be argued that through embracing the wigger identity, white boys are able to prevent themselves from being seen as racist. It can be argued that even if P5W did not outwardly express this, he is experiencing a level of white guilt. According to Steele (1990), white guilt stems from the realisation that due to being white, white people have received many advantages that the black race group has not. This feeling of guilt, as argued by Steele (1990), is one which resides within all white people to a lesser or great causing a continuing racial vulnerability and openness to racial culpability. Feelings which can be argued to be exacerbated in the context of contemporary South African society in which being political correct and embracing of all race groups is promoted.

Unlike previous research which has noted the way in which black boys have been positioned as trying to be white (Bhana, 2006; Durrheim & Mtose, 2006; Gibson & Merighi, 1994), what has emerged in this research is the view that there are a lot more white boys trying to be black.

**P4W:** *I think more white guys are trying to be black, than black guys trying to be white. I do not know why that is // ya. I do not know why that is. But I think it has got a lot to do with culture and who you are. I mean a black guy, coming from a rich background, a rich culture and stuff like that wouldn't want to be a white guy; whereas a white guy that's got no heritage behind him, no culture, he would find being one of the black guys appealing and try to be one of them*

**P2B:** *I also know some white boys trying to act like blacks*

Both of these quotations comment on how white boys within the school context are trying to act or be like black boys. It seems that unlike the case of Apartheid, black masculinity is being positioned in line with popular masculinity, a form of masculinity that boys aspire to be like. P4W describes the reason that white boys want to be like black boys is due to the rich background and culture that black boys have. That is, instead of drawing on stereotypes of black males as violent and physically strong, black boys are understood positively as having culture and heritage. It seems that white boys are becoming unhappy with the individualistic culture promoted by white masculinity. That is, as much as white boys experience the structural and economic benefits of this culture, on a personal level it appears that they are yearning for the collective and supportive culture that many black race groups promote.

It can be argued that a shift has taken place within South African society in which much pride stems from the rainbow nation metaphor (Habib, 1996). The discourse that this metaphor promotes is one of equality and togetherness irrespective of racial and cultural difference. It can therefore be argued that this shift in the sense of more white boys wanting to be like black boys reflects the internalisation of patriotism and the pride of being African.

#### 4.6.4 Racist!

According to Frosh et al. (2003<sup>1</sup>, p. 165) “the experience of racism is itself a major marker of racialised identities in boys’ lives.” The way in which racism is connected to race is a very apparent characteristic of South African society both past and present. Duncan (2003) contends that up until the 1990s race remained a significant symbolic marker for distinguishing which race groups received entitlements and opportunities and which did not. For example until its demise in 1994 the Apartheid Government arranged individuals according to four main race groups, namely whites, Indians (Asians), coloureds and Africans. In terms of this racial segregation the white race group was constructed as the most pure and the African race group as the most impure of all the race groups. According to Duncan (2003, p. 139), “as ideology, racism can therefore be considered as a set of ideas and discursive and material practices aimed at (re)producing and justifying systematic inequalities between ‘races’ or racialised groups”.

When analysing the interviews, the researcher became aware of the black boys experience of racism in the school context as well as the difficulties that white boys experience due to being perceived as racists. However, even though legislated racial inequality no longer exists within post-Apartheid South Africa, the following extracts illustrate the way in which racism is still very much a part of post-Apartheid South African society.

**P6B:** *There are racist guys here. Even the parents, some of the women, the wives, the way they look at you, it's just // even when you say; good morning, they walk past and they ignore you. The most racism we've got here is from the white mothers*

**P1B:** *Oh ja well\ just like for example we've got a boy in my standard who makes it quite clear that he doesn't like other races\ and he's sort of clear cause he is quite a hot shot big guy who is got his own little... ja\ that's what it's always like. It's definitely an issue\ some people deny it but that's how it is*

**P4W:** *I think in South Africa at this time; a lot of white guys would be racist // okay, no I think being a white guy these days is that if you had to say something about a black guy or to a black guy, you would be racist*

**P5W:** *I mean when people say racism everyone immediately seems to think whites hate blacks. But no one seems to consider that black people might have a hatred for whites*

In the context of the individual interviews, both P6B and P1B provided accounts of racism within the school. It seems that the boys felt able to disclose their personal views on the topic due to the realisation that their anonymity would be protected. In such a way, they could talk about these issues without having to worry about the ramifications of disclosing that a school which appears to be extremely race-conscious consists of boys who act in blatantly racist manners. When discussing his experiences, P6B became quite emotional; that is, he seemed very upset that when attempting to greet the boys' mothers, especially white mothers, he would be ignored. Once again, black boys appear to be judged primarily on the basis of their race. P1B referred to an extremely racist white boy in his standard. It seems that because this boy is quite a 'hot-shot' in the school, his racist attitudes remain unchallenged. In such a way, both hegemonic masculinity and racism work together in the subjugation of black boys in the school context. That is even though legislated racial inequality is no longer evident in South African society many people still seem to be positioning themselves in line with racist discourses and acting on these (Duncan, 2003).

In terms of the white boys' quotations, they position themselves as victims of constantly being perceived as being racists due to being white. Both P4W and P5W describe the way in which when individuals hear the word 'racism' they perceive the white race group to be the perpetrators and tend to overlook the possibility that the black race group could in fact be racist. P5W appears to be quite angry with constantly being viewed as racist due to being white. On a critical note, it cannot be denied that many black people within South African probably experience extremely negative feelings towards the white race group. However, this acknowledgement does not take away from the many years of subjugation and oppression black people endured in this country.

## 4.7 Conclusion

It appears from the above results and discussion that masculinity is complex, multiple and constantly changing depending on the context. This complexity became even more apparent when examining the role of race in the construction of the boys' masculinities. When analysing the boys accounts across the main themes, namely *On being a boy; Compulsory heterosexuality and the male sex drive; Talking about girls, and Racialised masculinities*, what became evident were the multiple and conflicting positions constructed by the boys irrespective of race.

In terms of the first theme, *On being a boy*, what became evident was that the boys' had definite ideas pertaining to what it means to be a boy. These ideas reflected the powerful influence of hegemonic discourses in shaping boys' understandings of what constitutes being a boy. However, as much as some of the boys positioned themselves in line with hegemonic ideals, other boys embraced alternative voices of masculinity. The latter narratives therefore provide a level of resistance to hegemonic masculinity, critiquing macho styles and rejecting risk-taking behaviours associated with norms and practices of hegemonic masculinity. One major component of being a boy was explored in the second them, *Compulsory heterosexuality and the male sex drive*. By this it is meant that most of the boys viewed heterosexual relationships as a natural part of being a boy. One important dimension of these relationships, be they casual or serious, was the need within most of the boys to be sexually fulfilled. These narratives reflected the biological discourse of the male sex drive that needs satisfaction (Hollway, 1989). The researcher became aware of the way in which the boys' narratives, especially in the focus group, seemed to represent the reinforcement of certain gender dynamics in which women are constructed as sexual objects to satisfy boys' sexual desires. However, as much as the majority of the boys supported the above discourse of masculinity, some progressive accounts also did emerge.

In order to reinforce their sense of masculinity the boys, irrespective of race, tended to construct themselves in opposition to femininity. Theme three, *Boys talking about girls*, therefore aimed to explore the role of girls in the construction of masculinity. According to Frosh et al. (2003<sup>1</sup>), boys' accounts of girls and women play important roles in the process through which boys construct their masculine identity. By comparing themselves to girls and in opposition to femininity, it appears that the boys were continually striving to develop a

sense of who they were as boys. Finally, theme four, *Racialised masculinities*, aimed to specifically explore the role of race in the construction of young adolescent masculinity. As in the case of Motesemme's (2000, in Gibson & Lindegaard, 2007) research, the importance of boys' race in shaping their masculinity fluctuated from context to context. For example, where in certain cases boys did not see race as an important part of who they were, in other contexts, race became a strong sense of identity or the target of other boys' criticisms.

Throughout the themes what became evident was the pressure that young boys experience to conform to hegemonic constructions of masculinity, especially popular constructions of masculinity within the school context. For example what emerged was a sense that boys constantly need to prove their masculinity. It seemed that the boys were constantly struggling to aspire to the idealisation of hegemonic masculinity (Seidler, 1989, 1991). The school appeared to play a central role in the supporting and perpetuating of hegemonic constructions of masculinity within contemporary South African society. For example as much as the school positioned itself as anti-racist an analysis of the boys' narratives highlighted the subtle forces of racism and racial difference in South African society. However, as much as most of the boys tended to position themselves in line with hegemonic constructions of masculinity what also became evident were opposing and conflicting narratives. Besides those boys who took up dominant positions what also became evident were those boys who reflected a level of uncertainty and fragility in their accounts. Moreover, this study gives evidence to the internal complexity and contradictory nature of masculinity, as depending on the context different forms of masculinity emerged. For example what became apparent were the discrepancies in the accounts given in the individual interviews and focus groups.

According to Ratele (2008), "even though analyses have shown that there are multiple, fluid forms of masculinity (Connell, 2005), there is a tendency to deploy the term as if it is a synonym for trunk-sized biceps, deep voice, gun in hand, laddish habits, unflagging sexual stamina or a more or less similar set of traits or unchanging behaviours" (p. 521). By providing a space for the boys, both black and white, to account for their masculinity and their understandings of being boys, this research aimed to move away from this tendency. However, an acknowledgement of boys' vulnerabilities and challenges should not be seen to negate the political dimensions of gender relations and what boys do to maintain power (Chadwick & Foster, 2007; Whitehead & Barrett, 2001). It can be argued that it is important to explore the current attitudes and perceptions of adolescent boys in contemporary society

and the role of race in influencing these perceptions. In such a way instead of constructing boys' as a homogenous and problematic group this research was able to provide insight into boys' vulnerabilities and contradictory positions, which have been obfuscated due to this dominant view of masculinity.

**CHAPTER 5**  
**LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**  
**FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

## 5.1 Limitations of the study

Even though one of the strengths of working with a small sample when conducting qualitative research and analysis is the rich and detailed data that it provides (Durrheim, 2006), the limitation of this method is that it limits the generalisation of the findings. Due to the research only being conducted with eight participants, (four white boys and four black boys) the findings cannot be taken as a general representation of all black and white adolescent South African boys' experiences and realities.

Another limitation of qualitative research is the subjectivity of the researcher. The researcher was aware of the implications of her race and gender impacting on the validity of the findings and therefore aimed to minimise the negative impacts this may have on the accuracy of the findings, as seen in Chapter Three. Discussion with a supervisor as well as the constant re-reading of the transcripts and the findings served to limit the influence of subjective views and personal discourse in the analysis stage of the research. However, the analysis and organisation of the results cannot be regarded as objectively definitive, and therefore the discussion is acknowledged as offering only one of many possible sets of interpretations.

Due to being able to elicit responses and information on these topics, it can be argued that the researcher was able to establish sufficient rapport to allow the participants to feel comfortable. Nevertheless, some of the boys did state at the end of the individual interview that they would have felt more comfortable discussing these sensitive issues if a man had interviewed them.

One other possible limitation of this research became evident during the focus group. That is, the researcher became aware of the way in which the boys who knew each other or were friends would engage in conversations with each other or support each other's views. In the case of boys who did not have any friends in the group or had not met any of the boys before, they remained relatively silent in the group. As much as the researcher attempted to limit the negative impact of this by encouraging the silent boys to talk and by breaking up the smaller in-group cliques, the researcher acknowledges the limitations of these developments on the accuracy of the findings. That is, due to the voluntary nature of the study as well as time constraints, the researcher selected boys on a "first come, first serve" basis. Another possible impact of the voluntary nature of the research is that the participants may have felt

pressurised to give socially desirable responses. It is also possible that the participants may have produced certain responses that were not in line with their true experiences as a result of the knowledge that they were part of a study (Hawthorne Effect) (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991).

Even though the researcher drew on a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A) during the interview process, spontaneous probing and the use of different wording on the part of the researcher may have negatively affected the consistency of the findings across interviews and elicited information in a way that confirmed her preconceived assumptions on the topic. The use of open-ended questions may also have prompted participants into providing ambiguous or vague answers. Finally, the participants may not always have understood the questions the researcher asked in the same way.

In terms of the focus group, even though the boys were informed of the starting time, many were late and as a result, some of the boys had to leave the focus group before it ended. That is, by the end of the 90 minutes, only four boys from the original eight were left; two white boys and two black boys. The researcher is aware that this could negatively influence the accuracy of the data collected, but due to the participants only leaving towards the end of the focus group it can be argued that this will be a minimal one.

Both the individual interviews and the focus group were audio recorded. It is therefore possible that the participants' awareness of this may have prevented them from expressing themselves openly.

## **5.2 Implications for future research**

When writing up the discussion section of this research and reflecting on the possible limitations of the study, the researcher became aware of the complex nature of young masculinities and how she had merely explored the tip of the iceberg. It is therefore advised that further research be conducted in the area of young masculinities with specific regard to the South African context. Due to the small size of the sample it would be effective to conduct further research to explore how adolescent boys of different races negotiate multiple voices of masculinity in the context of Post-Apartheid South Africa. It would also be helpful

to conduct research in which same-race and mixed-race groups are utilised so as to examine the extent that race and race differences impact on boys' masculine presentations.

Based on the majority of the boys' comments that it was enjoyable to have a space in which they could openly think about and discuss issues about being boys' it can be argued that it is important to develop a legitimate space in which boys' can express themselves. Frosh et al. (2003<sup>1</sup>) argue for the importance of giving boys a place to talk and express their feelings and thoughts. It can therefore be argued that interventions should be developed at the aim of giving boys' a space to discuss their experiences. In such a way instead of constructing boys' as a problematic and homogenous group further research should be conducted with the aim of unpacking the complexity and contradictory nature of masculinity. It is hoped that this will allow for the development of more positive forms of masculinity to emerge.

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# **LIST OF APPENDICES**

## **Appendix A: Interview schedule adapted from Frosh et al. (2003<sup>1</sup>)**

- **Introduction**

1. Your name.....
2. Your age .....
3. Your grade.....
4. Number of siblings and your place in the family.....

### **A. Being a boy**

- How do you define being a boy?
- What does it mean for you to be a boy?
- What does it mean for you to be a black or white boy?
- What are the differences between black and white boys?
- What do black or white boys do to make them boys?
- What have been or are the influences on your identity as a boy?
- What do you like about being a black or white boy?
- What don't you like about being a black or white boy?
- In relation to black boys explore issues of being called coconuts and cheese boys. Does it affect them? Yes or No, explore
- Are some boys more popular than others at school? What makes them popular?
- Are some boys unpopular? Why?
- What different kinds of boys are there in your school?
- What kinds of groups do you fit into? What is this like?
- Do black or white boys behave differently on issues of sexuality, HIV/AIDS, substance use, crime and violence)

### **B. Boys and risk-taking behaviours (e.g. Sexuality, HIV/AIDS, substance use, crime and violence)**

- What is risky or dangerous about being a boy today? What is particularly risky for

you?

- What do you think makes boys do dangerous things (e.g. substance abuse, violence, gangs and crime)? Can you give an example of risky thing you or some other boy you know has done and why they did it?
- Why are boys more likely to take certain risks than girls?
- How do you deal about peer pressure from friends?
- Is it possible for boys to resist peer pressure? Can you give an example of how you resisted peer pressure?
- Why would a boy have a girlfriend?
- In general, what age do boys in your community start having sex?
- Who educates boys about sex?
- What reason would a boy have for having sex?
- Is it possible for boys to abstain from having sexual relationships?
- What do boys say about boys who do not engage in risk-taking behaviours?

### **C. Alternative masculinity**

- Are there alternative ways of being a black or white boy?
- What kind of boy would you like to be? Do you ever imagine becoming different to other boys in your community? Tell me more about this
- What would you need to make this happen?

### **D. Family, context and class.**

- Who are your role models in your life and in the community? Why?
- What makes men powerful?

### **E. Reflections**

- How did you find the interview?
- Would it have been different if there had been girls present?
- Would it have been different if it had been a black male interviewer or white male interviewer?

## Appendix B: Consent form for school principle



### School of Human & Community Development

Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500

Fax: (011) 717 4559



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### Consent form for School Principal

I \_\_\_\_\_ school principal of \_\_\_\_\_ agree that Robyn-Leigh Smith, a Masters in Community Counselling Psychology student at the University of the Witwatersrand, will conduct a research study at our school to explore multiple voices of masculinity amongst school boys in a private multi-racial school in Gauteng.

As school principal I have read the information sheet and allow this research study to take place at our school. In the study, learners will be given disposable camera, asked to participate in the individual interviews and focus groups. The interviews and focus group will take place after school hours on the school premises.

I am aware that I may withdraw my school from the study at any time and it will not be held against my school or learners in any way. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and no information that may identify school or learners will be included in the research report.

I hereby consent for my school to participate in this research project.

School's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Information sheet for parents/guardians



### School of Human & Community Development

Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500

Fax: (011) 717 4559



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### Information sheet for parents/guardians

Dear Parent/ Guardian

Hello, my name is Robyn-Leigh Smith. I'm currently completing a Masters in Community-Counselling Psychology at the University of Witwatersrand. One requirement of the Masters course involves the completion of a research project. The research that I am conducting aims to explore the social construction of masculinity amongst boys in a private multi-racial school. By discussing issues of masculinity with adolescent boys I aim to gain an understanding of what it means to be a boy. This is an important research project to understand how adolescent boys in Johannesburg develop and live different versions of masculinity.

I wish to invite your child to participate in my Masters Research project. Should you agree that your son may participate; your son will be given a disposable camera and asked to take twenty four pictures with the theme "My life as a boy". Arrangements will be made by the researcher to collect and process the photos. The printed photos will be returned to your son. Your son will then be invited to participate in an individual interview, as well as a focus group with another four boys. In the individual interview, which will last approximately an hour, your son will be asked to discuss his photos and questions will be asked to gain clarity. In the focus group, which will last approximately an hour, your son and the other boys, will be asked to choose five photos that best describe their lives as boys and share their views about boyhood amongst each other. The individual interviews and focus group will take place

after school hours on the school premises. By allowing your child to take part in this study you will be helping the researcher in this project to better understand how young boys develop their boyhood or manhood within the context of a private multi-racial school. The research also aims to promote alternative ways of understanding masculinity.

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw your child from the study at any time and it will not be held against you or your child in any way. Your son's identity will be kept strictly confidential and his privacy is assured. However, it should be noted that in the focus groups, due to its group nature, even though confidentiality will be discussed, it cannot be guaranteed. Nevertheless, no identifying information will be included in the research report. The data (transcripts, tapes and photos) will be kept in a safe and secure location in the psychology department with restricted access to only my supervisor and me. The data collected in the study may be used as a part of a larger research study that my supervisor Malose Langa is conducting, and therefore the raw data will only be destroyed once this is completed and accepted for qualification. Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the topic counselling, post probably with the school psychologist, will be made available to your son if required. Finally, the results will be made available to you in the form of a 1 page summary.

Your child's participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. If you allow your son to participate in the study please will both you and your son fill in your details on the forms below and tell your son to give them back to the researcher.

Should you have any questions you may contact the researcher on 082 9327 083.

Thank-you

Yours sincerely

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Robyn-Leigh Smith (Student – Masters in Community-Counselling Psychology)

School of Community and Human Development

Discipline of Psychology

Wits

Private bag 3

2050

Tel: 0829327083

Email address: robynleigh.smith@gmail.com

Supervisor's details

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Malose Langa (Counselling Psychologist and Lecturer)

School of Community and Human Development

Discipline of Psychology

Wits

Private bag 3

2050

Tel: (011) 717-4536

Email address: malose.langa@wits.ac.za

**NB:** Please note that even with your permission, it is your child's choice whether or not he wishes to participate in the research project.

## Appendix D: Consent form for parents/guardians



### School of Human & Community Development

Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500

Fax: (011) 717 4559



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### Consent form for parents/guardians

I have read the information sheet and understood what the research project involves. My child may participate in the study, will be given disposable camera, asked to participate in the individual interview and focus group.

I am aware and understand that:

- I may withdraw my child from the study at any time and it will not be held against me or my child in any way.
- There are no direct benefits in the participation of this study
- This is a minimal risk study
- Participation for this interview is entirely voluntary
- No information that may identify my son will be included in the research report
- There are limitations in the guaranteeing of confidentiality and anonymity

I hereby consent for my child to participate in this research project. I also give Robyn-Leigh Smith permission for my child's results and direct quotes to be used in the write up of this study.

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E: Participant Information sheet



### School of Human & Community Development

Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500

Fax: (011) 717 4559



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### Participant Information sheet

Dear Participant

Hello, my name is Robyn-Leigh Smith. I am currently completing a Masters in Community-Counselling Psychology at the University of Witwatersrand. One requirement of the Masters course involves the completion of a research project. The research that I am conducting aims to explore the social construction of masculinity amongst boys in a private multi-racial school. This research project aims to understand what boys do to make them boys.

I wish to invite you to participate in my Masters Research project. Should you agree to participate, you will be given a disposable camera and asked to take twenty four pictures with the theme "My life as a boy". As a researcher I will make arrangements with you to collect and process the photos. The printed photos will be returned to you. You will then be invited to participate in an individual interview, where you will discuss with me the photos and what they mean to you as a boy and your life as a boy today. A few weeks after the individual interview, you be required to participate in a focus group with other boys, in which you will select five photos from the group that best described how the group sees what it means to be a boy. The individual interviews and focus groups will take place after school hours on the school premises. By taking part in this study you will help the researcher in this project to better understand how young boys develop their boyhood or manhood in the context of a private multi-racial school. The research also aims to explore how the boys of different races negotiate and make sense of their masculinity in post-apartheid South Africa.

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time and it will not be held against you in any way. You have the right not to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable answering. Your identity will be kept strictly confidential and your privacy is assured. However, it should be noted that due to the group nature of the focus groups that even though confidentiality will be discussed it cannot be guaranteed. Please note that no identifying data will be included in the research report. Should you be interested in the results of the study, a 1 page summary will be made available to you through your school. The data in this study may be used as part of a larger research study and that the raw data will only be destroyed once this is completed and accepted for qualification. The data (transcripts, tapes and photos) will be kept in a safe and secure location in the psychology department with restricted access to only my supervisor and me. Counselling, with most probably the school psychologist, will be made available to you if you require it to discuss anything that arose in the research process.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. If you choose to participate in the study please will you fill in your details on the forms below. You have also been given a form to take home for your parents to read and sign if you wish to take part in the study. Please return both these forms to the researcher.

Yours sincerely,

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Robyn-Leigh Smith (Student- Masters in Community Counselling psychology)

School of Community and Human Development

Discipline of Psychology

Wits

Private bag 3

2050

Tel: 0829327083

Email address: robynleigh.smith@gmail.com

Supervisor's details

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Malose Langa (Counselling Psychologist and Lecturer)

School of Community and Human Development

Discipline of Psychology

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Tel: (011) 717-4536

Email address: [malose.langa@wits.ac.za](mailto:malose.langa@wits.ac.za)

## Appendix F: Interview – Assent form for the participants



### School of Human & Community Development

Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500

Fax: (011) 717 4559



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### Interview - Assent form for the participants

I have read and understood what this research involves and what is expected of me.

I understand that:

- I may refuse to answer any questions that I feel uncomfortable answering
- I may withdraw from the study at any time and it will not be held against me in any way
- Participation in this interview is entirely voluntary and no information that may identify me will be included in the research report
- I agree to the use of direct quotes in the research report
- I am aware of the limitations of confidentiality and anonymity
- I am aware that there are no direct benefits for participation in this research
- This is a minimal risk study

I hereby consent to participate in this research project. I also give Robyn-Leigh Smith permission for my results to be used in the write up of this study.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G: Focus Group – Assent form for the participants



### School of Human & Community Development

Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500

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### Focus Group - Assent form for the participants

I have read and understood what this research involves and what is expected of me.

I understand that:

- I may refuse to answer any questions that I feel uncomfortable answering
- I may withdraw from the study at any time and it will not be held against me in any way
- Participation in this focus group is entirely voluntary and no information that may identify me will be included in the research report
- I am aware that the confidentiality of what is discussed and my anonymity cannot be guaranteed
- I agree to the use of direct quotes in the research report
- I am aware that there is no direct benefit from the participation in this research
- This is a minimal risk study

I hereby consent to participate in this research project. I also give Robyn-Leigh Smith permission for my results to be used in the write up of this study.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix H: Recording consent form



### School of Human & Community Development

Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500

Fax: (011) 717 4559



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### Recording consent form

I \_\_\_\_\_ consent to my interview with Robyn-Leigh Smith, in her study on constructions of young adolescent boys' masculinity in a private multi-racial school, being tape-recorded.

I understand that:

- The tapes and transcripts will be kept in a safe and secure place at the University of the Witwatersrand.
- The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person in this organisation other than the researcher and her supervisor, and will only be processed by them.
- All tape recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete and qualification has been obtained..
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report as the researcher will make use of pseudonyms in the identifying of the different participants.

I further give consent to the researcher, Robyn-Leigh Smith, to use direct quotes that will be stripped of any identifying information.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix I: Confidentiality Agreement



### School of Human & Community Development

Faculty of Humanities

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050

Tel: (011) 717 4500

Fax: (011) 717 4559



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### Confidentiality Agreement

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to keep all information disclosed in this focus group confidential.

I understand that:

- 2 Anything discussed during this focus group is to be used for research purposes only and therefore I will not disclose any of the information shared by the other participants.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix J:

### “My life as a boy”

- Take photos that represent for you what it means to be a boy today
- The photos you take should aim to reflect your personal understandings and experiences of what it means to be a boy today
- Once the photos have been developed they are going to be discussed in the individual interview
- Please note that the photos will be kept in a safe and secure location with restricted access to myself and my supervisor

## Appendix K: Photographs

Photograph A



Photograph B



Photograph C



Photograph D



Photograph E



Photograph F



Photograph G



Photograph H



Photograph I



Photograph J



Photograph K



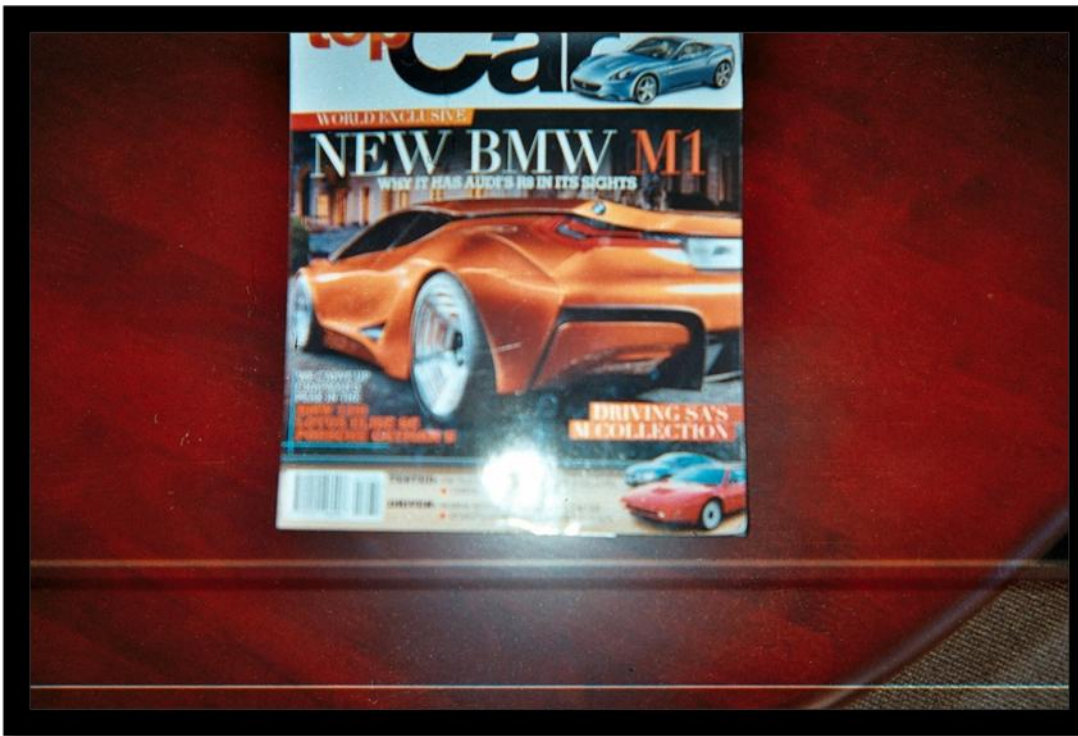
Photograph L



Photograph M



Photograph N



Photograph O



Photograph P



	
<h1>Certificate of Participation</h1> <p>Awarded to:</p>	
<hr/>	
<p>For excellent participation in the SANPAD Masculinity Project</p>	
<p>Miss Robyn Leigh Smith (Researcher)</p>	
<p>.....</p>	
<p>Mr. Malose Langa (Supervisor)</p>	
<p>.....</p>	
<p>Date .....</p>	