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Becoming a man: Exploring multiple voices of masculinity amongst a group of young adolescent boys in Alexandra Township, South Africa

Mr. Malose Langa

(Student no: **0317872M**)

Supervisor**:** Professor Gill T Eagle

The report is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Witwatersrand.

March 2012

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

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……..day of …….

Signature……

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ABSTRACT

The current study was aimed at exploring multiple voices of masculinity amongst township black adolescent boys in a particular South African setting of Alexandra Township, historically a working class community situated on the east side of Johannesburg. Thirty-two adolescent boys between the ages of 12 and 19 were recruited from two high schools in Alexandra and provided with disposable cameras to take 27 photos under the theme 'my life as a boy' in South Africa. Arrangements were made for these photos to be collected and processed. These photos were used to facilitate in-depth focus group discussions and individual interviews with each of the participants. In analyzing the data, the researcher combined discursive and applied psychoanalytic perspectives to identify meanings and contradictions that boys made in spoken texts about hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities. The key themes that emerged are that there are different ways of being a boy and that this process is characterised by mixed feelings of ambivalence, hesitation and self-doubt. It was evident that the process of negotiating all these voices of masculinity was not easy. The participants in the study seemed to simultaneously comply with and oppose hegemonic norms of masculinity in their narratives, revealing that negotiating alternative voices of young township masculinities is fraught with emotional costs and sacrifices. In conclusion, it is recommended that appropriate interventions need to be initiated and implemented to reduce high risk-taking behaviours associated with 'hegemonic' views of masculinity.

Key terms: Boys; Hegemonic; Masculinity; Township.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1. Objectives and the rationale for the study

In recent years, questions about men and boys have generated remarkable media interest, public outcry and controversy. In addition, many academic sources emphasize that teenage boys[1], in particular, are at risk of a range of psychosocial problems (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998; Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996). One major concern is over adolescent boys' deteriorating academic performance in schools (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Redpath, Morrell, Jewkes & Peacock, 2008). In many of these studies, it has been observed that more boys than girls are performing poorly in their school grades. In South Africa, Unterhalter (2005) found that more boys (85%) repeat both primary and secondary grades than girls (15%). Furthermore, the number of girls entering higher education is slowly and increasingly exceeding that of the number of boys (Redpath et al., 2008). Some researchers view this situation as indicating that boys are in a 'crisis' situation, which fuels the growing public concern about the plight of boys in schools (Martino & Meyenn, 2001). In schools, boys are more likely to be labelled as "troublemakers" in terms of truancy, discipline problems, suspensions and expulsions. Many of these problems in both primary and secondary schools have been linked with the expression of 'hegemonic[2]' forms of masculinity, which encourage casual treatment of schoolwork (Connell, 2000), defiance of adult authority (Gilbert & Gilbert,1998), missing classes (Flynn, 1994) and the social disapproval of boys who put emphasis on academic success (Renold, 2001).

However, in Britain, Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) found that there are boys who are able to resist their peers' pressure to comply with dominant or 'hegemonic' practices of masculinity, despite the fact that this is not an easy process as these boys experience mixed feelings about their masculine identities. The current research project also aims to explore how adolescent

[1] The terms adolescent/teenage/township/school-going boys are used interchangeability in the study to refer to the participants between the ages of 15 and 19 years old. The focus in the study is how boys in this age group negotiate and contest multiple voices of masculinity.

[2] The term hegemonic masculinity is based on Connell's (1995) work and will be discussed later in the research project.

boys in the context of Alexandra Township, a predominantly working-class South African context, negotiate the kinds of multiple voices of masculinity pointed to in other masculinity studies. In this thesis, the internal contradictions and psychological processes related to what it means to be a 'real' boy as articulated by adolescent boys from Alexandra Township will be explored, with an emphasis on positioning with regard to 'hegemonic' and counter-hegemonic versions of masculinity in this South African context.

Existing literature demonstrates that the construction of 'hegemonic' masculinity encourages adolescent boys to engage in risk-taking behaviours, such as drinking and driving (Connell, 2000), engagement in violent crime (Barker, 2005; Gear & Ngubeni, 2002; Jensen, 2008; Salo, 2007) and having (unprotected) sex with multiple partners which puts them at risk of HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases (Campbell, 1997; Shefer, 2003; Wood & Jewkes, 2001).

It is clear in this brief overview that the problems associated with adolescent boys have attracted considerable attention from many researchers in the field of sociology, education, anthropology and media studies, but often with insufficient attention to psychosocial aspects of masculinity. Understanding the psychological processes of how adolescent boys construct and engage with the idea and practices of masculinity is an important part of the current research study. Studies about boys and masculinities are not new but what is new is the focus of much contemporary research on the positive new elements and signs of masculinity that do not subscribe to stereotyped ideas of being a 'boy'. Certain groups of boys in the world today are not engaging in risk-taking and other problematic behaviours as part of constructing their masculine identities and are promoting different kinds of masculine ideals. They put more emphasis on academic success and long-term career goals as well as on more egalitarian ways of relating with girls and other boys. Many of the studies into such 'alternative' constructions of masculinity are based on the constructionist premise that masculinity is fluid, multiple and flexible (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002).

A major gap that currently exists in our understanding of boys and masculinities is around the psychological aspects of what it means to be a 'boy' in a specific context and in this case the

context is that of an urban African township. The idea that it is important to study the construction of masculinity in different contexts is based on Connell's (1995) argument that masculinity is not a single construct or phenomenon, but differs in expression from one context to the other. The decision to "choose" or "live" one form of masculinity over any other is influenced by factors such as culture, race, class and ethnicity. The current study aims to explore the multiple voices of masculinity amongst township boys during this historical time in a particular South African setting. The expression of masculinity in contemporary South Africa is influenced by the changed political landscape and the emergence of alternative competing gender identities that, in some respects, challenge the dominant norms of 'hegemonic' masculinity. Adolescent boys are likely to experience contradictions in negotiating multiple forms of masculinity as masculinities are subject to ongoing interrogation both globally and nationally as forms of social transformation take place.

The main aim for this study is to focus on how adolescent boys in Alexandra Township appear to develop and live out different versions of 'hegemonic' and 'alternative' masculinities as reflected in their everyday conversations. Currently, we know relatively little about how boys in townships construct their masculine identities and what motivates them to do so and how they feel about masculinities. Leading figures in this field of inquiry in South Africa include historians (Morrell, 1998, 2001; Glaser, 2000), anthropologists (Hunter, 2005, 2006; Niehaus, 2005) and sociologists (Cock, 2001; Reid & Walker, 2005), but there has been less published psychological research on young masculinities in South Africa, although there is an increasing interest in this field (see, Eagle, 1998; Lindegger, 2006; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Ratele, 2001; Shefer, et al., 2007). The rationale for this study is to further develop psychological theorization of masculinity (its development, maintenance and manifestations), with a constant emphasis on the implications of living out a particular form of masculinity in a particular context. In elaborating on the psychological understanding of how adolescent boys construct masculinities in the new South Africa, the study hopes to make an invaluable contribution to both local and international masculinity studies.

At a theoretical level, the study uses an applied psychoanalytic perspective as a useful tool of analysis in identifying contradictory desires, conflicts and emotional comprises within both

hegemonic and subordinated forms of masculinity. This approach is in line with the aim of the study which is to make an important theoretical contribution to understanding the emotional costs and tensions that township boys experience in negotiating hegemonic and particularly non-hegemonic masculinities. There seem to be many challenges for boys living out alternative versions of masculinity, and it is important for researchers to understand what happens psychologically when adolescent boys negotiate such multiple voices of masculinity in their daily lives. Frosh (1994, 1999) supports the use of psychoanalytic theory as a tool of research in gender studies as it offers fertile ground for exploring the problem of what it means to construct a gendered or in this instance, a masculine identity that subverts the categories of gender difference while at the same time employing them. One distinctive characteristic of psychoanalytic theory on gender is its focus on subjective experiences of being positioned either as masculine or feminine. However, some criticisms have been leveled against psychoanalytic theory for its individualizing, pathologizing and essentializing tendencies (Frosh, 1999; Frosh & Baraitser, 2008; Frosh & Young, 2008) and its failure to take the context sufficiently into account. Frosh et al (2003, p.39) argue that "there is no such thing as 'the individual', standing outside the social" It is clear that contemporary applied psychoanalytic theory sees the subject as both social and psychological, with behaviour influenced by the interplay between 'external' social and 'internal' psychical processes (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008). The study aims to hold true to reflecting an appreciation of this interplay, recognising that it is important that internal processes are analysed and interpreted within the context in which the subject is located. This means that an important theoretical contribution of the study is to understand how adolescent boys subjectively construct their masculinities within the particular social and historical context of Alexandra Township in post-apartheid South Africa.

A further dimension of the research is to examine how factors such as class positioning appear to facilitate or hinder engagement with alternative forms of masculinity. Changes in the construction of masculinity in the new South Africa are clearly influenced by class, ethnicity and race politics (Reid & Walker, 2005). During the struggle against apartheid, militarized masculinity became a dominant identity amongst many township boys, demonstrated in active involvement in anti-apartheid politics and protest activities. After 1994, there have been social and political changes in gender relations with considerable emphasis on gender equality

enshrined in the new constitution (Reid & Walker, 2005). The present study will take into account how current socio-economic and political factors may be influencing township boys in negotiating aspects of identity, including gender identity.

It is also important to bear in mind that power and struggle are often central to the experience of masculine identities and the cost of pursuing an appropriate masculine identity can be heavy. "To be a man it is not enough simply to be, a man must do, display, and prove it in order to establish an unchallenged manhood" (Connell, 1995, p.78). Boys often find themselves struggling 'to save face' in living up to expectations of being a 'real' man. Even the most successful may feel they have to repeatedly prove themselves. Research has illustrated that boys experience pressure to perform 'hegemonic' masculinities (Connell, 1995; 2000), usually through displays of hardiness, sport prowess and risk-taking behaviours (Frosh et al., 2002). Boys who do not comply with 'hegemonic' norms of masculinity may be called derogatory names such as 'losers' (Connell, 1995), 'nerds' (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998) and '*yimvu*' (Zulu word for sheep) (Bhana, 2004). As discussed earlier, adolescent boys experience peer pressure to comply with the beliefs and practices of 'hegemonic' masculinity, which may contribute to health and interpersonal risks, such as drinking and driving, engagement in crime and violence. However, some researchers have begun to observe that not all boys succumb to this peer pressure to perform 'hegemonic' identity of masculinity. According to Renold (2001, p.655) there are sub-groups of boys who are resisting dominant discourses of what it means to be a 'real boy', despite the observation that this is not an easy step, as it involves being vulnerable to discrimination and subordination. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, (2002) and Bhana (2004) found that boys who do not 'fit' hegemonic ideals tend to be subjected to bullying, verbal and physical abuse, exclusion, ridicule and humiliation. A focus of this study is to explore how township boys in Alexandra engage with hegemonic masculinity and the psychological strategies that some of them use in resisting, subverting and challenging the existing popular norms of 'hegemonic' masculinity within their community. There is a growing body of literature on new versions of young masculinity, a masculinity that is non-violent, monogamous, modern, and responsible and built on respect for self and others (see, for example, Frosh, et al., 2002). The study aims to look at the forces that effect changes in masculinities, and when, and how such changes seem to occur and the psychological processes

that are involved when boys make decisions to identify with one form of masculinity over another. One task of the present study will be to explore what kinds of identifications appear to be available to young boys in Alexandra Township, including both hegemonic and 'alternative' identities.

It is also worth noting that gender change is a highly complex process and that it occurs within individuals, within groups and within institutions. Yet it is important to look for signs of change, even if these, as Segal (1990) has observed, tend to occur 'in slow motion'. Different people act as informants to boys in the performance of masculinity, including male-role models such as male teachers. In his study into school boys' life, Attwel (2002) noted that all his participants saw male teachers as strict, less tolerant and less reasonable than female teachers. Morrell (2001) concludes "the model of masculinity presented by the male teachers to students seems unlikely on this reading to generate alternative, more democratic and gentler masculine identities" (p. 36). It appears that boys have few alternative adult male models to follow, so opportunities for transformation may be lost (Frosh, et al., 2002; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998). Boys may suffer from a lack of alternative positive male-role models in general, including also an absence of 'good' fathering. In *Steering by the Stars: being boys in South Africa*, young black boys who grew up in New Crossroads in Cape Town talked about the pain of absent father-figures in their lives and how it impacted on them (Ramphele, 2002). Some talked about fathers who were cruel, uncaring, unloving and depriving. Ramphele (2002) argues that the lack of good male-role models influenced many of these young black men to become involved in violence and gangs. Biddulph (1997, in Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998) says the solution to many social problems is to find a '*deep positive masculinity'* in young boys, which, if nurtured, can be learned and promoted. Clearly, there is a need to create alternative role models for many adolescent boys. Hence, it will also be important in the current research project to explore township boys' views and feelings about father figures in their lives.

At a more practical level, the main relevance of this research project lies in identifying healthy 'alternative' constructions of masculinity, to potentially inform public policies and intervention strategies targeting adolescent boys, with the hope of reducing high risk behaviours associated with 'hegemonic' masculinity. Since adolescence is a period in which boys experiment with

sex, substance taking and other potentially risky behaviours in large part to consolidate their masculine identities, it is also a critical stage for research and intervention. It is clear that "ideas of what it means to be a man are formed before boys become men" (Richter & Morrell, 2006, p.64). There is now an emerging body of international and national literature pointing to the efficacy of gender-based work with boys and men aimed at positively changing their attitudes and practices around gender and sexuality (Barker, 2005); Redpath et al., 2008). In South Africa, Sonke Gender Justice Network is working in all of the nine provinces to support boys and men to promote gender equity, prevent domestic and sexual violence, and reduce the spread and the impact of HIV and AIDS. This work is aligned with the paradigm shift from what Morrell (2001) calls 'old style' feminist theory, in which all boys and men were classed as part of the problem in understanding gender relations. In this research project, it is argued that work on gender studies should include studies of adolescent boys in order to challenge traditional ideas about gender oppression and the position of young men and in part to contribute in terms of providing a sound theoretical and empirical base to inform intervention programmes.

Having provided an overview of the broad aims and intention of the study, the following section provides a brief summary of what is covered in each chapter of the thesis.

2. Structure of the thesis: Summary

Chapter Two to Seven provides the theoretical basis for the study as elaborated below.

Chapter Two: The chapter covers three major theories of adolescent identity and development, drawing upon the work of Peter Blos, Erik Erikson and James Marcia. These theories are used to discuss adolescence as a transitional stage of human development. In the conclusion of this chapter, the researcher argues that adolescence is not something universal, but differs from one context to the other.

Chapter Three: In this chapter, the researcher draws on the work of various theorists such as Bob Connell, Jeff Hearn, Robert Morrell, and Michael Kimmell to define the term masculinity, recognizing that it is highly contested term. For example, is masculinity singular or multiple?

Does masculinity or do masculinities differ in terms of class, race or age? The researcher engages with some of these debates about the term masculinity. Connell's widely used and seminal concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' is also introduced and critically discussed. In the conclusion of this chapter, the researcher argues that expressions of masculinity are multiple, non-static and context specific.

Chapter Four: In this chapter, the researcher discusses the value of using psychoanalytic theory as a theoretical framework in research into gender and in the current research project. The researcher argues that psychoanalytic theory is a useful tool of analysis in attempting to understand many of the psychological processes that adolescent boys go through in conforming to or rejecting and resisting dominant, hegemonic norms of masculinity.

Chapter Five: In this chapter, the researcher discusses a range of international studies on masculinity with an adolescent focus. Many of these studies were conducted in the UK, USA and Australia. The researcher draws on the work of Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman (2002), Gilbert and Gilbert (1998), Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (1996), Pollack (1999) and Wetherell and Edley (1999), amongst others, to discuss evolving studies on young masculinities.

Chapter Six: In this chapter, the researcher focuses on South African studies on masculinity. The researcher draws on the work of key contributors such as Cock (1991, 1992), Mokwena (1991), Glaser (2000), Marks (2002) and Xaba (2001) to discuss the history of black masculinity under the apartheid regime and also how this context influenced the expression of masculinity amongst the youth in the townships, including the adoption of a militarized form of masculinity. In this chapter, the researcher also uses Robert Morrell's (1998, 2001) work to discuss how men have responded to changing gender relations in post-apartheid South Africa. In conclusion, the researcher reiterates the evidence that suggests that the formation and expression of masculinity is influenced by history and time.

Chapter Seven: In this chapter, the researcher discusses young masculinity studies on boys, sexual behaviour, HIV, circumcision, gangs and violence in contemporary South Africa. In

conclusion, the researcher argues that the new political context appears to influence township boys to question existing forms of masculine identity to some extent**.**

Chapter Eight: In this chapter, the methodological approach is described. The researcher discusses the participants' characteristics in terms of age and school grade/level. The methods of data collection (auto-photography, individual interviews and focus groups), are also discussed. The method of analysis, including both discursive and interpretive elements, is also described. In conclusion of this chapter, the researcher discusses the ethical considerations taken into account in the current research project.

Chapters Nine to Thirteen: In these five chapters, the researcher discusses the key findings of the research project. The five chapters are derived from the boys' talk about masculinity and are focused on identified themes, including discussions on violence, academic performance, relationships with girls, sex, HIV/AIDS, homosexuality and relationships with caregivers in their personal lives.

Chapter Fourteen: This last chapter provides an overview of the key findings and offers concluding remarks and recommendations for future research projects in this area. The limitations and strengths of the study are also discussed.

Chapter 2: Theories of adolescent development, identity formation and experimentation: Blos, Erikson and Marcia

Introduction

The participants in the study were adolescent boys from two public secondary schools in Alexandra Township, between the ages of 15 and 19 years old. Given their age, they could be categorized as adolescents. The term 'adolescence' comes from the Latin verb *adolescere*, which means "to grow to maturity" (Hurlock, 1980, p.2). Adolescence is regarded as an important stage in the life of the developing child and of all human beings. Broadly speaking, in terms of age, adolescence refers to individuals between the ages of 12 to 21 years, but with some variability depending on the context. In terms of the South African law, an adolescent is

an individual between the ages of 12 to 18 years old. At the age of 18, the person has the right to vote, drive a car, to legally consume alcohol, and to be held accountable for his/her own behaviour (South African Constitution, 1996). .

According to Feldman (2006), adolescence should not be confused with puberty. Puberty refers only to physical and physiological changes that occur during the period of adolescence, while the term 'adolescence' includes all the processes of maturity. For boys, physical changes involve genital development, growth of pubic hair, and facial and voice changes. Physically, girls generally develop faster than boys and are generally taller than boys (Feldman, 2006). Due to hormonal changes, sexual urges also become more intense during this stage. The pace of physical development in adolescence is heterogeneous and differs from one adolescent to another. For example, Antshel and Antshel (2002, in Feldman, 2006) found that adolescents of a high socio-economic status developed faster physically than adolescents of low socio-economic status. They attribute these differences in physical changes to access to good nutrition and good medical care available in high socio-economic families.

In this chapter, the researcher draws primarily on Peter Blos, Erik Erikson and James Marcia s' theories to provide a fairly curtailed discussion of adolescence as a transitional stage of human development, which involves highlighting issues of gender development and masculinity where relevant. Both Blos and Erikson drew on Freud's psychoanalytic theory in their understanding of adolescence, while Marcia adapted Erikson's theory to discuss ego identity development in adolescence. The researcher also provides a critical review and commentary on aspects of each theory where appropriate. This chapter aims to give a short overview of the psychological processes involved in adolescent identity formation drawing upon the work of these three major theorists, before moving to the literature on masculinity studies, which is the core focus of the current research project. Given the concerns about some vulnerability to risk during the adolescent phase of development, particularly in the case of young boys, the coverage of the theory is focused to some extent on ideas about why experimentation and risk-taking may be (more) prevalent during this time of development.

2.1. Peter Blos's perspective on adolescent identity formation

Peter Blos is a psychoanalytic writer who dedicated his life to studying psychodynamic processes implicated in adolescence. Blos adapted Freud's classical psychoanalytic theory to interrogate psychic processes characterizing adolescence and uses the dynamic interaction of the id, superego and ego structures to explain personality development during this phase. According to Blos (1979), adolescent development entails two central challenges, namely: (1) the second individuation process, and (2) reworking and mastering childhood, as discussed below:

2.1.1 The second individuation process

In addition to classical Freudian theory, Blos also draws on Margaret Mahler's work to explain adolescent character formation. Mahler's work explores infants early experiences of separation and individuation. Blos (Blos, 1962) argues that adolescents use the same psychic mechanisms as infants in the process of second individuation, and that this later phase is based on the first individuation process completed during infancy. The second individuation process of adolescence involves "relinquishing all intrapsychic parental representations" which were internalized during early childhood and that formed the structure of child identity (Blos, 1979, p. 162). Blos argues that adolescents disengage from aspects of introjected early childhood relationships with parental figures. This disengagement is influenced by ego maturation, which pushes adolescents to search for 'the self'. According to Blos (1962, 1979) ego development continues to be important during the phase of adolescence. Adolescent development can be carried forward only if the adolescent ego succeeds in establishing a historical continuity in its realm (Blos, 1979). This continuity serves a purpose beyond that of conflict resolution, since according to Blos (1979, p. 123), ego maturation gives rise to a "sense of wholeness" during adolescence. Failure of the adolescent to develop a strong and continuous ego can lead to ego loss. Ego loss threatens psychological integrity because it gives rise to more extreme forms of risk-taking behaviours. Blos explains that teenagers with weak egos are more prone to negative peer pressure as their sense of self is not sufficiently consolidated and matured. They often find compensatory relief in peer group belonging, allowing their peers to strongly influence their behaviour.

Moreover, Blos asserts that adolescents form new, extra-familial relationships with peers and friends. Peers help each other in relinquishing intrapsychic object ties with primary caregivers. The second individuation relies on this kind of outside assistance for resolution, which occurs when a teenager makes relationships outside the family. During this phase, peers tend to be more valued than family members. Rebelliousness and defiance with regards to parental and authority figures characterize the second individuation process (Blos, 1962, 1979). Lock (1995, p.548) refers to the process of engaging in oppositional and risk-behaviours as 'acting out in adolescence'. Like Blos, he also sees this as part of a normal second individuation process that many adolescents go through in order to form solid self-identities.

According to Blos (1966, 1979) risk-taking behaviours (e.g. drinking or smoking) are reasonably normal and, in moderation, can even be construed as positive during adolescence. With risk-taking behaviours, he argues that the adolescent is "doing the wrong things for the right reasons" (Blos, 1979, p. 147). Experimentation is useful for adolescents in the process of self-definition and individuation. However, Blos acknowledges that not all adolescents engage in risk-taking and anti-authority behaviours. Blos argues that some adolescents become more concerned with schooling and academic achievement in order to establish a solid self-identity. A major limitation in Blos's work, however, is that his theory does not say anything about how class and race and other socio-cultural elements influence adolescents' second individuation process. It is important to acknowledge that the psychical processes of second individuation are mediated by socio-economic and cultural factors. Furthermore, in the current research project, the researcher examines how class appears to either facilitate or hinder adolescent boys' engagement with alternative forms of masculinity as part of their adolescent development and identity formation, as well as taking into account other aspects of social location that appear to influence the development of 'self'.

2.1.2. Reworking and mastering childhood trauma

"We ourselves are shaped by the past, but are also continually reworking the past which shapes us" (Hill, 1974, in Hearn, 1989, p. 7)

The above quotation is in line with Blos's proposal that we are who we are because of our past. Blos shares the view that adolescents continuously rework their past traumas in order to gain mastery over them and suggests that the adolescent period provides adolescents with the opportunity to rework their childhood traumas. Blos concurs with Freud's observation that childhood trauma can have both positive and negative effects on character formation. According to Blos, the ultimate goal of adolescence is to rework significant personal traumas, including, for example, resolving oedipal conflicts. Blos argues that oedipal conflict does not necessarily end during the phallic phase, a view also held by Freud. Blos asserts that unresolved oedipal issues are revived and revisited during adolescence. The decline of the Oedipus complex at the end of the phallic phase represents a suspension of oedipal conflict rather than a definitive resolution, because we can ascertain its continuation at the adolescent level (Blos, 1979). Blos argues that the full resolution of Oedipus complex takes place during adolescence. The main focus here is on the firmer establishment of gender identity and behaviour, as linked to genital phase resolution and the revisiting and renegotiation of oedipal issues.

The formation of character, amongst other aspects, involves an establishment of a sexual and gender identity. Blos views adolescence as entailing a necessary regressive return to completion of oedipal issues and suggests that how the Oedipus complex is experienced during adolescence is not identical to the childhood conflict. According to Blos (1985), resolving the Oedipus complex leads to the development of healthy and generally heterosexual masculine identity. However, gender and sexual identity formation is characterized by internal conflict for many young boys. Blos contends that homosexuality is regarded as a constant threat to sexual identity (or heterosexist or normative identity) by many young boys. Thus, anything associated with homosexuality may be rejected and frowned upon. Blos observes that adolescent boys are obsessed with achieving and maintaining their sense of maleness. The main aim of adolescence for boys is to reach resolved heterosexual identity (a considered healthy masculine identity) or what Blos (1985) calls *allogender* (positive male identity). This entails being a 'real' adolescent boy who is preoccupied with erotic feelings towards girls or women. Making an opposite sex peer partner relationship and having a girlfriend is described as evidence of a progressive disengagement from primary objects of love (e.g. parental figures or siblings). Thus,

individuation, separation, gender identity formation and the adoption of heterosexist desire all become intertwined as this stage of development.

Furthermore, Blos argues that the process of regaining mastery over childhood traumas affects adolescents' relations with parental figures. In his classical text, *Son and father: before and moving beyond the Oedipus complex*, Blos (1985) contends that any lack of positive parenting experience may negatively affect how the adolescent deals with his/her own childhood traumas. For boys, the process of adolescent identity development mainly revives unresolved oedipal issues, which may lead to conflictual father-son relationships as part of resolving and reaching heterosexual male identity. An interesting part of the current research entails exploring how township boys in Alexandra talk about the presence or absence of fathers and other male figures in their lives and resonates with Blos' concerns in this regard. Many children are growing up without fathers in South Africa (Posel & Devey, 2006) as will be elaborated in a later chapter. Thus, in terms of Blos's theory, it is important to explore the psychological implications for adolescent boys who are growing up without their fathers or stable male role models in their lives. This has been a neglected area of research in exploring factors that shape adolescents' character formation and the current study aims to make some contribution in this regard.

It seems that adolescence in terms of Blos' theory is an important phase of development for an adolescent boy in which he has the opportunity to finally resolve the Oedipus complex and achieve a sense of separation and individuation from the father figure. However, writers such as Trowell (2002) and Emanuel (2002) disagree with Blos that the resolution of the Oedipus complex takes place with some finality during adolescence, arguing that it entails a lifelong struggle. Trowell (2002) and Emanuel (2002) contend that later in life when young men become fathers, oedipal conflicts and early childhood memories are re-evoked again. Having had or not had a father figure may positively or negatively impact on how the new father relates with his new-born child. They suggest that the process of becoming a father re-awakens and re-opens the developmental cycle of the Oedipus complex and that there is a need to re-work oedipal anxieties from this new position or perspective of being a father/fatherhood. Emanuel (2002) asserts that many of these aspects of oedipal resurgence during fatherhood are

unconscious. This study will explore not only some of the aspects entailed in relating to parental father figures and their frequent absence in the lives of these township boys, but also some the psychological dimensions entailed in becoming a young father, both in fantasy and reality.

2.1.3. Critical evaluation of Peter Blos's perspective on adolescent identity formation

Peter Blos made a significant contribution to our understanding of adolescent identity formation as discussed in the above section. In his theorization, Blos seems to accept that risk-taking behaviours are common and perhaps even necessary in adolescent development. This view is potentially problematic as it over-generalizes by suggesting that all adolescents are likely to indulge in risk-taking behaviours, but this theory does not say much about adolescents who do not engage in risk-taking behaviours. Although Blos acknowledges that there are some adolescents who become concerned with schooling and academic achievement as part of self-identity, he fails to provide reasons as to why these adolescents may develop this desire. This is one of the issues the current study aims to explore in studying psychological processes involved when adolescent boys appear to resist and reject dominant norms of 'hegemonic' masculinity.

Lastly, Blos appears to view heterosexuality (*allogender*) as the 'normal' outcome in terms of gender identity and homosexuality (*isogender*) as abnormal, representing a kind of a '*failed*' masculine identity. Based on this view, Blos may be criticized as being potentially homophobic in his theory, but as has been observed in relation to Freud's work (Mitchell, 1974) the context within which Blos was theorizing should also be taken into account. For example, his theory was developed at a time during which homosexuality was viewed as aberrant and diagnosed as a mental disorder in terms of the DSM (Diagnostic Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders) (Kroger, 1996). Despite some of these limitations and criticisms, Blos's theory remains an important tool of analysis for research into aspects of adolescent identity development.

2.2. Erik Erikson's perspective on adolescent identity formation

Erik Erikson (1963, 1968) was also one of the most prominent psychoanalytic writers to

investigate the phenomenon of identity formation during adolescence. However, Erikson moved beyond Freud's classical psychoanalytic theory to emphasize the importance of the environment in identity development. While Erikson is perhaps best known for theorizing the eight psychosocial stages of development, his major contribution has been his work on adolescent identity formation. As a psychoanalytic writer, Erikson (1968), like Blos, also argues that the roots of identity development can be traced back to early childhood experiences. Erikson sees the process of identity formation as universal, passing from one generation to the other, but at the same time differing in terms of time and context. Each context gives its adolescents the structure to forge particular kinds of identities. For example, Freeman (1993), using Erikson's theory, observed that the apartheid regime in South Africa created a context in which black youth in the townships developed a particular kind of identity, in many instances involving participation in politics and protest activities. Thus, adolescent identity development at this historical period in this context tended to involve the incorporation of a strong 'political' and 'anti-apartheid identity'.

According to Erikson (1968) the development of identity proceeds through eight stages, each stage characterized by what he calls a 'crisis'. By 'crisis', he does not refer to a catastrophe, but to developmental tasks that each person needs to complete before proceeding to the next stage of human development. 'Identity versus role confusion' marks the fifth of Erikson's eight-stage lifespan sequence of developmental tasks, and occurs during adolescence. Erikson refers to this as a critical turning point in adolescent's life, in which he/she has to move forward by taking a new direction in life (Kroger, 1996). In this process, the adolescent needs to deal with various challenges and various possible outcomes in identity formation, namely: moratorium, ego diffusion, over-identification and foreclosure. Each of these possible routes to identity formation is briefly discussed in the section below.

2.2.1. **Moratorium and ego diffusion**

In terms of Erikson's theory, adolescence is the most critical stage in identity formation. Erikson believes that adolescents need a moratorium, a time of freedom from commitments, set aside for self-exploration and discovery. Erikson clearly stated that adolescents "must often test

extremes before settling on a considered identity" (1968, p. 132). These extremes may include rebelliousness and risk-taking behaviours such as drinking, smoking, and reckless driving. This experimentation is a common part of the moratorium phase before settling on a more fixed identity. Erikson asserted that:

> "The adolescent mind is essentially a mind of the moratorium, a psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood, and between the morality learned by the child and ethics to be developed by the adult. It is an ideological mind and indeed, it is an ideological outlook of a society that speaks most clearly to the adolescent who is eager to be affirmed by his peers and is ready to be confirmed by rituals, creeds and programmes" (Erikson, 1968, p.236).

On this point, Erikson seems to share the same sentiment as Blos that experimentation, including engaging in risky behaviour, is 'normal' during this phase of adolescence. This seems to be a period of rapid change and growth. It is also important during this phase of development to achieve a secure sense of identity. For Erikson, identity formation involves an integration of different experiences, and exposure to different ideologies and life experiences as a teenager is important in allowing for the formation of a more rich or complex identity. For some teenagers, embracing this time of a moratorium may lead to ego diffusion, which is defined as the inability to settle on a stable and well-founded sense of self (Hook, 2002). However, on the other hand, Erikson himself was cautious about saying that a prolonged moratorium may lead to ego diffusion. His main argument is that adolescents need to make choices and these choices may turn out to be for better or worse in terms of identity choices. A better choice implies an ability to develop an identity that is congruent with contemporary society. A worse choice implies prolonged identity confusion in a young person which may lead to losing a sense of self in the process of experimenting with different ideologies, behaviours and relationships (Erikson, 1966, in Grinder, 1973), with an attendant self-destructive lifestyle.

2.2.2. **Over-identification and youth subculture**

Erikson argues that identity formation is also largely influenced by identification and over-identification with role models, for example, with figures in the public media, including television, magazines, and music videos. Young people use images that they see in the media to

promote certain youth subcultures. Youth subculture is all about young people's style, kinds of clothes, hairstyles, and behavioural conventions (Seidler, 2006). In the process of identification with external images, some youth may over-identify and lose a sense of their individuality. Adolescents tend to be in search of sameness and are eager to be affirmed and approved by their friends/peers. Young people refusing to comply with practices of the in-group may be excluded or '*othered*' group (Erikson, 1968; Renold, 2001). They may be seen as outcasts and are often called derogatory names (e.g. fools, cabbages, nerds) (Renold, 2001). Young people are expected to be loyal to the broad youth subculture.

> "Young people can become remarkably clannish, intolerant, and cruel in their exclusion of others who are 'different', in skin color, or cultural background, in tastes and gifts, and often in entirely petty aspects of dress and gesture arbitrarily selected as the signs of an in-grouper or out-grouper" (Erikson, 1968, p. 132).

Kinney (1999) theorized that two main adolescent subcultures exist in high schools: (1) an academic subculture which consists of serious, hard-working students; and (2) a delinquent subculture whose members rebel against school rules and regulations. The delinquent group is known to be more popular amongst peers in general (Kinney, 1999). Members of a delinquent subculture may engage in risk-taking behaviours such as smoking and drinking and may bully both the nerds and loners. Boys in the academic subculture tend to be considered as 'nobodies' whereas members of the delinquent subculture see themselves as cool, smart, clever, and streetwise (Kinney, 1999) and may also be seen as so by others.

According to Kinney (1999) peer groups are not homogenous and may serve different objectives for different individuals. He distinguished two kinds of peer groups, namely the 'clique' and the 'crowd', differing in terms of size and functions. The clique is smaller and the crowd is the largest adolescent peer group. Clique activities mainly focus on talking, which prepares clique members for crowd activities and enables clique members to evaluate crowd activities. One can be a member of clique and the crowd at the same time, but this is not an easy tension to manage. The crowd boundaries are clearly defined and members are expected to comply with the set rules of the crowd. Grinder (1973) identified the following three major styles or directions that characterize broad youth culture:

- **Hedonism**- includes adolescents who are preoccupied with pleasure and consumerism.

These young people are more concerned about having a 'good time' and about glamour. The hedonistic culture is consistent with the fun-loving, glamorous image of youth that is being promulgated by the mass media. Hedonistic youth are also more invested in fashion and style than academic achievement. In contemporary South Africa, Dolby (2000) found that many young people spend long hours on cell phones (Mixt), on the internet (Facebook), wear branded clothes, and play music on iPODS and DSTV, clearly being preoccupied with material possessions and the pursuit of pleasure.

- **Complacency**- describes adolescents who seem to accept the dominant political, economic, and moral values of society without any questions. They have a carefree attitude and see little need to play a role in change in society. The accusation of contemporary has also been leveled against black youth in South Africa post-1994 who have lost interest in politics. These youth are described as the YFM (popular youth radio station in Gauteng) generation or as 'Coca-Cola kids' because they are more concerned with having fun than participating in politics or social movements (Nutall, 2004, 2008; Stevens & Lockhat, 1997) (see both chapter 6 and 7 for more discussion on this kind of youth culture).
- **Alienation and protest**- includes young people who express their discontent by either passively withdrawing from society or actively attempting to change some policies and practices through activism and protest. This label could be applied to black youth who were actively involved in the struggle against apartheid in the pre-1994 period and may be true of some contemporary groups in South Africa, although political identity appears to be more diffuse (also see chapter 6 for more discussion on this militarized youth movement).

It is evident in this literature review that adolescent peer groups change over time and differ from one context to the other. Kinney (1999), using Erikson's theory, found that some youth who were nerds in junior school, changed identities after their transition to high school and began to participate in new subculture activities. Kinney attributes significant identity changes in adolescence to the high school environment. He argues that the high school provides more activities in which young people can participate. In terms of the activities, Kinney refers to extramural and sporting activities, such as playing soccer or rugby. Being part of a sport team

gives adolescents a social reference group. These reference groups provide adolescents with the opportunity to explore their values and interests and Kinney argues that this can contribute towards shaping masculine identity development for adolescent boys. While this may be helpful or positive for those who are included in group activities, there is also observation that boys who do not belong are excluded and discriminated against and may be less popular in the school context. Participation in sporting activities is a particularly common valued aspect of masculinity for adolescent boys in the school context.

2.2.3. **Ego identity and foreclosure**

Erikson (1968, 1980) argues that not all adolescents experiment with a range of identity positions and values. Some adolescents settle for stable identities without any form of experimentation or need to belong to different/deviant youth subcultures. For Erikson, this is a problematic way of forming an ego identity. By ego identity, he refers "to a conscious sense of individual uniqueness as an unconscious striving for continuity of experience; an optimal identity is experienced as a psychosocial sense of well-being. Moreover, ego identity's most obvious concomitants are a feeling of being at home in one 's body, a sense of knowing where one is 'going', and an inner assuredness of anticipated recognition from those who count" (Erikson, 1968, cited in Kroger, 2006, p. 206).

Foreclosure occurs when an adolescent makes an identity commitment without first experimenting with other possible identities; often unquestioningly adopting the values espoused by their parents and those within their families of origin. As discussed later, James Marcia has taken up some of Erikson's key concepts to explore how roles and values adopted by adolescents are influenced by parental values in a specific context. In some respects, a foreclosed identity has elements in common with the 'complacent' group identity discussed earlier. Youth who develop identity in this manner also tend to assimilate the values of others without question.

2.2.4. **Critical evaluation of Erik Erikson's perspective on adolescent identity formation**

It is indisputable that Erik Erikson has made a major contribution to the field of developmental psychology. Today, his theory is widely used in other social science disciplines such as education, sociology, anthropology, criminology and media studies. Despite this recognition, some criticisms have been leveled against his theory. The first major criticism pertains to the construction of adolescence as a universal phenomenon (Burman, 1994; Macleod, 2001, 2002). Although Erikson was aware of the vast differences among cultures, he still believed that his theory is universally applicable. He failed to sufficiently acknowledge how contexts (such as that of Alexandra Township in the current research project) could provide or encourage a particular type of identity formation.

The second major criticism is that Erikson failed to account for how demographic characteristics, such as gender, racial and class differences influence adolescent's identity formation. In South Africa, many studies have adapted Erikson's theory to study the motivational processes underlying social identity construction by South African youth prior to and in the post-1994 context (see, Campbell, 1994; Freeman, 1993; Stevens & Lockhart, 1997; Swartz, 2010). All of these researchers argue that young people's identity formation is influenced by race, class and political factors. Despite these criticisms, Erikson's theory still remains one of the most important theories in understanding adolescent identity development. His theory has influenced the work of many theorists, including that of James Marcia, as discussed in the subsequent section.

2.3. James Marcia's perspective on adolescent identity formation

Over the years, many researchers working with adolescents relied heavily on Erikson's work to understand adolescent identity formation. James Marcia is a well-known researcher who empirically tested Erikson's theory to understand the relationship between exploration and commitment variables in the formation of ego identity. According to Erikson (1968) adopting various ideological values for oneself helps form one's ego identity. Marcia wanted to test how this kind of internalization and subscription to specific sets of values might work. Based on his research, Marcia (1966) developed what has become known as the identity-status model, in

which he identified four different statuses by means of which adolescents approach identity - defining roles and values. The four statuses include identity diffusion, identity moratorium, identity foreclosure, and identity achievement, and clearly build on the kinds of identity formation possibilities outlined by Erikson and discussed in the previous section. Each of these is briefly elaborated as follows:

2.3.1. **Identity diffusion**

Identity diffusion characterizes the early phases of adolescence where adolescents have not yet made a personal commitment to any set of beliefs. Adolescents who remain in the state of identity diffusion neither explore nor commit themselves to any identity. They quickly shift from one identity to another. Marcia argues that their lack of commitment to one identity impairs their ability to form close relationships. Such adolescents are often seen as confused and aloof. They also present with low levels of self-esteem and are easily influenced by peer pressures toward conformity (Kroger, 2006). While some degree of flexibility in identifications is normal or even positive in early adolescence, persistence of this pattern leads to this problematic 'diffuse' identity.

2.2.2. **Identity moratorium**

Adolescents in this status also experience a crisis and have not yet made choices or personal commitment to any set of beliefs. However, they have explored and still are exploring various alternatives in an attempt to form an identity. This is what Erikson (1968) calls an 'ideological mind', represented in adolescents who are always searching for answers. Parents find it difficult to understand teens during this phase. Adolescents usually defy their parents' authority to experiment with various identities. Adolescents in a state of moratorium spend a prolonged time testing and experimenting with identities, ideas and difficulties, but the expectation is that they will eventually develop a more stable identity.

2.3.3. **Identity foreclosure**

As discussed to some extent in the previous section, adolescents in this status have made a personal commitment to certain values and beliefs without properly exploring a variety of identities. Most often, these adolescents simply adopt the beliefs and wishes of their parents. Foreclosed adolescents are less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours, but may also be more unthinking in their behaviour and attitudes (Kroger, 2006). Tom and Coetze (2004) argue this form of identity formation may be premature due to the fact that foreclosed adolescents are either not given freedom to develop their own identities or choose not to exercise this freedom. However, it is important to research on what psychological factors might be that influence foreclosed adolescents to settle on an identity without any experimentation.

2.3.4. **Identity achievement**

Adolescents in this status have explored different identities and have now made a commitment to a particular kind of identity. Commitment is achieved after a reasonably long period of exploration. This status marks the end of adolescence. Adolescents who have reached this status have generally been found to show personality features such as high levels of achievement, motivation and good self-esteem (Marcia, 1966).

It is clear that the four statuses in Marcia's theory constitute an extension of Erikson theory on the identity crisis process associated with identity formation. A study by Roker and Banks (1993) corroborated the existence of Marcia's identity statuses have found that adolescents enjoy experimenting with different identities during the phase of identity moratorium, including experimentation with a range of behaviours, such as engaging in forms of sexual contact and taking drugs and alcohol. According to this view, participation in some reckless activities may reflect the adolescent's search for a 'real' identity. In many South African studies (Parry et al., 2004; Rocha-Silva, 1998) on substance abuse, adolescents reported curiosity as the main reason for initial experimentation. Conformity to peer group values is also closely linked with a desire to be accepted and liked. Seidler (2006) suggests it is particularly difficult for a teenager to resist any peer pressure since there is a desire to be seen as 'cool' in the peer group. For many

adolescents, the phase of experimentation is temporary. While most adolescents outgrow this phase, others fail (Kroger, 2006). Some schools and home environments encourage adolescents to go and 'find themselves' and to develop a congruent 'self'/ identity, which may help them not merely to conform to what their friends do, but rather to make choices from the position of a more coherent and recognized identity.

In their study, Roker and Banks (1993) also found that the frequency of Marcia's identity moratorium and diffusion statuses within an adolescent population differs in terms of the family context, political climate, peer relations, media exposure and educational experiences. Roker and Banks (1993) found, for example, that identity development is also influenced by the type of school that young adolescents attend. In private schools, young adolescents have role models in both their parents and teachers, unlike in the public schools, where learners from poor family backgrounds appeared to have poor role models in their families and communities. Also at these public schools, teachers appeared to be de-motivated to serve as positive role models for their pupils. Roker and Banks (1993) concluded that adolescents in private and public schools have different identity *styles*. Learners in private schools are career-orientated/driven and are less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours as compared to learners in public schools who come from poverty-stricken homes, although this finding has been contested by Barker (2005) and Jensen (2008). Both Barker and Jensen argue that some learners in poverty-stricken communities are concerned with schooling and academic achievement, since in this context, education is seen as the key to success and escaping current life circumstances. However, at many public schools, male learners are more likely to experiment with alcohol and drugs and also to be part of gangs. These activities are seen as key markers of successful masculinity outside the school environment (Barker, 2005). School may be experienced by these kinds of boys as emasculating, due to their poor academic performance. Their search for positive identities relies on risk-taking behaviours and the affirmation and approval that they get from their male peers and this may involve explicit disinvestment in scholarly activities and opposition towards authority figures. What this brief discussion of differences in patterns of identity formation between boys educated in 'private' and 'public' school environments reveals is that identity formation may be strongly influenced by context and opportunities, in this instance mediated largely by class positioning and access

to particular types of schooling. This finding has relevance for the current research project which aims to study aspects of adolescent masculinity within two schools based in a particular socio-economic context.

2.3.5. **Critical evaluation of Marcia's perspective on adolescent identity formation**

Several criticisms have been leveled against Marcia's identity-status approach. One of the criticisms is whether Marcia's identity-status approach sufficiently or accurately captures Erikson's theoretical conception of identity (Kroger, 2006). Criticisms have also been leveled against the psychometric instruments used to empirically test Erikson's theory using Marcia framework. Some of the instruments fail to address phenomenological dimensions of identity (Kroger, 2006). The instruments also fail to sufficiently consider how contextual factors influence identity formation. Marcia also tends to present identity statuses as rather static and stable. He fails to sufficiently take into account the likehood that adolescents continue to undergo changes, depending on the context in which they are in. The theory also does not say much about gender differences and gender formation in particular.

Many studies have been conducted to verify and explore Marcia's theorized identity development statuses. For example, a study by Lannegrand-Willems and Bosma (2006) found that adolescents did appear to fit Marcia's statuses in approaching identity issues during adolescence. However, other researchers are not convinced that all adolescents fit Marcia's statuses in identity development. As already mentioned, Marcia is also criticized for failing to explain individual differences in identity development that relate to demographic aspects of identity, for example, Lannegrand-Willems and Bosma (2006) found that identity status differed in terms of race, age, gender, class, and culture amongst Dutch and French adolescents.

In response to some of these criticisms, it is argued that at no time did Marcia claim that his identity-statuses comprehensively capture all of the dimensions that Erikson included in his theory (Kroger, 1996, 2006). Marcia only used Erikson's theory as a basis from which to explore adolescents' processes of exploration and commitment to various roles and values. His theory has expanded upon and enriched Erikson's theory in some respects, and his theory has

also given rise to many scientific studies. Despite some of the criticisms, Marcia's theory still remains one of the useful tools in studies of adolescence.

2.4. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, the three major theories of Peter Blos, Erik Erikson, and James Marcia on adolescent identity development have been discussed in this chapter. Blos's work, strongly influenced by Freudian theory, understands adolescent identity development as a second individuation process, involving the re-working and mastering of childhood traumas. Blos acknowledges that adolescents should be allowed to experiment with various identities as part of individuating and resolving the Oedipus complex at this later stage of development. Erik Erikson also maintains that adolescents must be allowed to experiment and make mistakes. His theory was elaborated and employed by Marcia to understand the relationship between exploration and commitment variables in the formation of ego identity during adolescence.

Both Erikson and Marcia acknowledge the importance that the context plays in the process of adolescent identity development. In this study, the researcher aims to explore how adolescent boys from two schools in Alexandra Township negotiate multiple voices of masculinity. School is a central context in which identity exploration and commitment emerge during adolescence. A central feature of identity that becomes particular salient at this stage of life is gender. Hence the current study aims to investigate aspects of masculine identity amongst a particular sub-group of adolescent boys, drawing upon theory that suggests that identity formation is significant at this time, but recognizing the context in which this development takes place.

Lastly, in the study, the researcher uses the term 'adolescence' cautiously not to naturalize it as a time characterized by risk-taking behaviours, such as sex with multiple partners, drinking, smoking and reckless driving (Macleod, 2001; Seidler, 2006). In the mainstream literature, adolescence is often represented as the period of madness, chaos, turbulence and experimentation (Burman, 1994; Macleod, 2001; Seidler, 2006). Although the period may well be characterized by experimentation and risk-taking in many adolescents, it is equally important to look at teenagers who do not conform to these portrayals. It is the purpose of this study to look at how young school boys negotiate multiple voices of masculinity. In the

subsequent chapter, the researcher critically discusses the concept of masculinity or masculinities.

Chapter 3: Studying masculinity or masculinities

Introduction

Over the recent past years, there has been a growing interest in the field of gender studies on the study of young boys and men (see, for example, Connell, 1995, 2000; Frosh et al., 2002; Hearn, 1996, 1998; Khan, 2009; Messner, 1997; Morrell, 2001; Seidler, 1989, 2006). Many of these studies have engaged in the debate about what it is that constitutes masculinity. In this chapter, the researcher covers various definitions of masculinity and critically engages with the debate as to whether we should talk about masculinity or masculinities.

Furthermore, the chapter introduces and describes Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity, a concept that has become very influential in contemporary masculinity studies. However, there have also been a number of criticisms leveled against the construct (see, for example, Demetriou, 2001; Khan, 2009) and the rather reductionistic way in which it has been applied as will also be discussed. An important part of the discussion in this chapter is to examine how the concept of 'hegemonic' masculinity has been applied in South African studies on masculinity.

Overall, the chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section explores critical ways in which scholars and researchers in this field of inquiry define and explain masculinity or masculinities. The second section of the chapter covers critical discussion about Connell's notion of 'hegemonic' masculinity.

3.1. What is masculinity?

During the last two to three decades, masculinity has become a popular topic of study in many social science disciplines, including, psychology, sociology and anthropology. It could be argued that within social sciences, masculinity studies have tended to be dominated by sociologists, such as Connell (1995, 2000), Kimmell (1990, 2004), Messner (1997), and Seidler (1989, 1994, 2006), anthropologists such as Gilmore (1990), and historians, such as

Morrell (1998, 2001), and less attention has been paid to the psychological aspects of masculinity. However, the work of Edley and Wetherrell (1995, 1999), Frosh (1991, 1994), Frosh, Pattman and Phoenix (2002, 2003), Gergen and Davis (1997), Gilligan (2009) and Wetherell and Edley (1999), amongst others has opened up space for psychological understandings. This study aims to make a further contribution in this regard.

There have always been questions about what constitutes masculinity. The definition of what makes a man is often taken for granted and masculinity is assumed to be something inborn and natural. Some writers argue that masculinity is what men think and feel and how they behave (Seidler, 2006; Kimmell, 2004; Kimmell, Hearn & Connell, 2005). Morrell (2001) and Connell (1995) both define masculinity as a specific gender identity belonging to male persons. Furthermore, these writers see masculinity as a social construct that develops primarily through gender socialization. Connell (1995) and Edley and Wetherell (1995) argue that masculine gender identity does not exist in isolation from, but rather can only be understood in relation with femininity. In this view, masculinity is located as a gendered form of being that is given different expressions in different cultures and is generally constructed in contra-distinction to femininity. The concept of masculinity is generally used to refer to the cultural construction of maleness, the construction of men as gendered (Hearn, 1996). Masculinity has commonly been represented as a powerful, strong and dominant gender identity and yet the meaning of masculinity is not stable. Thus defining masculinity becomes a complicated process. There are so many diverse definitions of what constitutes masculinity and the concept of masculinity is used differently by various researchers depending on their field of study (Khan, 2009).

It is clear from the new social science research that there is no universal blueprint of masculinity that is found across all cultures. Masculinity differs in terms of class, race, ethnicity, and culture. Thus it has been argued that we need to speak of ‘masculinities’, not masculinity (Connell, 2000; Frosh et al., 2002) in order to capture the multiplicity of forms that masculinity can take in different contexts and at different historical moments. Arthur Brittan (1989) also makes a useful conceptual contribution to this argument about the definition of masculinity in highlighting the problems inherent in reifying masculinity into a definable heuristic entity. He argues that “since masculinity is socially constructed and historically and

culturally located, it is spurious to talk of masculinity and in fact that the study of masculinity should be recognized as the study of masculinities" (Brittan, 1989, p.14). This proposal has created robust debate about the definition of masculinity. Both Hearn (1996) and Clatterbaugh (1998, in Connell, 2000) argue that there is a real difficulty in defining 'masculinity' or 'masculinities' since these terms are used in inconsistent ways by different authors. Clatterbaugh (1998, in Connell, 2000, p.16) also suggests that if "talking about men seems to be what we want to do", why bother to introduce the muddy concept of 'masculinities' at all? However, many researchers such as Connell (1995; 2000), Morrell (2001) and Frosh et al. (2002), agree that we need to talk of masculinities instead of masculinity as a single entity and that this is a useful theoretical move/shift. They also appear to maintain that masculinity is not exclusively the property of men and therefore men's studies and the study of masculinities cannot always be equated, although there is clearly considerable overlap in the two fields. Since the present study is interested in understanding how a group of boys appear to define their sense of themselves as gendered, and as masculine in particular, it seemed appropriate to frame this research in terms of the study of young masculinities.

In South Africa, Morrell also argues that "there is no one, typical South African masculinity" (2001, p.33), but rather different masculinities. Many academics use the plural form 'masculinities' to acknowledge the variety of interpretive forms that masculinity can take. Connell (2000, p.65) argues that "an area of agreement emerged among North America, British and Australian writers in recent years that we no longer talk about masculinity but about masculinities". The fields of men's and masculinity studies are characterized by the study of male experience as specific and varying across socio-historical-cultural formations.

In the current research project, what remains critical is that the concept of masculinity is important in theorizing how boys and men are gendered and how this is expressed in their conversations and in their everyday lives. One of the constructs that has become widely used and popularized in men and masculinity studies is that of 'hegemonic masculinity'.

3.2. What is hegemonic masculinity?

The concept of hegemonic masculinity emerged two decades ago. The construct was first proposed in reports on a field study of social inequality in Australian High Schools in a related conceptual discussion of the making of masculinities and in debate over the role of men in Australian labor politics (Connell, 1995, 2005). The concept of hegemony was derived from the work of an Italian sociologist, Antonio Grasmsci, and his analysis of class relations. Grasmsci was a Marxist sociologist who used the term *hegemony* to critically talk about the power that the bourgeoisie had over the working class masses in a capitalist economic system. The bourgeoisie used their political power to control and dominate the working class and to sustain a leading position in social life (Giddens, 1994). The idea of hegemony was used to capture both structural and ideological or discursive dominance within certain sets of relations, pertaining in this instance primarily to class position, and power.

Connell (1995) later coined the term 'hegemonic masculinity' to discuss how some men use power to maintain control and domination over women and interestingly also over other sub-groups of men. He defined hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 1995, p. 77). Moreover, hegemonic masculinity is the term used to refer to the dominant cultural stereotype of masculinity. This includes, for example, the dominant social construction of men as brave, strong, aggressive and resilient, in many societies. The other dominant cultural stereotypes associated with hegemonic masculinity also suggest that a 'real man' is a male person who is able to support a wife and children by earning a steady income and having the ability to face and solve problems (Connell, 1995; Gilmore, 1990; Niehaus, 2005). Another fairly general element of being a 'real man' is evidenced in the ability to demand sexual intercourse with women and girls, often with multiple partners. Accordingly, hegemonic masculinity is predominantly encapsulated in being a heterosexual, healthy, competitive male who sees women as sexual objects and competes against other males for access to women (Connell, 1995; Niehaus, 2005). In general, hegemonic versions of masculinity give primacy to the belief that gender is not negotiable and do not accept evidence

from feminist and other sources that the relationships between men and women are, in many aspects, politically and socially constructed (Brittain, 1994). Hegemonic masculinity justifies patriarchy and oppression of women as part of culture and biology, as reflecting the 'natural order' of relationships. Hegemony also supports the institutionalization of men's domination of women in the workplace and in the family (Donaldson, 2003).

Hegemonic masculinity is characterized not only by domination over women, but also by domination of some men over other men (especially homosexual men). Hegemonic masculinity is therefore understood as both "hegemony over women" and "hegemony over subordinate masculinities" (Demetriou, 2001, p. 341). Heterosexuality and homophobia are arguably part of the bedrock of hegemonic masculinity.

> "Conformity to the demands of hegemonic masculinity, pushes heterosexual men to homophobia and rewards them for it" (Donaldson, 1993, p. 648)

It seems that hegemonic masculinity is sustained and affirmed by rejection of homosexuality and gay men. Gay masculinities are subordinated because their object of sexual desire is not consistent with heterosexuality, which is a fundamental element of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity relates to non-hegemonic masculinities by subordinating and marginalizing them (Connell, 1995). Several studies exploring hegemonic masculinities have illustrated how hegemonic masculinity is actively constructed and defined in relation to and opposition against the 'Other' (Renold, 2001), which can include girls, femininities and gay and non-hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1995). Davies and Hare's (1991, in Renold, 2001) concept of 'positioning' is particularly useful in theorizing the ways in which boys define hegemonic masculinities in relation to and against the 'Other', through techniques of discursive and behavioural domination and subordination. Authors writing on masculinity have also associated hegemonic masculinity with risk-taking, irresponsibility and aggression (Renold, 2001).

Connell (1995) and Segal (1990) have commented, however, that over the last two or three decades conventional maleness appears to be losing the popularity it once enjoyed, in part because a large volume of writing emerged in the 1970s and early 1980s criticizing hegemonic

masculinity. In this literature, the 'public face' of feminism, as Segal (1990, p.89) puts it, was sharply critical of men. In reading feminist writings one was likely to encounter men (as a consequence of their masculine identifications) pictured as rapists, pornographers, child abusers, and exploiters, and images of women as targets and victims of male aggression (Connell, 2000, p.144). Barry Ryan sums up this kind of attitude to men and masculinity:

> "After university I was at the stage where I could understand academic literature, and I read some pretty heavy stuff, which made me feel terrible about being male for a long time" (in Connell, 2000, p.144).

Many critics believed that hegemonic or conventional masculinity was "in crisis". Some men and boys began to feel the burden of being constrained and defined by this hegemonic masculinity construction/ideal and, for example, started engaging in activities aimed at supporting feminist liberation movements. These men and feminist women agreed that the main enemy was conventional or hegemonic masculinity, seen as a social role or set of expectations into which men were forced (Segal, 1990). 'Hegemonic masculinity' was accused of promoting power seeking, competitiveness, insensitivity, and as interested in things and goals rather than people and emotional processes (Cohen, 1990). Men and boys were understood to be coerced into this kind of masculine identity and conditioned into competitive, inexpressive, restrictive masculine modes, considered psychologically damaging (Levant & Pollack, 1995). However, Segal (1990) accused feminist scholars of lampooning hegemonic masculinity and, by implication, all men, by putting them into one category and characterizing them as all potential abusers, without recognizing the heterogeneity of masculinity:

> "It has been an enduring feature of radical feminist work to place issues of male violence at the centre of an understanding of social relations, although often this has been done in a way that forecloses the possibilities for men to change. In this context, it is crucial not to treat masculinity as a unified and homogenous category, fixed within particular relations of power, but to explore the emergence and experiences of different masculinities"(p. 286).

Segal (1990) and Seidler (1991) argue that it is important to differentiate between men who abuse women and men who do not. Their work illustrated some shift in terms of studies on men and masculinities. The focus of some more recent writing on gender has been to look at

positive signs of a form or forms of masculinity that do not subscribe to stereotyped ideas of what it is to be a man (Connell, 1995; 2000; Segal, 1990). In part as a result of this shift in emphasis, an active network of researchers on men and masculinity grew, special journals were established, and conferences organized. For example, in 1988 at the University of Bradford, a conference on men, masculinity and social theory was held. The conference was aimed at discussing discourses on men and masculinities (Hearn & Morgan, 1990). In 1990, the Division of Psychotherapy of the American Psychological Association (APA) also sponsored a symposium and published a special series on men and psychotherapy in the *Journal of Psychotherapy* (Levant, 1990). In the summer of 1992, the American Sociological Association (ASA) funded a conference for gender scholars to discuss masculinity and its practices (Messner, 1997). Messner mentions that as a result men's movements started emerging and joining forces with feminist women to confront issues of rape, sexual harassment, sexism and homophobia. Many seminal texts on men and masculinities were also published during this period (see, for example, Brod, 1987; Connell, 1995; Seidler, 1989; Segal, 1990). Growing out of these efforts other countries followed suit in initiating more comprehensive study of men and masculinity. In 1998, Chile hosted a conference on masculinities in Latin America. In Japan, there have also been changes in media portrayals of men and reference to shared childcare, renegotiations of sexuality and explicit critiques of traditional Japanese ideals of masculinity (Connell, 2000). Today there are many journals focusing on men and masculinities, including, the *Journal of Psychology of Men and Masculinities*; *American Journal of Men's Health*; *Men and Masculinities*; *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality*; and the *Journal of Men Studies*. All of these journals deal with diverse topics, including men's health, violence, sexual identities, fatherhood, construction of masculinities, gender relations and feminism.

Research interest in masculinities has also gained popularity in South Africa. In order to engage with issues of masculinity in the new South Africa, a conference on *Sex and Secrecy* was organized in June 2003 at the University of Witwatersrand. In 2005, another conference entitled '*From boys to men: masculinities and risk'* was held at the University of Western Cape. In many universities, there has also been a move to include 'Men Studies' as a field of inquiry and teaching. Books on the topic of masculinity were also written by South African

social scientists (see, for example, Morrell, 2001; Reid & Walker, 2005; Ougazane & Morrell, 2005; Richter & Morrell, 2006; Ratele, 2008; Shefer, Ratele, Strebel, Shabalala & Buikema, 2007). There were also special editions of journals on the topic of masculinity *(see Agenda, 1998; Journal of Southern African Studies, 1998; Psychology in Society, 2007, 2008; Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 2010). All these initiatives have been aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of boys and men's construction and experience of masculinity in South Africa.

Currently, it seems that some or even many men are slowly continuing to break out of the traditional stereotypic identifications associated with masculinity and are becoming more able to share feelings and to be more sensitive and more nurturing in their interpersonal relations (Connell, 1995; Cohen, 1990; Segal, 1990). According to Segal (1990) and Cohen (1990), for example, some men are willing to describe themselves as both 'feminine' (warm, sensitive, caring, gentle) and 'masculine' (strong, tough, competitive). Many of these men are also supportive of initiatives that are aimed at liberating women (Kimmell, 1987; Morrell, 2001).

3.3. 'New men's studies': Part of the problem or part of the solution?

Also in response to feminism, many 'new men studies' started to emerge, but the question has been posed as to whether these studies are part of the problem or part of the solution in relation to gender inequalities and difficulties? (Canaan & Griffin, 1990; Seidler, 1994). Some feminist writers (e.g., Canaan & Griffin, 1990; Macleod, 2007) have been concerned about the increasing number of studies on boys and men. Their major concern is that the proliferation of studies on boys and men might serve to legitimate dominant forms of masculinity in another guise or undermine the progress that has been made by feminist scholarship. Macleod (2007) proposes the possibility of a 'phallocentric trap', arguing that studies on boys and men may inadvertently continue advantaging and privileging men's experiences at the expense of women (marginalizing the latter). In response to this concern, Seidler (1994) and Morrell (2007) argued that studies on boys and men are not aimed at eradicating feminist scholarship, but aim to add to feminist scholarship in better understanding men, the social construction of masculinity and gendered relations. Ratele suggests (2008, p. 26):

"The aim of men's consciousness thought is to give men something along the lines of

> what women's studies gave to women: self-knowledge. Men's consciousness thought puts men at the centre, just like the women's liberation struggle put women at the forefront"

The current work on boys and men is aimed at promoting healthy alternative masculinities, gender equality and anti-sexist agendas. So how should 'the new studies on men' relate to feminist scholarship on women? Seidler (1994) argues that studies on men and women should move in parallel. Both feminist and masculinity researchers should work together on issues of feminism and masculinity since they provide a better understanding of gender relations. However, Seidler is cautious, arguing that women should still be given the space to set their own agendas and projects free from the interferences of men. The idea is that while feminism may serve the interests of men as well as women, researchers also need to explore issues of men and masculinity more critically (Seidler, 1994). In this vein, studies on men hopefully become not part of the problem, but part of the solution. Men and women should sit side-by-side against the common enemy of problematic versions of hegemonic masculinity (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). The current research project is located in the context of pro-feminist research on men and explores young masculinities within this kind of research tradition.

In the section below, the researcher discusses Bob Connell's seminal book *Masculinities* (1995), (also rooted within the pro-feminist research tradition), in which he elaborates on the idea that there are many masculinities, masculinities which are fluid and can and do change. This notion that expressions of masculinity may be malleable supports the possibility of less oppressive gender patterns and relations.

3.4. Masculinities ranked hierarchically

In 1995, Connell not only developed the theme of different kinds of masculine identities, but also introduced the argument that these masculinities are ranked hierarchically. According to Connell (1995) it may be useful to think of three categories of masculinity in regard to hegemonic masculinity: *subordinate, complicit, and marginalized.* Connell argues that different interpretations of masculine identity sit uneasily with each other, occupying hegemonic, subordinated, complicit or marginalized positions vis-à-vis each other, and

reflecting ongoing support and/or contestation of hegemonic versions.

3.4.1. **Subordinated masculinities**

Hegemonic masculinity exists in part based on the cultural domination of other forms of masculinity, the primary examples being the subordination of homosexual men by straight men, which includes subordination through street violence and homophobic attacks. Homophobia is an integral component of heterosexual masculinity, to the extent that it serves the psychological function of expressing "who one is not (homosexual) and thereby affirming who one is (heterosexual)" (Herek, 1987, in Hearn, 1989, p. 123). Gay masculinities are subordinated because their object of sexual desire is not consistent with heterosexuality, which is fundamental element of hegemonic masculinity and also because of associations between homosexual and feminine traits, attributes and behaviours. According to Connell (1995), homosexual masculinity is at the bottom of a male gender hierarchy among men. It is pushed very far away from hegemonic masculinity and it is easily associated with femininity. The process of subordination of homosexual masculinity is also "marked by a rich vocabulary of abuse: wimp, milksop, sissy, mother's boy, ladyfinger, motherfucker, jellyfish and so on" (Connell, 1995, p.79). Homophobia seems to be a reasonably constant feature of dominant masculinity's attempts to distance itself from the threat of homosexuality.

> "The harassment of those perceived to be gay or effeminate is one way of rendering heterosexuality compulsory, through the punishment of deviance from heterosexual norms of masculinity" (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998, p. 87).

A psychoanalytic interpretation of homophobia is that it represents an expression of men's fear of what they see as the 'feminine' in themselves the enemy within (Herek, 1987, in Hearn, 1989, p.123). Segal (1990) argues that homophobia stems from fear of one's own homosexual wishes and related taboos; fear of castration and loss of manhood. This is because homosexuality does not fit the public stereotypes, values and ideologies confining sexuality to procreation and the family. It seems hegemonic masculinity is sustained and affirmed to large extent by censure of gay men.

Thus homosexuality is a form of masculinity that is particularly denigrated in many societies and serves as a foil for the expression of hegemonic, heterosexual masculinity. The origins of this subordination may be both political and intrapsychic, as discussed. There are, of course, other forms of subordinated masculinity, for example, physically weak or under-developed boys or men may also be subordinated, but homosexuality provides the clearest and perhaps most widely recognized example of this kind of status.

3.4.2. **Complicity**

According to Connell (1995) not all men meet the normative standards of hegemonic masculinity but many men still benefit from the patriarchal dividends associated with this hegemony by the mere fact that they are men. Some men make some compromises to respect their wives or female partners rather than displaying a naked domination or an uncontested authority. Such men are also not violent towards women, and may do their accustomed share of the housework, childcare and general family support. These men are described as representing the "new age" man. These men are also described as sensitive (in touch with their femininity), caring, loving, supportive and non-violent. However, despite all these positive changes, such men may well remain '*complicit*' in supporting hegemonic masculinity in that they may do little to challenge patriarchy in general. As a result, there have been questions raised about the possibility of men ever really acting against their own collective material and psychological interests. Segal (1990) in her seminal book, *Slow Motion: changing Men,* also noted Connell's use of the notion of complicity and sees validity in the idea. She argues that although many contemporary men are now more able to share feelings and are more sensitive and more nurturing, they still benefit from patriarchy as a system and may do little to fundamentally challenge gender politics.

3.4.3. **Marginalization**

According to Connell (1995) masculinity is complicated by racial and class or socio-economic differences. Race relations are an integral part of the dynamic between masculinities. In a white-supremacist context, black masculinity is the most marginalized form of masculinity.

Robert Staples (1982) in *Black Masculinity* discusses the effects of class and race in terms of the expression of masculinity. He argues that black men in the United States have suffered as a result of massive unemployment, racism, and poverty. Staples (1982) takes this view further to indicate how black men in the United States have been denied mainstream or adaptive forms of masculine fulfillment. His main argument is that black men in general have not been able achieve highly valued masculine status due to race politics and racism in the USA, often because of their inferior educational opportunities and growing up in impoverished communities.

Similarly, black men in South Africa were historically also subjected to the same kind oppression in defining their own masculinities. Even by the 1950s, colonialism and apartheid had become understood as an assault on black men's masculinity. In an article in the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Morrell (1998) highlights how white Afrikaner masculinity became hegemonic in relation to black masculinity under the apartheid regime. Many black men felt emasculated in being called 'my boys' or 'kaffirs', by their white bosses (Morrell, 1998, p. 854). A black informant interviewed about his life on the mines said: "All we ask is to be treated like men" (Drum, 1951, in Clowes, 2003, p.103). Many black men were forced into the 'role of a non-man'- having to embrace the powerless of knowing that "white people could violate your life at will. Each of us black workers hated and feared the whites. Each of us felt the same shame and weakness. We were in the face of domination by the whites" (Clowes, 2005, pp.103-104).

As a result, it has been argued that a black man often despised himself and in turn often turned his hatred against his family through domestic violence (Fanon, 1968; Segal, 1990). Like Staples, Biko (1978, pp. pp.30-31) makes similar claims about race and emasculation in South Africa:

> "The black man we have today has lost his manhood. Reduced to an obligation shell, he looks with awe at the white power structure and accepts what he regards as the inevitable position. Deep inside him, his anger mounts at the accumulating insult, but he averts it in the wrong direction – on his fellow black men in the township, on the property of black people….all in all, the black man has become shell, a shadow of man, completely defeated and drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity".

Under apartheid, black masculinity was positioned as inferior to white masculinity. White men were in a position of power and authority and had the privilege to freely violate a black man's rights. Biko (1978, in Ratele, 2006) talks about how black men lost their manhood at the hands of white men. They felt helpless and powerless and came to associate their own skin colour with feelings of inferiority. Talking about the emotional pain of being a black man, Ratele (2006, p. 178) again quotes Biko as follows:

> "In the privacy of his toilet his face twists in silent condemnation of white society but brightens up in sheepish obedience as he comes out hurrying in response to his master's impatient call. In the home-bound bus or train he joins the chorus that roundly condemns the white man but he is first to praise the government in the presence of the police or his employers"

The above quote indicates that in private spaces or in the company of fellow black people, black men were able to recognize and express their hatred of the system of apartheid, but at the same time had no powers to challenge the white man's authority. The marginalization of black masculinity and the hegemonic position of white men is clearly illustrated in these circumstances where deference to whiteness is shown in public, in large part because of the economic and political power adhering to being white. In his writings, Morrell (2001) links the current high levels of violence in post-apartheid South Africa to the historical constructions of masculinity. In doing so, Morrell tries to show how apartheid appears to have provided fertile ground for constructions of masculinity that endorsed and legitimized the use of violence in a variety of public and private spaces.

It is evident that black masculinity was previously subordinated to white masculinity in South Africa and historically in the USA. However, it could be argued that along with other forms of masculinity, 'black' masculinity remains marginalized globally, even if racial oppression is no longer condoned or legitimated in law. In this respect, 'black' or 'coloured' masculinity is arguably still marginalized in relation to hegemonic masculinity. South Africa offers an interesting context in which to study shifts in what may constitute hegemonic masculinity since with affirmative action and a majority black government, 'blackness' has become associated with greater power and value in certain sectors of society. However, such change cannot be separated from global representations of 'blackness' and 'whiteness' and many black men in

reality remain impoverished and arguably still emasculated (and marginalized) in post-apartheid South Africa.

What is evident here is that various groups of men occupying particular identity statuses may be accorded different positions *vis-à-vis* dominant or hegemonic versions of masculinity. While such positioning (like masculinity) may be subject to change, it is apparent that to some extent that hegemonic masculinity can only be sustained at the cost of the marginalization and subordination of some men and through the complicity of others.

3.5. Critical evaluation of Connell's work

Despite his major contribution to masculinity studies, Connell's theory has been criticized for not being very specific on how men actually negotiate masculine identities. His theory focused mainly on macro-sociological issues rather than micro-psychological processes, the latter being the primary level of interest in the current research project. In other words, what are the discursive strategies that boys and men use on a daily basis in living out their masculinities? And do these strategies change from one context to another? According to Wetherrell and Edley (1999) the 'hegemonic masculinity model' is not sufficient for understanding 'the nitty-gritty of negotiating masculine identities' (p. 336). The main argument here is that Connell fails to look sufficiently at the discursive strategies that men employ to resist dominant voices of hegemonic masculinity and that the categories he describes (hegemonic, subordinated, marginalized, and complicit) may not always be easily distinguishable and may also be too limited in describing varieties of positioning and strategic engagement with hegemonic masculinity in context. Although these categories may be useful at a generic level and perhaps at a more sociological level of analysis, this explanation of forms of expression of masculinity fails to take into account the complexities of being a man in terms of his lived identity and experience.

Hegemonic masculinity is not a description of the characteristics of a 'real' man or men, but rather of a set of ideals that many boys and men aspire towards. Many of these aspirations are impossible to achieve or elusive (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). It is argued that Connell's earlier

understanding of hegemonic masculinity does not sufficiently take into account the dialectical relationship between hegemonic masculinities and marginalized or counter-forms of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is therefore represented as "essentially powerful, strong, brave, violent, risk-taking and heterosexual that is never infected by non-hegemonic elements" (Demetriou, 2001, p. 347). However, returning to Gramsci's work, it is important to note that hegemonic ideologies preserve, legitimate, and naturalize the interests of the powerful at the expense of the powerless. It must be noted that hegemonic relations in any society involve a constant contest and struggle for power and visibility. Connell seems to miss some of these complexities in his early writings. Boys and men appear to be constantly acting to maintain or occupy multiple and even opposing positions often simultaneously in their lived experiences (Frosh et al., 2002; Wetherell & Edley, 1999), illustrating that hegemonic relationships in respect of masculinity are non-static. According to Demetriou (2001, p. 355) "it is an illusion to think of hegemonic masculinity as a closed, coherent and unified identity". Hegemonic masculinity is characterized by the constant process of negotiation, translation and reconfiguration in order to adapt to the new historical time and context. Thus, both within groups and individuals shifts between hegemonic and counter hegemonic positions may take place very quickly, indicating co-existence and contestation. What versions of masculinity dominate or occupy a hegemonic position in any circumstance can also be subject to change. There is an appeal therefore not to reify the notion of a singular hegemonic masculinity.

Despite some of the criticisms, Connell should be given credit for his major contribution to the field of gender studies (especially masculinity studies). The concept of hegemonic masculinity arguably represents the most influential part of his work (Demetriou, 2001). It must be taken into account that Connell developed the notion of hegemonic masculinity while he was still rooted in understanding the class politics of the Australian capitalist economic system and its impact on men as partners and fathers. Since then, Connell has made substantial changes to the concept of hegemonic masculinity. He now recognizes the diversity, fluidity and multiplicity of masculinities including in respect of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic positions (Connell, 2000; 2005). Nevertheless the construct of hegemonic masculinity remains useful in understanding social positioning and the ways in which certain expressions of masculinity become dominant, legitimated and celebrated, and others, by virtue of this, become rendered

less legitimate.

3.6. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, it is clear that feminist and gender scholarship has provoked an interest in men, masculinity and gender relations between men and women. In addition, feminist and masculinity studies have also highlighted relations of dominance and oppression within the category of men. It is argued in this chapter that feminist and gender scholarship has also played a significant role in making men and masculinity more visible as the object/s of research.

While earlier radical feminist scholarship tended to depict all men as potentially abusive (Seidler, 1994; Segal, 1990), this view was found to be damaging as it over-generalized negative portrayals of men and discounted differences amongst them. This created a climate in which men began to "feel inadequate about who they were as men, feeling that they were not 'good enough' in many respects" (Seidler, 1994, p.115) and leading to some polarization in the study of women and men. Currently, there is greater recognition that the problematization of masculinity may be helpful in exploring gender relations and in attempting to challenge patriarchy. Connell's concept of a kind of 'hegemonic form/s' of masculinity appeared to offer a useful way of understanding archetypal, dominant, idealized and socially sanctioned expressions of masculinity that then become the blueprint against which boys and men 's experiences and behaviours become assessed. While there has been some criticism of the way in which the construct has been employed and the possibility that ideas around this kind of hegemonic gender construction may over-simplify what it means to live out a masculine identity. Overall, Connell's notion of hegemonic and counter forms of masculinity has gained considerable purchase in masculinity studies and offers a useful lens through which to look at expressions of masculinity and relations both between men and women and men and men.

In the subsequent chapter, the researcher discusses the use of applied psychoanalysis as a theoretical approach to understanding masculine subjectivities, aiming to focus in on more experiential or subjective aspects of masculinity identity.

Chapter 4: Psychoanalytic understandings of masculine subjectivity

Introduction

> "*Nothing is as practical as a good theory*" (Gabbard, 1990, p. 27)

The above quote suggests that the value of a good theory lies to a larger extent in its practical applicability. Theory is defined as a set of ideas and statements that describe, organize and make sense of the world and critically explain how facts fit together (Thomas, 2000). In this chapter, the researcher critically discusses the value of using psychoanalytic theory[3] as a tool of analysis to theorise the masculine subject and subjectivity. Since one of the major theoretical contributions that the current research project hopes to make is in understanding the feelings, emotional costs and contradictions that adolescent boys experience in negotiating hegemonic and non-hegemonic norms of masculinity, it is important to employ a body of theory that allows for exploration of aspects of subjectivity and more intra-individual experiences. Recently, there has been a growing interest in drawing upon psychoanalytic theory to explore the lived or subjective experiences of being and becoming masculine (Frosh, 1994; Hollway, 1989). Within critical psychology studies, there has also been a recent renewed interest in the origins and nature of subjectivity. The launch of a journal entitled, *Subjectivity* in 2008, previously the *International of Journal of Critical Psychology*, is an indication that the notion of subjectivity is gaining popularity in many social science disciplines, including within the domain of psychology. According to Blackman, Cromby, Hook, Papadopoulos and Walkerdine (2008), since the 1960s, subjectivity has been an important concept for academic research, allowing social scientists to engage with more personally experienced or lived aspects of social identity and social location.

[3] In the study, the researcher uses the term psychoanalytic theory without specific reference to any specific theorist. The researcher is aware that there are many theorists within the psychoanalytic literature (Freud, Post-Freudians, Klein, Post-Kleinians, Lacan, Post-Lacanians and so forth). In the current research project, the researcher uses the term 'psychoanalytic' broadly to refer to the work of all these writers, despite their philosophical differences. Psychoanalytic theories have in common usually recognition of the unconscious and the importance of intra-psychic processes and awareness that current experience is influenced by childhood development.

The book, *Changing the subject*, by Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn and Walkerine (1984), is regarded as one of the first major texts to grapple with the notion of subjectivity as a focus of academic research in psychology, challenging traditional psychological conceptions that people are mechanically positioned to behave in a particular manner. Wendy Hollway (1989) also made another major contribution to the topic in her book, *Subjectivity and Method in Psychology*. Hollway refers to subjectivity and the manner in which the term is used as follows: "individuality and self-awareness - the condition of being a subject is dynamic and multiple, always positioned in relation to discourses and practices" (p.25). In this description, Hollway clearly challenges the positivist scientific tradition of viewing the subject as unitary, rational and non-contradictory. In her work, Hollway also draws on Frosh's application of psychoanalytic theory (especially of the Freudian perspective) to challenge the notion of the unitary rational subject, as reflected in the quote below:

> "The idea is that in each of us there is a realm of psychological functioning which is not accessible to ordinary introspection, but which nevertheless has determining and at least motivating influence on the activities, thoughts and emotions of everyday life" (Frosh, 1987, in Hollway, 1989, p. 29)

According to Hollway (1989, p.29), "it is not that rationality is non-existent, rather that it is always being contested by forces", including the constant struggle to manage repressed material, which includes ideas, feelings, desires and fantasies outside of conscious awareness (Frosh,1994). Such repressed materials constantly threaten to overwhelm the (masculine) subject, as will be discussed later. Thus, there are arguably multiple forces governing male subjectivity, including unconscious contents.

In this chapter, the researcher argues for the relevance of researching male subjectivity using psychoanalytic theory. The researcher will employ the notion of subjectivity to highlight the complexities of how adolescent boys deal with subjective experiences of being positioned or positioning themselves as hegemonic or non-hegemonic. It must be mentioned that psychoanalytic theory in this research project is not applied in a traditional 'psychotherapeutic' or clinical sense focusing on exchanges between analyst and patient (Gabbard, 1990), but rather is located in the tradition of 'applied psychoanalysis' or what Frosh and Baraister (2008)

call ‘psychosocial studies’ in which the focus is on how the social and the psychodynamic interact with each other. Although psychoanalysis developed out of clinical work, it remains an important theoretical framework from which to understand and make sense of human behaviour more generally. The application of psychoanalytic theory in this research continues the tradition of using psychoanalysis to deal with social and political issues beyond the clinic and the hospital (Elliot, 1992, 2001; Elliot & Spezzanzo, 2000). In his recent book, *Psychoanalysis outside the Clinic*, Frosh (2010) also demonstrates the relevance of psychoanalysis in researching human subjectivity. He argues that psychoanalytic theory provides an innovative and reflective space for the thinking about subjectivity.

4.1. The value of psychoanalytic theory as a theoretical framework

It is important to mention at the outset again that the use of psychoanalytic theory as a theoretical framework is not aimed at ‘psychoanalyzing’ or ‘pathologizing’ the research participants, but at understanding some of the psychic processes involved in negotiating conflicting versions of masculinity. Based on the work of Stephen Frosh (1994), it has been demonstrated that psychoanalytic theory is a useful theoretical tool of analysis in identifying contradictory desires, conflicts and emotional comprises in the negotiation of both hegemonic and subordinated forms of masculinity. The current research project has been influenced by Frosh’s work and his demonstration that psychoanalysis can be a useful psychosocial framework for understanding gender and sexual identities. He asserted:

> “If psychoanalysis can be thought of as characterized by any particular ‘project’, it is to produce a certain kind of knowledge, providing explanations of human conduct and experience by revealing the mental forces that underlie them and that are not dealt with by any other intellectual discipline” (Frosh, 1999, p. 19).

In this quotation, Frosh stresses the power and the importance of psychoanalysis in exploring aspects of human experience which may not be accessible from other perspectives or disciplines. He argues that psychoanalysis is able to reveal “meaningful motivations and conflicts at the base of apparently and meaningless material” (Frosh, 1999, p. 19). Based on Frosh’s work, it is anticipated that psychoanalytic theory will help the researcher in the current

research project to understand aspects of how young masculine subjectivities are created, constructed and deconstructed and how the lived experience of being male, and masculine, is conveyed by boys from the township of Alexandra.

Although the study is interested in aspects of individual experience, it is also interested in understanding a particular set of versions of masculinity, that of a group of boys from Alexandra, an urban township in contemporary South Africa. Psychoanalytic theory is employed to study both personal and social aspects of masculine identities. At the same time, the researcher is mindful of the criticism that psychoanalytic theory may be limited in some respects in formulating the impact of social processes on identity formation (Frosh, 1999, 2010). Furthermore, the emphasis on social processes is important given that the researcher is interested in aspects of the meanings of masculinity that appear to be socially constructed in the particular context of Alexandra Township and contemporary South Africa. Conversely, the focus on social and political elements is aided by the introduction of the complexity associated with psychoanalytic accounts (Hollway, 1989). In the study, particular attention is paid to the strategies that boys appear to use and employ to 'position' themselves in relation to hegemonic standards of performance of masculinity, how these are subjectively experienced, and how these may vary by space, time, age, class, norms, family life and context. This positioning can be understood both in terms of social-contructionism and psychoanalytic theory (Burr, 1995; Butler, 1990; Frosh, 1994).

It is evident thus far that psychoanalytic theory offers a means of understanding how the world can be revealed and expressed in the experience of every individual, although its main focus is on the internal mechanisms by which individuals distort or deny reality (Frosh, 1999). Frosh insists that psychoanalytic theory has political and social significance. He rejects some of the criticisms that "it reduces what is social to individual processes rather than institutions that support certain discourses" (Frosh, 1999, p. 311). Frosh (1999) argues that in a complex manner, "psychoanalytic theory interweaves what is external to the individual with what is experienced as most deeply private and personally formative" (p. 312). On this point, he argues that "the society introduces into each individual its own ideological axes, which then become the generative kernel of emotions, attitudes and modes of relating to others" (Frosh, 1999,

p.312). The literature discussed so far suggests that there are complex emotional issues that operate at the heart of masculinity, making it a fertile area in which to apply psychoanalytic thinking. Applied psychoanalytic theory insists that we take a critical stance towards taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world (including the concept of masculinity) and analyze fantasies and feelings involved in negotiating this identity. The value of using psychoanalytic theory in this research is that it supplies the researcher with rich language and concepts to interpret some of the psychological processes that underpin the formation of masculinity.

It is important to bear in mind that power and struggle are central to the experience of masculine identities and that the costs of pursuing an appropriate masculine identity can be heavy. As a result, boys often shift from one position to another in order to manage expectations of being a 'real man'. Taking up certain subjective positions and foregoing others may evoke feelings of anxiety, loss and sadness (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). One of the central questions in the current project is why adolescent boys emotionally invest in certain subject and subjective positions. What are the conscious or unconscious reasons behind taking up certain discursive positions? What are the emotional costs involved in this process? It is arguably only through drawing upon psychoanalytic theory that the researcher will able to explore these kinds of questions about the adolescent boys from Alexandra Township whose experiences the thesis is centered around. In discussing the value of using psychoanalysis to analyze research material, Frosh and Baraitser (2008, p. 6) argue

> "That this approach can add something to the *psychosocial*…from the sophistication of its ideas about emotional investment and fantasy, which can offer a 'thickening' or enrichment of interpretative understanding brought to bear on personal narratives, especially those arising out of interview situations. Psychoanalytic interpretative strategies may be able to throw light on the psychological processes or perhaps the conscious or unconscious "reasons" behind a specific individual investment in any rhetorical or discursive position. This may offer a more complete (because more individualized as well as emotion-inflected) interpretive re-description of interview material with helpful links to clinical perceptions and practices".

Using psychoanalysis as reflected in the just cited quotation, the researcher will also able to theorise the male subject's relation to the self, others and the society as a whole. This is because psychoanalysis, as a psychosocial theory, offers opportunities to explore these

intertwined elements by emphasizing the ways that we mediate individual lived realities through cultural and social meanings that are in turn overridden with anxieties and desires belonging to the intra-psychic realm. In this way, psychoanalysis as a social and critical theory seeks to move beyond a conceptualization of male subjectivity as either the exclusive effect of discursive production or of the intra-psychic. It sees lived experiences and identities as the "products of a unique biography of anxiety and desire-provoking life events and the manner in which their meanings are affected by discourses and also because the unconscious defences that we describe are intersubjective processes (that is, they affect and are affected by others)" (Hollway & Jefferson (2000, p. 24). According to Elliot (2001) the relationship between self and society is one of conflict, tension and ambivalence, and the power of the self lies in the ability to negotiate all these tensions as part of achieving some sense of a personal identity.

In the section below, the researcher briefly discusses the work of three major psychoanalytic theorists, namely, Freud, Chodorow and Lacan, as part of theorizing male subjectivity. The researcher is aware that there are many theorists within psychoanalysis (including many that have written about aspects of gender and masculinity) and that it is not possible to cover all of them in the current research project. These three theorists are selected for discussion because of their relevance in framing responses to certain research questions in the study. It must be mentioned that there are major philosophical differences between these three theorists, but despite this they still provide a useful framework in theorizing masculine subjectivity.

4.2. Sigmund Freud and the painful struggle of the Oedipus complex

One of the earliest scientific accounts of the development of masculinity is based on the work of Sigmund Freud, who is known as the father of psychoanalytic theory. Freud offered the hypothesis that humans were constitutionally bisexual, that masculinity and femininity coexisted in everyone. He argued that at the earliest stage of development the infant can be conceived of as essentially bisexual, with boys and girls sharing the mother as the first exclusive love object, "passively enjoying and actively seeking the sensual pleasures of her ministrations" (Segal, 1990, p.75). Passing through the sensual comforts and fierce conflicts of oral, anal, phallic and genital eroticism, girls and boys alike desire the mother as their own exclusive love object.

Within Freudian theory, the Oedipal stage of development is viewed as pivotal in the establishment of gender identity and sexual orientation. In Freud's view, masculinity is neither biologically determined nor simply a product of social stereotypes and expectations. It involves a complex and difficult process of psychic constructions, marked by anxiety and contradictions (Frosh, 1994; Segal, 1990). The boy child enters the Oedipus complex of loving his mother and desiring her as his sexual object. As a result, he starts to develop jealousy and resentment towards the father who is viewed as a rival for the mother's attention, but these feelings induce fear in the boy child. The father-son struggle lies at the heart of Freud's account of 'masculinity', especially the boy's fear of castration. The fear of losing his penis develops into what Freud calls castration anxiety, which makes the boy ultimately give up his mother as a sexual object. This occurs through the boy making a powerful (paternal) identification with the father figure. Both the processes of identification and *dis-identification* are salient in the development of the masculine psyche. In terms of Freud's theory, fear is at the core of the formation of masculine identity, and important theoretical construct.

In his theory, Freud argued that the formation of masculinity is primarily connected to boy's fear of castration and that the identification with fathers is largely defensive, arising out of the need to defend against castration anxiety. As Richard (1990, p. 162) puts it "the son takes on the father's punitive possessiveness, and joins in the fearful, competitive rites of masculinity in which he hopes to lose forever his fear of castration". However, this fear of castration does not disappear as it continues to threaten to engulf the masculine subject, who continuously lives under the threat of a possible psychic disintegration. According to Whitehead (2005) this leads to 'masculine anxiety', which is the fear of collapse in self-identity as a man. This discussion points to the fragile nature of masculinity and goes some way towards explaining why boys and men experience pressure to display their 'manliness' in front of other men, through, for example, engagement in risk-taking behaviours in order to prove that they are not castrated, but still men. Failure to live up to the ideal masculine self may produce feelings of insecurity, inadequacy, anxiety and self-doubt about one's sense of manhood. So, in terms of Freud's theory, the masculine subject draws on various defense mechanisms to protect against the possible collapse of the ideal masculine self. In his theory, Freud talks about repression as one

of the most important defensive mechanisms in keeping unconscious aggressive and sexual impulses and anxiety at bay, acknowledging that the human subject requires repression to function adaptively. Elliot (1992, 2001) suggests that degree of repression that the human subject requires depends of many factors, such as access to social support and cultural conventions. Lack of support, for example, may lead to the failure of the ego, which Freud sees as an important part of the psyche in managing the 'psychic crisis of subjectivity' and tensions between external and internal demands (Elliot, 1992, 2001). It is through defense mechanisms such as repression, denial and sublimation that the human subject is able to manage some of these internal tensions. This again suggests that masculinity is not stable and coherent as a gender identity but is constantly perhaps experienced as under threat and characterized by internal tension and contradiction.

In the subsequent section, the researcher critically deals with the accusation that Freud was sexist in his writings about the formation of masculinity, and also the question of how boys manage to develop a gender identity or negotiate Oedipus in the face of absent fathers. This latter discussion is pertinent for the current research project, given that many boys grow up without father figures in South Africa (Ramphele, 2002).

4.2.1. **Is Freud's theory sexist?**

Psychoanalytic theory (especially Freud's idea of the Oedipus complex) has attracted a number of criticisms from many feminist writers. However, other feminists, such as Juliet Mitchell (1974), defended Freud's theory as non-sexist, arguing for a more symbolic understanding of Oedipus and oedipal conflicts. In her seminal book, *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, Mitchell (1974) makes a compelling argument that Freud's theory offers an alternative view to patriarchy. She argued that Freud problematized the production of masculinity and femininity rather than seeing them as an essential part of biological nature. Mitchell found Freud's theory useful in theorizing both male and female subjectivity and in seeking to describe how gendered relations (in society) become internalized in complex ways by human subjects. However, those feminist writers who maintain that Freudian theory is sexist, argue that in his theory, it seems men are the superior sex and considered to be active, assertive, competitive, rational, goal-

orientated and aggressive as a consequence of the resolution of the Oedipus complex, the inference then being that all of these qualities are less developed in women because of a less dramatic oedipal resolution. It seems masculinity is seen as a largely positive identity, while femininity is constructed as something negative or a 'failed' form of masculinity (Edley & Wetherell, 1995, p. 43). Another major criticism is that women in Freud's theory tended to be represented as incomplete by the entertainment of notion of penis envy.

In response to some of these criticisms, Frosh (1987, 1994) argued that Freud was largely describing unconscious processes in gender formation, involving repressed sexual desires and fantasies. These desires and fantasies cannot be behaviourally observed, scientifically tested or verified, but can be psychoanalytically theorized in cases where boys show signs of castration anxieties and unresolved Oedipus complex issues. According to Frosh (1987, 1994) the Oedipus complex is a metaphor of how male children negotiate their gender identities. As argued by Frosh (1994) and Segal (1990) Freud did not literally mean that the boy-child wanted to kill the father. He was talking about unconscious processes, processes that are argued to contribute to the boy-child's development of a sense of morality (superego amongst other aspects). Here, one may argue that the Oedipus complex basically symbolizes how the unconscious is socialized into societal norms and values. It is through these psychic processes that the boy-child is able to become a 'moral' male subject (Segal, 1990).

Another major criticism has been that Freud's theory was euro-centric in its orientation and therefore is limited in its applicability to very different contexts. In his latest book, *Hate and the Jewish Science*, Frosh (2009) argues that Freud's theory was not only seen as euro-centric, but also as a 'Jewish Science'. This was because Freud and many other leading analysts were Jews (Frosh, 2009). Based on this, many critics (especially in the African context) argued that it seems that in his description of 'the family', Freud was describing a typical western middle-class nuclear family unit in which both the mother and the father were available to catalyze and help the boy-child deal with the unconscious struggle of the Oedipus complex (Bozalek, 1997, 2006). Such circumstances may not be the norm in some contexts with implications for the application of oedipal theory in these instances. In agreement with Bozalek's (1997, 2006) argument, a central question in the current research is how this Euro-centric theory of Freud

can be applied in the African township context of Alexandra in South Africa in which many boy children grow up without fathers. However, here, it is important to mention that for Freud, the father figure did not only refer to the child's real or biological father, but to any male figure who might able to act as the symbol of patriarchal authority (Edley & Wetherell, 1995; Frosh, 1987). The father thus stands in for patriarchal power in society generally and boy children both fear this power and wish to assume it themselves. Based on this argument, there has been considerable interest in how gender development may unfold when father figures or stable male role models are absent (Diamond, 2005), a theme that is also explored later in examining data generated in this study.

4.2.2 **Searching for the unconscious in the inner world of the masculine subject**

According to Freud's theory, the unconscious remains the core component of human subjectivity. Historically, in traditional psychology, human subjectivity was understood to be coherent, stable, rational, and non-contradictory, but this understanding has changed over the last several decades (Blackman et al., 2008; Henriques, et al., 1984; Hollway, 1989). In his writings, Freud also undermined this conception of a coherent subject by placing the unconscious at the centre of human subjectivity:

> "The Freudian subject is non-rational and multiple, subject to forces that are not always under the control of the conscious mind. His ideas on the development of human sexuality are also subversive, since his theory takes neither masculinity nor femininity for granted. Instead the Freudian infant starts out as sexually undifferentiated (polymorphous perverse) with the potential to develop in any number of directions and only later develops masculinity or femininity after a complex struggle between contradictory forces" (Mama (1995, p.128)

The above quote is drawn from Amina Mama's (1995) important book, *Beyond the Masks: Race, Gender and Subjectivity*. In the text, Mama uses psychoanalysis to explore the intersection between race and gender amongst black women in the UK. She found psychoanalysis as a social theory useful to theorise and understand black women's multiple and contradictory positions or subjectivities, and also rejected the notion of a unitary, rational and fixed black female subject in dealing with issues of race and racism. Henriques *et al.*

(1984) also draw attention to four important aspects of using psychoanalysis in researching human subjectivity: (*1*) "in contrast to the rational subject of psychology, psychoanalysis gives space to our fundamental irrationality: the extent to which will or agency is constantly subverted to desire, and the extent to which we behave and experience ourselves in ways which are often contradictory; (*2*) the assumption of a unitary subject is immediately undercut in psychoanalysis by its focus on unconscious processes, which are on the whole excluded in psychology; (*3)* where psychology divides cognition from affect, in psychoanalysis these processes are intertwined in complex ways; (*4)* it provides an account of the continuity of the subject, of the past implicated in the present and a view of development which is in direct contrast to the oversimplified social or biological determinisms of rational psychology" (pp. 205-206). In his work, Frosh also seems to share the same sentiments as Mama (1995) and Henriques et al. (1984) that in terms of Freud's theory there is no coherent subject:

> "Freud's theory argues that behind the experience that we may have of ourselves as coherent psychological beings there exists a basic split in the psyche, reflected in the way some ideas are conscious or preconscious while others are radically unconscious. …It is through recognizing the existence of such unconscious forces and using them as explanatory items that human behaviour and experience become all plausible (Frosh, 1999, p. 85).

The unconscious is an important part of the psyche in the formation of masculinity because many of the psychological conflicts and processes that occur during the Oedipus complex become embedded in the unconscious but may still influence experience and behaviour. Freud sees the unconscious as constantly undermining the subject's sense of rationality and coherence because it contains repressed sexual and aggressive impulses (amongst other contents), which may give rise to certain behaviours. Frosh (2000) refers to the unconscious as the 'stranger within', an aspect of self that may unconsciously control behaviour. He argues that psychoanalysis places the unconscious at the centre of every human's behaviour due to the important position it occupies in the topographical structure of the psyche. In supporting this view, Hollway also used Frosh's work to draw attention to the complexity of the unconscious in shaping the subject's behaviour:

> "The activities of desire, condensed or displayed by the machinations of repression,

> make sense of the seemingly inexplicable, tell us more about ourselves than we might wish to know. Behaviour is motivated, but the motivations are in some way dangerous and unacceptable, and therefore become hidden. Implicit in this formulation is the notion that the state of reason, of informed and conscious control over one's psychological 'self', is not a state of nature, but of culture - that is, it has to be striven for and constructed. This is one of the sources of the subversive impact of psychoanalysis: it overturns the western view that the distinguishing mark of humanity is reason and rationality" (Frosh 1987, in Hollway, 1989, p. 29).

A psychoanalytic understanding of subjectivity is that it represents a site of conflict contested by unknown forces in the unconscious. It is only through making the unconscious conscious in analytic therapy that the human subject is able to see the link between the unconscious and his or her behaviour (Gabbard, 1990). According to Kvale (1999), however, there are limits on how psychoanalysis can be applied outside the therapeutic context, for example, to access research participants' unconscious repressed desires. Kvale (1999) argues that psychoanalytic (research) interviewing should not in any way be equated with long-term analytic therapy, in which the therapist has the opportunity over a long period of time to make and test certain interpretations of the unconscious. In the research context, the researcher does not have the necessary information or perhaps the ethical right to offer clinical kinds of interpretations of unconscious processes, as has been observed by Long and Eagle (2009). However, despite some these limitations, the researcher in the current research project hopes to use research interviews as a vehicle to investigate to some extent how adolescent boys' behaviours may be related to unconscious or preconscious aspects of their psyches. According to Frosh and Young (1999, p.110), "individuals are unconsciously impelled to express themselves in a particular way" that may reveal their unconscious material. Here, sections of the interviews will serve as a form of free association (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) to access underlying meanings of why research participants take up certain masculine subjective positions. The masculine positions that research participants take through their talk may be viewed as indicative of their unconscious, anxieties and defenses, amongst other aspects (Frosh & Young, 2008; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000).

What is evident is that intra-psychic conflicts may be understood as a creative feature of human experience. The successful construction of the masculine self is dependant not only on intra-psychic elements but also on the capacity of their environment to facilitate or hinder an

engagement with conventional and 'alternative' forms of masculinity. Within some feminist scholarship, mothers have been identified as important agents of support in the formation of a positive masculine self. This is explored in more depth in the subsequent section, which addresses the move from theorizing the father as central to masculine identity formation to highlighting the role of mothers as agents in helping the male child to separate and achieve a positive male identity. This shift in theoretical emphasis represents the move from a more classical Freudian drive-oriented perspective to an object relational perspective in which early attachment and relational elements of identity are given greater emphasis. The theorization of gender identity development and masculinity in particular, is rather different within object-relational theory, focusing more strongly on pre-oedipal aspects of development.

4.3. Object relations perspective on masculinity: Nancy Chodorow's work

Nancy Chodorow is a well-known psychoanalytic feminist theorist who has used psychoanalysis to understand gender differences. As a sociologist, Chodorow rejected the Marxist feminist analysis that gender inequality is primarily a product of the capitalist economic system. She felt this explanation was not sufficient to explain psychological processes involved in gender development. Like Hollway (1989), Frosh (1994) and Mama (1995), Chodorow also recognized the value of using psychoanalysis as a theoretical framework to research gender identity and subjectivity. She argued that "psychoanalysis is the method and theory directed toward investigation and understanding of how we develop and experience these unconscious fantasies and of how we construct and reconstruct our felt past in the present" (1978, p.4). In this quote, Chodorow asserts that negotiating gender is characterized by aspects of selfhood, agency and relationship with others, and that psychoanalysis enables us as researchers and clinicians to understand and analyze personal meanings that people make about lived experiences as gendered subjects in their multi-layered complexity. She maintains that it is through psychoanalytic concepts, such as projection, transference, and unconscious fantasy, that we are able to access the personal meanings that people make about the self as either a male or a female person because "each person's sense of gender…or gendered subjectivity is an inextricable fusion or melding of personally created

(emotionally and through unconscious fantasy) and cultural meaning" (Chodorow, 1995, p. 517). Chodorow maintains that it is only through a psychoanalytic lens that it is possible to understand how individuals' unique biographies and histories of childhood influence their identity formation, in terms of gendered subjectivity within a particular socio-cultural and historical context.

4.3.1. **Mothers as agents of change**

Despite her interest in psychoanalysis, Chodorow was also quite critical of Freud's theory. In her most influential book, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Chodorow (1978) critically challenged Freud's patriarchal view of masculine development. In this text, she focuses on the pre-verbal and pre-oedipal phases of development and the positive role that mothers play in the formation of gender, including masculinity. This view challenges traditional psychoanalytic theory's emphasis on the key role of the father, as an agent of separation, in the achievement of male identity (Frosh, 1999). For Chodorow, the mother is a central figure in the infant's early life and she argues that the mothering process for both boys and girls produces different results. This is because the boy and the girl child are managed and treated differently by their mothers. Chodorow (1989) asserts that

> "It seems likely that from their children's earliest childhood, mothers and women tend to identify more with daughters and help them differentiate less, and that processes of separation and individuation are more difficult for girls. On the other hand, a mother tends to identify less with her son and pushes him toward differentiation and the taking on of a male role unsuitable to his age" (p.49).

Based on this push towards early separation, the boy child must repress and deny early feelings of intimacy, tenderness and dependence on the symbiotic bond with the mother if he is to assume a 'masculine identity'. Thus masculine identity rests to a large extent on a rejection of the feminine, both internally and externally. Chodorow argues that it is the reaction of the mother to her offspring that drives the boy child to *dis-identify* and individuate. Mothers consciously know if the child is a boy or a girl based on their anatomy, and the mothering process for the mother evokes her own childhood experiences of being mothered herself. In this dynamic of double identification, Chodorow found that mothers tend to treat their baby

girls as an extension of the 'self' and baby boys as the 'other'.

> "Mother experiences her son as a definite other — an opposite-gendered and – sexed other" (Chodorow, 1978, p. 106).

The 'otherness' of baby boys is more valued than the 'sameness' of baby girls especially in patriarchal society (Edley & Wetherell, 1995, p. 50). Mothers tend to treat baby boys in a special manner. Baby boys in turn may experience this tenderness as both gratifying and engulfing. Chodorow's main argument is that the male infant's future masculinity lies in its otherness from maternal body. The mother provokes a premature separation (from the maternal attachment object) for her infant son in the pre-oedipal phase of development. Pollack (1998) argues that early separation leads to childhood trauma and may be evident in adolescent boys' difficulties. It is hypothesized that boy children experience early separation as a form of rejection and abandonment. In contrast, girls are not encouraged to break ties with their mothers. Their pre-oedipal mother-daughter relations bonds are prolonged in a way "they are not for the boy" (Chodorow, 1978, p.108). Based on these early pre-oedipal experiences, gender may be less problematic for girls, while it is being masculine that carries high costs. The early process of premature separation remains in the psyche of boy children and later in life, as men they may seek to avoid any form of dependence on women, since this may re-evoke feelings of fear, disintegration and loss of masculinity. Rutherford (1992.p.42) refers to this as the "*paradoxical dilemma*", the fact that heterosexual men desire women on the one hand, but on the other hand do not want to show any emotional dependence on them. They fear women, but at the same time find them attractive and seductive. Men feel threatened by love, but their need for love does not disappear. Chodorow argues that boys and men have developed psychological mechanisms to cope with their fears without giving up women altogether. Quoting Freud, Rutherford (1992, p. 44) suggests "men seek objects that do not recall the figure of the mother: 'where they love they do not desire and where they desire they cannot love'. They seek objects they do not need for love, in order to keep their sensuality away from the objects they love". This kind of internal and relation conflict explains the 'Madonna and Whore syndrome', which entails a split between the idealized mother and denigrated sexualized women, and also men's justification of their multiple relationships with different women (Ussher, 1997).

Chodorow argues that men's devaluation of women is a defense that protects masculine identity, arguing that "a boy child represses those qualities he takes to be feminine inside himself, and rejects and devalues women and whatever he considers to be feminine in the social world" (1978, p 176). The boy child engages in activities that are considered masculine and becomes contemptuous of anything feminine, viewing of women as inferior to men based on his introjection of patriarchy in part through the mother's transmission of gendered relations. Chodorow (1978) argues that "a boy's contempt serves to free him not only from his mother but also from the femininity within himself" (p. 182). Chodorow's theory may thus be useful for the current research project, particularly the idea that any identification with the feminine may represent a threat to boys' sense of manhood. Relying on Chodorow's work, it will be important to identify and explore possible strategies that adolescent boys may employ to distance themselves from activities and behaviours associated with femininity in their negotiation of a masculine identity.

4.3.2. **Object relational theory as potentially mother-blaming**

The object relations' argument that masculine identity develops out of the repression of maternal identification has been criticized by some feminist writers because it implies that women are not satisfied with their gender identity and that maleness is still more valued than femaleness including by women/mothers themselves (Bozalek, 1997, 2006; Kruger, 2006). Object relations theory has also been criticized for seeing mothering as exclusively a women's duty. Kruger (2006) has interpreted the work of traditional psychoanalytic theorists as taking the form of 'mother-blaming theories' (p. 183). She argues that mothers are always blamed for pathologies that children develop later in life as a consequence of not having had 'good-enough' mothering. Women are expected to be good mothers in order to raise mentally healthy children. The role of fathers or men is seldom mentioned in these developmental theories (Bozalek, 2006), and, for example, single mothers are often presented as the source of emotional problems for young adolescent boys (Bozalek, 1997). In identifying the absence of fathers or significant male role models as causative of alienation and delinquency, there is an implication that the remaining parent, the mother, is failing in her task in some way. The

idealization of the 'father's' role in the family has been associated with some gender conservatism and examination of the presence or absence of good male role models in boys' identity formation should be undertaken with sensitivity to this possible gender bias. Traditional psychoanalytic theory has been criticized for its failure to sufficiently consider social and political factors, and constructions of gender and gender inequalities need to be thought about carefully in considering the relevance and applicability of developmental theories, such as that of Chodorow.

Chodorow was also very critical in her writing of how capitalist society continues to push women into a mothering role by naturalizing mothering through promoting discourses of motherhood as instinctual and naturally exclusively, the preserve of women. Chodorow critically argues that in this conventional gendered picture of parenting the mother-son (or daughter) relationship is primary and the father is viewed as absent because of his work, which takes him outside of the home most of the time. As a result, the boy-child finds himself fantasizing about the missing masculine figure and role. In the attempt to gain an elusive masculine identification, the boy child pushes against the feminine wishing to identify with an idealized masculine image. This in turn reproduces mothering and the inequalities between men and women as men use various discourses to justify the continuance of a patriarchal system in which it is women's duty to raise children. Chodorow argued that one way of addressing the gendering associated with early maternal care and processes of identification and *dis-identification* is the more intimate involvement of men in early childcare. Chodorow advocates that childcare responsibilities should be equally shared between fathers and mothers. However, it may be that men are not always readily available to take on this role due to a range of context related constraints. For example, in South Africa, it is estimated that more than 70% of children are raised by single mothers with minimal involvement on the part of fathers (Ramphele, 2002).

In her more recent book, *The Power of Feelings: Personal meaning in Psychoanalysis, Gender and Culture*, Chodorow (1999) further supports the use of psychoanalysis to give an account of how feelings and emotions play an important role in gendered subjectivity. In this text, Chodorow's main argument is that negotiating gender identity is personal as well as cultural,

involving creating and re-creating meanings of what it means to be a male or a female person. Many of these identificatory processes occur at an unconscious level, mediated by "fantasies about one's gender, sexual fantasies consciously or unconsciously connected with sense of gender as it relates to body image, core gender identity, or gender identifications" (Chodorow, 1999, p. 104). Gender is regarded as subjective and personal. Clearly, Chodorow in this work challenges the simplistic assumption that gender is a purely either biological or purely cultural and social phenomenon. She highlights the psychic intricacies involved in gender development arguing that "gender is an ongoing emotional creation and intrapsychic interpretation, of cultural meanings and of bodily, emotional, and self-other experience, all mediated by conscious and unconscious fantasy" (p.540). Thus, for Chodorow, as for other applied psychoanalysts or psychosocial theorists, gender is imbued with both socio-cultural and personal developmental and relational elements. It is evident that each male person will subjectively construct his gender in unique ways, depending on the conscious and unconscious processes which underlie his particular sense of masculine self.

The discussion of Chodorow's work under this section leads on to a discussion of Jacques Lacan's theory on the role of culture and language in the acquisition of male subjectivity. In his theory, Lacan talks about the way the mother engages with the present or absent father in the family and argues that the mother may symbolically play the role of the father in his absence in order to encourage the boy child to move from *being* the phallus to having the phallus. Like Chodorow's, Lacan's theory also provides some bridge between the social and the psychological (Henriques et al., 1984).

4.4. A Lacanian perspective on masculinity

Jacques Lacan's writing has had a marked influence on thinking about gender and sexual difference. He has written so many books that it is impossible to cover all his ideas extensively in this thesis. The researcher will only focus on certain parts of his theory which are relevant to the current research project, using mainly the work of critical psychologists (e.g. Frosh, 1994; Hollway, 1989; Hook, 2006; Parker, 2005) and gender theorists (Butler, 1990, 1993; Rose & Mitchell, 1982; Segal, 1990) who have appropriated Lacanian theory to think about aspects of gender identity and subjectivity. In his writings, Lacan went back to Freud's earlier work to

refine and develop certain aspects of his theory. Frosh (1994) regards Lacan's work as "a return to Freud' and as recreating the spirit of the early gender debates in psychoanalysis" (p.66). Whilst located primarily in the realm of the symbolic (in keeping with the work of Juliet Mitchell, for example), Lacan's writing on gender represents a radical departure from object relations theory in its understanding of the relationship between gender, consciousness, language and the symbolic. He locates his work firmly within original Freudian theory, but rejected biological interpretations of Freud's ideas and insisted on understanding Freudian theory in terms of its symbolic associations (Frosh, 1994).

At the core of Lacan's theory is that identities, such as being a woman or a man, are primarily social in nature rather than natural and inborn. Based on this argument, his theory has been adopted by many feminist writers in problematizing gender and sexuality studies. For example, in the text, *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and The Ecolle Freudienne*, Rose and Mitchell (1982) use Lacan's theory to critically understand feminine sexuality. Their main argument, like other theorists already discussed, is also that there is a value in using psychoanalysis to understand femininities and masculinities and their link with the unconscious. To quote Mitchell (1982) on this point, she asserts that:

> "For all psychoanalysts the development of the human subject, it's unconscious and its sexuality go hand-in-hand, they are causatively intertwined. A psychoanalyst could not subscribe to a currently popular sociological distinction in which a person is born with their biological gender to which society - general environment, parents, education, the media - adds a socially defined sex, masculine or feminine. Psychoanalysis cannot make such a distinction: a person is formed through their sexuality; it could not be added to him or her. The ways in which psychosexuality and the unconscious are closely bound together are complex, but most obviously, the unconscious contains wishes that cannot be satisfied and hence have been repressed" (p.2)

In this fairly extended passage, Mitchell seems to agree with Chodorow and others that many aspects of gender development and negotiation appear to predominantly occur at an unconscious level. Mitchell also rejects the simple sociological explanation of gender as purely the product of the social and culture. She maintains that it is the unconscious that is central to human subject's behaviour, and it is only through psychoanalysis that one may able to understand psychical processes involved in how people become gendered subjects:

> Psychoanalysis should not subscribe to ideas about how men and women do or should live as sexually differentiated beings, but instead it should analyze how they come to be such being in the first place (Mitchell, 1982, p.3)

In its entirety, Lacanian psychoanalysis rejects the deterministic nature of much of the sociological and gender studies theory on what makes a woman a woman or a man a man. His interest is in how the human subject comes to occupy a certain position in terms of gender and how this subjective position is psychically negotiated and negated. Like Freud, Lacan also deconstructs the myth of a unitary subject (Henriques et al., 1984). He shares the same sentiment with many other psychoanalytic writers that the human subject is characterized by internal instability and contradiction. As elaborated by Rose (1982), "the unconscious undermines the subject from any position of certainty, from any relation of knowledge to his or her psychic processes and history, and simultaneously reveals the fictional nature of the sexual category to which every human subject is none the less assigned" (p.29).

Lacan argues that language is the central feature of human development. He explains how the resolution of the Oedipus complex and other childhood conflicts depend on the use of language. For example, it is through language that the infant enters the symbolic order, which leads to the "formation of a properly human subject, as opposed to the narcissistic subject of the mirror phase" (Jefferson, 1994, p.20), the latter which is characterized by the failure to distinguish the difference between the self and the external world. During the mirror phase, the infant lives in the 'imaginary world', but it is at this phase of development that the infant begins to acquire language which requires engagement with the social order (Henriques et al., 1984). Gaining mastery over language allows the infant to separate and individuate as part of entering the world of subjectivity - in which "individuals understand themselves in relation to others and experience their lives" (Lupton, 1996, in Nordtug, 2004, p.87). So in terms of Lacan's theory, language plays a critical role in the production of subjectivity. It is through and in language that subjectivity is constructed (Lacan, 1981).

Ian Parker is one the leading critical theorists who, along with others, has used Lacanian psychoanalysis to theorise subjectivity (Parker, 2005). Much of the work of critical

psychologists (see, Hollway, 1989; Parker, 2005; Potter & Wetherell, 1989) represents 'the turn to language', investigating how language is implicated in identity practices and how certain discourses are promoted as the ultimate truth. Language is not a neutral medium, but frequently serves some ideological purpose (Nordtug, 2004). For Lacan, language is not just language, but a tool that can be used to access unconscious functioning. Lacanian psychoanalysis is also interested to explore how human subjects position themselves within the existing dominant discourses. Lacan asserts that the human subject is always split and fragmented. It is through employment of language and discourse that male subjects come to identify as masculine. The process of identification remains central to Lacan's theory (Henriques *et al*., 1984; Jefferson, 1994) constellated around the importance of the phallus as the prime signifier of gender difference.

4.4.1. **The notion of the Phallus: masculinity as a burden**

Hegemonic or socially sanctioned masculinity represents an ideal image that boys and men aspire to achieve, but the process of achieving such identity arouses hidden feelings of fear and anxiety. Lacan (1958) sees this struggle to maintain the masculine image as the burden of 'the phallus'. For Lacan, the phallus is a symbolic representation of potency rather than a purely physical object. In his theory, the phallus is both something that symbolizes power and something that is empty. Drawing upon this idea, but giving it his own shape, Frosh (1994) argues that " 'having' the phallus attached to oneself is no guarantee of stability of identity; quite the contrary, it forces the man into an obsession with 'getting things straight' and the terror of loss which must seem comic to the penis-free woman. Phallus is such a burden to a man; living up to it becomes the necessary condition of masculinity, which is always in danger of being betrayed and undermined" (pp. 165-184). The difficulty of sustaining a masculine identity produces an internal struggle for most boys and men. Having the phallus becomes a burden in that it signifies some kind of performance pressure. In her seminal text, *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler (1990) builds on psychoanalytic ideas of both Freud and Lacan, to provide an account of the way in which individuals become gendered and are continually compelled to enact and re-enact gender roles. Butler argues that men and women are constantly required to 'perform' gender (hence the notion of 'performativity') and to participate in

behaviours required by cultural norms of masculinity and femininity. Elliot (2001) explains the notion of *'*performativity*'* in greater depth:

> "Performance involves individuals in continually monitoring the impressions they give off to and make upon, others. Public identity is thus performed for an audience and the private self knows that such performances are essential to identity and to the maintenance of respect and trust in routine social interaction" (p. 31-32).

The above quote suggests something significant, i.e., that the self may be split into two kinds of selves, namely the public and the private self. The former is displayed to others and the social world, while the latter is hidden. Displaying competence to others in the public self is the key signifier of successful masculinity, whereas failure to live up to the public masculine image is anxiety provoking and shameful. Adolescent boys often find themselves feeling pressurized to indulge in risky behaviours in the public performance of the gender role (Pollack & Levant, 1998; Renold, 2001). Butler argues that subverting hegemonic norms of masculinity is important to counter hegemonic gender behaviour because the notion of performativity entails a lack of freedom. To put it more aptly, Butler (1990, p.138), argues that performativity entails the 'forced reiterations of norms' within a matrix of constraints. The current research project will also draw upon Judith Butler's notion of subversion to explore discursive and behavioural strategies that adolescent boys may employ to challenge and reject the dominant norms of hegemonic masculinity. According to Frosh (1994) masculine success is derived from phallic mastery, but this is a complex and multifaceted process, provoking feelings of anxiety and fear about possible failure.

Furthermore, possessing the 'phallus' is such a burden that living up to it becomes implicated in problematic behavioural practices such as sexual risk-taking behaviours in adolescence and young adulthood. The success of today's behaviour is not sufficient proof for tomorrow. The boy must always do more to prove his masculinity, each act a little riskier. Any failure to sustain a masculine identity produces feelings of inadequacy and a sense that the individual is 'not man enough or a real male'. In this theorization, boys may continuously find themselves struggling to establish an unchallenged phallus by being willing to demonstrate bravado and avoiding identification with anything feminine. This suggests that masculinity is a fragile

identity that needs to be constantly protected and also defended against threats such as those posed by femininity and homosexuality. Based on this short discussion, it is clear that Lacan's theory and its elaboration in the work of critical theorists is a useful framework within which to explore some of the contradictions, fears and anxieties that township boys may experience in negotiating multiple voices of masculinity.

4.4.2. **Women as the 'Other' in Lacan's theory**

In terms of Lacanian theory, the 'phallus' is taken to be the emblem of power and then identified with the male penis (Frosh, 1994, p. 11). Lacan was insistent that Freud's usage of the term 'penis' did not refer to the biological organ, but to its symbolic representation (Segal, 1990, p.84). In Freud's theory, the woman is constituted by lack (penis envy), but in Lacan's work, the woman is fantasized as the 'Other' through whom completion might be achieved. In quoting Rose (1982, p.50) "the absolute 'Otherness' of the woman, therefore, serves to secure the man's own self-knowledge and truth". So in terms of Lacan's theory, the notion of the 'Other' suggests a particular set of power dynamics between masculinity and femininity. Women, in part through discourse are expected to masquerade as 'lack' in order to affirm the phallus in men. Building on Joan Riviere's work, Butler (1990) contends that masquerading is what women need to do in order to participate in men's public desires, while suppressing their own desires. It becomes apparent that men's sense of manhood depends on women's suppression and denial of the phallus:

> "In order to 'be' the phallus, the reflector and guarantor of an apparent masculine subject position, women must become, must "be" (in the sense of posture as if they were) precisely what men are not and their very lack establishes the essential function of men. Hence, 'being' the phallus is always a 'being for' a masculine subject who seeks to confirm and augment his identity through the recognition of that 'being for' (Butler, 1990, p. 61).

In her work, Judith Butler relies on Joan Riviere and Jacques Lacan s' analysis of masquerade to expand her theory on gender performativity. She argues that women pose a potential threat to men's sense of manhood and thus they take on masquerade knowingly as a mask to conceal and suppress their own masculinity. As part of masquerading, Friedlander (2003) argues that

women often find themselves worrying about how they look in order to be seen as a 'real woman'. Here, Friedlander asserts that "it is not the image of a woman that is crucial, but how her image is seen by men" (p. 99). In his classical book, *Enjoy your Symptom*, Zizek (2008) extends this idea that female beauty serves primarily as a focus for the enjoyment (*jouissance*) of men. Using Lacan's work, Zizek sees this enjoyment of women's bodies as part of the male gaze, as reinforcing the ideology of patriarchy and as perpetrating sexism against women. Quoting Pollock's (1998) work, Friedlander (2003) contends that women do not have much choice, but to 'dance' to the ideology of patriarchy and sexism. Ideology, as Zizek (2008) argues, is something that is entrenched in the social and not easy to challenge and transform. It is passed from one generation to the next as the norm that cannot be questioned. Arp (1995, in Chadwick, 2006) asserted that "from the onset of puberty, the female body assumes the status of the 'object' and the woman comes to look upon her body as a sexual object for others. In turn, she becomes alienated from her own body and repeatedly casts herself as an object of desire for men" (p. 246).

However, in *Bodies that Matter*, Butler (1993) argues that women may also use the strategy of masquerade to resist and subvert men's sense of manhood. She uses the example of a lesbian woman, arguing that while men often find themselves being attracted to such women they simultaneously feel threatened and intimidated by their subversion. Here, Butler demonstrates that the strategy of the masquerade can also disrupt the ideology of patriarchy, which conceals the contradictions and incompleteness of masculinity. From a Lacanian point of view, it is clear that the existence of masculinity is to a large extent dependent on the 'otherness of a woman' who is seen as the signifier of 'lack'. Masculinity can never exist independently, but requires femininity (as a counterpart) for its survival and affirmation. Zizek (1992) describes femininity as something mysterious and elusive for all men, cautioning that we should not see women as passive or subjugated in suppressing their sexual desires. For Zizek (1992, in Friedlander, 2006, p. 103), this constitutes "a 'false' sacrifice in the sense it serves to dupe the 'Other' ", in this case a male person, into believing he has power, while he is powerless. Zizek argues that women often use their subservient position to strategically assert their power over men. However, this form of power is hidden and invisible and emerges most often in the sexual encounter. There is a widely held fantasy of the woman's greater power and the potential

inability of the man to satisfy her sexual desires, which is mirrored in the limited theoretical articulation of what masculine sexuality might consist of phallic (penetration and a search for assurance that castration has not occurred).

Overall, male sexuality reveals the problematic status of the 'phallus'. Segal (1990) argues that contemporarily boys and men are terrified of possible failure in satisfying women sexually. Masculinity is associated with sexual adequacy, which creates considerable performance anxiety in this domain. The most common sexual complaints of men seeking therapy are erectile dysfunction, inhibited sexual desire and premature ejaculation. The failure to satisfy women sexually is one of the most forceful indictments of masculine power. "Whatever the meanings attached to 'the act' of sexual intercourse, for many men it confirms a sense of ineptness and failure: the failure to satisfy women" (Segal, 1990, in Frosh, 1994, p.100). This literal sense of failure is also seen as a failure of the phallus. Describing the penis as a 'symbol of terror', "the knife, and the fist", Segal (1990, pp.221-209), argues that the binary active/passive, masculine/feminine construction of heterosexual intercourse as the spectacular moment of male domination and female submission: "'the man' 'mounts' and penetrates; the woman spreads her legs and 'submits', illustrates men's sexual dominance over women". This is seen as the natural order of things and places considerable pressure on men to live up to expectations of being active, dominant and virile in heterosexual encounters. Again, based on this short discussion, it is clear that Lacan's theory is also a useful theoretical framework to identify how women may both unsettle men, yet also simultaneously affirm their power by artificially putting themselves in the position of 'lack' (masquerading). Some of these dynamics are influenced by the 'paternal law' to be discussed in the section that follows. It is evident that within this theoretical framing the phallus is the primary signifier, producing difference and forcing men and women apart (Frosh, 1994).

4.4.3. **Absent fathers: the name-of-the father as the law**

In Lacanian theory the paternal law ('the name-of-the father') is viewed as highly significant. The father plays a critical role in disrupting the mother-infant fusion so that the infant may enter into the symbolic world. For Lacan, breaking the imaginary bond represents a symbolic

castration. The law-of-the-father operates to institute the threat of castration (Frosh, 1994; Hook, 2006). Here, Lacan makes a major contribution in that the father in his theory is not necessarily the biological father but rather any representative of the social order, 'the law'. When speaking of the 'father' in relation to the Oedipus complex and the development of the child more generally, Lacan is not referring to the person who has impregnated the mother, but to the symbolic father who is present in society as a whole. According to Lacan (1984) the 'symbolic father' is the person (in the mind of the child) that the mother loves and desires and who has the capacity to free the child from his imaginary fusion with her. In his capacity as representative of law, the symbolic father helps the boy child to develop a relation to the phallus, which signifies masculinity (Lacan, 1984). Here, Lacan's theory may be viewed as progressive in that he shows that the 'real' father is not necessarily central to gender identity development. In the absence of the 'real' father, the mother is still able to help her infant break out of the 'imaginary' world and enter the 'symbolic' world. Based on this argument, many feminist writers found the work of Lacan useful in dismissing the portrayal of single mothers as necessarily responsible for raising unhealthy and pathological boy children. His theory offered an alternative view on how single mothers are consciously and unconsciously able to mediate the image of the 'absent' father in the psyche of the infant. Lacan argues that the internalization of the experience of having a father is not only the result of the child's direct relationship with him, but may also be a product of the role that the mother plays in raising the child in the absence of a father figure. The mother's mediation of the father depends on how she symbolically presents the absent father to the infant. It is noted that how the mother feels towards her separated partner may negatively or positively influence the mediation process since the child unconsciously may pick up his mother's attitudes towards her ex-partner (Blundell, 2002; Target & Fonagy, 2002). However, it is not just the fantasy of the actual biological father that is important in the mind of the mother, but also her representation of the patriarchal order and significant men in her life more generally. Engagement with fathers, present or absent is a topic of interest in the current research project, including how boys relate to their mothers in the absence of father figures in their lives. A positive relationship between mothers and their sons is something that appears not to have been explored in depth in the existing literature. Much of the focus has been on father-son relationship. It is possible that research on mother-son relationships may open up new possibilities in understanding how

adolescent boys appear to form masculine identities.

4.5. Concluding remarks

Despite some of the criticisms discussed in this chapter, it is apparent that psychoanalytic theory still remains one of the most influential theoretical frameworks in psychology and other social science disciplines. In the last few years, psychoanalysis has been adapted as a theoretical framework to research identity issues of race, racism (Hook, 2006), collective violence (Zizek, 2008), gender (Butler, 1990; Chodorow, 1994; Frosh, 1994, 1997; Frosh et al., 2002; Mama, 1995) and motherhood (Long, 2005, 2009), amongst others. It is clear that psychoanalytic theory is not limited to application to traditional clinical work in private practice but it is also a useful tool of analysis to deal with pertinent social and political issues. In the words of Anthony Elliott (1995, in Frosh 1997, 167) if psychoanalytic theory is to remain effective as a critical theory:

> "It must necessarily step back from the tendency to see the self solely in terms of the 'psychic' and instead confront head-on the issue of the construction of the unconscious in the field of the social and political".

It is evident that psychoanalysis as a critical theoretical framework needs to acknowledge the role that social and political factors play in the formation of human subjectivity and that there are many contemporary theorists who have taken up this challenge. The theory offers a useful tool of analysis to explore how people emotionally invest in and identify with certain subject positions in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, class and gender. In addition, psychoanalytic concepts such as denial, splitting, projection, identification, intellectualization and so forth offer enriching interpretive terminology to explain human behaviour in a particular context. It is clear that psychoanalytic theory has a central role to play in psychosocial studies and in researching how 'external' social and 'internal' psychic formations interact with one another (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008). The current study is interested in precisely this kind of interface of the social and the individual, in researching the subjectivity of adolescent boys in living out a masculine identity in the cultural context of Alexandra Township.

Chapter 5: International research into adolescent masculinity

Introduction

Research and writing about men and masculinities is not new. What is new is the relatively rapid growth of interest within the social sciences in men and masculinities as an explicit and gendered topic of inquiry (Connell, 2000; Hearn, 1997; Khan, 2009; Seidler, 2006). This shift dates from the late 1970s and since then this area has been receiving ongoing special research attention.

Few studies have been conducted to explicitly explore how young boys construct their masculine identities, but recently masculinity studies with an adolescent focus have been increasing in the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia (see, Connell, 2000; Frosh et al., 2002; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Renold, 2001; Swain, 2000, 2003). Also in the USA such studies (see Pollack, 1999) have been gaining popularity, although apparently to a lesser extent. Various aspects of young boys' development and studies associated with young masculinities that may have relevance for this research project will be discussed in the following sub-sections. There are two reasons why only five studies were chosen for this review. Firstly, schools have been useful sites at which to conduct research on school-going boys and have been the sites of some of these British and Australian studies that have influenced the current research project to also explore voices of masculinity amongst school-going boys in Alexandra Township. Secondly, these five studies focus on how young boys negotiate and contest multiple voices of masculinity in and outside school. All these studies argue that masculinity is something that is non-static and changes from one context to another. These are some of the issues that the current study wishes to explore.

5.1. Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman's study

In Britain, Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) have led the way in researching young masculinities. These researchers argue that boys' views on masculinity are fluid rather than fixed, and dependent on the situation in which they find themselves. Frosh et al. (2002) conducted a study using both individual and group interviews with 11-14 year-old boys in

twelve London schools. These boys were drawn from different racial groups (Asian, black and white). In the interviews, boys were asked about their self-definition as male/masculine, role models, and relationships with boys and girls, as well as about other aspects of their lives.

Their findings indicate that boys' negotiation of masculinity differs from one context to another. Boys also appear to police each other with regard to accepted behavioural practices. Boys, for example, felt more free and relaxed to share feelings of uncertainty over friendships, disappointment with parents, anger with absent or unavailable fathers, feelings of rejection, and fears and aspirations for the future, in the individual interviews. However, in the focus groups, the boys postured, performed and exaggerated their toughness and sexual prowess. The boys seemed to try very hard to be 'politically correct' and to give socially acceptable views about what it means to be a 'real boy' (Frosh et al., 2002). Boys who were not tough or sporty were called 'gay', the term 'gay' was being used in a homophobic way in order to put down boys who were seen as spending too much time with girls or boys who were physically small or not sporty. A hegemonic form of masculinity was supported through discourse and rendered compulsory for all boys. However, the findings from Frosh et al. (2002) indicated that not all boys conformed to the practices of hegemonic masculinity. Some alternative forms of masculinity emerged, represented in boys who were more sensitive, more contained, committed to school work, less bullying and less prone to risk-taking behaviours. Although Frosh et al. (2002) acknowledge that there are internal contradictions in the boys' narratives in negotiating alternative masculinities, they argue that boys should be encouraged to explore these multiple and sometimes contradictory voices.

5.2. Gilbert and Gilbert s' study

In their book entitled, *Masculinity goes to School*, Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) looked at the school as a context for the development of masculine identities among adolescent boys in Australia. Their main focus was on images and practices of masculinity being promoted in the school. Gilbert and Gilbert found that schools promoted certain gendered experiences for boys, instilling a culture of 'boys will be boys'. They also found that school teachers treated boys and girls according to gendered assumptions of what is appropriate. For example, teachers expected boys to be the 'troublemakers' and defy their authority. Furthermore, Gilbert and Gilbert also

found that male teachers did not promote alternative masculinities, but instead colluded with a conventional view of masculinity by encouraging male students to be aggressive. Male teachers also encouraged boys to pursue science-related subjects, subjects more linked to a masculine tradition of knowledge production. These school subjects were also associated with good career prospects, earning more money and being successful. Boys who failed to live up to this image were ridiculed for behaving like girls. Gilbert and Gilbert argue that male teacher's involvement in masculine discourses served the particular purpose of promoting 'macho' behaviours amongst school boys. Sports was another arena in which boys were encouraged to develop tough, strong and competitive images of what it meant to be a 'real boy'.

Gilbert and Gilbert's study raises pertinent questions for the current research project, including questions about the role of school teachers in dealing with gender issues. It is clear in their study that schools can be important sites of challenge or reinforcement of gender stereotypes. Teachers, however, are also a product of society's patriarchal system. For example, in South Africa, Human Rights Watch (2001) found that male teachers are the main perpetrators of sexual violence against school girls. In many cases, male teachers abused their position of authority by promising female learners better grades or money in exchange for sex. As a result of these kinds of practices and abuse of positions of power, male teachers may not necessarily be seen as positive role models by young male learners. Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) also found that adolescent boys have few adult male role models to follow, so opportunities for transformation are either very limited or altogether absent. It will be interesting to consider how similar or different the experiences of the boys in the Alexandra appear to be from the Australian boys researched by Gilbert and Gilbert.

5.3. Haywood and Mac an Ghaill's study

Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (1996) also conducted a study exploring how school boys construct their masculinities in Australian private and public schools. Haywood and Mac an Ghaill found that there appeared to be two broad groups of boys in the schools they researched, namely, academic achievers and non-achievers. The non-achievers were called 'macho' lads. Macho lads performed poorly in their grades because they missed classes and defied the/their teachers' authority. They usually refused to wear school uniforms, were the 'troublemakers',

joked in class, flaunted their sexual prowess, and smoked in public. The 'macho' lads looked down on academic achievers for working too hard and achieving good grades and ridiculed them for their lack of heterosexual experience. Terms such as 'wankers', 'gays' and 'teachers' pets' were used against academic achievers (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1996). Macho lads seemed to be popular in school and also with girls.

On the other hand, the academic achievers ridiculed the 'macho' lads as inarticulate and stupid, referring to them in class as 'cripple', and 'cabbage' (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1996). Haywood and Mac an Ghaill s' study shows that the interpretation of masculinity amongst boys can be highly contested. Masculine identities compete with each other for legitimacy and dominance. Male peers also influence one another in the production and regulation of a range of masculinities. One area of contestation appears to revolve around scholastic ability, academic endeavour and success. Another contribution of Haywood and Mac an Ghaill's study is their exploration of how young boys used language to regulate and police one another (an element that the researcher also hopes to explore in the current research project).

5.4. Pollack's study

Pollack has conducted interviews with young boys in the USA with the aim of understanding and listening to their hidden experiences of loneliness, isolation, stress and depression. In his book, *Real boys: rescuing boys from the myths of Masculinity*, Pollack (1999), argues that boys are victims of what he terms the 'boy code', a code which determines that boys are expected to be brave, tough and fearless and are expected to live-up to the image of masculine bravado. Boys who do not conform to this image are ridiculed and shamed. The 'boy code' is rendered compulsory for all boys. This observation is very similar to that of Frosh et al. (2002) concerning the pressures to conform to hegemonic versions of masculinity. In his interviews, Pollack found that many boys appeared to be, what he referred to as, wearing the 'mask of masculinity'. Behind the mask, boys struggle with feelings of powerlessness, anxiety, stress and depression. Pollack mentions that boys want to share these feelings, but parents and teachers fail to notice anything until the boy child cracks/breaks down and explodes into anger, or physical violence. Here, bravado is used as a mask to hide the real self who is anxious and insecure (in keeping with some of the psychoanalytic formulations of masculine identity).

Pollack also found that boys at times behave aggressively because of emotional problems at home, or relationship problems with friends and girlfriends. In his work, Pollack offers practical guidelines to parents and teachers on how to talk to boys about relationships, girls, sex, drugs, violence, stress, depression and so forth. Helping boys should include some of the following principles:"giving your boy child undivided attention; encouraging the expression of emotions; avoiding using shaming language; looking behind anger and aggression; and creating a model of masculinity that is broad and inclusive" (Pollack, 1999, pp. 391-398).

Overall, Pollack argues that the 'boy code' as a social construct should be challenged and dismantled. He also found that some boys do rebel against this code and argues that these boys should be supported in their quest to embrace alternative and healthy masculinity that is non-risk taking. Thus, his findings tend to support those of other researchers although his major contribution is in pointing to the likely links between aggressive and macho behavioural expressions and underlying feelings of depression, unresolved trauma and anxiety.

5.5. Wetherell and Edley's study

Wetherell and Edley (1999) conducted a study to explore how young men position themselves in relation to conventional notions of hegemonic masculinity. In this study, Wetherell and Edley provide a critique of Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity, arguing that this model is too broad. Wetherell and Edley found that boys and men individually or privately employ psycho-discursive strategies in negotiating multiple positions in relation to hegemonic masculinity. These strategies change from one context to another. Wetherell and Edley also reject Connell's apparent assumption (in his earlier work) that boys and men either conform to or reject norms of hegemonic masculinity:

> "We suggested it would be difficult to describe the men we interviewed as either complicit or resistant. We need to allow for the possibility that complicity and resistance can be mixed together" (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p. 352)

Based on their observations, Wetherell and Edley argue that boys and men may simultaneously identify with and oppose hegemonic norms of masculinity. Men in their study dismissed stereotypical macho behaviours as too extreme, but still maintained gender oppressive ways of

behaving, such as valuing authoritativeness, rationality and independence in men. It is possible that male participants in this study also did not want to be seen as traditional men and thus distanced themselves from extreme forms of what might conventionally be understood as hegemonic masculinity. It is therefore difficult to "conclude from this that these 'ordinary' men are beyond gender power simply because they do not seem (in discursive moment) to aspire to the most definition of hegemonic masculinity. Instead, paradoxically, one could say that sometimes one of the most effective ways of being hegemonic, or being a 'man', may be to demonstrate one's distance from hegemonic masculinity" (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p. 351) It seems in trying to be politically correct in terms of gender relations boys and men deploy multiple discourses, which may act to disguise or hide their adherence to and support of traditional hegemonic constructs of masculinity.

5.6. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, all these international studies on young masculinities have been influential in shaping the current research project. They have provided an understanding that adolescent boys express themselves through multiple voices, reflecting conflicts and contradictions in their constructions of masculinity. It is evident that some boys are pushed to the margins and their expression of masculinities is not popular or celebrated in the school context. What is also evident in these studies is that masculine identities are not fixed. Boys continuously find themselves changing their identities, which depends primarily on the context in which they find themselves. However, the freedom to choose one's identity is limited due to various regulatory techniques that are employed to control how boys behave and think (by both adults and other boys). Adolescent boys appear to 'perform' masculinities in schools in order to be seen as 'real boys and men'. In the discussion of how boys conduct themselves and relate to others, as observed in the range of studies described, it appears that Butler's notion of gender performativity is given considerable credibility. Several of the studies point to some distinction or tension between boys' public and private selves, suggesting that it is the expression of masculinity in more public or group contexts that tends to pressurize boys to conform to particular kinds of ideals and stereotypes. Although this public/private distinction may be fluid, there is also a further suggestion that the performance of masculinity may be rather taxing and psychologically costly. These are some of the issues that will be further explored in the current

research project.

Chapter 6: South African socio-historical studies on masculinity

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the history of black masculinity in South Africa under apartheid and also how this context influenced the formation of a militarized masculinity amongst youth in the townships. The discussion of masculinity in South Africa illustrates well that as societal changes take place, new forms of masculinity may also emerge. This chapter aims to provide a historical account of how township boys developed, negotiated and lived out their masculine identities under the specific context of the oppressive apartheid regime. Undoubtedly, the apartheid regime influenced township boys as comrades/activists to develop certain notions of masculinity (Langa & Eagle, 2008; Xaba, 2001). Those notions of masculinity are interrogated in this chapter with the aim of showing how a specific socio-political context may influence adolescent boys to adopt a particular form of masculinity. Understanding how township boys developed and negotiated their masculine identities within the apartheid context in the early 1980's and late 1990's will help the researcher in the current study to understand how changed current socio-political factors related to living in a non-racial democracy may create a different climate in which adolescent township boys come to express particular forms of masculinity rather than others. In addition, the chapter also covers more recent South African history and the changed context of gender relations in the post-1994 era/context.

6.1. Apartheid history and the construction of a militarized masculinity

In 1948, the National Party won the South African elections and immediately adopted oppressive racist policies against the majority of black people[4]. Some of the racist policies adopted included the Group Areas Act (resulting in forced removals of black people from their residential areas to designed areas) and the Bantu Education Act (denying black people adequate educational opportunities), as well as many other discriminatory Acts (see, Alexander, 1885; Saul, 1986, on 1948 Apartheid policy and its impact on the lives of black

[4] The term black in the chapter refers to Africans, Indians and Coloureds (commonly understood race classification categories in South Africa).

people). In response to these racist policies, black people formed political parties, most significantly the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC), which were banned in the late 1960's under the Communist Suppression Act of 1950 (Alexander, 1985)Alexander, 1985; Ellis & Sechaba, 1992). This was in the aftermath of the Sharpville massacre, in which 60 people were killed by police. The Sharpville massacre occurred during the campaign against the 'pass law', a law which forced every black person to carry a pass, indicating whether she or he was entitled to be in white-designed area (Ellis & Sechaba, 1992). Prior to the Sharpville massacre, in 1955, the ANC adopted the Freedom Charter as a guiding political document to achieve and build a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist society. Some of the clauses in the Freedom Charter included:

> "The people shall govern,
> All shall be equal before the law,
> The doors of learning shall be opened to all,
> The people shall share the country's wealth,
> All shall enjoy human rights,
> The land shall be shared amongst those who work on it" (Ellis & Sechaba, 1992, p.30).

The ideals of Freedom Charter inspired many people, but most particularly adolescent boys, to join the struggle against the apartheid regime. According to Marks (2002) these young boys were popularly known as '*youth charterists*' as they took the lead in popularizing the ideals of Freedom Charter in the townships and also organizing political activities that were intentionally aimed at defeating the apartheid regime. The culmination of a range of political events led to 1976 Soweto uprising, which is seen by many as the turning point in the anti-apartheid struggle. As part of the 1976 Soweto uprising boys and girls as young as ten to eleven were actively involved in school boycotts against the Bantu Education system. These young people (popularly known as the 'young lions') were also involved in burning and destroying public institutions associated with apartheid capitalism, such as municipal offices, banks, railway stations etc. It is estimated that thousands of school learners were killed by the police during the 1976 Soweto uprising (Ndlovu, 1998). From 1976 onwards, violence became more visible and intense, with mass-based political protests occurring in many places around the country. High schools became the key battleground in the liberation struggle. The youth responded to Oliver Tambo's call to make South Africa 'ungovernable', part of the ANC

policy which characterized the post 1983 era (Ramphele, 1992). The slogan 'Freedom Now, Education Tomorrow' was popularized amongst school-going youth. As a result, a significant numbers of young activists dropped out of schools to join the struggle against apartheid, many leaving the country to join the ANC and the PAC in exile to train as soldiers. More generally, the active participation of township youth in struggle politics gave many young boys the opportunity to develop what Langa and Eagle (2008) call a '*militarized masculinity*' and Xaba (2001) calls a '*struggle masculinity*'. Militarized/struggle masculinity refers to the boys' active involvement in politics and violent, protest activities that were aimed at defeating the apartheid regime and policing political activism in the townships and in some rural communities.

As part of constructing a '*militarized masculinity*', township boys were expected to be strong, brave, tough, fearless, aggressive and violent. The incorporation of these qualities into the self heavily influenced many adolescent boys into the direction of the formation of a militarized kind of masculine identity (Langa & Eagle, 2008). Because young and sometimes very young township boys perceived themselves as key agents of political change and defenders of their communities against repressive security forces (and were also cast in this role by others) (Marks & McKenzie, 1995; Xaba, 2001), they were compelled to occupy adult male roles, involving policing and patrolling the areas in which they were situated. Many boys were arrested, tortured and killed, primarily by state security forces, as a consequence of joining the struggle against the oppressive apartheid regime (Marks & McKenzie, 1995). The psychological consequences of state-sponsored violence on some young boys and girls have been documented in the study conducted by Straker and her colleagues in a book entitled: *Faces of revolution: psychological effects of violence on township youth in South Africa* (1992). Some of the key findings outlined in the text are that many young people were traumatized by the high levels of state-sponsored violence and that many left the country to train as soldiers in neighbouring countries such as Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Tanzania. The act of joining a militarized structure provided many township boys the opportunity of a formalized transition from boyhood into manhood. In their narratives, South African former combatants viewed completing military training as a rite of passage required in order to achieve what Suttner (2008) calls '*underground revolutionary masculinity*'. Underground revolutionary masculinity was based on the ability of a soldier to endure pain and

survive all the hardships associated with being part of a fighting force (for example, living in the bush without food and water over long periods of time). In keeping with other military structures, South African soldiers in exile were encouraged to repress all emotional vulnerability. Those soldiers who were unable to endure pain were labeled as lacking in masculinity and were also accused of being cowards or 'sissy boys' (Langa & Eagle, 2008; Sunter, 2008). Very young boys were expected to be fearless and also to be ready to die in war (Langa & Eagle, 2008). There was considerable pride/honour associated with dying in combat and preparedness to die in the struggle symbolized bravery for many township boys. The lives of those who died in the struggle were celebrated and they were seen as heroes and martyrs of the liberation struggle. Some of the most notable male figures to be killed in the liberation struggle are Steve Biko, Chris Hani, Okgopotse Tiro, and Solomon Mahlangu, amongst others. Heroes of choice for youth during this period were Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe, Walter Sisulu, and Oliver Tambo (Freeman, 1993). These were powerful male role models for young boys living in the townships. The dominant black masculinity of this time was centered on being politically active, brave, tough and violent in the political struggle against apartheid. Moreover, this influenced the formation of comrade masculinity amongst young boys in the townships. The discussion here illustrates that there appears to be an integral relationship between politics and expression of masculine identity. Young township boys were influenced by the politics of that time to assume a particular form of masculine identity.

6.2. Comrade masculinity

The spirit of '*comradeship*' brought young township boys together to develop a particular notion of what it meant to be a boy at that time. In the liberation struggle, every boy was expected to be a 'comrade' (Langa & Eagle, 2008), the term used to refer to any young black person engaged in resistance against apartheid (Marks, 2002). According to Campbell (1994), the term comrade was also used to refer to politically conscious young township people supportive of the Mass Democratic Movements. The period of the late 1980s and early 1990s was often referred to as "the time of the comrades", where comrades were "generally young activists seen to be at the forefront of the struggle against the South African apartheid regime" (Manganyi, in Marks, 2002). Being a comrade was a legitimate, normal and acceptable

masculine identity and non-comrade boys were often seen as cowards. To be a recognized as a 'comrade' was a prestige to be achieved and as a result, many boys strove and competed to attain this valued identity through their active involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle. Those boys who were not part of the valued comrade system within the township were victimized and were often accused of being police informants/spies (Langa & Eagle, 2008; Marks & McKenzie, 1995). Comrades were expected to be loyal to the comrade system and to maintain secrecy about activities associated with their membership, creating an adhesive in-group.

Campbell (1994) describes the three main activities associated with comrade membership as violent confrontation with political enemies (mainly the state security forces), the operation of the people's courts, and ensuring compulsory attendance of political meetings. Female activists were excluded from many of these kinds of political activities and it seems gender inequality was strong within the comrade system. Many young male comrades were very patriarchal, believing that men and women should not be equal and perpetuating gender stereotypes of inequality first taught in the family. In the interviews conducted with former female activists, Marks (2002) found that women and girls were excluded from occupying leadership positions in these kinds of anti-apartheid groupings. A number of reasons were offered by young boys for the exclusion of females, one of the main reasons being that females are temperamentally unsuited to cope with the demands of political leadership and participation. Furthermore, females were seen as too emotional, shallow and unreliable to be part of political activities (Campbell, 1994; Marks, 2002; Oxlund, 2008). Female activists were only allowed to perform peripheral roles such as cooking for the young males who were actively involved in policing and patrolling their communities. Male comrades defined the political terrain in terms of danger, conflict and violence, all of which were demarcated as a male territory (Campbell, 1994), and excluded females. The connection between a militarized ideology and the exclusion of female comrades has been researched by Cock (1991, 1992). Generally, Cock found gender inequality was rife in both formal and paramilitary structures, based on the 'politics of gender' that highlighted the difference between men and women. Men were viewed as strong, aggressive and violent and these 'masculine virtues', were described to be more suited to soldiering. The militarization of township boys reproduced an ideology of restrictive conventional gender roles. Young boys saw their roles as 'defenders' and 'protectors' of their

communities and these roles gave them the status of heroes and martyrs. In contrast to 'comrade' masculinity another apartheid township expression of masculinity was that known as *tsotsi* masculinity.

6.3. *Tsotsi* masculinity

As a result of political struggles against apartheid, the level of criminal violence also increased in the townships (Campbell, 1994; Glaser, 2000) and there was a rise of youth gangs (Mokwena, 1991; Pinnock, 1981). The studies of Mokwena and Glaser revealed the existence of what has been referred to as '*tsotsi*' masculinity in South African townships. This form of masculinity according to Mokwena (1991) mainly hinged around participation in criminal activities such as housebreaking, armed robbery, and abduction, rape and kidnapping of young girls. Mokwena (1991) argues that in the 1990s the political violence enabled criminals masquerading as political activists to commit these crimes. Some young men became known as *'comtsotsis'*, a term describing involvement in a blend of political and criminal activities (Marks, 2002; Motumi & McKenzie, 1998). According to Mokwena (1991), the emergence of youth gangs or '*comtsotsis*' led to many violent clashes with those who viewed themselves as true comrades. Comrades in this context saw their role as defenders of 'morality' in the township, holding to the position that youth leaders needed to behave in a 'disciplined' manner, both when engaged as members of organizations and as members of the community. As a result, comrades were accorded the responsibility of punishing suspected criminals or gang members (Mokwena, 1991; Marks, 2002) or ill-disciplined members of their organizations. Being a comrade meant distinguishing oneself from other members of the community by demonstrating adherence to discipline. *Tsotsi* masculinity, in contrast was a negatively defined masculinity, associated with anti-social behaviour. *Tsotsis* nevertheless held a powerful identity since they were often feared for their potential to be very violent. Although the distinctions between comrade and *tsotsi* identity were not always clear-cut, there was a period in which there was serious conflict between such groups in the townships particularly in the 1980s and early 90s. Both identities represented ways of accruing power as young black man at that time (Mokwena, 1991).

6.4. What happened to the comrade youth after 1994?

In 1990, anti-apartheid political organizations were unbanned and this led on to the process of political negotiations. This time was a period of nation building and reconciliation. Post 1994, virtually overnight, the comrade youth were required to change their life scripts from those of comrades or the 'young lions' to take on the identity of 'young entrepreneurs' and job seekers capable of taking advantage of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) opportunities (Marks, 2002; Stevens & Lockhat, 1997). In essence, the comrade youth were expected to develop a new identity that differed from the struggle masculinity of the past decades. They were expected to redefine their militarized masculine identities to be in line with the new social norms and values which have become prevalent in the new South Africa (Marks & McKenzie, 1995; Stevens & Lockhat, 1997; Marks, 2002), leaving many of these young men feeling confused about their current social identities.

Several studies have been conducted with former combatants in South Africa (Gear, 2002; Langa & Eagle, 2008; Marks, 2002; Mashike & Mokalobe, 2003). Many former combatants felt excluded in the process of negotiations and held that the ANC-led government did not sufficiently acknowledge the role that politically active township youth played in the struggle against apartheid (Gear, 2002; Mashike, 2002). A survey conducted with former comrades indicated that 79% of former combatants are unemployed (Mashike & Mokalobe, 2003). The inability of former combatants to secure employment is attributed to a range of factors. One of the main factors is that many former young combatants dropped out of school and many left the country to go into exile when they were very young, forfeiting the opportunity to complete their educational studies. Given their lack of qualifications and relevant market-related skills, many former combatants have been unable to secure jobs in the current (very competitive) labour market and feel politically marginalized and betrayed by the ANC-led government.

Today, many former combatants feel they have no role to play in the politics of the 'new era' since their militarized masculine identity is not valued anymore and some of these men have become involved in organized crime (Gear, 2002). This again illustrates that masculine identities are not static (Connell, 1995), as within the political context of apartheid, it is

apparent that township boys were forced to develop a particular masculine identity, whereas in the new democratic dispensation, young men are required to adopt different life scripts and develop new masculine identities. The current research project aims to understand how the current socio-political climate of democracy may provide a different background influencing adolescent township boys in masculine identity formation. This involves discussing in the subsequent section how men have responded to changed gender relations in the new post-1994democratic South Africa.

6.5. Is masculinity in crisis in the 'new' South Africa?

In South Africa, political and economic systems have been changing and there have also been significant changes in gender relations. Since 1994, government policies have been aimed at reducing some of the inequalities that previously separated women and men (Morrell, 2001), based on the ideal of shifting from a male-dominated patriarchal society to a new social order of equality between men and women. State institutions such as the Gender Commission and the Women Empowerment Unit in parliament were established to support gender-related campaigns and strengthen the democracy in the country. Their constitutional mandates were to protect, promote and monitor gender equality in South Africa. Today, women comprise 30 percent of the members of parliament. In his inaugural speech in 2004, the former President, Thabo Mbeki, stressed the importance of gender equality and the need to end discrimination. He said:

> "as we engaged the struggle to end racist domination, we also said we could not speak of genuine liberation without integrating within this the emancipation of women" (Peacock & Botha, 2006, p. 286).

Various laws have also been enacted to protect rights of women and children. For example, the Domestic Violence Act of 1998 (Act No. 116 of 1998) and Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act 32 of 2007 aim to reduce the high number of incidents of domestic and sexual violence in society and to afford maximum protection to the victims of domestic and sexual abuse. These Acts also set out the policies determining how victims may gain access to help. Government also committed itself to creating job opportunities for women. As a result of these changed gender relations, it has been observed that some South African men started to experience what has become known as a 'crisis in masculinity' (Reid & Walker, 2005). This

'crisis in masculinity' seems to involve the radical questioning or redefinition of the meaning of 'masculinity' which has occurred as a result of changes in social values, including the encouragement of women to enter the job market (Reid & Walker, 2005). Culturally, men have generally been ascribed the roles of head of households, protectors and providers. The current South African social and economic conditions, including the impact of the global financial crisis, make it difficult for many men to achieve 'complete' masculinity as evidenced in securing jobs, marrying, fathering children or establishing their own households (Hunter, 2005; Niehaus, 2005). Unemployment in South Africa is high, many young men are no longer working and some are wholly dependent on women for survival. Women have been seen by some men to be usurping roles previously allocated to men, creating uncertainty, insecurity and anxiety (Reid & Walker, 2005). In *Changing Men in South Africa*, Morrell (2001) argues that men responded differently to changes in gender relations in South Africa. Some have responded flexibly to the erosion of male privileges, while others have wanted to maintain the status quo of men-in-charge. Morrell (2001), using Connell's work, categorized South African men's responses to changing gender relations into three types: *defensive, accommodating and progressive*, each elaborated briefly below.

6.5.1. **Defensive men**

Some men responded defensively to radical changes in gender relations, committing themselves to anti-feminist sentiments and the restoration of male power. Their main argument is that men's interests are under threat from feminism. As a result, men need to join hands and fight feminism. These men argue that feminism is undermining the rights of men as fathers and heads of households. Anti-feminist men also started men's rights movements to deal with issues of divorce, and child custody, arguing that current laws favour women too strongly. In his text, *The Myth of Male Power*, Farrell (1994), an anti-feminist writer, argues that men, not women, are the real victims of feminism. According to Farrell (1994), this view that men are abusive is a myth or a 'feminist fantasy'. Many of these texts, such as Farrell's book, form part of an anti-feminist backlash calling for the return of traditional patriarchal gender relations and roles (Gough, 1998; Willott & Griffin, 1997). Defensive men feel they are losing masculine power and aim to regain this in some form. There is a sense amongst these groups of men that

the powers associated with traditional masculinity are being eroded and disappearing (Farrell, 1994; Gough, 1998; Willott & Griffin, 1997) and that this is problem for society and men in general.

It has been argued that some of these men responded to their sense of disempowerment by directing violence against women and intimate partners and that the masculinity crisis in South Africa has contributed in part to the very high levels of gender-based violence. Niehaus (2005) suggests it is through rape, for example, that some men demonstrate their heterosexual virility, humiliate economically successful women and enact an ideal of patriarchal power and entitlement. However, according to Morrell (2001) we should also be careful not to over-generalize in characterizing all men as being anti-feminism and anti-gender equality.

6.5.2.**Accommodating men**

Not all men have responded defensively or violently to changing gender relations in the new South Africa. Some men are trying to accommodate changes in gender relations, while perhaps simultaneously still holding onto some of the old ways of patriarchy. For example, Ratele's (2004) study demonstrates how a group of young, educated men in South Africa today are exploring new avenues for the expression of their masculinity that are not aggressive towards and/or rejecting of women's empowerment. At the same time there are instances where traditional notions of masculinity are still sustained, despite increased openness to some change. Gough (1998) and Harris, Lea and Foster (1995) further demonstrate that educated males may employ rhetorical strategies that accommodate the new context of changing gender relations, but use linguistic repertoires to hide their fundamentally sexist views and their support of more covert traditional hegemonic constructs of masculinity. These men support gender equality in voice while simultaneously negating it and as a result, hegemonic norms are discursively and strategically maintained and reproduced (Gough, 1998; Toerien & Durrheim, 2001). This is the one of the "most effective ways of being hegemonic to demonstrate one distance from hegemonic masculinity" (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p. 351), while still maintaining its benefits and interests. Accommodating men may thus be positioned somewhat ambiguously. They may even believe themselves to be progressive but aspects of their

behaviour, attitudes and discursive constructions of gender suggest an adherence to traditional patriarchal gender relations and gender stereotypes.

6.5.2.**Progressive men**

Morrell (2001) describes progressive men as South African men who are committed to gender justice and equality. Like defensive men, these men have also formed their own organizations, however, these are organisations aimed at achieving gender equality, at mitigating the impact and spread of HIV/AIDS and at ending gender-based violence. These organizations also aim to encourage men to be good fathers, husbands and responsible citizens. The ideal of the South African man amongst this cohort is one who is non-violent, a good father and husband, and able to contribute to family support both financially and emotionally (Richter & Morrell, 2006). For instance, the Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training (ADAPT) initiative, established in the Alexandra Township outside of Johannesburg, is one such initiative that is aimed at addressing the role of men in ending gender violence. ADAPT's programmes offer diverse services, including counseling and mentorship on what the modern man can and should be to his children and his family (Peacock & Botha, 2006). Another initiative, the South African Mens' Forum (SAMF), was formed in 1997 with a specific aim of mobilizing and galvanizing both older and younger men to change their mindset about conservative gender roles and to work to bring about gender equality (Peacock & Botha, 2006). Also, the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) Fatherhood project was formed in 2003 to encourage men to play a positive active role in their children's lives (Morrell & Richter, 2006; Peacock & Botha, 2006). Sonke Gender Justice Network was also established to strengthen the South African government and civil society capacity to support boys and men to take action to promote gender equality, prevent sexual violence and reduce the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS (Sonke Gender Justice Network, 2010).

All these initiatives speak to the changing climate in post-apartheid South Africa relating to gender relations and a need to redress institutional and social inequalities by including both women *and* men in the reformulation of gender identities. Dominant gender identity formations are now being contested and negotiated in light of the increased rate of HIV infection and of

very high levels of gender violence, as well as the changing role and authority of women within the society. Identities once perceived as stable and unchanging are not only being challenged but are also being slowly redefined in more progressive ways.

6.6. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, this chapter has illustrated how expressions of masculine identity are in a state of constant flux and are open to change depending largely on the prevailing societal norms and the historical forces at play at a particular time in society. As societal changes take place, new forms of masculinity may also emerge. It is therefore important to understand masculinity within different historical contexts in order to understand its present state and status. It is evident in this chapter that apartheid as a set of political conditions influenced township boys to socially construct particular forms of masculinity, whereas in the new democratic dispensation young South African men are required to adopt different life scripts and develop new masculine identities.

Morrell's categorization also shows that men have responded differently to the changes in gender relations in the new South Africa and that not all men responded negatively to such changes. Many South African men have reacted positively to changed gender relations, actively supporting their wives' career goals and becoming more involved in childcare. These images of masculinity indicate the existence of alternative 'non hegemonic' forms of masculinities in South Africa. But these manifestations of masculinity are not necessarily given sufficient prominence in a media context that tends to sensationalize and problematize masculinity and its effects. The South African media tends to depict men (especially poor, black men) as prone to violence and as potential women abusers and oppressors (Jensen, 2008). We need to be more critical of the racialized undertones of many of these depictions masculinity by the media. Alternative non-toxic masculinities need to be promoted in the South African media.

Chapter 7: Young masculinity studies in contemporary South Africa

Introduction

In South Africa, particular political forces have been identified as having shaped the lives of township youth, documented in historical and sociological research discussed in the previous chapter. Currently, social changes in employment, racial politics and gender relations require that adolescent boys forge new flexible masculine identities. The militarized masculinity of the early 1980s and 1990s is no longer relevant in post-apartheid South Africa (Langa & Eagle, 2008; Xaba, 2001). The new political context influences township boys in multiple ways to form new masculine identities. For example, today more emphasis is placed on qualifications and professional skills than on the military skills that defined township boys in the 1980s' and early 1990s' during the struggle against apartheid (Xaba, 2001). Township boys in the post-apartheid society also need to deal with new challenges, in particular the scourge of HIV and AIDS, and substance abuse.

Currently, there is a growing body of literature on a new version of young masculinity that is non-violent, monogamous, modern, and responsible and built upon respect, a literature that is perhaps directly or indirectly influencing adolescent identity development in South Africa as well as in other parts of the world, especially with increasing globalization and media exposure (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Morrell, 1998; Pattman, 2005, 2007). This chapter covers studies on young boys' sexual behaviour in the context of HIV, circumcision as a rite of passage to manhood, and the relationship between gang violence and masculinity in contemporary South Africa. These somewhat varied topics are covered since each of these represents an important research area in studying young masculinities in South Africa.

7.1. Masculinity studies on boys' sexual behaviour and HIV/AIDS

South Africa has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world (UNAIDS, 2010). It is estimated that HIV prevalence is 18.9% across the whole population, although there are a number of problems with and limitations to these figures (Department of Health, 2010; Shisana & Simbayi, 2002; UNAIDS, 2010). Nevertheless, the increasing HIV prevalence rate over the

last two decades (although very recently the rate appears to be decreasing) has raised many questions about boys, sex and masculinity. This recognition has led social science researchers to explore the role of gender in HIV transmission (Jewkes et al., 2009; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Pattman, 2007; Sathiparsad, 2007; Shefer, 2003; Wood & Jewkes, 2001). In South Africa, scholars have noted how dominant masculinities shape young boys' violent control over girls, the demand for '*flesh to flesh*' sex and the celebration of multiple sexual partners (Jewkes et al., 2009; Campbell & MacPhail, 2001; Wood & Jewkes, 2001). Adolescent boys, for example, boast about the number of girlfriends they have and the ability to have sex with all of them. According to Seidler (1989) many boys see sex as a quantitative experience (e.g. how many girlfriends do you have? How often have you had sex with them?). Boys achieve status, prestige and popularity amongst their peers through having multiple partners and through publicly demonstrating or proclaiming this. Young boys also feel entitled to have full penetrative sex, and sex when and how they want it (Jewkes et al., 2009; Campbell, 1997; Wood & Jewkes, 2001). In this respect, masculinity is still saturated with associations of a dominant, active, and promiscuous heterosexuality. However, there is an emerging literature which indicates that not all boys in South Africa engage in sex-related risk-taking behaviours as part of constructing hegemonic masculine identity, but these voices are not very popular (Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007; Pattman, 2007; Sathiparsad, 2007).

In many relationships, young boys control sexual activity, including the use or non-use of condoms. Use of condoms appears to signal and depend on the status of a girlfriend. For example, condoms are reserved for casual encounters or 'one-night stands' (Campbell, 1997; Sathiparsad, 2007). Girls commonly need to be submissive in 'love affairs' or risk being beaten up. Boys may claim that violence against girlfriends is a sign of love and also a legitimate means of instilling discipline (Jewkes et al., 2009; Redpath et al., 2008; Sigsworth, 2009; Wood & Jewkes, 2001). For many boys, there is a sense of entitlement to have sex with girls, particularly when they have spent money on them, such buying them drinks, sweets or chocolates. In this context, successful masculinity is centered on adolescent boys' ability to control sexual partners and to have a sex with them on their own terms. In terms of the male sexual drive discourse, sex is presented as 'masculine or physical need', while women's desires are barely recognized (Hollway, 1989) and this kind of discursive construction of heterosexual

encounters appears to be persistent as evidenced in the findings of empirical research in South Africa (Wood & Jewkes, 2001). Men feel entitled to initiate a sexual encounter, while women are denied this privilege. Women who initiate sexual encounters or carry condoms are labeled as 'loose', 'whores' or 'prostitutes' (Campbell, 1997; Hollway, 1989).

However, some girls are today defying boys' control by also beginning to engage in relationships with more than one boy (Hunter, 2005). These girls are accused of being *difebe* (sluts or prostitutes) (Hunter, 2005). Boys may try by all means to make practices of 'hegemonic' masculinity, such as engagement in a dominating sexuality, compulsory for their peers, in part through discursive practices. In this instance, masculinity (rather than femininity) is associated with sexual prowess and performance demonstrated in having many sexual partners. Having sex is used as yardstick in proving one's manliness. Jewkes and Wood (2001) found that many boys also used violence against girls who refused to have sex with them. This also offers some explanations for the increasing levels of sexual violence against school-going girls (see, Human Rights Watch, 2001). School boys were reported to be using force to have sex with girls in school toilet facilities, in empty classrooms and in hostel rooms and dormitories. These boys may enact their masculinity in this way in part in order to be seen as potent among their male peers.

On the other hand, young boys who have girlfriends complain bitterly about their inability to retain the interest of 'beautiful' girls. Boys report that girls want *sugar daddies* (men who are already working, driving flashy cars and can afford to buy them expensive gifts) and may thus be dismissive of the interest of younger men (Hunter, 2005; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007). Securing a girlfriend is all about what is known as the "*triple C syndrome*", being able to own and provide access to cash, cellular phone and car. Money talks as girls choose partners who are able provide them with material possessions and poorer boys face new difficulties in acquiring girlfriends. Failure to secure a girlfriend may challenge the development of a masculine identity and compromise status in the eyes of one's peers. Boys express their anxieties and frustrations about being rejected by girls who they claim are too materialistic and about their powerlessness in competing with older, rich men (Pattman, 2005; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2007). In this context, successful masculinity is associated with economic power and

those without wealth feel emasculated due to their inability fulfill the ideals of 'hegemonic' masculinity. In the township context, hegemonic masculinity also seems to be associated with both heterosexuality (and sexual prowess) and access to wealth, material possessions and resources. From a psychological perspective, it is important to understand how working-class boys in Alexandra Township deal with feelings of powerless, anxiety, and envy and the coping mechanisms they employ to deal not only with their youth, but also with their own class positioning. Thus, the study is interested not only in the kinds of social patterns, exchanges and labels that have been identified in related research, but also in the more personal effects/impact these have on individuals and what kinds of interpersonal and intrapsychic challenges this may pose.

7.2. Masculinity studies on boys, violence and gangs

In post-1994 South Africa, it has been observed that there was a broad shift from political violence to criminal violence. Crime statistics reveal that roughly 2.5 million people have been victims of different types of crime in the past six years (South African Police Crime Statistics, 2010). The Department of Correctional Service Annual Report (2010) also reveals that many of these crimes are committed by young males between the ages of 14 and 24 years. Researchers have also begun to explore why young boys and men dominate crime statistics in terms of commission of crime (see, for example, Cooper, 2009; Dissel, 1999; Gear & Ngubeni, 2002; Salo, 2007; Steinberg, 2004). It was found that engaging in crime and being part of a gang is seen as one of the ways of asserting a masculine identity amongst some young boys in South Africa. Gangs perform rituals and school new members to comply with traditional gang codes. Some of the gang codes involve 'spilling the blood' (e.g. injury or even killing someone or committing a violent crime) as part of initiation (Cooper, 2009; Jensen, 2008; Pinnock, 1984, 1997; Salo, 2007). The more brutal and daring the crime, the more respect the new gang member gets in the gang criminal underworld (Pinnock, 1984, 1997). After performing a ritual, a new gang member is tattooed, using a needle and ink made from hot, melted rubber. The new initiate is expected to endure the pain without complaining or crying (Jensen, 2008; Salo, 2007). As part of this rite of passage, new gang members are also expected to take on the ethos of the gang and be prepared to die for the gang in any gang warfare. Salo found that there are different gangs in Cape Town with different names (the Americans, Hard livings, Clever boys,

Junky Funky Kids, Naughty boys, etc). Gang fights over turf, community resources, women and the drug markets are very common. Gang fights also involve the masculine performance of fearlessness and bravery. Winning the fight gives one the status of being a 'real' gangster (Pinnock, 1997; Salo, 2007).

Kinnes (2000) found that there are many reasons as to why young boys join gangs, the first being that taking on the role of a gang member provides young boys with increased opportunities in many disadvantaged communities. Gang members may have access to particular geographical areas and also desirable material possessions, such as expensive cars, clothing, and are also able to attract the interest of 'beautiful' women. Gang members also enjoy a particular kind of respect and status. They are seen as role models for many young boys because they epitomize the image of a particular kind of success. Secondly, being a gang member provides safety and security for in-group members and non-gang members remain constantly at risk of being targeted by gang members (Kinnes, 2000). Thus, it becomes safer to make an allegiance to a gang than to remain outside of these structures in some contexts. It seems gang members try by all means possible to render gang masculinity compulsory for the boys in particular communities. However, there is also an emerging literature that indicates that many boys do not succumb to the peer pressure to engage in criminal activities (Jensen, 2008; Salo, 2007) or join organized gangs (Barker, 2005; Field, 2001) and resist such pressures. The interest in this study is to explore how some of these patterns may play out in the Alexandra ttownship context in which some elements of criminal masculinity also seem to be celebrated.

7.3. Rites of passage and masculinity: male circumcision and associated practices in South Africa

In his book entitled: *Manhood in the making*, Gilmore (1990) argues that masculinity also develops in the context of cultural ideology and is a product in many instances of cultural practices. Men are not born aggressive, but cultural formations encourage them to be aggressive and achievement and goal-orientated (Gilmore, 1990). Such ideas resonate with those discussed in chapter four, particularly again the notion of *performativity*. However, Gilmore's preoccupation was with 'rites of passage' and masculinity and pre-dates most of the post-modern work on masculinity. Manhood is something that men earn. This often involves a

test that must be passed over and over again, leaving the impression that manhood is a "precarious state" painfully achieved and easily lost (Pollack, 1995, p. 58). Gilmore (1990) argues that masculinity is a status, which has to be achieved at far greater cost than femininity. Indeed, in many cases where femininity can assumed to be acquired as a natural process of maturation, manhood involves participation in social rituals or rites of passage, which are much more strictly prescribed, often involving physical hardship, endurance or pain.

Various rituals, such as circumcision, are used to test boys' readiness to become 'real' men. In many African communities, the practice of circumcision is considered to be one of the rites of passage that young men should ideally go through in order to achieve the status of manhood. For example, in Xhosa tradition, many young males believe that manhood is only achieved via *entabeni*- literally translated as going to the mountain or to the bush for circumcision. The Xhosa tradition of initiating young men into *ubudoda* (manhood) is very important for young men's identity formation (Gqola, 2007; Kometsi, 2004; Mgqolozana, 2009). Those who are not circumcised are denied the status of *indoda* (man) and are excluded, for example, from decision making bodies such as community meetings:

> "He is a boy- *u yinkwekwe* - before he has gone to *ehlathini*. I mean culturally one has to go ….yes one is born a boy, but at the end one ends as *indoda*. So one who has not gone for the initiation, who has not gone to *ehlathini* is *inkwenkwe*" (Kometsi, 2004, p. 50).

The word *inkwekwe yinja* (a boy is a dog) is used in a derogatory manner to describe and discriminate against boys who have not been initiated (Tshemese, 2009). Boys feel it is culturally compulsory to take part in an 'initiation school, '*one has to….yes one is born a boy, but at the end one ends as indoda*'. Within Xhosa culture and some other ethnic groups in South Africa being an uncircumcised male is seen as an undesirable identity for both social and sexual reasons. Teenage girls also play a role in policing this aspect of masculinity through derogatory talk, such as employing the saying '*andithandani namakhwenkwe mna*', meaning we don't date boys (Tshemese, 2009). Gqola (2007, p.145) makes a similar observation when she notes that many Xhosa men believe 'a woman cannot marry a boy'. The status of *indoda* is rendered compulsory for all Xhosa boys in the rural and urban areas of the Eastern Cape, South Africa. It will be interesting to explore whether some of the same concerns and power

dynamics related to the social status of being *inkwekwe* (a boy) or *indoda* (a man) may also apply amongst adolescent boys in the current research project conducted in an urban township context. Historically, initiation schools played an important role in socializing young boys into being responsible adult men, but today there is an emergence of a reinterpretation of this rite of passage with the suggestion that initiation gives young men the unlimited and unquestionable right to access sex with multiple partners (Kometsi, 2004; Mgqolozana, 2009). Thus, there appears to have been some perversion of the original purpose of male initiation rituals in the Xhosa community. Immediately after initiation boys are declared 'real' men and encouraged to go and test their manhood, which becomes an integral part of their masculine identity performance:

> "It is perceived that when you become an *indoda* (a man), you become a better fucker, if I may put it bluntly, and guys, those who have come out of *esuthwine* (initiation), because they have been away for a long time, or whatever period, you are encouraged to go and test yourself and that is something that is encouraged" (Kometsi, 2004, p. 53).

The ceremony in which new initiates are encouraged to have sex with unmarried women/girls is called the 'house of the lamp' (Mgqolozana (2009, p. 164). The main purpose of the house of the lamp is to celebrate the achievement of manhood and to teach the new initiate manly behaviours, for example: "how to be with a woman, the language of men, and other activities consequential of being a man" (Mqgolozana, 2009, p. 164). The educational aspects of the initiation schools relating to what it means to be a responsible man and community member appear to have been largely eroded with increased urbanization and modernization. As a result, Tshemese (2009) advocates for the revival of 'old' style traditional circumcision schools in which initiates would be taught to be responsible men who are non-violent and respect women. He suggests that this may be one way of dealing with the scourge of gender-based violence and HIV and AIDS in the post-apartheid South Africa. Whether it is possible to reintroduce past values and institutions is debatable, however. It is worth noting that more recent research into HIV transmission has identified male circumcision as an effective protective feature. Thus, there is increasing encouragement of adult circumcision in South Africa for medical reasons rather cultural. There is also encouragement for the circumcision aspect of male initiation to be performed in medical settings to reduce risk of infection. Thus prior cultural practices are being

transformed by a range of influences.

7.4. Studies on the role of class status in young masculinity

In their study in the UK, Frosh et al. (2002) mention that experiences of social class, ethnicity, and race, play an important role in the concepts that boys develop about their masculine identities. For example, middle class boys in private schools positioned themselves as intellectually superior and as being more career-orientated than working class boys in state public schools. On the other hand, state-school boys describe private-school boys as *snobbish* and *wimpish*.

In South Africa, black African township boys who go to former Model C or better resourced 'middle-class' schools are often called derogatory names such as *coconuts* (Durrheim & Mtose, 2006; Pattman, 2005). The term 'coconut' is used in pejorative way to suggest that while a person is black on the outside in skin colour, they are in fact white on the inside as they embrace western, white and middle class values. These boys are thus also seen as lacking in African masculinity. Model C schoolboys, on the other hand, see boys in state schools as being intellectually inferior (Pattman, 2005). This suggests that social class intersects with how boys interpret conceptions of hegemonic masculinities. In their study of 174 boys, from Laberge and Albert (1999, in Frosh, et al., 2002) found that middle class boys were more likely to value leadership and intelligence as characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. Working class boys, on the other hand, were more likely to suggest that hegemonic masculinity was all about being streetwise able to attract girls (*cherries*) and looking 'cool', which might involve taking risks such as publicly smoking and drinking excessively. Working class boys seemed to see this as a legitimate form of masculinity.

In South African townships, both middle and working class adolescent boys are expected to be stylish and to wear certain expensive designer clothes (e.g. *All stars or Lacoste*), as part of '*loxion kulcha*' (Nuttall, 2008), in which clothing brands become the key markers of acceptable identity. Boys have become victims of this kind of fashion consciousness (often viewed as a marker of having adequate wealth) along with girls. Today township boys seem to be engaged

in some struggle to make general representations of masculinity compulsory, due in part to globalization and changing class relations in post-apartheid South Africa. New identities are also emerging as a result of young people of different races attending the same multiracial schools (or former Model C schools) (Dolby, 2000). Boys at township schools may accuse Model C schoolboys of trying to be like the Americans for speaking English in an American accent, wearing baggy jeans, playing basketball and listening to rap music rather than listening to *kwaito* (popular township music) or playing *ediski* (soccer) (Lockhart & Stevens, 1997; Nutall, 2008; Pattman, 2005). On the other hand, more middle class[5] boys also express criticisms of working-class boys in the township. Working class boys are constructed as rough, aggressive and violent (Pattman, 2005). This rather curtailed discussion shows that social class plays a central role in the expression of masculinity for South African youth, in keeping with international findings.

7.5. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, the discussion in this chapter has noted that research interest in aspects of young masculinity is slowly gaining popularity with some focus on the 'positive signs' suggesting contestation of the narrow identifications previously available for the development of young masculinities. This is important, since as has been argued, many aspects of what is commonly constructed as 'hegemonic' masculine identity are associated with a range of risks to young men and the people they engage with (for example, young women). Multiple versions of masculinity are emerging, offering adolescent boys the opportunity to conform to or reject new versions of masculinity. Some images of masculinity are more popular than others, differing in terms of individuals' race, class and cultural positioning amongst other aspects. It is therefore important to understand how boys in Alexandra township perform different versions of masculinity and to explore how they appear to develop and live a masculine identity in rapidly transforming contemporary South Africa. The study aims to bring a more nuanced psychological perspective to bear on the struggles involved in developing, sustaining, contesting and performing a contemporary masculine identity as a young black man in urban

[5] While the terms 'middle and working class' are used to describe groups of boys occupying different socio-economic status positions, it is recognized that these distinctions in terms of class are not necessarily clear-cut nor do the categories refer to class in the kind of classical way understood in Marxist theory.

South Africa, remaining constantly observant of the particular contextual and historical location of the population of boys being investigated.

Chapter 8: Research Methodology

Introduction

> "Research methods have become ways of approaching a question…but first we need to identify our goal and be able to justify our choice of the research methods" (Willig, 2001, p. 2)

The research orientation of the study is primarily qualitative. The word *qualitative* "implies an emphasis on the processes and meanings" that people make out of their lived experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 4). Based on this assertion, the researcher provides some motivation in the first section of this chapter as to why qualitative research methods were chosen for the current research project in order to explore adolescent boys' lived experiences in Alexandra Township. According to Lyons and Coyle (2007) qualitative research emphasizes the importance of the context in which the research is being conducted, thus the researcher provides some detailed background information about Alexandra Township in this chapter. The researcher also discusses the steps which were undertaken to recruit the thirty-two (32) boys in two public schools into the study, including all of the ethical considerations taken into account.

The third section of the chapter discusses the research data collection methods, namely, photography, individual interviews and focus groups. The strengths and limitations of using some of these research data collection methods are also briefly discussed.

The last section of the chapter discusses data analysis methods, and more specifically thematic and discursive analysis, based on the work of Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Edley and Wetherell (1999). Under this section, the researcher also discusses the benefits of combining discursive and applied psychoanalytic perspectives to deepen data analysis. This form of data analysis is based on the work of the following researchers: Frosh et al. (2003), Frosh and Young (2008), Hollway and Jefferson (2000) and Kvale (1999). Some of the concerns raised by Wetherell (2005) about the use of psychoanalysis as a research tool to analyze data are also discussed. Despite some of their philosophical differences, all of these writers agree on the importance of reflexivity in research and data analysis. Thus, towards the end of the chapter,

the researcher critically discusses how some of his personal reflections, counter-transference reactions, impressions, and feelings are also used as part of data analysis.

8.1. What is the relevance of qualitative research methods for this study?

For many years, research in psychology was dominated by quantitative studies, working with large samples aimed at quantifying their results and generalizing findings to a large population. Questionnaires and laboratory-based experiments were used in the field of psychology to assess people attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours. Many of these studies were rooted within the positivist tradition and emphasized that researchers should be neutral and objective in data collection and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Hollway, 1989; Lyons & Coyle, 2007; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1997). The positivist research tradition also tended to be based on the assumption that human behaviour is rational, static and stable (Hollway, 1989). However, in the 1970s, there was a growing dissatisfaction with mainstream positivist approaches in the social sciences. This led to the increasing use of qualitative research methods, methods designed to challenge the key epistemological assumptions of quantitative studies that research is value-free laden. In contrast, qualitative researchers argued that personal values are an integral part of research, arguing that no research can be truly objective or free of research influence. Reflexivity is an integral part of this understanding, a term capturing the idea that 'knowledge is co-constructed' and influenced by the researcher's identity, ideology, values, interests, and beliefs (whether consciously or unconsciously) (Hunt, 1989).

In *Discourse and Social Psychology, Moving beyond Attitude and Behaviour*, Potter and Wetherell (1987) provide a critical examination of the limitations of traditional quantitative research methods, arguing that such approaches cannot sufficiently take into account the role of language in research. Potter and Wetherell argue that research should investigate the use of language in social contexts. The turn to language was also an important shift for qualitative research in psychology. This is because the use of language in social activities was often taken for granted. Parker puts it succinctly when he says "language is so structured to mirror the power relations that often we can see no other ways of being, and it structures ideology so that it is difficult to speak both in and against it" (Parker, 1992, p. i). Within this kind of framing, it is important for qualitative researchers to understand the use of language, which is viewed as

representative of what people think and they construct certain issues (Parker, 1992). For example, boys in this study used language to express their views on what it means to be a boy or man. It is through language that the researcher was able to access their reasoning, thinking and emotions and the manner in which masculinity was discursively constructed by and for them.

It is against this backdrop that qualitative research was chosen as the methodological approach. Parker (1995) defines qualitative research as focusing on: "(a) an attempt to capture the sense that lies within, and that structures what we say about what we do; (b) an exploration, elaboration and systematization of the significance of an identified phenomenon; (c) the illuminative representation of meaning of a delimited issue or problem" (p. 3). A core feature of qualitative research methods is that "satisfactory explanations of social activities require a substantial appreciation of the perspectives, culture and 'world-views' of the actors involved" (Parker, 1995, pp. 3-6). As Burgess (1991, in Smith, 1995) notes, prominence is given to "understanding the actions of participants on the basis of their active experience of the world and the ways in which their actions arise from and reflect back on experience" (p.178).

Qualitative methods were considered most suitable for a study aiming to explore multiple voices of masculinity amongst adolescent boys in Alexandra Township. Qualitative methods allowed the researcher to explore how adolescent boys develop meanings and construct their masculine identities in everyday life. The researcher's main aim was to understand boys' practices of masculinities in terms of their active everyday experiences, their ways of negotiating both hegemonic and alternative non-hegemonic versions of masculinity, and some of the contextual factors that appear to facilitate or hinder engagement with alternative forms of masculinity. The researcher also sought to identify the discursive strategies that adolescent boys use in everyday life to negotiate multiple voices of being a boy. One of the key assumptions in qualitative research is a 'sensitivity to context', which is a sensitivity to how the ideological, historical and socio-economic climate influences the participants' talk (Coyle, 2007, p. 22). The context in which these boys live was also of central interest in this research study in terms of wanting to appreciate how boys in this particular environment express and live out masculinity. The researcher explored how adolescent boys make sense of their

personal worlds in Alexandra Township, while recognizing that the context is a key to appreciating the meanings that participants create about their lived experiences.

8.2. Alexandra Township: site selection

Why was Alexandra Township chosen as an area of study? The township of Alexandra (popularly known as 'Alex' and referred in this way in the thesis) served as a good research area to conduct this study for a number reasons. Alexandra Township is a predominantly black township situated 13 kilometers from the centre of Johannesburg in the North-Eastern suburbs. Poverty levels in Alex are very high, for example, as contrasted with the wealth of the neighboring suburb of Sandton, just 3km away. Alex was established in 1912 to provide a base for a valuable black labour pool to serve the white population in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. The majority of people in Alex came or continue to come from rural areas to Johannesburg in search of work (Bonner & Nieftagodien, 2008). In a survey of Alex residents, it was found that 49% of respondents were born in Gauteng, whilst 29% were born in the Limpopo Province (Alexandra Renewal Project, 2001). In Alex, Zulu (30%) and North Sotho/Pedi (26%) are the main languages spoken by residents (Alexandra Renewal Project, 2001), and suggests that these ethnic identities are salient amongst this population.

Today, Alexandra township is trapped in a vicious cycle of social and environmental problems, such as poverty, high unemployment, overcrowding, crime, pollution, poor electricity supply, lack of clean water, substance abuse, child neglect, and women abuse (Alexandra Renewal Project, 2001). Due to the dire circumstances in which most of its residents live, and the area's close proximity to wealthy suburbs, Alex is a place which is popularly called "the University of Crime" - a place where people (especially young males) learn to commit crime in other parts of Johannesburg with the rationale that this is a way they can survive adversity. In a recent survey of Alex residents, 29% of men and 40% of women reported that they were unemployed and looking for work (Bonner & Nieftagodien, 2008). Thus primary breadwinners often find it immensely difficult to fulfill their roles and many have dependants. In Alex Township, there is also shortage of housing, which has resulted in overcrowding and the influx of informal settlers living in shacks. Environmental conditions in Alexandra are very poor: lack of proper drainage system, uncollected rubbish and severe overcrowding all predispose residents to health

problems, such as vulnerability to infectious diseases. Levels of education are low: 5% of respondents have had no formal schooling, 10% have attained either a standard 4 or 5, 29% have attained a standard 8 or 9, 20% of respondents reported completion of a standard 10, and only 2% of respondents have attained a qualification higher than a matric (a school leaving certificate) (Alexandra Renewal Project, 2001). Access to health facilities indicate that those who earn more are inclined towards seeking private sector health care outside of Alex, while the poorer households for the most part, utilize public health care facilities. Currently, in terms of the Alexandra Clinic Health Report, 21% of males and 39% of females seeking treatment at the clinic are HIV positive (Alexandra Renewal Project, 2001).

While Alexandra Township is characterized by particular features, many young boys in South African townships are growing up in similar kinds of circumstances to those described in the above paragraphs. These youth form a significant proportion of the South African population and will be the future adults in society. It is important to study the experiences of adolescents growing up in adverse or non-optimal life circumstances and environments, conditions that are not atypical for some youth in a range of global contexts. Such youth may be particularly at risk for problematic identity developmental trajectories as discussed in the literature review. In the case of this study, the focus of interest is on gender identity and the construction and expression of masculinity amongst young boys in this context.

A further reason for choosing Alexandra as an area in which to conduct this study was to explore how township boys position themselves in relation to 'hegemonic' practices of masculinity in the 'new South Africa'. As suggested in the literature review, the construction of masculinity changes over time. A previous study by Glaser (2000) revealed that '*tsotsi* masculinity' was very popular in South African black townships, including Alex, during the apartheid years. The youth in Alex were also at the forefront of the struggle against apartheid and took part in para-military activities (see, for example, Bonner & Nieftagodien, 2008, on the detailed history of Alex and its role in struggle politics). By focusing on the experiences of contemporary youth in Alex, the researcher aims to explore to some extent how the construction of masculine identities has changed post-1994. Having provided the rationale for choosing Alexandra Township as the site for the study, the various steps and elements of data

collection are described in the sections that follow.

8.3. Gaining entry to the schools

The adolescent boys in the study were recruited from two schools in Alexandra Township. Schools are a useful site at which to conduct research on adolescents and have also been the site of some of the British and Australian studies that influenced the conceptualization of this research (Frosh et al., 2002; Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Renold, 2001; Swain, 2000, 2003). Work on masculinities has demonstrated in several studies that schools provide important spaces for meanings to develop of what it means to be 'male' or 'female' (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1996). More specifically, schooling processes can be seen to influence the formation of gendered identities, marking out "correct' or 'appropriate' styles of being a male" (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1996, p.19). In addition, from a practical point of view, schools also provided possible entry point for accessing young male adolescents in Alexandra Township.

In embarking upon the study, the researcher identified the school principals as the main gatekeepers in terms of gaining access to a school youth population. Kelly and Van der Reit (2001) define individuals as gatekeepers or representatives that give an entry into a specific community. Since the school principals were responsible for authorising the study in their schools, the researcher held meetings with two principals to explain the nature of the study. They were also given information sheets, detailing the nature of the research project and both were then willing to sign the consent form, giving the researcher permission to conduct research amongst adolescent boys in their schools (Letters of permission are attached in the appendix A, B, C, D and E). It was recognized that pupils' and guardians' consent would also be required beyond this (see appendix F and G)

The schools selected as good sites from which to recruit participants are both public schools and the researcher also needed to get permission from the Provincial Department of Education to conduct the study. The proposal was submitted to the Gauteng Department of Education, which also gave the researcher permission to conduct the study in these two schools.

8.4. Advertising the study

Based on the initial proposal, the researcher intended to conduct individual interviews and focus groups with approximately 18 adolescent boys. The adolescent boys needed to be between the ages of 14 and 19 years and to be doing either grade 10, 11, or 12 at the two selected school sites. The researcher advertised the study by visiting all of the classes of learners doing grade 10, 11 and 12. In the meetings, the researcher explained that he intended to conduct research into meanings of what it entails to be a boy in Alex. The researcher explained what participation in the study would entail. The researcher also explained that willing participants would need their parents/guardian's permission before taking part in the study. All the adolescent boys who expressed an interest in taking part of the study were given forms to take home for their parents to read and sign and the parental consent forms were returned to the researcher (see Appendix G).

8.5. Participants

Ultimately thirty two (32) adolescent boys participated in this research project. The number of participants exceeded 18, since there was considerable interest in participation and many boys wanted to be part of the study. It was also decided that the larger sample would allow for richer and deeper data collection.

Boys in this study were drawn from two schools situated in two different areas of Alexandra Township. The first school (School A) is located in the 'old part' of Alexandra and the other school (B), is on the East Bank, a new area housing many more black middle class or slightly wealthier people. The difference in location of these two schools formed an interesting background to the study since the mix of participants in terms of socio-economic status allowed for some insight into the influence of class and social factors in facilitating or hindering engagement with alternative forms of masculinity. Pupils who attend the first school mainly come from poor working-class backgrounds, while pupils from the other school come from somewhat wealthier or even middle-class family backgrounds, although children from the wealthiest homes in the township attended private schools outside of the township.

Nineteen (19) boys were recruited from the first school. Eight were in grade 10, eight in grade 11 and three in grade 12. The remaining thirteen boys were recruited from the other school. Ten were in grade 11 and three in grade 12. All these boys were between the ages of 15 and 19 years old at the time that the study was conducted.

8.6. Data collection methods

Under this sub-section, the three methods of data collection used in the study, namely, photography, individual interviews and focus groups, are discussed in some depth:

8.6.1. **Photography as a data collection tool**

Historically, photography, as a qualitative data collection method, developed out of social science disciplines, such as sociology and anthropology. Recently, this method has also been gaining popularity in other fields, such as psychology (Reavey & Johnson, 2008), allowing participants to represent their lived experiences through visual images. In the current study, the use of photography as a data gathering tool was useful in researching representational aspects of young masculinities in Alex. The decision to use photo-elicitation narratives as an initial research tool to specifically explore social constructions of identity was stimulated by the work of Collier and Collier (1986), Noland, (2006) and Blackbeard and Lindegger (2007). All of the participants in the current study were given disposable cameras to take 27 photos (the total available on the film) under the theme: '**My life as a boy**' in South Africa. In taking their photos, boys were encouraged to think about the following questions: What is it like to be a boy? What are the things that make boys feel like 'real boys'? How do boys spend their time? What are some of the challenges that boys face? What do other people (e.g. friends, parents, teachers & girlfriends) expect from young boys? What makes some boys more popular than others? Are there alternative ways of being a boy? Do you ever imagine becoming different to other boys? With the central question and the further prompts in mind, boys were then given a period of two weeks to take photographs. The space and time afforded to participants enabled them to think about how they wanted to represent themselves, but also required them to focus

on the task. After two weeks, arrangements were made for the researcher to collect all the disposable cameras. Two sets of the photographs were processed and one set was placed in an album and returned to each participant (in an album entitled '**my life as a boy'**). The duplicate sets of photographs were retained by the researcher, as agreed to by the participants.

Across this research project, a total of 678 photos were taken. All of the photographs were used to facilitate both semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups. Interviews involved giving voice to ideas beyond simple description of photos. What was the intention of the participant in taking a particular photo? What were the feelings and emotions that accompany the photos taken? How does the participant relate feelings and emotions back to the photo? What does the photo represent in terms of what it means to be a boy? Zillier (1990, in Seedat, Baadtjies, van Niekerk & Mdaka, 2006) argues that photos can set up a discourse between the photographer and the viewer. The photographer is compelled to attend selectively to elements of personal interest, decides what to show the viewer and how it will look to the viewer, and anticipate how viewers might react to it. Riley and Manias (2003, in Seedat et al., 2006, p.304) identified three ways of looking at photos: "(1) looking at the image to analyze information internal to it; (2), looking at the image to examine the way in which the content is presented; and (3) looking behind the image to examine the context, or the social and cultural relations that shape its production and interpretation". In this study, it was the second and third element that were of primary interest with a focus on what this represented about lived masculinity in contemporary Alexandra township for this group of young boys. It was emphasized that the photographs would not be evaluated in terms of artistic merit, but were designed to assist the researcher in understanding how/what the boys viewed and wanted, in order to represent aspects of their lives.

Furthermore, the benefits of using photography to research young masculinities in the current research project were understood as follows (see, Langa, 2008, pp. 10-15):

- ***Participants took the role of an 'expert guide' leading the interviewer through the content of the photos***

In describing their photos, participants in this study were writers or authors of their own stories/narratives. They shared their personal lived experiences of what it meant to be a boy through their photos. Photo-narrative therefore seemed to offer a gratifying sense of self-expression as participants in this study were able to describe and educate the interviewer about their lives through discussing the photos taken. The use of the photo-narrative also allowed boys to 'tell' their stories about what it meant to be a boy spontaneously without feeling pressurized about what views might be wrong or right. Participants seemed to enjoy explaining the context within which some of the photos were taken. In this sense, they became expert informants about their own life contexts.

- ***Participants took an active role and participatory role in data collection.***

Boys were active participants in data collection and in the selection of images that best described and represented their own masculine identities. It was clear that the participants put considerable thought and reflection in deciding which photos they took.

- ***Using photos was non-intrusive and open-ended***

In this study, photographic images functioned as the starting point for discussion. Photo-interviewing gave participants maximum freedom to express their own views about what it meant to be a boy without too many inhibiting effects, especially in the individual interviews. Participants also seemed to feel less pressurized in engaging in the interview process because they had the photographs as an initial springboard for self expression. The photos represented boys' everyday lived experiences as well as their fantasies about life and their future expectations as young males.

- ***Building rapport and collaboration***

Lastly, taking photos helped the researcher to establish rapport with the participants. Before the initial interview, the researcher spent a lot of time with participants teaching them how to use their disposable cameras. The rapport started to develop at this stage. Two weeks later, the

researcher returned to collect the photos to be processed and thereafter set up the interviews. The repeated visits to the schools and contact with the boys enhanced the researcher's relationship with the participants.

Some of the photographic images will be used in some chapters in the findings section to supplement discussion and to illustrate the images that the adolescent boys choose to present to assert their masculine identities. The boys also appeared to be gratified to receive the albums with their photographs from the researcher feeling that had retained something for themselves from the research process.

8.6.1. **Individual interviews as a data collection method**

Schurink (1998) identified individual interviewing as the most common method of data collection in qualitative research. It is argued that individual interviewing allows an exploration of issues that may be too difficult or complex to explore through quantitative methods. Interviewing helped to develop a better understanding of the meanings that the participants make about their lived experiences (Parker, 1995; Schurink, 1998). There are different types of individual interview schedules, namely, structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Each of these methods have advantages and disadvantages (see, Fontana & Frey, 1994; Schurink, 1998, for more discussion of this point). Despite some of these strengths and limitations, individual interviews are generally used in qualitative research to understand deep levels of feelings, attitudes, behaviours and experiences of the participants (Schurink, 1998), which is the main aim of the current research project.

In this study, the researcher arranged and conducted individual interviews with all of the 32 boys who selected/volunteered to take part in the study. In the individual interviews, boys were asked to provide a description of each photograph they had taken and why and how they had decided to take that particular image. What was the intention in taking a particular photo and what were the thoughts, fantasies, feelings and emotions that accompanied it both at the time and in the interview? This kind of interview process is referred to as *photo-elicitation*, where photos are used to prompt interview responses (Blackbeard & Lindegger, 2007; Noland, 2006).

The use of photographic images as a route into discussing masculinity seemed to produce a heightened level of engagement on the part of the boys. Both the content of the images as well as their elaborations about the images provided useful data. The interviews were tape-recorded. All photos were numbered so that corresponding sections of an interview could be linked to a particular photo. However, where the researcher did organize the photos into general categories that emerged later from speaking with boys. Many individual interviews were quite extensive because each photo and the narrative associated it were covered during the interview. The interviews were conducted after school hours or over the weekend and took more than a full hour in every instance, in some instances taking as long as two to three hours.

Individual interviews proved to be very useful in this study. In the individual interviews (as opposed to the focus groups), boys seemed more relaxed, open and fluent, because these interviews were interviewee-centered. As mentioned earlier, the interviewees took the active role of being 'experts' in leading, guiding and sharing their own lived experiences of what it meant for them to be a boy in part through talking about their photos. Participants seemed to enjoy explaining the context of certain photographic images (for example, taverns, spaza shops and so forth) to the researcher. In a sense, the participants became aware of having considerable 'cultural capital' from being experts of their own life contexts in Alex. This allowed for some inversion of roles in that the researcher was constructed as a recipient rather than provider of knowledge. Individual interviews also allowed the researcher to identify difficulties that the young boys appeared to face in negotiating multiple voices of masculinity. There were so many contradictions in the boys' narratives, which appeared to reflect the complexity of being a young man engaging with multiple aspects of gender identity establishment.

The individual interviews were semi-structured (see the interview schedule, appendix J). An interview schedule was developed based on Frosh et al. (2002), Fouten (2006) and Blackbeard and Lindegger's (2007) work and the research aims of this study. The interview schedule included a list of possible questions to be asked in the interview, but the researcher adapted these questions depending on the participant's narratives, allowing him to follow issues or themes raised by the participants. In keeping with Berg's (1995) recommendation, the

researcher used probing questions to elicit more information and elaborate on ideas that were introduced by the interviewees. The researcher was both flexible and reflexive. For example, where relevant the researcher commented on the participants' non-verbal cues to elicit more information (e.g. it seems you were quite uncomfortable when I was asking you about your religious beliefs, can you tell me what that is about?). Commenting on participants' non-verbal cues proved to be quite enriching. Participants were able to express their fantasies and emotions connected to particular issues, a register of experience that was of particular interest in the current research project.

Generally, participants occupied an important space in the research. The interviewer took a facilitative role, picking up on issues that the interviewees raised and encouraging them to develop and reflect upon them further. The boys were encouraged to critically explore the forces of dominant or hegemonic masculinity (although this term was not used with participants) in interviews and to reflect upon contradictions as key features characterizing contemporary masculinities. In the individual interviews, the researcher ensured that a wide range of issues were covered, for example, boys' self-definition as male/masculine; role models; relationship with other boys and girls; intimacy and friendships; sexual practices; violence; career aspirations; and substance abuse, in keeping with the approach of Frosh et al. (2002). The researcher explored the difficulties that the boys seemed to encounter in being masculine. The relationship between personal life and external structures was also explored. Boys were encouraged to comment on their perceptions of aspects of the social context that might give rise to different forms of masculinity. Although the style of the interview was non-directive, the researcher challenged the participants to be reflective about the inconsistencies and contradictions in their narratives. The researcher aimed to create an informal and collaborative atmosphere so that participants felt free to talk about their uncertainties over friendships, disappointment with parents, anger with absent or unavailable fathers, feelings of rejection by girls, fears of being seen as gay, feelings about suicide, and aspirations about the future, amongst other issues (Frosh et al., 2002). Various aspects of these interviews will be discussed later.

8.6.3. **Focus groups as a data collection method**

The use of focus groups in qualitative research has been growing in popularity in social science research studies (Morgan, 1997). Essentially, a focus group provides group members with an opportunity to express their views collectively on a specific topic. Like individual interviews, focus groups also have a number of strengths and weaknesses. One of the major strengths of focus groups is that they allow the participants to share their own insights and to build upon responses of other group members, thus enriching the process of data collection (Fontana & Frey, 1994). The facilitator/moderator plays a critical role in directing the group discussion in a fairly structured manner. One of the major challenges of focus group interviewing is to manage group dynamics to ensure that the group is not dominated by one person (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Morgan, 1997). In addition, it is important for the researcher to possess specific research and listening skills to be able to facilitate a focus group.

In the current research project, focus groups were used in combination with individual interviews, in line with the research aims of assessing whether constructions and enactments of masculinity might change depending upon context or situation. For example, it was of interest whether the photo-narratives that boys shared in individual interviews remained consistent when articulated in a focus group with other boys or whether they changed, possibly because of feeling pressurized to comply with dominant norms of hegemonic masculinity and present a more normative version of themselves.

Boys were invited to come to a group interview following their individual interviews and the group interviews took place two weeks after the individual interviews. Participation in focus groups was voluntary. Three focus groups were facilitated. The first focus group consisted of five boys and the second and third focus groups were attended by six boys. The group sizes were manageable in terms of allowing everyone to participate. All the focus groups were conducted at school after school hours. Given the context, participants knew one another because they all attended the same school. Before starting the group meeting, ethical concerns were discussed, including the desirability of confidentiality and possible limitations to this in such groups. Permission to tape record the group sessions was obtained prior to the process.

The focus groups lasted between one to two hours. Again, the researcher used photos as a springboard for discussions in the focus groups. In the focus group interviews, boys were asked to choose five images (out of their 27 photos) that best described them as boys and to share them with other boys in the group.

Choosing five photos that best represented their 'life as boys' helped to set the mood for the group discussions. The exercise served the function of what Morgan (1997) terms an "icebreaker", but also added value in terms of contextualising discussion in the groups. While some boys were initially embarrassed to show their photos in the group, for others the group interview process became something of a game with participants competing against each other to give the most comprehensive information about their photos. Consequently, the combination of individual interviews and focus group interviews provided rich information, insight and ideas about what it means to be a boy in Alex. The researcher was able to observe how the boys 'policed' and 'regulated' one another in the group context.

The researcher also played a significant role in facilitating group discussions (see also the section on reflexivity). The researcher's facilitation style was generally non-directive, to allow for the free flow of ideas in the groups. The researcher relied on his group facilitation skills to ensure that participants did not deviate too far from the topic, but this was not always easy because some boys were very sarcastic and laughed at those who questioned or rejected hegemonic norms of masculinity. The researcher 'moderated' and 'prompted' group members to respond to issues raised by others, or to identify agreements and disagreements among themselves. In all the focus groups, the level of engagement was balanced, except in one focus group where one group member was very dominating. Generally, participants gently challenged one another's views. The dialogue in the groups was largely unstructured, the accounts of various group members stimulating other participants to also express their views on a range of topics and the discussion was quite free-flowing.

Another advantage in the focus groups was the fact that the researcher was not a stranger to the participants because he had already met them in the individual interviews. Given what he knew about what they had already said in the individual interviews, the researcher was able challenge

the participants in the group to think more critically (while being mindful throughout to protect their confidentiality). The researcher attempted to link themes that had emerged in the individual interviews and themes that were emerging in the focus groups. Participants engaged in a process of jointly contesting and creating meanings of what it meant to be a boy in their life context. Overall, the focus groups proved to be an appropriate research method for data collection in this research project and provided complementary data to that obtained in the individual interviews.

8.6.4. **Follow-up individual interviews**

After all of the individual interviews had been transcribed, the researcher read all the transcripts and decided to conduct follow-up individual interviews with eight boys whose material was particularly interesting. All of the boys approached were comfortable or even eager to be interviewed further. Follow-up individual interviews were conducted with three boys showing a strong conformity to hegemonic ideals and five boys who seemed to subscribe to apparently alternative versions of masculinity in order to better explore hegemonic and counter-hegemonic positions and masculinities. Follow-up individual interviews were conducted within two to three months of previous interviews. The researcher arranged to meet each boy individually. Each of the eight boys was given the transcript of his interview for about a week to read and think prior to their follow-up individual interview. In the follow-up individual interviews, the researcher asked the participants whether the transcript appeared to truly reflect what they had said in their first individual interview and their thoughts about the material. Was there anything that they felt they wanted to add or change? Was there anything that had changed markedly since the last individual meeting? Follow-up individual interviews were aimed at clarifying and exploring contradictions and gaps in the material that had emerged in the first individual interview and in asking for elaboration of interesting points and issues. In the follow-up individual interviews, the researcher was fairly specific about detailed pursuit of major themes in the transcripts. The method of follow-up interviews was also used to good effect in the study conducted by Frosh et al. (2002) into adolescent masculinity. The researcher found the follow-up individual interviews very useful in clarifying issues, and supplementing narratives that had emerged in both individual interviews and focus groups. The

boys also reported that they found the follow-up individual interviews useful in helping them to reflect at a deeper level on what it meant for them to be boys in their township context.

8.7. Data Analysis

Discursive analysis was one of the overarching frameworks used to interrogate data in this study. The term 'discourse' is used differently by different writers and there is also considerable variation in how discourse analytic and/or discursive methods are employed in the social sciences. There is no single definition of what constitutes a discourse. In this study, the researcher subscribed to Parker's (1992) definition that a discourse is a system of statements which construct an object, such systems of statements are taken up in speeches, conversations and texts, and in this study, it was assumed would be reflected in the transcribed interview material. Furthermore, the term 'discourse' refers to the speech patterns and usage of language within a specific community (Willig, 2001). According to Parker (1992) discourse analysis involves analyzing data in order to disrupt and deconstruct the taken-for-granted meanings in language and interaction. This epistemological underpinning of discourse analysis fits with very well with the overall aim of the current research project, which was aimed at analyzing multiple voices of masculinity and at exploring how hegemonic and counter-hegemonic constructions are contested by boys in their conversations and behaviour.

Discourse analysts argue that discourse is about how language is applied (e.g. Potter & Wetherell, 1987) or how talk is used to justify particular actions (Parker, 1992). So for discourse analysts, language is not just language, but the tool that is used to construct objects, such as, for example, hegemonic or non-hegemonic masculinity. Discourse analysts take a critical stance by looking at the functions performed by a language in order to reveal hidden meanings and the ways in which some versions of reality or ideas gain a particular kind of power and credibility. The question of the 'truthfulness' of accounts in interviews has been debated by discourse analysts (see, for example, Parker, 1992; Wetherell, Taylor &Yates, 2001; Wetherell, 2005). Is what the participants say in interviews a true reflection of their mental processes and inner worlds, and, for example, are normative pressures not influencing participants to give socially acceptable answers? Seeking to know the '*truth*' is, however, largely irrelevant for discourse analysts (Taylor 2001). Discourse analysts are not interested in

whether the participants tell the truth or not, but are more interested in discourse itself, how it is constructed and the ideological function it serves (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). There is no single truth to be discovered by the researcher, but rather there are multiple truths. Given that human subjects are viewed as employing or drawing upon language in a fluid and contextually sensitive manner, discourse analysts are not invested in pursuing participants' words as a 'real' representation of self, but rather seek to appreciate the kind of discursive work that language does and the ways in which it positions the speakers and listeners. Parker (1992) argues discourse can contain negations as well as assertions, and that these are often part of the implicit, rather than explicit features of discourse.

There are different types of discourse analysis (for example, Foucauldian or Critical Discourse Analysis), however, a discursive approach based on the work of Potter and Wetherell (1987) and Edley and Wetherell (19999) was employed in the current research study to analyze the data. In analyzing adolescent boys' narratives, the researcher focused on metaphors, idiomatic expressions, tensions and contradictions (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Edley & Wetherell, 1999), in order to shed light on the formation of masculine identities. It is evident that the use of discursive psychology in the study (as elaborated in a subsequent section) allowed the researcher to move beyond *simple description* of what it means to be a boy to understand more political and interactive processes involved in the subjective construction and living out of masculinity. Since qualitative analysis is strongly theoretically driven or shaped, the discussion of the methodological processes employed in the study includes discussion of critical and theoretical issues and perspectives.

8.7.1. **Transcription of the interview material**

Before data analysis took place, the researcher needed to translate the spoken material into written form by preparing *transcripts*. All of the focus groups and individual interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed for detailed data analysis. According to Du Bois, Schuetze-Coburn, Cumming and Paolino (1993) transcripts should contain accurate information as far as possible, including speech errors, pauses, interruptions, changes in volume and emphasis of certain points.

Based on Parker (1992) and Willig (2001) and Potter and Wetherell s' (1987) work the following transcription conventions were followed in this study (see Appendix L for an example of a transcript):

1. When material was omitted from the transcript, this is indicated with three or more dots….;
2. When there are noises, words of assent, and so on, a set of slashes//// is introduced
3. / indicates a correction or stumbling speech (e.g. Ja/well/well/not really)
4. A pair of parentheses ( ) encloses any comment the transcriber or researcher chooses to make about some of the slang words used by the research participants.
5. The spelling 'uh, unh, um'', represent hesitation words
6. :: Colons indicate the prolongation of a sound. The length of the row of colons indicates the length of the prolongation (e.g. Um::::: I'm not sure)
7. Bolding of quotes indicate some form of stress indicating boys' emphasis in the speech. Many of these bolded quotes were chosen for some depth analysis (see chapter 9 to 12 on findings and discussion).

The process of transcription took a period of five to six months. This process took longer than expected because in many instances the researcher had to listen to one interview repeatedly in order to pick up participants' pauses, hesitations, gaps, and silences. The researcher also had to listen to the interviews repeatedly in order to accurately transcribe the participants' terminology and use of township slang or what Glaser (2000) calls '*tsotsi taal*'. The interviews were mainly conducted in English, intermixed with Zulu or Sotho on occasion, but the participants also employed '*tsotsi taal*' and vernacular idioms to express some of their own views on the research topic. For example, the word *ibhari* is a Sotho word for a 'fool'; *sexjaro* is township lingo for a boy who likes having sex with many girls; and *isitabane* is a Zulu word for 'gay'. It must be mentioned that literally some of these terms mean something else, but were used colloquially by the participants to convey a particular view. In the transcription and in the discussion of research findings, the researcher retained all of these slang words and other parts of township lingo (with meanings explained in brackets).

8.7.2. **First-stage of analysis: looking for themes**

The initial stage of data analysis involved reading each transcript many times with the aim of determining the prevailing themes relating to masculinity and those representing the dominant masculinities to which the adolescent boys appeared to publicly and privately subscribe to. The researcher followed Smith (1995, p. 20-21) and Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim‘s (1999, pp.140-141) suggestions in looking for themes:

- The researcher read transcripts initially a number of times to note significant themes in what the respondent was saying. Reading and re-reading the transcripts helped the researcher to start noting important features in the data. The researcher summarized and made connections and associations, which served as preliminary interpretations.
- Each transcript had line numbers, which were used in the coding process (see Appendix L).
- On a separate sheet, the researcher listed emerging themes and looked for connections between them. The whole process was done manually as the researcher did not use any computerized programme (an example of this is provided in Appendix K).
- For any significant theme, the researcher simply wrote the line number in the appropriate cell of the table and indicated the pseudonym allocated to the participant (again see Appendix K).
- The process was then repeated for all of the individual and focus group transcriptions.
- The researcher produced a master list of themes and ordered them coherently. The researcher identified major themes and sub-themes (again see Appendix K).
- All of the data was then categorized and classified into various themes. The researcher examined each theme to define more clearly what the theme captured. Classifying, categorising and re-categorising themes were guided by the research aims. Once the themes were classified, the researcher examined their similarities and differences.
- The key themes were coded by breaking data into meaningful pieces under the code heading for further elaboration and analysis.
- Interpretation and checking involved reading and re-reading all of the transcribed material to develop sub-themes and to identify contradictions and tensions in the data.

Next to each line number in the transcripts, the researcher wrote his own initial interpretation of the material.

- All of the key themes and sections of the texts were highlighted and some of this material was selected for more specific discursive and interpretive analysis (see the section below on the discourse analysis)

8.7.3. **Second-stage analysis: Combining discursive psychology and psychoanalytic approaches to deepen data analysis**

As discussed earlier, the researcher combined both discursive psychology and psychoanalytic theory to analyze transcribed interviews. Psychoanalytically based analysis draws upon a more realist (as opposed to constructionist) perspective, also, however, moving beyond pure description. In this framework, a more interpretive or hermeuntic understanding is employed-spoken contents being linked to intra-psychic formations, conflicts and processes, rather than being mapped into the social or ideological realm. Thus, the analysis drew upon both realist and constructionist perspectives, employing interpretive and discursive analysis in a complimentary and inter-related manner. The use of the two approaches in combination provided an in-depth framework of analysis from which to identify meanings and contradictions that adolescent boys revealed in spoken texts about hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities and the manner in which these were socially constructed in the context of Alexandra Township. Discursive psychology and psychoanalytic theory have been used in combination both theoretically and methodologically in many other studies of gender-related issues (see, for example, Frosh et al., 2003; Frosh & Young, 2008; Frosh & Baraitser, 2008; Hollway, 1989; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Long, 2005, 2009). These two approaches were both relevant in achieving the research aims of the study outlined in the introduction to and rationale for the research project, i.e. the intention to study both social and personal aspects of masculine identity. The use of psychoanalytic ideas and concepts in data analysis helped the researcher to move beyond mere re-description of the participants' ideas and constructions. Psychoanalytic theory helps to account psychologically for how and why people take up certain positions in discourses, despite some of the concerns raised by Wetherell (2005, 2008) about the over-emphasis of psychoanalysis on a hypothetical interiority rather than the social.

Both discursive psychology and psychoanalytic theory place language at centre stage in data analysis. It is through language that people make meanings about the self. For example, particular words, metaphors, and terms were selected by boys in the study to emphasise certain issues and points of view about their sense of their own and others' masculinities. The researcher was aware that the participants tended to use language to present themselves positively, especially in the focus group interviews amongst their peers. In analyzing the use of language, discursive psychology is more concerned with how the talk is mediated by the availability of discourses in the social and political realm, while psychoanalytic theory focuses more clearly on how the talk is mediated by relational dynamics and unconscious processes (Frosh & Young, 2008). Here, the interest is on how the 'external' social influences the 'internal' personal experiences of being and vice versa or how different levels of experience appear to interpenetrate each other.

8.7.3.1. ***Interpretative repertoires***

Discursive psychology also explores how people use various 'interpretative repertoires' which have been provided for them by history and cultural resources. Potter and Wetherell (1987, p. 138) define interpretive repertoires as "basically a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterise and evaluate action or events". In the second phase of the analysis, the researcher also looked for and sought to identify different repertoires that township boys employed in the pursuit of putting forward what they perceived as constituting a 'real boy' in the new South Africa. Some repertoires were clearly more popular than others and therefore emphasised in the discussion. According to Potter and Wetherell (1987) repertoires are usually taken as facts or taken for granted as 'common sense' (Willig, 2001, p.107). In this study, the researcher analyzed boys' taken-for-granted views on what it means to be a boy. It is clear that interpretative repertoires are part and parcel of any community, providing a basis for shared social understanding (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) and that they were operative in this particular 'community' of boys. In the study, the researcher attempted to analyze these views to identify and explore how the discursive object of masculinity was constructed, including what interpretative repertoires seemed to be at play and functions they appeared to serve.

It was clear that there were also internal tensions and contradictions in the participants' narratives that appeared to be both interpersonally and intra-psychically generated. The use of psychoanalytic ideas enriched the analysis by offering theoretical ways of understanding some of the psychological mechanisms (conscious or unconscious) operating in subverting and challenging the dominant norms of hegemonic masculinity. Contradictions and complexities were noted in both the individual and group interviews and were also of particular interest in analysis and discussion. Some of the boys seemed to resist the idea that masculinity could be contested and contestable, so data analysis involved a close examination of how the boys engaged in contesting hegemonic versions of masculinity.

Particular attention was also paid to the points in the interviews when emotions, such as, anxiety, fear, aggression, anger, guilt, loss, frustration or disappointment emerged, either explicitly or implicitly. This allowed the researcher to make more psychoanalytic or 'clinical' interpretations of the emotional processes involved in taking up particular subjective masculine positions.

8.7.3.3 ***Subjective positioning, conflicts and defences***

Discursive psychology is also interested to explore subject positions available to people in particular contexts (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Edley & Wetherell, 1999), while psychoanalytic theory accounts for why people emotionally invest in certain subject positions (Frosh & Young, 2008). In the study, the researcher read and re-read the transcripts to analyse and identify positions that participants occupied in the interviews. Questions the analysis sought to engage included the boys choice (either consciously or unconsciously) of certain subject positions over others and what the emotional costs or benefits of positioning oneself as a particular kind of boy appeared to be. Some of the boys positioned themselves as more conventionally masculine, while others resisted stereotypes and stereotyping of boys. In taking up subject positions, boys in the study drew upon various medical, cultural, religious, sociological and psychological discourses, as will be elaborated in the discussion chapters.

Boys oscillated between different subject positions, while some subject positions proved to be more popular than others.

Attention was paid to the ways boys invested themselves emotionally in particular subject positions, as well as the anxieties and defenses evoked in taking up such positions. According to Frosh et al. (2002), internal conflicts and personal contradictions are indicative of the struggles involved in dealing with the fluidity of masculinity amongst adolescent boys. Further attention was paid to identifying gaps, silences, pauses, subtle messages and emotional investments implicated in particular masculine subject positions. Discursive practices of silencing, discriminating and isolating non-compliant boys were also observed and noted.

The researcher also further examined how boys logically took turns in the focus groups. The researcher analyzed the 'holes' and 'intersections' between speakers and the various subject positions that the boys occupied in the focus groups. The researcher also paid close attention to the way boys rhetorically positioned their accounts, descriptions, and evaluations of peers in group situations and how contributions of different speakers were meshed together in group conversations, as well as the way different types of actions were produced and managed. In analysing focus group interviews, the researcher aimed "to critique and analyze complex dynamics in the talk which are far from the obvious" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 83). The researcher also analyzed how positive self-representation was used in the group context in order to save face or make a good impression in the group.

The researcher was also interested in discursive strategies that boys used in distancing themselves from particular discourses. In terms of Potter and Wetherell's (1987) work, adolescent boys used disclaimers, excuses and justification to distance themselves from certain subject positions. For example, in talking about gay masculinity, boys often used disclaimers such as "I'm not homophobic, but……I think there is something wrong with gay boys". In terms of psychoanalytic theory, disclaimers were perceived as often used defensively.

In addition, the researcher also observed how boys also tended to excuse in order to deny any form of *agency* in respect of some attributes, especially when talking about their risk-taking

behaviours. According to Potter and Wetherell (1987, p. 75) "excuses are accounts which admit the relevant act was bad in some way, but claim performance was influenced or caused by some external agency". Studying excuses was important in revealing defensive mechanisms, such as denial, rationalization, intellectualization and projection. Analysing excuses allowed the researcher to identify some of the factors (external or internal) that pushed boys to behave in particular ways. It is hoped that the complementary employment of discursive and psychoanalytic understandings and interpretations will be evident in the elaborated discussion of the key themes that emerged.

In conclusion, both discursive psychology and psychoanalytic theory proved relevant, appropriate and useful approaches of data analysis in the research project, despite the philosophical differences between these two approaches.

8.8. Researcher reflexivity and data analysis

Qualitative data analysis underlines the importance of a researcher's reflexivity, which is about how the researcher's own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments and social identities may have shaped the research and data analysis process (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). According to Taylor (2001), the identity of the researcher influences his/her choice of a particular research topic, and Hunt (1989) also argues that researchers should reflect on how past personal experiences influence them to choose certain research topics. Hunt adds that understanding the self in the research context helps the researcher to be critical of his/her work. In her work, Hunt integrates social science traditions and psychoanalytic thinking, suggesting that researchers should be required to reflect on their own 'counter-transference' reactions in the research process. In the current research project, the researcher drew upon his awareness of the psychoanalytic principles of counter-transference, transference and resistance in deepening his data analysis. This psychoanalytic lens gave the researcher the opportunity to think critically about his own feelings, thoughts, fantasies, and emotions and his personal responses to the participants' responses to certain research questions. According to Cartwright (2002) and Kvale (1999) being 'reflexive' is an integral part of understanding how knowledge is co-constructed, a process in which both 'transference' and 'counter-transference' material may be critically analysed.

8.8.1. **Thinking about counter-transference aspects in the research**

As a researcher, I have always had an ongoing and applied academic interest in working with youth-at-risk (see, for example, Langa, 2007a, 2007b; Langa & Eagle, 2008). This has included working with juvenile offenders in prison and young former combatants in post-apartheid South Africa. The young masculinities research topic resonated deeply with my own experiences as a young black teenager who also grew up in a township, had been exposed to different types of pressures, and had also engaged in risk-taking behaviours. In the current research project, I was interested in exploring multiple voices of masculinity, particularly alternative voices which were not sexist and were non-harmful to self and others. Relying on stereotypes of race, gender and class (Jensen, 2008), people tend to associate young black males from townships such as Alex with crime and violence. In this research project, I wanted to dispel some of these stereotypes and demonstrate that not all of the boys from Alex are involved in anti-social activities. My interest in the current research project was to explore psychological strategies that adolescent boys might use in resisting, subverting and challenging the existing popular norms of 'township' masculinity, in order in the longer term to inform public policies and intervention strategies aimed at helping young people in the new South Africa. Thus I had some investment in exploring counter hegemonic positions or apparent options for resistance to dominant framings amongst the boys in the study. In order to do this, however, I also had to appreciate what the dominant or hegemonic versions of masculinity were in this context.

As mentioned earlier, I conducted interviews with 32 boys over a period of ten to twelve months. Similar to the research approach in Frosh et al.'s study (2002), I also recorded my impressions of the interview processes (for example, whether it was an 'easy' or 'difficult' interview, whether there were any unexpected aspects in the interview, and so on). Similar to Hollway (1989) and Swartz (2010), I also used a notebook to write down my field notes and my personal reflections immediately after each interview with the participants. This was in line with Mead's (1962, in Steier, 1991, p.2) suggestion that reflexivity is all about "turning-back one's experience upon oneself". I had to look back and explore possible 'counter-transference'

feelings. Counter-transference is defined as the therapist's unconscious emotional reactions to a patient (McWilliams, 1999) and is generally a term used in connection with therapeutic or counselling relationship. However, as suggested previously, the term has now been extended or introduced into the research terrain (Kvale, 1999). In this context, I used the term counter-transference to reflect on my feelings in response to conducting interviews with the adolescent boys in Alex. Is it possible that I, for example, I was over-identifying with the emerging material in the interviews? How did I experience the participants or how did they experience me? What feelings did the participants evoke in me and how did I handle these feelings? My awareness of my own counter-transference feelings and fantasies was useful throughout the research process. I also used these feelings to better understand the boys' emotional concerns and difficulties as an added dimension of the data analysis.

I also had to reflect on the issue of the power relations between the participants and myself as a researcher (see Reicher, 1994, in De la Rey, 1997). All of the participants knew that I was a psychologist and lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand. My professional background automatically gave me a position of power because I was seen as an educated person and a middle class person who drove a reasonably expensive car and was assumed to live in a wealthy suburb (like Sandton, a place which represent a desirable future for many young boys in Alex). As a researcher, I needed to be aware of this position of power in my interaction with the participants. All the boys called me Mr Langa, perhaps in some ways locating me as similar to a teacher in their environment. I believe it was out of respect and perhaps some idealization that I was called Mr Langa, as opposed to by my first name, which would have been a more casual form of address.

What about my race and gender? Did my identity as a young black male play any role in my interaction with these boys? How did the participants experience me? Did the participants see me as a more distant or more caring male figure? My field notes included my observations of how boys in the study responded to me and my questions and some observations are also included in the data analysis. Many of the participants commented that most of my questions were fine, but that the questions on sex and sexuality were a bit difficult. Talking about sex was a sensitive subject. Some of the participants spoke about their uneasiness and found this

part of the interview quite uncomfortable, although they were aware that they could choose not to answer certain questions and some boys exercised this prerogative. However, not all the boys found it difficult to talk about sex and sexuality and some of the boys answered these questions in detail (e.g. telling me about the importance of satisfying a girl sexually) and boasting about the number of girls that they have had sex with. Many of the participants said that the research questions also explored issues that were too private and personal (especially in talking about relationships with their fathers and the deaths of their loved ones). There were some instances in which participants cried during the interviews. My professional training as a counselling psychologist helped me to contain the participants' feelings and emotions, although it was not always easy to respond to the participants' emotions as a counsellor and still fulfil my role as a researcher and this was one of the tensions I had to manage in the research. I sometimes felt torn between while carrying out these two opposing roles at the same time, an observation that has also been made by Long and Eagle (2009) in their research. Overall, however, reflecting on my counter-transference feelings provided useful data on the emotional world of the participants, which also facilitated a deeper understanding on my part of the boys' feelings about their relationships and difficulties in their everyday lives.

8.8.2. **Thinking about transference in relation to the data analysis**

Moreover, my interaction with these boys seems to have mobilized feelings of what might be understood as transference for some of the boys. In clinical terms, the word 'transference' is defined as unconscious, archaic images that the patient imposes on the analyst (McWilliams, 1999). However, as with countertransference, the term has also been introduced into the research domain to describe aspects of participant reactions towards the researcher and research process. In this research project, several of the participants experienced me as a caring male figure, as mentioned earlier. I agree with Hunt (1989) that the data collection process in research can also invoke feelings of love and care. Rather than seeing myself as a distant and emotionally detached researcher, talking to these boys about what it means to be a boy, I became involved in some of their personal lives. I remember, for example, one of the boys disclosing to me that he was 'gay' and the helplessness I felt when he spoke about the difficulties he faced as a young black 'gay' boy living in Alex. I remember sharing my feelings

with my supervisor about this interview and this supervision meeting served as a kind of debriefing session. It is my hope that talking to me about this had at least provided some relief for him and some support. Another boy phoned to tell me he had failed and another that his brother had been murdered. Thus, I became more involved in these boys' lives than initially anticipated. Where I could I offered direct support, such as attending the funeral of one of the participants' brothers, but I also encouraged him to attend the free counselling service at Alexandra Clinic as I thought this might be beneficial.

Moreover, it seems talking 'man to man' in the interviews made many boys feel relaxed, because the researcher had an interest in their stories and was also not judgmental about their risk-taking behaviours, such as having sex with multiple partners, smoking, drinking and use of illegal drugs. There was a sense of *comraderie* and brotherhood in sections of the interviews. One participant said, "*I have never spoken to my brothers like the way I spoke with you*". Another participant said, "*I know that you are also a male. You also grew up. You were also once my age. You were also a teenager. Stuff like that. That made me talk more and feel free and comfortable*". It was evident here that interviews evoked different feelings in the participants. Some had wishes that their parents (especially fathers) and brothers were also open enough to talk to them about intimate issues such as sex, girlfriends, HIV and AIDS, and their involvement in experimental behaviours, such as drinking, smoking and drug use.

As mentioned earlier, it is also possible that the repeated visits to the schools and contact with the boys to give and collect the disposable cameras may have enhanced the researcher's emotional relationship with the participants. Some of the boys insisted that the researcher comes to their homes for follow-up interviews. The rapport was well enough developed to allow for in-depth disclosure of intimate material in the interviews and for boys to volunteer self-doubt and their misgivings about some of the commonly accepted portrayals of their boyhood. By the end of the research project, all of the participants were interested in continuing with the project. Many of the boys experienced the interviews as cathartic, and they said the process also helped them to reflect on their male identities and on their wishes in life. It is possible that the end of the project represented some loss of an ideal and caring male figure in their lives. All boys were given a copy of their photos as a reminder of the research

project. Following the data collection phase of the research project, the researcher became involved in school life skills workshops in which many of the boys participated. However, the difficulty in ending the research project was unanticipated and required careful and sensitive closure in some instances.

In conclusion, it is evident that the application of psychoanalytic ideas was useful in data analysis and in gaining a reflexive awareness. Being aware of my 'counter-transference' and of participants' 'transferential material' assisted me a great deal in deepening my analysis and in understanding some of the boys' emotional concerns and difficulties (although the psychoanalytic concepts are applied with some caution given their roots in long term psychotherapeutic exchanges). Where relevant, some of the reflexive observations are revisited in the discussion of the data and the themes that were identified as salient in the study.

8.9. Ethical considerations

As far as possible all the ethical concerns relevant to this particular piece of research were taken into consideration. Firstly, the whole research project was approved by the Ethics Committee for Research into Human Subjects (Non-medical) of the University of Witwatersrand (see the ethical clearance certificate, Appendix I).

Secondly, the school principals and the Provincial Department of Education gave permission for the study to be conducted in two schools in Alexandra Township.

Thirdly, since all of the participants were minors, all of the consent forms had to be signed by their guardians/parents. Participants also signed assent forms before participating in the research project. All the usual ethical principles were also adhered to in the study, such as guaranteeing confidentiality (through use of pseudonyms and erasure of identifying information in the report), and obtaining specific permission to tape record all the interviews. The limitations concerning focus groups confidentially were also discussed at the outset of each group interview, although participants were requested to maintain confidentiality as far as possible in this context. The researcher also informed the participants of the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to answer only questions that they were comfortable with. The

participants were informed that only the researcher and the researcher's supervisor would have access to the transcripts and recordings. Overall, the study did not appear to cause any direct psychological distress to the participants but an offer was made to one participant to go for free trauma counseling at the Alexandra Psychology Clinic after his brother's sudden death. All the participants reported that they found the interview processes to be useful in helping them to talk about and reflect upon their emerging masculine identities and future goals in life.

Fourthly, there were some ethical issues related to the fact that the participants were given disposable cameras to take pictures of what it meant to be a boy in the new South Africa. Participants were told to keep their cameras safe and were also instructed not to use their cameras during school hours, except during break times or after school hours. Participants were also requested to obtain permission of any individuals prior to photographing them, as well as to avoid taking people's faces. Some pictures were blurred in order to maintain the participant's anonymity. Many people were, however, excited to be photographed. In fact, some posed and performed while their photos were being taken. Sometimes to capture the natural interaction between people, participants took pictures without permission and then requested permission after the image has been taken. In general, individuals gave permission freely for their photos to be used in the current research project. Some images included underage boys smoking and drinking in the school toilets and taverns in Alex, but there were no restrictions on photos that could be taken, as long people's right to privacy was not violated. All of the participants used their disposable cameras responsibly.

Lastly, all the participants signed a consent photo release form giving the researcher permission to use all of the photos produced out of this research project for research purposes (without compromising their confidentiality). The participants were informed that their photos might be published in this final research report and perhaps in other academic arenas (e.g. journals and books). As mentioned earlier, all the participants were given copies of their photos in an album and certificates of participation in the **Young Masculinities Research Project**. The certification ceremony was held at one of the high schools as a token of appreciation for their hard work, dedication and commitment in participating in the study.

Some of the other complex ethical issues, such as the inadvertent development of attachments between some of the participants and the researcher, have already been discussed. The researcher made every effort to adhere to sound research ethics protocols in executing the study. It appeared that in the main there were benefits to both the researcher and the participants in undertaking the study.

Findings and discussion

Introduction

Based on the data analysis, it was decided to discuss the central findings under the following five key sets of themes, in which each is presented in a separate chapter. Within these broad themes or subject topics various sub-themes are also elaborated. The core themes and a brief summary of key findings covered in each of the findings chapter is briefly outlined in advance of the more extended discussion. **Chapter 9**, which is the first findings chapter, discusses two different 'types' of boys, namely, *tsotsi* and academic boys and how these boys compete with one another for dominance in the school context. *Tsotsi* boys were evidently more popular than academic boys. Academic boys interviewed in the study described some of the contradictions of living out their masculinity in competing contexts and with a range of objectives in mind. They had to draw on competing discourses and careful management and enactments of identity to negotiate conflicting meanings concerning what constituted being a 'real boy'. In conclusion, the chapter reveals that being a conflicted male subject should not necessarily be seen as problematic. It can, in fact, be an emotional resource in providing some insight into how to be reflective about a masculine self.

Chapter 10 covers adolescent boys' talk about girls and sex. Many of the participants said that boys expect to have sex with multiple girlfriends as sexual relations are seen as a key marker of successful young masculinity. This view of sex as a priority in relationships with multiple girlfriends was, however, rejected by other participants, some of whom classified themselves as Christian. These participants employed various coping strategies to resist and reject peer pressure, including the use of religious convictions to say 'no' to sex before marriage. One of the conclusions in this chapter is that the adolescent boys' voices reflect conflict and contradiction in their construction of masculinity with regard to sexual identity and heterosexual engagement.

Chapter 11 covers the discussion on the role that 'class' and material status plays on how the boys negotiate masculinity. The participants mentioned that 'class' plays an important role in

making certain boys more popular than others. Class in this study relates to what boys wear, the school they go to (private or public) and the music they listen to. 'Class' also seemed to be an important factor in determining who has access to girls as sexual partners.

Chapter 12 deals with the participants' views on gay masculinity. The study findings reveal the participants' homophobic attitudes towards gay boys and that boys police each other in this regard. 'Homosexuality' is regarded as 'other', 'deviant', 'abnormal' and 'un-African'. In order to maintain their 'straight' masculinity, the participants reported isolating themselves from gay boys and avoiding practices that might be associated with 'homosexuality'. The conclusion in the chapter is that many boys appear to be internally threatened and conflicted by the unmanliness associated with gay masculinity.

The last findings and discussion chapter, **chapter 13**, deals with boys' relationships with caregivers. All the participants in the study said that they had good relationships with their mothers and other female figures in their lives. In talking about their mothers, the participants said that they could more freely and openly talk to their mothers than their fathers about their girlfriends, sex, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS. The chapter reveals that many of the boys in the study had limited access to adult male role models. Many of the boys talked about their wish to become different fathers to their own biological fathers. A sub-section of the chapter also discusses the experience of three adolescent boys as teenage fathers.

Chapter 9: Types of adolescent masculinity in Alexandra Township and associated personal and interpersonal dynamics

Introduction

In keeping with several other South African studies, it was evident that the boys in the current study characterised themselves and their peers according to a self-generated and commonly understood typology, reflecting that adolescent identity within their community is not homogenous. All the participants in the study agreed that there were different ways of 'being a boy'. The interviews revealed recurring allusions to different 'types' of boys at schools in Alexandra township – namely, *tsotsi* boys, academic boys, *sex-jaro* boys, Christian boys, *cheese* boys and 'gay' boys. However, it is important to note that most of the boys did not fit neatly into these categories. Adolescent boys often vacillate between identifications with multiple positions, confirming Frosh et al.'s (2002) view that masculinities are fluid, multiple and often contradictory. The study reveals some interesting complexities in relation to how adolescent boys simultaneously accept and reject certain practices of masculinity in their daily lives, depending on the context in which they find themselves.

This chapter will focus most particularly on the power relations that were reflected between *tsotsi* boys and academic boys, since these two 'types' of expressions of identity were seen as both dominant and in tension. The *tsotsi* boys in this study are boys who miss classes, defy teachers' authority, and perform poorly in their grades. Conversely, the academic boys conform to school rules and perform well academically. The focus on these two groups does not mean these were the only sub-groups of boys in Alex. There were many other social sub-groups of boys, as mentioned earlier, and these other categories will be discussed where relevant in subsequent chapters to illustrate how adolescent boys embrace more than one masculine identity and what types of identity emerge in this context. In this chapter, I highlight how the academic boys engage with the dominant norms of *tsotsi* masculinity in the context of the two high schools from which participants were drawn for this research project. Photographic images are used in some sections of the chapter to illustrate some of the activities that adolescent boys engage in to assert their masculine identities and to supplement the discussion. The chapter concludes with some exploration of the emotional processes that the

academic boys go through in resisting, subverting and challenging the apparent dominant norms of *tsotsi* masculinity in order to assert less popular, non-violent voices of masculinity in the context of the Alexandra Township.

9.1. Characterizations of '*tsotsi*' boys and their associations with dominance

This first section of the chapter explores the markers and characterizations of *tsotsi* masculinity. Being violent was one of the recurrent themes in many of the academic boys' descriptions of *tsotsi* boys[6]. Academic boys reported that some *tsotsi* boys belonged to gangs and were likely to be involved in violent crime as well as to bring weapons to school. Being violent was described as a key marker of being a *tsotsi* boy. In the extract below, Martin speaks about *tsotsi* boys at his school.

Extract 1:

> ***Martin[7]:*** *This man and this man [see the photo below]…. because this guy, whenever we are in class, he always wears a cap. When they tell him to remove the cap, he would take it off and then wear it again. He made a* ***'7' sign[8];*** *and I am also doing it here [see the photo below].*
> ***Researcher:*** *What does 7 represent?*
> ***Martin****: It represents that you are an '****outlaw****'. We're saying, I'm giving you 7. And a seven means a gun.*
> ***Researcher:*** *It's a gun!*
> ***Martin****: Yes,* ***whenever you mess with me****,* ***I'll beat you****. So this boy is always out of the picture; there is no one like him in the class. He is always 'out'.*
> ***Researcher****: What do teachers say about these boys?*
> ***Martin****: Teachers are also scared of them. Everyone is scared of them.*
> ***Researcher:*** *… So the sevens [****tsotsi boys****] are the ones who beat up girls?*
> ***Martin****: Yes, they can beat up anything that is beatable.*

[6] It must be mentioned at the outset of this chapter that out of thirty two participants who participated in the study only four boys self-identified themselves as *tsotsi* boys, and as a result, their voices are somewhat underrepresented in this chapter. This may be due to the fact that participation in this study was voluntary and many academic-orientated boys may have volunteered in numbers as for them this may have been seen as another extra curriculum activity to take part in the study. It is possible that *tsotsi* boys may have been suspicious of the research project despite the fact that the researcher went to different classrooms to explain the nature of the study in detail and issues of confidentiality and anonymity.

[7] All the names have been changed to protect the identity of the participants.

[8] Bolding of quotes indicates some form of stress and also important points for some depth analysis and discussion.

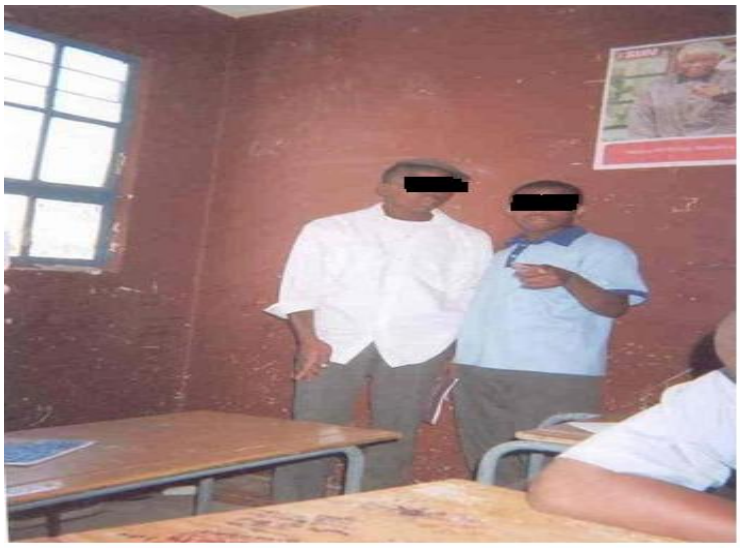


Photo 1[9]

The above photo shows two boys one of whom uses his two fingers to demonstrate the 'seven' sign. Martin, in this individual interview, mentioned that *tsotsi* boys were also known as 'sevens' (*seven* is township slang for a gun). The 'seven' sign is very popular among adolescent boys generally in Alex, but *tsotsi* boys often use it as a gesture of being '*gevaarlik*' (Afrikaans word for dangerous, but also slang for being defiant) (Cooper, 2009). According to Martin, *tsotsi* boys are 'outlaws' as they bring guns and other weapons to school and are also the troublemakers and bullies at school. Martin mentioned that 'everyone' was scared of *tsotsi* boys at his school, including the teachers. It was reported in many of the interviews that a boy who could fight or use a knife (or any sharp weapon) was accorded the status of *s'khokho* (township slang for 'hero'), arguably revealing masculine power dynamics in keeping with what Whitehead (2005) calls 'heroic masculinity'. Whitehead argues that heroic masculinity does not exist in isolation, but depends on *others*, for example, villains and victims of violence, for its establishment. According to Whitehead (2005), the *hero-villain dynamic* is what leads to boy-to-boy violence because all adolescent boys strive to achieve the status of a hero. The boy who is defeated loses his status of being a 'real' boy and in the Alexandra context is seen as an *mfana* (Sotho word for a little boy). This view was confirmed by William, a 16-year-old boy, who, in his narrative, mentioned that fighting with other boys was all about gaining respect and

[9] All photos have been blurred to protect the identity of the participants. All the participants have also signed a consent form for their photos to be used in the research project.

proving that 'I am a man'. Some participants in the study boasted about and took pride in some of the fights that they have had with other boys at school (see the extracts below).

Extract 2:

> ***Shaun:*** *Sometimes we feel that if I do not fight they would say that* ***I am weak*** *or I am scared of him. That guy would then take advantage that I did not fight him. He would then* ***look down on me****, and say awful things about me.*

Extract 3:

> ***William:*** *So you are proving yourself that, yeah, you can't tell me a thing.* ***I am a man,*** *you can't tell me such things.*

It seems that enhancing one's social position was an important factor in adolescent boys' involvement in fights at school. Adolescent boys who were unwilling to be violent and who also did not live up to the image of being violent were considered *dibhari* (Sotho word for fools). *Tsotsi* boys asserted in the interviews that reputation and respect were gained only through fights with other boys at school. This finding may go some way towards explaining the increasing level of violence observed in many South African schools (Burton, 2008). It is reported that one in five school learners are apparently at risk of being bullied, harassed or beaten-up at school (Burton, 2008). The notion of embodying a particular kind of manhood seemed to play a key role in some of the fights that had taken place in their schools. Many of the narratives revealed a perception that willingness to engage in violence was proof of being a 'real' man (Extract 2 and 3). It was also evident that it was the public display of violence and aggression that was important, be this explicitly by taking part in physical fights, or more implicitly, such as indications that one was carrying a weapon (especially a knife). One means of carving out some territory as a dominant, rather than a subservient boy was to demonstrate a willingness to display and engage in interpersonal aggression. Furthermore, the data also suggested that boy-to-boy violence served as a defence against feelings of shame and humiliation. Thus violent displays might emerge not only out of assumptions of dominance but also out of a need to achieve or hold onto hard won status. This point is illustrated well in the extracts below.

Extract 4:

> ***Shaun:*** *We fight as boys. We fight and fight. We also fight for girls because I would not be standing with a girl, my girlfriend, at around 20:00 or 21:00 at night; and then some guy comes and take her away from me. To me it shows that he does not* ***respect*** *me, he is* ***looking down*** *on me, and* ***I'll show him*** *the other side of me.*

Extract 5:

> ***William:*** *In most cases we boys always fight over girls. You can't allow someone to come and* ***take your girlfriend.***

Many participants asserted that boys often fought over girls at school. Their narratives revealed that girls were treated as masculine 'trophies' that needed to be protected against potential intruders (this theme will be discussed in greater depth in chapter 10). Thus, fighting over girls was centered on feelings of being threatened by other males. These feelings seemingly tied up with Shaun and William's belief that their girlfriends belonged exclusively to them (Extracts 4 and 5). There was a sense of ownership of girlfriends and other boys were expected to respect this ownership, but this was not always the case. In situations like this (fighting over girls), violence was again linked to a public display of power and authority. One wonders what this kind of need to publicly display power means for adolescent boys psychologically. Chodorow (1994) argues that such public displays arise from pre-oedipal and oedipal psychic conflicts, arguing that willingness to compete with other males and display dominance is a key marker of being a male. But the question remains: Why do some adolescent boys resort to violence while others do not? In answering this question, Cartwright (2002) argues that it depends on the interface between intrapsychic forces and the external environment, which may either decrease or increase an adolescent boy's propensity to violent behaviour. The present study confirmed that participation in fights or enactments of violence were felt necessary to establish or maintain status in some instances; and that boys who either refuse to fight or those who get beaten up lose the status of being 'real' township boys and are in a sense, 'emasculated'.

Interestingly, the process of emasculation can occur only if the violence is directed by a male against another male peer (Whitehead, 2005). In other words, boys consider other boys as worthy opponents to fight against in order to achieve some kind of power and authority. In this respect, *tsotsi* masculinity is somewhat precarious as it depends on 'weak' male opponents for its confirmation. Dominance has to constantly be reiterated through either threats of or enactment of violence against another male person.

Tsotsi boys in the study contended that a boy had to fight with other boys to show that he was not *lekwala* (Sotho word for coward). In extract 4 above, for example, Shaun mentioned that he

cannot afford to be humiliated in front of his girlfriend and other boys. It would be an insult to his manhood for another boy to come and take his girlfriend from him. In his psychoanalytic study aimed at understanding why young males resort to violence, Cartwright (2009) shows how shame and humiliation are central to male violence. Reacting violently is considered a normal response to perceived narcissistic injury to masculinity. Feelings of shame associated with narcissistic injury produce desperate defensive mechanisms aimed at preventing further humiliation (Cartwright, 2002). It then becomes justified for a boy to save 'face' by fighting back to avoid further humiliation, for example, in front of his girlfriend (Extract 4). To emphasize this point, Shaun, added "*I need to defend my dignity. You would not want to be told what to do by another boy*". The need to defend one's dignity and to retain the respect of peers seems to be crucial to maintenance of a masculine self. In all the narratives, the use of violence was seemingly justified as a valid response to other boys' provocation. A major theme that emerged in the findings was the strong correlation between the *tsotsi* boys' masculine identities and violence in schools. For these *tsotsi* boys, violence was a core part of the self and as discussed to some extent already, this has implications for other boys, those who compete, those who envy, those who observe and those who are defeated.

However, an analysis of the *tsotsi* boys' thoughts and feelings revealed some other interesting themes. It became evident that their sense of self was apparently more externally than internally driven. They seemed to rely heavily on external affirmation for their violent behaviours (e.g. being congratulated or applauded by other boys for their 'bravery'), which in turn, made them feel good about their masculine selves. Similarly, Pollack (1999) in the USA and Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) in Australia, found that adolescent boys who were more likely to become violent were more prone to peer pressure, suggesting that many of these boys struggled privately with low self-esteem issues and resorted to violence to mask their feelings of inadequacy. In the present study, many of the *tsotsi* boys also spoke privately about feelings of self-doubt regarding their masculine identities and volunteered that they felt empty and depressed at times. For example, in his individual interview Shaun said: "*Sometimes I feel this emptiness in me. I really, really feel down……but if feels good when I hit the shit out of you*". Interestingly, much of this information about feelings and emotions came to the fore in the individual interviews rather than in the focus groups, probably because the participants did

not want be seen as 'vulnerable' in any respect by their male peers. *Tsotsi* boys were more at ease in talking about their feelings of vulnerability in the follow-up individual interviews. It seemed that in many instances being violent was the façade that *tsotsi* boys wore in order to hide a more fragile 'true' self as illustrated by Shaun's comment earlier. The public face of violence thus represented something of a 'false' self (Winniccott, 1965, 1988).

Aspects of psychoanalytic theory proved useful in attempting to analyze and understand some of the internal psychological processes involved in what it meant to be a *tsotsi* boy in Alex. In many instances, *tsotsi* boys seemed to display a public, violent masculine identity as a compensatory mechanism for their lack of self-esteem, lack of academic skills and inability to compete with the academic boys in the classroom.

Extract 6:

> ***Simon:*** *You see many of* ***these guys*** *(referring to* ***tsotsi*** *boys) are bullies, but failures at school. They are failures you know when it comes to school work. They get zeros in tests and assignments.*

Extract 7:

> ***Nathan:*** *These* ***guys*** *(also referring to* ***tsotsi*** *boys) think they are clever, but you know///I perform better than them in tests and homework. Many fail because they don't study. They only know how to bully other kids….*

It was reported in the interviews that *tsotsi* boys perform consistently poorly in their grades. As a result, it might be speculated that they feel undermined and possibly 'emasculated' in the classroom context. It seems that the bullying of the academic boys was also based, at least in part, on envy, because these boys knew the answers in the classroom and consequently occupied a position of power within this part of the school environment. It can therefore be argued that bullying is a tool used by the *tsotsi* boys to render the academic boys powerless, helpless or emasculated outside of the classroom context. In the interviews, *tsotsi* boys simply justified their involvement in violence as a means of proving their 'manhood'; however, the use of psychodynamic theory as a tool of analysis allowed for analysis which entertained the possibility that the violence represented a projection of unwanted feelings of failure, lack, rejection and deprivation as observed by other researchers (Fonagy & Target, 1999; Perelberg, 1999). As mentioned previously, in the follow-up individual interviews, many *tsotsi* boys mentioned feeling sad and depressed about their personal lives. For example, William, a self-identified *tsotsi* boy said, *"(Eish!) I feel empty in a way. Like there is a space that is left*

opened. I had to see things for myself. I started doing bad things at an early stage like smoking, drinking and going to parties. And I know if my father was here, I wouldn't have done that. Many *tsotsi* boys attributed their emotional difficulties to the absence of a father figure in their life (one of the major themes to be discussed in chapter 13) and a lack of emotional support at home and also at school. It seems these feelings of emotional deprivation, rejection and neglect were then often projected onto other boys at school as a defence mechanism to preserve the fragile psychological self (Fonagy & Target, 1999), suggesting that teachers and parents can play an important role in supporting these adolescent boys in their emotional development and experience.

Defiance of teachers at school may actually in some instances represent a cry for help. However, according to Pollack (1999), such defiance is often misinterpreted as 'boys being boys' and, as a result, nothing is done to help such boys. *Tsotsi* boys seemed to constantly feel the need to affirm their positions as 'real' boys, but the rewards for their public violent masculine performance appeared to be temporary, leaving them wondering what they needed to do next in order to maintain the same status. This again reveals the artificiality of their violent masculine identities, and some fear of the 'true' self being exposed beyond the macho mask as observed by other researchers (Cartwright, 2002; Perelberg, 1999). This shows the emotional and energetic cost of being a *tsotsi* boy since the identity requires constant enactment and interpersonal contestation. It is also an identity that may be experienced as frustrating or even intimidating as illustrated in the quote below.

Extract 8:

> *Yes, you see fighting makes **you popular** yeah and doing rough stuff at school also, but sometimes you see yeah it makes **you so tired. You really, really get tired** that yeah you just want to be **a normal guy** who does not fight with other people…*

It was evident that *tsotsi* boys do hold a particular status and may be seen as 'popular' and able to attract girls (a point to be discussed later), but there is a suggestion that they maintain this hegemonic status in this particular township context in part by making other boys inferior - pushing them down the hierarchy. However, there is also the suggestion that the identity is precarious and hard won, since it requires willingness to enact violence and interpersonal domination continuously. At the same time, many of these boys feel insecure, empty and

unhappy which suggests that occupying this kind of hegemonic position is not necessarily satisfying, but costly emotionally. The discussion up to now has revealed some of the processes involved in how *tsotsi* boys negotiate their identity and position in the school environment, but it should be re-emphasized that not all boys in Alex are involved in the violent or defiant acts of *tsotsi* boys. Some adolescent boys, as will be shown in the subsequent section, were embracing 'alternative' voices of masculinity, which were non-violent and co-operative within the school environment.

9.2. 'Academic boys' and their negotiation of a non-aggressive identity

As mentioned in the preceding section, 'academic boys' are boys who conform to school rules and perform well academically. They are often seen as mature, responsible and studious. Many of these kinds of boys in the study rejected and subverted the automatic association of masculinity with violence as normative amongst adolescent boys living in predominantly black townships, such as Alex. These boys embraced masculine voices that were non-violent, non-risk taking, and school orientated. These counter-violence voices were more dominant among the participants who classified themselves and were also classified by others as 'academic boys'. It was evident that the need to do well academically was a major protective factor in avoiding becoming involved in violent situations at school.

Extract 9:

> ***Tommy:*** *I just* ***walk away****, I just walk away or I try telling the person. If someone's arguing with me I just leave and say okay you're right.* ***I don't like fighting****.*
> ***Researcher:*** *If you walk away won't they laugh at you that you're a coward and you're scared.*
> ***Tommy:*** *I don't look up to people. I'm not interested in what people say.*
> ***Researcher:*** *But they will laugh at you.*
> ***Tommy:*** *Yeah but it's not going to be something that's gonna go on forever. They can laugh for that day or the week when they see me but it's not something that can go on forever.*

It emerged that adolescent boys who were academically orientated were less likely to be violent or to defy teachers' authority. These boys were internally driven to do well in their studies, and they also appeared to have a clear sense of a masculine self. For example, in extract 8 above, Tommy appeared to be very confident about his self-sufficiency, suggesting a sound inner world. He was not bothered about being laughed at as *lekwala* (Sotho word for a coward) when he walked away from a potentially violent situation. His main concern was to do well in his studies. It became evident in the study that academic success was the main

protective factor in mitigating against participation in risk-taking behaviours. This is similar to Barker's (2005) findings amongst boys in Brazil that young adolescent males who performed well academically were less likely to be involved in risk-taking behaviours, such as gang violence. It was evident in the present study that the participants who embraced non-violent voices of masculinity generally displayed a high degree of self-reflection. Their concern was not how they appeared to others, but how they felt about the reconciliation of their behaviour with a clear personal identity. They also expressed significantly higher levels of optimism and confidence about the future than their *tsotsi* male peers. For example, one of the academic boys said, "*yeah we will see who is going to be successful between me and these guys (referring to tsotsi boys). I value my education more than anything*". It can therefore be concluded that having educational aspirations and valuing academic achievement appear to be powerful protective factors in resisting involvement in risk-taking behaviours such as substance abuse, and participation in crime and violence.

Extract 10:

> ***Alfred:*** *I don't care about being popular or what.* ***I only care about my future****. My future comes first.*

Extract 11:

> ***Herman****: I* ***care only more*** *about my school work. Yeah, myself I don't care about being violent or showing other boys that I'm strong and I can fight with other boys…We also discussed some of these issues in the* ***peer-to-peer project****.*

Many of the academic boys in the study were also members of a peer-counselling project in one of the schools in Alex. In their training to become peer educators, topics covered included violence, trauma, teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. It is possible that the peer-counseling project may well have helped this group of adolescent boys to be more reflective about themselves and the negative aspects of boy-to-boy violence and other risk-taking behaviours associated with the phase of adolescence. In the interviews, I found many of these male peer educators to be insightful and perceptive about what it meant to be a non-violent boy in Alex. They all rejected the dominant norms of *tsotsi* boys, volunteering that boys did not have to be violent in order to achieve an 'ideal' manhood. In one of the interviews, Simon, a 16-year-old boy, maintained that it was 'stupid' to think that being violent made one a 'real' boy. This view was also supported by other boys in the study as shown in the extracts below.

Extract 12:

> ***Timothy:*** *I think that's stupid believe me because* ***people get killed*** *in some of these fights.*

Extract 13:

> ***Martin:*** *I don't think fighting with other boys makes you a 'real' boy.* ***That is for boys that are stupid.***

The above extracts show that academic boys tended to distance themselves from the violent masculinity commonly associated with township masculinity and were active in carving out alternative masculine identities which were non-violent. However, later in the chapter, some of the difficulties this group of boys encountered in embracing alternative views of masculinity are discussed in greater depth. For example, it was revealed that the academic boys often felt marginalized because their non-violent voices were not as popular as those of anti-authority *tsotsi* boys. Barker (2005) also observed that violent boys often tend to attract popular attention, in turn marginalizing those who are non-violent.

As part of their peer-counselling project, academic boys in the present study were determined to popularize their non-violent masculinities by organizing public workshops in their schools to talk to other boys about the potential problems associated with school violence and other risk-taking behaviours. This assertion of their non-violent masculinities created tensions between academic and *tsotsi* boys. These tensions and more general power dynamics played themselves out in the school environment where *tsotsi* and academic boys competed for power, popularity and legitimacy. In some respects, the academic boys chose to downplay their position so as to avoid confrontation, but it also appeared that their less provocative stance in the world meant that they were less prominent and less visible in the school/Alex context. In a sense, one could understand this as a competition over what version of masculinity assumed hegemonic status within this environment and which versions were marginalized or rendered subservient. The fact that there was both overt and covert contestation over these central identity types reinforces the argument that dominant or hegemonic positioning is both temporal and context specific. As this contestation emerged as a prominent feature in analyzing the interview material, it forms the main focus of the discussion in the rest of this chapter. The next section explores some of the psychological processes that seem to be involved when adolescent boys make decisions to either identify or *dis-identify* with one form of masculinity over the other. The discussion shows how adolescent boys in the study moved discursively from one masculine identity position to another, apparently in order to conform to certain norms of

masculinity. Some of the participants were clearly pushed to the margins, while other boys strategically occupied multiple positions simultaneously. Such positioning is elaborated in the subsequent discussion.

9.3. Competing for power, visibility and legitimacy in the school environment

All the participants mentioned that *tsotsi* boys were well-known for missing classes in order to smoke *zol* (dagga) and gamble (play *ama-dice*[10] and *zwipi*[11]) in the school toilets. As mentioned earlier, *tsotsi* boys were also well-known for contesting school authority, for example, by conspicuously not wearing school uniforms and failing to do schoolwork, whereas it was observed by the researcher that academic boys always wore their school uniforms and were meticulous in class attendance. *Tsotsi* boys apparently considered schooling irrelevant and perhaps even as 'emasculating' in terms of their conception of township masculinity (a point to be discussed later in the thesis). They were intent on proving their manliness in the eyes of other boys by breaking school rules and being dismissive of academic success. In the interviews, academic boys spent a lot of time talking about the school toilets as privileged 'spaces' for certain groups of boys (especially *tsotsi* boys). The photo below (2A) shows a group of adolescent boys playing dice in the school toilets during school hours, with many clearly not wearing the school uniform. In the interviews, the participants mentioned that gambling (especially playing *ama-dice*) was common among adolescent boys in Alex. This game is also popular even amongst very young boys in primary schools (see photo 2B below).

[10] *Ama-dice*- is a popular gambling game in which two dice are used. Adolescent boys often gamble with money and valuable items such as cellphones, watches and clothes. Fighting over these items is common.
[11] *Zwipi*-is another popular township gambling game in which a gambler uses his hand to spin a coin on the floor. Other gamblers have to guess how the coin is going to fall and choose one side. They lose if their choice is wrong and win if their choice is right. *Zwipi* gamblers gamble only with money.



Photo 2A



Photo 2B:

In addition to the photographic depictions, there was also discussion of gambling as an activity associated with a *tsotsi* identity[12].

Extract 14:

Martin*: Tsotsi boys always hang around* ***school toilets all the time. They don't go to classes****. They are the bullies and make other learners to pay* ***toilet fee*** *so that they can gamble.*

Extract 15*:*

Researcher: *Do you also gamble?*
Tommy: *No, I don't gamble.*
Researcher: *Where do they gamble?*
Tommy: *They gamble in the school toilets*

[12] I observed that boys who were classified or classified themselves as *tsotsis* tended to downplay their anti-authority position by not being very explicit at times about playing dice or *zwipi* during school hours. Most of the data that emerged out of this section emerged in my interviews with academic boys. It is possible that here *tsotsi* boys may not have wanted to be seen in a negative light by the researcher. While on the other hand, academic boys used this part of the interviews to complain about *tsotsi* boys' unruly behaviours in the school toilets.

Researcher: *When? After school*
Tommy: *No. They gamble during school hours. Many boys miss classes to go and play zwipi and ama-dice in the school toilets.*

Extract 16:

Researcher: *Is this common for boys to gamble during school hours?*
Martin: *It is very common. Many boys go to school, but many do not go to classes. They go and gamble. ..These boys that* ***gamble are bullies****. They* ***harass*** *other learners.*

It was clear from the narratives that school toilets had become particular kinds of 'masculinized' spaces, and that *tsotsi* boys were the main gatekeepers of these 'spaces'. They set the rules and regulations about who could enter and who could not. It was reported that some boys (mainly academic boys) were forced to pay a 'toilet fee' (Extract 14) before being allowed to use the toilets. The above extracts indicate that academic boys such as Martin and Tommy felt unsafe going to the school toilets where, apparently, a lot of bullying took place. What emerged was that *tsotsi* boys had significant influence outside of the classroom despite the fact that teachers were aware that there was bullying of other children by these boys in the school toilets. *Tsotsi* boys seemed to get public recognition or at least tacit acceptance for their unruly behaviour. Their bad behaviour was evidently well-known by everyone at the schools, including the school principals. In the group interview below, the participants spoke about a particular boy who was notoriously well-known for getting into trouble at their school:

Extract 17:

Martin*: He always likes fighting; he is* ***a seeker of attention****. And then girls would always know that whenever there is chaos he is the one to be recognized first. That whenever there is a fight,* ***P*** *is always there. Whenever there is something wrong,* ***Piet is*** *always there.*
Researcher: *Is he popular as a result?*
Mpho*: Yes.*
Martin*: When he goes to the staff room, the teachers know* ***this is Piet****.*
Researcher*: What makes him popular?*
Mdu*: When the teacher is addressing us,* ***he will make a joke****, and then we laugh, and then like* ***he will disturb the teacher****.*

In the group interview from which the above extract is drawn, the academic boys distanced themselves from the disruptive activities of *tsotsi* boys by positioning themselves as more academically orientated and non-disruptive. I observed a sense of solidarity among this sub-group of participants in this group interview, which served as a forum for them to share their emotional experiences of being bullied by *tsotsi* boys. The focus group appeared to be viewed as a 'safe' space, (unlike the school toilets), where they could freely talk about *tsotsi* boys'

unruly and violent behaviours. What was also evident was that although *tsotsi* boys publicly acquired some status for breaking school rules, privately, these boys were often seen as 'fools'. This emerged in the above group interview (Extract 17) where the participants laughed together about Piet (a *tsotsi* boy known for his bad behaviour) because he had repeated the same grade for the past three years. In this particular group interview, the participants categorized *tsotsi* boys like Piet as inferior and positioned themselves as superior because they had done well academically. The participants mentioned that *tsotsi* boys were more likely to drop out of school because of their poor academic performance thus, putting themselves at risk of seeking other masculine-validating identities and activities outside school, such as joining gangs and committing crime.

Extract 18:

> ***Martin:*** *You see many of these boys [referring to Piet] do not finish their matric. You can't get any work if you did not finish matric. They drop out of school. You see then stay at home and do nothing. Then you start thinking about things such as smoking and doing crime.*

Extract 19:

> ***William:*** *They [referring tsotsi boys who dropped out of school] stand at a corner and then take money and take whatever they get. And then if they say to you let's go together to do such a thing, and if you don't go and say that I am not doing this; they will say you are scared, you are not a man.*

The context of Alex, a working-class urban township, should be taken into account when attempting to understand *tsotsi* boys' negative attitude towards academic success and likely participation in criminal behaviour. Many young adolescent boys in Alex believe they have no control over their future, and are demoralized by the lack of future prospects. Because of the perceived absence of future prospects, they seem to focus on having a 'good time' in the present rather than focusing on academic achievement, which is seen as bearing fruit in the future. *Tsotsi* boys have created some form of identity for themselves that involves rebelling against social norms and values, including defying teachers, dropping out of school and joining violent gangs. In some respects, they argue that they have little choice in taking up such identifications.

Extract 20:

> ***Researcher:*** *And the thing about mugging people; is it something that is giving other* ***people a status here in the township? That one has been to jail and stuff like that?***
> ***William:*** *Mugging people is a petty crime and they look down upon it. …but committing armed robbery, they give you credit for that. And that you have been in and out of jail.*

They give you credit. And sooner or later you drive or you wear fancy clothes. They give you credit that crime is working for you.
Researcher: *Why do young people get involved in crime?*
William: *I can say* ***peer pressure*** *and the* ***environment also****. Some of my friends when we do not have cash and maybe it's days around the 16th or some other big occasions; we go out mugging people. We are in need of cash. So this shows that* ***sometimes gents mug people****.*

Themba, however, accused *tsotsi* boys of making excuses for their involvement in violent crime by blaming external factors such as poverty and peer pressure. He contended that people cannot blame everything on the environment because "*you are a master of your own destiny*". He maintained that "*it does not matter what school you go to (a multiracial or township school) but you need to decide whether you want to be successful or not. It is all about choice and I have made a choice to do well in my studies*". Themba was in Grade 11 in one of the high schools in Alex at the time of the interview. He said he wanted to be successful like one of his brothers who was a manager in one of the big companies in Midrand (a large industrial area near Alex). His brother also went to high school in Alex and was now successful, living in one of the exclusive suburbs in Johannesburg and driving a nice car. Thus it seems that some boys in Alex had positive male role models who encouraged them to embrace alternative versions of what it meant to be a 'real boy' without feeling compelled to become involved in the criminal activities of the *tsotsi* boys.

Moreover, many academic boys in the study argued that *tsotsi* boys were nothing more than attention seekers who were disruptive and made jokes in class in order to impress their classmates, especially girls.

Extract 21:

Herman*: I was in Grade 8. I was childish whereby I wanted to get attention from other people – even girls, even anyone in class. So that they can feel my presence, they can feel that Herman is in class. I must make noise and stuff like that and cause disruption.*

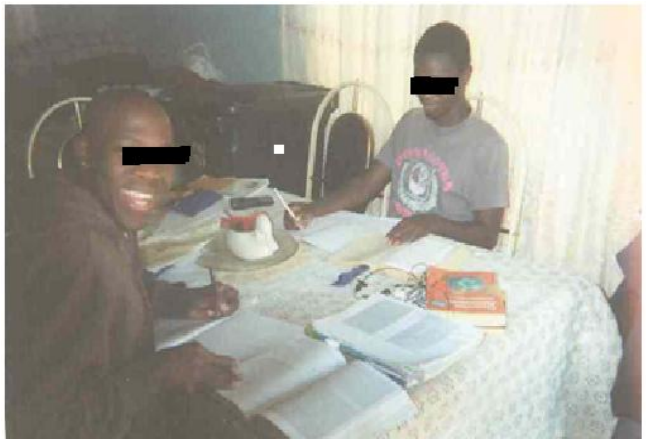
Thus *tsotsi* boys were characterized as attention seeking and childish in some respects and in characterizing these boys as such, academic boys were able discursively to assume some superior positioning over them. It was evident that there was tension for boys in publicly demonstrating academic interest or aptitude as has been observed in other studies of adolescent

boys (Frosh et al., 2002; Renold, 2001; Swain, 2002). It was evident as described that adolescent boys often went to great lengths to avoid demonstrating studious behaviour as it is not 'cool' to be seen as invested in doing well at school. Academic orientation for a boy is often associated with femininity, and, consequently, many boys in the study appeared to feel quite strongly pressurized to comply with hegemonic versions of an anti-academic masculinity in Alex, epitomized in *tsotsi* masculinity.

It emerged from this study that *tsotsi* and academic boys competed for power, visibility, legitimacy and dominance in the school environment and that in this context both sets of boys enjoyed some status, even if very differently derived. As mentioned earlier, it seems *tsotsi* boys had more power outside the classroom context during break, on the school fields and in the school toilets, while academic boys had more power in the classroom context due to their superior academic performance and success in completing school work. It was observed that many of the participants who classified themselves as 'academic boys' had pictures of books in their albums (see the photo below), suggesting the significance of this element of their lives to their identity. They celebrated their studiousness, even if this was in a low key way when in more public forums.



Photo 3



Picture 4

Picture 4 shows two academic boys doing their school work. In the study, *tsotsi* boys labelled academic boys negatively as 'teachers' pets' or 'Mr.Goodboys'. Academic boys were subjected to insults and were teased and called derogatory names, such as 'losers' and *snaai* (fools). In this respect, *tsotsi* boys also appeared to belittle academic boys as child-like and seeking of approval. Each group thus worked to delegitimize the other. There appeared to be different strategies for doing this and different dividends for occupying one or other of these dominant identity types. In this study, academic boys complained that *tsotsi* boys were not only covertly tolerated by teachers, but were also popular with girls.

Extract 22:

> ***Simon****: But then if you disrespect the teachers you become* ***popular*** *in that group of becoming popular, in that bad way. But then if you play sport, and* ***not being the teacher's pet*** *necessarily, and you (don't) do your home work, you become popular amongst the girls. And the girls would like you that this guy.*

Extract 23:

> ***Nathan: I don't know, these girls of these days,*** *when they see a boy* ***drinking, smoking and missing classes****, they get proud of the boy.*

Despite their commitment to studying and doing well academically, academic boys felt at a disadvantage because they were not generally popular with girls, "*especially girls of these days*". Simon bitterly complained that "*you don't do your homework but girls would like this*". Frosh et al. (2002) found in their research that girls tend to like academic boys because they do not harass/abuse them and they respect teachers, but girls do not necessarily like such boys as potential boyfriends. Girls often see 'academic boys' as being too effeminate and lacking key characteristics of conventional adolescent masculinity, such as roughness and toughness.

Academic boys were puzzled by the girls' preference for *tsotsi* boys as potential boyfriends.

The findings suggested that there were some costs involved in being identified as an academic boy, including being rejected by girls as a potential boyfriend. Academic boys were also seen by girls as boring because they did not go out to parties and were routinely at home reading or doing schoolwork. One academic boy (Nathan) spoke about feeling hurt when his girlfriend of two years ended their relationship to go out with a popular *tsotsi* boy at their school. He suspected that he lost his girlfriend because he was not in the 'cool' group of *tsotsi* boys. Other sacrifices that came with being an academic boy included being bullied and called derogatory names, such as '*teacher's pet*' as alluded to already. As a result, some of the boys who classified themselves as 'academic boys' were experiencing conflicting emotions and considerable ambivalence about their masculine identities. Some of them seemed to appreciate that there were costs and tensions in occupying a kind of mid-hierarchy identity.

Extract 24:

> ***Nathan****: Yes. It's like I am that* ***simple guy****. I wouldn't say I am popular, I wouldn't say I am a loser. I feel that* ***I am in between.***

Extract 25:

> ***Simon****: Yes, being* ***like in between****, you wouldn't impress people doing bad things. And again you wouldn't be that guy that doesn't socialize, like you lock yourself out.*

In these extracts, the participants speak about the benefits of being 'in-between' or 'in the borderland' (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003). Academic boys in the study thought it was better to be 'in between' and a '*simple guy*' who was neither popular nor a 'loser' if this was the cost of having academic aspirations. However, being in the middle constituted a dilemma as they wanted to do well academically, but, at the same time, they did not want to be categorized as teachers' pets or bookworms. They wanted to be considered 'real' township boys by doing what other boys did, such as socializing and spending time with other boys on the street corners, but they also wanted to get good grades at school. The balance was difficult to achieve, and it was evident that being an academic boy involved conscious management of behaviour and the perceptions of others. As Reay (2003, p. 161) puts it, "to be both academically successful and acceptably male requires a considerable amount of careful negotiation on the part of academic boys". Like the adolescent boys in Reay's (2003) study, academic boys in this study were also caught between two opposing positions in attempting to

ensure that their sufficiently tough and socially integrated township masculinities were kept intact, while simultaneously endeavoring to maintain their academic success. It was both an internal and external battle that many of the academic boys had to manage in order to be seen as 'real' township boys. For example, many academic boys in the interviews spoke about studying privately at home or in secret places (such as the library in town) so as not to attract negative attention from other adolescent boys and girls.

The present study revealed that *tsotsi* boys appeared to be at the top of the masculine hierarchy in the school context. They were seen as the most 'cool' and popular group by the majority of boys who took part in the study. Some of the other boys (including academic boys) strove to be like them without compromising their studies, but others were willing to compromise their studies in the process of adhering to the norms of *tsotsi* masculinity. The study showed that academic boys employed various coping strategies, such as also at times fooling around in the classroom, in order to be in the 'cool' group. One academic boy said, "*I was playing in class, neglecting my school work, yeah you see making jokes about teachers in order to be 'cool'*". Peer pressure is thus exerted on young adolescent boys to belong to certain cliques at school, but this comes at a price that may involve neglecting schoolwork in order to gain membership of the in-group. Adolescent boys who do not comply with certain masculine practices are refused membership into certain friendship groups (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003). *Tsotsi* boys in the study asserted that it was not 'cool' for any township boy to spend a lot of time doing schoolwork.

Extract 26:

> ***William:*** *For me to tell the truth I sometimes feel* ***going to school is a waste of time****. There are guys here in Alex who have money, but some have never been to school. That is my view! I sometimes feel like that…You see here in Alex everyone drinks and smokes.*

Extract 27:

> ***Simon:*** *Many boys think it is cool to smoke and drink.*

Many boys in the study asserted that township boys must behave in a particular manner (e.g. smoke, drink, have multiple girlfriends) and hang around with male friends in public places rather than do school work either inside or outside of school time (see illustrative photo below).



Picture 5: A group of adolescent boys sitting on one of the street corners in Alex

It is on the street corners and in the school toilets where the unofficial syllabus of 'learning' how to be a 'real' township boy takes place. According to Salisbury and Jackson (1996) and Swartz (2010), gathering in groups gives boys the much-needed audience to display and confirm their masculinity. This is because group loyalty and male bonding rank high on the list of traditional, masculine values. A sense of brotherhood and oneness also exists when boys are in a group where they can spend time talking about 'masculine' interests such as, sex, cars and sport. These are the kinds of values and behaviours associated with and lived out in a kind of *tsotsi* identity. Boys who did not comply with these norms and practices of *tsotsi* masculinity were not only seen as teachers' pets, but also as '*mommy's boys*', by implication as immature, feminized and still overly attached to their mothers. It became evident that *tsotsi* boys actively exploited academic boys' insecurities to affirm their own sense of manhood. However, in the section below, some of the discursive strategies that academic boys in the study employed in maintaining their diligent, progressive and academically orientated identities are discussed. It seemed that being 'in-between' and inhabiting a border space was one of the mechanisms that academic boys used to transcend group boundaries and occupy multiple positions, in a similar way to that described in Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli s' study (2003).

9.4. Walking on a tightrope: academic boys' discursive strategies to maintain 'alternative' masculinities

As indicated earlier, the interviews revealed that academic boys found themselves in a dilemma because they wanted to belong to the 'cool' group but, simultaneously, questioned some behaviours associated with *tsotsi* masculinity, such as missing classes or not doing their school work. These boys were emotionally troubled in negotiating conflicting voices of masculinity and felt uncertain about their subjective positions. As a result, academic boys employed a range of discursive and behavioural strategies to legitimize themselves, such as identifying with and belonging to several groups/cliques rather than confining themselves to one group. Earlier, Simon and Herman, as academic boys, mentioned they did not want to be categorized as 'teachers' pets'. Herman saw himself as a balanced person rather than belonging to a single group – he publicly acted as something of a *tsotsi* boy but, at the same time, did not neglect his schoolwork. He noted that he participated in some of *tsotsi* boys' defiant behaviour, such as teasing teachers, but not in an extreme way. This approach could be seen as a 'face-saving' strategy (Billig, 1988; Elliot, 2001) that Herman and other academic boys employed to maintain school-orientated masculinity while simultaneously embracing certain practices of *tsotsi* masculinity. Through this strategy, many of the academic boys could straddle different positions as outsiders and insiders without being seen as inferior and inadequate. They were thus considered 'in-between' and were accepted in the worlds of *tsotsi* boys as well as amongst academic boys. Martino and Pallota-Chiarolli (2003) found that Australian academically orientated adolescent boys also employed similar strategies in order to deal with bullies at school.

The present study showed that academic boys who moved and occupied multiple positions were also less likely to be bullied because they now had the cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) to negotiate boundaries between groups without being seen as easy targets (Martino & Pallota-Chiarolli, 2003). It is conceivably less costly emotionally for an academic boy to occupy multiple positions simultaneously since this allows for social integration and avoidance of denigration, but for some of the boys in the study, being in the borderland was experienced as emotionally draining and frustrating. One academic boy said, "*I hate to pretend. I just want to be myself*". This sentiment was echoed by other academic boys, namely,

that pretending to be something they were not was taking its toll on them emotionally. They felt they were being dishonest to their 'real' selves for the sake of wanting to be seen as 'cool'. Aligning oneself with *tsotsi* identity thus had both costs and benefits and conscious effort was expended in positioning oneself as an academic type and yet non-marginalized.

However, some of the academic boys were confidently able to reject the dominant norms of *tsotsi* boys without having to straddle or occupy multiple positions. These boys were aware of the peer pressure to conform to certain practices but were able to deal with the negative input of their peers as illustrated in the interview with Themba, a 16-year-old boy. He mentioned that when *tsotsi* boys teased him by calling him a bookworm, he consoled himself by thinking, "*let's put five years down the line and see what is going to happen; who is going to be a bookworm, who is going to wash whose car, who is going to be whose garden boy, who is going to … you know stuff like that*". Themba seemed to be coping well and resisted peer pressure to engage in anti-school behaviours such as missing classes or defying school teachers. He narrated that he saw education as an investment for the future. He believed that although he currently occupied an inferior position later he would be in a superior position. In his photo album, he had photo of a new Mercedes Benz and a big house.



Photo 6

Referring to this photo, Themba remarked that *tsotsi* boys now thought they were clever, but, later in life, they would be working as his servants, washing his Mercedes Benz and also working as 'garden boys' in his big house. In his fantasy, it would be pay-back time. Although

Themba appeared reasonably confident in his academic identity, it is apparent from his fantasy that he felt considerably aggression towards *tsotsi* boys. He appeared to manage some feelings of current impotence by entertaining a dream of becoming an object of envy and of dominating those very same boys by whom he was currently feeling oppressed. His resistance was covert rather than overt but it is evident that he was invested in punishing those occupying *tsotsi* positions rather than merely escaping their scrutiny. There are interesting race and class implications in his fantasy, as previously it would have been white men who owned expensive goods and had black boys to help maintain them as 'garden boys'. Themba clearly fantasies about occupying this previously 'white position' and of perpetuating a set of class relations he has perceived as generally operative in the new South Africa due to the emergence of black middle class. There is thus considerable complexity to this defensive strategy.

It was evident that the use of photography in the research project enabled participants such as Themba and others to create and express their fantasies about life and their futures as young males living in a working class community such as Alex. Photographs of flashy cars and big houses were fairly common and suggested self projection into a different, desirable future. Brett, another 16-year-old academic boy, also had a photo of a big house with swimming pool in his album. He also mentioned feeling hurt when *tsotsi* boys at school call him a 'fool' for reading and doing his schoolwork. He recounted that the coping strategy he used was to ignore all these negative comments and concentrate on his goal of becoming a civil engineer. The photograph also seemed to represent the dream he hoped to achieve, a fantasy future-orientated goal that sustained him in the difficult present.

Overall, many of the academic boys in the study were future orientated and were therefore willing to forgo peer approval in the present in order to achieve future aspirations of moving from Alex (a predominantly working-class area) to the neighbouring suburbs of Sandton and Sunninghill, which represented an ideal lifestyle for many of the boys in Alex. However, the narratives also pointed to the psychic and interpersonal tensions that many of the academic boys experienced in negotiating the paradoxes of township masculinity. Their narratives were characterised by contradictory sentiments and ambiguities as it was not easy to be a 'different' boy who consciously adopted non-popular masculine positions. As Ratele et al. (2007, p. 126)

put it, being a different boy is '*hard work*', so it is important that young adolescent boys are assisted in negotiating these challenges of boyhood and also the transition into healthy manhood.

9.5. Concluding remarks

This chapter explored some of the power dynamics involved in taking on and living out a masculine identity as a school-going boy in Alex. It was evident that there are different groups or 'types' of boys in Alex and that these groups compete with each other for legitimacy and domination, some practices of masculinity enjoying greater popularity than others. There were two dominant and opposing 'types' of masculinity that emerged as salient from the interviews were what have been termed '*tsotsi* masculinity and 'academic masculinity'. However, it should be noted that in keeping with other research studies, it was observed that the contestation of and preferences for different masculine identities were changeable to some degree depending on the context in which boys found themselves. For example, academic boys in the study were mostly more successful in the classroom while *tsotsi* boys were more popular outside of the classroom and the school environment. The subjective positions that boys occupied were fluid rather than rigid and fixed. In the main, the participants appeared to vacillate between multiple positions, simultaneously accepting and rejecting certain practices of township masculinity, although for some boys, identification with a certain type of masculinity remained quite consistent. What was apparent from the findings was that boys' status was derived from holding or being ascribed a certain position within the peer group hierarchy. In terms of the hierarchy of masculinities at schools assessed in the study, *tsotsi* boys were at the top of the hierarchy, were highly visible, and projected a form of typical 'township masculinity'. However, the visibility and dominance of *tsotsi* type boys was challenged and subverted to some degree by academic boys in the classroom. However, dominance in the classroom had its own emotional costs for academic boys, including being rejected by girls as potential boyfriends and being called derogatory names. As a result, academic boys had conflicting feelings about their identifications with alternative voices of masculinity. Some wanted to be popular and yet still achieve good grades at school. According to Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003), such boys are forced to exist in a kind of

'borderland', preferring to be 'in between' by shifting their identifications depending on the context in which they find themselves, and this was borne out in the current study. For example, some of the academic boys would strategically "*fool around in the classroom*", but later, when they got home, they would do their schoolwork. These boys might publicly display the more typical aggressive, defiant male-role related behaviour, but privately rejected such roles. The public performance was used as a coping strategy to deal with fending off the insults that would be heaped on them if perceived clearly to be 'academic boys'. The findings revealed that being a 'different' boy who adopted non-hegemonic positions was a complex process characterized by feelings of anxiety, hesitation and ambivalence. These were contradictions that young academic boys in the study had to manage in order to maintain and sustain emerging alternative school-orientated voices of masculinity in this context of Alexandra Township. The experience of academic boys confirmed Frosh et al.'s (2002) assertion that the process of being a different boy who adopts non-popular positions is not easy, as it involves facing discrimination and marginalization. At the time, it is important to note that in more private moments some of the *tsotsi* boys also confessed to some difficulties with their identity positions-disclosing feelings of emptiness and lack. Their active display of masculinity seems to resonate with ideas about masculinity as performative and compensatory. Pressure to consistently live out of this identity was also sometimes experienced as depleting and 'tiring', as illustrated in extract 8.

What was evident in the present study was that some of the boys were cultivating alternative versions of what it meant to be a 'real' township boy in opposition to becoming involved in the anti-school behaviours associated with *tsotsi* masculinity. This group of adolescent boys vehemently rejected notions of *tsotsi* masculinity and challenged popular conceptions of all township black adolescent boys as necessarily 'violent' (Dlamini, 2010). Referring to stereotypes of race and class, Jensen (2008) found that people tend to associate black adolescent boys with gangs, crime and violence. Jensen found, however, that many of these boys chose not to engage in crime or belong to gangs and that the problem is perhaps rather the negative portrayal of all such boys in public discourses. As a consequence, 'alternative' voices are often neglected. It is therefore important that safe spaces are created to publicize and celebrate non-hegemonic norms of black and township masculinity. A focus on voices of

resistance will promote the realization that not all township boys are inherently violent, callous, risk-taking and exploitative of girls and women (Barker, 2005), as was certainly evident in this study. The present study showed that some of the adolescent boys were strongly future orientated and that this was important in the willingness to sacrifice alignment with dominant or popular positions in the present and thus to entertain non-hegemonic or alternative identity positions. Their narratives revealed positive signs of change, ambition and the aspiration to achieve certain career goals. Many of the academic boys in the interviews were not sure if they would be able to access institutions of higher learning when they completed their schooling due to a lack of finances at home and it is important for the state to recognize this in aiming to promote more constructive and productive expressions of masculinity. Pursuing academic work was seen by this group of adolescent boys as an investment in the future and as a possible means to breaking the cycle of poverty in their lives in Alexandra Township.

Both the *tsotsi* and academic boys, occupying different poles on the spectrum of identifications, faced material and psychological risks. Adopting a *tsotsi* identity was predictive of academic failure and likely future involvement in a high risk gang lifestyle. Making identification as an academic boy involved ridicule and sometimes bearing the brunt of aggression. It is therefore important for youth interventionists to work with boys across this kind of spectrum and to be aware of the different kinds of pressure that young men face. Although, this will be returned to in the concluding section of the thesis, it was apparent that at least two factors were implicated in a willingness to take up more alternative positions, the first being a hopeful or positive future orientation and the second being a clear and strong sense of self, or of personal identity, that was maintained to large extent independent of peer recognition or affirmation.

Chapter 10: Adolescent boys' talk about girls and sex

Introduction

In the study, all thirty two of the research participants had photos of girls in their albums. In the individual as well as group interviews, the participants spent a lot of time talking about their relationships with girls. They said that it was important for a boy to have a girlfriend, but expectations in terms of these relationships differed from one boy to another. Many of the participants remarked that boys expected to have sex with multiple girlfriends as sexual relations were seen as a key marker of successful township masculinity. This view of sex as a priority in relationships with multiple girlfriends was, however, rejected by other participants. Their voices represented an emerging alternative masculinity that promoted 'faithfulness' in relationships with girls, and challenged popular misogynistic views of girls as sex objects. This group of adolescent boys believed that girls should be treated with respect and dignity, although this view was not popular amongst the majority of boys who took part in the study.

In talking about girls, the participants again used certain typologies, categorizing themselves and each other as either *sex-jaro* or Christian boys. As with *tsotsi* and academic typologies, these (*sex-jaro* or Christian) appeared to be the two main opposing poles that were employed in discussion about relating to girls, with boys positioned at either extreme or somewhere on the continuum. However, discussion of the two major types is enlightening in revealing predominant kinds of conversations about opposite sex relationship. *Sex-jaro* is township slang for boys or men who either have or aspire to have multiple girlfriends and many sexual encounters. What emerged in the study was that *tsotsi* boys (described in chapter nine) were often categorized as *sex-jaros*, while academic boys were often categorized as *ubazalwana* (literally Zulu word for being Christian, but used derogatorily in the study to mock boys who believe it is wrong to have sex before marriage). In addition to being violent, *tsotsi* masculinity was also tied to a particular performance of heterosexuality in which having sex with multiple partners was important. In contrast, academic boys were teased for their lack of heterosexual experience. This chapter explores these kinds of identities and how an adolescent boy's relationship with girls and degree of sexual experience can allow or deny him membership of a

particular group at school. However, these identities should not be taken to be fixed or singular as illustrated in the previous chapter. Masculine identities are plural, and adolescent boys can align with or 'belong' to a range of categories depending on the particular context they occupy at a particular juncture, including living out apparently contradictory identities. Identities or typologies compete for attention and priority.

10.1. *Sex-jaros* as 'sexual champions' versus Christian boys as 'sexual morons'

Girls were a central topic of discussion for all the participants in the study. Having multiple sexual partners was described as a key marker of being a *sex-jaro*. The word *sex-jaro*, as mentioned earlier, is township slang for boys who like to have sex with many, different girls. Martin, one of the most articulate boys in the study, said the following about *sex-jaro* boys at his school.

Extract 1:

> ***Martin****: This guy is '**sex-jaro'** [referring to the photo below]. A sex-jaro is a boy who likes girls.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Sex-jaro?*
> ***Martin****: Yes.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Okay. What is that?*
> ***Martin****: It's a boy who likes girls. Like **'jaro'; 'jaro'** never fails in anything. There is no girl who can say no to him when he chats her up. He can get a girl any time whenever he wants. He can do anything he wants to do at that moment, and no one would tell him anything. So that is why I tell you that this boy dates a girl today and then the next day he wants to have sex with her. So they are called **sex-jaros**.*



Photo 7

In the above photo, a well-known *sex-jaro* boy is portrayed hugging one of the girls at school. The two had obviously been happy to pose for the picture. In this study, *sex-jaro* boys seemed to have a lot in common with the *ingangara* boys identified in Selikow, Zulu and Cedras' (2002) study. *Ingangara* boys are also popular with girls and also believe that boys should have multiple girlfriends, claiming a highly sexualized and public masculine identity (Selikow et al. 2002). *Sex-jaro* boys have a sense of superiority when it comes to chasing and dating girls. According to Martin, "*sex-jaros never fail in winning the girl over*". Their ultimate goal is to make a sexual conquest as quickly as possible, to date a girl for one day and then to have sex with her the next day. In their township lingo, the boys call this kind of pursuit "*go shaya shaya*" (telling a girl a lot of lies in order to have sex with her within a short space of time). This is a regarded as a special skill possessed only by *sex-jaro* boys. Conquest and the overcoming of girls' scruples about having sex through their powers of persuasion were thus important attributes of *sex-jaro* boys. *Sex-jaro* boys also took pride in the number of conquests they were able to make as illustrated in the extract below:

Extract 2:

> ***Researcher:*** *Go back a bit. How many, girlfriends do you have?*
> ***Timothy****: (****Laughter****) A lot. I can't even count them for you.*
> ***Researcher:*** *More* ***than five****?*
> ***Timothy:*** *Five is too little (laughter).*
> ***Researcher:*** *More* ***than eight****?*
> ***Timothy: Eight is too few****. I've been dating for a long time; I don't even know how many girls I've dated ever since I got here. I make sure that every year in my class I have a girlfriend and it happens.*

In the above extract, Timothy, a *sex-jaro* boy, laughed at the researcher's ignorance in expecting him to have a single or limited number of girlfriends. In the interview, Timothy took pride in the fact that he claimed to have had more than eight girlfriends. It was an achievement that was worth celebrating. *Sex-jaro* boys compete with each other about the number of girlfriends they have and the numbers of girls they have had sex with. It is a 'numbers game', similar to that highlighted in a study conducted in Soweto Township that revealed that a group of sexually active adolescent boys kept a register of their sexual conquests pinned on their walls and ran a competition to see who could sleep with the most girls each week (Selikow, et al., 2002). A boy who slept with multiple girlfriends was seen as a 'real' *sex-jaro* or *ingangara*. The narratives in the present study suggested that girls were treated primarily as sex objects or conquests because *sex-jaro* boys described their relationship with girls only in these terms. The

perception was that boys could not live without sex and that it was part of 'male nature' to seek regular sex with multiple partners. In this regard, Timothy, a self-identified *sex-jaro* boy, said, "*You cannot eat Chicken Licken (a popular fast food chain in South Africa) every day*", suggesting that sexual satisfaction was more dependant on variety. In the interview, Timothy used the food metaphor ("*eating Chicken Licken every day*") to also position himself as a streetwise and sexually experienced adolescent boy. The use of metaphors to characterize sexual experience appeared to be an important part of a successful boasting strategy for young boys in the study. *Sex-jaro* boys asserted in the interviews that it was boring to have sex with only one partner. One of the discourses they employed to justify promiscuity in relation to sex was that of cultural practice or tradition. Timothy was not the only boy in the study who boasted about having had sex with more than one girl. In the extracts below, other boys such as Shaun and William, also boasted about the fact that they have many girlfriends and further justified this in terms of 'African tradition'.

Extract 3:

> ***Researcher:*** *Is it possible for a boy to have* ***one steady girlfriend****?*
> ***Shaun:*** *No. No. I can say traditionally, it is the way that we grew up knowing that a boy is supposed to* ***have more than three girlfriends****. We take it from our forefathers. I have more than* ***three girlfriends***

Extract 4:

> ***William:*** *yeah, they know (referring to other boys) know she is my straight girlfriend****, but*** *I have other* ***girlfriends***

Some of the narratives highlighted the importance of disclosing to male peers one's sexual success with multiple girlfriends. This seemed to enhance *sex-jaro* boys' public status, acceptability and admiration. *Sex-jaro* boys were seen as role models by their male peers and admired for the fact that they had been able to engage in sexual relations with many girls. Perhaps particularly in response to being interviewed by a male researcher, some *sex-jaro* boys, such as William, seemed to engage in this kind of overt boasting about sexual prowess in the interviews to demonstrate their virility, and possibly make the researcher feel less 'potent' in the process. For example, William proudly shared his 'sex' stories involving multiple girlfriends. It seemed important to him to demonstrate his knowledge of many aspects of sexual activity. He said, "*with my friends obviously we talk about the clitoris, it is girl's G-spot, the nipples and stuff; foreplay. We talk about stuff like to satisfy a girl*". Here, William presented himself as mature and experienced enough to sexually satisfy his many girlfriends.

He inferred that he knew what girls wanted and also where to touch them during 'foreplay'. Pascoe (2007) also found that disclosing their sexual escapades boosted adolescent boys' status in the male peer group. Not only the ability to secure multiple partners for sex, but also the ability to perform adequately sexually and to give women satisfaction was portrayed as part of a successful masculinity. In this respect, there is also some risk in sexual engagement. It is during sex that one's manhood is tested, and this is a point that Timothy emphasized, "*you do it (sexual activity) right so that you can keep her for long period of time, but if you don't do it right she would leave you and look for someone that can do better than you*". In this extract, Timothy, as a *sex-jaro*, was worried about possible failure to satisfy his girlfriend sexually, failure that could bring feelings of shame and a sense of inadequacy. A girlfriend who is not satisfied with her boyfriend's sexual performance represents a threat to a boy's sense of manhood and his public status. *Sex-jaro* boys were expected to be sexually experienced. In one group interview, the participants engaged in competitive talk about who was best able to satisfy a girlfriend sexually. The participants took turns in mentioning that it was important for boys to 'massage' and engage in foreplay activities in order to satisfy their girlfriends sexually.

Extract 5:

> ***Researcher:*** *What is it that you discuss?*
> ***William:*** *Like when it comes to* ***satisfying a girl, massaging and*** *doing foreplay.*
> ***Researcher: Yes.***
> ***Themba:*** *You've got to know the* ***G-spot, clitoris and stuff****. We talk of certain positions. We just talk!*
> ***Sheba****: To be in the crowd it is. To be that popular boy, it is.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Okay. Is it important for a boy to* ***satisfy a girl sexually****?*
> ***Themba:*** *Yes, it is important to* ***satisfy a girl sexually****.*

However, the participants also seemed to experience some fears and anxieties that they might not be able to meet their partners' desires. Masculinity is associated with sexual adequacy, suggesting that adolescent boys may be placed under considerable pressure to be sexually experienced or at least appear to be so. Sex was constructed as a masculine-driven act and failure to satisfy girlfriends was one of the most forceful indictments of masculine power, in keeping with observations of other gender scholars (Connell, 1995; Segal, 1990).

Satisfying girls sexually was a key marker of being a 'real' *sex-jaro* boy. However, Timothy, as a self-identified *sex-jaro*, was concerned in the interview that "*some [boys] do it to satisfy their own sexual needs*". Here, Timothy criticized these other boys as selfish in thinking only

about satisfying their own sexual needs and ignoring those of girls. In Lesch and Kruger's (2004) study, a group of adolescent girls complained about the lack of sexual satisfaction in their relationships with boys. In his narrative, Timothy advised his male peers to think about girls' sexual needs, arguing that sex was not a one-sided activity. He maintained that both parties should enjoy sex equally because "*it is all about putting both interests to heart*". In some respects, this aspect of the discussion ran counter to the notion of sex as conquest and as a kind of collection of trophies in which girls were seen as needing to be duped and seduced, rather than engaged with as sexual partners with their own needs and desires. The discussion also revealed that some of *sex-jaro* boys entertained these somewhat more egalitarian views about sex. These boys seemed to challenge traditional notions of masculinity that sex was all about penetration and male orgasm. William and his friends shared sexual tips such as the importance of touching girls' erogenous zones to ensure that their girlfriends experienced sexual satisfaction. Although these could perhaps be seen as more progressive views about sex, it was evident that there was ego-investment in pleasuring girls and also that there was considerable posturing in group interviews as s*ex-jaro* boys were invested in presenting an image of being 'macho' males and sexually competent and potent individuals. Their references to body parts and sexual practices and the need for sensitivity to the pleasuring of girls, appeared to be designed, at least in part, to impress their peers and to shore up their confidence in this area. However, in the individual and follow-up interviews, it became evident that many of *sex-jaro* boys were privately worried about their ability to satisfy girls sexually. In his individual interview, Timothy felt more at ease to talk about his fears and anxieties about feeling pressure to satisfy his many sexual partners.

Extract 6:

> ***Timothy****: Yes, when I have sex I make* ***sure that she enjoys it****. I don't want to have sex with someone, and she does not enjoy it. I even ask her afterwards if she enjoyed herself and if she says no we do it again.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Why do you do it again? Is it to ensure that you satisfy her?*
> ***Timothy****: (Laughter).* ***You have to perform****.*
> ***Researcher:*** *If you don't satisfy her? How would you feel about that?*
> ***Timothy:*** *It* ***would hurt*** *because it means you don't have experience.*

Segal (1990) also found in her research that men generally worry about their ability to satisfy their partners sexually, revealing something artificial or fragile about men and boys' 'macho' hypersexual image. A girlfriend who expresses dissatisfaction with her boyfriend's sexual

performance may cause a major narcissistic injury to his sense of manhood. In psychoanalytic terms, such girls may be seen as castrating figures (Gough, 2004). Although it seems that in the example cited, the evaluation was invited in the hope of the reassurance, in extract 5 above, Timothy indicates that he would be hurt if his girlfriend said 'no', she did not enjoy it (sex). Non-enjoyment would undermine his *sex-jaro* identity because *sex-jaro* boys are publicly expected to be 'experts' on issues of sex. This is consistent with Segal's (1990) contention that while sex for males is a source of pleasure and power, it simultaneously produces feelings of self-doubt. *Sex-jaro* boys seemed to experience similar fears and anxieties. This also emerged in one of the group interviews where the participants started bragging about the sizes of their penises evoking phallic notions of the bigger, the harder, and the better. One boy said, "*Yeah your umshini wako [Zulu word for gun which is used as a euphemism for penis in this context] must be big so that you are able to do it right*". This view was shared by many boys in group interviews. A big penis was considered a symbol of sexual strength, and it was interesting that some of the participants compared a penis with a gun, in keeping with Dolan's (2002) argument that a gun in this context was not just a gun – it was a symbol of power, authority and masculine pride (Cock, 2001; Segal, 1990). Many of the adolescent boys in the study also believed that they must have big penises and be able to maintain a firm and lasting erection without early ejaculation in order to satisfy their partners. This belief seemed to generate considerable anxiety about sex and sexual performance revealing some awareness of the kind of 'burden of the phallus' suggested by Frosh (1994). This was clearly illustrated in extract 6 in which Timothy spoke about his fears and anxieties about the possibility of failing to satisfy his girlfriend sexually. Many of the group interviews and some of the individual interviews produced material that indicated that adolescent boys might benefit from sex education, including education that questions traditional notions of masculinity as based upon sexual performance as critical to the affirmation and validation of this identity. *Sex-jaro* boys, by definition, were expected to know about sex, but they also acknowledged the need to enhance their knowledge of sex and sexuality and had clear ideas on how this should be done. For example, William as a *sex-jaro* boy narrated that "*sex is something that you get to know as you grow up…. But I never knew how it was done. And then I started dating girls, I started by kissing; after kissing, obviously we proceed, and then we had sex… So we need more information about sex and teachers must be opened*". The conclusion and recommendations

section in chapter 14 elaborates on some recommendations about potential sex education and how this should be implemented.

The subsequent section deals with *sex-jaro* boys' anxieties and fears concerning dating one sexual partner and monogamy. In their narratives, *sex-jaro* boys also spoke about their fears regarding the possibility of being left by their girlfriends. The participants draw upon various discourses, including that of the 'unfaithful woman', to justify their need to have many girlfriends and multiple sexual partners.

10.2. Female infidelity and lack of commitment as a threat to masculinity

A theme that emerged in the individual interviews with *sex-jaro* boys was their fear and anxiety about intimate relationships with one sexual partner. The fear centred on the possibility of girls leaving them and was part of their justification for engaging in several relationships simultaneously.

Extract 7:

> ***Peter:*** *You must not look up to one girl;* ***look up to two girls*** *because if you have one when she leaves you, you are going to be left with nothing*
> ***Researcher:*** *Why is it not possible to have one girlfriend?*
> ***Peter:*** *Most of your organs are in pairs, which mean you have to* ***have two girlfriends****.*
> ***Researcher:*** *What do you mean when they say most of your organs are in pairs?*
> ***Peter:*** *Like you have* ***two eyes, two nostrils, two ears and two hands****. So they say even a bicycle has two wheels. So you must also have many girlfriends to avoid any disappoint if she leaves.*

Extract 8:

> ***Researcher:*** *Is it not possible to have one girlfriend?*
> ***Shaun:*** *I do not want to rely on one person. When she tells me that it's over, I would not have that stress to even hang myself or kill myself over her. So by having another girlfriend,* ***when she tells me that it's over, I know that I have a back-up plan****.*

In the above extracts, the participants seemed to justify their need to have more than one girlfriend out of fear of being hurt or abandoned. It seems that *sex-jaro* boys may feel more insecure and vulnerable in relationships than evident at face value, but they conceal this fear by proactively entertaining multiple girlfriends. It is possible that *sex-jaro* boys' fear of intimacy and that the anxiety associated with any dependence is split off and projected onto girls who are viewed as fickle, disengaged and untrustworthy. Given these boys' acknowledgement of non-fidelity on their part, it seems that characterizations of girls as uncommitted may well

represent some form of projection. According to Yates (2000) defensive psychic mechanisms of splitting and projection are regularly used by boys, where more vulnerable aspects of the self are denied and projected onto girls as a means of protecting the ideal masculine ego. For example, in extract 8 above, Shaun seems to be excusing *sex-jaro* boys for seeking additional partners because girls themselves are not committed and dependable. The origin of 'unfaithfulness' is thus located outside the self and girls are blamed for boys' infidelity. As mentioned earlier, having multiple partners seems to give *sex-jaro* boys a sense of power and control. The fear of disintegration following the break-up of a relationship revealed something important about the fragility of *sex-jaro* masculinity. It seems the '*back-up plan*' in Shaun narrative (Extract 8) is used to obviate any sense of potential pain and mourning after a possible failed relationship. Kimmell and Messner (2004) found that 90% of men resort to substance abuse after the break-up of a relationship in order to numb feelings of loss, depression and grief. Men evidently find it difficult to talk about their hurt feelings following the dissolution of a relationship, especially if the break-up was as a result of the female partner's infidelity, which impacts negatively on the sense of manhood.

Adolescent boys in the present study also found it difficult to deal with their female partners' infidelity. During the interviews, three boys spoke about their experience of being cheated on by their girlfriends. Clearly, this experience left these boys feeling humiliated and wounded emotionally. In terms of Lacan's theory, this kind of experience may be seen as representing the fall of the phallus (Frosh, 1994).

Extract 9:

> ***Researcher:*** *And after you found that she was cheating how did that make you feel?*
> ***Shaun:*** *It made me feel that* ***I am useless****. It made me feel that I am not satisfying her, so she deserves someone who will satisfy her, since, well, I am not satisfying her.*

Extract 10:

> ***Alfred:*** *You see girlfriends sometimes they can make you go crazy because you find that you are in love with that girl. And then you find that at the next street she is in love with another guy. So I found her, and she was standing with another guy (kissing). I asked her why you are cheating on me. I was so* ***hurt****. I'm still even* ***hurting*** *now.*

Extract 11:

> ***Tommy:*** *I was* ***hurt****. I did not know what to do when I discovered that my girlfriend was cheating on me. I'm still* ***hurting****.*

All the three participants became deflated and hurt on discovering that their girlfriends had cheated on them, corroborating Jewkes and Wood's (2005, p. 325) finding that adolescent boys 'feel small' when they experience infidelity on the part of girls in their lives. Interestingly, the three boys did not tell their male friends that their girlfriends had cheated on them. Tommy said that he did not want his friends to laugh at him. Out of fear of being mocked, the three boys decided not to talk to their male friends about how their relationships had ended and how they felt about this. In Pollack's (1999, p. 67) words, "these boys were pressured into suppressing all their feelings of hurt" at least in public. They consequently suffered in silence without any emotional support from peers because of the anticipated humiliation of confessing that their girlfriends cheated on them. In Shaun's case, his girlfriend 's interest in another boy was interpreted immediately as indicating that he could not satisfy her sexually, suggesting quite a narrow conception of how relationships are made and maintained and also indicating that her behaviour mapped directly onto a sense of lack of potency on his past. In the public discourse of heterosexual relations, boys are expected to cheat on girls and not the other way around. As part of the have/hold discourse identified by Hollway (1989), girls and women are expected to be faithful and demonstrate high levels of commitment in relationships. It is seen as the male's prerogative to start or end a relationship (Jewkes & Wood, 2005), and girls who take over this agency undermine adolescent boys' masculinity. In Selikow et al. s' (2002) study, some of the girls claimed that because boys were not faithful, there was no reason for them to be loyal and faithful, indicating that there was an awareness on their part of double standards in gendered relationships and some justification of retaliation. However, all the participants in the current study mentioned that girls were not allowed to have multiple boyfriends, although boys who have multiple partners are publicly celebrated as *sex-jaros*. Girls who do the same are frowned upon and seen as transgressive and 'loose' as discussed in the subsequent section. Such double standards in relation to judgments of male and female sexual appetite and promiscuity are widely recognized in gender studies literature (Hollway, 1989; Lesch & Kruger, 2004) and appeared to be already quite entrenched amongst these young adolescent men in Alex.

10.3. Double standards in relation to sexual behaviour

It became apparent in the study that adolescent boys scrutinized and policed girls to make sure that they did not have more than one boyfriend. Girls who refused to comply were called derogatory names such as 'whores' or *difebe* (Sotho word for prostitutes).

Extract 12:

> ***Researcher:*** *Can girls also have many boyfriends?*
> ***Shaun:*** *When a girl starts having more than one boyfriend, she would be referred to as a* ***whore****, and so on.*

Extract 13:

> ***Themba:*** *We call them* ***difebe*** *(Sotho word for prostitutes).*
> ***Researcher:*** *Why?*
> ***Themba:*** *It is not allowed.*

Extract 14:

> ***Researcher:*** *Is this not unfair that for boys it is fine to have many girlfriends, but it is not fine for girls to do the same. Ok, what if a girl comes to you and says Martin, I love you?*
> ***Martin****: I would ask her how many boys have you told so because it is not usual and it is not normal for you to come and say that you love me. A boy has to go and approach and propose. So whenever a girl proposes to me, it seems awkward. It means* ***ke sefebe*** *[In Sotho 'she is a prostitute'].*

It was evident that adolescent boys in Alex were invested in controlling the expression of girls' sexuality. They set the standard for acceptable behaviour, which included the expectation that girls should not take the initiative in heterosexual relationships, should not ask boys 'out' on a date and must also be faithful in relationships. The participants labelled girls who made themselves easily sexually available as whores, but, at the same time, they did not like girls who "*played too hard to get*", said Lesly, a 16-year-old boy. On this point, Stombler (1994) contends that boys give girls mixed messages about proper sexual behaviour because they expect them to be sexually available, but not too easily available. Girls are expected to perform a balancing act by being sexual available without being labelled as too 'loose'. The participants' narratives indicate that girls and women are denied independence in directing their sex lives and expressing their sexual desires freely. Girls cannot decide when and how to have sex, and the dilemma for school girls appears to be how to maintain the reputation of being a good girl rather than a whore and yet not to be seen as withholding and prudish. Unlike, boys who publicly boast about their multiple partners, girls have to be discreet about their multiple affairs as they risk being assaulted if their boyfriends find out that they have

been unfaithful (Jewkes & Wood, 2005). Boys thus discredit and undermine girls' right to have multiple partners. Lesch and Kruger (2004) argue that schoolgirls should be empowered to assert their rights as sexual beings and to also celebrate their own sexuality just as adolescent boys do. *Sex-jaro* boys in the study seemed to feel justified in having sex with different partners while denying schoolgirls the same freedom. Such double standards endorse male supremacy where adolescent boys control girls as sex objects, using both talk and active policing of behaviour, such as ostracization and labeling of such girls negatively. Although beyond the scope of this study, it would be interesting to interview girls about their perceived positioning in this respect.

In addition, it seems terms such as whores and *difebe* are used to defend against any masculine injury that boys might suffer when girls defy their domination by also dating multiple boys. Such girls are devalued and denigrated by adolescent boys in an attempt to re-instill masculine domination and also hypothetically to deal with their feelings of anxiety, shame and humiliation associated with the possibility of being cheated on or rejected by these girls. As a defence against such possible masculine injury (Cartwright, 2002; Rochlin, 1980), boys appeared to be emotionally invested in inhibiting and controlling sexual practices of their female peers. Boys' sentiments were contradictory, because, on the one hand, girls were looked to affirm adolescent boys' sense of masculinity, and, on the other hand, they posed potential threats to their sense of manhood. These threats generated anxiety and, consequently, an investment was made at an unconscious or conscious level to protect the self against the threats by entrenching male supremacy over women (Soskelne, Stein & Gibson, 2004). Such domination of women is collectively rationalized and reinforced, indicating how masculine identity is expressed as sexual proactivity and prowess and is simultaneously guarded and protected.

The above discussion has suggested some of the defensive mechanisms employed by adolescent boys in their relationships with girls in order to resolve the 'masculine dilemma' of simultaneously loving and fearing girls or women (Cartwright, 2002; Rochlin, 1980). This highlights the complexities and paradoxes inherent in living out young masculinity. Adolescent boys have to contend with these contradictory forces within themselves and find a way of

dealing with public and personal pressures and their dependence upon others, including girls, in order to derive and maintain self-esteem. The subsequent section reveals how *sex-jaro* boys may engage in risky sexual behaviours to heighten their sense of masculinity. McQueen and Henwood (2002) see risk-taking behaviours among adolescent boys as largely representing psychological defense mechanisms to cope with psychic fears and anxieties associated with being a male, anxieties rooted in early childhood. In the section below, the researcher critically discusses some of the psychological processes involved when *sex-jaro* boys engage in sexually risky behaviour, including placing themselves at risk for contraction of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as HIV.

10.4. Multiple partners: secret lovers in the era of HIV and AIDS

In the study, *sex-jaro* boys proudly spoke about commonly having both steady girlfriends and sexual relations with *makwapeng* (Sotho word for secret lovers) who were treated differently. In the extract below, William, as a self-identified *sex-jaro*, argued that a steady girlfriend is not treated in the same way as a secret lover.

Extract 15:

> ***William****: I have other girlfriends.*
> ***Researcher:*** *With them does the same principle apply about no sex and no sex?*
> ***William****: I have had sex with them.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Why with them and not her (his steady girlfriend)?*
> ***William****: You see with these girls (secret lovers) is because of their mentality. They* ***like bad*** *things. They are in the* ***fast lane.*** *We do what we do but not with her. She is someone (referring to his steady girlfriend)* ***I want to build a family*** *with her. I can't afford to lose her over them.*
> ***Researcher:*** *With them, do you also talk to them about things like safe sex?*
> ***William****: No, with them is all about sex, but my girlfriend we talk about everything including HIV and AIDS and condom use.*

The above narrative suggests that secret lovers are treated exclusively as sex objects because with them it "*is all about sex*", whereas in the case of his steady girlfriend William wants to 'build family with her and abstains from full sexual relations'. The feminist writer, Ussher (1997), has referred to this as the Madonna and Whore syndrome, where girls are cast into opposite categories by boys – either as Madonnas (referring to a more idealized romanticized representation of a woman, in this case a steady girlfriend), or whores (referring to women who are seen as temptresses and sexually loose, in this case a secret lover). Chodorow (1978) sees this kind of splitting as a psychic mechanism that boys and men employ to deal with their

anxieties about liking and fearing women/girls simultaneously. Evidently, no bonding or emotional connection exists with secret lovers. According to William, secret lovers are 'positioned' as being in the "*fast lane*" and as liking "*bad things*" and, as a result, they deserve to be treated badly and used as objects of sexual activity. In contrast, with his steady girlfriend, William openly discussed issues of safe sex and teenage pregnancy, evincing concern for her welfare and a commitment to her in the future. One could argue that secret lovers were merely used as objects to contain boys' anxieties and fears about the masculine self as shown earlier in which many participants boasted about the fact that they had multiple girlfriends. In this interview, William spoke about sexual escapades in which he had unprotected sex with many of his girlfriends. He said that this had happened more than once. In the interview, William sounded rather reckless in his sexual behaviour. The interviewer therefore asked him as well as other participants whether *sex-jaro* boys were informed about HIV/AIDS and STDs. One of the other boys interviewed answered as follows:

***Extract 16*:**

> ***Martin:*** *They do. When we tell this one (pointing to the photo of one sex-jaro boy), he would always ignore us, and say* ***ke mmino wa lefase*** *[it is 'the world's music and we must have fun]',* ***we would all die****, nevertheless. There is point where you will die, and you wouldn't have tasted anything. So you would be useless when you get to God.*

In his book, *Unimagined community*, anthropologist Robert Thornton (2008) maintains that fatalistic attitudes such as "*we would all die*" have contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. It seems that *sex-jaro* boys such as William and others have perhaps at times resigned themselves to the risk of contracting HIV and justify this to some extent by referring to the need to satisfy an appetite for pleasure (and sexual pleasure in particular) in the present moment. What also emerged in this study was that lack of sexual agency in relationships was putting young girls at risk of HIV infection as *sex-jaro* boys felt entitled to have unsafe, penetrative sex with multiple partners. Martin mentioned that *sex-jaro* boys were also called "*I do not care*" boys in Alex.

Extract 17:

> ***Martin:*** *I think these boys are also called* ***IDCs, I Do Not Care****. So as he is an IDC, he thinks that these messages [HIV/AIDS campaigns] are meant for other people and not for him. So it must go to other people. So he says it is preferable that flesh be destroyed by flesh than by soil at the graveyard.*

Some of the adolescent boys in the study were knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS infection and how to prevent its transmission, but it seems this knowledge did not generally influence *sex-jaro* boys to change their risky sexual practices. *Sex-jaro* boys reportedly dismiss HIV/AIDS messages as overly conservative and "*meant for other people*". There was a sense of perceived invulnerability in their narratives. For many years, researchers have been asking why so many adolescents still engage in unsafe sexual practices while knowing that these practices may result in HIV infection. In their HIV prevention work with South African youth, Campbell and MacPhail (2002) concluded that the *context* of adolescents should be taken into account when trying to understand lifestyle choices that place young people at risk of infection. In Alex, for example, the risky sexual behaviour of *sex-jaro* boys is admired by many adolescent boys. According to Niehaus (2005) sexually active boys are seen as 'cool' and are said to have achieved the status of *inkhalakhata* (township lingo for a 'real' man). It seems that achieving this particular kind of notion of popular township masculinity comes at a price, which involves risking one's health and even one's life. The references to death and dying in the previous quotations suggest that there is some appreciation of a risk to mortality and that there is a kind of defiance and deliberate recklessness in the boys' sexual behaviour that is worn as a badge of daring. This tends to confirm Rose's (1987) argument that masculine subjectivities are acquired at a 'cost', one of these costs being engagement in risk-taking behaviour as a means to earn a position of status in the peer male group. This kind of risk taking is also likely to be exaggerated amongst adolescents, given their developmental characteristics.

The study helped to shed light on some of the psychological processes involved in HIV risk-taking behaviours amongst adolescent boys. Follow-up individual interviews were conducted with some of the *sex-jaro* boys, such as William, in order to explore and better understand their risk-taking attitudes and it was apparent that some of these boys felt largely hopeless about their future prospects and, as a result, had predominantly negative views about life. This may be contributing to their risk-taking behaviours. For example, one *sex-jaro* boy in his second follow-up individual interview said, "*I don't care if I die of HIV or AIDS. I really don't care. I feel I'm already dead inside*". Another *sex-jaro* boy said, "*Who cares? I don't care because we are all going to die*". The theme of death and dying was central in some of the interviews with *sex-jaro* boys. In a follow-up individual interview, Brian jokingly said, "*AIDS stands for*

American Idea to Destroy Sex". The dominant feeling in these interviews as captured in these statements was that "*we are all going to die anyway. So why not enjoy yourself while you are still alive*". A fatalistic element was evident in the narratives of the *sex-jaro* boys and they engaged in unsafe sexual practices knowing full well that such practices could lead to HIV infection. The question was whether these boys, as a result of feeling helpless and hopeless, engaged in risk-taking behaviours as a means of coping with or suppressing these negative feelings (Schafer, 2003) and as a way of feeling 'alive' in the present when the future appeared bleak. Some of them conveyed a kind of nihilistic attitude in this respect. Many of the *sex-jaro* boys stated that they did not care about their future because their current life circumstances created little grounds for optimism (for example, lack of future prospects due to poor academic performance at school and expectations of ongoing impoverishment). However, this is not to say that all adolescent boys who grow up in poverty-stricken areas, such as Alex, engage in risk-taking behaviours.

This chapter now focuses on what could be referred to as the 'internal functioning' of *sex-jaro* boys and their involvement in risky sexual behaviours. As evidenced in the above extracts, for many of these boys, their internal world was characterized by negative emotions such as feeling "*dead inside*", which points to rather severe depressive feeling states. Instead of attempting to deal more constructively with the negative feelings of depression, they appeared to avoid or alter these feelings by engaging in risky sexual behaviours. Donald Campbell (1999) a psychoanalytic researcher, argues that risky behaviours represent an attempt, unconsciously or consciously, to get rid of emotional pain, but the pain continues to engulf the self. Certainly for some of the *sex-jaro* boys, it seemed their emotional suffering was hidden beneath multiple layers of hyper-masculine assertions and behaviour that served as a compensatory defence mechanism in dealing with feelings of emptiness and despondency. The follow-up individual interviews gave the participants the opportunity to talk openly about some of their suppressed feelings of distress and depression. For example, William said the following in his individual interview.

Extract 18:

> *The thing that we guys deal with is stress and depression. I faced things by myself. And there came a time where I thought,* ***fuck I might as well kill*** *myself*

During this part of the interview, William confessed that he sometimes feels sad, depressed and even suicidal. Consciously or unconsciously, this may play a role in his self-destructive sexual behaviours. A recent study (Nduna, Jewkes, Dunkle, Shai, & Colman, 2010) also revealed that depression may be associated with high-risk sexual behaviours among South African youth (males and females). For males, the specific risky behaviours associated with depression were having multiple sex partners and being less likely to use a condom. A limitation of the Nduna et al.'s study (2010) was that it was quantitative in nature and therefore did not enable the researchers to explore the subjective meanings the participants attributed to their risky sexual behaviours. In the present study, follow-up individual interviews allowed exploration of some of the underlying psychological processes that influenced *sex-jaro* boys to behave recklessly. The intention here was not to 'pathologize' the participants but to gain greater insight into their risky sexual behaviours at a psychological level. A major shortcoming in many studies on young masculinities is that they do not explore how psychological and intrapsychic processes influence certain individuals to indulge in risk-taking behaviours (McQueen & Henwood, 2002). Campbell (2003) argues that many HIV interventions are based on the assumption that sexual behaviour is shaped only by the conscious decision of an individual and fail to take into account how masculine sexual identities are 'collectively' negotiated and constructed in a particular context and also how more unconscious processes may be implicated in behaviour. In the present study, importance was attached to how personal histories, life circumstances and lifestyles in Alex influenced adolescent boys to behave in a particular manner. According to McQueen and Henwood (2002), the focus on 'life-history' factors enables researchers to gain some awareness of the emotional investments people make in occupying certain subjective positions. This study revealed that many of the *sex-jaro* boys who are also *tsotsi* boys engaged in risk-taking behaviours as a means of masking feelings of emotional deprivation, neglect, rejection and anger at their parents (especially absent father figures), and as a means of bolstering identities that were in actual fact rather empty and fragile. In chapter 13, the issue of absent fathers and its impact on adolescent boys' sense of manhood will be discussed in greater detail.

It was evident that the follow-up individual interview process gave *sex-jaro* boys such as William the opportunity to reflect on their masculine selves as illustrated in the extract below.

These aspects of the participants' narratives show that adolescent boys do have the capacity to reflect on their risk-taking behaviours, which could potentially lead to behaviour change and transformation of the self if supported.

Extract 19:

> ***Researcher:*** *I mean at one point we got very emotional and we started talking about personal stuff. How was that part for you?*
> ***William:*** *I think it was healing in a way. It was something new. I have never talked to someone like this. So it was healing process in a way. And somehow the whole concept of what does it mean to be a boy, it showed me other stuff like really what does it mean to be a boy.*

This view that the follow-up individual interviews were cathartic was shared by all of the *sex-jaro* boys and by other boys in the study. They commented that they had never had access to 'private spaces' to talk about intense feelings and personal problems. While follow-up individual interviews were not therapy sessions, they seem to have offered the *sex-jaro* boys the opportunity to talk about life stories of neglect, rejection and deprivation. As a researcher, I observed that in these interviews, many of *sex-jaro* boys started opening up about their more private feelings and relating how some of these internal feeling states were contributing to their risky sexual behaviours. They no longer postured defensively and boasted as they had in the first individual interviews and focus groups, but were willing to reveal their feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness. Reflecting on this, Brian, as a *sex-jaro* boy, said, "*I think for me it was a question of not knowing myself or …what I want in life but through this [referring to our two follow-up individual interviews] at least now I know what it means to be a boy*". Like Brian, other *sex-jaro* boys also acknowledged that the follow-up individual interviews helped them reflect more deeply on what it meant to be a boy in Alex, supporting Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli's (2003) argument that adolescent boys are able to talk about their inner feelings and emotions without any need for performance if given a safe space to do so.

In the course of the present study, some of the *sex-jaro* boys began to question their risky sexual behaviours with multiple girlfriends. "*From now I told myself that no unsafe sex. I must just stick to one partner*", said William in his follow-up individual interview. The fact that the researcher was non-judgmental seemed to enhance the participants' insight. However, more engagements with adolescent boys are needed at an interpersonal and pedagogical level to create the space to challenge the heterosexist, hyper-masculinity linked to risky sexual

behaviours. Discussions with adolescent boys should take place in settings where the boys can present their concerns and doubts without fear of criticism and ridicule in order to challenge their risky sexual behaviours without alienating them. In the subsequent section, the researcher discusses some of the 'alternative' voices that were presented voluntarily by boys who rejected the dominant discourse associated with a sexually active, promiscuous and risk taking masculinity. This group of adolescent boys who took part in the study believe that boys should be 'faithful' in relationships with girls and support a more monogamous and risk minimizing view of sexual behaviour.

10.5 .Voices of resistance: challenging the hypersexual nature of *sex-jaro* masculinity

A small but significant sub-group of adolescent boys was critical of *sex-jaro* boys' sexual behaviour. Wetherell and Edley (1999) identify such boys as occupying a 'rebellious' subject position in which the macho risky sexual behaviours of other boys are rejected and challenged.

Extract 20:

> ***Thabiso:*** *I would prefer to* ***have one girl****.*

Extract 21:

> ***Simon:*** *Yeah, I feel like you must have one because you must be honest and loyal to your girlfriend. Because when you are with her, you will be telling her, you are only the heart of my desire. But you know very well that she is not the only one. So I think we must be faithful to our lovers.*

Extract 22:

> ***Brett:*** *I think you must have one girl.* ***I refuse this thing of having two girls*** *because if you really love somebody, you wouldn't want to share her with somebody else.*

Interestingly, all the participants who rejected the idea of multiple partners were academically orientated boys. Again here, as shown also in Chapter 9, academic orientation seemed to be a protective factor against involvement in risky sexual behaviours. Simon, as one of the academic boys who also classified himself as a Christian, said in his individual interview as well in the group interview that boys should be 'honest' and 'loyal' to their girlfriends (Extract 21). He took moral position that boys should stop telling girls that they loved them while knowing that they were betraying them by having other relationships. Simon's main complaint was that having multiple partners, lying and seeing sex as a priority in relationships tarnished the image of 'good' boys like him because then girls saw all boys in the same light ("*boys only*

want sex"). This view was supported by other academic boys such as Thabiso and Brett who also rejected "*this thing of having two girls or more*". They argued that boys should be 'faithful'. Similar voices of resistance have been identified in other studies on young masculinities (Frosh et al., 2002; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Shefer et al., 2007). Understanding these voices of resistance and also the factors that make these voices possible is important. As Barker (2005, p. 25) puts it, "understanding these voices of resistance yields tremendous insights on the power of subjectivity – that is the power of individuals to construct their own meaning out the world around them and their life circumstances, particularly the power of subjectivity to question rigid gender norms". It is therefore interesting to further explore how some boys in Alex were able resist peer pressure to engage in the kinds of normative sexual practices outlined thus far.

Extract 23:

> ***Herman:*** *So other guys, they like girls who drink because they think that when* ***she is drunk they can easily have sex with that girl****. And then that is why I took this photo [It was a picture of boys drinking and a girl]. I took it because, although here she was not drinking beer, I took it because I wanted to express that, us guys, sometimes we take – let me say 'us' because I am also a guy; we take advantage of girls,* ***although me I do not do that****.*

Extract 24:

> ***Martin:*** *It is wrong for these boys to do that because the advantage of boys over those girls is that they get drunk quickly, and then they end up not controlling themselves. So the boys take advantage of their bodies.* ***I personally feel that is wrong.***

Khan (2008) found that girls who drink alcohol are often seen as easy sexual targets. Here, the male fantasy is that if a girl drinks too much alcohol, she will lose her inhibitions and become easily sexually available. In the above extracts, both Herman and Martin distanced themselves from *sex-jaro* boys who use such tactics to have sex with girls. Marcus, a 16-year-old boy, also supported the view that girls should be treated with respect and dignity. He said, "*if a girl does not want to sleep with me, I would not beat her up. If she does not want to sleep with me, it's okay*". This reference to not beating up his girlfriend is probably related to the fact that *sex-jaro* boys were also well known for using violence against their girlfriends. The data, however, show that some of the participants embraced non-violent voices and more respectful relationships with girls. Similarly, Sathiparsad (2008) found that many young males in South African schools were slowly developing progressive views on gender-based violence. Sathiparsad argues that interventions to address gender-based violence should incorporate

approaches that involve adolescent boys in developing alternative masculinities to promote gender-equitable, non-violent and non-risky heterosexual relationships such an alternative identity as illustrated in the sub-section below, in which being a virgin was celebrated in the context of HIV and AIDS.

10.6. "I'm proud to be a virgin": rejecting notions of male hyper-sexuality

Ten boys disclosed in the individual interviews that they were virgins, almost a third of the sample. This was surprising, not only because it seemed unusual for so many adolescent boys to disclose such intimate information, but also because the prevalent view seems to be that adolescent township boys are necessarily sexually active. In this study, Marcus, an academic boy, disclosed in the individual interview that he was a virgin and was proud to be one. In the era of HIV and AIDS adolescent boys should be encouraged to be responsible about their sexual lives and it may be important to challenge the male sexual drive discourse (Hollway, 1989) as Marcus did in this instance. In the study, some of the participants held healthy and self-protective views about HIV/AIDS – they were aware of the risks of HIV infection and were consequently responsible in their sexual behaviours. Unlike the *sex-jaro* boys, they contended that boys should either abstain from sex or be faithful to one partner.

Extract 25:

> ***Nathan:*** *She (his girlfriend) is special in many ways. I love her a lot, and I wish that I could end up with her. And I feel comfortable when I am with her.* ***We haven't had sex and I'm happy with that.***

In the above interview, like Marcus, Nathan also said that he was proud to be a virgin. He rejected the view that boys 'must' have multiple partners because he realized that it puts them at greater risk of HIV infection. The behaviour of some boys thus seemed to run counter to Campbell's (2001) finding that South African adolescent boys in general engage in unsafe sexual practices. For instance, Marcus spoke about his fear of contracting HIV. In his interview, he disclosed that his older sister had been HIV positive and had died two years earlier. Marcus was highly emotional when he talked about the death of his sister and how she had died. Since then his mother had advised him not to engage in any sexual activity. Marcus said that he had not had sex since then because of his awareness of the consequences of having sex at a young age. He commented that seeing his sister so ill and bed-ridden had strengthened

his resolve to resist other boys' pressure on him to have sex. It seems the experience of personal loss as a result of HIV and AIDS had thus influenced Marcus to remain sexually inactive.

Thabiso, another 16-year-old boy, said he was happy about his decision not to have sex until he was married. He contended that it was worthwhile to "*sign the contract with yourself*" not to have sex until the right moment. As mentioned earlier, ten boys disclosed that they had never had sex, and these boys evidently took pride in their virginity. They embraced non-risky sexual behaviours and maintained that boys should be faithful to their partners or abstain until the right time. It was evident, however, that the process of being a 'different boy' was in many cases beset with feelings of anxiety, self-doubt and internal conflict. Adolescent boys who embrace alternative masculine voices have to contend with such inner struggles on a daily basis as demonstrated in the section below, in which it is apparent that these boys are teased about their lack of sexual experience.

10.7. Emotional costs to being a Christian boy and a virgin in Alex

In Alex, *sex-jaro* boys are widely seen as 'sexual champions' for having sex with multiple partners while Christian boys are generally ridiculed by *sex-jaro* boys as *dikgope* (Sotho word for a boy who does not have a single girlfriend and has never had sex). Some of the boys who categorized themselves as Christians spoke about feeling pressurized to have girlfriends and sexual relationships, but others were able to resist the peer pressure although they said it was not easy. One Christian boy (Simon) commented, "*being a Christian boy is a tough battle*". Many of the boys who classified themselves as Christians mentioned that they often experienced confusion and uncertainty due to the teasing they had to endure from the other boys (especially *sex-jaro* boys) in Alex.

Extract 26:

> ***Nathan****: Other boys [especially sex-jaro boys] used to say bad things about me, call me* ***umzalwana*** *that I like going to church. But as a human being I do not take what they say personally.*

Hierarchically, the Christian boys apparently occupied the second to bottom position (with gay boys occupying the bottom position) in terms of adolescent boys' status on the masculine

hierachy in Alex. They (Christian boys) tended to be ridiculed as 'fools' and were insulted by being called belittling terms such as *umzalwana* (the Zulu word for being Christian, but in this context used derogatorily to refer to any boy who goes to church regularly and believes sex before marriage is a sin). Being ridiculed as *umzalwana* may evoke feelings of hurt and discrimination. Although Nathan denied taking these insults personally, in the interview, I observed that he did appear to feel upset about this. In countering the ridicule, Simon, another Christian boy, positioned himself as superior and more mature, responsible and intelligent than boys who did not attend church when he spoke about the perception that, "*our boys they take you like a fool when you go to church*" (referring to *sex-jaro* boys). Simon saw himself as an adult person who was disappointed with *sex-jaro* boys who did not know what they wanted in life. In the individual interview and the focus group, Simon was critical of *sex-jaro* boys' sexual behaviour. In one of the group interviews, Simon was very assertive in his position that boys must be faithful to their partners, as evidenced in a quotation previously cited. As a researcher, I was surprised at the manner in which Simon asserted himself in the focus group. In fact, he was very dominant and took the role of teacher in the group, lecturing his male adolescent peers about 'healthy' and non-risky behaviours. Interestingly, he used religious discourses (e.g. "*the bible says sex before marriage is sin*") to silence fellow group members. It may have been difficult for the other boys in the group to challenge him because they did not want to come across as atheists or as challenging of Christian values in a public context. In the extract below, Simon said that boys who did not attend church were afraid of him. They found it difficult to talk in front of him about smoking, drinking and having sex with their girlfriends. He implied that these boys respected him for his morality and maturity, and also feared being judged by him. This gave him an interesting form of power - the power of moral censure as opposed to the kind of power associated with popularity and sexual prowess.

Extract 27:

> ***Simon****: It's not like that happens always, but then you are going to say, I am from church. It's like something … you see they are afraid of that. They fear you in a way. They are afraid of that. Because when you say that I am from church, they would be afraid of saying other* ***things in front of you like talking about drinking, or doing stuff like that, in front of you****. Because I have noticed that with my friends; at first we used to talk, especially on Sunday mornings; yeah, yesterday was a nice night, we had this, we did this, we did that. But now they are afraid to touch that topic because* ***they are afraid of what I would say, or what I would think, or what I would do.***

Christian boys seemed to use their religious beliefs to resist, reject and subvert popular norms of *sex-jaro* masculinity. Religion seemed to serve as a protective coping mechanism. The Christian boys also appeared to have developed a clear sense of self to deal with the derogatory names accorded them. They were seemingly not bothered by the *sex-jaro* boys' insults, and they were also confident enough in their identities not to be influenced by their peers to engage in risk-taking behaviours. Their affirmation and validation appeared to be internally driven rather than based primarily on external loci of control, although their sense of belonging to a congregation of Christian people probably helped to shore up this identity. However, the findings later showed that the process of negotiating multiple voices of masculinity from the position of a Christian boy was not always simple and stable. Christian boys experienced internal battles, but they seemed to employ reasonably mature defence mechanisms, such as sublimation and self-talk strategies to reconcile opposing aspects of being a Christian boy in Alex. Again the identity struggles expressed by Christian boys confirm Frosh et al.'s (2002) and other theorists' observation that masculine identities are rarely stable or coherent but rather are fluid, multiple and contradictory in lived practice. Despite their apparently strong and stable identity positions, Christian boys' narratives were characterized by considerable feelings of ambivalence. This kind of ambivalence emerged strongly in the individual interview with Simon when he spoke about one of his photos depicted below.

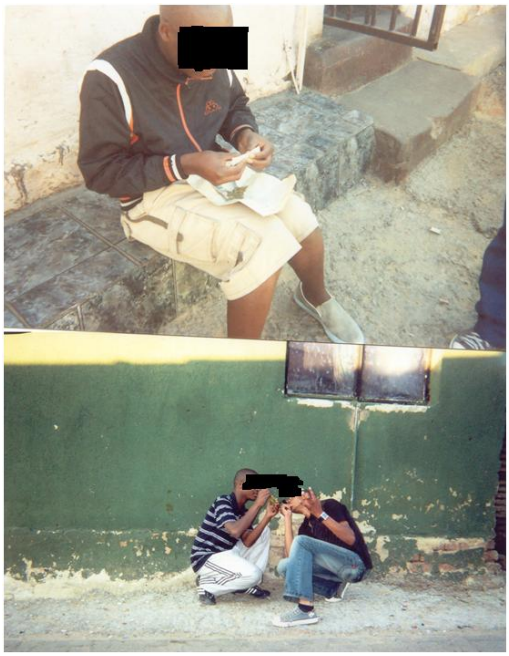


Photo 10

Extract 28:

> ***Simon:*** *With this photo I wanted to show you that many boys here in Alex think to be a boy you must smoke and drink… and have sex with many girls.*

While recognizing that such behaviour is normative amongst his peers, Simon, a 16-year-old Christian boy, distanced himself from *sex-jaro* boys who smoke dagga and *rocklefase* (mixture of mandrax and dagga). In his individual interview, he confessed that he used to smoke and drink but added that he had stopped this after he became a born-again Christian. Simon said, "*I was pleasing them or pleasing anyone*" (referring to his friends when he was smoking and drinking). Interestingly, while he had stopped engaging in these behaviours, many of his friends did not know this because he did not tell them. He appeared concerned about losing his status as a 'cool' guy if his friends were to find out, but he also displayed a certain independence when he said, "*I actually do not care anymore ... yeah, the coolness and the status doesn't worry me anymore because at first it used to worry me*". Simon apparently experienced an internal battle about whether to openly tell his friends that he was no longer drinking and smoking, as he was worried about being ostracized if he told them and perhaps also of appearing to be judgemental. It seems he still wanted to maintain the image of being a 'cool' boy by occupying different and even contradictory positions. Simon was one of the boys in Chapter 9 who insisted that he did not want to be classified as either a *tsotsi* boy or an academic boy. He argued that these categories constrained him from being who he wanted to be at any particular time. However, he also acknowledged that occasionally he felt confused about his identity and that he often found the process of being in the 'borderland' overwhelming, taxing and energy consuming. He confessed in his individual interview that he experienced feelings of self-doubt in his interaction with his male peers. He continued to spend time with them, and they often pressurized him to drink with them, but he said he was able to resist, involving some self-sacrifice and self-discipline.

Extract 29:

> ***Simon:*** *They offered me a drink, and I was like confident –* ***I'm like no, no I'm fine****! And then I kept quiet. After a while, I thought about taking the drink and then I said to my friends, guys I would be back now. Then I went home****. And then I sat down, never went out again.***

The above narrative illustrates Simon's internal conflict. Firstly, he did not want to disappoint his friends by openly refusing to drink, and secondly, it was clear that he experienced internal

conflict because he himself wanted to drink. Going home was an escape for him and helped him resist the impulse to drink. He had to remove himself from the situation in order to manage these tensions rather than engaging his peers directly. The internal battle of resisting the temptation to drink and smoke was intertwined with a deeper fear of failing himself should he submit to the temptation.

Extract 30:

> ***Simon:*** *Yeah, you know sometimes you can't help* ***temptation****. Temptation just comes everywhere. So instead of being in that situation where you are going to be tempted just be out of it completely … yeah****, it's a battle at first.*** *But when you get used to the idea, it becomes something that you live with. You wouldn't even be tempted at all to drink at all! But when it's like a few months that you have stopped this thing; it's a battle. It's like a* ***tough battle.***

As a researcher, I found Simon to be insightful and reflective in his interviews, and his contribution seemed to confirm Barker's (2005) view that the achievement of alternative masculine identities requires boys to have well-developed self-reflective abilities. Simon had some of these abilities. In the extract above, he acknowledged that temptations will always be there, but suggesting that he has found strategies to manage this. He also did not minimize his vulnerabilities and his struggles. In his narrative, Simon sounded very authentic. His sense of self was very clear, although as mentioned earlier he acknowledged that being a different boy was a "*tough battle*". Below, Simon spoke about other coping strategies he uses to deal with some of his internal conflicts. He asserted that being a Christian helps him handle a range of 'temptations', including the temptation to have sex. While the discussion has moved away somewhat from the direct observation of heterosexual relationships, it appeared drinking, smoking and having casual sex were all tied up in a package for many of the respondents.



Photo 11:

Extract 31:

> ***Simon****: This was a Christian camp (pointing to the above picture). I was on this camp. It was a Christian camp ...**yes, it does help you deal with some of these issues because sometimes** you see you have got this thing, you see. Is it right as a Christian to do this thing?*

It seems Simon was creative and imaginative in his depiction of photographic images and many of his photos featured activities at church. In commenting about his photos, Simon mentioned that there was an internal voice that guided him in resisting the temptations that life presented him. He added that it was against the teachings of Christianity to smoke, drink alcohol and have sex before marriage. It thus seems that religion played a key role in helping Simon cope with some of his internal conflicts, and that he had internalized these values and used them to guide his behaviour.

In terms of psychodynamic theory, it could be argued that Simon used both sublimation and repression as defence mechanisms. Sublimation is a defence mechanism whereby a person channels unacceptable impulses into socially acceptable behaviours, often altruistic or creative in nature (Schafer, 2003). In this case, Simon arguably used religion as a 'healthy' sublimation to resist desires to engage in risk-taking behaviours. At the same time his desires and impulses also seemed to be repressed, in that he associated pre-marital sex with sin. Religion forced him to repress his sexual desires, but this was accompanied by some fear of disintegrating and losing his sense of self. Simon 'confessed', in the extract below, to being an ambivalent masculine subject. He mentioned that he was once tempted to have sex with his girlfriend, but this did not happen.

Extract 32:

> ***Simon: I was home alone, and then I brought my girlfriend inside the house****; and then actually like my sister came in and then she just found me. I was in the kitchen. I was like pouring some juice, biscuits and all that. And I think that was like ... I think it was the way it was meant to happen. And I was meant to do what I was thinking in my mind, to please other people.* ***I think she was meant to come in at that time****.*
> ***Researcher:*** *But if your sister didn't come, were you then going to have sex with the girl?*
> ***Simon: Yeah, I was just going to do it;*** *and then afterwards you've got that pleasure – afterwards you're going to your friends; yeah, I had sex with this girl.*

In the interview, Simon explained how he was in two minds as to whether to have sex with his girlfriend or not. He seems to feel lucky that he abstained, but he acknowledged that if his sister had not returned, he may well have had sex with his girlfriend. Interestingly, the

anticipated pleasure associated with potentially having sex seems to be as much about sharing the experience with other boys as it is about the act of sex, reinforcing the notion that masculine identity is very much tied with making public one's prowess, even if this is to a limited group of friends. Simon maintained that it was possible for a boy to be a virgin and not have sex at all and still retain his masculine identity. He claimed that it was unacceptable for a Christian boy to have sex before marriage as this contravened the teachings of Christianity. Religious beliefs, teachings and mores may help adolescent boys to exercise self-control in abstaining from sexual activity (Abbott-Chapman & Denholm, 2001). However, the process of managing oneself in relation to this kind of prohibition seemed to be anxiety provoking and threatening for Simon and some of the other Christian boys.

Simon's views were similar to those of Michael, another 17-year-old boy who also classified himself as a Christian. Michael attends the Christ Embassy church, a well-known charismatic church in Randburg. His photos also featured church-related activities (see the photo below).



Photo 12

In the photo above, Michael depicted himself singing in the church choir. He mentioned that he wants to be a minister like his Pastor at church. He also did not smoke or drink alcohol and also believed sex before marriage was a sin.

Extract 33:

> ***Michael:*** *You have to stick by the rules; you can't be out of the line because if you do so ... at church you hear different things;* ***they tell you that if you do this, you will rapture; if you do this, it's not good, you are committing sin****. I have to stick by the church rules.*

As Ratele et al. (2007) and Jensen (2008) found in their research, it was also the case that some of the boys in the present study drew on their religious beliefs to resist risk-taking behaviours. Michael believed that it was against church rules and a sin to be "*out of the line*" (e.g. to smoke and drink) and that "*the word of God controls everything in you*". Like Simon, however, Michael also spoke about his own internal battles. According to him, temptations would always be there, but he had to convince himself that "*it is wrong, it is wrong*". Following this internal dialogue/self-talk, he was able to control himself. However, sometimes the temptations become too strong for Michael to deal with alone.

Extract 34:

> ***Michael:*** *I consult someone who's like an elder at church like sister P. I don't just deal with them myself because sometimes I'll deal with them and then I take the wrong decisions or choices, and then it ends up being a mix-up.*

In Michael's case, resources were available for him to talk about his feelings and conflicts, for example, there was a support system for him at church. It appeared that the elders at Michael's church were quite prepared to talk to teenagers about their life struggles. Michael said that he always consulted sister P at church about his life problems, such as the temptation to experiment sexually. The theme of managing temptation to have sexual relations emerged strongly in the interviews with the Christian boys. Martin, also as a Christian boy, said that Alex had too many temptations such as "*parties on weekends and seeing boys and girls hugging and kissing in public*". Martin also experienced contradictory emotions about his decision to abstain sexually. In the extract below, he spoke about being tempted to have sex with a girl when he went to a party with his friends.

Extract 35:

> *I was at a house party so* ***the majority of boys were having sex****, but the girl that I was standing with and we were just drinking cool drink. That was it! Okay; she said what* ***about moving out from what they were doing*** *and then go and stay outside and talk about something? So I realized that there are different people because if it were someone else she would also want to do it. She showed me how truthful she was that I am too* ***young and I am too special, I'll never do this thing****.*

It sounds as if Martin was tempted to have sex, but was relieved that he had managed to retain his integrity as a Christian, in part because of support by the girl he was with. As a researcher, I wondered how Martin would have reacted had this girl shown any interest in having sex with him. All the boys who had never had sex acknowledged that the desire to have sex was always present. These boys reported that they engaged in a process of self-talk or internal dialogue to

manage such desires. For example, Martin said, "*I talk to myself and say it is wrong to have sex*" in order to control his sexual feelings. Michael said that he often prayed to control his sexual urges. Judging by Simon, Nathan, Michael and Martin's narratives, being a 'different' boy in respect of abstinence from sex was evidently difficult. Their subjective positioning was characterized by feelings of ambivalence evoked in negotiating alternative voices of masculinity in respect of whether or not to seek out and engage in sexual intercourse. They had to repress their sexual desires, fearing if unchecked they could run out of control. In this respect, although they supported renunciation and care in sexual engagement, their talk tended to support 'the male sexual drive' discourse in that they seemed to subscribe to a construction of themselves (and other boys) as naturally strongly desiring of sex. Simon, Martin and Michael's narratives revealed that their sexual feelings were not always successfully repressed. According to Schafer (2003), repression is a contradictory defence mechanism – it is always related to desire and ends in an intense internal struggle. The repression of sexual desires produced feelings of anxiety in the participants, once again showing that masculine subjects are not unitary in their identities. Since sexual material was socially and religiously unacceptable to the conscious minds of the Christian boys, it seems their 'self' was split into two, a desiring part and a restraining part, the 'naturally' sexed boy versus the Christian valued virgin. They relied heavily on their internal Christian 'voices' to manage the temptation to have sex at a young age. In the study, Christian boys were evidently more likely to delay their sexual debut than non-Christian boys, such as *sex-jaro* boys. Christianity seems to be a positive protective factor in helping adolescent boys to resist peer pressure to have early and non-committed sexual relationships, and perhaps, by implication, to refrain from engaging in other risky behaviours (Abbott-Chapman & Denholm, 2001). However, there was also some indication that the Christian way involved control of more basic or essential male or masculine impulses.

Not all of the participants who rejected risk-taking behaviours were Christians. Other adolescent boys in the study who did not classify themselves as 'Christian' also held alternative, non-risk taking views of youthful masculinity, but these boys also seemed to experience the same emotional difficulties as Christian boys. They were also teased and called derogatory names. In fact, any adolescent boy in Alex who is known to have never had sex,

whether Christian or not, is called *umzalwana* as Martin was when he declared his virgin status, and his friends laughed at him and pressurized him, reportedly saying: "*why don't I want to do this thing [have sex], why am I storing it because it would get rotten?*" The findings suggest that the participants experienced conflict and emotional costs in negotiating hegemonic and, particularly, non-hegemonic masculinities. Martin's friends used scare tactics to persuade him to be sexually active – suggesting that his penis would become 'rotten' from 'storing' too many sperm cells. They also said to him "*o boloya ke letswai*" (Sotho idiom meaning that boys who are not sexually active will develop pimples and acne because of the large number of sperm cells in their scrotums). Shaun added that another myth was that a boy who had never had sex would go mad, '*o tla gafa*' (Sotho idiom meaning that pent-up sperm will eventually drive such a boy crazy/psychotic). These mythologized stories seem to play an important role in the lives of many adolescent boys in Alex. The stories suggest the use of scare tactics to pressurize these boys into sexually activity, including drawing upon pseudo-medical theories. The mythology is that it is 'unhealthy' to be a virgin – with the storing of sperm specifically constructed as something that may be dangerous to one's health. It is interesting that much of this mythology concerns perceptions that non-ejaculation, and the associated accumulation of sperm, is in some way fundamentally dangerous. Without going into detail there has been anthropological and public health work in respect of HIV and AIDS that has identified resistance to condom use as in part predicated on the importance of sharing body fluids in sexual intercourse in African culture (Thornton, 2008). It appears that virginity in Alex is infused with African cultural meanings in which it is suggested that sperm is meant to be spent and exchanged. Thus boys who were known not to be sexually active were pressurized via the employment of a combination of pseudo medical and cultural theories.

All of the participants who were virgins agreed that it was not easy to tell other boys that they had never had sex. Interestingly, many of the boys only disclosed in the individual interviews that they were virgins only during the follow-up individual interviews. It is possible that the participants felt more at ease with the researcher at this time, enabling them to 'confess' material about more sensitive topics. As mentioned earlier, the follow-up individual interviews enhanced the rapport between the researcher and the participants such that the researcher was apparently seen as a 'trusted' male figure who could contain their fears and keep their

'shameful' secrets confidential. Because of anxiety about ridicule and ostracization, being a virgin was something the boys generally kept secret:

Extract 36:

> ***Simon****: Actually, it's something that you keep as a* ***secret****. Let's say* ***you haven't had sex****, you'd want to keep it as a secret because if you tell them – and like – you are going to say you haven't had sex.* ***Yo! Wow! Ey****! And then you are going to have that pressure. Guys I have had sex so many times. But then it's going to take guts; because if that topic comes, everyone is going to say; I've had sex so many times – and then you are going to be the odd one out that is going to say; guys I have never had sex. You are going to be that odd one, and you are not going to be … you* ***do not want to be left out;*** *you want to be in the group.*

Simon's narrative illustrates the embarrassment a boy will feel if he chooses to tell his male peers that he has never had sex. Virginity is often seen as shameful and perhaps even aberrant. As a result, many adolescent boys feel pressured to lie about their sexual involvement in order to prove their virility. Lying about one's sexual history may manifest in what Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe and Thompson (1994, in Khunwane, 2008, p. 87) call telling "public performance stories", where young men recount fabricated sexual experiences in order to project an image of being a "macho, knowing and experienced male":

Extract 37:

> ***David****: What I try to do is … I will join their conversation and we'd discuss, just so that they should not think that I am sidelining myself. Because if I can start asking questions,* ***they will think that I am gay****.*

David had also never had sex with his girlfriend, but when he was with his male friends he pretended to be experienced. He participated in boys' sex talk and lied about his sexual experience because he did not want his male peers to think he was gay. David's narrative shows that boys scrutinize and police each other in respect of accounts of sexual prowess, which can lead to posturing and lying. Many other boys also spoke about the fear of being considered gay, especially if they had never had heterosexual sex. Being considered gay had many negative connotations for the participants because 'homosexuality' was seen as a deviation from the commonly accepted and prescribed masculine practice of heterosexuality. The theme of homosexuality is discussed in greater depth in chapter 12. Being seen as unmanly, whether as gay, a virgin or a Christian, evokes fear in many boys. As a result, they may well engage in compensatory masculine defining activities such as becoming promiscuous or at least pretending that this is the case, to affirm themselves as members of the male club (Salisbury & Jackson, 1996). Fabricating or exaggerating one's sexual experience also

becomes an important part of 'public performance' for the sake of complying with hegemonic views of *sex-jaro* type masculinity. Those who tell the truth about their lack of sexual experience are seen as 'fools' for failing in the masculine task of sexual conquest and prowess and viewed as at risk, not only socially, but also in terms of their physical and psychological health.

However, some boys such as Simon, Michael, Nathan and Martin, as mentioned earlier, were able to resist their friends' and peers' pressure to be sexually active. For these boys, having sex was not a priority in their relationships with girls. Herman did not classify himself as a Christian but was also one of the participants who proudly stated that he had a girlfriend and had never had sex with her.

Extract 38:

> *I have a girlfriend because I love her and nothing else. I do not go with other guys who want to impress their friends and to have sex with the girl. I am not doing it because of that.*

In this extract, Herman was clear about his subjective masculine position. For him, having a girlfriend was all about love and "*nothing else*". Unlike *sex-jaro* boys, he did not harbor an ulterior motive for wanting a relationship, pursuing girls purely as sexual conquests or trophies. He looked down on *sex-jaro* boys who had to have sex with girls in order to impress their male counterparts. He saw this as stupid, despite the fact that he was ridiculed by *sex-jaro* boys at school, "*the other guys were saying I am a fool, I do not want … I only want to have girls for the fun; I do not have sex with them. That is what the other boys were saying*". Like Simon and many other boys who had never had sex, Herman said he also had mixed feelings about how to deal with the boys who mocked him about his virgin status.

Extract 39:

> *When they first told me **I was a bit down,** I felt that I did not fit in, and at that moment I wished if she (his girlfriend) was here and then I will have sex with her, but when I talked to my brother I was back to **my old self again**. I now just say (haai) leave me alone, just leave me alone, let me live my life**, I do not care about that stuff** anymore*

Listening to Herman's narrative, it appeared he was also experiencing contradictory feelings in being a 'different' kind of boy. Peer pressure made him anxious and also led to self-doubt to the point where he fantasized about having sex in a somewhat desperate way in order to fit in with the apparent norms of sex-jaro boys. Like many other boys, Herman had to negotiate

these conflicting feelings and consulted with his brother who guided him to maintain his alternative position. He needed affirmation from another male figure, in this case his older brother, in order to withstand the peer pressure to conform. The above extract also reveals how adolescent boys 'monitor' each other. Herman's narrative shows that he was subjected to close scrutiny because he had a girlfriend but had never had sex with her. Although experiencing some self-doubt and at times feeling '*a bit down*', Herman confirmed that he was now quite sure that he wanted to be a 'different' boy.

Extract 40:

> *I told them to leave me alone, ever since that day they have never come to me and say I am a fool and all that stuff. Actually they are now avoiding me, they are now avoiding me. They do not talk to me anymore because I have told them to leave me alone; you are a bad influence on me*".

In the end, it seems Herman felt triumphant as his tormentors at school no longer ridiculed him about his virgin status and apparently now perhaps even respected him for his independent mindedness and assertiveness. Herman reported that he had made new friends who were supportive and encouraged him to maintain his virginity, "*they encourage me that Herman we still have a lot to live for, so let's not rush into stuff that at the end we cannot handle*". It seems that being friends with non-*sex-jaro* boys was a further protective factor against not engaging in risk-taking behaviours and that peers can serve as an important support group in maintaining alternative voices of masculinity. Interestingly, Herman was the only boy in the group interview who disclosed that he had never had sex with his girlfriend, which was uncharacteristic of how the rest of the boys in the groups engaged and how the majority of adolescent boys are reported to behave in a crowd when talking about sex (Pascoe, 2007). Clearly, he resisted the peer pressure to lie and pretend to be more sexually active than he was. In the follow-up individual interview, the researcher was particularly interested to explore his alternative views of masculinity and his coping strategies to counteract hegemonic attitudes. He said, "*I can say that I have a good self-confidence in me and the self-esteem. I do not care what others say*". A clear sense of self seems to help adolescent boys like Herman resist peer pressure to comply with hegemonic norms of masculinity. Herman asserted that he did not care what his male peers said about his virgin status as he was confident and knew what he wanted in life. His plan was to complete his matric and to study chemical engineering at university. As observed in some of the other chapters, having a clear sense of the future also seemed to help

him and other adolescent boys stand firm in their decision to be 'different' boys who did not engage in sex-related risk-taking behaviours. Despite the emotional costs, living out an alternative masculinity seemed to make some of the adolescent boys more thoughtful and responsible about their behaviours and even at times provided them with a source of pride and feelings of superiority. The determination or courage required to resist dominant norms and peer encouragement and pressure to conform left these boys with a sense of being strong in resolve and purpose.

10.8. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, having relationships with girls was central to the masculine identifications of all the adolescent boys in the study. However, the importance of these relationships differed from one group to another. S*ex-jaro* boys asserted that having sex with multiple partners was a priority in their relationships with girls, but this view was rejected by other adolescent boys in the study. This latter group of boys were more mindful of girls and their feelings and valued their own virginity, although their narratives were characterized by feelings of conflict, ambivalence and self-doubt. It was evident that the 'male sexual drive' discourse had strong currency amongst all the boys, those who engaged in sex, boasting about multiple and even high risk engagements, and those who refrained from sex expressing the need for strong self-control in this regard. It was also evident, that, as is almost pervasively found in research into masculinity, the demonstration of sexual prowess is central to young male identity. The pressure to perform or at least to appear to perform in this way means that it is quite common for boys to exaggerate or fabricate tales of their sexual encounters in the company of other boys. However, from the individual interviews in which less face saving was required, it emerged that about third of these 16 to 18 year old boys were still virgins, most of them concealing this fact from their peers. This suggests that there is some awareness of risks (both psychological and physical) associated with high sexual activity and some resistance to conformity in this respect even if this is often covert rather overt. From the discussions, it appeared that refraining from sex was generally more about exercising self-discipline than it was about lack of opportunity, although it must be acknowledged that this may also have been a factor.

Lastly, the findings in this chapter revealed emerging positive images and views of youthful masculinity in Alex, which should perhaps be popularized in the mainstream literature and media. Opportunities and forums should also be created for boys to talk about their fears and anxieties in relationships with girlfriends in order to help them develop and embrace more flexible images of heterosexist manhood and more realistic and constructive understandings of sexual relationships and practices.

Chapter 11: The role of 'class' in the formation and contestation of young masculinities in Alexandra Township

Introduction

In their study in the UK, Frosh et al. (2002) found that social class, ethnicity and race played a central role in adolescent boys' conception of their masculine identities. One of the main differences between the Frosh et al.'s study and the present study is the racial composition of the participants. In their study, Frosh and his colleagues included adolescent boys of different races (white, black and Asian), and, as a result, their constructions of masculinity were racialized as well as structured around class distinctions. In the present study, race appeared not to be an important marker of identity in the boys' minds, presumably because all the participants were 'black' (as are the overwhelming majority of residents in Alex), however, it was relevant to explore how 'class'[13] influenced adolescent boys' negotiation of masculinity against the background of the changing socio-economic conditions in the new South Africa, since this emerged as a salient point in the interviews and photographic representations of masculinity. It should also be noted that raced and classed aspects of identity still overlap strongly in South Africa with the overwhelming majority of black African people living in conditions of poverty or surviving on minimal incomes, despite the fact that there is a fast developing black middle class.

Chapter 9 and 10 showed how adolescent boys categorized each other or themselves as *tsotsi* boys, academic boys, *sex-jaro* boys, and/ or Christian boys. In this chapter, categorization along class lines, which also emerged as salient in the interviews, is explored. It was interesting that in this context, working-class boys classified themselves as the in-group while middle-

[13] Class for the purpose of this chapter refers to the participants' social and economic status. In the study, the participants categorized each other or themselves as either poor or rich depending on social factors such as the school they attended (public or private school), the clothes they wore and the area where they lived (in Alex or in the suburbs). These were some of the markers that the participants used to classify themselves or others as either poor or rich. Boys who came from families that were considered rich and who attended private schools in town were classified as middle class while boys who came from families that were considered poor and who attended public schools in Alex were classified as working class. However, this is not to say all boys who attend public schools are poor or that those that are considered 'rich' are necessarily wealthy. Categorizations are relative and to some extent context specific. However, the boys' categorizations represent important lifestyle differences and provide a sufficiently coherent basis for commenting upon the role of class in expressions of young masculinity in Alexandra Township.

class boys were 'othered' as the out-group. It was noteworthy that all of the participants in the study categorized themselves as poor (working class), while 'other' adolescent boys who attended former Model C schools[14] outside Alex were identified as rich (middle class). The middle-class boys were called derogatory names such as *cheese* boys (with associations of being too spoiled and too soft). It is an insult for any boy in Alex to be called a '*cheese* boy' because such boys are generally seen as 'sissies' or 'mommy's boys. These boys are also seen as lacking the key characteristics of being 'real' township boys, which include being rough, streetwise, risk taking and independent. In this chapter, I discuss some of the tensions between working-class and '*cheese* boys' in relation to defining what constituted a 'real' township boy. One of the tensions was centred on the accusation by the working-class boys that '*cheese* boys' use their privileged economic status to date the attractive girls in Alex. A sense of 'emasculation' was noted among the working-class boys in their assertion that '*cheese* boys', due to their class status, were denying them the opportunity to date girls (especially 'pretty' girls). As discussed earlier in chapter 9 and 10, girls in many of the narratives were represented as commodities to be 'won' by adolescent boys in competition with their male peers and also in competition with older, wealthy men ('sugar daddies') who are employed and drive expensive cars.

In this chapter, I also discuss various key visible markers (e.g. taste in clothing and music) that adolescent boys use to classify each other as either belonging or not belonging to *E'khasi* (slang word for township). Adolescent boys who do not 'fit' the ideals of young township masculinity in terms of taste in clothing and music tended to be ridiculed and called derogatory names such as *abomo-rapper* (rappers) or '*coconuts*' (the term is used to infer that while they may appear black on the outside their behaviour and values suggest that they are really 'white' on the inside). These epithets ('*abomo-rapper*' or '*coconuts*') stem from the sentiment that

[14]Under apartheid, different schools were established for white, black, Indian and coloured children. The schools for white children were 'resource rich' compared to the schools for the other racial groups. Post-1994, all schools were integrated under one education system. The former white state schools are today known as former Model C schools. These schools still tend to be more resource rich and offer better educational opportunities for children. Since 1994, an increasing number of black children are attending such schools as well as more elitist solely privately funded (private) schools. Many of these children come from middle-class families some of which still live in townships such as Alex while others have moved out of Alex into the neighbouring suburbs. The adolescent boys who attended these schools were identified as middle class in the present study because their parents had the money to pay the higher fees of the former Model C schools or even of fully private schools.

these boys are not 'real' township boys because they attend former Model C schools, speak English with an American accent, wear baggy jeans, play basketball and listen to RAP music rather than listening to *kwaito* (popular, South African produced township music) and playing *ediski* (soccer), similar to observation made by Pattman (2005). These boys are also accused specifically of being too Americanized because of their preference for music and clothes associated with American youth culture. The working-class boys subjectively positioned themselves as 'real' township boys as opposed to these pseudo American middle-class boys. It should be noted that I did not conduct interviews with middle-class boys who attended former Model C schools (creating some limitations for discussion in this chapter). Nevertheless, the findings indicate how young township masculinities are established, monitored and produced by township-schooled boys through engagement with the changing nature of class politics in the new South Africa. It is important to note "the reality [is] that South Africa has witnessed the replacement of *racial apartheid* with what is increasingly referred to as *class apartheid* between the poor black and the rich black" (Bond, 2004, cited in Terre Blanche, 2006, p.73). This, according to Durrheim and Mtose (2006), has brought changes to identity politics, including what it means to be a black adolescent in the new South Africa. In this chapter, photographs are again used to enhance the presentation of how adolescent boys employ class markers to represent different versions of the masculinities encountered and reflected in their everyday experiences of living in Alexandra Township.

11.1. The privileges of middle-class boys versus the hardship of poor working-class boys

The construction of '*cheese* boys' as 'rich' was a common point of discussion among the participants in the study who either explicitly or by comparison classified themselves as poor. In the individual interviews and the three group interviews, the issue of rich and poor boys in Alex was raised without any prompting. The group context seemingly provided the working-class boys with a 'safe' space to talk about their frustrations in their interactions with '*cheese* boys' who were accused of using their privileged class status to deny them the opportunity to realize their masculine identities, primarily by dating all the available girls in the community. In their albums, all the participants included photographs of expensive cars such as Mercedes Benzes, BMWs, Volvos and Mini-Coopers (see the photos below). Overall, more than sixty

pictures of the total corpus of photographs included cars. A lot was said about these cars and the status attached to owning them.



Photo 13



Photo 14:

In their narratives, the boys suggested that girls in Alex were materialistic, as evidenced by their dating of only *cheese* boys who drove flashy cars. This was a prominent theme in all the interviews. Many of the working-class boys felt materially disadvantaged in their competition with *cheese* boys to attract the interest of girls (see the extracts below) and claimed that access to cars, in particular, made *cheese* boys more popular with girls.

Extract 1:

> ***Researcher:*** *What are things that make other boys more popular than others?*
> ***William****: In most cases, boys who have rich parents. They drive their parents' cars. They wear expensive clothes, and* ***girls want them.***

Extract 2*:*

> ***Researcher:*** *So what if you do not have a car?*
> ***Herman****: The girls would be saying where can he take me if he does not have a car. And then at the end of the day, you will be alone whereby you will not be having a girlfriend. But if you park a car here at the gate, all the girls' eyes would be looking at you. And then at the end of day I think you will get* ***sexy girls*** *because of the car.*
> ***Researcher****: Any car?*
> ***Herman****: No. It must be a nice car. Like* ***BMW, Mini-cooper or Hummer****. It must not be* ***sekorokoro*** *(Sotho word for an old car).*

Extract 3*:*

> ***Thabiso:*** *Golf 5 is the most lovely car. So if you are a boy and you have that* ***Golf 5*** *then they will say you are a* ***cheese*** *boy….. They are popular for driving their parents' cars. Girls also like them.*
> ***Researcher:*** *So girls don't like you?*
> ***Thabiso:*** *Yeah, they want boys who drive cars.*
> ***Researcher:*** *How do you feel about that?*
> ***Thabiso:*** *I feel* ***useless*** *sometimes, but our time will also come.*

It was clear that the participants felt that lack of material resources such as "*wearing expensive clothes and driving their parents' cars*", made them less popular with girls. Besides talking about cars as being appealing in respect of being fast, a major theme in the interviews was the wish of the working-class boys to own some of these cars in the future, in part to attract girls or women as partners. Boys who did not have cars were not sought after as potential boyfriends because "*the girls would be saying where can he take me if he does not have a car*" (Extract 2), i.e., because they cannot offer girls mobility, excitement and evidence of material resources. These boys felt marginalized and 'useless' because they could not take girls out over the weekends to pubs and clubs in town or entertain them in particular ways. Owning a car was seen as a ticket to attracting girls in Alex, especially "*sexy girls*" (Extract 2). It was interesting to note how girls were again objectified in the narratives as a kind of commodity to be 'won' in this particular construction of young township masculinity. In her research, Van Eeden (2006) noted that the representation of women as desirable commodities was common in car advertisements in South Africa and other parts of the world. In the adverts she analyzed, cars were always portrayed as a symbol of masculine power, success and sexual adventure. The working-class boys in this study may have internalized some of these images leading them to

believe that owning a car would help to compensate for their working-class manhood, which was under threat from *cheese* boys. Cars thus carry a powerful symbolic value, being a well recognized indication of a boy/man's wealth and capacity to provide material resources. It was clear that boys in the study shared this view, but they were also able to talk about how cars were attractive to adolescent boys and girls in allowing them mobility to move beyond their immediate environment of the township. In the working-class boys' narratives, girls were also represented as the 'exotic sexy other' (Van Eeden, 2006) who had to be hunted, impressed and conquered by boys who drove big, luxurious cars. Psychoanalytically, one could perhaps argue that big cars such as Hummers, Jeeps and Range Rovers serve as phallic symbols, suggesting that the bigger, the better. One participant (Thabiso) suggested that tastes in cars were clearly sexed: "*girls like certain cars. The cars that girls like are Toyota Conquest, small cars like Yaris. With us boys, we prefer big cars*". Big cars in this narrative signified boys' wish to flaunt status, power and potency. In keeping with their photographs, all the participants claimed that it was important for boys and men to drive popular brands of cars such as Mini-Coopers, Golf 5s, Hummers, Mercedes Benz's and BMW's. According to Herman, cited previously, girls did not want to date boys who drove old and outdated cars (*sekorokoros*). Alexander (2003) sees this kind of pressure as part of what she calls 'branded masculinity' in which men as well as boys are expected to own and publicly display certain branded products, including expensive cars. She argues that today branded masculinity shapes men and boys' understanding of themselves in contemporary society. It was evident that the working-class boys in the present study felt insecure and inadequate without access to such brand-name goods (as will be further explored) and felt both envious of and antagonistic towards *cheese* boys for their apparently easy access to such resources.

It seemed owning some of these expensive cars would remain a fantasy for most of the working-class boys in Alex because of prevailing socio-economic factors, such as high levels of poverty and unemployment. Some of the working-class boys (especially *tsotsi* boys as discussed in chapter 9), saw their involvement in crime as a legitimate social response to personal feelings of emasculation, disempowerment, marginalization and economic exclusion and as an alternative means of accumulating wealth. In Alex, many boys who engage in criminal activities enjoy a kind of guarded respect and status. They are often seen as role

models due to their ability to achieve some of the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, such as owning a car, wearing expensive clothes and having access to multiple girlfriends. In his individual interview, Themba said that "*people take crime to get this [referring to a photo of an expensive car]*". William, a self-identified *tsotsi* boy, added that "*it is common for boys in Alex to go and mug people. And sooner or later you drive a car or you wear fancy clothes and all girls want you*". According to Kinness (2000) and Barker (2005), this is what motivates many young males to join gangs as gang members are also often seen as role models because of their opulent lifestyles and access to expensive cars.

Segal, Pelo and Rampa (1999) found in their study that the increasing level of violent crime among young township boys was linked to the emerging culture of crass materialism and class inequalities in the new South Africa. This finding runs contrary to other literature (e.g. Pinnock, 1982, Glaser, 2000) in which the emergence of the hyper-violent masculinity of black working-class youth under apartheid was primarily understood as a defensive stance in response to white racism. Today, crime in South Africa may be understood as in part a form of resistance and a class struggle waged by subordinated poor black youth against the rich (both black and white) (Segal et al., 1999). Connell (1989) in his classic work on class considers the violent hyper-masculine behaviour he observed amongst Australian men to be part of protest masculinity, where marginalized working-class boys and men attempt to assert their power over others in manifest ways. There may be parallels in South African context, although there is clearly the complication of the interface between race and class. In talking about cars in the interviews, many of the working-class boys (mainly *tsotsi* boys) saw themselves as superior to *cheese* boys on the grounds that 'real' township boys make their own money by joining organized gangs rather than relying on their parents' wealth. According to one *tsotsi* boy, "*cheese boys are nothing to me coz I'm hustler. I hustle my way around coz I go out and make my own money*". In some of the narratives, *cheese* boys were infantilized, characterized as babies for relying on their parents for everything. Working-class boys re-asserted their power and positioned themselves as streetwise and resourceful, making plans to get their own money in contrast to these dependant *cheese* boys. The belief among this group of working-class boys (mainly *tsotsi* boys) was '*indoda iya ziphandela*' (a boy always 'makes a plan'). 'Real' township boys become self-sufficient, even if this is achieved through stealing cars and

committing other criminal activities in order to get their own money. Admirable masculinity for this sub-group of boys is thus associated not only with access to, and displays of wealth, but also with self-sufficiency and the ability to personally acquire such material resources, even if this means engagement in crime and the forceful wresting of resources from others.

The above findings confirm the view in the existing literature that individuals who are excluded from society's principle domains of power will tend either to: 1) be passive in the face of this power, 2) reject this power through resistance, or 3) accept the status and legitimacy of this power but reinvent other means by which this power may be acquired (e.g. through involvement in violent crime) (Newburn & Stanko, 1994, p 6-8). The data may be understood to also support the 'structure-agency' debate on the strategic redeployment of power, that is, power is not something static but changes with time and history (Foucault, 1978). In the present study, class status and power dynamics were strategically repositioned. The working-class boys did not have access to the class status and associated capital to attract girls, but, instead, redefined what it meant to be a 'real' township boy (i.e. that one had to be tough, aggressive and self-sufficient). As a result of this 'repositioning', *cheese* boys were denied the legitimacy of being seen as 'real' township boys and were discursively dislocated from their geographical and historical identities. In this way, middle-class or *cheese* boys were rejected from or denied 'in-group' status. This issue will elaborated in a subsequent section further exploring how working-class boys positioned and repositioned themselves as 'authentic' township boys while 'Othering' *cheese* boys as spoilt brats who did not really belong to Alex. It was evident in this discussion that the working-class and *cheese* boys' relations were often characterized by competition, threats and feelings of envy and jealousy. The section below explores boys' talk about money in negotiating and contesting class relations in Alex.

11.2. Money makes the world go around: access to wealth and resources of value

Many of the participants said that having money was very important for adolescent boys in Alex. One participant (Simon) had among his photos a picture of an ABSA bank sign (below), which he commented on as follows (Extract 3 below):

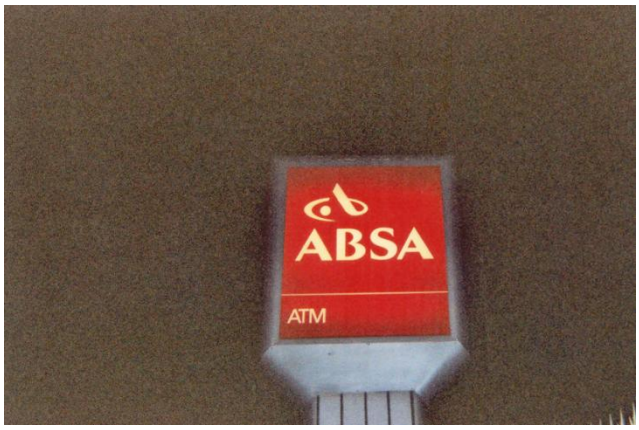


Photo 15:

Extract 3:

> ***Simon****: You see when you see this sign (**ABSA bank**) you think of money. **As a boy you should have money**, especially if you are living in Alex. If you don't have money you won't fit into most conversations … if you don't have money first of all girls won't like you, **typical girls** of Alex. They won't like you. Your friends won't take you **as that man.** They won't look at you as that guy. They look at you as that. **Having money is a big thing. It is like having a girlfriend**.*

Simon's photo of 'ABSA Bank' and his elaboration of its meaning was striking in that it represented the subscription to dominant norms of capitalist masculinity (Alexander, 2003; Connell, 1995; Edley & Wetherrell, 1995), even in this deprived South African community. In his comment on the photo, Simon said that money symbolized something of importance for many young boys in Alex. According to him, boys who did not have money were seen only as 'that' (inferring a kind of non-identity) and as lacking in status, which meant they were 'nothing' in the eyes of their peers. Interestingly, Simon compared having money to "*having a girlfriend*", partly because "*if you don't have money first of all girls won't like you*", but also because it was an alternative means of being seen as having value. It seems that young males had to demonstrate their status relative to other males by either showcasing their wealth in some form or having access to girlfriends (especially 'pretty' girlfriends) and that the two were associated. Many of the participants mentioned that it was important for adolescent boys to have beautiful girlfriends. As mentioned in chapter10, all the participants had pictures of girls in their albums (see some of the photos below).



Photo 16:

Extract 4:

> ***Simon****: These girls yeah that I would say they are* ***the prettiest girls at school****. Everyone likes them and all that. […].Yeah your girlfriend* ***must be pretty****.*

The desirability of dating 'pretty' girls only was supported by all the participants. The use of "*must*" in Simon's narrative suggests some obligation as in "*your girlfriend must be pretty*". Dating an ugly girl was considered shameful by all the participants and it was observed that friends would laugh at "*you that your girl is ugly*". In this study, the participants seemed to feel more powerful and competent as a result of dating girls who were considered beautiful. For example, in choosing five photos that best described them, the participants in one of the group interviews were competitive about who had a picture of the most beautiful girl. In this focus group, the participants took turns in bragging about the beauty of their girlfriends. Throughout the discussion (especially in group interviews) girls were objectified as either beautiful or ugly. It is possible as mentioned earlier in chapter 10, that some of the boys might have been posturing in these group interviews to produce this kind of sexist talk involving prototypical aspirations associated with hegemonic masculinity where women were treated as sex objects

(Connell, 1995; Hollway, 1989; Segal, 1990), but it was noticeable that this talk was relatively common and uncontested.

On the whole, the working-class boys expressed their frustrations about being rejected by some girls (mainly 'pretty' girls) who preferred to date only *cheese* boys. They complained bitterly about their powerlessness and marginalization to compete with *cheese* boys who could go to a bank (such as ABSA) and withdraw money to buy their girlfriends expensive gifts. The working-class boys felt 'emasculated' by *cheese* boys and felt that they were "*left with nothing*" (Extract 6 below) as they did not have access to such material resources and therefore had to compromise on the value of girls they could attract. The interviews revealed that the participants felt particularly resentful and angry towards the *cheese* boys because they used their class status to attract girls.

Extract 5:

> ***David:…*** *I don't like these* ***cheese boys*** *because they are taking all our girls*
> ***Researcher:*** *How do you feel that cheese boys are taking all the girls?*
> ***David:*** *I feel* ***angry man*** *because we also want to have chicks (slang word for girls)*

Extract 6:

> ***Themba****: Girls only want these boys [cheese boys] because they have money. Many of these boys go to schools in the suburbs.* ***We are left with nothing****.*

Williot and Griffin (1997), in their research in the UK, also found that many working-class young men felt powerless when they could not live up to masculine role expectations, in this instance providing for their families. The present study shows that the pressure to occupy the breadwinning or provider role starts at a very young age. All of the participants (despite being teenagers) spoke about the importance of providing for their girlfriends to show that they were 'real' men. Seidler (2006) sees this as one of the burdens associated with men and boys' search for power, in the course of which they become vulnerable to frustration when their subjective experiences of power do not match their economic position. Boys and men may then explore other avenues to assert their position of power. In the current study, the working-class boys employed various discursive strategies to delegitimize *cheese* boys' success with girls. One of the strategies is illustrated well in the extract below.

Extract 7:

> ***Martin:*** *Cheese boys are not* ***sex-jaros****.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Why*

Martin: *Because* ***sex-jaros*** *only use their charm to get chicks (girls). They do not use their money like these boys (referring to cheese boys).*
Marumo: *I agree with Martin* ***those boys are not sex-jaros*** *because sex-jaros use their skills only to charm. They don't use money like cheese boys.*

This section of discussion that took place in one of the group interviews revealed that the notion of *sex-jaro* masculinity could be used to devalue other kinds of sexual conquest. *Cheese* boys' success with girls was not celebrated or seen as a commendable achievement since they were accused of not using their innate abilities or skills to win girls over, like *sex-jaro* boys. The status of s*ex-jaro* was evidently reserved only for working-class boys who achieved success in the love market despite their lack of material resources. Here, *sex-jaro* boys' skills in winning girls over were celebrated as the triumph of 'real' township masculinity over an easy, materially bolstered masculinity. Again there is assertion of a kind of self-sufficient masculinity as the ideal. However, the discussion below indicates that behind their critical views on class inequalities, working-class boys still envied *cheese* boys' aspects of their 'easy' lives and access to material resources.

11.4. "I do envy them": Hostile, aggressive and envious feelings towards *cheese* boys

Many of the working-class boys in the study expressed feelings of envy and wished a change of fortune and bad luck on *cheese* boys, as illustrated in the extracts below.

Extract 8:

Researcher: *How do you feel about these boys from rich families?*
William*: I* ***do envy them****,* ***but*** *what I feel about these boys is* ***that they are spoilt now****. They don't know how to do things for themselves.* ***If something happens*** *to their parents, they will struggle big time.*

Extract 9*:*

Thabiso*: It is their time.* ***Our time will come****.*

The subtle communication in Thabiso's assertion (Extract 9) is that the *cheese* boys will be punished in future when the working-class boys' "*time comes*", which will be when they also have the opportunity to acquire material goods and gain access to 'pretty' girls. Some of the boys managed their frustration and envy by arguing that there would be a future reversal of positions. To put it succinctly, Lesley, a 16-year-old working-class boy, remarked "*it is better to start being poor than to start being rich and end-up being poor*". It seemed working-class

boys employed various defence mechanisms to overcome or deny their aggressive and envious feelings. For instance, William acknowledged in his individual interview (see Extract 8) that he was envious of *cheese* boys' access to girls, but then immediately started talking negatively about such boys as being spoilt brats. As illustrated in the previous extract he added, "*If something happens to their parents, they will struggle big time*". Here, William almost wishes orphanhood on *cheese* boys so that they will be forced to become aware of the dependence and personal limitations of this parentless position, and notes that their suffering will be worse because "*they don't know how to do things for themselves*". For some of the boys, there was an inference that not only their access wealth but also their insertion into caring or intact families made *cheese* boys objects of envy. However, this was not explicitly stated and the main focus was on their 'indulged' position and the sense that they had 'easy money'. In the extract below, the *cheese* boys' lack of resilience and dependence on their parents' wealth for their personal status is further emphasized.

Extract 10:

> ***Martin****: They are* ***spoilt brats;*** *they are not cheese boys.*
> ***Mpho****: We agree with Martin!*
> ***Peter****: Yeah, I agree with Martin and Mpho because how can you be a cheese boy, because they say a person gets remembered by his work. So those are not your work, they are your parents'.*

In this group interview, Martin vehemently rejected the view that middle-class boys were *cheese* boys, in the sense that '*cheese*' status, however problematic, was attached to direct ownership of wealth. Both Mpho and Peter joined in and supported Martin's assertion that *cheese* boys were nothing, but '*spoilt brats*' (Extract 10), which was denigrating and spoiling of their class status. *Cheese* boys were also accused of bragging about things that they have not worked for, again emphasizing their lack of positive self-attributes. Working-class boys seemed to express all these negative feelings towards *cheese* boys as a coping strategy to deal with their own internal feelings of deprivation, inferiority and envy. According to Klein (1988), "envy is the angry feeling that another person possesses and enjoys something desirable - the envious impulse being to take it away or spoil it" (p.181). This seems an apt explanation for denigration heaped upon middle-class *cheese* boys by the participants and for the wish that their status might be inverted or their lack of independence revealed through some form of misfortune.

In dealing with their feelings of deprivation, working-class boys seemingly had little choice but to spoil and devalue anything associated with *cheese* masculinity despite their own material aspirations. According to Klein (1988), spoiling and devaluing are inherent in envy. The object which has been devalued and spoilt, such as the status and material wealth of *cheese* boys need no longer be envied because it no longer contains anything desirable or enviable (Klein, 1988; Segal, 1989). Despite employing some of these defence mechanisms, it seems working-class boys' sense of emasculation, helplessness and powerlessness did not disappear. It was apparent that they still envied *cheese* boys, particularly their success with girls and had to find other objects against which to direct their feelings of anger and hate. This is illustrated in the discussion below in which some of these negative feelings appeared to be projected onto girls with the accusation that those who dated rich boys or older rich men were *difebe* (Sotho word for prostitutes).

11.5. Girls as gold-diggers, preferring to date *cheese* boys and older men

In the process of re-asserting their masculinity in the part of the discussion focused on *cheese* boys and class status, the participants started talking negatively about girls, accusing them of generally being gold diggers and materialistic for dating only boys or older men who had money. Their feelings of powerlessness in competing with *cheese* boys and older, rich men were apparently projected onto these girls. Girls, as the object of desire linked to wealth acquisition, also had to be devalued

Extract 11:

> ***Shaun:*** *I can say basically* ***girls see boys as ATMs.***

Extract 12:

> ***Nathan****: There are* ***girls who like you for money****; and there are girls who love you for you; there are girls who like you for the clothes that you wear. There are other girls that just use you.*

Extract 13:

> ***William:*** *Those types of girls are* ***gold diggers***

In their study, Kaufman and Stravrou (2004) found that these girls' relationships with boys and men were underpinned by economic exchange in that many young girls dated certain boys or older men in return for material rewards. Kaufman and Stravrou (2004) also found that some

girls categorized men as 'ministers': Minister of Transport (a rich boy/man who owns a car and is able to take his girlfriend to different places); Minister of Finance (a rich boy/man who gives his girlfriend money to buy clothes and perfumes); and Minister of Telecommunications (a rich boy/man who buys airtime for his girlfriend). The cost of dating such girls was too high for working-class boys, as illustrated in the extract below.

Extract 14:

> ***Peter****: If you have got money as a boy, it gives you … usually you win a girl, because girls are influenced by money****. So this guy buys this girl (pointing a photo of a girl) an airtime almost every week.*** *So he is making things difficult for me because it's obvious that I would not give her money as I am not working. I do not have that money to give to this girl.*
> ***Researcher****: Would that limit your chances?*
> ***Peter****: Yeah, it would limit my chances, but* ***I would try as a man*** *to face this challenge.*
> ***Researcher****: So currently do you have a girlfriend?*
> ***Peter****: Currently I do not have a girlfriend,* ***honestly speaking****.*
> ***Researcher****: Have you ever had one?*
> ***Peter****: Yes I had but I cannot remember the date. We broke up because of a certain guy who was also giving her money. And then she thought that* ***I'm useless*** *because I was* ***not giving her money.*** *So I decided to be single in the meantime and see how can I solve this issue of guys who have money ruining our chances with girls?*
> ***Researcher****: How did you feel?*
> ***Peter****: I felt* ***I'm useless to her*** *because I was not giving her money and there was a certain guy who is willing to give her money.*

Adolescent boys appear to need material resources in order to 'make it' in the love market (Extracts 11, 12, 13 and 14). Working-class boys who did not have money were angry with girls for 'using' boys or seeing boys as ATMs (Extracts 11 and 12). Girls were constructed as parasitic and calculating in this respect. According to Herman, "*she does not love you of who you are; facially and physically. She loves you because she wants money from you*". All the participants subjectively positioned themselves as superior to such girls (derogatorily labelled 'gold diggers'). In his individual interview, William said the following:

Extract 15:

> *These girls wouldn't have a future, they wouldn't have a family. We are all growing up, and by the time maybe* ***some of us have families****,* ***we have fancy cars*** *and stuff, they would still be in this position, still doing the same thing. But maybe that time* ***they would be down and out and staying in shacks.***

Ironically, William, a well-known *tsotsi* boy who neglected his schooling (as discussed in chapter 9), in the above extract positions and repositions himself as superior to the 'gold diggers'. His main argument is that such girls will not have a future because they are wasting

their time and talents by dating *cheese* boys and rich men. As a male researcher, I got the impression in the interviews that the participants were inviting me to side with them in talking negatively about girls, especially in the group interviews where the participants took turns in supporting fellow group members in deriding girls by calling them names such as *difebe* and gold diggers. It felt as if at these times the group interviews became girl bashing sessions. Disparaging girls as gold diggers seemed to be a major defence against the hurt of potential or actual experiences of rejection by them. Feelings of hurt were apparent in Extract 14 cited earlier, where Peter was in pain and despondent about competing with boys who had access to wealth and resigned to not making a heterosexual relationship at this point in his life.

Working-class boys' anger was not directed only at *cheese* boys who came from rich families but also at 'sugar daddies' for taking their girlfriends. As a male researcher, I sometimes wondered if I was not also seen as a potential 'sugar daddy'. Many of the boys had pictures of my car (a Golf 5) in their albums. One participant commented, "*you see if I drive a car like this [referring to my car] I will get all the girls in Alex*". This view was shared by many of the boys I interviewed. I detected feelings of curiosity or envy that I must have access to young girls because I was driving one of their dream cars. The fact that I was positively received by the boys despite their awareness of my 'wealthier' status, confirms Lindeggar and Maxwell's (2007) finding that adolescent boys are not opposed to the 'sugar daddy' phenomenon *per se* – they are opposed to it only because of their lack of economic resources to compete in the love market and perhaps it was important that I did not live in the same environment. The interviews showed how power worked both ways. On the one hand, girls were seen as commodities to be won, but, at the same time, they had the power to reject or disdain boys or make them feel 'useless' (Extract 14) by forcing them to come to terms with their class position and lack of access to resources.

In addition to calling these girls derogatory names, the threat of violence was another key strategy that working-class boys employed in asserting their masculine authority over girls who placed emphasis on material provision or rejected them to go out with *cheese* boys. Similarly, in her research on adolescent boys in Alex, Kann (2008) also found that many of the boys felt entitled to use violence against school-going girls who played 'hard to get' or rejected their

love proposals. Sathiparsad (2008) argues that the increase in violence against school-going girls in post-apartheid South Africa is linked to adolescent boys' sense of marginalization, powerlessness and emasculation. These boys often assert their dominance in violent ways, not only against girls, but also against other boys, in this case, *cheese* boys. To relieve their sense of emasculation, many of the working-class boys (mainly *tsotsi* boys) also spoke about using threats of violence against *cheese* boys. The dominant view was that *cheese* boys were too soft to fight for themselves.

Extract 16:

> ***King****: Cheese boys are* ***mommy's boys*** *(laughing). They are* ***sissies****.*

Extract 17:

> ***Shaun:*** *Everyone knows that cheese boys ke makwala (Sotho word for cowards). They can't fight. They are* ***too soft.***

Working-class boys boasted that they had physical power over *cheese* boys as a way of compensating for their inability to compete with them economically. Furthermore, c*heese* boys were also mocked and laughed at for being 'mommy's boys and sissies', further derogating this identity. This once again demonstrates how *cheese* boys were infantilized as children who lacked the key characteristics of township masculinity, which included being tough, rough, unafraid of fighting and willing to use physical force. The data shows how class plays a role in how adolescent boys negotiate and contest multiple voices of township masculinity in the new South Africa. Working-class boys have to employ various discursive strategies and defence mechanisms to deal with their feelings of deprivation and to re-assert their sense of self-worth and dignity in making comparisons to better-resourced, more middle-class boys. However, it seems that the contestation for power, authority and legitimacy goes beyond having access to girls and extends to other visible markers of what constitutes a 'real' township boy. The section below elaborates on how wearing certain clothes and listening to a particular genre of music are some of the identity markers that adolescent boys also use to differentiate one another along class lines.

11.6. "Stylizing the body": Taste in clothing as a key marker of young masculinity

Many of the participants in the study had photos in their albums showing the brand labels of shoes (e.g. All Stars, Superga and Carvella), clothes (e.g. Nike, Polo, Lacoste and Adidas) and cellphones (e.g. Nokia, Samsung and Motorola). All the participants said that adolescent boys were expected to wear designer labels but also that stylishness depended on the context in which they found themselves. Of interest here was that clothes and shoes had become a form of objectified cultural capital which could be understood in terms of Bourdieu's (1986) theory on taste. In Alex, boys who wore certain brands (e.g. Superga and All Stars – see the photos below) were 'accepted' more easily than the boys who did not wear these brands (see the extracts below). Particular township clothes were elevated as key markers 'real' township boyhood, which perhaps contradicts Bourdieu's view that people seek to attain only elite cultural taste. The data suggests that different cultural products can have objectified capital depending on the context in which people locate themselves.



Photo 18:

Extract 18:

> ***Simon****: Typical shoes which Alex boys wear (Superga). That's why I took this picture. Like E'khasi (township) lifestyle. It is pantsula (hip music) life. You can't come here with* ***baggy jeans and wearing big shoes****.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Why not?*
> ***Simon****: It is because this is not Alex style. It is not E'khasi (township) style, you see.*
> ***Researcher:*** *What is it?*
> ***Simon****: It is like being … eh, you see,* ***hip-hop guy. You are like a hip-hop****, like rap music. (Laughing)… that's not cool in a way. (Laughing)… that's not cool. That is not what boys want to wear.*



Photo 19:

Extract 19:

> ***Researcher****: What is this (referring to the picture above)?*
> *King: These are my All Stars. I don't go anywhere without them.*
> ***Researcher****: You don't go anywhere without All Stars!*
> ***King****: I wouldn't because I'm a dancer.*

Wearing All Stars or Superga (particular brands of shoes) was evidently a significant marker of one's identity as a 'real' township boy. Boys who did not wear these shoes were 'othered' as the 'out-group' and subordinated because of their non-compliance with the clothing style of township masculinity. For example, Simon (Extract 18) states that a boy who wears baggy jeans and big shoes will not be accepted by other boys in Alex. He said, "*You can't come here… because it is not E'khasi (Township) style*" to wear Americanized style clothing. It thus seems that wearing particular shoes or other items of clothing is compulsory for acceptance as a township boy and that style is closely observed. Adolescent boys in Alex monitored their styles of dress, speech and walk in order not to be accused of acting like 'hip-hop guys', as illustrated in the extract below.

Extract 20*:*

> ***Simon:*** *The boy wouldn't be with us.. Last week, this one guy lives up here and as he was coming by I was thinking of this project that what it means to be a boy. And then I saw him as he was coming by* ***he like pulled up his pants*** *and he started chilling with us and smoked. And as he was leaving he puts his hand in his back pockets and takes down the pants a little bit. But as he was coming to us* ***he like pulled up the pants*** *and* ***all that just to fit in*** *because he knows that he does not fit in. He knows that it's not the style in Alex to put your pants down. He is just*

*a visitor here. I think from where he is from it's like normal**, it's cool to be a hip-hop guy**, it's cool to [dress] like that but not here in Alex*

The example of this boy pulling up his trousers shows how boys in Alex police their masculinities by placing themselves (and other boys) under a particular kind of surveillance (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003). The visitor's pulling up of his trouser was a sign or marker that he knew the acceptable style for boys in Alex. He was 'self-censoring' himself by subtly changing his style of dress as he approached Simon and his friends on a street corner in order to comply with the cultural markers and practices of township masculinity. Here, Foucault's (1978) notion of 'self-surveillance' is pertinent in observing how boys learn to police their own and others' masculinities and embrace particular discursive and behavioural practices. Boys who do not comply with 'township' clothing style are 'othered' as outsiders and may be aware of this. Street credibility is important as a critical mode of positive self-making and self-representation (Nuttall, 2008). Benefits and costs are attached to identifying or *dis-identifying* with certain masculine identities in terms of dress code. Dressing in a particular way defines one as either an 'insider' or 'outsider' (Nuttall, 2008). For example, the participants in the study stated that boys who wore over-sized baggy jeans, big shoes, big shirts and basketball caps were not popular in Alex. Such boys were derogatorily called *abomo-rapper*, as their identification was seen as un-African in many respects. Interestingly, as suggested in some of the previous material discussed, there was again some resistance to the imposition of an American cultural hegemony and an assertion of the importance of a localized and perhaps Africanized culture. The findings in this study differ from those of Lyloyd and Mendez's (2001) study conducted in Botswana and Weiss's (2009) study in Tanzania. In these studies, Lyloyd and Mendez and Weiss found that adolescent boys in Gaborone and Dar es Salaam fully embraced hip-hop culture, music and fashion regardless of class position.

What is 'cool' to wear seems to depend strongly on the context in which boys find themselves. Emphasizing this point, Simon says "*You will find labels like K-Swiss in schools such as St. Johns (well-known private school in Johannesburg) but for schools in the location (township) you will find labels such as All Stars, La Coste, and Carvella popular*". The type of clothes and how they were worn were some of the markers that adolescent boys used to identify one another as either hip-hop or *E'khasi* boys. The interviews revealed that in addition to wearing

certain shoes township boys had to wear tight jeans or khaki, dickies trousers, bright coloured shirts (except pink shirts, because of the association with gayness) and sporty caps. Boys who wore these clothes were seen as 'authentic' township boys in terms of their dress code and style. Glaser (2000) and Mabena (1996) also found that clothing and dress style were key markers of the *pantsula* township culture that existed under apartheid in the early 1950s. *Pantsula* was associated with sophisticated dancing skills, drinking, leading a fast life and an energetic, desirable life style (Glaser, 2000; Mabena, 1996). Despite contemporary style influences and globalization, many adolescent boys in Alex still show remnants of the *pantsula* culture in their dress codes and fashion. In his album, Marumo has a photo of boy considered to be stylish in terms of Alex standards (see the photo below).

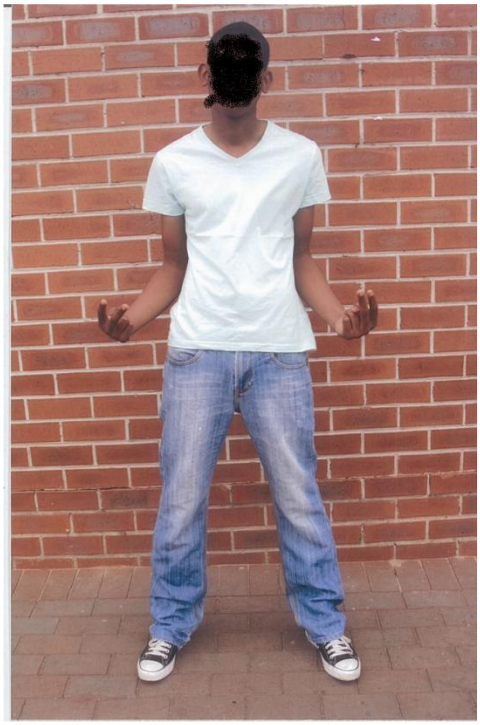


Photo 20:

***Extract 21*:**

Marumo: *I shoot friend, K, and this picture shows that boys like style*
Researcher: *What is he wearing here?*
Marumo: *He is wearing takkies (All Stars), tight jean and D900 shirt.*
Researcher: So it is all about style?
Marumo: *Yes, style and fashion.*

It was evident that the boys in the study monitored each other and most of them attempted to dress in accordance with the prevailing clothing norms of the Alex context in order to avoid social exclusion. It seemed that boys apparently had little freedom to choose their own identities in this respect because these identities were generated within webs of social, cultural, political and class structure. Also of interest was how taste in fashion produced and consolidated class differences and how these differences became the way adolescent boys marked and defined themselves.

Extract 22:

> ***Researcher****: Who are these boys who wear baggy jeans?*
> ***Herman****: **Mabhujwa** (Township slang for bourgeoisie).*
> ***Peter****: yeah, it is only **mabhujwa** who wear these big shoes like Timberland, ECKO…I forgot other labels and big shirts.*

Other studies (cf. Ibrahim, 2003; Iwamoto, 2003; Mendez, 2001) have revealed that being part of hip-hop culture was associated with elements of hegemonic masculinity including thug life, toughness, machismo and hyper-sexuality. However, this was not the case in Alex. Hip-hop culture in Alex was associated mainly with *cheese* boys who were seen as 'sissies' and well known for wearing particular brands of very expensive clothing such as Timberland, Nike and Adidas sneakers. These boys were derogatorily labelled *mabhujwa* (derived from the Marxist's term bourgeoisie). The terms *cheese* boys, *abo-rapper* and *mabhujwa* were used interchangeably in the study as derogatory references to boys who came from wealthy families. The dominant use of the term *mabhujwa* (Extract 22) in the interviews was interesting as it was evident that working-class boys, although not politically active and perhaps even not fully aware of the origin of the term, conveniently drew on Marxist language and class politics when talking about their relations with *cheese* boys. Despite their contempt for *amabhujwa* style, working-class boys felt materially disadvantaged in competing with *cheese* boys in terms of fashion, since it appeared this expensive style might be more popular with girls. It was apparent, yet again, that in order to deal with their underprivileged status, working-class boys accused *cheese* boys of not being 'authentic' township boys, further spoiling their identity. "*It is not E'khasi style to wear baggy jeans and big shoes*" (Extracts 18 and 20). The idea that it was not *E'khasi* (township) style to wear hip-hop clothes emerged strongly across the participants. The interviews revealed that these working-class boys subjectively positioned

themselves as the custodians of township fashion, marking *cheese* boys as the 'other' and accusing them of being 'sellouts' for betraying township fashion.

It was evident that the working-class boys in Alex were entirely opposed to hip-hop clothing and music. Although unacknowledged it seemed that their opposition to hip-hop culture was perhaps in part due to the fact that many of them could not afford the more expensive branded clothes associated with hip-hop style, rather than about taste *per se*. Many clothing items associated with hip-hop culture are particularly expensive. For example, it was estimated that at the time that the research project was conducted (2008/9), that Timberland shoes cost more than R1 600 per pair (roughly $214) more than the monthly income of many working-class families. However, while they were opposed to validating the most expensive brands, the boys were themselves somewhat snobbish about cheap or completely non-branded clothing. The importance of the cost of the clothing item was recognized even amongst these working class male participants: "*It is the price that counts here mo Khasi. You can't wear something cheap from Mr. Price. People will laugh at you*" said Themba. Dolby (2000), in her study on young adolescents in Durban, South Africa, also found that "the label counts, but the cost as well" (p. 14). Buying an expensive clothing item was thus seen as representative of one's class position and economic status.

Although the working-class boys criticized middle-class boys for materialism, it was observed through their photos that they were also aspirant and had fantasies of possessing material resources, such as expensive cell phones, branded clothes and cars. In this respect, working-class boys may be accused of being somewhat hypocritical for condemning middle-class boys as it was clear that they also spent the little money they had on material markers of social status, such as shoes or shirts. According to Thabiso, a working-class boy, "*you will never find a cheese boy buying something useless. But for a boy who is not a cheese boy and who buys a D900 (an expensive shirt), whereas he sleeps on a sponge at home, that is quite useless because a D900 will never make anything for him*". Thabiso lamented the fact that poor working-class boys were more likely than *cheese* boys to wear expensive Italian brands (such as D900 shirts). He saw this as "*useless*" expenditure when basic items such as beds were lacking at home. This comment reflects just how powerful the dominant culture of materialism

and consumerism is amongst the youth of even economically deprived townships, such as Alex. Segal, Pelo and Rampa (1999) contend that working-class boys may be using fashion as a mask to hide their feelings of inferiority and to be accepted in peer groups. Boys with 'style' receive desired attention (Segal et al., 1999). As has been observed in some other studies, it is interesting that the gender distinctions in fashion consciousness are changing and that boys appear to be preoccupied with these issues in the same way as are girls (Pascoe, 2007). However, for these boys there was an extrapolation from clothing style to a particular kind of masculine group identity.

A further aspect of the fashion competition centres on who is wearing original labels as opposed to *fong kong* (fake) labels. In her study on aspects of contemporary youth culture, Nuttall (2008) found that many young people in South Africa, who were not middle class, bought cheaper *fong kong* products in the inner city or on the street corners in order to achieve some class and economic status. One participant (David) commented that "*you can see if this Lacoste [popular shoe for boys in Alex] is fake or legit. People will laugh at you if you are wearing a fake Lacoste. It is better not to have it than to buy fake*". The interviews revealed that the participants policed each other closely to check who was wearing a *fong kong* or the original and that boys who wore *fong kong* clothing items were ridiculed as the expectation was to keep the dress code 'real and original' (Clay, 2003).

The discussion revealed that the ability to participate in the youth fashion culture was largely restricted to boys who had the financial capital to buy original (and not fake) expensive branded clothes. Clearly, consumer culture has created a new kind of space for the contestation of township masculine identities in the new South Africa. The demise of apartheid has also allowed some of the youth of South Africa to interact with each other in multi-racial schools, and also to access different global images and identities via the media. Following globalization, identities in terms of fashion have become universal and deterritorialized (Yarwood, 2006). Race alone may no longer be a sufficient axis of analysis to understand how black adolescent boys negotiate their identities in a place like South Africa. Class plays a crucial role in status making, although as mentioned earlier in South Africa it is still very much the case that race and class are closely interlinked. In terms of Bourdieu's (1986) theory,

different forms of cultural capital exist and may be interchangeable at different times in determining one's authenticity and social value, for example, in this instance, one's value as a 'real' township boy. Some boys may not have objectified cultural capital, such as cars and money, but they may not have cultural capital such as skills to win girls over and the right kind of 'township' clothes, that authenticate them as 'real' township boys. It is evident that there are complex and dynamic forces at play in cultural and class are positioning, many which are context dependant. Emotional costs are clearly evident in the efforts of adolescent boys to continuously try to engage with or inhabit different, more elevated masculine positions. It is hard work to manage all of the tensions that come with being a boy in a particular context, in this case a working- class boy in contemporary Alexandra Township.

11.7. Language and taste in music as other markers of masculine identity in Alex

The findings revealed that language (especially one's accent) was also an important marker of one's identity as either an 'authentic' or 'non-authentic' township boy. Middle-class boys were derogatorily labelled '*coconuts*' because they spoke English with an American 'accent' and also preferred to listen to hip-hop rather than *kwaito* (popular township) music.

Extract 23:

> ***Philip:*** *Cheese boys we also call them* ***coconuts****.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Why do you call them coconuts?*
> ***Alfred****: I think the word* ***coconut*** *comes from the fact that a* ***person acts like he is white****; and they are running from who they are. Maybe when he wants to pronounce Sipho or Malose, he would pronounce it differently [with an American accent].laughter.*
> ***King:*** *Laughter….He is a* ***snob [because he is accented]***
> ***Shaun:*** *I can say basically that* ***Model C school children*** *are more into outside things like listening to rap music….or liking things from* ***America*** *even though the person is* ***an African****.*

In the above group interview, the participants joined in deriding *cheese* boys in relation to their accents and mannerisms. It was observed that the participants laughed a lot in this group interview, the laughter evidently being used to mock and to again belittle *cheese* boys for not being 'black-enough'. This part of the discussion raises an interesting debate on the politics of 'whiteness' and 'blackness' as this emerged from the data. Identification with whiteness (for example, in terms of speaking English with an American accent) was strongly rejected by the working-class boys. 'Blackness' was celebrated as superior to 'whiteness'. For many of the boys in Alex, the degree to which one could claim to be a 'real' black boy was determined by

one's ability to speak *tsotsitaal* (township lingo for '*tsotsi*' language). Boys who attended private schools and spoke 'accented' English were considered 'snobbish' and criticized for not being fluent in their home languages such as Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho. There was an implication that they were betraying their roots, but again the derision and defensive claim to real, black/African, township masculinity, suggested that behind the criticism was some degree of envy as some working-class boys also wished to speak 'accented' English like cheese boys: "*yeah I can say I envy them (referring to cheese boys) sometimes because they speak good English, while some of us I can say we struggle to speak English because of our schools mokhasi (Township)*".

It would have also been valuable to talk to adolescent boys who may have been positioned themselves or were positioned by others as '*coconuts*', however, in this study, none of the boys identified himself as such. It could be inferred that positioning oneself as middle class (with its associations of being a '*coconut*' or *cheese* boy) involves some risks in Alex and may also have felt risky even in the context of the study. This might have prevented some of the participants who were recruited from a high school in the East Bank (a new area housing many black middle-class people in Alex) from openly talking about their lived experiences as adolescent boys who came from more privileged family backgrounds. It was evident that boys who were positioned as '*coconuts*' were more likely to be emotionally abused and to be called with other derogatory names, such as 'wannabes' or 'Oreos' (again inferring 'black' on the outside, but 'white' inside), as was also found in Durrheim and Mtose's (2006) and Smith 's (2009) studies. Their middle-classness was frowned upon, and they were indicted for being too 'white', even, for example, by their practice of listening to traditionally white radio stations such as Classic FM and 5FM (Durrheim & Mtose, 2006).

It was also interesting to observe how the notion of 'who is an African' (Extract 19) was evoked to criticize *cheese* boys for not being real 'African' boys because they were "*acting white or doing American things*". Here, working-class boys positively identified themselves as 'real' African boys who took pride in their 'blackness' and cultural practices, marked by a range of features such as dress style, mannerisms, language use, accent, and tastes in music. During the interviews, some of the working-class boys spent a lot of time talking about male

kwaito artists such as Brown Dash, Arthur Mafokate, Mandoza, Zola and Mzekezeke. According to one of the participants, King, a working-class boy, *kwaito* music is not just music but an expression of township lifestyle. The participants stated that *kwaito* lyrics often dealt with pertinent issues such as unemployment, poverty, crime, violence, and HIV/AIDS. *Kwaito* musicians were idolized by some of the participants as important role models. There was a sense of sameness and affirmation of points of potential identification with *kwaito* stars because many of them have also grown up in townships and yet have become public figures in the music industry. In their music and achievements, these musicians reflected the township lifestyle of hardship and potential success. Some of the participants expressed their ambition to become *kwaito* stars, as this identity apparently represents the achievement of success despite the difficult odds of poverty and deprivation. It was thus not only the content of their music but also the identity status they had managed to achieve, that made *kwaito* stars cultural icons and important role models for township boys. Thus again there was a theme of embracing or living out a 'real' township identity, while at the same time hoping to transcend this identity in the future.

11.8. Concluding remarks

This chapter has explored material from the study that demonstrated that access to wealth, class differences and changes in socio-economic factors play an important role in how adolescent township boys negotiate and contest masculinity identity positions. Reid and Walker's (2005) view that the construction of masculinity in the new South Africa is influenced by class politics was confirmed and elaborated with respect to observations about contemporary township youth and particularly Alex youth. The chapter also highlighted the intersection of gender with class relations and some patterns of dominant-subordinate class relations amongst youth in Alex. The position of black adolescent boys within their peer group was strongly influenced by class position and access to wealth and material resources. Interestingly, given the predominantly working-class composition of the participant sample, in the context of the study, a tough working-class masculinity was valorized over a more middle-class status. However, as discussed in the chapter, it was evident that there was considerable investment in the acquisition and display of wealth and that much of the derogation of middle-class '*cheese*' boys may well have stemmed from envy. Material resources were seen as crucial in attracting

the interest of girls, pretty girls in particular, and it appeared that for many it was acceptable to compete to acquire wealth by engaging in criminal activity. There was further reinforcement of the idea that a 'real' or 'true' young township masculinity entailed toughness, self-sufficiency and resilience in the face of hardship. In rather complex ways this masculinity was defined in part with reference to race, Africanness and Anti-Americanism. '*Ekhasi*' or township masculinity was something to cherish in the face of deprivation and hardship, however, subscription to such masculinity also entailed limitations and constraints. Many boys seemed to hold fantasies of shifting their class positions despite their criticisms of *cheese* boys.

Class also played a key role in influencing how black adolescent boys negotiated multiple voices of masculinity in terms of fashion and music and practices in this regard were closely observed by these boys. Taste in clothing and music was an overt indication of one's class and group allegiances. However, class boundaries were not rigid as some boys occupied multiple positions simultaneously by listening to a variety of music types and choosing not to identify with any particular clothing culture. In this respect, it was yet again evident that identities were not static and changed with time and history. It was also apparent that previous gender stereotypes concerning fashion consciousness were shifting in that these male participants spent considerable time discussing aspects of fashion, dress and brand labels. It was also apparent that these working-class boys were not immune to the impact of global consumer culture as has been found in other studies (Dolby, 1999; Nutall, 2008).

Chapter 12: Adolescent boys talk about 'gay' boys and sexual orientation

Introduction

Besides talking about girls, the participants also spent a lot of time talking about 'gay' boys. It appeared that boys who failed to live up to the norms of heterosexual masculinity, like other kinds of boys who did not live up to Alex norms of hegemonic masculinity, were ostracized, ridiculed and called derogatory names such as 'sissies', 'faggots' and *isitabane* (Zulu word for gay). The boys interviewed in the study aligned themselves generally with hegemonic masculinity not only by dissociating themselves from boys who self-identified as homosexual, but also by derogating 'homosexuality'[15] in general and making pejorative associations between a range of alternative masculine behaviours and 'homosexuality'. 'Homosexuality' in this context was considered as 'deviant', 'abnormal' and 'un-African'. Many of the participants seemed to feel threatened and internally conflicted by the perceived 'unmanliness' associated with 'gay' masculinity. In order to maintain their 'straight[16]' masculinity, the participants reported that they isolated themselves from 'gay' boys and avoided practices that could be associated with 'homosexuality'. A major theme that emerged in the study was the characterization of 'homosexuality' as un-Christian, sexually aberrant, perverse, contaminating and threatening to the institution of the heterosexual family. The boys' responses thus reflected little tolerance of 'homosexuality' despite the existence of 'gay' sympathetic constitutional rights and considerable change in social attitudes to 'homosexuality' globally.

Amongst other aspects this chapter focuses on various discourses (e.g. medical, religious and psychological) that the adolescent boys in the study employed to justify their discrimination against 'gay' boys at school. Interestingly, all the participants (including *tsotsi* boys, *sex-jaro* boys, academic boys and Christian boys) classified themselves as 'straight' except one participant who classified himself as 'gay'. Boys of various 'types' were united in their

[15] The term 'homosexuality' is put in inverted commas to acknowledge that as an identity category it is a social construct. In the thesis, the terms homosexuality and gay are used interchangeably, but the researcher is aware that the term gay implies a more liberated or liberatory form of identity. The boys in the study used the term gay in their interviews, but not in recognition of this as a liberatory form of identity. Their use of the term was generally pejorative.

[16] The term 'straight' is also put in inverted commas initially to acknowledge that this is also a social construct the participants used in the study to categorise and label each other.

opposition towards 'gay' boys. It was observed that homophobic views were more often raised in the group interviews than in the individual interviews. In this chapter, I discuss how the group interviews became a safe space for the adolescent boys to talk about their disgust for and even hatred of 'gay' desires and associated characteristics. Homophobia in their narratives seemed to function as a tool of control to maintain strict boundaries between 'straight' and 'gay' boys. In their pecking order, 'gay' boys were 'othered' and construed as being at the bottom of the masculine hierarchy. All of the boys appreciated the need to behave in a particular manner to avoid any accusations of being 'gay' and this suggested that gayness was not defined purely on the basis of same sexual desire or relationship, but was also associated with other stereotypically defined practices and behaviours. The fear of being seen as 'gay' was mentioned as one of their major concerns by all of the participants. As will be elaborated in this chapter, it appeared that same-sex relations present a threat to adolescent boys' sense of manhood. This reveals the subtle and somewhat contradictory power that 'gay' masculinity holds in relation to 'straight' masculinity.

12.1. "A boy cannot marry another boy": the South African constitution's allowance of same-sex marriages perceived as a threat to the institution of the heterosexual family

In 1996, South Africa was the first African country to adopt a constitution that protected people from discrimination based on sexual orientation. More recently, invoking the constitution, the Constitutional Court ordered the South African government to legalize same-sex marriages. At the time of conducting the interviews for this research project, the Constitutional Court had just approved the Civil Union Bill, which recognized same-sex marriages in South Africa. In the group interviews, the adolescent boys expressed their anger at the South African government for allowing same-sex marriages.

Extract 1:

> ***Thabiso:*** *Yeah, the government has allowed* ***a girl to marry a girl****, and a boy to marry a boy. That* ***thing is not right*** *because as a boy you* ***have*** *to marry a girl so that you can have a family****. So when you marry a boy, you would not have a child.***
> ***Researcher:*** *So how do you feel about that?*
> ***Thabiso:*** *It's* ***not right****.*
> ***Simon:*** *It* ***destroys*** *families. Let's say two ladies marry each other, or two guys marry each other and they adopt a child.* ***That thing is going to destroy that child****.*
> ***William:*** *The child would grow up in an* ***abnormal family****. And obviously he might turn out to be* ***a homosexual as well*** *because he grew up in that environment, which is not good.*

It was evident that the participants used the focus group interview space to express their negative views about the new Civil Union Bill. In arguing that the bill was not right to allow "*a girl to marry a girl and a boy to marry a boy*", and in his subsequent talk, Thabiso seemed to be unconsciously drawing on a religiously informed view that the ultimate goal of sex in marriage is procreation. His main concern was that when a boy marries a boy they "*would not have a child*". Having a child was interpreted as one of the key markers of virile masculinity and a normative or even compulsory goal in becoming a man. It was evident that Thabiso was angry when expressing his views on same-sex marriages – views that were also emotively supported by the other members of the focus group (Extract 1). Simon said, same-sex marriages "*destroy families*", and he was also concerned about the psychological well-being of children who were adopted by same-sex partners. William, in turn, also supported Simon's contention that such adopted children "*grow up in an abnormal family*" (Extract 1). Here, both William and Simon imply that a 'normal' family comprises a heterosexual father, mother and children. Homosexual families were therefore construed as 'abnormal' and 'deficient' in terms of raising 'normal' children. William was worried that adopted children who grew up with gay parents would be affected emotionally and that they might also turn out to be 'homosexuals' as a consequence of growing up in what he saw as 'an unhealthy environment'. Unconsciously, William seemed to draw on previously dominant psychological discourses (especially some aspects of classical psychodynamic theory) that suggest that people become 'gay' due to childhood traumas and abnormalities in their upbringing. These attitudes run counter to the findings of Connell's (1992) study that being 'gay' is not related necessarily to childhood traumas, and that 'gay' male research participants revealed what would be considered 'a good upbringing'. The expression of such negative attitudes also seemed to confirm Foucault's (1986, 1987) contention that the pathologization of 'homosexuality' as a kind of sickness is used as a form of regulatory power to control sexuality in the general population and to present heterosexuality as the 'norm'.

Interestingly, in this part of the discussion, the participants in the study positioned themselves as 'experts' on issues of childhood development. The discourses of 'normal' and 'abnormal' childhood were used to justify their negative views about same-sex marriages. An analysis of

these justifications and the strong emotions associated with this aspect of discussion, however, revealed hidden feelings of fear and anxiety. The participants' narratives indicated that the idea of same-sex marriages was threatening to their sense of manhood, but they did not openly want to acknowledge this in the interviews. They wanted to sound 'politically' correct in asserting that they were not personally opposed to same-sex marriages but were merely thinking about the best interests of children who might grow up in the families of same-sex partners. The participants wanted to appear reasonable in their opposition to same-sex marriages and did not want to be seen as overtly homophobic. However, there were some participants who openly stated that same-sex marriages not only posed a threat to the psychological wellbeing of adopted children but also to the institution of the heterosexual family. Over the course of the study, the adolescent boys' fears, anxieties and sense of powerlessness became more evident in their further talk about same-sex relationships and 'gay' boys at school, as is discussed in this chapter.

12.2. "Who is the head in a gay marriage?": Homosexuality as a threat to patriarchal relations within the family unit

In the study, the participants posed numerous questions about who the household head would be in a 'gay' marriage, who would pay '*lobola*' (bride wealth) and who would be expected to cook in the house, suggesting a somewhat literal and stereotypic view of how sex roles work in relationships.

Extract 2:

> ***Michael:*** *I think being gay is not right because imagine* ***a man and a man*** *– they get married – And in a normal family household, you will find that there is a head of a family who is a man. A man is the head of the family,* ***because he leads by an example****. Then the wife will follow. But now with gays who can we say is the head of the family because they are all the same. When you go there and say I am looking for the man of the house,* ***a man comes.*** *Then they start arguing about that. So I do not think it's right.* ***(Laughter)***
> ***King:*** *And* ***if I am gay, I am making an example****;* ***if I am gay*** *and I am dating – So he decides that we must get married. We have to pay* ***lobola****, so who has to pop out money? Is it me or him? If he takes the money, who is going to wear the* ***wedding dress****? No, I am not!* ***(Laughter)***
> ***Michael:*** *And imagine; who is going to say, I am willing to cook, I am willing to clean, I am willing not to go to work, I am willing not to learn how to drive? Every day, I am in front of the stove busy cooking. No!* ***(Laughter)***
> ***Shaun:*** *I think that spiritually, culturally, from our* ***forefathers there was never a gay****.*

The above discussion in the group interview uncovered many interesting themes. It seems Michael was concerned about who was going to be the head of the household in a 'gay' marriage. He seemed worried about preserving the privileges of patriarchy whereby a man is head of the household and "*then the wife will follow*". Same-sex relationships threatened this order. Michael also believed that same-sex marriages would create confusion and interfere with peace and stability in the family because it would not be known who had the authority in the household, because "*they are all same*". Michael evidently felt threatened by the possible loss of authority and power entailed in a same-sex relationship and found it hard to imagine a man marrying another man. He said that he hoped the decision to approve same-sex marriages was just a joke. Michael's views and concerns were supported by other group members in the group interview. In this group interview, King added another dimension to the debate by asking who was going to pay *lobola* (bride wealth) and who was going to wear the white wedding dress. He found this dilemma both disturbing and ridiculous. Interestingly, he could not imagine himself wearing a white wedding dress, "*no, I am not!*". This seemed to arouse feelings of fear and anxiety in King as he was very quick to distance himself from anything associated with same-sex marriages. He emphasized that he was just talking hypothetically when he said, "*if I am gay*". It became more evident that King was not comfortable in using himself as an example. It seems he felt his sense of masculinity was under threat. The pitch of his voice was also high in emphasizing his disapproval of 'gay' marriages. In addition, to reviewing same-sex marriage as aberrant in challenging patriarchy and sex roles, King also saw 'gay' marriages as going against African cultural practice, for example, where a man was expected to pay *lobola* to the family of his wife as a token of appreciation of contractual obligations to his fiancé and her family. Shaun concluded the group discussion (Extract 2) by stating categorically that same-sex relationships were un-African and that "*from our forefathers there was never a gay*", an idea that will be explored in the following sub-section. The narratives in this part of the discussion revealed strong support for traditional sex or gender roles even to the extent of suggesting that girls or women should not drive motor cars. The participants seemingly held stereotypical ideas of how domestic relationships should be conducted, implying a lack of flexibility in their thinking and support of patriarchy. The participants seemed emotionally invested in defending the benefits and privileges of the patriarchal system, such as gender inequality in the household. Their emotions became heated in this section of

discussion, especially in the focus groups. The group context, in this instance, seems to have provided the participants with a sense of solidarity in expressing homophobic sentiments and in legitimating conformity to a prescribed type of hegemonic masculinity.

The whole discussion of same-sex marriages was also somewhat mischievous as suggested by the laughter in response to some participants' contributions. This served to disparage 'gayness' further through ridicule and the re-assertion of its aberrance. The humour/laughter may also have helped release tension in discussing this topic. According to Pascoe (2007), making jokes about same-sex marriages helps adolescent boys feel connected with each other. It is also possible in the current study that taking up a joint condemnatory stance may have helped the adolescents in the group context to manage their own anxieties and fears about 'gayness' and the challenges this identity poses to hegemonic masculinity.

12.3. **"From our forefathers there was never a gay": Homosexuality as un-African**

As illustrated in the excerpt quoted previously, participants in the study also stated rather categorically that 'homosexuality' was un-African.

Extract 3:

> ***Shaun:*** *... culturally, from our* ***forefathers there was never a gay****.*
>
> ***Lesley:*** *This thing of gay or being gay is for* ***white people.*** *I can say it is western, but not* ***African.*** *In* ***our African culture,*** *a man must marry a woman and not a man (laughter)*

It seemed that this employment of a discourse of tradition allowed the participants to justify their distaste for same-sex marriages and the marginalization of 'gay' boys at their schools. The participants portrayed 'gay' boys as doubly 'other' – as both not normally male and not normally African. Their ethnic identity was thus questioned along with their masculinity. This discourse helped reinforce the view of homosexuality as alien and foreign. Various African political leaders have also stated that homosexuality is un-African. In Zimbabwe, President Robert Mugabe fuelled homophobic sentiment by declaring that gays were 'worse than pigs or dogs', and Daniel Arap Moi, when he was President of Kenya, called 'homosexuality' a 'scourge against African norms and values'. Potgieter (2003), however, argues that it is incorrect to consider 'homosexuality' as something un-African. Her ethnographic research

indicates that 'homosexuality' has existed for many years in Africa but has been rendered invisible and silenced through various legal, cultural and political discourses and practices. As mentioned in the literature review, the South African government committed itself to the eradication of all forms of discrimination and duly protected 'gay' and 'lesbian' rights in terms of the country's democratic constitution that came into operation post-1994. However, despite the constitutional commitment to equality, many 'gay' men and boys still live in fear of oppression and violence. For example, one boy in the group interview, William, said, "*all gays must be killed*", clearly indicating that legal recognition of same-sex marriages did not change people's homophobic attitudes. Legal protection also did not guarantee acceptance or tolerance as the notion that homosexuality was un-African still persisted amongst youth in the study and is evident in other public spaces.

'Homosexuality' in the interviews was 'othered' as something 'foreign', 'western', and 'alien'. The participants were not aware of and in all probability would not have been interested in the evidence that 'homosexuality' had always existed in Africa. They used emotive language to position themselves as pure 'African' boys by distancing themselves from and dismissing homosexuality as a product of Western influence and cultural imperialism. With comments such as "*in our African culture*", the participants used the politics of Africanism and an indigenous culture to justify their view that 'gay' boys and men lacked the key characteristics of African manhood such as getting married to a woman, having children and supporting their families (Rankhotha, 2006). To emphasis this point, Peter said, "[*y]ou must have children to show that you're a real African man …*". This part of the discussion demonstrated how ideas about sexuality intersected with the politics of patriotism and nationalism. In this study, 'gay' boys were seen as lacking an authentic African identity by associating themselves with Western sexual practices of 'homosexuality'. Not fathering children was also an associated powerful indictment of their non-African manhood. In addition to arguing the un-Africanness of homosexuality, the participants also employed a range of religious discourses to perpetuate and justify discriminatory practices against 'gay' boys.

12.4. "Not Adam and Adam": Homosexuality as un-Christian

In another group interview, the participants talked about whether being 'gay' was something inborn and whether it was God's will that such as identity existed. The participants drew on various religious discourses in discussing 'homosexuality'.

Extract 4:

> ***Martin:*** *I think that it is a creation, it's a* ***God creation****, because it's a woman trapped in a man's body. There is nothing you can do about that thing because* ***there are boys trapped in a woman's body.***
> ***Mpho:*** *Martin has a point, but in my opinion it's God's will; have to forgive me – should my child turn out that way, I will pray as much as I can that a child I get should be straight.*
> ***Brett:*** *In the* ***Bible****, God said I create Adam and Eve,* ***not Adam and Adam****. It is totally wrong according to me; I don't know about other people. It is totally wrong for me to be with another man and for a lady to be with a lady because God says go out there and* ***multiply****. Not that you should be involved in same-sex relationships because there would be a conflict, because you would never multiply. The majority would say because this woman is giving me problems let me fall in love with a man. You are just messing up because you are now a* ***bull and a bull****. It does not work because in a kraal there should be one bull.* ***There can never be two bulls****. It is always* ***a bull and a cow****.*
> ***Philip:*** *The* ***Bible*** *says reproduce and multiply; it means create and make more people, and if it's a guy and a guy what are they going to do?*

The above extract reveals how the participants used religion to justify their view of 'gayness' as aberrant and as going against the social order. Yet again, some interesting contradictions emerged in their discussion. Martin contended that being 'gay' was "*God's creation and there is nothing we can do to change that*". He argued that we need to accept 'gays' as people with a kind of disability who were born and trapped in the 'wrong bodies', a product of biological destiny. In his narrative, he felt sorry for 'gays' for having been born with this irreversible biological condition. Interestingly, the participants took turns in supporting each other's views. Mpho agreed with Martin that 'gayness' was a form of physical disability and added that having a 'gay' child was a curse or punishment from God for sinners. He would pray hard to make sure that his son did not turn out to be 'gay' when he became a father later in life. At this point, there was some entertainment of the idea that a 'gay' identity was not chosen and that 'gay' people were 'created' (by God) and born into this position. For a brief period in the discussion there was some degree of sympathy for being positioned as a homosexual. There

was also some suggesting of a kind of body dysmorphoria related to 'homosexuality' that might be distressing to those involved.

While there was some confusion in the participants' narratives as to whether 'gayness' occurred by destiny or choice, it was clearly still constructed as an unnatural and denigrated biological condition. Brett asserted that God created only "*Adam and Eve, not Adam and Adam*". Many religious groups have also used this same line of argument to oppose same-sex relationships as immoral and unbiblical (Croucher, 2002). Brett saw same-sex relationships as interfering with God's plan to "*go out and multiply*". He employed religious as well as biological essentialist discourses to advance his argument that same-sex relationships were fundamentally wrong because they did not contribute to the biological process of reproduction. Here, Brett implies that 'gay' people might engage in sex for pleasure only, which is 'wrong' because sex should be used for procreative purposes. Homosexual relations were also interpreted as a threat to human existence as procreation would be stunted through same-sex marriages. These discourses were aimed at presenting same-sex marriages as 'deviant' and unnatural and returned again to placing considerable weight on men's place in heterosexual procreation. To emphasize his point, Brett jokingly argued that it was against nature to see two bulls having sex, "*it is always a bull and a cow*", reinforcing by implication the idea of homosexuality as un-African as this analogy derives from pastoral imagery rather than urban township living. Appeals were again made to a concrete and traditional view of the 'natural' order. Same-sex relationships were seen to be going against both natural and biblical laws to procreate and multiply, in addition to departing from African tradition.

It was also interesting that many of these boys who drew upon a kind of theological discourse were not very religious in the sense of being practising Christians, but they nevertheless felt comfortable to cite the Bible ("*the Bible says*") as an authoritative source in decrying 'homosexuality'. Rather than arguing the 'immorality' of 'homosexuality' as is often done in religion-based discussions, they emphasized the unnaturalness of homosexual partnerships in that they failed to produce children. What was clear from the narratives was that the participants did their best to portray 'homosexuality' as aberrant, as unnatural and as 'other' – drawing on a range of discourses including an appeal to African tradition, Christian beliefs,

patriarchy and notions of sex role divisions, sexual desire, sexual practices and reproduction. All these discourses were used to justify the social construction of 'homosexuality' as unnatural and even as a form of pathology, as illustrated in the next section. Also evident were the powerful negative emotions the topic evoked. In some of the group interviews, for example, anger was expressed at the Constitutional Court's decision to approve same-sex marriages, and there was a strong feeling that the decision should be reversed.

12.5. "Gay boys need to see a psychologist": Homosexuality as aberrant and a form of pathology

Negative attitudes towards 'homosexuality' have a long history in Western literature (Theuninck, Hook & Franchi, 2002). For example, DSM-I listed 'homosexuality' as a sexual disorder until it was delisted in 1973 (Bootzin & Acocella, 1988; Theuninck, Hook & Franchi, 2002). Despite campaigns to portray 'homosexuality' as an acceptable lifestyle, negative stereotypes still persist both globally and in many African countries. Although 'homosexuality' has been removed as a mental disorder in more recent diagnostic systems, it seems that views of it as an illness are still prevalent today amongst some sectors of society, thus confirming Foucault's (1986) view that certain discourses take a long time to dissipate. In this study, many of the participants also considered homosexuality to be a 'disease' or form of 'pathology'.

Extract 5:

> ***Shaun:*** *I think there is something wrong with gay boys. I think they need to see a* ***psychologist****.*

Shaun was convinced that "*there is something wrong*" with 'gay' boys and drew on existing psychological discourses to construct 'homosexuality' as something 'pathological' and 'deviant'. He suggested that 'gay' boys should see a psychologist, implying that there was a cure for 'homosexuality' and that it was something that required curing. When Shaun mentioned the word 'psychologist' he looked at me and smiled giving me the impression that as someone who is a qualified counselling psychologist, I should understand the need to see 'gay' boys for therapy. The dominant stereotype among most township boys is that 'gay' boys are abnormal and in need of psychological help. In the extract below, Alfred argues that being 'gay' is part of an identity crisis of not knowing whether one is a 'he' or a 'she'.

Extract 6:

> ***Alfred:*** *He thinks maybe (she) is a girl, but* ***he*** *is not a* ***she****; he is a he.*

Here, Alfred makes a common assumption that gender identity is something that is not only static but also fundamentally linked to the biological or physical body. In this sense, the individual is not free to 'change' or play out a kind of identity that is different from that represented in his/her physical body. The narratives revealed that 'straight' boys positioned themselves as guardians of mental health who had the power and knowledge to diagnose what was 'normal' or 'abnormal'. The power of normalizing practices (Foucault, 1986) was aimed at silencing or rendering 'gay' masculinity unnatural. 'Homosexuality' was pushed to the margins through these normalizing practices. The study revealed that the adolescent boys' sense of hegemonic masculinity was sustained by the pathologization and denigration of 'gay' boys as 'other' and 'deviant'. It also revealed that seeing 'homosexuality' as pathological and as requiring alignment to the norm was a mechanism used by adolescent boys to affirm, by contrast, their own sense of manhood and self-acceptance. This confirms the view in the literature that masculinity relies on the oppression of the 'other' (usually either women or 'gay' men) as a way of defining and asserting itself (Connell, 1995). In other words, masculinity does not exist without comparison with and in contradistinction to the 'other'. For instance, in this study, the participants used 'gay' masculinity as an example of what was not 'normal' masculinity or was not masculine at all. Binaries were consequently created of acceptable or unacceptable township masculine identities and practices.

12.6. "Gay boys are a disgrace to males": Homosexuality as failure to perform virile masculinity

A common theme in all the group interviews was that 'gay' boys were in some way letting 'straight' boys down.

Extract 7:

> ***William:*** *They are a* ***disgrace to males****. That is what I feel.*
> ***Researcher:*** *In what way?*
> ***William:*** *Because they were* ***born with a penis****, and now* ***they are not using it****. So I feel that they should be punished.*

In this extract, William asserted that 'gay' boys should be punished for not using their penises properly, one infers, not for penetrative vaginal sex. He considered homosexuals a *disgrace* to the male species. According to William, having a penis was an important marker or symbol that "*you are a boy*", and given this, boys should use their penises to have sex with girls. 'Gay'

boys were seen as deviating from the 'normal' sexual practice of 'screwing' and 'fucking' girls (Salisbury & Jackson, 1996). In this narrative, one encounters a point where gender and biology intersect. The dominant idea is that the penis should be used only for penetrative vaginal sex with the implication that 'gay' sex is not 'real' sex and that 'real' sex can only take the form of vaginal penetration. In this respect, there is little recognition that male homosexual sex may involve acts of penetration and be virile and active in expression. There is an assumed association between passivity and 'homosexuality'.

Extract 8:

> ***Martin:*** *I normally ask myself about gays – is that as boys* ***we*** *feel – like maybe you meet a girl and you have feelings for her, and such things, you love her – and maybe she tempts you in such a way that … like* ***she touches you*** *and we* ***boys are easily taken****. But with a* ***gay boy there is no magnet*** *in him to get attracted to girls. He is just* ***stiff****.*

Here, Martin seemed to be echoing William's sentiment that there was something wrong with 'gay' boys regarding sexual desire. His main argument was that 'gay' boys did not have 'magnets' to be sexually attracted to girls. They just remain 'stiff', i.e., frigid, when girls touch them. Martin was implying that responding to sexual invitation and having heterosexual desire is natural and inborn for any boy. Martin seemed to suspect that 'gay' boys may not get an erection in such a situation, which is why they did not become aroused when girls tempt them (despite his somewhat ironic reference to 'stiffness' in this context). He believed that there was a 'mismatch' between 'gay' boys' biologically sexed bodies (i.e., possessing a penis) and lack of sexual feelings for girls. The assumption was that sexed bodies and gendered identities are automatically intertwined. This assumption has been challenged by Butler (1990) who argues that there is no relation between sex organs, gender identity and desire and that, therefore, we need to question the automatic association of these three elements. However, according to Martin, boys should always be ready to have sex with girls, making an assumptive link between biology, desire and object availability. The compulsion to perform 'straight' masculinity was biologically, collectively and culturally imposed. In his comment, Martin used the pronoun 'we' to emphasize a sense of unity and sameness with other boys in the group interview. In many of the group interviews, there was evidence of turn taking to sustain a certain line of argument about 'gay' boys' problematic lack of sexual desire for girls. This lack of sexual desire was seen as something bizarre and strange.

Extract 9:

> ***Alfred**: I can say that most of the boys are not interested in gays, because what they need from girls, gays do not have.*
> ***Researcher:** What is it that boys want from girls that gay boys do not have?*
> ***Alfred:** I can say as a sexual healing – I can put it that way**. Girls have different parts: ditties and all that stuff**. And gays do not have that; they just look exactly like mine.*

Alfred was explicit in his narrative that 'straight' boys were not interested in 'gays' because they did not have "*ditties and all that stuff*", such as a vagina for "*sexual healing*". Many of the participants mentioned that having vaginal sex and satisfying partners sexually was a priority in their relationships with girls. Alfred was puzzled as to how a boy could be sexually attracted to another boy because they both have the same sex organ (penis). King agreed with Alfred when he said, "*I will never date a gay because he has what I have. Why should I date him? He would not give me that much 100% of what a girl would*". In other words, he would never date a 'gay' boy because such a boy could not give him "*the vaginal sex*" and heterosexual interest and validation that a girl could. He also did not see any reason for dating a 'gay' boy because "*he has penis and I also have penis*". In their narratives, both Alfred and King implied that 'gay' sex was necessarily lacking because it deviated from what they considered to be 'normal', that was, penetrative vaginal sex. It seemed penetrative sex itself was not necessarily the issue but the *type* of penetrative sex. One wonders whether the boys would approve of anal sex between heterosexual partners and whether the issue was not essentially about object choice rather than practice. In this section, the participants' narratives emphasized sexualized identity as intrinsic to masculinity with frequent references to penises, intercourse and reproductive capacity. This could, in part, be attributable to the participants' age, their biological development, their sexualized gender identity and their interest in forming sexual and 'romantic' partnerships. Alongside this strong 'biological' emphasis was a stereotypical and patriarchal understanding of sex where vaginal penetration was more valued than any other form of sex, for example, oral or anal sex. Using a penis properly was equated only with penetrative vaginal sex.

Moreover, in talking about the penis, Shaun also contended that being 'gay' was something that could change and that sexual orientation was a malleable aspect of identity. In his individual interview, Shaun spoke about his friend's 'gay' cousin who was assaulted and forced to use his penis to have sex with a girl, and subsequently "*he stopped being gay. He*

changed. Now you can say he is a player". In similar vein, it is worth noting that sexual violence (especially rape) against lesbians is common in South African townships and is based on the belief that it will make lesbians heterosexual (Mashaba, 2005). In the example of his friend's cousin who had been beaten up, Shaun suggests that being 'gay' was merely an act of performing a 'wrong' gender role (Butler, 1990). He believed that 'gayness' was something that could be 'cured' if a person was forcibly shown the 'right direction' and experienced heterosexual sex. Shaun implied that having sex with a girl was a good experience and that all 'gay' boys needed to 'taste' it, and then they would stop being 'gay' and become 'players' (Casanovas). The discourse here reiterates the idea that masculinity is not defined only in terms of heterosexual desire but also in terms of one's ability have sex with multiple partners – being a '*player*'.

Having covered many of the significant themes concerning 'homosexuality' arising from the interviews, the discussion now moves on to consider the impact of participants' attitudes on engaging with 'gay' boys in practice. How do adolescent boys relate to 'gay' boys at school? How do they feel about forming friendships with them, for example?

12.7. "They wouldn't be too close": Homosexuality as contaminating

All the participants in the study spoke about the discrimination against 'gay' boys as necessary and justifiable. Many of the participants appeared to be frightened by any possibility of closeness or association with 'gay' boys. In order to maintain their 'straight' masculinity, the participants reported that they distanced themselves from 'gay' boys, apparently leaving these boys socially isolated.

Extract 10:

> ***William:*** *They (gay boys) wouldn't be too close.*
> ***Simon:*** *Keep a* ***distance****.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Why keep the distance?*
> ***Simon:*** *Because other boys are going to think that* ***you are also gay****.*
> ***William:*** *Besides that…*
> ***Thabiso:*** *They would say you are in a* ***relationship with him*** *(laughter of the whole group)*

In the above extract, 'gay' boys were seen as in some way contagious or corrupting. In support of this view Herman said, "*there is this other young boy who sometimes acts gay. When he turns to hug me or something, eish! I feel like a snake is going for my body. Because when I*

start thinking of myself acting as gay that thing makes me uncomfortable". The depiction of 'homosexuality' as a snake in this narrative was similar to the construction of the figure of the homosexual in the 18th century as a monster, a pervert and a freak (Foucault, 1986). Given such sentiments, the participants consequently avoided being 'too close' to boys who sometimes "*act gay*". If a boy was seen in the company of 'gay' boys, people might think that he was also gay or that "*you are in a relationship with him*". The fear of being considered 'gay' was evidently what primarily prompted the participants to avoid 'gay' boys. Even if they wanted to socialize with 'gay' boys, the social stigma deterred them. The anxiety of being seen as 'gay' was too overwhelming for many of the adolescent boys, with Herman, for example, saying that he cannot imagine himself "*acting as gay*". There was a sense of feeling disgusted that this boy who sometimes acts 'gay' wanted to hug him. These aspects of the discussion were interesting because of the tensions they revealed. On the one hand, there appeared to be a somewhat visceral, subjective set of responses, which suggested that 'homosexuality' was something that could be 'caught' from others, almost like a contagious disease. One could also speculate whether such extreme rejection of touch or affection from another boy was a defence against homoerotic impulses (Nayak & Kehily, 1996). On the other hand, there was a powerful awareness of social attributions and judgments, and an anxiety that one might be perceived as 'gay' by association. Here, the participants' anxiety could be socially rather than purely personally mediated.

What was also clear was that 'gay' boys or boys who act like 'gays' should be avoided at all costs because of a deep-seated fear of being contaminated by what some of the participants termed the "*disease of homosexuality*". Here, the participants resurrected the outdated view, already discussed, that 'homosexuality' constituted a mental disorder.

Embedded within the discussion of rejection of contact with homosexual boys is a subtle irony. It is interesting that the participants regarded sexual orientation as malleable and as capable of transformation and raised the possibility that they themselves could be changed into homosexuals or contaminated by 'homosexuality' in associating themselves with 'gay' boys.

My interviews with the adolescent boys revealed throughout that 'gayness' was an identity with powerful negative associations and any closeness with it had to be strictly avoided, both literally and figuratively, also as illustrated in the section below.

12.8. Befriending gay boys, "as long they don't propose love to me": Homosexuality as requiring strict boundaries

In related but somewhat different sets of conversations boys spoke about how they might relate in reality to peers who were identified as 'gay' and displayed a somewhat more complex awareness of their own and others' positioning in this respect. Some of the participants reported mixed feelings about befriending 'gay' boys. For example, Simon disagreed with William who in one of the focus groups had earlier asserted that all 'gay' boys should be '*killed*'. Drawing on a human rights perspective, Simon asserted that the rights of 'gay' boys should be respected as they were also human beings, in a sense, contradicting his earlier remark that same-sex marriages should be opposed because they 'destroy families'. This shows the fluidity of the discursive positions that adolescent boys occupied at different times and in different contexts across the course of the interviews. In response to William's radical opinion, Simon seemed to adopt a non-homophobic attitude towards 'gay' boys when he said, "*I respect them. It's not like I would look down on him when he passes by, or assault him*". While the sentiments here could still be viewed as prejudicial in rejecting only extreme homophobic behaviour, some attempts to engage positively with 'gay' boys were evident. It is therefore important not to label all adolescent boys as homophobic. A few of the participants demonstrated the emergence of alternative non-homophobic voices that appeared to need external validation due to their fragility. For example, in his individual interview, Simon said that he did not have a problem befriending 'gay' boys provided they observed certain limits and restrictions. He said "*I don't mind to befriend gay boys as long as they don't propose love to me.*" Clearly, Simon was conflicted about taking the position to befriend 'gay' boys as he was worried about the possibility of being seen as a potential sexual conquest.

Extract 11:

> ***Researcher:*** *What would you do when he proposes love to you?*
> ***Simon:*** *I would tell him* ***politely*** *that he must look at me well, as to who I am****. I am not gay****. I am not in that group****, in that 'family'.*
> ***Researcher:*** *But if he pursues you?*

> ***Simon:*** *If he pursues me, obviously* ***I would get angry*** *because I am only human as well. Maybe to an extent of beating him up, but then as a guy he is going to fight back. It won't* ***be like a male and female fight****, but it's going to be a* ***male to male fight****.*

Simon suggested that if a 'gay' boy was to propose love to him, his first reaction would be polite rejection, but if the 'gay' boy continued to pursue him, he might react violently. In the group interview, Simon, as a Christian boy, tried hard to sound progressive, but many of his views were implicitly still homophobic. He supported his fellow group members in their view that 'gay' boys were identified as feminized, but asserted rather strongly that if a fight ensued between him and a gay boy, "*it won't be like a male and female fight, but it's going to be a male to male fight*". In this statement, Simon not only asserted his own potency but also implied that being 'gay' was a 'public performance' that might change if a 'gay' boy was under siege to prove his maleness in a violent context, an idea observed in other research (Whitehead, 2005). He seemed to think that it would be an insult to his manhood for a 'gay' boy to consider him an object of sexual desire because he did not belong "*in that group [or] in that family*". Simon used the word 'that' twice in this piece of narrative to position 'gay' masculinity as 'other' and to enable him to distance himself from this identity. The possibility of being seen as a sexual object by another boy created anxiety in Simon, and, as a result, his more progressive, anti-homophobic views expressed in the individual interview changed radically in the focus group. In the group context, Simon might not have wanted to be seen as 'gay' himself by advocating 'gay' rights, especially in a context where anti-gay sentiment was predominant. Male bonding, according to Frosh et al. (2002), is often solidified and cemented among self-identified heterosexual boys in the kind of critical group conversation that was observed in the study and individual boys clearly did not want to be excluded from this kind of bonding as noted previously.

Many of the participants in the individual interviews spoke about their fears and anxieties of being seen as 'gays' due to their failure to live up to the image of township masculinity, which in many instances involves an engagement in macho type behaviours as a way of proving one's manhood. The participants did not have the freedom to choose their male friends because some boys had to be avoided due to their being 'gay' or acting like 'gays'.

Most of the participants said that they knew 'gay' boys at their school and that they also felt uncomfortable around them.

Extract 12:

> ***Herman:*** *To tell you the truth; all of us here, we* ***do not feel comfortable*** *around gays. We do not even want to associate with them.*
> ***Mpho:*** *Herman is telling the truth about the issue he is talking about. Because it is true, even now there is a certain boy who is troubling him.*

Herman took the stance here that he was talking on behalf of the group when he said "*all of us here, we don't feel comfortable around gays*", making the assumption that all the boys in the group were 'straight' and by implication, including the researcher. In this group interview, Mpho supported Herman's view that boys in general did not feel comfortable around 'gay' boys, but he also told the interesting story of a 'gay' boy who had been flirting with Herman at school. It emerged in the group discussion that other boys had also had encounters with this particular 'gay' boy and had a generalized view of the experience.

Extract 13:

> ***Mpho:*** *It was that boy's party, and Martin and I did not know that he is gay. We went to the party and it was nice. The second day we noticed different* ***moves and actions*** *and the way he was talking that there is something wrong with this guy. So there were girls and boys and they exchanged numbers. He also had our numbers, and the next day I got* ***a message that said go outside; I will blow you a thousand kisses****. I said to Herman I will not* ***appreciate and I will not tolerate*** *this thing. I said to Herman why don't you talk to this guy; why is he doing this,* ***sending us love messages.*** *I said Herman go and talk to this person. I do not know if Herman went and told him. K and I had that problem.*
> ***Researcher:*** *So Herman what is happening*
> ***Herman:*** *Okay. In a way I was not 100% sure that he was gay. He is in the* ***middle actually****. When I confronted him, we decided, the three of us, Martin and Mpho, that we must confront him and ask him* ***where does he stand****. If we say men and women; where would he stand? Do you get my point? And then he actually got angry at me for asking him that question. That is why I am saying us* ***straight guys*** *do not hang around gays.* ***They bring us down****. At the end of the day, girls when they see us hanging around with gays, they think that we are also gay whereby when I go to propose her, she says what are you doing; you are weak .You are gay!*

The fear of being rejected by girls was another reason the participants distanced themselves from 'gay' boys. It was evident in the above extract that boys needed to be consistent about their 'stand' in terms of their identity and preference for men or women. A boy who was suspected of being 'gay' was confronted and questioned about his sexuality because he apparently behaved strangely (e.g. walking and talking like a girl and sending love messages to other boys). This behaviour was not in accordance with the boys' code (Pollack, 1999) that adolescent boys must pursue and woo girls as potential sex partners. Like Simon earlier, Mpho

was also furious that this boy who was suspected of being 'gay' had sent him a love message, feeling offended to be seen as the object of male desire. In the group, there was also a sense of feeling betrayed by this boy. As a result, he had to be confronted and compelled to declare whether he was 'straight' or 'gay'. In the participants' minds, it seemed impossible to be bisexual (you are either one of us or you are not).

In many respects, this group discussion was also about the constraints and boundaries placed upon 'gay' boys in terms of sexual expression and relationships with 'straight' or other boys in general. 'Straight' boys evidently have to avoid practices associated with femininity such as hugging and sending other boys text messages - implying that adolescent boys cannot show affection to each other without provoking possible negative reactions. In this respect, it is worth noting than in talking about 'homosexuality' there was often a conflation between 'homosexuality' as epitomized in feminized behaviour and attributes and 'homosexuality' as about same sex object choice. Pascoe (2007) in her study of adolescent boys observed that any boy who made any slight mistake of doing something 'unmasculine' was likely to be called a 'fag'. The 'fag' identity served as a disciplinary mechanism to ensure that all boys complied with the prevailing hegemonic norms of masculinity. She also found that the 'fag' slur was not limited only to 'gay' boys but was employed in respect of any boy who temporarily failed to perform certain masculine activities in a given social space. Similarly, this idea seems to capture some of the internal tensions, fears and anxieties that the adolescent boys in the present study had to manage on a daily basis in order to maintain and sustain the image of being 'straight' boys. In order to shore up one's own heterosexual identity, one had to very clearly and strongly *dis-identify* with 'homosexuality', and by association, 'the feminine', even in terms of one's dress style, as discussed in the sub-section below.

12.9. "A pink colour is for girls": Key markers of being 'gay'

As mentioned previously, in the expression of anti-homosexual and denigratory sentiments towards 'gay' people, the boys seemed to assume that I would share their views or at least understand them. In this respect, it was evident that they assumed that I was heterosexual. In his paper entitled *Methodological instability and the disruption of masculinity*, Davison (2007) shares his personal experiences of conducting research with young men. He became aware of

how his male research participants concluded that he was 'gay' based on their interpretation of markers, such as his clothing (tight jeans), his soft voice and physical appearance (slight build). As a result, he observed that in some of the interviews, 'straight' boys felt inhibited to openly express homophobic sentiments while the self-identified 'gay' participants talked to him more openly about their sexuality and the problem of homophobia in schools because they thought he was 'one of them'. Thinking that I was 'straight', many of the participants in the present study felt free to express their prejudices about homosexuality in front of me. It is possible that similar external markers such as clothing and physical appearance might also have been used to conclude that I was 'straight'. It is also likely that since I was seen possibly as an aspirational figure (e.g. owning a car, holding a professional degree), I was necessarily associated with the 'superior' identity of the heterosexual male.

In the study, the participants spoke about the markers that they used to determine whether a boy/man was 'straight' or 'gay'. They asserted that they could tell if a boy was 'gay' by the way he dressed.

Extract 14:

> ***King:*** *A lot! Because the first thing is they wear these [**skinny trousers**] and making themselves look **sexy like girls.***

Extract 15:

> ***William****: … **tight pants, bum-shots**…you see them hugging and kissing. If you don't you will think they are girls and you can make a mistake of proposing like **Zenzo on Generation** (popular TV programme which depicted two men kissing).*

In these extracts, King and William used existing social stereotypes to portray 'gay' boys as flamboyant 'queens' who seek attention by wearing '*skinny trousers*' and '*tight pants*', but these comments also revealed something deeper. Here, 'straight' boys appeared to see 'gay' boys' dress style as representing a major threat to their sense of masculinity in that they were turning themselves into objects of potential (male) sexual desire. In this brief extract, the boys convey the kind of slippage that can take place if boys, by virtue of their manner and dress, come to be mistaken for girls. Again there seems to be some caricaturing of male 'homosexuality' as necessarily involving performance of a feminine-identification and also an inadvertent acknowledgement that desire can be 'misplaced' and is therefore not as instinctive as they previously implied. It is possible that some of the participants may even have felt

seduced by ‘gay’ boys, who looked ‘sexy like girls’. Pascoe (2007) found that many adolescent boys were privately sexually attracted to ‘gay’ boys but that they repressed these sexual desires because of the social stigma of ‘homosexuality’. Psychoanalytically speaking, the degree of homophobia expressed could be understood as suggestive of a defensive position that implies the existence of repressed homoerotic desires and impulses. Any such feelings or desire were denied by the participants when they depicted ‘gay’ sex as repulsive and lacking in some way. The negative depiction of ‘gay’ sex might have made the participants feel more masculine and less threatened by ‘gay’ boys, but their fears and anxieties did not disappear because they were confronted by ‘gay’ images every day at school and also in the media, such as on popular television programmes. They were thus aware of needing to engage with ‘homosexuality’, despite their general expression of rather conservative attitudes.

Furthermore, in one of the group interviews, the participants mentioned that they made fun of ‘gay’ boys or boys who were concerned about their appearance or who wore particular clothing.

Extract 16:

> ***Philip:*** *Like if you wear something* ***pink****, a* ***pink*** *colour is for girls. We will tease you.*
> ***Shaun:*** *Pink colours are for girls.*
> ***Alfred:*** *You can’t wear a pink shirt. People will think you are gay. I won’t wear anything pink.*

For many boys in Alex, as discussed in chapter 11, wearing Superga and All Stars was a key marker of township masculinity. A boy who wore anything pink was suspected of being ‘gay’ because the colour pink was associated with femininity. Again, one sees a somewhat literal and stereotypic view of ‘gayness’ and its association with the conventionally feminine. It was maintained that such boys who wear pink clothes must be avoided, but interviewees also complained bitterly that it is unfair that ‘gay’ boys spend most of their time with girls.

12.10. “It is unfair that gay boys spend most of their time with girls”:Homosexuality as female aligned

Under this sub-heading, the idea that homosexuality was seen by the participants as disrupting existing gender relations is explored. Boys were expected to spend time with other boys talking about sport (such as soccer, rugby and wrestling) and girls. The participants expressed

discomfort with the tendency of 'gay' boys to spend most of their time with girls despite the fact that they ('gay' boys) were shunned by heterosexual boys.

Extract 17:

> ***Peter: They let us down*** *because when they meet with girls they tell them our weak points, that guys are like this and that*
> ***Herman:*** *Just imagine I want a girl over there; the next thing I go and talk to her – and maybe this gay guy does not like me and he goes to tell that girl that, ey, Herman is like this and this and this. In other words,* ***as guys we are supposed to be united****.*
> ***Mpho:*** *They do because they know much about girls because they always have a conversation with girls, and talk about boys, but he is a boy too. And then he emphasizes that boys are wrong. And he forgets that he, himself is a boy. And then that there are sorts of boys that we don't want ...*

In the above quote, Peter mentioned that he was feeling 'let down' by 'gay' boys. He accused them of telling girls about boys' '*weak points*' and, as a consequence, girls may reject them. Herman and Mpho also accused 'gay' boys of not collectively protecting the interests of boys and forgetting that they were also boys. According to Herman, boys needed to be 'united' in their mission to 'conquer' and 'play' girls, but 'gay' boys were evidently derailing such clandestine plans by telling girls, for example, that boys wanted only to have sex with them (Jewkes & Wood, 2005). The implicit accusation was that 'gay' boys used their 'gayness' to get close to girls and to gossip about boys. In this group interview, 'gay' boys were seen as 'sell-outs' or 'traitors' for telling girls male secrets. There was an element of irony here, in that 'straight' boys expected solidarity and cohesion from a group of 'gay' boys, when most of their talk had constructed such boys as 'other'. Being 'gay' in this context was seen as advantageous in a contradictory way because 'gay' boys had unlimited access to girls. Beyond seeing such relations as threatening, the participants seemed envious of the closeness and openness of the relationship between 'gay' boys and girls. Some of the participants jokingly talked about the need to pretend they were 'gays' in order to access girls.

The participants seem, at least in part, to have made these accusations as a defence to cope with their feelings of envy and anxiety and to spoil 'gay' boys' positive relationship with girls. In an individual interview, Hilton, a self-identified 'gay' boy, refuted the accusation that he gossiped about 'straight' boys. He said he spent a lot of time with girls because they did not discriminate

against him. He also mentioned that girls were less homophobic as compared to boys, and thus, he enjoyed their company.

Extract 18:

> ***Hilton****: I don't tell my friends (girls) what boys do. I don't tell them how and where boys change when they grow up. They talk about it in front of me, but I don't.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Do girls talk about girls' stuff with you?*
> ***Hilton****: Yes.*
> ***Researcher:*** *What do they tell you?*
> ***Hilton****: They will say, oh, my friend I'm on my periods (**menstruations**). They will say, oh, these pads will break your virginity.*
> ***Researcher:*** *They **say pads**?*
> ***Hilton:*** *Yes, you know the ones that have a string.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Is it pads?*
> ***Hilton:*** *Yes, they have a string. They say it breaks their **virginity**.*
> ***Researcher:*** *They do what?*
> ***Hilton:*** *Break your virginity; if you are still a virgin and you use those pads because you insert them they **break your virginity**. They talk about all these things in front of me, and I don't have a problem. They won't say this boy is not supposed to know girls' stuff. My friends are open and they just talk.*

As the researcher in the study, I initially asked a lot of clarity seeking questions of Herman here, partly because of my surprise at the intimate information Hilton had gained from his female friends. It appeared that girls were free to talk to 'gay' boys about intimate female experiences such as "*menstruation*" and "*pads breaking your virginity*". Pascoe (2007) believes that girls talk freely to 'gay' boys because they are not seen as potential boyfriends. Girls also prefer being with 'gay' boys because they are friendly, less abusive and less violent (Frosh et al., 2002; Pascoe, 2007). It is possible that 'straight' boys might have been aware of the fact that 'gay' boys had access to imitate 'girls stuff' and therefore in a sense had knowledge superior to their own. They also wished to have the same unrestricted contact with girls and they complained that "*girls always run away from them and like being with gay boys*" (Simon). However, in the extract below, Michael asserted that 'gay' boys spend a lot of time with girls out of fear of being rejected and out of wanting to also align themselves with girls as a means of alleviating their anxiety about heterosexual interchanges.

Extract 19:

> ***Michael****: From my personal point of view I think boys who tend to change to **being gay are insecure about themselves**; **they are afraid to be rejected by females**. So they tend to act like females because **they are afraid to go for females**.*

In this extract, Michael seemed to draw on the stereotype that boys and men may turn 'gay' because they have been hurt by girls. He regarded himself as superior to the 'insecure' gay

boys and as more confident and not afraid of rejection by girls. Michael categorized 'gay' boys as cowards who "*are afraid to go for females*". It was clear that the hegemonic template for relating to girls was as potential sexual conquests rather than friends or confidants. Like William, Michael also argued that 'gay' boys should be denied masculine status for not complying with the norms of hegemonic masculinity, which include being sexually attracted to girls as well as accepting the challenge of the possibility of rejection by women. In the extract, 'gay' sexuality is derided once again because of its shift away from focusing on 'females' as trophies of masculinity. As mentioned earlier, it was only through having multiple partners and penetrative vaginal sex that 'straight' boys were accorded the status of *inkhalakhata* (real men).

12.11. "Why did you give that 'gay' boy a camera because he is not a boy?":Policing each other through boundary maintenance

The study revealed that the participants policed each other in subtle and also not so subtle ways in terms of boundary maintenance (Britton, 1990), which was enforced through compulsory association with some boys rather than others. For example, during my fieldwork, Brett, Mpho and Martin saw me giving Marcus a camera so that he could also be part of the research project. Brett and his friends immediately asked me why I had given Marcus a disposable camera because he was not a 'boy' but 'gay'. I asked them why they thought Marcus was 'gay', and they replied he was 'gay' because he spent most of his time with other 'gay' boys at school. This, for me, was a clear indication of how the boys policed each other. Solely on the basis of his association with 'gay' boys, Marcus was considered 'gay' and by implication he was denied the identity of 'real' boy. In a Foucauldian sense, a regulatory practice was implemented in order to claim a particular kind of masculine gender identity (Foucault, 1976). Boys who did not reflect the dominant heterosexual masculinity were ostracized. Brett and his friends suggested that Marcus should be excluded from the study on boys and masculinities because his masculinity was in doubt as he failed to maintain strict boundaries between 'straight' and 'gay' boys (Bird, 1996; Britton, 1990). It seemed that there was also an implicit fear that Marcus would contaminate the research project. As a result, he was not welcome to be part of the study.

Brett and his friends also accused Marcus of speaking like a girl. Brett joked that Marcus's voice was too soft for him to be a boy. In this group context, boys were expected to behave in a particular manner, and failure to comply with these physical markers of valorized masculinity could lead to homophobic comments and the creation of a disparaged or failed masculinity (Davison, 2007; Nayak & Kehily, 2008). Despite these accusations, I invited Marcus to be part of the research project. I wondered what Brett and his friends thought about my 'transgression' and whether they also questioned my sexuality as a researcher. In conducting interviews with lesbian school girls, Pascoe (2007) found that her research participants were curious about her sexuality. They wanted to know whether she was in a heterosexual or homosexual relationship. As discussed previously, Davison also found his sexual orientation and/or sexuality questioned in conducting research with adolescent boys, although questions concerning this were not put directly to him. Kong, Mahoney and Plummer (2001, in Henderson & Shefer, 2008, p. 7) reported that "before being interviewed, many *participants* may want to know where both the researcher … is coming from, what kind of relationship they are having together and how *intimate* details will be presented and represented". It was proposed that "deep levels of disclosure will come if the participant senses shared understanding from the interviewer" (Josselson, 1995, in Henderson & Shefer, 2008, p. 7). However, perhaps contrary to Josselson's suggestion about researcher self-disclosure, I decided not to reveal anything about my sexual identity as I thought that disclosure might change the dynamics of the interviews and may have possibly deterred the participants from freely expressing their views, including rather blatant misogyny and homophobia. At the same time, I was also not comfortable in including Marcus in the focus group because of the homophobic comments made by other boys in the school in previous interviews. Only two individual interviews were conducted with Marcus. Homophobia was evidently a pervasive problem in Alex. Throughout the first interview, Marcus did not say anything about the rumour that he was 'gay' until he mentioned that he wanted to be a hairdresser when he grows up.

Extract 20:

> ***Researcher:*** *Does this say anything about* ***your identity****?*
> ***Marcus:*** *Yes. People would think that* ***he is a hairdresser, he is gay or something****. They do not understand that in life you need to have a career that you will follow.*
> ***Researcher:*** *And you say it also says something, partly; it is not that it's because of your identity. When I was asking you about who you are and all that, you did not say anything about your identity as a gay boy?*
> ***Marcus: No, I am not gay****. I am Marcus, a person who likes people, and I am bright.*

Researcher: *I mean when you are a hairdresser people automatically think you are gay.*
Marcus: *Most people think that you have chosen to be a hairdresser, and most hairdressers are gay.*
Researcher: *And you say you are not?*
Marcus: I am not (gay).

First, I need to acknowledge that I went into this interview with an agenda of wanting to find out whether Marcus was 'gay' or not because of what Brett and his friends had told me earlier. My questions in the above extract reveal that I was explicitly pushing Marcus to say something about his sexual identity. With hindsight and self-reflection I was also able to uncover my own prejudices in associating certain occupations (e.g. hairdressing) with being 'gay'. In the interview, Marcus denied that he was 'gay', "*No, I am not gay*". He said that he knew that the other boys at school thought he was 'gay', but it did not concern him unduly because he knew he was not. I observed that Marcus was confident in talking about his individual identity and masculinity (also disclosing that he was proud to be a virgin), and in rejecting risk-taking behaviours associated with being a 'real' township boy in Alex. It is possible that other boys might have accused Marcus of being 'gay' because he did not comply with the 'unwritten rules' (Davison, 2007a; Pascoe, 2007) of hegemonic masculinity, such as displaying aggression, spending time with other boys, playing football and dating multiple girlfriends. Marcus was thus perhaps being punished for not conforming to the gender expectations of compulsory Alex hegemonic masculinity. In this context, his lack of conformity led to a categorization of him as 'other' and in much of the conversations 'Othering' was conflated with categorization as homosexual.

In the follow-up interview, Marcus told me that he has a girlfriend that he met a few days after our first interview. I found this disclosure interesting in a number of ways. I wondered whether Marcus told me about his new girlfriend as an explicit marker of a heterosexual identity and as a face-saving strategy (Billig, 1988). He might also have made the disclosure in an attempt to consolidate his sense of masculinity by playing the 'macho' role in the follow-up interview. Surprisingly, in this follow-up interview, Marcus said that he was planning to have sex with his new girlfriend soon but that he would respect her decision if she said she was not ready for this. Although, he appeared to be somewhat cautious around this he suggested it would be 'fine' if she wanted to have sex with him.

Extract 21:

> ***Researcher****: Something you said when I was reading your first interview that boys in relationships always expect to have sex with their girlfriends, I wonder where you stand now that you have a girlfriend.*
> ***Marcus****: It shouldn't be me putting her under pressure… I don't like to be put under pressure so I do the same things to the other person* ***I won't put her under pressure to say you must sleep with me.***
> ***Researcher:*** *Do you get that feeling at times that you want to have sex with her?*
> ***Marcus:*** *No. I don't have that feeling.*
> ***Researcher:*** *So it means with regard to that something that we discussed around this, is it possible for boys not to have sex, to abstain?*
> ***Marcus****: Ja, not all of them, some.*
> ***Researcher:*** *So where do you fall?*
> ***Marcus****: Since we had that interview I've changed my mind about like…… when she comes to me to tell me she wants to sleep with me its fine but I won't go to her and tell her let's do this and that.*

In this section of the interview, two points appear to warrant further analysis. On the one hand, Marcus embraced an alternative voice that was non-coercive towards his girlfriend. He accepted that 'no' means 'no'. However, on the other hand, Marcus experienced some internal conflict about the fact that he had never had sex. He felt pressurized that the time had come for him to be sexually active. Again here, as a researcher, I wondered if Marcus's sudden decision to be sexually active was not the result of pressure to prove to his peers (and perhaps, me) that he was not 'gay' but 'straight' and that participation in the study had brought some of these issues to the fore. However, I would not want to suggest that it was not possible for young men to be both heterosexual and to display non-conventional characteristics in terms of masculinity. Marcus was an interesting participant altogether in his willingness to adopt or own different and autonomous positions and apparently to be able to do so and maintain self-esteem. In one of the interviews, he said, "*I am Marcus, a person who likes people, and I am bright*". It seemed that some participants in the study were able to challenge dominant expectations about male attributes and behaviour and to make alternative choices in terms of lived identity. Some of the features that appeared to be implicated in this kind of opening up of options and space are explored in the conclusion of the thesis.

In terms of feelings and emotions, it was difficult for adolescent boys like Marcus to resist and reject the dominant practices of hegemonic masculinity without any form of support and guidance. In his reflections on the research project, Marcus said, "*I wish it was possible to*

continue and continue with this so that we as boys can continue talking about our feelings". Clearly, being a boy, as demonstrated in the participants' narratives, came with mixed feelings of uncertainty, confusion, sadness, fear, anxiety, hurt, frustration, pain, pride, triumph, and aggression, in living up to the dominant images of 'straight' masculinity. Both 'gay' and 'straight' boys seemed to struggle in different ways with this aspect of identity. For example, in the next section, I use the case of Hilton, a self-identified 'gay' boy, to demonstrate some of the difficulties that young black 'gays' encounter, but the discussion also moves away from the dominant representation of 'gay' boys as only victims of homophobia in schools. I look at the discursive strategies this 'gay' boy employs to assert his 'gayness' as an expression of sexual freedom and choice.

12.12. "They call me *isitabane*": The pain and power dynamics of being a gay boy in Alex

The focus in this section is on Hilton, a 15-year-old boy who self-identified as 'gay', living in Alex and the only such boy interviewed in the study. In the individual interview, he spoke about how other boys harassed him and called him derogatory names at school: "*They call me isitabane, faggot and say lots of other things.*" The study showed that schools were not doing much to protect the rights of 'gay' boys such as Hilton. Shaun said the following about how 'gay' boys are treated at his school.

Extract 22:

> ***Shaun:*** *I can say most of the time* ***we make fun*** *of them. When we see them* ***we make jokes.***
> ***Researcher:*** *Like what?*
> ***Shaun:*** *Okay, this other time they (****gay boys****) came into a class. I do not know what they were looking for. So they found that the majority in that class were boys. A door was closed, they were teased and then fondled;* ***hey baby! hey baby! hey sweety****!*

In this extract, it was clear that homophobia was used as a tool of control in policing the boundaries of traditional masculinity and that the heterosexual boys felt comfortably in the majority. The boys appear to have enacted a kind of collective sexual harassment. The boys made fun of these 'gay' boys by treating them like girls, "*hey baby! hey sweety!*, to ensure that they were aware of the loss of their male status. In the process of making these jokes, 'gay' boys were clearly feminized. In the interviews, the participants tended to view it as unproblematic that township boys often discriminated against 'gay' boys. This view was

somewhat defensively echoed by Hilton when he said "*I don't care because they don't do anything for me. So I don't care (about) people who discriminate against me*". However, in the following extract, he narrated his experience of being discriminated against and abused and considerable distress associated with this.

Extract 23:

> *"Sometimes **I wish I could commit suicide** because I don't like **being gay**. I've been single for a long time. I don't remember being involved with anyone, **the loneliness is killing me**; and the people that discriminate against me, it hurts and **I'm even scared to go outside** and I feel **ashamed**. **I hate being gay**, but there is nothing I can do. It hurts 'when I see couples, each and every time I'm with my friends who are girls and their boyfriends come (and) I get left alone and I have to go home. **I'm lonely you see**".*

Despite his early assertions of not 'caring' about people who discriminate against him, I became worried in conducting this interview because Hilton sounded seriously depressed in this section of the discussion. I attempted to empathize with him without "slipping into a therapeutic or counselling mode" (Henderson & Shefer, 2008, p.7). The research interview was not 'psychotherapeutic' but it was conducted in a 'clinical style' to encourage openness and to explore emotionally marked material (Frosh et al., 2005; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) and this allowed some degree of support and containment. Hilton's sadness seemed related both to the impossibility of finding a suitable partner and to his sense of ostracization and social isolation[17]. His words are poignant in the distress they covey. Hilton said that he had been trying to find a partner for the past three years but had not been successful. He was still single at the time of the interview.

Extract 24:

> ***Researcher:** Do you feel it's difficult to get a boyfriend in Alexandra?*
> ***Hilton:** Yes. It's difficult unless you go to the internet but it's not promising for gays. These so-called **chat rooms** don't do anything for me.*
> ***Researcher:** So you have tried?*
> ***Hilton:** Lots of times but nothing happens. **I hate being gay**.*
> ***Researcher:** You say there's nothing you can do. What do mean by that?*
> ***Hilton:** (Laughter) There's nothing I can do because the people I want to be with … I don't want someone with the same status as me. I want someone **'straight'** because you can't date someone who's gay when you are gay, you have to find someone **'straight'** and that makes it difficult… **I want a straight person** because I'm gay. The straight one will be the man; being the gay one I will be the woman.*

[17] As part of my ethical responsibility, Hilton was given contact details of Gay and Lesbian Organisations that he may contact for counselling or more information about being 'gay'. In the telephone follow-up interview, he mentioned that he had called one of the organisations and would be meeting with them. Two years later, his story appeared in one of local newspapers (Speak Up Alex) with Hilton proudly talking about his identity as a young 'gay' male living in Alex.

In reading these extracts, one should take into account that Hilton was still a teenager. He was only 15 years old at the time of the interview. It is possible that his identity as a 'gay' boy might not yet have 'solidified'. He had not yet reached the stabilization phase in terms of Plummer's (1975, in Mashaba, 2005) theory on male 'homosexuality' identity formation. Stabilization is viewed to have occurred when a gay male feels comfortable with his sexual identity. Plummer (1975, in Mashaba, 2005) believes that reaching the stage of self-acceptance is not easy as exemplified by the difficulty many 'gay' men and women have in 'coming out' about their sexuality. However, Hilton said that he found it easy to tell his mother about his sexuality and that, after her initial disappointment, she accepted his sexual orientation. His siblings were also supportive. Hilton's difficulties were mainly compounded by the homophobic environment in which he lived and by the lack of 'gay' role models in Alex because many 'gay' boys and men are too scared to 'come out of the closet', especially in South African townships such as Alex. Numerous African people, as also shown in this study, still believe that homosexuality is 'deviant', 'evil' 'un-African' and 'abnormal', and these beliefs seem to continue to perpetuate negative views about 'gay' men and women (Potgieter, 2003). Hilton evidently internalized some of the negative perceptions about 'homosexuality', and, as a result, he found himself feeling confused, isolated, depressed and also questioning his sexuality as wrong ('I hate being gay'). Hilton seemed to feel trapped in a difficult and denigrated identity.

What also emerged in this interview was that Hilton had no-one to talk to about his feelings and emotions. It was evident that young 'gay' boys such as Hilton need support and possibly psycho-education from supportive peers and adults. He found the interview process to be helpful in talking about some of his difficulties, such as that of finding an intimate partner. He also spoke about some of his fears and anxieties about sex in a 'gay' relationship.

Extract 25:

> ***Hilton:*** *Yeah, I ask myself the same question every day, if you have sex. (**Laughter**) I can say yes.*
> ***Researcher:*** *What is it that you ask yourself?*
> ***Hilton:****((**Laughter**)**Who will penetrate who**? Do you understand?*
> ***Researcher:*** *Explain. Tell me more.*
> ***Hilton:*** *If we are dating me and my boyfriend it's obvious I'm the girl so he …*

Researcher: *He has to penetrate you.*
Hilton: *Yeah.**(Laughter)***

The above extract suggests that Hilton assumes that heteropatriachal masculine stereotypes may also apply in 'gay' relationships when it comes to having sex (Henderson & Shefer, 2008). A 'gay' man who occupies the position of the man decides when and how to have sex and also assumes the active, inserter role while the other man takes the passive, anal receptor role (Henderson & Shefer, 2008). It also seems passivity and activity in this kind of sexual act is modelled on the stereotypical gender relations between heterosexual men and women. Passive partners are feminized and may be seen as inferior in the relationship. However, the 'gay' black men in Rankotha's (2005) study preferred 'flexible' role playing in bed where partners took turns in penetrating one another and this kind of pattern may be reasonably common. In the present study, Hilton was not sure if he wanted to take a passive or active role but seemed to lean towards the former, seeing his identity as feminized. He was clearly worried about how he was going to experience his first sexual encounter – whether it would be pleasurable or painful. He wanted to explore his fears, but he was not entirely relaxed in talking to me about sex, often laughing at my questions. He seemingly used laughter as a means of easing his nerves and fears about, for example, "*who will penetrate who*". Interestingly, he did not complete his sentence when I asked him to tell me more about his fears and anxieties. One wonders if Hilton felt ashamed of his fantasy that as "*the girl so he* ...", and I therefore completed his sentence with, "*he has to be penetrated*". In the study, many of the adolescent boys were curious and voyeuristic about how 'gay' boys and men had sex. Themba said, "*I always ask myself, how they do it? Is it not painful*? Most of the participants associated sexual intercourse between 'gay' partners with pain. I also observed that some of the participants spat and frowned when comments about 'gay' sex were made, highlighting their feelings of disgust, repulsion and their sense of such sexual intercourse as aberrant. However, at the same time, these negative reactions may be understood as revealing the subtle power that 'gay' masculinity has over hegemonic masculinity, which contradicts the mainstream literature that epitomizes 'gay' masculinity as necessarily inferior. For example, in one of his photos, Hilton was wearing '*a pink T-Shirt*' and said that he valued cleanliness and also loved taking care of himself. He positioned himself as superior to many dirty 'straight' boys in Alex. He was highly critical of homophobic boys and said that such boys at his school were immature

and childish. In this part of the interview, Hilton took pride in his wearing of colourful clothes, such as the pink T-Shirt worn in his photo. He confidently said that he was no longer bothered by being called *isitabane* (Zulu word for gay). Hilton seemed to be using his clothing as a public marker to assert his 'gayness' and also to challenge the dominant norms of township masculinity, which prevented adolescent boys from wearing certain clothes. His subversion of these boundaries may be experienced as a threat to masculinity by many 'straight' boys at his school. At the end of the interview, there was a sense of feeling liberated in Hilton's narrative when he said "*Some (other boys) are hiding when you look at them they are straight and dress like other boys but they are gay on the inside…. So I don't care (about) people who discriminate against me… This is who I am and will not change because of them*". Despite all the difficulties, Hilton was slowly sounding confident in his identity as a young black 'gay' in Alex and was also asserting his 'gayness' as an expression of sexual freedom and choice. It seems the interview space gave him the opportunity to begin to express some of these views.

12.13. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, this chapter has critically examined (predominantly) how 'straight' boys talk about 'gay' boys in Alexandra Township and how male 'homosexuality' is constructed in this environment. It was evident that adolescent boys who failed to live-up to the image of township masculinity may be accused of being 'gay', thus 'gayness' was used both in a descriptive sense to denigrate those who do not conform to township masculine ideals as well as to refer to boys who adopted a homosexual identity and might act on same sex desires. Based on various medical, psychological, cultural and religious discourses, 'gayness' in the township context of Alex was constructed as 'other', 'deviant', 'abnormal', 'un-African' and 'un-Christian'. Invocations of the politics of reproduction, fertility, paternity and patriarchy were also central in the participants' narratives. 'Homosexuality' was construed as a threat to masculinity, primarily due to its association with a lack of reproductive capacity. This part of the discussion also revealed how understandings of sexual identities intersected with the politics of ethnicity, race, class and nationality, for example, the positioning of 'homosexuality' as something Western and foreign. In this chapter, 'straight' boys positioned themselves as 'normal' authentic African boys while 'gay' boys were positioned as aberrant and even sick and mentally disturbed. It was also evident, however, that there was considerable

confusion and ambiguity around the construction of homosexuality as innate or as chosen, and as a stable or changeable/malleable identity.

Interestingly, the issue of 'homosexuality' was more often raised in the focus groups than in the individual interviews. The group interviews seemingly provided the participants with a collectivized space to express homophobic views in the face of the threat that 'homosexuality' posed to their sense of manhood. Homophobia was evidently a tool 'straight' boys used to create some sense of unity and to control the boundaries of traditional African masculinity. Calling 'gay' boys *isitabane*, 'moffies' and 'faggots' was commonly used defensively to denigrate 'homosexuality' as sexually perverse and aberrant. It was also observed that the boys seemed to struggle to manage repressed feelings of fear and anxiety about being contaminated by 'homosexuality' and that there might be some fear of homosexual desire (as both potential object and subject of such desire).

The use of vulgar language and also threats of violence against 'gay' boys revealed something profound about the power that 'gay' masculinity has over 'straight' masculinity. As suggested in the discussion, the virulence of the anti-gay sentiment expressed at points, suggested that homosexuality could not easily dismissed, but was experienced as a powerful threat - perhaps at both a social identity and intrapsychic level. The transgressive nature of 'homosexuality' was apparently appreciated and recognized as challenging the hegemonic masculinity to which they gave their allegiance. This revelation allowed me, as the researcher in this study, to move away from the dominant construction of 'gay' boys as always and only victims of homophobia in schools and other areas of society. In the implied valorization of heteronormativity, 'straight' masculinity was shown to be a somewhat fragile identity under threat by other identities, such as that of the 'homosexuality'. The advocates of 'straight' masculinity used a range of strategies to protect and shore up heteronormative masculinity in the face of the existence of 'homosexuality'.

Chapter 13: Fathers, fatherhood and fathering.

Introduction

During the course of the interviews, it emerged that many of the adolescent boys in the study did not know their fathers and had grown up with little or no contact with male parents. The mainstream literature on fatherhood indicates that boys who grow up without father figures are more likely to experience emotional disturbances, including displaying of aggression, violent behaviour and vulnerability to drug abuse (Garbarino, 1999), although this may be due to growing up in single parent households rather than necessarily about the absence of a male parent. In this chapter, the researcher discusses how some of the boys in the study were able to construct positive male identities, despite the lack of father figures in their lives, challenging the simplistic assumption that the absence of the father figure will necessarily result in maladjustment. A range of internal and external factors can help adolescent boys develop a positive masculine identity, despite such circumstances.

The second part of the chapter deals with the issue of teenage fatherhood. Considerable research has been done on teenage pregnancy in South Africa (Macleod, 1999; Makiwane, Richter & Philips-Reynard, 2006), but most of it has focused only on teenage mothers. In the research study, three adolescent boys talked about their experiences as teenage fathers, and their narratives reveal how the absence of their own fathers has possibly played a role in their wanting to be 'good' fathers themselves. The narratives of these participants suggest that teenage fathers are perhaps embracing the image of the 'new age father', which involves moving away from solely playing the traditional breadwinner role towards a role characterized by emotional care, love and concern for children.

13.1. Absent fathers

In this chapter, absent fathers refers to fathers who are absent through death, absence with occasional contact, absence with regular contact and absence with no contact at all (Swartz, & Bhana, 2009). Out of the 32 participants, nineteen of the boys had no contact with their fathers

or did not know the identity of their fathers; seven knew their fathers, but they had separated from their mothers; four were living with their fathers but described them as emotionally absent; and two had lost their fathers through death. Thus, the picture that emerged from this Alexandra-based group of adolescent boys, was that most had little or no direct contact with their fathers and few appeared to be living with older male figures in their homes (including either older brothers or uncles). Here, it is important to take the context of Alexandra into account when discussing the participants' narratives. The majority of families in Alexandra live in shacks, many of which are not big enough to accommodate all the members of each household. Many families are consequently in a state of disintegration as the parents and the children do not necessarily live in the same household. Some of the participants reported that they did not live in the same shack as their brothers and that this was because their older brothers were renting their own 'backyard' accommodation somewhere else in Alex. This is unlike the situation in rural areas where adolescent boys do seem to be able to more easily interact with other members of their extended families, such as brothers, uncles and grandparents who live in the same geographical area. These male figures serve as male role models for young adolescent boys in such communities (Hunter, 2005; Lesejane, 2006; Mkhize, 2006). However, migration has disrupted even these patterns of family life. Many of the participants reported that they had no male role models to guide them as to what it meant to be a boy or man. Only four of the boys were living with both their fathers and mothers at the time of the interviews. However, even amongst those who did have ready access to their fathers they did not always perceive the relationship as positive. Some of the participants described their fathers as emotionally abusive, which created an emotional distance between them and made it difficult to talk to their fathers about salient issues, such as masculine identity. The first part of the discussion in this chapter focuses mainly on what the participants said about absent fathers and how they attempted to engage with or compensate for this lack.

13.2. Dealing with the absence of a father figure

It is perhaps especially significant that although the participants had taken photos of cars, clothes, cellphones, girls and friends during the study, none had photos of father or older male figures in their lives. Individual interviews proved to be useful in allowing the participants to talk about their disappointment with absent fathers. In the individual interviews, many of the

participants spoke at length, without much probing, about the difficulty of not knowing their fathers. They described this experience as painful and as a result, avoided talking about this at school.

Extract 1:

> ***Simon:*** *It is just like the pain of – you know sometimes when I play around with friends and sometimes we have these little fights, and they are going to say I am going to call my father……but* ***[I]have no father to call.***

Extract 2:

> ***Themba****: It is very* ***embarrassing*** *to tell your friends that you do not know your father.*
> ***Researcher****: What is embarrassing about it?*
> ***Themba****: That you do not know who you are. …You feel maybe* ***you were born by mistake*** *because you do not know who is your father*

Extract 3:

> ***William:*** *My closest friend has his father. Most of the time we would go, maybe on weekends, his father lives at 4th Avenue and his father would like treat us – you see - give him cash to go and buy clothes. I wouldn't show* ***it but I would be dying inside****…you know feeling* ***jealous*** *and* ***wishing*** *it was you*

All of the nineteen boys who reported that they did not know their fathers had never shared this information with their male peers or teachers; they would either avoid the topic altogether or remained silent when their friends talked about their fathers. They were apparently envious of their friends who knew their fathers, and, at school, it was painful to hear them talking about their relationships with fathers. Many of the participants were also seemingly ashamed and embarrassed to tell their male friends that they either did not know their fathers or they had no way of making contact with them. This was considered a sensitive 'private' matter, in part because it raised personal questions about their identity. For Themba (Extract 2), talking to his peers about his absent father evoked feelings of shame about being 'illegitimate' as opposed to being a 'legitimate' child who knew his biological father. He believed that he might have been born 'by mistake' and consequently avoided conversations about fathers because of the humiliation he felt attached to his status in this regard.

Extract 4:

> ***Thabiso:*** *Like if there was a* ***parents' meeting today,*** *the next day when we get to school the teachers would* ***talk about the fathers and such things.*** *They would ask us; why didn't your father come to the meeting, and you would just make an excuse that maybe he was working nightshift. He works at night and such things. We do not tell them what the* ***situation is like.***
> ***Researcher: Why?***
> ***Thabiso:*** *Because you are* ***ashamed****. You don't want others to know that you are not staying with our father.*

In the above extract, Thabiso confesses to being too ashamed to tell his teachers the truth about why his father did not attend parents' meetings at school, not wanting them to know that he had no contact with his father since 2003 (almost eight years). He said he had no choice but to fabricate a euphemistic story that allowed him to save face by saying that his father works at night. Participants were highly emotional when they talked about their absent fathers in the interviews and many of them seemed angry at these men for not having played any positive role in their lives. The participants were uncomfortable talking about their absent fathers in the focus groups as it appeared to be a sensitive and emotional subject for a group discussion. It is possible that adolescent boys may have avoided talking to their male peers about their absent father figures because the topic is likely to evoke feelings of sadness and shame and these are emotions that boys need to avoid expressing in 'public' spaces (Pollack, 1999). They could not afford to be vulnerable in this way in front of their peers.

Many of the participants also seemed to experience some form of 'identity crisis' related to not knowing/connecting with their fathers. It should be taken into account that the participants in the study were adolescent boys and that it is during this stage in life that many young people ask identity-related questions such as: "who am I?" And in this instance, who is my father? Why did he leave? Where is he? What does he look like? Am I like my father at all?

The participants also mentioned other difficulties related to not being able to access or call upon a male parent. For example, in his narrative (Extract 1), Simon talked about his sense of helplessness and lack when friends threatened to tell their fathers if he quarreled with them. He had no paternal support and authority to back up his position. Some of the boys talked about their envy of boys who had access to caring and loving fathers, although considerable emphasis was also placed on the role of fathers in offering material provision. They wished their fathers were available to also provide financial resources so that they could, for example, buy expensive branded clothes to impress or fit in with peers as discussed in chapter 11. The participants seemed to draw on the traditional or conventional picture that fathers were expected to be breadwinners and to provide material resources for their children. In expressing their discomfort and /or distress about non-contact with fathers, the boys indicated that they

had rather stereotypical ideas about the role that fathers might play - as bestowers of identity, as physical protectors and as material providers. The absence of these potentially positive male parent attributes in their lives was keenly felt. The boys' sadness and frustration in this regard needed to be hidden from others, but in addition there was also evidence of shame attached particularly to being neglected, abandoned and/or disowned by biological fathers. Some of the participants spoke about their fantasies about meeting or contacting their absent fathers as discussed in the subsequent sub-section.

13.3. "I miss my father": Fantasies about meeting absent father figures

Many participants who did not know their fathers spoke about the wish to meet them and the desire to make such contact seemed to preoccupy their minds. However, some boys recognized that such meeting might be complicated.

Extracts 5:

> ***Simon****: I do not want to have that tight relationship with him, but I would like to meet him*.
> ***Researcher****: How would you react if he comes back?*
> ***Simon:*** *By any chance if he comes back it is not like I am going to hate him or anything. I* ***would forgive him****, simple! But then it would not be like the same. It's not going to be like back to normal, happily ever after. No it can't be like that because he wasn't there.*

Extract 6:

> ***Themba:*** *I really wish my father was staying with us. I* ***miss*** *him…I wish to meet him.*

The above extracts reveal that these participants fantasized about making contact with absent fathers and it was noticeable and understandable that they were quite emotional when they spoke about this. Their tone in this section of the interviews showed that they were hurting. The common theme that emerged was their longing and yearning to meet their absent fathers. However, Simon was ambivalent about how he would react if his father returned (Extract 5). He felt that his father should not expect things to return to 'normal' as if nothing had happened. There was a sense that Simon would still be angry with his father for not having been there when he was growing up. He concluded that he would 'forgive him' in order to resolve his own emotional pain, but clearly this would not be an easy process. Forgiveness seemed to signify letting go of suppressed feelings of anger and disappointment at his father's abandonment. Simon said that he should now accept that he would never meet his father as his father had never bothered to visit him although he knew where his mother lived. This was

something that angered Simon. He acknowledged that he should give up his fantasy of meeting his father one day because the absence and hope caused him a lot of emotional pain. Some of the participants said that they knew where their fathers lived and that their fathers also knew where they lived, but they (their fathers) had also not bothered to make any contact with them.

Extract 7:

> ***Thabiso:*** *He does* ***not have children with that woman****, but that woman has her own children. So he is supporting those children,* ***but does nothing for me****.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Does* ***it hurt you*** *that your father is not staying with you?*
> ***Thabiso****: It does hurt me, because when I look at his other children they have everything. They have clothes, shoes and all those things, but I do not have such things.*

Extract 8:

> ***Nathan****: He (his father) stays in Tembisa. He has another woman there.*
> ***Researcher:*** *But does he come to visit you?*
> ***Nathan****: No. I last saw him in 2003. He only came once in a year.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Do you miss him?*
> ***Nathan****: Yeah.*
> ***Researcher:*** *And do you wish at times that you could go and see him?*
> ***Nathan****: Ya. I wish sometimes.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Does he call?*
> ***Nathan:*** *He last called in 2003. When I call* ***he turns off*** *the phone.*
> ***Researcher:*** *It must be very painful!*
> ***Nathan****: Sometimes I do not feel the pain because I am just happy that my mother is around.*

Both Thabiso and Nathan in the above extracts mentioned that their fathers were living with other women and their children. In their narratives, there was a sense of feeling angry both towards their fathers and at these women for having taken away their fathers to support their own children. There was also a sense of feeling rejected by their fathers, quite explicitly illustrated in Nathan's conversation about his phone calls to his father (Extract 8). One of the responses was to then attempt to suppress the desire to contact his father. Interestingly, on different occasions, all of the participants who lacked stable and available fathers said that their mothers were 'a pillar of strength' in consoling and helping them deal with the painful emotions concerning their absent fathers. Later, I will discuss the positive role that the mothers played in assisting their adolescent sons to resolve some of these negative emotions and to also develop 'alternative' voices of masculinity that seemed more constructive for their identities.

In many of the interviews, a sense of disappointment was evident among the participants that their absent fathers had failed to play a positive father figure role in their lives as adolescent

boys. Some of the participants spoke about their resultant feelings of depression due to lack of father figures in their lives, as illustrated in the extract below.

Extract 9:

> ***William:*** *I can say because he (his father) was supposed to have been around at that time and* ***play a father figure****; and show me what being a guy means, and how was I supposed to carry myself. So he was never there and I had to see stuff for myself.*
> ***Researcher:*** *And how does it make you feel, the fact that there is this distance between the two of you?*
> ***William:*** *(Eish!)* ***I feel empty in a way****. Like there is a* ***space that is left opened.***
> ***Researcher: …****who would you say was able to fill that gap?*
> ***William:*** *(Eish!) No one! I had to see things for myself. I started doing bad things at an early stage like smoking, drinking and going to parties. And I know if my father was here, I wouldn't have done that. So I got freedom at an early age. And as you can understand in the township life is fast, things happen.*

During the research process, there were instances in which some participants cried openly in the interviews. The above interview was one of the most challenging interviews in this respect. William was emotional when talking about his absent father and mentioned that he was ten years old when his father left. He still did not know the reason for his departure, which had left a gap or hole in his internal world. In his words, he said, "*I feel empty in a way*" and spoke of a "*space that is left opened*". He contended that his lack of access to a father had influenced him to behave recklessly and to start smoking and drinking at a young age. Of course, it has to be asked whether William was not using his home background as an excuse for his risk-taking behaviours, since other boys in the study also did not have father figures but did not engage in such behaviours. However, it needs to be mentioned that other boys often had other male figures, such as brothers, to help them with positive older male identifications. In his narrative, William mentioned that he did not have anyone to act as his male role model. Arguably, good fathering (either from a biological father or any substitute male figure) enables a boy child to reconcile the opposing elements in his psyche (Diamond, 2004; Frosh, 1994). William, however, did not have any 'good' internal paternal object to regulate his internal world and fill the 'empty space' left by his absent father. He has two older brothers, but he rarely talks to them. In the interview, he said that his two brothers were not positive male role models because they themselves drank and smoked heavily. He added that after his father left, "*everyone was minding his own business*". He believed that the sense of 'emptiness' left by his absent father and the lack of alternative male role models left him vulnerable to peer pressure and to indulge in risk-taking activities. However, he was remorseful about engaging in such

behaviours. He even went so far as to suggest not only that he wished his father was around to play a positive father figure role, but also to discipline him. Thus, he seemed to be seeking a strong male to take an active interest in him and to set boundaries. Despite some insight into his own self-destructiveness, he felt unable to easily change his behaviour without some external structure and validation. One also had a sense that William's response to his father's abandonment of his family meant that he had less hope, less investment in the future, and therefore, less motivation to change. As a result, he was also very reckless in his behaviour.

Following our individual interview, another participant (Benny) went home to ask his mother about his absent father who he has never met. In the follow-up individual interview, he said that the first interview had evoked feelings in him such as: "*I want to know who I am. I want to know who my father is*". He spoke with his mother who told him that his father had left while she was still pregnant and that she had lost contact with him but that she had heard that he was living somewhere in Ga-Marule (a remote rural area in Limpopo Province). At the time of the interview, Benny was still making plans to trace his father based on this information. In particular, he wanted to know what his father looked like. "*Does he look like me*?", he asked rhetorically in the interview. Benny stated that he also wanted to change his surname to his father's surname because he saw this as important for his acceptance by his father's ancestors and in adopting Pedi cultural practices so as to align with his father's line of heritage. Interestingly, Benny attributed some of his behavioural problems, such as smoking, drinking and poor academic performance, to a lack of connection with his father's ancestors. He believed the only solution to his problems was to meet his father and perform certain rituals to cleanse himself so that he could start behaving like a 'real' man. In this interview, it was interesting to observe how Benny drew on a cultural discourse to explain his risk-taking behaviours as an adolescent boy. In his anthropological work, Schapera (1978) found that fathers in cultures such as the Pedi culture were regarded as important male figures who had to help their sons and other boys in the community develop the specific attributes of masculinity. Rituals, such as the attendance of initiation school, played a key role in assisting adolescent boys to identify with their fathers and other male figures as role models. Schapera (1978) maintains that identification with fathers and other male figures in the community is a crucial marker of being a 'real' Pedi boy. In the psychoanalytic literature, identification with father

figures is also regarded as an important aspect of masculine gender identity development (Blos, 1985; Chodorow, 1978; Diamond, 2004). In the present study, Benny also wanted to identify with his father by taking his surname, recognizing that this would hold some symbolic meaning. Connecting with his ancestral spirits by taking his father's surname would be an important culturally supported step in developing a positive masculine gender identity. Like many other adolescent boys in the study, Benny was also frustrated that he had never met his father and also shared the fantasy that his father would have helped him to better understand what it meant to be an adolescent boy and to become a man by giving him guidance and support.

In the bulk of the interviews, the participants presented an image of the 'ideal' father as someone who cared about and loved his children and spent time talking to them about self-protective behaviours. Father figures were seemingly idealized in some of the narratives. Absent figures were also often attributed potentially positive and helpful attributes, even when there was some evidence to the contrary. One wonders if this idealization was not sometimes compensatory in nature, assisting the boys in the study to deal with feelings of lack and loss and to legitimize engagement in risk-taking behaviours. Some of the participants (e.g. William and Benny as discussed in the above paragraphs) shared their fantasies of how their lives would have been different had their absent fathers been present. The absent father figures would have hypothetically provided direction or guidance and have taken away their feelings of sadness, frustration, confusion, conflict and depression if they had been present. However, many of the participants also appeared to realize that their wishes to meet their absent fathers were unrealistic and that their father-related fantasies might be just a pipe dream.

Extract 10:

> ***Simon:*** *I just need to accept the situation. My mother has been encouraging to forget my father.*

Extract 11:

> ***Nathan:*** *I must just forget about him because since, since nothing. No phone call… and nothing.*

Convincing themselves to give up on the hopes of their absent fathers was not an easy process because of the recurring fantasies they recounted. For example, in Simon's words: "*like I used to ask my mother, is he a nice guy? And my mother used to say negative things about him. And*

then at times I used to say maybe she is saying this because he does not live with me and all that. But I think I am starting to believe those things that he was not such a great guy". Simon's father left when he was three weeks old (according to his mother), and having worked hard to find some way of redeeming him in his mind, as a young man, he was now beginning to believe his mother that his father might not be such a '*good person*'. Initially, he had thought his mother spoke negatively about his father because he had abandoned her with a small child and that she was therefore biased in her assessment, but he seemed now to be more willing to give up his own fantasy to meet with him and to appreciate that his mother's assessment might be realistic. In this respect, he seemed to have adopted a more psychologically mature position. It seems boys like Simon, Nathan and others had no choice but to develop some way of coping that involved relinquishing images of idealized absent fathers, often by using the mental mechanism of forgetting, which allowed them to operate/function as if their fathers have never existed in their psyches. Some of the participants spoke about finding substitutes to replace their absent father figures.

13.4. "I see my brothers as my second fathers": Older brothers' influence on the participants in developing 'alternative' voices of masculinity

In the study, some of the participants spoke about the presence of older brothers as an important positive factor in their lives, particularly in the absence of their fathers. These older brothers appeared to play a significant role in helping their younger brothers develop and embrace 'alternative' voices of masculinity that were not risk-taking. However, not all older brothers were experienced as positive role models, (as shown in William's narrative earlier) and some of the participants were the first born and/ or did not have brothers in their families. Older brothers were, however, viewed as providing important guidance and support on what it meant to be a boy in Alexandra Township in some instances.

Extract 12:

> ***Simon:*** *Sometimes at school most of the time,* ***people are like talking about their fathers and you can't jump into that conversation because you never lived with your father****. But then still* ***on my side I could talk about my brothers****; because most of my friends it's like their mothers, their fathers and them.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Uhmmm*
> ***Simon:*** *You see a brother from a father is quite different, but then for my side my brothers* ***filled spaces like a father****. I never got to live with my father, and all that. So my brothers I take*

*them **like my fathers, my second fathers**. I never had that opportunity to like sit with my father but **my brothers were able to fill up that space of my father**.*

Extract 13:

***Herman**: if I tell him (his brother) before I do something, and he tells me straight; Herman this is **good** for you and this is **bad** for you. Do not do this, do this. It will be good for you in the near future. He tells me not to do that stuff because when you go to a party with a girl; the next thing you will get drunk and then maybe have sex. And then at the end you will get diseases. So he encourages me not to do that kind of stuff.*

Simon and Herman both said that they saw their brothers as a positive replacement for their absent fathers. Here, the status of 'fatherhood' was not limited to the biological process – it was extended to the social or psychological role that older brothers/men may play in general. This emerged clearly in Simon's narrative (Extract 12) where he emphasized that his three brothers were his '*second fathers*', filling the gap that has been left by his absent father. He narrated that he saw his brothers as his positive male role models. Sadly two months after our first interview, I received a call from Simon telling me that one of his brothers had been shot dead in Alex. In my follow-up interview with him to discuss his brother's death, he said with considerable emotion that losing his brother was like losing his father. He said, "*You still remember when I talked to you the last time I told you that I see my brothers as my fathers. Yeah, now I feel like I lost another father*". As indicated in Chapters 9 and 10, Simon was one of the most insightful and reflective boys in this research project. Again in this interview, he emphasized that he regarded his brother as his father because he had advised and guided him on what it meant to be a responsible boy who did not engage in risk-taking behaviours. The understanding of Simon and some other interviewees in this regard seemed to confirm Mkhize's (2006) view that in traditional African families, fatherhood is a collective social responsibility for all male members of the household (e.g. brothers in Simon's case) and other members of the extended family, including grandparents and uncles. All these male figures play an important role in socializing adolescent boys into what it means to be an African boy and later, man. However, in this urban township context of Alex, extended family members were not always available as many were living in distant, remote rural areas. The only people who were constantly available were their mothers whose positive role will be discussed later in the chapter.

However, in the interviews, the boys displayed different emotions when speaking about their absent fathers depending in part upon whether the absence was through death, or involved occasional contact or no contact at all. In the following section, the cases of Peter and Xander in particular are used to shed light on how some of the adolescent boys dealt with the absence of fathers due to death.

13.5. "I do not even have a picture of my father": Absent fathers through death

Dealing with the absence of a father who had died was a major challenge faced by some of the adolescent boys in the study. Two participants (Peter and Xander) spoke about the fact that their fathers had died and of their wish that they were still alive so that they could advise them on what it meant to be a boy. These two boys also expressed their envy of boys who had access to their fathers. In his individual interview, Xander, a 17-year-old boy, spoke at length about his father who had died when he was four years old. This loss had been subsequently, more recently, followed by the death of his mother in 2007 (six months prior to the interview I conducted with him). In the interview, Xander stated that his mother's death had evoked unresolved issues about his father's death:

Extract 13:

> ***Xander**: **Until 12 years old** I realized that I did not have a father, then I started questioning and finding that my questions are being ignored. Those questions were being ignored until my mother died. So I remained **clueless**. I do not even know **the picture of my father.***
> ***Researcher:** And how was it, I mean that experience for you not knowing your dad as a young child?*
> ***Xander:** That time **I felt so desperate**. You know kids when they talk about their dads. I used to keep quiet or get out of that group or something because I had nothing to say. Nothing to say! I had a **stepfather,** but it was not just good enough. It was not good enough for me because I needed a father who cares about me, because **I am his organism**. **So if it's a stepfather** he does not really care. So in those groups when they start talking about parents I'd likely pull off, because **I do not wanna get hurt**, going over this thing over and over again.*

In this interview, Xander was also highly emotional in talking about the loss of his parents and he became tearful at times. His mother had evidently occupied a significant space in his internal world, and although this man was still alive he felt that his stepfather '*was not good enough*' to fill the gap left by his father because he was not '*his organism*'. His mother had told him that his biological father had died when he was four years old, which from a psychoanalytic perspective, could be viewed as a critical phase of development when a strong

male figure is needed to help a boy child to resolve the Oedipus complex (Blos, 1985; Diamond, 2004). Amongst other developmental milestones, the early experience of protection and limit setting by a male figure is internalized in the psyche of a boy child, and this process may have been interrupted in Xander's case when his father died. He was frustrated that he had no memory of his father not even his 'picture' as part of the memory process to relate to. In the interview, Xander seemed angry that his questions about his father had been ignored. Now his mother had also died, and he remained 'clueless'. He repeatedly stated that he wished his father was still alive or that, at least, he had some photographic representation of him. It was apparently difficult for him to mourn or identify with a father figure whom he could not recollect or visualize. Whether the participants looked like their absent fathers or not was a repetitive theme that emerged in the interviews, seemingly related to a concrete need to identify with and be identified as the son of a male parent. It seemed to be part of identifying with and taking on their fathers' characters, lineage or heritage. Without this identification, the participants appeared to experience a sense of lack/loss and disorientation, often verbalized as an internal emptiness or absence.

Like many of the other adolescent boys in the study, Xander stated that growing up without knowing his father was not an easy process. It was also painful for him to hear his friends at school talking about their fathers as he felt he had 'nothing' to share (Extract, 13). Xander did not say much about his stepfather, but it seemed he was not very close to him. He said that he had never had a positive male figure to identify with, except his uncle, who lived somewhere in Kwa-Zulu Natal and with whom he had lost contact. In the interview, I was worried because it seemed Xander was struggling with his mother's death and the re-evocation of the loss of his father, although he spoke of ways he was attempting to deal with his losses.

Extract 14:

> ***Researcher:*** *I mean Xander these are like* ***emotional stuff,*** *and would you say you are coping with whatever you are going through?*
> ***Xander:*** *I* ***am coping****, I am trying to forget about it, live with it, appreciate that; except that they are gone now, and they will never come back.* ***I am deciding to be a role model*** *to other people now. I am deciding that my little siblings must look up to me when they are in problems and in pain and* ***I will be there for them.*** *After all* ***you do not need to hide your feelings*** *because if you hide them they kill you. They're just in there inside you wanting to go out. And if they do not get a space to go out you end up collapsing. This pain is in there and you do not want to take it out.* ***So it's better if you cry it all out****.*

It was clear in this interview that Xander had suddenly been forced to take on the role of an adult male who had to look after his younger siblings following his mother's death, thus becoming 'parentified' at a young age. This evidently had a considerable impact on him as he felt the absence of a biological male parent in his own upbringing, and now he was feeling pressurised to be a good male parent figure for his younger siblings and to be a role model for other people. He was in fact a responsible male figure to his peers at school and was actively involved in the LRC (Learners Representative Council). In his capacity as one of the male peer counsellors at school, a role for which he had volunteered, he had to help his peers deal with their personal problems. I found him to be reflective about his emotions, and he appeared to be coping well with the loss of his parents. He stressed that it was important for adolescent boys to talk about their emotions "*it does not help if boys hide their feelings because they kill you inside.*" At the end of the interview, Xander said that if he found that he was not coping, he would take up the offer of free counselling at the Alexandra Clinic. He believed that going for counselling would not mean he was weak or a sissy, but "*it shows I'm real boy who is in touch with his inner feelings and emotions*". The individual interviews in the study seemed to have given the participants the opportunity to talk about their emotions concerning their absent and lost father figures and Xander was one of the participants who seemed to have used the interview space and the relationship with the researcher in a constructive and supportive way.

Not only did many of the boys attempt to become or make themselves in the image of idealized father figures, but they also drew upon other potential sources of support in their environment such as other relatives, for example, older siblings or extended family members, where possible. Xander and the other boys were able to construct positive male identities that were not centered on risk-taking despite the lack of father figures in their lives. Xander attributed his positive sense of self to his aunt who had been highly supportive after his mother's death. He saw her as one of his role models. In the next section, I discuss the positive role played by mothers and other female figures in helping adolescent boys develop positive masculine identities. One of the questions debated in this section is whether fathers are core or necessary to masculine identity formation, and what role may be played by mothers and other female figures in this regard in the absence of father figures.

13.6. "I see my mother as my role model": Mothers occupying dual parental roles

Despite the absence of father figures in their lives, many of the participants seemed to feel some sense of belonging and self-esteem and attributed their more positive self image attributes to their mothers. They believed their mothers played a significant role in shaping their valued identities as adolescent boys in Alex.

Extract 15:

> ***Simon:*** *My mother is like a hard worker, she perseveres. …**I see her as role model.***

Extract 16:

> ***Themba****: The fact is that my mother has always been there for me. She covered the whole **space, the gap of my father.***
> ***Researcher:*** *And it sounds like she was someone central in your life*
> ***Themba****: Yes she was my pillar of strength.*

Extract 17:

> ***Nathan:*** *My **role model** is my mother. She openly talks to me about everything.*

These extracts suggest that from the perspective of these adolescents the process of helping a boy child develop a positive masculine identity does not necessarily require the presence of a father figure. Many of the participants stated that their mothers had played a significant role in helping them acquire 'a positive sense of self'. In Extract 15, Simon describes his mother as a hardworking person and he also reported that she had managed to support all of her eight children without help. Consequently, he saw his mother as his role model: "*I would not be who I am if it was not my mother. I can say she is my hero.*" In Themba's case (Extract 16), his mother covered "*the whole space, the gap of my father*". His mother was a central figure in his life and his statement suggested that he did not feel any sense of emptiness in respect of his parental introjects because of the solidity of his mother as a present figure in his life. This sentiment is contrary to the existing literature, which tends to present single motherhood as a source of emotional problems for many adolescent boys (Garbarino, 1999). The present study confirms Bozalek's (1997) South African based finding that female-headed households can raise well-adjusted adolescent boys. Of course, one would have to ascertain how their later development transpires and the veracity of their self-descriptions, but from the perspective of a subjective sense of self and the ability to exercise positive agency, these boys seemed to feel that mothers had supplied adequate or good support (even in the absence of male partners). The

fact that many participants described their mothers as 'symbolically' filling the void left by their absent father figures, seems to supports Lacan's (1984) view that the mother can symbolically play the role of the father in his absence in order to encourage the boy child to move from *being* the phallus to *having* the phallus. According to Lacan (1984), the 'symbolic father' is the person the mother loves and desires and who has the capacity to free the boy child from his imaginary fusion with her. In his capacity as the representative of the law, the 'symbolic father' helps the child develop the sense of having a phallus, which signifies masculinity (Lacan, 1984). It was evident in sections of interviews that mothers in many instances played this role of mediating and communicating the importance of the social or 'the law' to their sons, as illustrated in extracts 15 and 16. The extracts below also show that the mothers played a significant role in talking to their sons about risk-taking and transgressive behaviours.

Extract 18:

> ***Tommy:*** *My mother tells me I must try and stay away from having sex with girls. She tells about the risk of getting diseases such as HIV stuff*

Extract 19:

> ***Shaun:*** *It's my mother. She is the one who tells me that if you have sex without condoms then there might be pregnancy, HIV/AIDS.*

Those boys who lived with both their parents reported that it was difficult to talk to their fathers about HIV/AIDS, condoms and sex. They preferred talking to their mothers whom they considered more supportive and easier to talk to about sensitive topics such as sex and girlfriends. Many of the participants in the study described their mothers as warm and approachable while fathers were mostly described as too strict and distant. As was found by Frosh et al. (2003), the adolescent boys in the present study might also not have trusted their fathers enough to talk to them about emotional problems out of a fear of being seen as weak or unmasculine. The mothers were then apparently expected to play the role of containing and responding to their sons' feelings and emotions. In the excerpts below, both Martin and Shaun share their frustrations about how their fathers reacted when they tried to talk to them about sex-related issues.

Extract 20:

> ***Martin:*** *My dad* ***always beats around the bush****. My mother will always tell you something that is straight. My father is like an old person – he thinks you are young and will not tell you straight. My mother would take you from this point and then put you to the right point.*

Extract 21:

> ***Shaun:*** *I once asked my father about sex and* ***he said my son I will beat you should I hear you talk about such things. A****t the end of the day, because my father refused to talk to me, I go out and I'll get a person who will tell me about those things. And then I would feel that that person does not advice me positively, he just advices me negatively. So I feel free to talk to my mum.*

It is apparent that in some of the families in this study, even when the fathers were available, they were not seen as positive male role models. Their sons did not identify with them possibly because they believed their fathers did not have the emotional capacity to contain their (the boys') anxieties and feelings of self-doubt about what it meant to be a boy. These participants described their fathers as emotionally absent, uninvolved and too conservative, illustrated for example, in their refusal to talk openly to them about sex and other challenges they faced as adolescent boys as illustrated previously (Extract 20 and 21). On the whole, their relationships with their fathers were thus not positively perceived. However, as discussed earlier, their mothers were more willing to give advice about self-care and talk to them about issues of sex, condom use, teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. Some of the participants, such as Themba, Nathan and Simon, despite the absence of father figures in their lives, appeared to embrace aspects of masculinity that were non-risk-taking, non-violent and non-sexist. As discussed in previous chapters, they mentioned that they had never had sex and also did not smoke or drink. All of these boys attributed their positive attitude to self-protection and care, and their respect of themselves and others, to the role their mothers had played in their upbringing. This challenges the notion that adolescent boys necessarily need to *dis-identify* with their mothers and *counter-identify* with their fathers in order to establish a sound gender identity (Diamond, 2004). In the present study, the participants apparently appreciated and needed their mothers to affirm their sense of masculinity. Their mothers seemingly gave them a sense of security in helping them deal with the anxieties of what it meant to be an adolescent boy in the absence of a father figure. In the context of an absent father figure, Diamond (2004, pp. 365-366) argues that "in identifying with his mother, the adolescent boy also 'identifies with' and internalizes a core, enduring sense of his mother's relating to him as male person of the opposite sex. These identifications remain core aspects of the boy child's internal world and significantly affect the formation of his male gender identity". Such arguments suggest that the process of male gender development is not linear and that boys may identify and *dis-identify* with significant persons

of both genders and with both real and symbolic or fantasized objects. While it was difficult to extrapolate from the data whether Diamond's hypothesis was borne out in mother-to-boy child relationships, it was evident that mothers were willing to discuss their sons' preoccupations, choices and risks, suggesting that they were willing to engage with them as young 'male persons'. The mothers appeared to be attuned to meeting the emotional needs of their adolescent sons in such a way as to help them develop secure and healthy voices of young masculinity. In contrast to Chodorow's (1978) early work, it seemed boys in the study did not need to repudiate everything feminine in order to individuate and achieve their sense of masculinity. More recent theorists (Benjamin, 1990) have suggested that in fact boy children need to attach and individuate in relation to mothers rather than separate and individuate, if they are to develop a sense of maleness that is not based on masculine anxiety (Diamond, 2004; Rochlin, 1980). Thus, it cannot be simplistically assumed that the absence of a male parent figure will necessarily result in maladjustment and it seems reasonable to conclude, on the basis of both theory and data, that some mothers have the capacity to help their sons develop a secure masculine gender identity without being overly gratifying or too engulfing. Such a mother frees the boy child from his imaginary fusion with her and helps him achieve an independent sense of maleness. Lacan (1984) refers to this as the 'paternal metaphor' in which the unconscious father in the mother plays a role in her son's journey towards the world of males. It seems this is the role that some mothers played for their sons in the current study.

Throughout the study it was striking to observe that there were no references to positive experiences of 'good' fathering in Alex based in real relational experiences. However, despite the lack of a positive fathering experience, many of the adolescent boys revealed in their narratives, as discussed in the next section, their intention to be 'good' fathers later in life in comparison with their own fathers. The wish to be 'different' fathers evidently stemmed in part from their own lived experiences of lack, neglect and abuse.

13.7. "I wish to be a father of a baby boy": The ideal of becoming a good father

Many of the participants spoke about wanting to be 'different' fathers as compared to their own biological fathers. It appeared that in order to cope with their disappointment and anger towards unavailable fathers, the participants in some instances cultivated the fantasy of being

'good' fathers, a role that they saw themselves fulfilling later in their adult lives. In the context of discussing his disappointment with his own experience of being fathered, Simon had the following to say in response to a question posed to him by the researcher in the course of the interview.

Extract 22:

> ***Researcher:*** *What kind of a father would you want to be?*
> ***Simon:*** *A father that is* ***always there for his son****, if I have a son. I want to be always, always, always, there; I want to spend most of my time with my child. Even if I work on Saturdays and Sundays; make time. Whatever job I do I must make time for my child. Even if I work a simple job 8 to 5; Even if I have work to do I must make time to ask, what did you do at school today and all that?* ***Because that thing affects a child.*** *This thing affects … you know when you say to your dad; I'm just speaking generally; when you say to your dad; hey dad I heard this and this, and then your dad is focusing on his work and he is not interested in what you are saying; it affects that kid because they want to spend that time with their daddy.*
> ***Researcher****: Why do you wish* ***to have a baby boy****?*
> ***Simon****:* ***To relive that life, refill that space, react that life****, making my son me and I would be my father. But then acting it the way I would have loved it to be. Not the way it would have been, but acting it the way I would have loved it to be.*

In the above extract, Simon speaks about the importance of fathers spending time with their children and argues that children need paternal interest, attention, love and care. He seems to embrace an alternative understanding of 'fatherhood' – that it is not only the mother's duty to assist children to manage their daily lives but that the father should also make time to bond with his children and engage with their emotional needs and concerns. As a researcher, I again found Simon to be thoughtful in his reflections. It seemed he had his own ideal fantasies about 'fatherhood' based in large measure on being a 'different' father to his own absent father. His expressed wish to have a baby boy in particular is interesting on a psychological level. One wonders if having a baby boy would help Simon to fill the gap caused by his own unmet emotional needs as a young boy and his conversation about fathering seems to confirm this with his insight that he wants to act "*it the way I would have loved it to be*". Fogany (2003, 2004), in his psychoanalytically informed research, found that parents often live their unfulfilled needs through their children, and it seems Simon also longed to make up for his ungratified needs by meeting the needs of his own baby boy in a projected fantasy of the future. A baby boy would help him "*relive that life, refill that space*". Diamond (2004) sees such a wish as a compensatory mechanism to help the individual fulfil his childhood fantasy of having a loving and caring father. Clearly for Simon, this was a psychic fantasy, to fulfill

himself through producing, claiming and caring for a baby boy. It seems the lack of a positive fathering experience may engender the desire to become a 'different' father and to undo the pain that one suffered as a child (Blos, 1985). Many of the other participants also said that they wanted to be 'different' fathers when they grew up, as indicated in the following extracts.

Extract 23:

> ***William:*** *I want to be a father who is always there for his children, no matter what. Always* ***guiding, a role-model most importantly****. They must look up to me. They must not see me* ***doing bad things, fighting with their mother and stuff like that, or drunk.*** *Because I feel like by the time I have a baby, for sure, my life will change. And the way I see things, I will see things from a better perspective.*

Extract 24:

> ***Researcher:*** *And what kind of a family man would you be?*
> ***Philip:*** *Like I wanna treat my kids – like spoil them.* ***I do not want them to grow as I did****. I want them to have a family, a father and a mother. And* ***I want them to have a better life than I did have before****.*

Extract 25:

> ***Nathan:*** *It would be different because the way* ***I was raised****, I did not get things easily.* ***I would not get fancy clothes****, but I told myself that they would have to get the things I did not get. Not that I should make them go through what I went through.*

These narratives also point to the unresolved mourning that the participants still harboured about their upbringing. They wanted to break the relationship with their absent fathers through *dis-identification*, by imaging being better fathers themselves and perhaps triumphing over their own absent fathers in the process. These mechanisms may have helped them overcome some of their feelings of sadness and their anger towards their absent fathers, centred in their wish to become the opposite of them. Thus for some participants in the study, it seemed that fantasies of being a 'different' father were apparently also about healing childhood wounds caused by absent father figures. For example, Philip, in his individual interview, said that one of his wishes was to start a community radio called Teen FM to help teenagers talk about their personal problems. By helping others, Philip might unconsciously have hoped to resolve his own pain of abuse and rejection. He did not want other teenagers to suffer as he had, and he explicitly said he wanted to raise awareness about problems of father-son relationships. In order to be a different father, Philip also wanted to be a good role model for his children. In their narratives, all the participants tended to present quiet idealized images of their future selves and were critical of their absent father figures. All the 'badness' was located in the

absent object, and all the future good fathering qualities were located in the self. Clinical observation would suggest that this kind of split might not necessarily be useful in enabling them to become good parents in the future. However, what was evident was that bad experiences might lead to processes of repair in the future, rather than necessarily the transgenerational transmission of poor or absent fathering. It is also again useful to highlight that the more positive images that these boys held in their minds were probably a product not only of feeling loved and validated by alternative older figures (such as brothers, mothers and uncles), but also through new `images of fathers that are produced in the broad cultural milieu in post-apartheid South Africa (Richter & Morrell, 2006).

A progressive factor in the participants' narratives about fatherhood was that emphasis was placed not only on meeting the physical needs of their children but also their emotional needs. Many of the participants evidently knew what responsible fatherhood entailed. Their attitude represented a major shift towards embracing progressive notions of fatherhood that included giving love, care, support, guidance and protection to their children. Whether their own experiences of absent, unavailable and abusive fathers will influence their own practices, rather than their ideal expectations of themselves, is difficult to predict, but the interviews with the three participants who were teenage fathers themselves provided the opportunity to talk to these boys about their own practical and lived experience of being 'different' fathers to their absent fathers (as discussed in the next section). The discussion on teenage fatherhood occurred spontaneously as the three boys reflected on their absent fathers. No direct questions were asked on what it meant to be a teenage father, but the theme of parenthood emerged strongly in their interviews as these three participants had included photos of their newly born children in their albums. Looking back on their own childhood and how they had interacted or had not interacted with their fathers was always a point of reference that these participants drew upon in speaking about their own experiences of becoming fathers. In aiming to be 'different' teenage fathers, these participants were seemingly attempting to disconnect from their own experience of a lack of 'good' fathering and effect some repair through their own behaviour as teenage fathers.

13.8. Becoming fathers themselves: 'Good-enough' teenage fathering

In the present study, three adolescent boys (Oupa, Timothy and Nelson), while talking about their absent fathers also spoke about their own experiences of becoming teenage fathers. They reported that they were actively involved in their children's lives thus contradicting the dominant view in the literature that teenage fathers very seldom accept responsibility for supporting their children (Makiwane, Richter & Philips-Reynard, 2006).

The three teenage fathers mentioned their shock when they first received the news that their girlfriends were pregnant.

Extract 26:

> ***Researcher:*** *When she told you* ***she was pregnant****, what was your first reaction?*
> ***Oupa:*** *I became* ***scared*** *and I told her I will see. I will just have to tell my old lady (his mother) and I don't know how she's going to react.*

Extract 27:

> ***Timothy:*** *When she first told me I thought she was joking. When time passed I started seeing changes and I asked her if she was serious.*
> ***Researcher:*** *Were* ***you not scared****?*
> ***Timothy: I was scared****.*

Extract 28:

> ***Nelson****: I was* ***shocked*** *when my girlfriend first told me she was pregnant. My girlfriend's family did not come to report at my place. Like you know* ***culturally*** *they are supposed to come and report that your child has impregnated our daughter and stuff. They did not come. I only told my mother six months later.*

The participants were apparently not only scared and shocked but also worried about how their mothers would react to the news that their girlfriends were pregnant. In Nelson's words, "*You know they will scream at you. They will say yeah you must stop going to school. You must find a job to support your child*". All three participants stated that they did not immediately tell their parents about their girlfriends' pregnancy due to their fear of being shouted at. They described this period as stressful. Oupa said, "*the stress was killing me. I was even thinking maybe I have bad luck or something*". He had not expected his girlfriend to fall pregnant because "*I used to think only older people go through this thing (making someone pregnant)*". Oupa was remorseful in the interview and wished he could undo the circumstances of the impregnation. He added that he did not have enough information about sex at the time and that the workshops he attended did not give him sufficient information on teenage pregnancy to

have anticipated this outcome.

Both Oupa and Timothy said that it took them three to four months before they told their parents about their girlfriends' pregnancy. In the extract above, Nelson argued that he did not immediately tell his parents because culturally, he expected his girlfriend's family to come to his house and report that he had impregnated their daughter. Schapera (1978) confirmsthat in terms of cultural rules, the girl's family has to go to the boy's family to report the matter once they discover that their daughter is pregnant. In Pedi culture, this custom is known as '*go latla patla gore ngwana wa lena o robile ngwana warena leoto*' (meaning "we are here to report that your son has impregnated our daughter"). In return, the boy's family has to pay '*isisu* or *inhlawulo*' (damage money for impregnating a girl out of wedlock) if their son accepts paternity (Hunter, 2005; Swartz & Bhana, 2009). In the past, paying damages involved handing over livestock, but today in modern society paying damages involves the exchange of money. For most families, the amount ranges from R1 500 to R2 000, but this differs from one family to another and some families may demand more than this (Swartz & Bhana, 2009). Interestingly, the three teenage fathers in the present study were not requested to pay '*isisu* or *inhlawulo*'. It seems this practice is not common in urban contexts such as Alex, possibly due to the erosion of cultural practices in the townships or the lack of fathers and close relatives, such as uncles, to negotiate the damage money. However, the practice is still common in the rural areas of South Africa. In their studies, Hunter (2005) and Swartz and Bhana (2009) found that paying '*isisu*' was at times an impediment to fatherhood because many boys and young men refused to acknowledge paternity and deserted their children owing to their inability to afford this 'damage' payment. Hunter and Swartz and Bhana concluded that '*isisu* or *inhlawulo*' had largely lost its cultural significance as a symbol of apology to a girl's family (in urban areas particularly) because of the high cost of the damages.

However, in the present study, the three teenage fathers did not deny their paternity. It was not clear whether they accepted this in part because their girlfriends' families had not approached their families to demand they pay '*inhlawulo*' and therefore they had not had to negotiate the affordability of acknowledging paternity. In the extract below, Nelson, a 17-year-old teenage father, says that he would have acknowledged paternity in any case.

Extract 29:

> ***Nelson:*** *I would not deny* ***paternity****. They (his friends) were talking like that, but* ***I would not deny my blood****. I would never deny my child.*

In the above extract, Nelson says his peers advised him to deny paternity when he told them about his girlfriend's pregnancy. He vehemently rejected their advice saying he could not disown his own '*blood*'. His argument was that refusing to acknowledge one's own blood would bring bad luck and possibly anger the ancestors. After his child was born, *mopaso wa go bega ngwana* (a cultural ritual to introduce the child to the ancestors) took place. He believed that the birth of a child was a gift that had to be celebrated, even though the child had not been planned. His newly born baby boy was central in his life. Unlike his absent father, he wanted to be there for his child and take good care of him. Psychoanalytically speaking, this seemed to be a reversal of positions (Pistorious, 2000) as suggested in earlier discussion in this chapter. Nelson, in this new relationship with his baby son took his absent father's position, and his son took his position. By taking good care of his baby boy, he seemed to be vicariously fulfilling some of his unmet emotional needs as a boy child himself. The interview revealed that the birth of his child had reactivated some of his unresolved childhood issues with regard to his absent father. The other two teenage fathers also spoke about wanting to be 'good' fathers, in contrast to own absent fathers, suggesting that in becoming fathers their own experiences of being fathered had been evoked, probably both consciously and unconsciously. This confirms Diamond's (1986) view that men approach the birth of their children filled with all their fantasies and fears about their own childhood. Fatherhood may thus be about repairing father-son relationships through resolving intrapsychic conflicts in this regard. Building on Blos's work, this may be confirming of Trowell (2002) and Emmanuel's (2002) arguments that becoming a father evokes oedipal conflicts and early childhood memories. It is through this experience of being a new father that some men are able to resolve aspects of their unresolved oedipal issues with their fathers.

The three participants also stated that they felt committed to their new roles as teenage fathers and that they were actively involved in their children's lives.

Extract 30:

> ***Oupa****: Sometimes she gets* ***sick*** *and you find that I have* ***stress*** *because I was at the clinic the whole night and I can't go to school the following day. Those are the things that were stressing*

me. Sometimes I want to do something for her and then the next thing she's sick and I'm at the clinic and then I can't do my school work, I fall asleep in class and I get stressed.

Extract 31:

***Timothy**: I worry when **he's sick or has a rash and think** what if something happens to him.*
***Researcher:** When he's not feeling well do you become stressed?*
***Timothy:** It happens sometimes when he's sick that his mother doesn't tell me and it's one of the things that stress me because she waits for me to ask her what's going on with the baby.*

In their interviews, the participants also spoke about the emotional costs of being teenage fathers. For example, Oupa reported that the period immediately following his daughter's birth was highly stressful because he spent most of his time at the hospital with his daughter during her critical illness lasting nearly three months: "*I had to be supportive to the mother (his girlfriend). I didn't want her to feel like she had the baby alone. We did this together*". Here, Oupa, a 16-year-old teenage father, indicated that he was willing to take on the responsibility of supporting his girlfriend emotionally; he did not want her to feel alone in looking after their sickly child, whom he recognized as their joint responsibility. Oupa was also proud about taking on the conventionally female role of feeding his daughter and changing her nappies. He argued that as a teenage father he needed to do all these 'feminine' chores in order to bond with his daughter. Both Oupa and Timothy's views signified that as teenage fathers they were slowly embracing voices of responsible fatherhood characterized by emotional care, love and concern. Despite their youthfulness, they appeared to have adopted responsive and responsible roles in relation to their children and to have been willing to demonstrate more adrogenous 'new father' attributes.

However, the interviews also revealed that the process of teenage parenthood took its toll on teenage fathers and mothers', particularly in terms of academic performance. The three teenage fathers all said that their academic performance had declined subsequent to their girlfriends' pregnancy and also after the birth of their children. Oupa and Timothy were repeating Grade 11 and 12 respectively at the time of the interviews, and they attributed their academic failure to stressors associated with being teenage fathers. For example, Oupa reported that he and his girlfriend missed classes to take their child to the hospital. It was initially difficult for him to adjust to the new role of being a teenage father. He reported that he began to drink and smoke excessively in order to forget his problems, but, with time, he realized that this was not helping

him. He said, "*I did not want to be like the old man (his absent father)*" and stopped his heavy drinking and smoking. As mentioned earlier, the participants were explicit about trying to offer their children a 'different' experience of growing up that was an improvement on their own father related experiences:

Extract 32:

> ***Oupa:*** *I want to do things for my child so she can have a better life than I did and guide her not to experience the things that I did*.

Extract 33:

> ***Nelson****: Yes. It is* ***painful growing up, not knowing your father****. I really want to be a different father.*
> ***Researcher:*** *And do you think you would be free to talk to him?*
> *Nelson: Yes. Because I do not want* ***him to do the mistakes*** *I did.*

The extracts show that the participants were emotionally invested in wanting to be caring and non-damaging fathers. Being a 'good' teenage father was apparently about rectifying their absent fathers' mistakes as far as possible in their lived relationships with their babies and their mothers. For example, Nelson maintained that he would talk more openly to his son about issues of sex and teenage pregnancy to ensure that he did not make the same mistake of impregnating a girl at a young age. He believed he would not have made this mistake if he had had a male figure in his life to guide him in this way. It was very clear that the teenage fathers did not want their newly born babies to experience the pain they had undergone. Oupa (one of the *sex-jaro* boys referred to in chapter 10) said that he would be over-protective of his daughter to ensure that boys did not play games with her (meaning that they would not cheat on her or treat her as a sex object). Ironically, perhaps, he appreciated that this was a risk because this is what he had been doing as a *sex-jaro* boy. He asserted that he would teach his daughter when she was older to be careful of boys and their lies. Although, at the time of the interview, Oupa had separated from his girlfriend (the mother of his three year-old daughter), he reported that he made sure that he saw his daughter almost every day: "*I do not want her (his daughter) to be like me. My father stays in Orange farm and I'm staying with my mother here in Alex. I see him (his father) once in a while. He does not visit us. So I don't want my daughter to experience that.*" Unlike his absent father, Oupa was happy to spend his time with his daughter:

Extract 35:

Every weekend I go and fetch her. She stays at my place for the whole weekend. I play with her. You know yeah it's important for kids to be with their fathers.

The other two teenage fathers also spoke about the importance of fathers spending time with their children. Although the emphasis was on meeting the emotional and biological needs of their children, they were also frustrated by their inability to meet their material needs. In this respect, they believed they were not good enough as fathers because they did not have money to support their children and had to rely on their parents (especially mothers) for their own and their babies' financial support. In their study on teenage fatherhood in South Africa, Swartz and Bhana (2009) also found that teenage fathers battled with some of these issues. Another major struggle was managing the tensions of being a teenager and a father at the same time. The narratives revealed a sense of feeling forced to grow up too quickly and pressure to stop behaving like 'typical' teenage boys.

Extract 35:

Oupa*: I can't enjoy it* ***(being teenager)*** *anymore since having a child, (eish) it's difficult. Everything I do I must do to please her because I brought her into the world and not to make her suffer.*

Extract 36*:*

Timothy*: I can't just do things* ***without thinking first****. Now when* ***I have money I can't just go and spend it****. I have to think about the child. I feel different*.

In these extracts, it was apparent that Timothy and Oupa both acknowledged that having children was a big challenge for them and that they now needed to be more responsible in their behaviour. For example, Oupa said that he used to smoke a lot of dagga (South African term for cannabis), but now that he had a child "*you can't be buying dagga all the time when your child needs certain things*". As a teenage father, whatever he did, he first had to think about his daughter. At the time of the interview, Oupa was selling sweets and cigarettes at school, and, with the little money he earned, he was able to buy a few things for his daughter. He interpreted these changes as meaning that he was being responsible and making compromises, for example "*not buying dagga*", to ensure that his daughter did not "*suffer*". He wanted his daughter to live a better life because he had "*brought her into this world*", indicating his sense of both burden and responsibility. Oupa was very appreciative that his mother supported him and was also supporting his daughter. He wanted "*to see her (his daughter) in school and me being able to take her to school in my car, living in my house and me being able to give her*

money, my money not my mother's money". Oupa regretted having impregnated his girlfriend, but argued that the experience has taught him a valuable lesson. He felt he had 'grown' as a result of the experience and was more mature than his male peers. As a teenage father, he told his peers "*that having a child is not easy*" and advised them about reducing risk in relation both to unplanned pregnancy and contracting HIV/AIDS. He had also stopped smoking dagga and was focusing more on his schoolwork. He wanted to complete his matric and study chemical engineering at university. In the follow-up individual interview, Oupa said he had found a piece job at a local supermarket after school hours. He was grateful that he could now support his daughter with his own money and did not need to rely on his mother's money. Tragically, Oupa was shot and killed on his way back from work one evening. He was allegedly caught in the crossfire when two men started fighting over a girl in a local tavern in Alex. The perpetrator was not arrested due to lack of evidence. His mother was devastated by his death. I too was devastated, particularly because in our follow-up individual interview, Oupa had sounded so positive about the future. He had said that the experience of being a teenage father had taught him many lessons about life and that he had decided to create a new life for himself and to be more responsible in his behaviour.

It was evident that the stress of being teenage fathers apparently served as a trigger for personal growth and positive change in the lives of the participants (Joseph & Linley, 2006). Timothy, another 17-year-old teenage father, also believed he had 'grown' as a result of his personal experience of becoming a teenage father. He reported that his character had changed and that he was now more responsible. For example, as discussed in chapter 10, Timothy was one of the boys who boasted that he had more than eight girlfriends and had had sex with all of them. He reported that after his baby boy was born, he had stopped doing lot of things such as "*having many girlfriends*". Unlike the late Oupa, who had separated from his girlfriend, Timothy was still in a relationship with the mother of his son. His girlfriend was doing Grade 11 at the time of the interview. For Timothy, the meaning of his son's name *Lesedi* (Tswana word for light) was significant because he believed his son has become his 'light'. He was now able 'to see the light' and consequently avoided risk-taking behaviours such as drinking excessively or having sex with multiple partners. In the follow-up interview, he spoke about the importance of being

loyal and faithful to Z (the mother of his child). His main goal was also to complete his matric and to study for a Bachelor of Commerce degree at the University of Johannesburg.

Overall, the participants felt triumphant that they had managed to deal with many of the challenges of teenage fatherhood. Despite anxieties and pressures, this experience seemed to have transformed their sense of self. The positive changes that followed included making sacrifices in their personal lives, such as not spending money on alcohol, dagga or branded expensive clothes; becoming monogamous; and seeking part-time employment, so that they could support their newly born children. The participants evidently had the capacity to reflect about what the birth of their children had meant for them, their identities and their future. The period before (and in some cases, immediately after) their girlfriends fell pregnant was in some instances characterized by self-destructive risk-taking behaviours, but later they felt they had to become more reflective about their behaviours. The participants believed they had experienced personal growth, which helped them to reorganize their goals and ambitions in life, which included to complete their schooling and undertake tertiary studies and to find better jobs to support their children. The three participants who were young fathers seemingly developed a greater sense of purpose in life. It would be interesting to explore the long-term sustainability of these positive feelings about the self and plans for the future. The participants might well have used the notion of personal growth to deny negative feelings associated with teenage fatherhood, although it is recognized that personal growth following a stress-related event is possible and may be important in mobilizing inner resources for healing and for positive change (Joseph & Linley, 2006). It should be noted that such growth is not only an individual phenomenon – it is also facilitated by other factors, such as social support and this may be a crucial element in the lives of these adolescent boys. Social support provided by parents seemed to play a central role in this process of positive change. The present study showed that the participants' mothers, who were now grandparents, supported their grandchildren and encouraged their sons to be 'good' fathers. In psychoanalytic terms, these mothers could be viewed as good 'containers' as they provided emotional support to their sons in coping with the new responsibilities of being teenage fathers and helped them to manage their related stress and anxiety. This is line with Fagan and Bernd's (2004) finding that the support of family members has a positive influence on teenage fathers' involvement in their children's lives. It is

also possible that the boys who were teenage fathers represented their paternal roles and commitment in a positive light in order to impress the researcher with their sense of responsibility and willingness to 'pay' for the mistake of impregnating a girl at this early time of life. However, they appeared to be able to openly express their initial misgivings and avoidance of responsibility and the examples they gave of the actual roles they had played (for example, accompanying mother and sick baby to the hospital) suggested that their concern was enacted in real behaviour. In this respect, the findings for the study regarding teenage paternity, although based on a very small population of three, suggests that boys may be more willing to shoulder responsibility in this regard than is generally thought or expected.

13.9. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, it is clear that the majority of the adolescent boys in the study grew up without access to their fathers and that they were generally very disappointed that in their experience their fathers had failed to be positive male role models for them. However, despite the real-life experience of absent father figures, many of the participants seemed to be embracing alternative voices of masculinity that were not destructive to the self and others. The study findings appear to contradict the mainstream literature which holds that adolescent boys who grow up without father figures are highly likely to experience emotional disturbances and indulge in delinquent and risk-taking behaviours. Generally, the participants spoke about their mothers as positive role models. Again this is somewhat contrary to the existing literature which often tends to present single mother parenting as the source of emotional problems for adolescent boys. The present study showed that many female-headed households were apparently able to raise well-adjusted adolescent boys who appreciated the value of their mothers and the female parenting they received. Thus it cannot be summarily assumed that the lack of a father figure inevitably results in maladjustment among adolescent boys, despite the boys' perceived sense of disappointment in regard to poor or absent father relationships. The participants who lived with both parents in most instances saw their fathers as emotionally absent, strict, less tolerant and less reasonable than their mothers. Their fathers found it difficult to talk to them about intimate and important preoccupations, such as sex, condom use, risk-taking behaviours and gender related tensions and conflicts. In some of the households,

brothers were able to fill the void left by the absent fathers by talking to their younger brothers about ways of living out a masculinity that did not entail risks to self and others.

The adolescent boys also created an 'ideal' picture of fatherhood to which they themselves subscribed in wanting to be good fathers in the future. One cannot say whether they will able to achieve their ideal expectations, but it was clear that this process helped them to compensate for the lack of father figures in their personal lives. This need to *dis-identify* with negatively perceived fathers also emerged in the interviews with the three teenage fathers who showed themselves to be highly motivated to be 'good' and 'different' fathers compared to their own absent fathers. In this context, their newly born babies appeared to serve as an extension of the self allowing them to fulfil some of their own unmet emotional needs as children in meeting the needs of their own progeny. This set of processes seemed to support Diamond's (2004, 2005) contention that becoming a father evokes childhood wishes and fantasies about how one was fathered or not fathered. Despite their lack of positive fathering experience, the participants in the present study were emotionally invested in being 'good' fathers. This is contrary to the dominant literature that holds that adolescent boys who grow up without positive male role models or father figures are more likely to become poor male role models themselves (Garbarino, 1999; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996). Whether this took the form of compensatory fantasies or compensatory behaviours (in the case of the actual teenage fathers) it was apparent that engagement with real and perceived lacks in constructive fathering had mobilized these boys to want to 'do better' themselves. This is an interesting and perhaps original finding that suggests greater complexity in understanding the impact of absent, neglectful and/ or disengaged fathers in the lives of developing adolescent boys.

Chapter 14: Concluding Remarks

Introduction

In this conclusion chapter, the researcher critically discusses some of the key findings and themes that emerged in this study. This is to highlight all the complexities of how adolescent boys negotiated and contested multiple voices of masculinity. It was evident in this study that the subjective positions that boys occupied were fluid rather than fixed and rigid. This was not easy at a personal level as boys continuously had to shift from one position to another, depending on the context in which they found themselves. The process of self-representation and self-identification was often characterized by feelings of internal turmoil, and self-doubt and even by a sense of emptiness amongst some of the participants. Based on some of the key findings, the researcher provides specific recommendations for future possible practical interventions in working with boys to assist them negotiate and embrace healthy voices of masculinity that are non-risk taking. Such interventions should be implemented both in and outside school environments as there was evidence of an intersection between these settings in how boys defined their masculinities. It is argued that these interventions should give boys the opportunity to freely interrogate their feelings and emotions without any fear of being judged negatively. This was a strength of the current study. The researcher provided the participants with the safe space to freely talk about their feelings of anger, disappointment, frustration and insecurities in relation to certain events in their personal lives as well as to talk about more positive aspects. This seemed to have facilitated some insight and the ability to reflect on the self amongst some of the participants. The chapter concludes with discussion of some of the key limitations and strengths of the current research project.

14.1. Summary of the key findings

14.1.1. **So what is being a different boy?: Being in the borderland as a survival strategy**

On the whole, the findings in this study suggest that being an adolescent boy in Alexandra Township and the adoption of a ‘real’ boy or masculine identity is a complicated process, often characterized by feelings of ambivalence and contradictions. For example, in the context of

Alex, it was evident that some versions of masculinity (e.g. *tsotsi* or *sex-jaro* masculinity) were more valued and celebrated than others (academic or Christian-orientated). Masculinities that were viewed as non-risk taking, non-violent, and to some extent, non-sexist tended to be less socially accepted or celebrated. The process of negotiating multiple and conflicting versions or voices of masculinity that emerged as salient in the interviews was not easy. It was evident that there were different sub-groups or 'types' of boys in Alex and that these groups competed with each other for power, visibility, legitimacy and domination. However, it must be mentioned that boys did not necessarily fit neatly into each of the typologies identified in the study and in many instances appeared to vacillate between multiple positions, simultaneously accepting and rejecting certain practices of township masculinity, although for some boys' identification with a certain type of masculinity remained quite consistent. Many of these boys (mainly academic boys) had to straddle a range of masculine positions or occupy 'borderland' spaces in order to maintain a particular reputation and status in the peer group. Their success depended on how they navigated a range of subjective positions and public displays of masculinity. Through this sort of navigation their masculinity was confirmed and validated by *tsotsi* boys who somewhat tended to act as legitimate gatekeepers of what constituted township masculinity. The embodiment of both *tsotsi* and academic image allowed academic boys to enter the world of *tsotsi* boys in order to avoid becoming the target of overt discrimination and marginalization through being teased, mocked and called all kinds of derogatory names. However, it must be mentioned that 'borderland' masculinities (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003) are also not fixed, as academic boys in this study continuously had to negotiate and transgress certain norms, identity categories and group boundaries in order to live in this dual space. Some boys experienced the process of being in-between or in the 'borderland' as emotionally exhausting and frustrating and some expressed feelings of self-doubt and fragility about their alternative identities. On the whole, it was evident that being in the 'borderland' was a survival and coping strategy that these boys used to maintain and sustain emerging alternative voices in this context of Alexandra Township. Without this strategy, it seemed these boys would not have succeeded in embracing more healthy alternative voices that were non-risk taking. Furthermore, these boys employed reasonably mature defence mechanisms, such as sublimation and self-talking strategies to manage all these tensions related to being in the borderland and reconcile opposing aspects of being an academic boy in Alex. Their self-reflective abilities seemed to

have helped them to achieve these alternative masculine identities. Despite this success, their voices still appeared to be weak and marginalized due to the hierarchical nature of young masculinities in Alex and the dominance of the more aggressive and sexist masculinity.

14.1.2. **Dominant masculinities and bravado as a mask to hide the fragile self**

On the whole, the interviewees also appeared to be aware of a hierarchy of masculinities in which alignment to some positions rather than others allowed for social status and positive self-esteem. In this respect, it appeared that certain 'types' or typifications of masculinity occupied hegemonic or counter-hegemonic status amongst these township boys. As mentioned earlier, two identities that enjoyed largely hegemonic status amongst this group of school boys were *tsotsi* masculinity, associated with defiance, toughness, risk-taking and willingness to engage in interpersonal violence; and *sex-jaro* masculinity, associated with a virile sexuality and multiple female conquests. Both *tsotsi* and *sex-jaro* boys were highly invested in the production and reproduction of hegemonic notions of masculinity in which engagement in risk-taking behaviours was glamorized and celebrated as the key marker of being a township boy in the context of Alexandra. Making identification as either *tsotsi* or *sex-jaro* was highly valued. Despite this public masculine bravado, it emerged that many of these boys were in fact psychologically 'vulnerable', uneasy and unhappy in their private spaces.In the interviews, it was evident that their engagement in risk-taking behaviours was in many instances a compensatory defence mechanism in dealing with feelings of emptiness, depression and despondency. Interestingly, all these feelings were shared in the individual interviews rather than in the focus groups, probably because these boys did not want to be seen as 'vulnerable' or 'sissies' in any respect by their male peers.

While, it is difficult to generalize these findings from this small sub-sample of boys, there was some suggestion in the study that the risky identity was constructed and worn in order to hide a more a fragile 'true' self. This suggests that occupying dominant positions was not necessarily satisfying for many boys, but costly emotionally. This emotional pain as mentioned earlier was more evident in individual and follow-up interviews in which the participants were no longer posturing and performing the traditional masculine roles in more public forums. They were

now feeling at ease to share their feelings of vulnerability, fears, and uncertainties about the future due to their current life circumstances. Based on these findings, it is recommended that safe spaces should be created to engage boys such as *tsotsi* boys at a deeper emotional level rather than condemning them as reckless and irresponsible as this is likely to further alienate these kinds of boys and push them deeper into the pain of depression and anger. Consciously or unconsciously, these negative feelings seemed to play a role in their self-destructive behaviours. Despite this, it was evident that many of these boys had the capacity to reflect on their risk-taking behaviours if given safe space to do so, suggesting the potentiality for behaviour change and transformation of the self. This was what the researcher did in this study, abeit it indirectly, striving to contain and look beyond the posturing nature of the *tsotsi* or *sex-jaro* identity of these boys in order to access and allow their feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness. On the whole, the findings revealed the considerable internal and external struggles that boys experience in adopting both popular and non-popular masculine subjective positions.

14.1.3. **Investment in schooling and the future as a protective factor**

It seemed that being reflective and insightful, and having educational aspirations and valuing academic achievement, appeared to be some of the protective factors that helped some of the adolescent boys in this study to resist and reject involvement in hyper masculine behaviours that might place them and others at risk in various ways. Many of these participants displayed high levels of self-reflection, introspection and insight about what it meant to be a 'different' boy and the determination required to maintain this stance. However, their resistance was often not overt, but significantly in many instances took the form of future orientated fantasies to achieve certain career and other goals. Clearly, investment in education/schooling seemed to have served as a good 'container' to hold some of these boys' frustration in the present, while they projected themselves into a fantasied future. In these imagined positive futures, there were also fantasies of change of current power relations in which highly achieving boys who were marginalized at the present moment would become superior to *tsotsi* boys whose social positioning would remain unchanged(largely due to lack of commitment to their schooling). Clearly, these were some of the consoling and coping strategies that academically invested

boys used to deal with their marginalized positions in the present. It is possible that without education/schooling as a positive form of sublimation many of these boys would have found it difficult to resist and reject notions of hegemonic Alex masculinity.

On the whole, the present study seemed to challenge popular conceptions of black township adolescents as all potentially violent or at risk for engagement in criminal activities. There was evidence in the study that some adolescent boys were slowly embracing alternative young masculinities, although this process appeared to come with considerable emotional costs, sacrifices and feelings of self-doubt. It appeared that a combination of more internal features (such as the ability to delay immediate gratification to achieve long term goals and a clear sense of self) and more external facilitators (such as access to a supportive mentor or involved caretakers) was important in allowing boys to take up non-conforming and non-hegemonic identities in this context of Alexandra Township.

14.1.4. **Globalization and changing class relations in negotiating masculine identities post 1994**

The findings in this study also revealed that access to wealth and class differences play an important role in how township boys negotiate and contest positions of masculinity. Interestingly, all the participants seemed to self-identify as poor. Given their predominantly working class identity, across all the group and individual interviews, there was derision directed towards middle class boys whose identity appeared to lie outside of the township due to their identification with clothes or taste in music which were considered too white, western or American. Middle-class boys were called all kinds of derogatory names and were accused of being developmentally immature as in 'spoilt brats' or 'mommy's boys'. As opposed to these 'soft, dependant' boys, the interviewees prided themselves on occupying a kind of resilient, self-sufficient township/male identity. Perhaps somewhat ironically, however, many of them also had aspirations to obtain the material luxuries that these middle-class, '*cheese*' boys were seen as enjoying, such as access to cars, 'pretty' girls and expensive clothes. There was considerable evidence of envy towards those who had access to material resources on the part of the boys in this study, suggesting that while '*cheese* boys' were excluded from their in-

group, they were still envied as many aspects of their middle class lifestyle represented the ideals of a more globalized, hegemonic masculinity. Overall, it was observed that class seemed to play a key role in influencing how black adolescent boys negotiated multiple voices of masculinity in the context of Alexandra Township, despite the limitation of not having conducted interviews with boys who may have classified themselves or been classified by others as '*cheese*' boys. The findings in relation to wealth and class again showed that masculinity was not something static. Changes in terms of socio-economic factors seemed to effect changes in how boys negotiated and contested masculine identity positions. This was a shift as compared to boys under apartheid where being a 'comrade' was the key marker of being a 'real' township boy. It was evident that the demise of apartheid has allowed South African youth, including boys in Alex, to be part of the global village, also able to access different global images and representations of identities. Due to globalization, masculine identities seemed to have become somewhat universalized. The immediate or local context may no longer be seen as the sole frame influencing young people to embrace certain identities. Global consumer culture seemed to play a key role in terms of young people's taste in music and clothing, although some markers particular of adolescent masculinity were highly contested in Alex along class lines. For example, African American hip-hop culture was appreciated to be a possible model for adolescent masculinity, especially by '*cheese* boys', but was rejected by *Ekhasi* or 'real' township boys who embraced they own local kwaito related mode of expression.

14.1.5. 'Othering' of boys as non-masculine

A major finding in this study was that almost all of the boys (irrespective of 'type') were united in their antagonism towards 'gay masculinity', accusing 'gay' boys of letting boys down in a variety of ways. It was evident in all the interviews that 'gay masculinity' tended to occupy a very low status position in the hierarchy of masculinities. This was despite some attempts by some interviewees to demonstrate that they were more accepting of 'homosexuality', since they still expressed rather conservative and prejudicial attitudes in this respect. The participants employed various discursive strategies, including drawing upon popularised religious, cultural, and medical discourses, to assert their subjective positioning as more

hegemonically aligned, more authentic and more legitimate than gay males, who were very much 'othered'. The concept of 'Othering' as used by Renold (2001) was also usefully applied in the current research project to explore and interrogate how derogatory labels and terms such as *isitabane* (Zulu word for 'gay') were used to control and negate boys who did not comply with the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. It was evident from some of the interview material that 'homosexuality' and/ or same-sex relationships were viewed as posing a threat to the participants' conception of traditional African manhood and this despite the fact that they were regularly confronted with images of 'gay masculinity' at school and also at home, in watching certain popular, locally filmed television programmes.

It was apparent that there was fear and anxiety that social relations with 'gay' boys or any boy who behaved in a 'gayish' way might be contaminating and therefore should be avoided at all costs. As was found in Pascoe's (2007) study, it is also appeared in this study that homophobia may have represented a degree of defensive positioning, mobilized to repress any homoerotic desires and impulses, given the virulence with which some ideas and sentiments were expressed in those sections of the interviews dealing with 'homosexuality'. Interestingly, homophobic views were more often raised in the group interviews than in the individual interviews. The group interviews appeared to create a legitimating space for the participants to talk about their disgust for and even hatred for 'gay' boys and associated behaviours. Homophobia in their narratives seemed to function as a tool of control to maintain strict boundaries between 'straight' and 'gay' boys. It also functioned as a technique of self-surveillance and monitoring. All the participants spoke about the need to behave in a particular manner to avoid any accusations of being 'gay' and this suggested that 'gayness' was not defined purely on the basis of same sex-desires but was associated with other stereotypical behaviours and practices. The fear of being seen as 'gay' was mentioned as one of the major concerns by all of the participants. Almost continuously, the participants appeared to be monitoring themselves and policing other boys for any 'gay' associated behaviours. This suggested a lack of freedom in how boys behaved and related with one another. Certain behaviours, such as demonstrations of closeness and intimacy, had to be avoided at all costs, as this was experienced as aberrant and threatening. This revealed the fragile nature of masculinity in that repudiation was used as a central tool in establishing and protecting the

masculine sense of self. The 'Othering' work seemed to underpin many of the internal tensions, anxieties, and fears that the adolescent boys in the present study had to manage on a daily basis in order to maintain and sustain the image of being 'straight' boys. They had to clearly *dis-identify* with anything associated with 'homosexuality', even in terms of their dress style and the colours of their clothes. Overall, it was evident that 'gay' identity posed all kinds of challenges to hegemonic masculinity as understood by these boys. There were clearly also other forms of 'Othering', such as that of rejecting 'cheese boys', as explored in the study, however, the 'Othering' of homosexuality and its association with femininity was very marked.

14.1.6. **Fulfilling unmeet childhood needs through 'idealising' fatherhood and fathering**

It was also clear in the study that the majority of the participants grew up without father figures, but despite this, many expressed desire and some commitment to being different fathers later in life. Many created an 'idealistic' picture of fatherhood in the future, suggesting they intended to be both emotionally and physically available for their children. It was evident that there was something compensatory about this wish, aiming to fulfill unmeet childhood needs and also to dis-identify with absent fathers by being 'good' fathers themselves. These images were often so 'rosy' or idealized that there was a question as to whether many will able to achieve their high expectations or will these just remain compensatory fantasies. It was difficult to make any conclusion at this stage but some participants were living this dream in reality by being 'good' teenage fathers themselves. It was evident that these teenage fathers were highly committed to being 'different' fathers, despite a lack of material resources to support their newly born babies in some instances. Their conception of fatherhood represented some paradigm shift in which the role was no longer defined by one's ability to meet the economic needs of the child, but by being emotionally available to provide much needed love, care and nurturance to children and support to mothers. Despite this more progressive outlook, all teenage fathers were still troubled by their inability to support their children financially. Interestingly, all the teenage fathers appeared to be insightful and reflective about how the experience of being a teenage father had transformed their sense of self, leading them to be more responsible in their behavior and also strive to achieve certain goals in life. It seemed being a teenage father contributed immensely to their sense of growth and maturity. On the

whole, the findings in this study appeared to contradict the existing literature that boys who grow up without fathers are more likely to repeat the cycle of being bad fathers themselves. However, this was not the case with this sub-group of teenage fathers in Alex as they were highly invested in being 'good' fathers.

In their interviews, the participants spoke about their mothers as positive role models, which was also contrary to much of the existing literature in which female-headed households are often presented as a source of emotional problems for many adolescent boys. In this study, mothers were frequently seen as pillars of strength and a source of comfort and emotional support. These boys seemed to feel that in the absence of the father their mothers' provided them with adequate emotional and practical guidance in dealing with life and the pull to engage in risky behaviours. They believed this contributed constructively to their positive identities as boys growing in Alex. It was evident that their mothers were able to play dual parenting roles and were able to be good 'containers' of their sons' frustrations in life. This showed that mothers had the emotional capacity to help their sons develop a secure sense of their masculine gender identity. In other instances, this role was played by older brothers who also appeared to generally play a positive role in supporting their young brothers to embrace aspects of masculinity that were non-risk taking. All these individuals played a major role in filling the void created by the absence of fathers in many families in Alexandra. In conclusion, some of the boys were able to engage with alternative forms of masculinity, despite all the challenges (external and internal) discussed in this thesis. It was apparent that environmental forces were important both in restricting or inhibiting progressive or more flexible expressions of masculine identity and in cultivating and supporting this potentiality. It is therefore important that specific recommendations are developed and implemented to support adolescent boys in negotiating and embracing alternative versions of masculinity.

14.1.7. **General overview**

Overall, this study is making some contribution to the existing literature on young masculinities in South Africa. It was evident in the study that masculine identity is non-static, but fluid and dynamic. As a result, the participants had to move between positions, but this still indicated some rigidity and preservation of many stereotypes and conventional, historically

laden assumptions about masculinity. The fact that boys who entertained more alternative identities often had to perform more stereotypic roles of what it meant to be a male person, suggested how strongly dominant stereotype reinforcing discourse or gender ideology was still entrenched despite all emerging elements which were less conventional. This showed that change was taking place, but in slow motion as many of the alternative voices were not yet publicly celebrated and popular.

It was also evident that in embracing less conventional voices of masculinity, the participants had to be more reflective (such as retain a strong sense of self cohesion despite engaging in quite contradictory practices) as well as relying on external supports from approving and loving older family members, particularly mothers and brothers. Both internal and external forces were quite central in how these boys made sense of self to negotiate their way through more hegemonic and conventional ways of being and into enactments that might be risky to themselves and others. Almost all the participants had access to some sort of internal world and range of feelings and emotions, than it was generally expected. All these private aspects of self were accessible due to the safe interviewing space that was created for the participants to express intimate feelings and emotions. This helped to also reveal the fragile side of young masculinity and how it was being compensated through an engagement in risk-taking behaviours. It is therefore important specific programmes are implemented to create safe spaces for adolescent boys to reflect about their own masculine identities and the whole process of transition into manhood.

14.2. Implications of the findings for intervention

As mentioned earlier, it was evident from the interviewees that being a boy in the process of becoming a young man in Alexandra Township is not easy. It is therefore important that intervention programmes are developed and implemented both in and outside school environments to assist and support adolescent boys to negotiate multiple voices of masculinity. Here are some specific recommendations:

14.2.1 **Creating safe reflective spaces for boys' talk about what it means to be a masculine subject**

In most cases, adolescent boys are given little opportunity to think about what it means to manage a male or masculine gender identity. The dominant view is that boys often find it difficult to talk about their feelings and emotions. However, it was clear in this study that many boys were reflective in talking about their feelings and views about what it meant to be a boy in a specific township context. It is highly recommended that that boys should be provided with safe reflective spaces to freely express their views on their gender identities without fear of criticism and ridicule and should be supported to question, challenge and subvert notions of hegemonic masculinity that are overly constraining or are associated with involvement in risk-taking and harmful behaviours. It was evident in the current research project that 'alternative' voices of masculinity were generally not publicly celebrated. Too much attention was given to *tsotsi* boys and academically achieving boys tended to feel left out and ignored by their peers, within the school context more generally and in the community as a whole. It is therefore important that positive images of 'alternative' masculinity are also popularised in communities, so that new voices of masculinity can emerge and be celebrated publicly.

14.2.2. **Critical engagement about sex and sexual orientation**

There is also a need for sex health education in and out of schools, targeting adolescent boys. As suggested by Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003), such sex health education programmes should challenge some apparently common heterosexist practices. Such programmes need to take into account social practices of masculinity and the fact that boys may well indulge in sexually risky and female coercive behaviours in order to gain approval from their male peers. Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) argue that the reduction of sex education to biological information sessions fails to challenge heterosexist and hyper-sexual models of masculinity. They argue that sexuality education needs to move beyond factual, reproductive lessons to interrogate the social and cultural constructions of hegemonic masculinity, an argument which is supported by the findings of the current research as some participants actively volunteered that they needed more direct engagement and openness about issues of sex and sexuality. It

was also evident from the findings that safe 'spaces' should be created for parents at home and teachers at school, to discuss sex with adolescents. Such sex and sexuality education programmes should be 'dialogical' in nature in that it is not helpful if sex educators are seen as experts and adolescents as ignorant and needing to be policed and regulated. It has been proven that top-down approaches or scare tactics do not work in attempting to improve self and other care in relation to adolescent sexual practice. Attempts to impose narrow moralistic views about sex have also failed (Izugbara, 2007; Macleod, 2002). It is suggested that teachers and parents need to be honest and comfortable in talking to adolescent boys about sex and sexuality.

Teachers also need to be proactive in dealing with issues of 'homosexuality' and homophobia in schools. It was clear in the study that silence on issues of 'homophobia' reinforces the negative portrayal of same-sex relations as deviant, pathological and un-African. It is important that such constructions are also challenged and interrogated within the school environment. This might create some space within which 'gay' boys can begin to come to terms with their identities and lifestyle choices.

14.2.3. **Supporting voices of hope about fatherhood and fathering**

It was also evident that adolescent boys created an 'ideal' picture of themselves associated with wanting to be good fathers in the future. As mentioned in chapter 13, it is difficult at the present moment to predict whether these boys will able to achieve their ideal expectations, but it is important in terms of policy recommendations that adolescent boys as future parents are provided with both psychological and practical support to develop new images of fathering and fatherhood. This may be nurtured, learned and promoted through workshops and awareness campaigns in the wider community. Social support of this kind might help these adolescent boys to achieve their fatherhood ideals with potential benefits for both them and their future families and children.

It is also recommended that parenting workshops should be targeted at fathers as well as mothers. Participants who were living with both parents saw their fathers as emotionally

absent, strict, less tolerant and less reasonable than mothers. Their fathers found it difficult to talk to them about sex, HIV/AIDS, condom use and other risk-taking behaviours. It is important to encourage fathers and other male figures to become positively involved in their adolescent sons' lives as it was evident that they potentially had an important role to play, given the boys' reference to the importance of male role models. It is also important that fathers and other male figures serve as good male role models themselves if possible. However, the important role of mothers, who were more often available and accessible to their adolescent sons, and who appeared to enjoy considerable respect in many instances, should also not be under-estimated in offering community support to parents.

14.2.4. **Life skills and counselling services**

Lastly, it is recommended that life skills workshops and counselling services should be provided for adolescent boys to talk about personal problems and also to reflect on their masculine selves to gain some insight into how bravado or involvement in risky behaviours may be used as a compensatory mechanism to hide the 'real' self. As suggested by Pollack (1999), life skills workshops and counselling services should focus on boys' relationships with parents, other boys, girls, teachers, sex, drugs, violence, stress, depression and so forth. Such counselling services should help to create a model of young masculinity that is non-risk taking, non-violent and non-sexist. This kind of service, if also accessible, might allow for more distressed, disturbed and depressed adolescent boys to access help and support at a critical time in their development.

14.3. Limitations of the study

The most significant limitation of the study was the sample size. The study was based on a limited sample of thirty two participants recruited only from Alexandra Township. It is important to note that the participants' race, class and cultural positioning played an important role in how they negotiated and continue to manage their masculinity. As a result, the findings of this study cannot be generalized across all adolescent boys in South Africa. Despite this limitation, which is very common in many qualitative studies, the study has generated an interesting set of ideas on how boys in Alexandra Township perform, develop and live

different versions of masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa, that may well resonate with experiences in other townships and other impoverished, peri-urban communities.

Another possible limitation of the findings was that some boys in the focus groups may have exaggerated or underreported aspects of their experience because they were aware of group expectations and did not want to be seen as challenging or failing to comply with the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. This limitation has been observed in many other young masculinity studies in which group data gathering was undertaken (Frosh et al., 2002; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Renold, 2001). However, the researcher did attempt to acknowledge and deal with some of these limitations during the course of the study and it was also the case that the performativity of masculinity (as more evident in the group interviews) was of interest in the study. The group data was also balanced and complemented by the individual interview material.

A third major limitation may be around how the data was analyzed and interpreted. In a qualitative research study, the process of interpretation is always open to debate and contestation (Frosh & Emerson, 2005; Wetherell, 2005). Hopefully, the researcher has provided sufficiently coherent arguments together with substantiating quotations to support his claims. As a researcher, I acknowledge that I had some investment in exploring multiple voices of masculinity, particularly alternative voices which were not sexist and non-harmful to self and others and as a result, I may have been biased in how I analyzed some of the research material. However, the process of constantly reflecting on my own values, and interests and receptivity to critical feedback from colleagues and my supervisor, who was actively involved in co-interpretation of the research material, may have helped to maintain some sort of balance in this regard. It is also worth noting that the study was about both maleness and masculinity and that some of the debates about how best to couch or locate studies focused on experiences of boys and men are applicable in this instance. Nevertheless, it is asserted that the focus on how boys perceived and took up gendered identity positions can be understood as the study of the expression of masculinity in this context.

14.4. Strengths of the study

The most significant strength of the study was the manner in which the data was collected. Firstly, the use of photo-narrative proved to be an innovative and creative research tool in researching young masculinities amongst adolescent boys in Alexandra Township. This research method allowed the boys to represent their worlds through 'their own lived experiences' and to become agents in the act of storytelling and explaining their photos. The onus was also on the research participants to take responsibility for producing and reproducing aspects of their own biographies in the images taken, explaining their sense of their masculine identities and their perceptions of masculinity, as well as who they want to be in the future. This process also appeared to be reflexive in allowing boys to develop new ways of thinking about themselves as male adolescents. At close inspection, and coupled with the narrative commentaries, the photos also revealed aspects of the participants' emotional worlds and tensions and contradictions in negotiating multiple meanings of masculinity. Through the narratives linked to their photos, many of the boys were comfortable to talk to me as a researcher about their ambivalence in risk-taking behaviours, attitudes towards girls and other boys, and disappointment with male caregivers in their personal lives.

Secondly, both individual interviews and focus groups proved to be useful in exploring how adolescent boys negotiated multiple voices of masculinity and also how these voices shifted from one context to another. For example, some of the boys' alternative narratives shared in the individual interviews were not the same as the narratives they shared in the group interviews. It seemed that many of the boys struggled to hold onto alternative versions in a group setting and instead conformed to socially acceptable views about what it meant to be a 'real' boy by conforming to peer-generated norms of hegemonic masculinity in this context. This again showed that it is not easy to be a different boy without feeling pressurized to perform an accepted set of gender roles in public when the gaze of one's peers is upon one. It was also evident that 'Othering' narratives and discourses, for example with respect to girls and 'gay' boys, were particularly strong in the group interviews. Group alignment was secured and reinforced in this kind of prejudicial discussion of others.

It was observed that follow-up individual interviews gave the participants the opportunity to develop greater trust in the researcher and to talk about sensitive and personal issues that they did not mention in the first individual interviews and focus groups. Similarly to Frosh et al. 's (2002) study, some of the new material that emerged in the follow-up individual interviews included discussion of relationships with girls, anger with absent or unavailable fathers, feelings of rejection, and fears and aspirations for the future. In individual interviews boys also seemed more relaxed, open and fluent, because these interviews were interviewee-centered and relatively unstructured, allowing the participants to talk more freely about what it meant to be a boy in the new South Africa. The researcher was also both flexible and reflexive in challenging the participants to be more reflective about the inconsistencies and contradictions in their narratives. It seems the nature of the research relationship that the researcher had with the participants evoked various kinds of predominantly positive 'transferential reactions' as discussed previously in findings chapters. Overall, the participants reported that they found the research process to be beneficial in encouraging them to reflect upon and interrogate dominant norms of hegemonic masculinity. This suggests that adolescent boys have the capacity to intelligently and insightfully reflect on their personal lives if given a focused and safe space to do so.

Finally, the combination of both critical discursive and psychoanalytic theory proved to be useful in allowing the researcher to analyze and interpret some of the subjective struggles and experiences that boys encountered in being positioned and positioning themselves as masculine, an aspect that is often neglected in more sociological research into masculinity. For example, it was apparent in this study that the manner in which some boys negotiated their masculine identities evoked unresolved oedipal issues, suggested when participants spoke about their future wishes to be good fathers later in life, in contrast to their own absent fathers with whom they *dis-identified*. It was through the use of psychoanalytic terms and concepts that the researcher was able to link adolescent boys' subjective positioning with some of the more unconscious processes that emerged out of their shared narratives. Similarly, as suggested in the discussion of contrasts in group and individual interview material, it was evident that discursive understandings were also relevant in attempting to understand the boys' negotiation of male and masculine identities.

14.5. Future research

There are several possible directions for future research emerging out of this study. It would be interesting to conduct a similar study that includes boys from different racial groups to assess how the role of race, class and ethnicity influences social constructions of masculinity. This would further contribute to our understanding of how class and race intersect with masculinity in societies in transition, such as South Africa. It would also be worth conducting a longitudinal study with these adolescent boys to assess the sustainability of alternative voices that emerged out of the study over an extended period of time. Lastly, it would also be worthwhile to include adolescent girls in studies such as this to explore their views about boys and to assess how such views appear to facilitate or hinder adolescent boys' engagement with alternative forms of masculinity.

It is apparent that the study of 'young' masculinities continues to be important, not only to appreciate how young men themselves experience, engage with and manage this identity, but also to understand how their conflicts and identifications may have current and future social impacts, such as upon the considerable problem of sexual violence in South Africa and the problem of unavailable or disengaged male parental figures.

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Appendix A :Information sheet (Principal)

Dear Principal

Hello, my name is Malose Langa. I'm registered Counselling Psychologist doing a PhD research in Psychology at the University of Witwatersrand. As part of my PhD, I'm doing a research with adolescent boys in Alexandra Township about meanings of what does it mean to be a boy. This is an important research project to understand what do boys do to make them boys. This research will help us to understand how we can help young boys in Alexandra to deal with high risk-taking behaviours such as drug use, violence, crime, HIV/AIDS, and poor academic performance.

I would like to ask your permission to conduct my research in your school. Should you agree, I will need to conduct two focus groups and individual interviews with around 16 adolescent boys, from grades 9-12. Each of the 16 learners will be given a disposable camera and asked to take twenty pictures with the theme "My life as a boy". As a researcher I will make arrangements with boys to collect and process the photos. The printed photos will be returned to boys. Boys will then be invited to participate in a focus group with other six to seven boys for 1 hour. In the focus group boys will be asked to choose five photos that best describe their lives as boys and share their views about boyhood in a focus group. Two or three weeks after the focus group some boys may still be required to attend a follow-up individual interviews (lasting for 30-50 minute) with the researcher to explore more other meanings about what it means to be a boy today. The focus group and a follow-up individual interview will take place after school hours on the school premises. By allowing your male learners to take part in this study you will help the researcher in this project to better understand how young boys develop their boyhood or manhood in Alexandra. The research also aims to promote alternative ways of masculinity that is not risk-taking to deal with high risk-taking behaviours such as drug use, violence, crime, HIV/AIDS, and poor academic performance in schools.

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw your school from the study at any time and it will not be held against you or your school in any way. The learners have the right to not answer any questions that they feel uncomfortable answering and confidentiality is assured. Parental consent as well as each individual learner's consent will be obtained before the study begins.

Your permission and assistance would be greatly appreciated. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call the researcher on (011) 717-4536.

Yours sincerely
Malose Langa (Counselling Psychologist and Lecturer)
School of Community and Human Development
Discipline of Psychology
Wits
Private bag 3
2050
Tel: (011) 717-4536

Appendix B: Letters of permission from school principal (first school)

I _____ school principal of _____ agree that Malose Langa, a lecturer at Wits University and registered Counselling Psychologist, will conduct a research study at our school to explore multiple voices of masculinity amongst school boys in Alexandra Township.

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

I know 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 for this interview 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: Letters of permission from school principal (second school)

I _____ school principal of _____ agree that Malose Langa, a lecturer at Wits University and registered Counselling Psychologist, will conduct a research study at our school to explore multiple voices of masculinity amongst school boys in Alexandra Township.

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

I know 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 for this interview 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 D:Information sheet (participant)

Dear Participant

Hello, my name is Malose Langa. I'm registered Counselling Psychologist doing a PhD research in Psychology at the University of Witwatersrand. As part of my PhD I'm doing a research with adolescent boys in Alexandra Township about meanings of what does it mean to be a boy. This is an important research project to understand what do boys do to make them boys. This research will help us to understand how we can help young boys in Alexandra to deal with high risk-taking behaviours such as drug use, violence, crime, HIV/AIDS, and poor academic performance.

I wish to invite you to participate in my PhD research project. Should you agree to participate, you will be given a disposable camera and asked you to take twenty 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 a focus group with other six to seven boys for 1 hour. In the focus group you with other boys will be asked to choose five photos that best describe your lives as boys and share your views about boyhood in a focus group. Two or three weeks after the focus group you may still be required to attend a follow-up individual interview with the researcher to explore more other meanings about what it means to be a boy today. The focus group and a follow-up individual interview 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 Alexandra. The research also aims to promote alternative ways of masculinity that is not risk-taking.

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. Should you be interested in the results of the study, I will be willing to give a copy of the research to your school, which you will have access to.

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
Malose Langa (Counselling Psychologist and Lecturer)
School of Community and Human Development
Discipline of Psychology
Wits
Private bag 3
2050
Tel: (011) 717-4536

Appendix E:Consent 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 for this interview is entirely voluntary and no information that may identify me will be included in the research report.

I hereby consent to participate in this research project. I also give Malose Langa permission for my results to be used in the write up of this study.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix F: Consent form for participants (tape recording)

I _____ consent to do an interview with Malose Langa being tape-recorded.

I understand that:

- The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person other than Malose Langa,
- All tape recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Participant signature _____

Date _____

Appendix G: Information sheet for parents/guardians

Dear Parent/ guardian

Hello, my name is Malose Langa. I'm registered Counselling Psychologist doing a PhD research in Psychology at the University of Witwatersrand. As part of my PhD I'm doing a research with adolescent boys in Alexandra Township about meanings of what does it mean to be a boy. This is an important research project to understand how young boys in Alexandra develop and live different versions of masculinity. This research will help us to understand how we can help young boys in Alexandra to deal with high risk-taking behaviours such as drug use, violence, crime, HIV/AIDS, and poor academic performance.

I wish to invite your child to participate in my PhD research project. Should you agree that your son may participate, your son will be given a disposable camera and asked to take twenty pictures with the theme "My life as a boy". Arrangements will be 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 a focus group with other six to seven boys for 1 hour. In the focus group your son with other boys will be asked to choose five photos that best describe their lives as boys and share their views about boyhood in a focus group. Two or three weeks after the focus group your son may still be required to attend a follow-up individual interview with the researcher to explore more other meanings about what it means to be a boy today. The focus group and a follow-up individual interview will take place after school hours on the school premises. By allowing your child to take part in this study you will help the researcher in this project to better understand how young boys develop their boyhood or manhood in Alexandra. The research also aims to promote alternative ways of masculinity that is not risk-taking.

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. 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 (011) 717-4536.

Thank-you

Yours sincerely
Malose Langa (Counselling Psychologist and Lecturer)
School of Community and Human Development
Discipline of Psychology
Wits
Private bag 3
2050
Tel: (011) 717-4536

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

Appendix H:Consent form for parents/guardians

I have read the information sheet and understood what the research project involves that my child may participate in the study, will be given disposable camera, asked to participate in the focus group and possibly a follow-up individual interview.

I know 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. Participation for this interview is entirely voluntary and no information that may identify my son will be included in the research report.

I hereby consent for my child to participate in this research project. I also give Malose Langa permission for my child's results to be used in the write up of this study.

Child's name: _____

Date: _____

Parent's signature: _____

Appendix I: University of Witwatersrand Ethics letter

Appendix J: Interview schedule adapted from Frosh et al. 's (2003) and Fouten 's (2006) work.

- **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 do 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 boy?
- What don't you like about being a boy?
- 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?

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 the alternative ways of being a 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?
- How do men cope with problems in your community?

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 woman interviewer or white male interviewer?

Appendix K: Example of data analysis process to identify key themes

Initially, I identified so many themes in the process of reading and re-reading the transcripts. Each transcript had line numbers, which were used in the coding process. For any significant theme, the researcher will simply write the line number in the appropriate cell of the table and indicate the pseudonym allocated to the participant. The researcher will also underline such line numbers in the transcript. Next to each line number, the researcher will also write his own initial interpretation of the material. This process helped the researcher to identify lines in the transcripts which were analytically rich for further analysis in terms of dominant, dilemmas and alternative voices to norms of hegemonic masculinity. In this way, the researcher was able to identify both compliance and non-compliance to hegemonic masculinities. The interest here was also to identify strategies that the participants may be employing to reject, challenge and resist practices of hegemonic masculinity and costs and contradictions associated with this alternative positioning.

1. **Substance abuse**

Substances	**Reasons for substances**	**Rejection of risk-taking behaviours such as substance abuse (alternative voices)**
Themba- It is common for boys to drink and smoke in Alex (**line 499 to 503**) **Oupa**- Addiction amongst boys in Alex (**line 141 to 146**) **William**- smoking *zol* **(line 618 and 726**) **William** – smoking and drinking (**lines 844, 853, 861**) **Shaun**- alcoholic (**line 721-725**) **<u>Gendered practices</u>** **Shaun**- boys who drink ciders are too weak (**line 725**). **Shaun**- girls who drink Amstel and lagers (**line 774**) **Lesley**- girls that drink are horrible (**line 675**)	**Oupa** – stress (**lines, 44, 91, 99**) **Thato**- to have fun (**lines 45, 78, 111 and 156**) **Simon**- to impress others (**lines 186-192, 550),**	**Simon**- rejecting risk-taking behaviours associated with smoking and drinking (**lines, 68, 69, 395, 400, 405, 535**) **Thabo**- having friends who are not smoking helps (**line 209-212**) **Tshepo**- I don't smoke **(lines 503, 513**) **Marumo**- smoking is not good for your lungs (**line 188-189**). **Martin**- I don't drink (**lines 346, 354**) **<u>Strategies to cope</u>** **Marumo**- staying away from friends who smoke (**line 181**) **Martin**- positive friends (**line 305-308**) **Martin**- positive self talk (**line 378-381; 385-387**) **Simon**- being Christian can't drink and smoke (**line 610-617; 627-631**)

2. **Relationships with girls**

Why relationship with girls	**Types of girls**	**Alternative voices**
Shaun- a boy cannot survive without a girlfriend **(line 179)** **William**- It's all about meeting nice chicks **(line 908)** **King**- every boy has to have a girlfriend **(line 159)** **Peter's group**- to prove you are a boy you must have a girlfriend **(lines, 170, 184)** **<u>Sex in relationships</u>**	**Martin**- cool girls, snob girls, hot girls **(line 197-202).** **Simon**- beautiful girls (**line 646, 758, 798**) **William**- beautiful girls **(line, 291-294; 321-327)** **Sima**- dating a beautiful girl, it is about status. Everyone talks about you **(line 18)** **William**- girls as gold diggers **(lines 539, 545, 561)** **Simon's group**- having a beautiful is like a jackpot **(line 676)**	**Herman**- not all about sex **(line 594)** **Peter's group**- It is not all about beauty **(line 787-790; 800-803)** **Nathan**- Not ready to have sex **(line 321)** **Nathan**-I'm proud to be a virgin **(lines, 321; 342)** **Michael**- never had sex (**line 187, 737)** **Simon**- boys that go to church

Thabiso- boys want to have sex **(line 828)** **Martin –**it is all about sex **(line 207)** **Herman-** It is all about sex **(lines 110-115; 124-128)** **William-** you must have sex because you don't want people to think you are a fool **(line 513)** **Alfred-boys expects sex (line 604)** **<u>Boys fighting over girls</u>** **Shaun-** fighting over girls **(lines 102-103; 142-145)** **Nathan-** fighting over girls **(lines 637-639; 650-661)** **William-** boys fighting over girls **(line 772-777)** **<u>Different types of boys</u>** **Martin**- tsotsi boys at school (**line 392-418**) Martin – sex-jaro boys (**line 449-457; 460-465**) **Herman**- pantsula boys (**line 340-346**) **Herman**- tsotsi boys (**line 364-368; 444-451**) **Herman**- academic boys (**line 403-406**) **Herman**- talks about an being academic boy (**line 409-414**) **Peter's group**- sex-jaro boys (**line 575-580**) **Peter's' group**- cheese boys (**line 684-707)** **Simon's group**- academic boys **(line 569-583)** **Simon-** hip-hop boys **(line 679-683; 691-695; 700-710; 715-724)**	**Peter's group-** girls like money **(line 103)** **Herman-** different types of girls **(lines 332-327)** **William-** sluts versus potential wife **(lines 389-393)** **<u>Multiple girlfriends</u>** **Shaun**- has three girlfriends (**line 503, 547, 521**) **Martin**- many girlfriends (**line 223**) **Peter**- justification to have many girlfriends (**line 530-539**) **William**- you must have more than one girlfriend (**line 513, 532-533**) **Shaun**- cheating of girls is a game (**line 513-534**) William- it is not cool to have one girlfriend (**line 513, 532-533**) **<u>Girls as players too</u>** **Simon's group**- girls also cheat (**line 297-309; 315-317**) **Shaun**- girls also have many boyfriends (**line 547**) **Herman**- girls as too calculating (**line 106-114**) **Simon**- clever girls (**line 844-850)** **Simon-** girls as gold diggers **(line 1079-1090)** **Peter-** girls as gold diggers **(line 457-463; 475-482)**	abstain **(line 961)** **Simon- he is a virgin (lines 68; 395)** **Thabiso-** abstaining **(lines 422-450)** **Herman-** have not had sex **(line 854)** **Simon's group-** it is not easy to tell other boys that you have not heard sex **(line 842-846)** **Thabiso-** being teased for being a virgin **(line 291; 501-518)** **Alfred**- I'm a virgin **(line 582-590)** **<u>Non-violence voices against girls/women</u>** **Marcus-**men should stop abusing women **(line 185)** **Marcus –**no means no **(line 388)** **<u>Feelings of contradictions</u>** **Michael-** feeling tempted to have sex **(lines 230, 261-267; 284)** **Simon-** feeling tempted to have sex **(lines 482; 907-912)** **<u>Coping strategies</u>** **Michael**-spending time at church **(line, 59, 136-168; 305; 482)** **Simon-** talking to himself **(line 930-935)**

3. HIV/AIDS

Risk-taking in the era of HIV/AIDS		**Alternative voices**
William- tested because was worried that he was HIV **(line 411-424)** **Peter's group-** IDC (I do not care) (**line 906-909)**		**Shaun-**fear of getting HIV/AIDS **(line 449-455)** **Marcus-** his sister died of HIV/AIDS. He says it was a difficult experience **(line 159-164)** **Martin –**worried about HIV/AIDS (line 467-471) **Herman –**worried about HIV/AIDS (**lines, 133-135; 480-483; 598-604**)

4. Gay masculinity

Homophobia	**Pathologizing gay boys**	**Being gay boy in Alex**
Peter's group- discrimination against gay boys **(line 497-499)** **Peter's group-** gay boys gossip about boys **(lines 451-454;467-471)** **Peter's group-** gay boys can't have children **(line 510-512)** **Simon's group-**a girl cannot marry a girl	**Shaun-** gay boys as sick **(line 304)** **Shaun-** gay boys as lowering the status of status **(lines 314-320; 326-336; 340-343)** **Shaun-** masturbation for gay boys (**lines 438-439; 381-383**) **Peter's group**- gay boys can't have children (**line 510-512**).	**Hilton-** feeling suicidal that other boys discriminate him **(lines 45-47;96-100)** **Hilton-** mother as supportive **(line 26)** **Hilton-**feeling lonely that I don't have a girlfriend **(line 215-217)**

(lines 382-384; 392-399; 401-458; 471-491) **Shaun-** having a girlfriend is a sign that I'm not gay **(lines 184-189**) **Shaun-** he does not want other boys to I'm gay (**lines 292-295**)	**Peter's group**- it's God creation to be gay (**line 444-447; 451-454**) **Peter's group**- there is something wrong with gay boys (**line 465-481**) **Peter's group**- discrimination of gay boys (**line 496-515**) **Shaun-** gay boys need to see a psychologist **(line 304)**	

5. Education, aspirations and future goals

Themba- value of education **(line 335-336; 362-372)** **Marcus –** important to be educated **(line 220-222; 226-229)** **Simon- (line 71)** **Thabiso-** driving an expensive car and living in big house **(line 235-237; 271-275)** **Herman-** values education **(line 409-414)** **Thato-** sees education as an investment for the future **(line 263-276)**

6. Role models

Brothers as role models	**Mothers as role models**	**Fathers as role models**
Simon- I see my brothers as my role models **(line 31, 41)** **Thami-** I see my brother my brother as a role model **(line 42-45)** **Herman-** see my brother as a role model (**line 67-69)**	**Martin-** I'm close to my mother than my father **(line 66-74)** **Martin-** I see my mother as a role model **(line 729-734)** **Alfred- my mother is someone important to me (line 24-26)** **Marcus-** I feel comfortable to talk to my mother than my father **(line 112)**	**Martin-** aggh there is nothing much to say about my father **(line 54-63)** **Herman-** can't talk to my father **(line 608-689)** **Simon-** never got to live with my father **(line 29-39; 55-67; 85-92; 173-184)** **Shaun-** can't talk about my father **(line 588-593; 598-603; 608-609** **Nathan-** my father does not care about me **(line 612-616)** **Thato-** can't talk to my father about sex (**line 537-540)** **William-** my father when I was very young **(line 32-39; 55-60; 65-71;77-8791-97;118-126; 158-162;171-175)**

7. Participants' reflections about photography as a research tool

Thabiso – it was good taking photos **(line 580)** **Simon-** I really enjoyed taking pictures **(line 1134-1136; 1154-1158; 1294-1297)** **Peter- (line 847-851)** **Herman (line 789-795).** **Martin (line 810-813)** **William (line 876, 886-889)**

Appendix L: Examples of transcripts

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