

Chapter Two: Masculinity

2.1 *The Study of Men*

Historically, issues of identity, sexuality and body image were viewed as feminine concerns, and were thus studied from the perspective of women, leaving men and masculinity comparatively under-researched (Connell, 2002; Metcalf, 1985; Whitehead & Barrett, 2001). This situation, however, started to change during the late 1970s and early 1980s, when a burgeoning collection of books, newspaper articles, magazines and conferences on men and masculinity began to emerge, giving rise to the notion of *men's studies* as a parallel to the established *women's studies* (Hanmer, 1990; Morrell, 2001). Academic interest encompassed diverse areas such as debates on the *normative* status of men, their roles as parents, representations of men in the media, and male sexuality (Bryson, 1999; Burr, 1998; Whitehead & Barrett, 2001). The interest in the study of men has recently begun to develop in South Africa as well, as seen in the wide range of published articles, books and media attention currently available. For example, the South African multidisciplinary publication *Agenda* devoted an entire 1998 issue to the challenges facing men in democratic transition, while Luyt & Foster (2001) researched the relationship between gang process and masculinity, and Gear and Ngubeni (2003) looked at gendered relationships in incarcerated men. Other South African studies have drawn on post-structural theory and discourse to deconstruct men's talk on gender (Harris, Lea & Foster, 1995), while some quantitative work has been done in the field of sex-role stereotypes (Prinsloo, 1992), sexuality (Zlotnick, 2002), men's attitudes toward contraception (Lipschitz, 2000) and coping in the workplace as it relates to sex role orientation (May & Spangenberg, 1997).

The interest in the study of men both overseas and locally has been strongly connected to the rise of the women's movement and feminist studies, as well as to gay liberation and scholarship (Connell, 2000; Whitehead & Barrett, 2001). Feminism in particular has gained much ground in shifting the rights and privileges of women to a more equitable position relative to men, and has encouraged wider roles and opportunities for women. An interesting offshoot of this has been an increasing instability, and even blurring, of the more traditional, stereotypical expectations of masculine and feminine behaviour (Berger, Wallis & Watson, 1995; Hearn &

Morgan, 1990; Zinn, Honagneu-Sotelo & Messner, 2000). Indeed, both masculinity and femininity are currently understood to take multiple and even contested forms (Frosh, 1994). This has sparked some debate around a *crisis of masculinity*, where some men are said to be confused, and even angered, by the contradictory and alternative types of roles given to them in the wake of the women's movement (Brod, 1990; Lemon, 1995; Levant, 1996). While some privileges enjoyed by men may have shifted, Whitehead (2002) suggests that the crisis can more correctly be understood as a perceived *emasculation* stemming from a belief in men's "naturally" advantageous position relative to women, and a desire on the part of some men to maintain this gender order. This implies that whether or not the changes in the definition of masculinity are actually disempowering for men, some men perceive them to be disconcerting and threatening.

2.2 Approaches to the Study of Men

The study of masculinity is complex, and has been attempted from diverse and sometimes incompatible perspectives. For example, Edley and Wetherell (1995) have suggested five approaches to masculinity as follows:

1. Attempts to source the biological basis of masculinity (e.g. Kimura, 1993);
2. The use of psychoanalytic theory to understand the intra-psychic development of masculinity (e.g. Frosh, 1994; Harding, 2001);
3. Interpreting masculinity as a learned sex role (e.g. Bem, 1974);
4. The social relations approach, which understands masculinity through the lens of race, class and other social divisions (e.g. Connell, 1987);
5. And lastly, using a cultural-ideological approach that defines masculinity as a social construction that is relative to a particular time and culture (e.g. Burr, 1998; Kimmel, 1997).

Given the expansiveness of these approaches, this review will present a short overview of their key features, placing particular emphasis on what they can offer in terms of understandings of masculinity. While a useful starting point for this was Edley and Wetherell's (1995) conceptualisation, in view of the brevity of the report, categories four and five listed above were combined due to their commonalities. As such, the following discussion includes the biological, psychoanalytic, sex role theory

and social constructionist perspectives, and delineates the approach to masculinity adopted for the purposes of the present research.

2.2.1 A biological basis to masculinity

“One of the most obvious sources of individual variation in the behaviour of humans is gender: males and females behave differently. The question is whether any differences in cognitive behaviour between males and females can be attributed to biological differences between the brains of the two sexes. There is substantial anecdotal and experimental evidence of such cognitive differences, and there have been several attempts to relate these to differences in brain organisation”

(Kolb & Wishaw, 1996, p. 221).

The above quotation encapsulates key elements of the biological perspective to understanding masculinity. This approach gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s, and asserts that men and women differ not only physically, but also in the way in which they behave, solve intellectual problems, and generally think and act (Kimura, 1993; Lipschitz, 2000). It further proposes that genetic and hormonal differences produce psychological differences in women and men, and assumes that these differences are fundamentally important to our understanding of human behaviour and experience (Burr, 1998). Consequently, this approach is dominated by a strong emphasis on seeking differences between men and women, and its influence is seen in “the tendency to build sex comparisons into research designs almost automatically” (Burr, 1998, p. 124). Differences found are accounted for by several factors, including differential brain organisation (e.g. Moir & Jessel, 1991), hormonal effects on cerebral function, genetic sex-linkage, maturation rate, and preferred cognitive mode (Kolb & Wishaw, 1996).

While sex differences have been enthusiastically researched from this perspective, the results are subject to much controversy and debate, and the approach itself has been criticised for being reductionistic. For example, Edley and Wetherell (1995) state that trying to find a biological basis to masculinity forces one to “separate what cannot be separated: men are the product of a complex system of factors and forces which combine in a variety of ways to produce a whole range of masculinities...” (p. 37).

Segal (1990) has also reflected on the existing research on sex differences, stating the following:

“...the existence of sex differences in behaviour had been systematically exaggerated, and similarities minimised. There were no consistent sex differences in traits like achievement, motivation, sociability, suggestibility, self esteem and cognitive styles [and only] small but “fairly well established” differences in visual and spatial ability, mathematical reasoning and aggressiveness”
(p. 62).

As such, critics of the biological approach raise concern that the differences reported might actually be smaller and less discrepant than is often argued. There are also inconsistencies in findings that may be the result of procedural differences in studies or the use of small samples (Kolb & Wishaw, 1996). In addition, even if differences exist between men and women, there is concern that this approach ignores the potentially substantive variations amongst men and amongst women, in other words, potential intra-group differences (Segal, 1990).

The biological approach has also been criticised for failing to draw on social understandings of gender in interpreting its finding, and for uncritically accepting prevailing assumptions and stereotypes about the sexes (Burr, 1998). For example, both Kimura (1993) and Kolb and Wishaw (1996) have suggested that while men and women have similar overall levels of intelligence, they tend to have varying patterns of specific abilities that are relatively consistent and at times substantial. Spatial and mental rotation tasks appear to favour men, while perceptual speed, short-term memory and verbal fluency tasks favour women. This led Kimura (1993) to the conclusion that “men and women may have different occupational interests and capabilities, independent of societal differences” (p. 89). However, it is a highly contested point as to whether such differences can be attributed to innate differences existent prior to birth, or whether these are a consequence of differential socialisation and environmental exposure between boys and girls during childhood (Burr, 1998). It is important for this distinction to be noted, as sex differences that are believed to be a consequence of biology alone are often used to justify differential access to opportunity (Burr, 1998), and may lead to differential status being attached to categories of people (Connell, 1995).

It is beyond the scope of the present research to engage comprehensively with the findings and explanations from the biological approach, but the position of the present research is in line with Burr (1998), who suggested that one should acknowledge that there may be biological mechanisms that determine our psychological make-up and behaviour, but that these are also likely to interact in complex ways with psychological and social factors. Despite its usefulness in inferring sex differences, however, the biological perspective may only predict that there are certain regularities about what is considered masculine or feminine which are largely independent of culture, or may suggest that there is a genetic, evolutionary conception of what is attractive for men or women (e.g. Mealey, Bridgestock & Townsend, 1999; Rhodes, Hickford & Jeffery, 2000). While this latter work could be useful in engaging with the body image variable discussed in chapter four, the present study was more interested in perceptions of masculinity, whether or not biologically constructed, and as such did not adopt a biological perspective.

2.2.2 The psychoanalytic model

A completely different approach to masculinity is found in psychoanalysis. While not a unified theory, a central thread tying psychoanalytic theorists together is an emphasis on the unconscious and an interest in the individual's intra-psychic life (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). Sigmund Freud, the key developer of psychoanalysis, held that people are motivated primarily by instinctual forces of which they have little or no awareness (Feist & Feist, 1999). While a comprehensive account of the entire psychoanalytic approach cannot be given due to space constraints, Freud's ideas proved valuable to the present research as he presented the first comprehensive theory of the acquisition of gender, and provided the foundation for debating and adding complexity to the notion of gender identity (Eagle, 1998). In his theory, Freud held that while boys and girls follow separate and distinct paths in order to attain their gender identity, they both need to negotiate their Oedipal crisis in the phallic stage. Briefly, masculinity in boys is said to develop out of a defensive need to identify with the father and separate from the mother, while femininity in girls is believed to develop through identifying with the mother, whilst simultaneously shifting sexual desires to the father (Tyson & Tyson, 1990).

Freud was always perplexed by the “riddle of femininity” and conceptualised it through metaphors of a “dark continent” (Freud, 1933). This was largely because he struggled to neatly apply the Oedipal complex to girls, as he needed to explain how girls shift their object choice from the mother to the father, while still ultimately identifying with the mother (Fast, 1993). While this led Freud to conclude that the development of femininity in girls was more circuitous and unstable than masculinity in boys (Halberstadt, 1998), his supposition regarding the relative certainty of masculinity has been challenged. Indeed, for Edley and Wetherell (1995), masculine identity is a “less stable, more complex psychological process than femininity” (p. 47), which Chodorow (1978) attributed to the fact that men need to constantly prove and reaffirm their masculinity. This debate will be extended in section 2.4 which discusses Freud’s theory of the development of masculinity in boys.

2.2.3 Socialisation and sex roles

While the psychoanalytic perspective had a strong following, it was regarded by many with suspicion, and by the 1950s, a radically different perspective to gender identity had developed (Connell, 2000). This *sex role approach* did not understand gender identity as a product of unconscious or biological forces, but rather as a product of socialisation (Connell, 2000). “Socialisation refers to the process by which people come to adopt the behaviours deemed appropriate in their culture” (Burr, 1998, p. 38). Thus, according to this approach, a boy would internalise a normative set of standards through socialisation processes which would designate his masculinity. Masculinity is consequently not understood as having an inner essence, but is rather believed to be the product of a socially prescribed role that has been internalised (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). Given that the content of what is socialised is dependent on a particular time and culture, this approach can account for gender differences and divisions seen across cultures, as different societies appear to advocate different kinds of traits and roles as being appropriate for men and women (Archer & Lloyd, 1985).

In line with the biological sex difference research, this approach shows a strong move to delineating and polarising masculine and feminine characteristics (Steinberg, 1993). These stereotypical roles provide a form of security and predictability for individuals, and are responsible for designating appropriate careers, behaviour, and status for men and women (Connell, 2000). These are then continuously played out

and reinforced in institutions such as the media. The concurrent boom of psychometrics in the 1960s also influenced this approach, as researchers began to develop polarised scales of desirable masculine and feminine traits (Burr, 1998). While initially it was believed that individuals who displayed appropriate characteristics for their sex were the healthiest (for example, Terman & Miles, 1936), a breakthrough came with the work of Bem (1974) who proposed the notion of androgyny as the model of psychological health and adjustment. Bem's work was extensively drawn upon in this research and will be discussed in more detail in section 2.5.1.

Despite the popularity of the sex role approach and its often intuitive appeal, it too has been heavily criticised. For example, it is argued that the roles designated for men and women are formulated upon stereotypical behaviours and often do not reflect actual lived experiences of men and women (Burr, 1998). It is further criticised for failing to account for the complexity and contradictory nature of gender experiences, and does not adequately engage with the issue of why some people rigidly adhere to stereotypes while others do not (Segal, 1990). Moreover, the approach is influenced by the essentialist proposition that versions of masculinity and femininity are stable, when in fact they appear to be variable and changing (Levant, 1996). Despite these criticisms, however, the approach is extremely useful in engaging with the content of masculinity and femininity, and provides a tangible means of measuring gendered traits. As such, the present research was centrally located in the sex role paradigm particularly with regard to Bem's (1974) theory.

2.2.4 The social constructionist approach

While men and masculinity had already been approached in a variety of ways, a further school emerged in the 1980s known as social constructionism. While this perspective was not adopted for the present research, it is useful to provide a sense of what the approach posits, given that it has come to be a currently popular way of engaging with questions of gender identity (Burr, 1998). Social constructionism is a paradigm which essentially holds that language has a directly formative influence on our thoughts and everyday assumptions about the world, and is the channel through which one derives meaning from experience (Burr, 1995; Finlayson, 1999). It is through language, and specifically discourse, that a complex social order is

established through which people can interact with each other and formulate principles and practices over time (Burr, 1995). Hollway (1984) defines discourse as “an interrelated system of statements which cohere around common meanings and values [that] are a product of social factors, of power and practices, rather than an individual set of ideas” (p. 231). Discourses are multiple, and offer competing and potentially contradictory ways of giving meaning to the world (Gavey, 1997).

One particular strand of social constructionism following Foucault (1979) is known as post-structuralism, and focuses on the identification of discourses that engineer dominant ways of making sense of the world. These discourses are validated through social practice (Best & Kellner, 1994) and function to normalise particular behaviours (Parker, 1990). In contrast to the sex role approach where there are prescribed roles for men and women, post-structuralists hold that there is no given, determined nature to the world as it stands as the product of social process (Davis & Gergen, 1997; Hollway, 1989). All forms of categorisation and labelling, including the terms “masculine” and “feminine”, are thus socially constructed, making “correct” behaviour for men and women dependent on the culture and time that created and sustained it (Davis & Gergen, 1997). This further implies that there is no single, universal essence to masculinity or femininity, but rather a multiplicity of experiences for men and women, and multiple meanings attached to being masculine or feminine (Burr, 1995; Connell, 2000; Whitehead, 2002). The understanding of masculinity in this approach can be stated as follows:

“Masculinity is best understood as transcending the personal, as a heterogeneous set of ideas constructed around assumptions of social power, which are lived out and reinforced, or perhaps denied and challenged by multiple and diverse ways within a whole social system in which relations of authority, work and domestic life are organised in the main along hierarchical gender lines”
(Segal, 1990, p. 288).

While there may be no single experience of masculinity, Connell (1987; 2000; 2002) has argued that there are always culturally dominant forms of masculinity designated as hegemonic. For Connell (2002), hegemonic masculinity denotes the “ascendancy of one group of men over another” (p. 60), making this version of masculinity a yardstick against which other forms are measured and subordinated. As the

hegemonic form represents a *currently accepted* strategy, it is not a fixed character type, but becomes salient through denoting these other versions as *deviant* (Ingraham, 2002). Hegemonic forms are always constructed in relation to women and subordinated masculinities (such as homosexuality), and so are contained in hierarchical relationships (Connell, 1995; Zinn et al., 2000). Interestingly, while this may be the dominant form of masculinity, it need not correspond with the lived experience of real men, as the winning of hegemony over other versions of masculinity typically involves the creation of models which are quite specifically fantasy figures (Connell, 1987). As such, hegemony may be best explained as an idealised type of masculinity rather than a presentation of actual masculinity (Connell, 1983). For Frosh (1994), this sets up a difficult position for men, as masculinity so defined becomes an impossibility, a fantasy of conduct.

While the notion of hegemony is useful in opening up discussion of how different versions of masculinity play up against one another, the difficulty is that the hegemonic form at any given time is difficult to define, as it is not only culturally variable, but also continuously created and challenged (Morrell, 1998). Some research, however, has attempted to source the essence of these forms at a particular time (Gill, 2003). For example, early work by Goffman (1963) pointed out that there was only one dominant form of masculinity in America in the 1950s, namely “young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual, Protestant, father, fully employed, of good complexion, weight and height, and a recent record in sports” (p. 128). In more recent times, the documenting of hegemonic forms of masculinity has drawn extensively on media representations of masculinity, particularly as seen in men’s magazines. These, for Rutherford (2003), provide an important popular site for the articulation of modern masculinity and for speaking to the male consumer. Such analysis has revealed fragmented, contradictory, and inconsistent versions of masculinity. In Britain, for example, discourses on men have included the “new father,” “soft lad,” “new boy” and “soft romantic”, amongst others (Gill, 2003).

While some of the afore-mentioned discourses have disappeared quickly, Gill (2003) did find two relatively enduring forms that appear to represent contemporary masculinity in Britain. These two versions are contradictory, and appear to have arisen as a consequence of feminist advances and critique of traditional masculinity.

On the one hand, there is a move toward promoting the “new man” who is sensitive, respectful of women, more emotionally aware and is invested in his physical appearance (Gill, 2003). While inherently narcissistic, this “new man” has apparently reassessed the traditional division of labour and made a new commitment to fatherhood (Benwell, 2003). This has been labelled as the “metrosexual” in popular South African culture (Flocker, 2003, in Morano, 2004).

On the other hand, the “new lad” was a reaction to the “new man”, and arguably represents an attempt to reassert the power masculinity was deemed to have lost by the concessions made to feminism (Gill, 2003). In this respect, it marks a return to traditional masculine values of sexism, exclusive male friendship and homophobia, and plays up the dominant representation of masculinity as equated with strength, power and control (Kimmel, 1997). Importantly though, “its key distinction from traditional masculinity [is] an unrelenting gloss of knowingness and irony, a reflexivity about its own condition which arguably rendered it more immune from criticism” (Benwell, 2003, p. 13). It is unclear whether these forms of masculinity can be extrapolated to the South African context, but they nevertheless reinforce the supposition that there are multiple definitions of masculinity at any given time, and multiple ways in which masculinity can be asserted.

From the broad outline presented previously, it can be seen that the post-structural approach builds a critical framework for conceptualising gender identity by documenting the ways in which language and forms of knowledge are used to explain, justify, and reproduce particular social relations (Finlayson, 1999). It is also useful in inferring the flow of power through which particular versions of masculinity are produced and maintained (Hanmer, 1990; Segal, 1990). The present research did not, however, adopt this perspective as it does not provide a tangible way in which to quantitatively measure masculinity. Moreover, the research was not interested in discerning the variable definitions of masculinity, but rather focused on how one particular interpretation of masculinity was related to body image and ego strength.

2.2.5 Masculinity as relational

A common theme emerging from the diverse perspectives that have been presented is that masculinity is almost always defined in relation to femininity. For example,

biological models focus on asserting that men and women are programmed to act in different ways because of biological differences, while role theory holds that there are qualitatively different ways for men and women to behave (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). Indeed, several authors have suggested that “naturalised” gender differences amongst men and women have been weaved into society as commonplace assumptions, and function to maintain differential access to opportunities (Connell, 1995; Hearn, 1987; 1998). This suggests that men and masculinity do not exist in a benign context, but are rather inherently related to women and femininity in what Benwell (2003) refers to as “complementary” or “oppositional” relationships (p. 9). As such, while the present research was primarily concerned with masculinity, it was not possible to engage with the term without also looking at femininity and gender relations more broadly. The review will now turn to how gender was understood for the purposes of this research.

2.3 Understanding Gender

“The concepts ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’, Freud (1953) observed in a melancholy footnote, ‘are amongst the most confused that occur in science.’ In many practical situations the language of ‘masculine’ and “feminine” raises few doubts. We base a great deal of talk and action on this contrast. But on the same terms, on logical examination, ...they prove remarkably elusive and difficult to define”
(Connell, 1995, p. 1).

While both the definition of gender and the process of attaining a gender identity are sources of much debate, a useful starting point is to tease out the distinction between sex and gender. On an arguably simplistic level, many writers have asserted that *sex* is a biological aspect of a person, which is assigned at birth according to the individual’s anatomy and hormones (Richardson, 1988). *Gender*, on the other hand, is often argued to be accomplished in the social realm, and is influenced by environmental, psychological, and cultural factors (Davis & Gergen, 1997; Richardson, 1988). This essentialist account holds both sex and gender as permanent and stable features of an individual, where gender is simply a by-product of cultural experience (Burr, 1995). However, post-structural theorists oppose this neat distinction, and rather claim that both sex and gender are cultural categories that refer to ways of describing and understanding human bodies and human relations (Jackson

& Scott, 2002). Indeed, for Butler (1999), the belief that there is a biological realm that is somehow exempt from the discursive realm is embedded in the idea that men and women are inevitably different because biology dictates that they are. In other words, Butler (1999) argues that *sex as biology* is no less a construction than *gender as cultural category*. In this light, gender is neither something we have, nor is it something we are, rather it is something we “do” (Benwell, 2003).

Despite much tension between essentialist and constructionist accounts, for West and Zimmerman (1998), the usefulness of keeping the two terms distinct is that it allows writers to acknowledge that men and women are biologically distinct (denoting *sex*), while the actual experience of being a man or woman may be quite variable due to the social and cultural significance attributed to that sex (denoting *gender*). The present research followed a similar logic and the terms were kept separate. While sex (and sexual identity) was used to denote the category of male or female as designated by anatomical differences, the understanding of gender (and specifically the attainment of gender identity) was more complex, and will now be discussed in detail.

2.3.1 Defining gender identity

Gender identity can be viewed as a broad concept denoting a sense of self as masculine or feminine, which may or may not be consistent with biological sex (Tyson, 1997). As such, it is possible to have masculine women and feminine men. Gender identity must, however, be distinguished from *sexual orientation*, which refers to a preference for same sex or opposite sex persons as a sexual object choice (Tyson & Tyson, 1990). While there is room to suggest that each person has their own understanding of masculinity and femininity, the influences of culture on such definitions cannot be ignored. Indeed, for Steinberg (1993), they are an aspect of the person which is directly in line with the expectations of the particular society and culture in which the man or woman was socialised, and similarly for Burr (1998), they signify “social and cultural expectations attached to being a woman or a man” (p. 13). However, it is also possible that one’s gender identity is further influenced by unconscious psychological reactions to anatomical distinctions in the Oedipal complex (Tyson & Tyson, 1990). In both accounts, gender identity appears to be something that is achieved rather than something that one *naturally* has.

The attainment of a gender identity and the actual content and substance of such an identity is a highly contested topic. Some theorists have held that because men and women are biologically different, they have “natural” character differences as well (Colman, 2001). By emphasising the role of anatomy, genes and hormones in the development of gender identity, the content of masculinity and femininity becomes innate and safeguarded from outside cultural influences (Bohan, 1997). The problem with this, however, is that not only are the content of these “inner essences” poorly defined, but it suggests that men and women can only behave in predefined and hence limited ways (Connell, 2001). In contrast, constructionists were seen to suggest that appropriate gender behaviour is created and sustained through social interaction (Bohan, 1997). However, if gender is indeed socially constructed, then there is no measurable content to masculinity or femininity, as it will always be defined by the discourse at play. As such, in order to work more tangibly with the gender identity variable, this research followed two other schools of thought, namely psychoanalysis and gender role theory. Freud’s (1933) theory of the Oedipus complex was used to explain the conflictual path toward attaining gender identity, while gender role theory, as understood by Bem (1974; 1975; 1981), was used to operationalise the substance of masculinity.

2.4 Attaining Gender Identity: A Psychoanalytic Account

Freud’s theory provided the first coherent source of explanatory thinking about gender identity, and explained its attainment in a deterministic way (Prinsloo, 1992). He delineated five developmental stages that the child must progress through based on the physiological maturation of body and the shifting erogenous zones (Tyson & Tyson, 1990). Each stage encompasses a particular conflict that needs to be negotiated and resolved for healthy development (Hook & Watts, 2002). While he did not write directly of masculinity per se, Freud saw the development of the male as simpler and “normal,” while women and femininity were harder to understand and as such were represented as deviant and “other” (Tyson, 1997). In so doing, his theory encouraged the view that gender identity was formed as a consequence of a long and conflict-ridden process, and thus undermined any assumptions and certainties held that becoming masculine or feminine was uncomplicated (Appignanesi & Forrester, 2000). Given that the present research focused upon men, the review will only present a discussion of gender identity development in boys. While the complexity of even

this process cannot be fully explored given the brevity of the present report, the discussion will integrate current revisions to Freud's theory as pertinent to the present research.

2.4.1 Freud's psychosexual theory

Freud described the first two stages of childhood as the *oral* and *anal* stages respectively (Feist & Feist, 1999). As these stages are concerned with both learning about the world and developing a primary sense of self control, the "normal" child will emerge from these stages having learnt to give up some bodily pleasures in return for more independence, and will have formed a conception of himself as existing in his own right (Edley & Wetherell, 1995; Hook & Watts, 2002). Importantly, it is during these first two stages that the boy will have developed affection for his mother who has up to that point provided him with comfort through food and warmth (Cameron, 2003). While the first two stages are important for the child's development, the contrast between male and female for Freud (1933) does not yet play a role. As such, the review will now turn to the third *phallic* stage, which represents the most significant stage of gender identity development, and begins at about three years old.

The phallic phase signals the start of significant differentiation in the psychological development of boys and girls. While anatomically boys and girls were already distinct at birth, it is only during this stage that children begin to subjectively define themselves in gendered terms (Fast, 1993). A key factor in this process lies in the shift in erogenous zones from the anal sadistic components of toilet training to curiosity and sexual excitement associated with the genitals (Hook & Watts, 2002). The boy's interest in his penis comes from the realisation and curiosity that it is an organ which is "so easily excitable and changeable, and so rich in sensations" (Freud, 1923, in Crain, 1992, p. 230). This is then suggested to make the boy want to compare his penis to other males, as well as see the sexual organs of girls. Through this transition and greater awareness of genitalia, the boy invariably learns of sexual differences (Tyson & Tyson, 1990). This recognition of sexual differences becomes the hallmark of gender identity development in Freud's theory, and over the course of the next few years of the child's life, the mental content for gender differentiation becomes established (Tyson & Tyson, 1990).

The key event in the phallic stage is known as the Oedipus complex and its resolution is the cornerstone of successfully attaining a gender identity (Tyson & Tyson, 1990). Based on the Greek legend of Oedipus, Freud held that the boy's love and affection for his mother from the previous stage now becomes a far stronger, sexualised desire (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). However, these fantasised wishes for the mother place the boy at variance with his father, as he is required to compete with him for her affection. Importantly as well, while the Oedipal complex is an intra-psychic experience, it overlaps with a period of insatiable curiosity about other's genitals in the social sphere. This is vital, as the key to successfully resolving the Oedipal complex lies in the awareness of anatomical differences amongst boys and girls (Hook & Watts, 2002). Indeed, Freud believed that when the boy sees a female and notices that she does not have a penis, he "automatically assumes that the female must once have had a penis and that they have been castrated, that someone has 'taken it away' " (Hook & Watts, 2002, p. 71).

The fear of losing the penis develops into what Freud termed *castration anxiety*, and rests on the precondition that the female genitals are recognised as insufficient and lacking (Frosh, 1994). While much feminist criticism has been levelled against this (for example, Chodorow, 1978), Freud maintained that the boy becomes fearful of his father whom he believes will castrate him should he act upon his desires for his mother. This intense fear also serves as the basis for the formation of morality through the development of the super-ego (Crain, 1992). Ideally, the boy should resolve himself to identify with his father while disengaging from the mother, making the attainment of a masculine gender role both an endorsement of the masculine attributes symbolised by the father, and a simultaneous rejection of the feminine attributes symbolised by the mother (Steinberg, 1993). Through this submission, the boy also becomes heterosexual, as desires for the mother become translated into a wish for a similar female object. This signifies the successful resolution of the Oedipal complex (Edley & Wetherell, 1995).

For the purposes of this research, a key contribution of the phallic stage is that it recognises that gender identity is neither wholly biologically determined, nor simply a product of social stereotypes and expectations (Segal, 1990). Rather, it signals a "complex and difficult process of psychical construction, ineluctably marked by

tension, anxiety and contradiction” (Segal, 1990, p. 72). In addition, masculinity can be understood not only as a consequence of identification with the father, but as a “defensive construction developed out of a need to emphasise a difference, separateness from the mother,” which symbolises femininity (Metcalf & Humphries, 1990, p. 26). For Frosh (1994) and Pollack (1998), this emphasis on difference may translate into a need for men to keep separate any hint of traits understood as feminine, such as feelings of dependence. However, given that the boy originally identified with femininity through his mother, one could argue that the affirmation of masculinity is made more tenuous and difficult to achieve (Kimmel, 1997). For Frosh (1994), this suggests that men are likely to experience masculinity as an endlessly aspirational state, one which needs to be repeatedly proved against stringent cultural standards of masculinity. However, with the move toward widening the definitions of masculinity and femininity, it is likely that the men in contemporary society will need to strike a difficult balance between accepting the looser boundaries between gender roles whilst also having to continually prove their masculinity as distinct from femininity (Frosh, 1994).

2.4.2 A core gender identity

While his theory remains popular, Freud’s work has been both amended and elaborated in view of newer research on gender identity. One such modification pertinent to the present research is the notion of a *core gender identity*. While Freud did not consider the pre-Oedipal events as important for gender identity, later psychoanalytic thought has shown increased interest in looking at the earliest stage of child development in addressing gender identity (Tyson & Tyson, 1990). It is believed that a core gender identity is established concomitantly with the developing sense of self in the first two years of life (Chodrow, 1978), and refers to our most primitive, cognitive sense of belonging, both consciously and unconsciously, to one sex and not the other (Stoller, 1976). In essence, it signifies the primary sense one has of maleness or femaleness, and is the foundation of future perceptions of masculinity and femininity (Tyson & Tyson, 1990). The factors that make up this phase appear widely divergent, and include the biology of the child (such as hormones), object relations, and parental attitudes reflected back onto the infant (Stoller, 1976).

Despite these many influences, Stoller (1976) suggested that social factors have a greater impact on core gender identity than physiological development. This is because as a child enters the world, they are designated as a “girl” or a “boy” on the basis of external genitalia. This is significant for Moore (1976), as persons interacting with the child will have preconceived ideas of what masculinity and femininity means, and so will interact with the child through those beliefs. This will then be translated in a series of verbal and non-verbal cues that convey a sense of gender to the child (Moore, 1976), which in turn shapes the child’s developing mental schema of the meanings of masculine and feminine, male and female (Fast, 1993).

The notion of core gender identity has important implications for classical Freudian theory as it maintains that gender identity formation has its roots in pre-Oedipal development. It also detracts from the view that masculinity is necessarily dependent on castration anxiety (Tyson & Tyson, 1990). However, it must be emphasised that a more mature sense of masculinity will only be determined by the conflict resolution and identifications made with the same-sex parent during the Oedipal complex (Tyson, 1997). The theory does, however, strengthen the view that by the time the boy enters the phallic stage, he will have had an initial bond with femaleness through his mother (Chodorow, 1978). However, in order to accomplish masculinity in the Oedipal conflict, the boy will need to “unlearn” femininity, and associate with what is not feminine. This provides some motivation for the supposition that men require a clearer sense of gender difference and have a stronger desire to maintain rigid boundaries between male and female (Stoller, 1976). Indeed, for Chodorow (1978), “men come to emphasise difference, not commonalities or continuities, between themselves and women, especially in situations that evoke anxiety because they threaten to challenge gender difference or to remind boys and men of their potentially feminine attributes” (p. 391).

While Freud’s work is useful to understand the complex psychological development of masculinity, his theory is controversial and has been criticised (Connell, 2000). For example, there have been widespread objections to the differential status Freud attributes to being male or female, and the theory appears to ignore gender as a system of power relations in society (Burr, 1998). Moreover, psychoanalysis has been heavily criticised for being unscientific and untestable (Burr, 1998). It also does not point to

the actual substance or content of masculinity, and so the variable remains tangibly undefined. As such, to engage concretely with the content of gender identity, the present research drew on sex role theory and socialisation.

2.5 Sex Role Theory and Socialisation

Broadly speaking, the sex role approach holds that the substance of gender identity is a consequence of social expectations, norms and scripts. From birth, socially desirable behaviours for men and women are lived out to produce seemingly naturalised ways of “doing gender” (Whitehead, 2002). Consequently, in this approach “correct” gender behaviour is drawn from our social and cultural environment through a process of socialisation (Connell, 2002). This behaviour is learned and validated from various sources such as family, school and media, and is translated into, for example, appropriate behaviour, styles of clothing, toys and choice of career (Connell, 2002).

Some derivatives of this approach, such as social cognitive theory, emphasize that gender roles are acquired through imitation, modelling, vicarious reinforcement, and observation (Bandura, 1977; 1986). The models which provide the expectation of how men and women should act do not necessarily need to be real-life persons, but can come from television programmes, films, books, advertisements and so on (Hergenhahn, 1994). These gender stereotypes operate as social norms, where conformity to the roles encourages social approval and reward, while deviations are discouraged and reprimanded. This led Burn (1996) to surmise the possibility that individuals who deviated from their gender roles in a way that resulted in severe negative consequences are more likely to maintain more stringent gender appropriate behaviour in later life.

For many years, the content of what was socialised had been based on the idea that there are different, and often diametrically opposed, roles and behaviours acceptable for men and women (Connell, 2002). These bipolar attributes were regarded as appropriate for a particular sex, where higher endorsement of masculine traits in men and feminine traits in women was considered psychologically healthy (Hornibrook, 1988). For example, in Western culture, masculinity was argued to include being goal orientated, assertive, detached and consequently “instrumental” in nature, while

femininity was thought to revolve around empathy, care and emotion, and hence deemed more “expressive” in nature (May & Spangenberg, 1997).

The gender role paradigm further assumed that people have an inner psychological need to have a gender role identity and that optimal personality development hinges on its formation. However, for Lipschitz (2000), the male sex role keeps a man bound to outdated notions of what he must do or be in order to prove himself as a man, making the balancing of a desire to conform to traditional masculine norms difficult to reconcile with more open and progressive versions. Pleck (1981) has also criticised the sex role approach for failing to explain diversity among men, as it seems to assume that men are a homogenous population who all strive toward playing the same role. Moreover, a person’s theoretical understanding of what is appropriate for men and women may in fact not translate into their lived experiences (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). For example, in contemporary Western society, strict conformity to particular gender roles is not being played out as much anymore, as it is possible to have strong, independent women who are career-focused, and nurturing, empathic men who take more interest in domestic responsibilities (Edley & Wetherell, 1995).

2.5.1 The work of Bem

While the polarising of masculinity and femininity dominated until the 1970s, a major breakthrough came with Bem’s (1974) research which introduced the notion of *androgyny*. This denotes a person who shows high levels of both masculine and feminine traits. Steinberg (1993) understands androgyny not as the mere addition of one set of characteristics to another, but rather as the synthesis that gives rise to a new entity, - an integrated human being that can more comfortably fulfil their potential. Similarly for Bem (1974), androgyny is the most psychologically healthy and well-balanced gender orientation because it allows a person the full range of responses in different situations. In contrast, traditionally masculine men and feminine women are believed to be motivated by societal norms and standards to suppress any behaviour that might be considered undesirable or inappropriate for their sex (Bem, 1974). These persons are believed to show inflexible responses across different situations, and thus ultimately show less coping ability and lower self-esteem (Bem, 1975).

In attempting to address her belief about androgyny, Bem (1974) developed a measure of gender identity known as the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI). The BSRI contained separate and independent *Masculine* and *Feminine* scales, and assessed the extent to which the person endorsed the characteristics on each scale. The content of the BSRI was derived from studies with large samples of male and female college students who were required to assess the desirability of a series of traits for men and women (Bem, 1974). Items that were rated by both sexes as significantly more desirable for males than for females were labelled *masculine*, while those rated significantly more desirable for females than males were labelled *feminine*. Items that were not seen as differentially desirable for males or females were labelled *neutral*. Items on the Neutral scale are regarded as “fillers” and are not used in calculating the person’s gender orientation (Bem, 1974). Thus the BSRI allows one to be classified as *masculine*, *feminine* or *androgynous* depending on the differential endorsement of characteristics on the Masculine and Feminine scales.

A few years after the original scale was developed, Bem and Lenney (1976) added another classification to the BSRI in response to earlier critique by Spence, Helmreich and Stapp (1975). Spence et al. (1975) raised concern that there were actually two groups subsumed under the category of androgyny, but that the groups showed a significant discrepancy in their scores on self-esteem. Individuals with high masculinity and high femininity scored high on self-esteem, while individuals with low masculinity and low femininity showed poor levels of self-esteem. To correct this, Bem and Lenney (1976) designated that high scores on both masculinity and femininity represented androgyny, while a new category of *undifferentiated* was created to represent poor endorsement of either masculine or feminine traits. As such, the BSRI now included four possible gender role orientations.

Bem also refocused her classification of persons as masculine or feminine to that of *sex-typed* or *cross-typed* (Bem & Lenney, 1976). A sex-typed person is one whose gender identity comes to be congruent with the societal expectations of their sex. This person is “highly attuned to cultural definitions of sex appropriate behaviour and uses such definitions as the standard against which his or her own behaviour is to be evaluated” (Bem, 1981, p. 5). In terms of the BSRI, a sex-typed person would either be a man who endorses a significantly higher proportion of masculine rather than

feminine traits, or a woman who endorses a significantly higher proportion of feminine rather than masculine traits (Bem & Lenney, 1976). In contrast, a cross-typed (or *sex-reversed*) individual is one whose gender role orientation is opposite to his or her sex, such as a feminine male or masculine female. Bem's description of the process of becoming cross-typed is unclear, however, and appeared to be a perplexing question for Bem herself (Hornibrook, 1988).

Bem (1981) continued to investigate sex-role identity, and eventually moved away from understanding the gender role orientations merely as personality traits toward the notion that sex-role stereotyping was a means through which one can make sense of the world. Her *gender schema theory* asserted that a person uses schemas to measure the extent to which their behaviour is congruent with societal standards (Bem, 1981). A schema can be understood as a cognitive structure that organises knowledge about objects, situations or events that have been acquired from past experience (Cohen, 1996). These schemas lay the foundation for the way in which the child cognitively integrates gendered behaviour, and become a yardstick for the individual's conduct and development (Prinsloo, 1992). Indeed, "the process of learning schematically how to select those attributes and behaviours socially defined as applicable to his or her own sex contributes to organising the diverse concepts of the child's self concept" (Hornibrook, 1988, p. 24). If schemas form an internal regulatory mechanism through which cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity are internalised, then dimensions of gender identity are a means through which a person can structure their world (Burr, 1998). One who is androgynous possesses gender schemas for both sexes, while the undifferentiated person ascribes neither to strongly masculine nor strongly feminine schemas. Both sex typed and cross typed individuals order their world through polarised gender schemas (Bem, 1981).

2.5.2 Gender role identity and psychological health

There is much debate around which gender identity encourages optimal psychological functioning. Bem (1974; 1981) argued that excessive commitment to a polarised gender identity could lead to the development of inflexible and maladaptive coping patterns and gendered styles of pathology. For example, stereotypical masculine traits include elements of dominance, assertiveness and independence, and thus over-

identification with these traits may play up in a person who is excessively aggressive, controlling or even antisocial (White, 1987, in Cameron, 2003). In contrast, over identification with the female role may encourage women to be helpless, submissive and dependent (Bem, 1974). As such, Bem (1974) argued that an androgynous orientation is the epitome of psychological health. This supposition is corroborated by empirical research that has found higher androgyny to be associated with increased flexibility, effectiveness, and situational appropriateness (Bem, 1974; 1975), higher levels of social responsiveness (Heilbrun & Mulqueen, 1987), and higher self-esteem (Flaherty & Dusek, 1980).

In more recent years, however, support for androgyny as the single epitome of psychological health has waned. Indeed, newer studies have indicated that androgyny and masculinity are either equally adaptive (May & Spangenberg, 1997) or that psychological well-being can largely be attributed to the masculinity component of androgyny (Long, 1989). While it is plausible that androgynous individuals are more likely to be psychologically healthy because they incorporate the strengths of both masculinity and femininity (Bem, 1974; Markstrom et al., 1997), it is less clear why masculinity on its own is a factor in psychological health. Forshaw and Schmuckler (1993) suggested that masculinity (as defined in instrumental terms) is good for the self, while femininity is good for others. This is not necessarily true, however, as masculinity has been associated with more alcohol problems, aggressive crimes and drug abuse (Meyer & Salmon, 1984). Nevertheless, there is growing support for the assertion that masculinity is associated with a strong health and adjustment factor (May & Spangenberg, 1997).

While there is debate about whether masculinity or androgyny is the epitome of psychological functioning, a feminine or undifferentiated orientation is typically believed to be less healthy. For example, femininity has been associated with higher anxiety (Biaggio & Nielson, 1976) and poor personal adjustment (Heilbrun, 1988 in Hornibrook, 1988). While Schiff and Koopman (1978) found some positive associations with femininity and higher ego strength, the undifferentiated are assumed to have the poorest mental health and lowest self-esteem due to their impoverished levels of masculinity and femininity (Markstrom, Sabino, Turner & Berman, 1997 Hornibrook, 1988). To shed additional insight into these debates, the present research

looked at how an individual's gender role orientation was related to ego strength and body image concerns.

2.6 Operationalising Gender Identity

While it has not been exhaustive, this chapter has shown that gender identity is a complex variable that has been engaged with in many ways with differing results. Even the definition of masculinity and femininity is illusive and controversial, particularly as the boundaries of "maleness" and "femaleness" have been weakened (Burr, 1998). Consequently, proponents of scales and inventories to measure masculinity and femininity are typically criticised for failing to take into account shifts in interpretations of such behaviour (Pleck, 1981). However, in spite of the valid concerns levelled at the measurement-based approach to gender, the present research did attempt to quantify masculinity and femininity (and implicitly androgyny) by using the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974; Bem & Lenney, 1976), as it resonates with a traditional understanding of masculine and feminine ideology. While these traits are not regarded as "correct" in describing masculinity or femininity, the BSRI was deemed appropriate for use in the present research as the study was specifically interested in conformity to stereotypical expectations of masculinity as it related to ego strength and body image. Thus, in view of the workings of the BSRI, gender identity was operationalised as the differential endorsement of masculine and feminine traits on the BSRI.

The BSRI continues to be a popular measure of gender role identity even in South Africa (e.g. Cameron, 2003; May & Spangenberg, 1997; Zlotnick, 2002). However, some authors who have attempted to reassess the validity of the traits have found a need to revise the characteristics that were originally conceptualised by Bem (for example, Antill & Russell, 1982). In addition, despite Bem's (1974) claim that the dimensions of masculinity and femininity are empirically as well as logically independent, both Zlotnick (2002) and Cameron (2003) found that higher scores on the Masculinity scale were significantly related to higher scores on the Femininity scale. While Zlotnick does not afford argument as to why the two were related, Cameron (2003), who looked at ego strength, masculinity and symptomatic behaviour in adolescent schoolboys, suggested the following:

“This finding is not particularly unexpected, given the make up of the sample. Two of the three schools from which subjects were drawn were co-educational schools with not too strong an emphasis on traditional boy’s sports. The learners from these environments would have been exposed, in the educational setting, to socialisation by and with girls and predominantly female staff in an environment where there is an overt emphasis on gender equality. For such learners to identify with feminine qualities of the BSRI is not surprising”
(p. 119 - 120).

Cameron (2003) further attributed the correlation to the individual’s accomplishment and consolidation of an identity as premised by Erikson’s fifth stage of *identity versus role confusion*, and held that the individual at this point may be more willing to adopt integrative characteristics. Indeed,

“The primacy of the same sex peer group may have passed its zenith and more importance may be placed on the approval, acceptance and attention of the opposite sex peer group. Thus their masculine identity may be fairly secure and their level of maturity, and strength of identity, may allow for the integration of stereotypically feminine traits into the personality”
(p. 120).

Given that such a correlation was antithetical to the way in which Bem conceived of the BSRI, and has concerning implications for the scales’ ability to discriminate between masculine and feminine characteristics, additional validation of the scale was effected prior to being used in the present research. This was used to determine whether the scales were in fact independent, as well as to infer whether the traits on the BSRI still measure the same conceptions of masculinity and femininity as found by Bem (1974).