

**REPRESENTATIONS AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF MASCULINITY AMONG MALE
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: AN EXPLORATIVE STUDY**

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DECLARATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science in the Graduate Programme in Research Psychology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I,, declare that

1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
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It has been a long time coming and I can now finally say that it's done. This has been a long and trying journey which has not been without its ups and downs. Working in this field of masculinity research has been an eye opener for me.

Firstly I would like to take this opportunity to thank my supervisor, Professor Graham Lindegger for his patience, knowledge and insightful stimulation throughout this study; without you this journey would have been much more painful.

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I hope this is the beginning of more opportunities to come.

A woman simply is, but a man must become. Masculinity is risky and elusive. It is achieved by a revolt from woman, and it is confirmed only by other men.

-Camille Paglia

Abstract

This research project aimed at exploring how masculinity is constructed and performed amongst young men who are students at University of KwaZulu Natal. This study was part of a larger SANPAD funded research project on South African masculinities.

Seven participants between the ages of 18 and 25 were recruited from this institution; four Black, two White and one Coloured. Participants were given a disposable camera and were instructed to take photographs under the caption: "What is it like to be a young man in South Africa today". A focus group discussion was conducted with the participants to explore constructions of masculinities based on the photographs they had taken.

Photographs were analysed using content analysis and the focus group interview was analysed using thematic analysis. For the purpose of analysis, the 36 photographs were placed into 5 categories which were people, manmade objects, natural objects, animals and people and manmade objects.

Content analysis revealed that the most common themes for the photographs were of cars, smoking, sports, drinking and women. Analysis of the themes from the focus group discussion revealed that the participants in the study had a clear understanding of how young men need to perform masculinity. In this regard they gave the following examples; young men play sport, young men drink, young men smoke, young men need to seek and attain success and respect, young men engage in heterosexual relationships, young men take responsibility, young men fight when the need arises and young men take initiative. The young men in this study drew on many strategies in constructing their masculinity, but mostly the strategies of hegemonic masculinity including compulsory heterosexuality, physical strength, violence and being a breadwinner.

Race was an important factor in the construction of masculinity, particularly in sexuality and sport.

Masculinity, it seems, is complex and is affirmed by other men. Young men who appear to have achieved a successful masculine identity amongst their peers are those who are successful financially and within the arena of sports, those men who are independent, reliable, strong and successful in their sexual prowess.

These examples of the performance of masculinity echo the concepts of various masculinities, especially hegemonic masculinity. The findings of this study were examined from the perspective of various theories of masculinity, particularly the work of Connell.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation explores the ways in which young men construct masculinity within a university context. Drawing on the work of Connell in understanding gender constructions, particularly her notion of hegemonic masculinity, this study attempts to understand how young men position themselves in establishing a masculine identity.

According to Connell (1998, p.3), “recent social science research has made important changes in our understanding of masculinities and men’s gender practices, emphasizing the plurality and the hierarchy of masculinities, and their collective and dynamic character”. Although recent research has varied in the subject of masculinity, the specific focus common to this research has been on how masculinity is constructed in a given setting.

Connell (1998) asserts that certain conclusions have emerged from this social science research as a whole. These conclusions include plural masculinities, hierarchies and hegemony, collective masculinities, bodies as arenas, active construction, contradictions and dynamics.

Connell (1998) describes plural masculinities as having resulted from diverse cultures and differing eras of history constructing gender differently. Messner (1994), states that varying definitions and representations of masculinity exist in diverse societies. What is important to note is that multiple kinds of masculinities exist in specific cultural settings. Examples of this can be found in Foley’s (1990) schools studies, Messerschmidt’s (1997) workplace studies and Barrett’s (1996) military studies (Connell, 1998).

The notion of hierarchies and hegemony emphasize that multiple masculinities exist in social relations of hierarchies, control and marginalisation. The hegemonic version of masculinity is the most preferred and most common within a given context. Most men aspire to this hegemonic norm and comply with it, although very few attain it. Those who comply with the norms of hegemonic ideal are expected to achieve the hegemonic expectations. “The dominance of hegemonic masculinity over other forms may be quiet and implicit, but it may also be vehement and violent, as in the important case of homophobic violence” (Connell, 1998 p.5).

Within the realm of the body as an arena, men's bodies remain important sites of masculinity. As in sports, "men's bodies are addressed, defined and disciplined" (Theberge, 1991, in Connell, 1998, p. 5).

Connell (1998) asserts that within the active construction of masculinity, masculinities come into reality through people acting or performing. Masculinities therefore do not exist without social interaction; they are actively produced using available resources and strategies in a given environment.

Masculinity is not a homogenous phenomenon, hence Connell's preference for the concept of masculinities. Connell, in work published in 1990, posits the notion of the world gender order as a means of understanding masculinities. Masculinities and femininities are produced simultaneously and thus establish a gender order. Connell (1990) describes world gender order as the arrangement of relationships that interrelate the gender organisations within institutions, and the gender orders of local society on a larger world scale.

The way in which men are positioned and the establishment of masculinities may be analysed at any level at which gender practices reconstructed in relation to the body, personal life and in collective social practice. According to Connell (1995), the male body is positioned in the gender order, entering the gender process through body specific performances which include labour, sexuality and violence.

This study sets out to explore how young men construct masculinity by studying a group of university students at UKZN. In order to gain insight into how masculinities are constructed, a group of university students were given a camera and were told to take photographs under the heading "What is it like to be a young man in South Africa today". A focus group discussion was then conducted with this group, giving each participant the opportunity to say why they took a particular photograph and how that activity illustrates how they construct their masculinity.

The thesis is structured as follows;

In chapter one, I provide an overview of the various studies that have contributed to the exploration of the theories of masculinity and studies, chapter two provides an overview of the theoretical approaches to masculinity. I explore the construction of masculinity and masculine identity positions, with particular reference to Connell's hegemonic masculinity as well as suggest gaps in literature within the field of South African masculinities. Chapter

three addresses the social constructionist theoretical framework on which the study is based. In chapter four, I provide an explanation of the data collection procedures and data analysis employed in this study. I provide a detailed description of how each method was employed at each stage. In the fifth chapter the findings are discussed. This chapter is divided into the results of the content analysis of the photographs and the thematic analysis of the focus group discussion. Chapter six presents the discussion of the findings as well as the conclusions drawn from these findings. In this chapter, I discuss the findings in light of hegemonic masculinity and the performance of gender. The conclusions section attempts to suggest possible recommendations for future research in the field of masculinities, particularly South African masculinities.

1.2 Research rationale

It is clear from the review of literature that constructing masculinity is a complex process. Young masculinity has been linked with negative activities such as violence, drinking and risky sexual behaviour. Masculinity is dependent on the constant change in society or context. This suggests that there is a need to explore the emergent masculinities as the societal context of South Africa changes.

This study sets out to explore the ways in which young men in South Africa construct masculinity. It attempts to identify and explore how various masculinities are constructed and managed including those masculinities considered to be alternative masculinities. The main focus area of the research will explore how young men identify with and perform masculinities as well as how they position themselves in terms of dominant masculinities such as hegemonic masculinities.

Many social interventions are aimed at young men and in order for these interventions to be successful, exploring and understanding the complex processes involved in the construction of masculinity is essential.

Connell (1998) asserts that gender is structured relationally and hierarchically and consists of multiple masculinities and femininities. Within this, hegemonic masculinity forms the most central aspect. According to Connell (1998), the task of being a man involves taking on and negotiating hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity does not rely on brute force for its efficacy, but on a range of mechanisms which create a gender consensus that legitimates the power of men and particularly emphasizes that hegemonic masculinity is built on men being complicit rather than distancing themselves.

There are two approaches to the issue of hegemony. One approach based on cultural studies and post-structuralism, posits a constantly changing hegemonic masculinity. The weakness of this approach is that it is possible to neglect that gender relations are power relations and men have power.

A second approach based on a multi-layered model of gender power, insists that hegemonic masculinity is a structured relationship in which in highly complex ways power is distributed between men and women in unequal ways.

However, there are objections to the use of the concept of hegemonic masculinity and that is hegemonic masculinity is imprecise and too rigid to capture the complexities of gender power. Despite this objection it does remain indispensable for the purpose of analysing relations between men and between men and wider society (Morrell, 2001).

Society is ever changing and because of this masculinities are subject to this change while simultaneously being bound by race, culture, class, history and context.

1.3 Research aim

The overall aim of this study was to explore how masculinity is constructed among male university students of different races, varying ages and different social backgrounds. The aim included exploring how hegemonic masculinity influenced how these young male students' construct and perform masculinity. It further explored how they position themselves in relation to the standards of hegemonic masculinity.

The major objectives of the study were; (1) to identify the constructions of masculinity made by university students (2) identify specifically the norms of hegemonic masculinity (3) to explore how young men position themselves in relation to hegemonic masculinity particularly in terms of whether they align or distance themselves with it and how this is managed. Some key questions that this study aims to address are;

- How is masculinity performed in daily life?
- What are the norms of hegemonic masculinity?
- How do young men position themselves with the norms of hegemonic masculinity?
- Do constructions of masculinity differ across race and context?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter theorises masculinity by exploring and examining works of various theorists in an attempt to explore the various understandings and constructions of masculinity amongst a small group of young male university students ranging from 18 to 25 years. During this particular stage of a young man's life, he is exposed to prominent masculinities within this setting, particularly hegemonic norms of masculine practice. This dominant norm of masculine practice becomes a marked influence in a young man's socialisation. Research studies reviewed in this current study suggest that masculinities are actively produced, multiple, fluid, dynamic and created in specific historical context. A further suggestion is that there are hierarchical and hegemonic forms of masculinities.

The current study focussed on exploring the construction of various masculinities from the point of view of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinities as describes by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005, p. 838), "do not correspond closely to the lives of any actual man. Yet these models do, in various ways, express widespread ideals, fantasies and desires. They provide models of relations with women and solutions to problems of gender relations. Furthermore, they articulate loosely with the practical constitutions of masculinities as ways of living in everyday local circumstances." Hegemonic masculinity is not the only theory used to understand the construction of masculinity, but is the most useful and most drawn upon by theorists.

This chapter presents discussions around the socially constructed ways of understanding and performing gender and masculinity in the international and South African contexts.

2.2 Theorizing masculinities and gender

According to Lindegger and Maxwell (2007), masculinity is a socially constructed phenomenon rather than a property of an individual man. It is both socially and historically constructed in a process involving 'contestation between rival understandings of what being a man should involve' (Morrell, 2001, p7).

Connell (1994) emphasises that there is no one pattern of masculinity that is found everywhere. It is therefore important to speak of "masculinities", not "masculinity (p. 10).

Due to the fluidity of masculinities, culture, gender, language, historical context, socio-economic status and race all become factors that play an important role in defining masculinities.

Lindegger and Maxwell (2007) further explain that masculinity is an everyday system of beliefs and performances which regulate behaviour between men and women and between men and other men. Individual attitudes and behaviours of men emerge as a product of the construction of masculinity in various cultures and contexts.

Masculinities are often bound together by their domination of women. Although masculinities are multiple they can only be understood in relation to femininity. Davies (1997) explains that gender is constructed through language as two binary categories which are hierarchically arranged in relation to each other. A large part of what it means to be a boy is not to be a girl. Young men are not born masculine. Young men learn how to behave appropriately from an early age. This appropriate behaviour is learned by replicating behaviours that are performed by older boys and men around them and by participating in discourses of masculinity with their fathers, brothers and the likes of their peers. This learned behaviour is then continuously enforced and reinforced throughout the boy's life in both public and private spheres (family, peer groups, school, etc.). Young men who fail to successfully replicate these performances are subjected to ridicule from their peers. (Davies, 1997).

According to Connell (1995), speaking about masculinities equates to speaking about gender relations. Masculinities concern the position of men in a gender order. They can be defined as the patterns of practice by which people engage that position (Connell, 1995). In contemporary society, the construction of gendered identities involves a narrowing of choices which takes place in the context of class, race and other overlapping layers of identity construction (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002). Class, race and ethnicities are factors through which masculinity takes on meaning within any society. Each of these possesses a characteristic shape and set of features. These masculinities do however change over time, and are also affected by other changes elsewhere in society while simultaneously affecting society. Although masculinity is socially constructed around power, not all masculinities are equally powerful. In this regard there exist subordinate and subversive masculinities existing among groups which are marginalized or dominated and may be oppositional to the dominant masculinity (Connell, 1995).

Ethnicities and racialised differences are intertwined with emerging masculinities because constructions of cultural diversity are important elements within the social contexts out of which masculinities emerge. Racialised masculinities are both culturally produced and productive of cultural practices (Frosh et al, 2002). “Ethnicity and race need to be conceptualized as being plural, dynamic and socially constructed”. (Frosh et al., 2002, p. 147).

Morrell (2001) states that masculinities are constantly broken down, defended and recreated. For gender activists this particular conceptualization provides space for optimism as it acknowledges the possibility of intervening in the politics of masculinity as a way of promoting more peaceful and harmonious masculinities (Morrell, 2001).

Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley (1999), state that Connell’s formulation of hegemonic masculinity and men’s complicity or resistance has been a very popular conceptual framework for understanding masculinity. Wetherell and Edley (1999) provide three ways in which Connell’s work has been popular in understanding masculinity; 1) Connell’s approach allows for diversity where masculine identities can be studied in the plural instead of in the singular; 2) the approach allows for careful analysis for problems specific to gender power and 3) this approach highlights the importance of noting the relations that exist between men as well as the relations that exist between men and women in the formation of gendered identities. Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity has proved to be particularly useful for understanding the broad social context of gender relations (Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

Connell in the book, *Gender and Power* (1987), claims that gender is demonstrated as being a concept of power. This power is demonstrated by how individual men each enjoy the ‘patriarchal dividend’, which is the advantage gained by men in general from the overall subordination of women. Connell (1987) went on to argue that although being a man conferred power, not all men share this power equally.

With these particular categories identified by Connell, a focus on the more dominant form of masculinity, namely hegemonic masculinity, allows for the conceptualization of the power aspect of masculinity. Furthermore he claimed that while men oppress women, some men also dominated and subordinated other men (Connell, 1987).

Despite men’s sharing of what Connell (1987) terms the ‘patriarchal dividend’, some men are also dominated by others, for example, working class, black and gay men are marginalised from or subordinated by hegemonic masculinity. While these men may experience

marginalisation and subordination in some contexts, in other settings and contexts these same men may operate in compliance according to hegemonic norms (Wetherell & Edley, 1998), demonstrating that men may hold numerous positions in relation to hegemonic masculinity.

2.3 Hegemony and male power

According to Hearn (2004, p. 53) “the notion of hegemony provides a way of talking about overarching ideologies at the level of everyday, taken-for-granted ideas and practice performed with consent, without coercion”.

Donaldson (1993, p. 645) has described the concept of hegemony as being “about the winning and holding of power and the formation (and destruction) of social groups in that process. It is about the ways in which the ruling class establishes and maintains its domination. Hegemony involves persuasion of the greater part of the population, particularly through the media, and the organization of social institutions in ways that appear ‘natural’, ‘ordinary’, ‘normal’. The state, through punishment for non-conformity, is crucially involved in this negotiation and enforcement”. Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985) go on to say that the term, hegemony, has been used widely in recent years in debates on men, mainly as hegemonic masculinity.

There are two approaches to the issue of hegemony. One approach is based on cultural studies and post-structuralism and posits a constantly changing hegemonic masculinity (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994). The second approach is based on a multi-layered model of gender power and asserts that hegemonic masculinity is a structured relationship where power is distributed between men and women in unequal ways.

2.4 Hegemonic masculinities

Connell (1995, p. 77) defines 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’. Some common defining features of hegemonic masculinity include compulsory heterosexuality, racism, misogyny, and homophobia (Morrell, 1998).

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) postulate that hegemonic masculinity is a pattern of practice allowing men to dominate over women.. Hegemonic masculinity remains a dominant masculinity over complicit, marginalized and subordinated masculinities. Although the majority of men will never attain hegemonic masculinity, it remains a normative ideal of

masculinity which all men aspire to achieve. Hegemonic masculinity embodies the currently most honoured way of being a man requiring all other men to position themselves in relation to it. Men might align themselves fully with hegemonic masculinity or align themselves alongside hegemonic masculinity so as to still manage to experience the benefits of performing a hegemonic ideal. Due to the fluid and dynamic nature of masculinities, hegemonic masculinities come into existence in specific circumstances and are open to historical change (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Men who practice a hegemonic form of masculinity possess power which they are unwilling to give up. Connell's (1987) social theory of gender emphasizes that gender is structured relationally and hierarchically and consists of multiple masculinities and femininities. The most central aspect to Connell's social theory of gender is hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1987) goes on to assert that being a man involves negotiating hegemonic masculinity through their complicit or resistant position. (Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

Hegemonic masculinity exists only in relation to subordinate, complicit, and marginalized masculinities (Lusher & Robins, 2009). Complicit masculinities, as explained by Connell (1995), are masculinities which are constructed alongside hegemonic masculinities to benefit from the patriarchal dividend without bearing the consequences of patriarchy. In this regard, these men do not adhere to or challenge hegemonic masculinity, but instead manage to benefit from it.

Men cannot be studied without exploring men's power. However, as mentioned previously, this does not mean that all men are powerful; rather 'power is a very significant and pervasive aspect of men's social relations, actions and experiences' (Hearn, 2004, p. 51). Hearn (2004) goes on to assert that men's power spans over the interpersonal, public and private spheres. It can be accepted, recognised, resisted and taken-for-granted.

Hegemonic masculinity provides a way of explaining that even though 'a number of masculinities coexist, a particular version of masculinity holds sway, bestowing power and privilege on men who espouse it and claim it as their own' (Morrell, 1998, p. 608). 'Factors such as class, race and age interact with gender to produce discourses inviting subject positions in which different privileges are invested' (Danckwerts, 2005, p. 14).

Hegemonic masculinity is presented in Connell's work as an aspirational goal rather than as a lived reality for ordinary men. A key characteristic of this notion seems to be 'its 'impossibility or 'fantastic nature' (Frosh, 1994 in Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p. 337).

According to this, no living man is ever man enough. This unattainable quality gives hegemonic masculinity a 'regulatory force' (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Connell argues that most men comply with hegemonic masculinity even though they cannot perform fully the practices of a hegemonic form of masculinity. The reason why many men perform a complicit form of masculinity is because they benefit from the dominant form of masculinity and through the subordination of women. (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). In this regard, despite its idealistic nature, most men aspire towards it with only a few ever attaining it.

However most men and boys 'cannot hope to fit into the masculine ideal and many men who are powerful within society do not have the characteristics of toughness and physical dominance associated with it' (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1995, in Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002, p. 76). Much research continues to draw on this concept of hegemonic masculinity as it captures the power of the masculine ideal for many boys and men (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998; Wetherell & Edley, 1999 in Frosh et al., 2002). Different masculinities arise in different social, economic, cultural, historical contexts and are dependent on developing a (Morrell, 1998).

2.5 Maintaining hegemonic masculinity through homosociality

According to Bird (1996, p. 121) 'homosociality refers specifically to the nonsexual attractions held by men (or women) for members of their own sex'. Homosociality distinguishes between men and women through segregation in social contexts. Hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities are promoted through segregation within social groups, (Bird, 2006).

"Homosocial interaction, among heterosexual men, contributes to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity norms by supporting meanings associated with identities that fit hegemonic ideals while suppressing meanings associated with non-hegemonic masculinity identities" (Bird, 1996 p. 121).

Chodorow (1978), Gilligan (1982) and Johnson (1988) all provide meanings which are essential to understanding how homosociality contributes to the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity, including emotional detachment, competitiveness and sexual objectification of women.

According to Chodorow (1978), emotional detachment involves young men detaching themselves from their mothers and forming gender identities which are opposite to their

mothers or that which is female. In line with emotional detachment, Cancian (1987) states that when a man expresses their feelings it is equivalent to revealing vulnerabilities which is feminine and a sign of weakness. This is not a valued quality in a successful masculinity. Suppressing one's feelings shows a valued characteristic of self-control. Failure in establishing and maintaining emotional detachment subjects one to ridicule and ostracization from the homosocial group.

Gilligan (1982), Messner (1992) and Johnson (1988) give explanations of the role played by competition in the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity. Gilligan (1982) asserts that competitiveness is constructed and maintained through relationships with other men where individual masculinity becomes competitive. Partaking in competition within the male homosocial group is an essential activity which facilitates hierarchy in relationships. Johnson (1988) elaborates that competition with other men establishes individual and appropriate masculinity and contributes to the maintenance of male dominance over women and other men. Those who do not partake in competitive activities become disadvantaged within the group and become prone to ridicule (Gilligan, 1982).

Sexual objectification of women involves conceptualizing male as being better than female (Johnson, 1988). Through the sexual objectification of women, male superiority is maintained. Sexual objectification of women is a form of competition within male homosocial relationships where men often compete with one another in their sexual exploits. According to Connell (1992), objectification of women and men's competitiveness over objectifying women defines the very essence of hegemonic masculinity in a given context.

2.6 Gender, performance and hypermasculinity

As stated by West and Zimmerman (1987), gender is an achieved status which is constructed through psychological, cultural and social means. "Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional and micro-political activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine natures" (p 126). Gender is therefore an ongoing activity embedded in everyday interaction.

Doing gender involves the creation of differences between girls and boys and women and men, which are not natural, essential or biological. Once these differences have been created they are used to continuously reinforce gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987). "Standardized social occasions such as organized sports for the expression of manliness provide platforms for displays of the essential female and male natures. Within this arena, qualities that are to

be associated with masculinity such as endurance, strength and competitiveness are celebrated and encouraged by all those involved” (Goffman, 1977 p.322). Goffman (1976) asserts that when human beings interact with others in their environment, it is assumed that each person possesses an essential nature discerned through the expression of natural signs. Femininity and masculinity are seen as prototypes of this essential expression conveyed in any social situation.

“Hypermasculinity is characterized by the idealization of stereotypically masculine or macho traits and the rejection of traits perceived as the antithesis of machismo” (Scharrer, 2001 p.160). Mosher and Sirkin (1984) regard hypermasculinity as a personality trait that predisposes men to assert power and dominance over women and other men. The traits of masculinity, virility, and physicality are compounded in those with the macho personality constellation, as is a strong contempt for traits believed to be inferior or feminine, such as compassion or expressions of sadness (Zaitchik & Mosher, 1993).

According to Mosher and Sirkin (1984), hypermasculinity can be understood with three factors; callused sex attitudes towards women, danger as exciting and violence as manly. According to these components, the hypermasculine male is interested in sensation seeking, is uncaring and unemotional in sexual relationships, and holds the ideal that there is a connection between maleness and aggression. Brannon (1976) provides four characteristics of men who comply with the macho hypermasculine display of masculinity; no “sissy stuff” (a man must never resemble a woman or display strongly stereotyped feminine characteristics), the “big wheel” (the ability of real men to obtain wealth, fame, success and status), the “sturdy oak” (conveys manliness, confidence and self-reliance), and “give ’em hell!” (men emit an aura of aggression and violence and use it to obtain sex from women).

2.7 Contextualising South African masculinities and race

As stated by Ellapen (2006), the history of South African society is one of separation where races were separated into separate groups in demarcated areas. This was done so as to maintain different identities in different areas. ‘The strict separation of races in South Africa was accompanied by the strict demarcation of masculine identities between white men and black men. Black masculinity was constructed as deviant and projected as ‘other’ through the dominance of white masculinity. White masculinity exerted hegemony over other forms of masculinities and was especially concerned with controlling, monitoring and surveying the masculine identities of black South Africans’ (pp. 55-66).

Regardless of the multiplicity of masculinities in a given society, not all masculinities are equally powerful. In South Africa there has always been a hierarchy of masculinities in operation with the dominant masculinity oppressing (Hanke, 1992).

Hegemonic masculinity has been responsible for subordinating black masculinity throughout history causing its nature of 'otherness'. For a long time, white masculinity has been the hegemonic masculinity which has dominated over other alternate masculinities. Throughout history, white masculinity has often been essentialized and privileged, as an unproblematic and an incontestable category (Ellapen, 2006).

Due to the existence of apartheid in the history of South Africa, Xaba (2001) identified struggle masculinity and post struggle masculinity as dominant masculinities amongst black urban young men. According to Xaba (2001), post struggle masculinity marked a transition from masculinity constructed during the apartheid era.

'Hegemonic masculinity is important as it helps to locate the different masculinities at play in South African society and the processes through which black masculinity was constructed as 'deviant' through the dominance of white masculinity. White masculinity enjoyed the privileges of being 'hegemonic' and dominated the landscape of South African society until democracy in 1994. This dominant or hegemonic masculinity was also responsible for the oppression of gay and alternate masculinities (black masculinity) that did not fit into the exclusive politics of the ruling party' (Ellapen, 2006, p. 58).

According to Stuart Hall (1996, p. 116) 'black has never been just there either. It has always been an unstable identity, psychically, culturally, and politically. It too is a narrative, a story, a history. Something constructed, told, spoken, not simply found'. 'The construction of black identity as dangerous, sexual and improper was based on a predetermined ideology that set about to construct black identity so, and regulate its performance so that it fitted within the status quo of the Afrikaner Nationalist ideologies' (Ellapen, 2006, p. 8).

According to Morrell, Jewkes and Lindegger (2012, p. 12), 'hegemonic masculinity is widely used in South African gender research... the concept is used by many of the contributors and used as an organising concept for the periodization and analysis of men and masculinity in South African society'. Morrell (2001) proposed white masculinity, rural African masculinity and black masculinity as three hegemonic masculinities in South Africa. White masculinity was 'represented in the political and economic dominance of the white ruling class' (Morrell et al., 2012 p.12). African masculinity was 'rurally based masculinity that resided in and was

perpetuated through indigenous institutions such as chiefship, communal land tenure and customary law' (Morrell et al., 2012 p.12). Black masculinity 'had emerged in the context of urbanisation and the development of geographically separate and culturally distinct African townships' (Morrell et al., 2012 p.12). These three hegemonic masculinities represented three groups of different men, different ideals of male behaviour and three different sets of gendered practices (Morrell et al., 2012).

2.8 HIV/Aids and South African masculinities

The construction of masculinities in southern Africa has been described as being a local and a global process by Morrell (2001). Brown, Sorrell, and Raffaelli (2005) assert that 'past research in sub-Saharan Africa has revealed linkages between notions of masculinity and sexuality; Price and Hawkins (2002) reported that young men in Zambia talked about sexual relationships as central to their self-esteem and social status' (p. 587). Similarly, as described by Wood and Jewkes, (2001), the number of girlfriends a young man has is a marker of what it means to be a man.

In work done by Campbell (1997) on South African mine workers it was reported that masculine role expectations had negative effects on the effectiveness of intervention programmes. Masculine role expectations amongst this group of mine workers included multiple sexual partners, involvement in high risk situations, unprotected flesh on flesh sex and fathering many children. Other research (Abdool Karim, Abdool Karim, Preston Whyte & Sanka, 1992; MacPhail & Campbell, 2001) found that condom use undermined young men's notions of masculinity in South Africa. Young men's need to engage in sex with multiple partners and not using condoms as well as the importance placed on fertility, places their sexual health at risk. The link between the multidimensional and evolving nature of masculine identity in an African community and continuing high-risk sexual behaviour despite widely accessible information about HIV and AIDS was found to be critical in the abovementioned research. At an International AIDS conference held in Durban in 2000, South Africa, it was highlighted that the misuse of alcohol was a behavioural risk factor for HIV transmission. Studies such as those conducted by Mbulaiteye, Ruberantwari, Nakiyingi, Carpenter, Kamali and Whitworth (2000), have documented that alcohol consumption is strongly associated with the diminished ability to ensure using a condom during sexual intercourse. This will put the young men at risk for contracting HIV and other sexually

transmitted diseases due to the impaired ability to make reasonable decisions about the use of a condom.

One cannot understand the context of HIV without making use of the gender perspective in exploring the relations and power hierarchies that exist among all sexual identities (Wood & Jewkes, 2001).

2.9 Gaps in literature

Although there is an abundance of literature on South African masculinities (Morrell, 1998, 2005; Whitehead & Barrett, 2001; Walker, 2005; Sideris, 2004), there seems to be very little literature addressing Indian and Coloured masculinities in South Africa. The aim of this research was to explore how young men within a university institution construct masculinity. The purpose was not to generate findings which can be generalized from one context to another, instead the purpose was to generate data which can be transferred from one context to another and used to inform findings in another context similar to the one in the study. The lack of racial diversity in previous literature is echoed by the current study which lacked the Indian perspective and had only one Coloured participant. This lack of racial diversity was also a limitation of the study.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter explored the national and international debates and research on young men and the construction of masculinities which show that there exists a hierarchy of masculinities which change over time. This chapter further emphasised that masculinities are not biologically determined but socially constructed. The essential findings of the works reviewed in this chapter suggests that there are multiple forms of masculinity and that there are hierarchical and hegemonic forms of masculinities in specific circumstances that are actively being produced and reproduced. The following chapter on the theoretical framework on which this current research is based, further elaborates this notion of the social construction of masculinity.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST THEORY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the social constructionist theory and how it best fits understanding the phenomenon which is the construction of masculinities. Social construction posits that reality is a social construction based on one's own interpretation and the meanings that one makes about the world. It is an approach to psychology which focuses on meaning and power and aims to account for the ways in which phenomena are constructed.

According to Cromby and Nightingale (1999), the world we experience and the people we find ourselves to be are first and foremost the product of social processes such as language and discourse. The social reproduction and transformation of structures of meaning, conventions, morals and discursive practices constitute both our relationships and ourselves. Furthermore social constructionists acknowledge notions of historical and cultural change and accept that knowledge and activity are intimately related. As explained by Burr (1995), knowledge and social action go together. Humans actively seek to explore aspects of their world in particular ways for particular reasons. While this is done, knowledge is created and is then taken as “truth” about the world. However, other activities are carried out for other purposes and possibly generate alternative “truths” about the world. Therefore “knowledge is inextricably linked to, and emerges as a product of, activity and purpose” (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999, p6).

3.2 Power, gender and socialisation

Power can be seen as a personal attribute, the implementation of strategies or the use of resources and as a structural feature of societal relations. Power, as referred to by Gergen (1989), warrants voice and is always a significant factor in the processes of social construction whether it is acknowledged or not. Power is always present in the interactions and relations of people and is inherent in the constructions of gender and gender practices. Lorber (1994) describes gender as the routine ground of everyday activities. It is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction, out of social life and is the texture and order of that social life. Gender, like culture, is a human production that depends on everyone constantly “doing gender” (p. 1). Gender refers to the social, psychological and cultural attributes associated with men and women. Gender describes societal attitudes and behaviours expected of and associated with the two sexes. It refers to the degree to which an

individual sees himself or herself as masculine or feminine based on society's definitions of appropriate gender roles and is seen as being an achieved status. These are sets of rules for what is appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour in a given culture. Collections of gender norms are what make up a set of expectations about how someone labelled a man or someone labelled a woman should behave.

The way in which femininity and masculinity becomes an internalized part of the way we think about ourselves describes gender identity. Gender identity becomes an essential part of who we are (Butler, 1988).

Socialization, according to McHale, Crouter and Tucker, (1999), is defined as the ways in which people learn to become members of any given group. The process of socialization begins at birth and continues throughout a person's life. Throughout this time we constantly learn how to successfully belong to new groups or adjust to changes in the groups to which we already belong.

Gender role socialization has been described as the process through which individuals learn the gender norms of their society and come to develop an internal gender identity. Individuals learn the values, attitudes, motivations, and behaviour considered appropriate to each sex by their culture. It takes place from earliest childhood through adolescence and throughout all social interactions in which we participate (McHale et al., 1999).

“Through myriad activities, opportunities, encouragements, discouragements, overt behaviours, covert suggestions, and various forms of guidance, children experience the process of gender role socialization” (Witt, 1997, p.253). Behaviour which is deemed appropriate within a given context is reinforced through rewards while behaviour which is deemed inappropriate behaviour is punished. This appropriate behaviour is learned through parents, the media, peer groups and other sources of socialization. At an early age, children develop stereotypical conceptions of both genders and begin to use these conceptions to organize their knowledge and behaviour. Lorber (1994) asserts that as children grow up, other adults, older siblings, peers, religious institutions and schools exert an important influence on their socialization.

3.3 The social construction of masculinity

Constructionist research has used a range of social-scientific methods to explore the situationally performed and constructed gender identities of men. The first important

conclusion generated from these methods is the multiplicity of masculinities. Masculinity is constructed differently across cultures and periods of history. For instance, in some contexts soldiers are seen as heroes and seen as an essential marker of masculinity while some contexts devalue soldiers and violence (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994).

Mac an Ghaill (1994) posits that the gender structures of a society are definitive as either being masculine or feminine. Individually, a man is said to be masculine and collectively masculinities are defined and sustained in institutions, such as corporations, armies, governments or school. As stated by West and Zimmerman (1987), masculinities exist because of social behaviour and come to exist as people act becoming patterns of social practice.

3.4 Construction of hegemonic masculinity

Connell's social theory of gender emphasizes the relations of power between men and women and also between different groups of men. This theory asserts that gender is structured relationally and hierarchically and consists of multiple masculinities and femininities. Hegemonic masculinity is the most popular aspect of Connell's theory and is defined as the "configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy which is taken to guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 1995, p. 77). Lusher and Robins (2009) elaborate that hegemonic masculinity controls a hierarchy of masculinities set up in a way to maintain these gender relations therefore displaying hegemonic masculinity as dominant over women and other masculinities such as homosexual masculinity.

Connell (1995) states that hegemonic masculinity cannot be defined as a set of psychological traits or predetermined characteristics and exists only in relation to subordinate, complicit and marginalized masculinities. In elaboration on subordinated, complicit and marginalised masculinities, Connell (1995, p. 77) provides the following definitions;

'Hegemonic masculinity, involves dominance and subordination between groups. It is established in relation to various subordinated masculinities, such as homosexual masculinity and in relation to women. Homosexual masculinity, under the current hegemonic patriarchal masculinity, is at the bottom of the gender hierarchy due to its assimilation with femininity.'

‘Many men are not actually able to meet the normative standards displayed by the hegemonic masculinity. In reality few men are likely to attain the idealistic standards of hegemonic masculinity. However, most men support, or are complicit with, the patriarchal system from which all men benefit. Women are also bearers of the significance of masculinity, by for example refusing to do certain tasks that are considered too “macho” for them. In this way, both masculinity and femininity are gender projects, culturally and historically configured.’

‘Hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic not just in relation to other masculinities, but in relation to the gender order as a whole. It is an expression of the privilege men collectively have over women and other men in a patriarchal society.’

Whitehead (2002) argues that hegemony is constantly being contested and involves constantly contested leadership or the simultaneous presence of dominance and resistance. In this regard Connell (1987) suggests that at times stronger and at other times weaker versions of gendered power relations may be present and slightly different configurations may also be produced. It can therefore be concluded that there are degrees of legitimacy.

Lusher and Robins (2009) posit that the acceptance of a particular characterization of masculinity is dependent on the rejection of another because the hegemonic form of masculinity is defined by what it is not as much as what it is. Therefore the rejection of one form of masculinity gives legitimacy to another form.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the theoretical framework upon which this research is centred. Social constructionist theory accounts for the way in which reality and masculinity are constructed. Power is essential to the explanation of the construction of masculinity as it is always present in the interactions and relations of people. The following chapter, research methodology, accounts for the design, analysis and procedures undertaken in this research.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present an overview of the research methodology, rationale, design and procedures. The chapter also presents how data was collected and analysed. I will also discuss the ethics considered in the research process.

4.2 Research design

The study used a qualitative approach. According to Bernard (2000), qualitative research is aimed at gaining a deep understanding of a specific organization or event, rather than a surface description of a large sample of a population. It aims to provide an explicit representation of the structure, order, and broad patterns found among a group of participants. It generates data about human groups in social settings. The aim of this approach is to describe, explore and understand human behaviour rather than explaining it and attempts to understand how the participants derive meaning from their surroundings, and how their meaning influences their behaviour (Bernard, 2000).

Qualitative research, as stated by Bernhard, (2000) is characterised by a number of features which were well suited to this study: research is conducted in a natural setting (in this instance a focus group of male participants facilitated by male interviewers which simulates a more relaxed discussion environment), the perspective of the actor is emphasized, the aim is in-depth descriptions and understandings of actions and events, the inductive exploration of social action and focus on a specific context as opposed to generalizing the findings to a theoretical population (Bernard, 2000).

The study made use of data which had been collected as part of a large multi-component study of masculinity. This study formed part of a SANPAD masculinity project which explored the meaning of masculinity for young men in South Africa.

4.3 Procedure

This process began with the participants receiving a disposable camera. With this camera they had to take photographs under the caption “My life as a young man in South Africa today”. The participants were not limited to how many or what type of photographs they should take under this topic.

Once these photographs were taken they handed the cameras back to the project leaders who were then responsible for printing these photographs. Once printed the participants were requested to choose the top five photographs they felt best demonstrated what it is like to be a young man in South Africa today. They were then invited to be part of a focus group discussion which was conducted in English. Some participants chose five photographs; some chose more than that and some chose less than that number.

The aim of the focus group was to invite participants to discuss both their photographs and their notions of masculinity and its construction. Researchers wished to gain insight in to why the participants took the photographs they took as well as to explore how these photographs reveal their understanding of what life as a young man is like and also what masculinity means for them and how they achieve this. The focus group was spread over two sessions to cover all the material and photographs and was led by two male researchers. The total length of the focus group discussion was over 3 hours long. Both focus group days were facilitated by both the interviewers. In order to capture the discussion, both video recording and audio recording was used. In this way they were able to capture the audible narrative as well as the interaction of the participants within the group. The interviewers also took field notes. The focus group discussion began with an open-ended question pertaining to how the participants found the data collection process of having the camera with them to take photographs. There was particular interest in whether or not they had any difficulties in getting photographs that they felt were representative of masculinity and how they dealt with such dilemmas.

Once this question had been addressed each participant had a turn to share their photographs which they had chosen prior to this focus group discussion. These photographs were placed in a table in front of the participant who then got a chance to talk about each photograph to the whole group. In this talk the participant would explain to the group the contents of the photograph and then why they had taken it as well as how it illustrates what they feel it is to be a young man. These photographs not only showed representations of what it meant to be a young man living in South Africa today but they also depicted individual, subjective understandings of masculinity.

Once the participant was done with the explanation, the group and the interviewers were then given a chance to share their ideas and views and ask questions in relation to each participant's photographs. Once all the photographs of all participants were shared they were then asked to select one or two photographs which best captured what it means to be a young

man in South Africa. Audio recorded material generated from the discussion were transcribed by the researcher.

‘Photo elicitation is based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview’ (Harper, 2002, p.13). Photographs that are used in research extend along a continuum where at one extreme you find photographs which can be considered as being the most objective such as ‘visual inventories of objects, people and artefacts’. These include photos of work, schools or other institutional experiences. These images may serve to connect an individual to experiences and not necessarily reflect the participant’s actual lives. And at the other extreme of the continuum, photos illustrate the intimate dimensions of the social, family or other intimate social group or one’s own body (Harper, 2002).

4.4 Sample

For the purpose of the study, a non-probability purposive sample was used. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to choose a case because it illustrates some features or processes in which the researcher is interested (Silverman, 2005). The purpose is to recruit participants who have experienced the phenomena under study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001) where the groups, settings, processes and individuals of interest will be studied within the context in which they occur or exist (Silverman, 2005). In this instance the concept or the experience under study becomes the unit of analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The participants are chosen beforehand based on the needed purpose which they serve. Sample sizes which may or may not be fixed prior to data collection, are dependent on the time and resources available as well as on the objectives and purpose of the study (Bernard, 2000).

For this research the sample consisted of a purposive sample of 7 young male University students on the UKZN Pietermaritzburg campus. The race of the participants in the group included 4 Black males, 2 White males, and 1 Coloured male with ages ranging between 18 and 25 years of age. For the purpose of maintaining confidentiality, the participant’s names were not used. Instead each participant was identified with their initials; PC, SS, PT, MM, SK, LK, LB. these initials were used throughout the discussion as well as on the transcribed interview and on the recordings.

4.5 Data analysis

The data for analysis was obtained from two sources and consisted of audio recordings (interview transcript) and photographs. Multiple sources triangulate findings and can enhance the internal validity of a study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

A programme called Nvivo was used for both the photographs and the interview transcript. Nvivo is a software programme that supports qualitative research methods. It allows collection, organization and analysis of content from interviews focus group discussions surveys, audio and social media data.

Data was analysed using content and thematic analysis. Content analysis was used to analyse the photographs. Content analysis is a research tool focused on the content and internal features of a specific media. It is used to determine present certain concepts, themes or characters in an objective manner (Berelson, 1952).

The photographs were uploaded into Nvivo to allow for the analysis of each photograph and the formation of categories. The 5 emergent categories were; people, manmade objects (buildings and cars etc.), natural objects (trees etc.), animals and people and manmade objects. These categories will be elaborated on in the “Findings” chapter.

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the focus group discussion. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) define thematic analysis as being the most common form of analysis in qualitative research and emphasizes pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns or themes within data. Thematic analysis in this study was performed through the process of coding in six phases to create meaningful patterns. These phases include: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. The six phases upon which the analysis is based draws on Fereday and Muir-Cochrane’s (2006) work. These six phases are detailed below;

- Phase 1: Becoming Familiar with the Data

The initial phase in thematic analysis once the audio had been transcribed verbatim was for me to familiarize myself with the data. Prior to reading the interview transcripts, I created a list of potential codes. The data was read and re-read in order for me to familiarize myself with what the data entailed. This was done while paying attention to patterns that occurred and taking notes. After this process I had preliminary starting codes and detailed notes.

- Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

The second step in thematic analysis was to generate an initial list of items from the data set that had a reoccurring pattern. This systematic way of organizing and gaining meaningful parts of data as it relates to the research question is called coding. Data was collapsed into labels to create categories for more efficient analysis. At this point meaning could be deduced from the codes. After this phase I was left with comprehensive codes of how the data could potentially answer research questions.

- Phase 3: Searching For Themes

Codes were then combined into over-arching themes that accurately depict the data. At this point the meaning of themes was described. Anything missing from the analysis became clear at this point. Themes were searched for closely to see which ones worked and which ones did not work so as to proceed with the analysis of the potential codes. At this stage I had a list of potential themes which required further analysis.

- Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

In this stage, I looked at how the themes supported the data and the overarching theoretical perspective. This allowed for further expansion on and revision of themes as they developed. At this point, I had a set of potential themes. Some existing themes were collapsed into each other while others were condensed into smaller units. At this point the way in which the themes were patterned was beginning to tell a story about the data.

- Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Analysis at this stage included capturing interesting aspects of the themes and why they were of interest. Existing themes were defined and refined as they were to be presented in the final analysis. At this phase, I looked at how each specific theme affects the entire data. By the end of this phase, I was able to define what current themes consist of as well as explain each theme thus providing a comprehensive analysis of what the themes contribute to understanding the data.

- Phase 6: Producing the Report

After final themes were reviewed, I began the process of writing the final report. It was important to decide on the themes that would make the most meaningful contribution to answering research questions. In order to increase dependability through thick description of the results, dialogue connected with each theme was presented. The goal of this phase was to write the thematic analysis in such a way that it conveyed the story of the data in a manner that stays true to what the participants expressed in the focus group discussion.

Maintaining quality of the findings

In order to ensure the validity and merit of the analysis, it was essential to maintain trustworthiness.

Establishing trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1981) stated that while all research must have “truth value”, “applicability”, “consistency”, and “neutrality” in order to be considered worthwhile, the nature of knowledge within the rationalistic (or quantitative) paradigm is different from the knowledge in naturalistic (qualitative) paradigm. In order to judge the trustworthiness of qualitative research, Guba and Lincoln (1981) proposed four criteria; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. They felt that these four criteria best reflected the underlying assumptions involved in qualitative research. In order to maintain credibility, the audio recording was transcribed verbatim. Transferability was ensured through a thorough description of the context of the research. Furthermore, a dense description of the research methods was provided.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Research ethics meant following ethical guidelines in order to ensure maximum protection and respect for all participants involved in the study process. Because the data used in the current study was collected for a larger SANPAD study on South African masculinities some years ago, documents such as ethics approval, participant consents and information sheets are no longer available. However, ethical clearance was obtained from the ethics committee of the University of KwaZulu Natal.

In order to ensure maximum confidentiality, before the participant photographs were used in the research, faces and identifying objects and/or features captured in the photographs were

blurred out with the use of a software programme called Picasa 3 which can be downloaded from the internet at the following link; (www.picasa.google.com).Once downloaded this programme allows you to upload photographs so as to begin with the editing process. For the purposes of this study, blurring out desired aspects of the photographs was used.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided an overview of methodology, research design and procedures employed in this study. The chapter also provided an accurate account of each step in the research design as well as the components of ensuring the validity and merit of the research. The following chapter, chapter five, presents the findings of the content analysis of the photographs and the thematic analysis of the focus group discussion and my interpretation of the discussions held with the young men.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This findings chapter presents findings from the content and thematic analysis of the photographs taken by the participants and the discussion held by the young men. The focus of these findings is on how the participants across race, age, and context present how they construct their masculinity. This chapter also looks at how performance of gender and masculinity can be understood with Connell's work on hegemonic masculinities.

The 7 research participants took 149 photographs in total; LB took 24 photographs, LK took 12 photographs, MM took 20 photographs, PC took 26 photographs, PT took 11 photographs, SK took 24 photographs and SS took 31 photographs. The total number of photographs that formed the basis of the focus group discussion was 36. This total number came about because each participant was requested to choose 5 photographs which they felt were most representative of what their understanding of masculinity was. This number varied for the participants where LB, PT, MM and SK each chose 5 photographs, LK chose 3 photographs, PC chose 6 photographs and SS chose 7 photographs.

5.2 Content analysis of the photographs

After spending some time looking at and analysing the photographs, similar photographs were initially grouped together under specific headings such as cars, buildings, nature, friends, family and pets. Once this had been done, further analysis allowed for the 36 photographs to be placed into more general categories. These 5 categories were; people, manmade objects (buildings and cars etc.), natural objects (trees etc.), animals and people and manmade objects and were based on the focus of each photograph. This meant that the thematic analysis of the focus group discussion around the photographs lended itself to the content analysis of the photographs. These categories allowed all of the 36 photographs to be categorized accordingly. In these categories 13 photographs were placed into the 'People' category, 14 photographs were placed into the 'Manmade objects category', 0 photographs were placed into the 'Natural objects category', 1 photograph was placed into the 'Animals category' and 8 photographs were placed into the 'Manmade objects and people category'. Under each category a brief description of what was captured in each photograph was given, and is shown in Table 1.

Table 1:Description of photographs chosen by participants as representative of masculinity

Participant	Total photos	People	Constructed objects	Natural objects	Animals	People with constructed objects
LB	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Females taken from the back; Young man lying on the road 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cars; gym equipment 	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young men drinking alcohol
SS	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male friends sister 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy breakfast food Rugby boots and rugby ball gardening tools- lawnmower and rake Crowded House (club) 	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pet dog 	0
MM	5	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car guitar Kwaito music CDs Levi's clothing Basketball net 	0	0	0
LK	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Son Girlfriend 	0	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young man smoking
PT	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car; Neat bed with cycling helmet, picture of him and girlfriend, bible, cross, cell phone Pile of shoes Cosmetics for men 	0	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boys playing rugby on field
PC	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sister 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cars on street messy room matchbox collection Empty alcohol cans Books 	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young men smoking and drinking young man playing computer games

SK	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young, men on break from lectures • Young men mock-fighting 	0	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young men near car • young man carrying plank • young man smoking and reading news paper
Total number	36	13	14	0	1	8

From Table 1, I was able to deduce which photographs appeared to be the most common amongst the participants as well as those which were least common. These photographs are described in Table 2. In order to deduce which photographs appeared to be the most and least common, the number of times each photograph with the same focus appeared across all of the participants was counted and the photograph which appeared the most out of the 36 photographs chosen across all the participants was ranked as the most common and the least appearing photograph across all participants was ranked as being least common. Photographs which appeared the most were those of cars with 5 of the 7 participants having taken photographs of cars (1 participant took a photograph of his own car while the other participants took photographs of other cars); 3 out of the 7 participants took photographs of smoking and sport; 2 out of 7 participants took photographs of drinking, family members, girlfriends, technology and its use, objects related to education, young men having fun; 1 participant took photographs of empty alcohol bottles, empty matchboxes, shoes, clothes, females, gym equipment, fighting, female friends, male friends, children, healthy eating, objects related to religion, musical instruments, music, working men, pets and objects related to doing chores.

The following table, table 2, presents which photographs were the most common across all the participants in the study.

Table 2: Most common appearing photographs in descending order							
	LB	SK	MM	LK	PC	PT	SS
Cars	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Sport			✓			✓	✓
Smoking		✓		✓	✓		
Drinking	✓				✓		
Family					✓		✓
Girlfriends				✓		✓	
Technology					✓	✓	
Education		✓		✓			
Having fun	✓					✓	
Alcohol					✓		
Matchboxes					✓		
Shoes						✓	
Clothes			✓				
Females	✓						
Gym	✓						
Fighting		✓					
Female friends							✓
Male friends							✓
Child				✓			
Healthy eating							✓
Religion						✓	
Music			✓				
Men working		✓					
Pets							✓
Chores							✓

5.3 Thematic analysis of focus group discussion

5.3.1 Introduction

The following section provides a thematic analysis of the focus group discussion. Participants presented their chosen five or six photographs to the group and described what each photograph entailed as well as why that photograph was taken. Photographs which were taken by participants included cars, sports and the gym, smoking and drinking, music and musical instruments, branded clothing and shoes, messy and tidy rooms, young men playing computer games, religion, male friends, girlfriends and females, family, young fatherhood, male grooming products, young men having fun, young men taking initiative, young men fighting and young men being informed. These photographs are explored in an attempt to understand how they contribute to these young men's construction of masculinity.

5.3.2 Cars

Five out of seven participants took various photographs of cars. They provided different reasons as to why they felt the car represented masculinity, but one reason which seemed to come through across the participants, was that of independence. In terms of masculinity, a car was more than just a means of moving from point A to point B; the car became a visible symbol of independence for these young men. Independence, it seemed, was central to the conceptualization of masculinity.



MM took a photograph of a car because he felt the car was 'typically masculine' and was also something every guy loved. In this instance he felt that the car was a man's first love. The car was seen as an object which can, on its own, define masculinity. Cars are automatically and typically masculine as opposed to being typically female. MM made the generalization that every man shared the same love for cars.

okay umm this is a car (laughter), a BMW so well for me it's kind of like it's every guys love you know, first love so to speak. Ya it's typically masculine to me so ya I took that one. -MM (Black)

The car for PT represented independence for him. This was a photograph of his own car. As a man he felt that having a car is not essential but it is important as it allows you to be independent and not have to ask permission from parents meaning you can make your own rules. Owning a car allowed for that transition from being a boy who still has to ask permission from his parents to being a man who is independent and can do as he pleases without needing permission from his parents.



I took a photo of it because it's the independence of being able to drive around. I didn't take it because as a guy you need to have a car, I didn't think that at all, but having a car is the ability to do what you want, you know, you know a car is the ability to maybe go fast you know, umm, cruise around and not have to ask someone's permission and that I thought was part of being a man. As long as you are kinda under having to ask for lifts from your folks and asking for permission for stuff, you are still a boy, but masculinity is a lot to do with independence. I think so that's why I took a photo of my car. -PT (White)

LB doesn't own a car but felt that a car was an essential item to own as a young man as it afforded you the freedom of being able to go where you please when it suites you, but with this car also comes the ability to be responsible enough to be able to take care of your family by being able to give them a ride to school etc. At that moment he did not have a wife and

children but a car is something that would be very important in future. A car afforded him not only autonomy but also allowed him to be a prospective provider.



Cars really interest me as a young man. I think it's a must-have, umm, but particularly for me I think it's the ride to cruise. You can go to whatever place that you want to go and with your family to supply the kids with a ride to school. I mean whatever, it doesn't apply to me now, but as a man I think it's a must-have. -LB (Black)

The young men photographed near this particular (GOLF pictured below) car were looking at this car as something they wanted to own in the future. This car fell within the expensive range of cars, has high speed and is aesthetically pleasing. Seeing this car was motivation to own this car in future and the way in which they will achieve this aspiration is by studying which will enable them to work and then finally buy this car. The car became the reason for these young men to study. Not owning a car was seen as being limiting in terms of fulfilling the demands of masculinity. The model of the car was very important in that it increased one's ranking amongst peers further asserting successful performance of masculinity.

These are my 2 friends they were like in a break from lectures, and now they are near cars. You check especially this one, this was the most targeted one ya, so it was like a motivation to them that's why they are studying. They are like studying to new car nice cars so that if you have a nice car you are independent you are mobile you can move from point A to B and from point B back to point A. -SK (Black)



In addition to the independence, cars provided access to women as well as dependence of other men. In this way, once one gets a car your movements are not dependent on others. A man becomes that much more important and become 'the man' within your peer circle as the entertainment and movement of your group of friends depended on the one who owned a car. In this regard one moves from being just a regular man to being a better man. Your status as a man was elevated and affirmed amongst your peers. In the way that participant SK put it, it seems as though because one owns a car, they have a say in terms of what your activities your group can partake in because one's status in the group had increased..

For us young men most of us, like if you have a car as a young man you are independent and it's like an access to many many things, like women. Like, like even your peers, sometimes if they wanna party like you are just chilling at home and next they call 'eyi can you take us somewhere and you drive us to a party there' and you are not planning anything, so you are a man enough coz now they can't go there without you. So you are independent and it shows that you are a man coz they can't go there without you coz they need you for transport. - SK (Black)

Owning a car changed one's lifestyle in many ways but the most important way is that a young man became independent to move around as they please. Having a car also had the ability to facilitate gaining knowledge of other townships allowing him a change of scenery and experience other people, how they live and how they talk even. The car afforded him to take a tour of South Africa, learning along the way. Independence and learning from different contexts became difficult when one's movement was reliant on public transport.

If you have a car it changes your lifestyle, but for me if I can get a car now it will change my lifestyle coz now I have a car I can move from here to Durban. So like during the week maybe I can go to Durban back here and anywhere I'll move around coz I have a car of which I'm not doing that now coz I don't have a car. So it can change your lifestyle like moving places you know. -SK (Black)

Yeah yaya coz (Why is that?), coz maybe there are like some places that I don't know like maybe like around Maritzburg coz I'm not from here iMbali there's Mbali, I 13, so that can change my experience coz I can take my friend there maybe my friend can tell me I need to go home 'can you drop me at home', then I'll take him there like when I'm there I'll meet up some other people and like from a different environment another environment like the atmosphere there is different like the atmosphere that I'm used to. So it would change my experiences now I see other people and maybe they talk other languages, like especially the slangs I start learning that slang for that section, move to another section then learn another slang for that section. So my experience is changing because now I'm learning different things meeting different people from different places. - SK (Black)

Participant PC took a more general photograph relating to the car. He did not focus on a particular car, but rather focused on cars in traffic as a way of illustrating to us his mode of transport or his means of moving from point A to point B. He also went on to talk about why he would want to own a car and the main reason he had mentioned was that it would be a means of getting the interest or the attention of an attractive young lady or a 'hot chick'. The car for PC served two functions; it afforded him an attractive young woman as well as served a more practical function. Although he mentioned that he would use the car to attract women, he did say that in reality that was not what he would use the car for, instead he would use it practically as a means of moving from point A to point B. Elaborating more on the practicality of the car, having a car would mean that he could go anywhere independently without having to depend or rely on anybody else to transport him from place to place. With that said however, not having a car did not prohibit him from moving around or even travelling to places like Durban; this he can do with the use of public transport. A car seems like something 'nice' to have as it affords you that opportunity to be independent enough to move around when you please and how you please (driving around with the music loud) as well as becomes a status symbol.

When I took this picture I was walking. It kind of shows my mode of transport compared to someone else. The why I wanted the car was I'm gonna get a hot chick with the car, but obviously that's not exactly what I'm going to go and buy a car, but I know it's gonna help in future. Also I can go wherever I want. I don't have to depend on no one. I don't have a car now but if I wanna go to Durbs I can still go to Durbs, it doesn't mean I have to have a car but I mean it is nice to kind of drive around you know, your music's pumping and they are like 'ah he's got a car' so it's like a status thing, I guess as well. -PC (Coloured)



5.3.3 Sport and gym

This category involved photographs of sport and gym equipment. These ranged from rugby balls and soccer balls to basketball nets. Partaking in sport was described as an outlet for pent up aggression, so it allowed young men to be aggressive in a controlled and acceptable way. One participant even went as far as describing sport as a 'war' that is taken on in honour of one's school. Gym equipment not only facilitated taking part in sport but it also provided a means of attracting women. Going to the gym assisted in taking care of one's body and image, which in turn made young men more appealing to women.

The thing about the gym the gym is where you go when you want to get strong I mean if you look at it most women go there to get in shape not to get strong like the gym it's all about getting strong you think gym man- PC (Coloured)

I think what he is meaning is like you know how guys go and get bigger muscles and look big whereas women go there to look slim and [lose weight ya] not fat - SS (White)

The gym it seemed, serves different purposes for men and women. Men went to the gym to enhance sporting performance as well as to enhance their attractiveness to the opposite sex by getting bigger muscles. Women on the other hand went to the gym to be slim implying that women's attractiveness to men is dependent on the size of their body where smaller is better. This also implied that women who go to the gym to increase their muscle size would not be seen as attractive as they would now have a masculine characteristic.



MM took a photograph illustrating a basketball net, yet when he spoke about it, this photograph was merely symbolic for his interest in sport in terms of masculinity. Even though he can play basketball, what he felt defines being a man is rugby mostly due to its 'hard' and 'contact' nature. Basketball on the other hand it seems lack this masculine 'contact' and 'hardness' and therefore fails to be a sport which would adequately define him as being a man.

Umm this is sport, not really basketball. I can play basketball but not basketball.

Rugby is a real definition to me of being a man, you know, it's hard, it's contact, it's everything and I'm like a rugby nut! -MM (Black)

Sport seemed to be an important marker of being a man, but it was important which sport was used to define this. In this case for MM rugby better suited that role due to its tough physical nature. Even though he played basketball, it was not as masculine as rugby and does not do as good a job of defining masculinity. MM went on further to explain why rugby was such an important definer of being a man for him. Rugby, in South Africa, is a sport which has been

traditionally associated with white men, yet in this study MM who is a young black man identifies more with the sport which is traditionally a white man's sport as opposed to identifying with soccer which has traditionally been a black man's sport. This was owed to the fact that MM attended an Afrikaans medium school where he took on a white identity and the only sport being offered was rugby. He had no choice but to play rugby which resulted in him excelling in the sport and eventually loving it.

Well that's because I went to an Afrikaans school you check so the only thing I grew up doing was rugby so and then I got my colours in it and whatever but so this is how I came about it wasn't really like a choice it was it was played at school and it's what I had to do so then loved it so ya -MM (Black)

The environment he found himself in and the resources he was exposed to determine how he positioned himself to rugby which also assisted in his formulation of masculine identity.



Masculinity was not just about playing sports. PT took it one step further by saying that masculinity was also about being good at a sport or most importantly being successful at a sport. In order to be successful in a particular sport, one needed to train therefore sport becomes a marker of success.

My helmet, cycling helmet umm because training and trying to be successful is on the sport side of masculinity -PT (White)



Rugby not only provided a healthy platform in terms of providing exercise for SS, but it also provided a platform which was more social as he got to meet new people.

I enjoy rugby very much. I played rugby for Maritzburg varsity it's like exercise its just the thrill of the game and meeting new people I enjoy rugby. - SS (White)

Physical appearance as a young man was very important and in order to achieve that, one must visit the gym or make use of gym equipment. With the reference to being able to carry heavy objects showed that the main reason why young men worry about their appearance to this degree was largely linked to building muscles and getting big and strong enough to be able to carry heavy objects. This particular activity could be taking place when moving from one house to another which could be the future house he might own once he is married and has a family, moving items for friends and family and also moving of own items currently in the instance of moving to and from various university accommodation.

And here I think as a man u have to go to gym in order to work out I mean to carry stuff to carry fridges when you move out or whatever to a new house ya and that's it- LB (Black)

5.3.4 Smoking and drinking

Smoking and drinking were described as being recreational activities that young men take part in. This often meant that these activities were done in social settings. But the discussion especially went around the issue of young men being able to take control of their smoking and drinking. This suggested that impulses and their control is an important part of masculinity. Risk taking was mentioned in connection with nicotine and alcohol addiction.

They smoke and drink with the awareness of being addicted to these substances. These photographs involved smoking and drinking alone or in groups.



This photograph was of the participant smoking during a study break with the focus of the photograph being on the smoking. The participant did say that while being addicted to nicotine it also helped him to relax hence having taken a smoke during his study break. He also spoke about how his addiction to nicotine can also be owed to peer pressure. Without being aware of the possible consequences of smoking, he started smoking through conforming to the pressures of his peers. Masculinity was not only a biological phenomenon, but also has a social aspect where one man's masculinity was affirmed by other men to be successful. Being part of a group was an important element to masculinity so if the group you belong to smokes and drinks, young men often felt obliged to comply to take part as well in order to remain affirmed amongst their peers. This was what LK had to say about how he started smoking;

*I'm addicted to nicotine because and it helps me to relax and actually the reason that made me to smoke is because I was also influenced by friends. I saw them smoking and then I started smoking not knowing this thing would be addictive to me. -LK
(Black)*



Building on the aforementioned idea that young men need to be able to take a time, relax and have fun, LB added the importance of young men socializing with other young men. This socializing particularly included drinking which was done in the right location with the right people.

Here umm I was trying to convey a message that sometimes you just have to chill, chill with your homies umm socialize maybe have a drink just chill at the right place where it is. -LB (Black)

With regard to smoking and drinking, PC feels, in order to be regarded as a real man amongst your peers, it was not just about the drinking or just about the smoking, but it is more about how much do you drink and how much do you smoke. While he was in high school drinking was the activity that was most popular amongst the school boys and even then it was important how many beers you could drink and handle. If a young man could only handle a few drinks they were ridiculed by their relevant peers. For PC, smoking, especially the smoking of marijuana, had a risky element to it especially when he started smoking it in high school. This risky element was visible in instances where there would be a drug test at school and he knew that he had a smoke the day before. When he shared this with his peers they would be impressed that he would smoke marijuana at the risk of being caught out by the drug test. Being able to take risks as well as facing negative consequences meant that he was fulfilling another requirement of being affirmed as a man. PC mentions that smoking marijuana seemed to be more of a risk in high school with more consequences to face and therefore more popular amongst his peers, but as he entered university, smoking marijuana remained as popular as it was in high school but with no real consequences. It was no longer

about the risk of being caught but rather about how whether or not one can consume large amounts of marijuana or alcohol and still be able to 'handle it'. Being able to smoke a lot and drink a lot without passing out means that you will not be ridiculed by your peers. With masculinity comes taking risks and strength and smoking and alcohol consumption become a way in which young men can test their strength amongst their peers.



We had a little party there's guys drinking and they are smoking some weed there. I don't like at school like drinking was like the main thing if you can drink it's also about how many beers you can drink and stuff, coz if you can drink a few beers people they look at you funny and stuff when I started drinking I started smoking. When I started smoking first it's like wow you know coz also like you know when you walk around school you are like shit there's a drug test today and it's like ahh I smoked yesterday all the guys are going to be like wow stuff like that it something we used to go through also now at varsity how many guys smoke weed there's a lot of guys that smoke weed and I don't know. I started drinking like good guys and okay when I first started smoking I started smoking by myself but I wasn't really like forced into it. I chose to get into it, but like a lot of guys they were forced into it you know peer pressure and stuff and the drinking drinking was at school it was the thing to drink I guess I kinda went into it like smoking weed and like those okay now I find that guys you have to be able to if you drink you have to be able to handle like when you smoke a joint coz if you smoke a joint and pass out people are going to look at you like a fool I mean this guy is a light weight he can't handle it stuff like that whereas if you smoke like a lot people they are like wow you know it's a good thing stuff like that coz even like my first year people were like he smokes weed you know and stuff like that now

it's more like it's like a have a problem now it's like it's changed now it's no longer about he smokes weed good for him he's a weed smoker it's kinda like putting me in a class down at the bottom so yeah it's kinda at least I can say I'm proud I smoke I guess I wouldn't say I'm addicted coz like if I really wanted to stop I would stop. Also I mean im still young the chances of me growing out of it are high coz it just happens maybe eventually you are just like no I don't need to do this anymore type thing even the drinking I mean I drink a lot eventually you get to a point where this is too much drinking I'm gonna have to do this all the time so I'm still looking to the future for when I'm gonna stop. -PC (Coloured)

However as much as he has mentioned that the high school trend is still relatively popular especially with regard to marijuana smoking, it also began to take on a different quality in university where if you are a known heavy marijuana smoker, people's perceptions of you change. As a first year, having other students know that he is a marijuana smoker was a good thing and other students would say so but as the years go on, being a smoker stops being a good thing and becomes a problem where other people see him as having a smoking problem. In this way he finds himself being stereotyped negatively by other people. But despite being stereotyped that way, he still felt proud of the fact that he smokes and states that he was not addicted to marijuana and that if he wanted to stop smoking he could easily do so. But given that he was still young, he still had the time to grow out of this habit which also included that of drinking. With both drinking and smoking there comes a time where you no longer feel that you need to be doing it. At the moment drinking and smoking are activities which he took pride in and giving up both or either was something he was only looking towards working on in the future. Being a man means having a great deal of self-control. According to PC, smoking and drinking were merely a choice not an addiction meaning it was important to always be in control. Being able to differentiate between the two was important for one's conceptualization of a successful masculinity. It seemed as though everything had a time and place, and as one gets older, certain activities that one engaged in while young stopped having a place in one's life and get replaced by other age appropriate activities.

5.3.5 Musical instruments and music

This category seemed to be a contentious one for the participants. When taking this photograph, participants were faced with the question of whether musical instruments and music could be described as being a strictly masculine activity. This was brought on by the fact that women also play musical instruments and listen to music making this particular photograph difficult to place in an exclusively male category. It was however then decided that this particular category rather than describing an activity that all men take part in, it is instead an activity which an individual can enjoy. This particular activity was not seen as a collective activity.

Participant MM took a photograph of a guitar mainly to emphasize what he felt was masculine without having to consider whether or not the opposite sex can partake in that activity as well. The guitar in this instance speaks to the individual person as opposed to the collective where it becomes a symbol for what an individual would consider masculine without having to consider whether other young men agree or disagree. This becomes one activity that does not require that affirmation from other young men. The guitar allows him to set himself apart from other men. The guitar in this regard was used to show the subjective activities associated with being a man and allows him to position himself in opposition.



I can't play that much but I can play ya for me it's masculine, but I know girls do play guitar as well. Instead of looking into whether girls do this or not do that just like the other guy said just take what you think and how you live do not go out of your way in order to get those pictures which are masculine you know so this is me -MM (Black)

MM then went on to talk about the music CDs that he photographed, and explained why he specifically chose the Kwaito genre. While explaining why he felt Kwaito is a distinctive marker of black masculinity, he also explains why he himself cannot identify with this particular marker even though he is a young black man, effectively positioning himself as different.

This is a typically black guys' first whatever you know if you are a black guy this is the music that is associated with you, as a young you are limited to this, you cannot listen to trance, you cannot listen to anything you know, so for me it's kinda like ya it does define a typically black man. It defines a typically black man hey but it doesn't define me. I've got other tastes rather than Kwaito and that doesn't make me less of a man so ya it's masculine but liking other kinds of music doesn't make you any less masculine. From what everyone knows and what everyone sees in South Africa this is what, this was kind of a blanket for all young black South Africans, not all but for most, it's kinda like that. –MM (Black)



Kwaito music is a genre of music which is generally listened to by black people and specifically young black males. MM emphasizes that Kwaito is a genre which society stereotypically associates with black men. Because of this association it is made difficult to associate black men with other genres of music such as Trance music (which is a genre of electronic dance music most commonly associated with white men). Kwaito music, he felt, defines a 'typically black man'. However, he did not personally identify with Kwaito. Despite the fact that he preferred other genres of music other than Kwaito, he did not feel as if he is any less of a man, nor can he be defined in a way less than that of a black man who would be considered to be a real man amongst his peers. Kwaito represents the 'typical black man' as seen by others and society in general, but it does not represent him, how he defines himself or his masculinity. This is because MM distances himself from the 'typically black

male'. So with regards to the Kwaito music genre he was talking about other young black men and not himself specifically, putting himself in an atypical position.

Kwaito becomes the norm for black men and can be seen as a symbol of hegemonic masculinity. In this regard, MM positions himself against this hegemonic norm and establishes an alternative masculinity for himself. Having a different preference of music to his black counterparts sets him apart from the typical young black man.

Having gone to an Afrikaans high school, MM was not exposed to the Kwaito experience and more exposed to Sokkie Sokkie music, but he also felt that he was still black a black man. Because of the environment he found himself in, he felt that he had no choice but to listen to the Sokkie genre of music. Sokkie music was common in this environment.

Well I'd say well growing up it probably deprived me more of Kwaito rather I had to listen to Sokkie Sokkie all the time. -MM (Black)

The contrast of being expected to listen to Sokkie Sokkie music while in a predominantly Afrikaans environment and being expected to listen to Kwaito music while being in a predominantly black environment, created what MM called a 'dilemma' in terms of how he adapted within each environment. What the community expects of a black man in both communities differs to what MM identifies with when he is in each environment. It still does create confusion. Coping in these two racialised environments meant that MM had to juggle between his white identity and his black identity and this is often contentious. Although he feels he prefers Trance music, he is aware that he is not a white person and while he doesn't feel that Kwaito defines him, he is a black man. The two genres of music capture the different versions of masculinity typical of black and white men. The racial identity linked with each genre shows the dilemma which MM encounters in positioning himself as a man.

You will find that because you do not do this in the black community you don't have your 50 Cent or your Zola umm top volume when you are washing your car or your father's car or something you find that you are listening to trance or something and you know the black people per say and you go to the Afrikaans community whereas you do the same thing and you find after all I'm not white you know it's that kind of dilemma so ya. -MM (Black)

5.3.6 Branded clothing and shoes



The above photographs and descriptions suggest that status was an important aspect to achieve in the attainment and performance of masculinity identity. One way of getting that status was through the clothes you wear and can afford to buy. Money then became the vehicle to reaching that goal of being able to wear the clothes necessary to get that required level of status. In regards to clothing it doesn't matter which race a man was nor does it matter what your background is, the clothes you wear as a man are important. But for a typically black person, the right kind of clothing and being able to afford that clothing is particularly important as a marker of successful masculinity. Of course brand name clothing is very important hence MM took a photograph of Soviet clothing.

You spoke about clothing ey? So same here clothing I think does sort of give you status umm in all walks of life whether you are black, white whatever umm and for a typically black person it does, it matters. You are much more masculine if you can afford that if you can. Coming back to the money issue, but not the money issue specifically, but it does if you can wear anything you wanna wear umm your Prada whatever, well you do get your status and to be masculine goes with having status and with that you kind of achieve status. -MM (Black)

Being masculine meant that one has status associated with material wealth, in which case financial security can provide one with that sought after status.

PT took a photograph of a pile of various shoes which he describes as serving a symbolic function. The photograph displays various shoes which all symbolize different aspects and activities of manhood.



The formal shoes represented the material success. Having a job is an important milestone in the path of masculinity. The job enabled the young man to afford the material possessions which become markers of successful masculinity.

This is the various different footwear that I own umm I've got a smart pair of black shoes over here. For the shoes that you wear for an occasion often say a lot about what you gonna do so I took photos of the different shoes I have in my cupboard because they explain the things that I do as a young man; you work and you sometimes get smart to impress people or to be formal and stuff so I took the smart shoes. – PT (White)

The soccer boots and the running shoes indicate the importance of sport in being a young man as well as how important these shoes are to making sure that he is successful in this chosen sport. It was not just about owning the right footwear and playing the sport, rather it was about using those shoes to ensure that one is successful at the chosen sport.

I've got my soccer boots there for when I'm playing sport and I'm trying to be good at it so I have the right shoes to be kind of successful. I have some shoes for running and sport and some other ones for hiking and stuff, hiking togs

there as well those are just the footwear that you wear shows where you are going umm and guys need to be going somewhere guys - PT (White)

The name brand Oakley casual sandals highlights not only the importance of owning name brand items but also how men conform to the trends of owning such items. Owning such items means one has attained a particular status among the group and is acceptable to other men and through that you can also gain a degree of respect from other men.

I'm wearing those shoes at the moment those are like casual day to day sandals umm they are Oakley that's the name brand and I've kind of given into the whole name brand thing I'm tryna be cool I guess. - PT (White)

Being a young man meant that one has to have goals and direction. Young men need to be headed somewhere and need to be doing something with their lives. A man who is headed somewhere and leading people gains respect from other men. Being a man involved always getting better and in order to get somewhere and get better at something, you need the right shoes or the right equipment to do so. One needs to be the kind of man other men can look up to and follow.

You said if the guy that, if a man that you know is just sitting in the township umm not tryna go anywhere not tryna do anything then he doesn't get much respect and I agree with that, I think I always try to be getting fitter or tryna get educated or tryna work their way up a certain company ladder, guys need to be doing something, leading people somewhere is important for guys umm so the footwear that you are wearing for the occasion shows where you are going and that's the meaning behind that a bit deep I guess. -PT (White)

Each situation needs certain commodities and as a young man one needed to be able to know which of those to choose to attain masculine success for example, Oakley footwear when relaxing and hanging out with other men on a casual day to day basis. As PT mentioned in the quote *I'm trying to be cool I guess*, he was aware of the successful status factor that he has managed to attain in owning this particular pair of shoes.

All of these shoes photographed by this participant were a visible sign of success. When other young men see these shoes in the appropriate circumstances, they can see for themselves that the person wearing them has managed to achieve and maintain a successful masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity was mainly about success, respect and status and these shoes

represent that for PT and in order to achieve the above, the correct shoes were required. The shoes also reinforced the notion that there is no one way of being masculine, hence the reference to masculinities.

5.3.7 Neat rooms vs. messy rooms

Two participants took photographs of their rooms. One room was messy and the other room was neat. Both of these versions had important implications for how masculinity is viewed; they both describe important qualities required to attain successful masculinity. Neatness represented discipline while messiness represented the nature of young masculinity. PC went on to say that he was aware of the messiness of his room and it does not bother him in any way. In this space he was able to make his own rules about the state of his room regardless of what other people had to say about it. This aspect of decision making was seen as an important factor in attaining successful masculinity.



The neatness of his bed and his room symbolized discipline. Young men needed to be disciplined because real masculinity required a man who knows what he wants and if one is disciplined, one can get what they want. In other words self-control was seen as a key concept to the attainment of a successful masculinity. According to the participants, discipline was seen as a vehicle which can assist with the attainment of real masculinity. Being masculine also requires the ability to engage in activities which are perhaps difficult to do, but if one had the discipline and the order in his life doing the difficult doesn't become so difficult. Being a man, as PT explained, was a constant struggle. It was a struggle which required one to win in order to be successful.

This is my bed obviously made coz I think discipline is important young men need to not just be wild and kind of like wishy washy and just going with the flow because that's so easy real masculinity is kind of deciding what you want and being disciplined about getting it so ya like I just find that things go better if my room is neat when my varsity notes are ordered when I'm doing stuff that maybe isn't easy to do and I think it's part of being masculine. -PT (White)

PC's room was something he felt he owned and therefore made rules regarding it. If one finds that they do not want to be in his room largely because it was untidy, then they should not be in his room. He felt that having to keep his room tidy was something that he has had arguments about with his parents but that still did not change his thoughts on having to keep his room tidy which eventually lead to his parents giving up on getting him to neaten up his room. According to the participants, keeping a room neat and tidy was not something PC feels boys do. When it came to cleaning his room, he had other more important activities he had to do which took place on the university campus. Masculinity in this regard seemed to be something that is often challenged by different people and requires a young man to affirm it in any way possible. In this room he also had displays of empty matchboxes and alcohol bottles. He focussed on the matchboxes as he felt he was a heavy smoker. The way in which he had displayed these matchboxes could be implying the pride he takes in being a heavy smoker as the matchboxes provided a visual image. However, what was interesting was the way in which these boxes have been displayed in his room. The match boxes are stacked in a neat column which resembles the neatness of the room PT had photographed. Even though his whole room did not represent neatness, it did contain some elements of neatness emphasizing the aforementioned need for discipline in attaining a successful masculinity.



This is my room mmm you can see my match box collection beers there are my text books on the floor, my school bag I don't know I guess my room's really untidy but how many guys have rooms untidy. I know okay your room's neat (laughter) that's just how I've been all my life my room's always untidy when I was at school my parents used to give me a hard time but they got over it eventually as I guy I shouldn't have to be thinking about cleaning my room when I've got things to do on campus and stuff I mean my room is the last thing and also it's my room so no matter how it looks I don't care because if someone doesn't like how my room looks you know you can go. I'm not saying you have to be in my room so I guess and I guess ya I'm a heavy smoker. -PC (Coloured)

This photograph of the kitchen introduced the idea of messiness as a possible marker of masculinity. Just as neatness was seen as being symbolic of the self-control which was a marker of successful masculinity, messiness was associated with the idea that domestic work is for women and not men. Keeping the kitchen clean would be the job of women and not that of men. PC defined masculinity in opposition to women where he saw neatness as a quality that was associated with women rather than men. To him it didn't seem to matter who did the cleaning or when, but it will be done eventually as long as he was not the one who has to be doing the cleaning. He lived in an establishment where the tenants are all young men and this set up works better for him as opposed to the set-up which included young women.



Okay that's our kitchen. I stay in a dig, it's just guys okay this was probably the neatest part of the kitchen coz like last year we had three chicks staying with us and they joined us in the second semester two of them that had arrived they hadn't been

six hours and already tryna tell us to clean the kitchen and stuff. We basically told them to go somewhere but coz they left at the end of the year it's just guys now. I guess women they have to see a clean kitchen but guys it's like who cares someone's gonna clean it up eventually you know whether that person it's gonna be good for him I'm not gonna do it that type of thing. -PC (Coloured)

5.3.8 Technology and computer games

The photograph on technology was described in such a way that there is a link with the above section on neat and messy rooms as it brings out the idea of discipline which has been established as being an important marker of successful masculinity.

The advancement of technology has allowed for gadgets such as watches and time management is an important aspect in being a successful man. With time management comes self-discipline which is also important to masculinity. For PT this was not something that was easy nor is it something he is good at, but being good at it will surely help to get that much closer to success. A young man needs to interact with life, be forceful with it in order to be successful and you cannot do that without discipline and good time management. Without these two one is not a very successful man.

I've got my watch there for the sake of time management but that goes with the discipline stuff. I just find that hard, it's something I wanna get better at and guys who are late for stuff and chaotic umm I think aren't taking life by the scruff of the neck and being successful with it. -PT (White)

Playing computer games was an activity that PC sees as being a dominantly masculine one which he has not witnessed many (if any) women engaging in. Women tended to be more interested in more feminine activities such as texting or fashion. Computer games create a fantasy or virtual world where men can fully become the type of man they desire. Within these games one partakes in any activities without having to worry about the repercussions i.e., having to go to jail for killing someone. Games provided a means of escape from the everyday life and all that comes with it. Certain masculinities such as hegemonic masculinities were unattainable and not every young man can be that ideal man, but with the virtual reality computer games, a young man can have just that; the sought after ideal hegemonic masculinity. Whatever you lack in the real world, one could make up for it in the virtual world. For example someone who was not good at sports which was important in the conceptualization of masculinity can become a world class sports player in the virtual world;

your world your rules. The virtual world allows one to be the man that others idealize without being faced with the daily challenges. This idea of having to get away from reality and all the things that come with it touches on the idea that being a man and identifying yourself as a real man is not easy to do and sometimes you just want to get away from it all and realize it in a virtual world and technological advances such as computer games afford you this opportunity.

The idea of defining masculinity in opposition to women was emphasized again by how women are not traditionally expected to play computer games. Computer games were then seen as a masculine activity.



This guy's playing around he's playing a computer game I don't know as guys you find guys enjoy playing computer games I mean you hardly ever see girls you know playing computer games I don't know I just don't see it otherwise it's always when you find someone playing a computer game it's a guy you never see a woman playing computer games she's either smsing or these fashion things all that stuff and ya computer games is kind of a guy goes into fantasy it's especially like those shooting games it's kinda like you in the shooting game and shooting people you know it's like you are going into a fantasy because you are getting out of reality, you know, coming into something you know killing people you can kill people without going to jail type thing, you know, it's like you can put it's like you can some of these also have story lines put yourself into that storyline and stuff it's like something to get away from other things you know -PC (Coloured)

Isn't there are like soccer games rugby games like for instance a person is not good at playing soccer or rugby they just pick up a computer he does well on the playing field so it's ya it's getting away from reality. -PC (Coloured)

Computer games were seen as a means of escape for the young men as they provided an alternative world where they could form and established any desired masculinity without needing that external affirmation from other men. Violent video games were often the common choice for young men. One participant mentioned that when he plays computer games that contain violence, one aspect he enjoys is that he will not have to deal with the consequences of having killed someone in virtual reality. In computer games, one is expected to kill in order to win, so some level of violence is acceptable within this virtual world. These young men also feel that video games were not aimed at women but do provide a virtual reality as a means of attaining hegemonic standards. It is often difficult to be successful in attaining a desired masculinity in the real world, but virtual reality makes this process easier and without challenge. The real world is not without challenges and neither is defining masculinity and regardless of what virtual world one chooses, one is able to master that world without challenges and without the fear of failing. If one does fail, you can always restart the game and reality does not offer you that opportunity.

Okay this guy's playing around he's playing a computer game I don't know as guys you find guys enjoy playing computer games I mean you hardly ever see girls you know playing computer games I don't know I just don't see it, otherwise it's always when you find someone playing a computer game it's a guy you never see a woman playing computer games, she's either smsing or these fashion things all that stuff. Computer games is kind of a guy goes into fantasy it's especially like those shooting games it's kinda like you in the shooting game and shooting people you know it's like you are going into a fantasy because you are getting out of reality you know coming into something you know. You can kill people without going to jail type thing you know it's like you can put it's like you can some of these also have story lines put yourself into that storyline and stuff it's like something to get away from other things you know so so yeah...Isn't there are like soccer games rugby games like for instance a person is not good at playing soccer or rugby they just pick up a computer he does well on the playing field so it's ya it's getting away from reality"-PC (Coloured)

5.3.9 Religion

One participant took a photograph of commodities related to his Christian faith. Learning about masculinity and how to be a man for this participant takes place on two planes; from other young men and from reading the bible.



This particular photograph that featured a cross and a bible was taken by one participant PT. Through these focus groups it became apparent that masculinity is partly attained by conforming to the hegemonic standards endorsed by other men. PT introduced a very different version of constructing masculinity. His understanding of masculinity was guided by what the bible and the word of God has to say to him, and was based on “*what the plan for guys to be actually is*”. This seemed to refer to God’s plan for men, as revealed in the bible. Unhegemonic as it might be, religion for PT played an important role in his own conceptualization of masculinity. From reading the bible he was able to learn more about what is expected from him in line with his Christian faith. Being able to stand up for what he believed in allows him to acknowledge that even though Christianity will not afford him status in general among, it did reveal the version of masculinity apparently expected by God. As he has mentioned earlier, PT said that being a man comes with being ‘cool’ but being Christian as he explains, is not ‘cool’. But because this is something he strongly believes in, he chooses to risk being seen in an unfavourable light thus demonstrating how he is effectively able to establish an alternate masculinity, different from hegemonic forms of masculinity.

I’ve got a bible and a cross because that’s central for me not just life but I know what I know about masculinity much from learning from other men but also from reading the word of God and figuring out what the plan for guys to be actually is. Being able

to stand up for that as well is a hugely masculine thing to do rather than just to say oh well it's uncool to be Christian or it's uncool to try and live differently so that's why that's there. -PT (White)

5.3.10 Friends

No clear distinction in the gender of the friends was made, but friends were seen as playing an integral role in the lives of young men. Friends became the next important factor after family, in the formation of manhood. Friends almost become a second family. Hegemonic masculinity was affirmed by other men and this takes place within society. Other men therefore form a social family.



My friends like these are like some of my best friends umm these are the ones that all drink umm ya I didn't take photos of the ones that don't drink. This is just before a lecture and they are like for guys I think friends are like your second most important thing apart from your family umm ya for young men. -SS (White)

5.3.11 Girlfriends and females

Females were photographed either as girlfriends or just as friends. Participants spoke about how having a girlfriend is not the only important factor in masculinity, but what the girlfriend looks like is just as, if not more, important.

Having a girlfriend, according to PT, was something that all men want. Those who have girlfriends have them because they want to have them, and those who do not have them want them. PT makes a clear distinction about sexuality when he talks about how being a guy entails attraction to the opposite sex as opposed to the same sex. So being masculine is

defined in opposition to homosexuality. Not only is a young man attracted to the opposite sex, but wants to protect them, look after them and make them feel good about themselves, therefore men are seen as having a superior role in relation to women within any relationship.

Even if we don't have one, we all kinda want one in the end. Part of being a guy is being attracted to girls and part of being a guy is wanting to protect girls and look after them and make them look beautiful and all that kind of stuff. -PT (White)

Having a girlfriend or being in a heterosexual relationship seemed as though it was an important way of showing other men that you are man enough in their eyes. Not having a girlfriend or not being in a heterosexual relationship results in the young man being ridiculed by his peers who have girlfriends or are in heterosexual relationship. In this way the girlfriend almost becomes a visible symbol not only to yourself but also indicates to other men that you are also actively taking part in activities which affirm you to other men as being man enough as well as aligns you to the norms masculinity. So in that regard having that visible symbolic girlfriend shields you from ridicule and ensures that one step closer to achieving that ideal hegemonic masculinity.



I think as a young man eh most of us have girlfriend and if you don't have one eh some other guys will laugh at you and think that that you are not man enough. -LK (Black)

He goes on to say that not only do other men see you as not being man enough if you do not have a girlfriend, but more importantly there is also the risk of being labelled as being gay by your peers and you are also essentially going against the grain of being masculine;

Some of us they interpret it in a different way that if you don't have a girlfriend maybe you are gay or a what or you are not man enough. -LK (Black)

On further elaboration of what it meant to not have a girlfriend as a young man, LK touched on issues such as respect, the family structure and feelings of inferiority. He felt that if, as a young man you do not have a girlfriend like all the other young men in your township, you will be seen as inferior and therefore you will not be liked by the other boys who do have girlfriends and your masculinity will not be affirmed by your peers. Your masculinity will therefore be in opposition to that of the greater group. In that same token if you are a young man who sits in the township with no education you lose that respect within your social circle as with not having a girlfriend. Respect is an important aspect of manhood which can be affirmed by having a girlfriend amongst other things.

You are seen like inferior eh and they don't take you like, eh they take you for granted coz you don't have a girlfriend, maybe you are not studying you are just sitting in the township and you don't get that respect, I think that thing maybe it has to do with a family structure you understand most of the families they grew up maybe with a single parent family and then they don't have like a father figure to guide them don't do this and this. I think that has an impact and those who were maybe a father figure is not mmm talking to like in our black society it's hard for a father to sit down with you and tell you listen now you are 16 years old so you must do this and this and this eh. -LK (Black)

However, having a girlfriend or the idea that having a girlfriend is a big, if not the most important determinant of manhood. Being born and raised in a township seemed to have a different take on the way in which you view women as well as the factors which influence your decision to be part of a heterosexual relationship and what that would mean to you and other young men as opposed to having been born and raised in a more urban setting. Within the township setting LK felt that peer pressure and impoverished circumstances were most common. Due to peer pressure, it seemed as though township young men are required to go through milestones such as having a girlfriend by the age of 16 and having a child by the age of 25 in order to be affirmed by others as being a man or being man enough. This notion of milestones brings attention to the contextual nature of masculinity. The basic conceptualization of masculinity may be common across the young men in this group but context plays a very important role in the formation of these understandings of masculinity.

I was born in a township and I grew up in a township. You see and things that are happening in a township you become, what can I say, you become pressured by your friends to do things and that thing I think it has to do with maybe poverty in the township and other factors, but in the township eh when you reached the age of 16 eh you must have a girlfriend reaching maybe age of 25 for sure you must have a kid that's the way it is -LK (Black)

Being attracted to females was an important aspect of being a man and being able to watch females and admire them was something that he did as a young man. The fact that this particular photograph was taken from the back could perhaps indicate that part of the female body which most attracts him particularly and also emphasizes the objectification of women. The female form was what attracted him so the fact that he took this photograph from this angle illustrates his appreciation of the female form. This photograph also showed that watching females formed part of the definition of manhood and this was what was happening here.



As young men we are interested in the females the female side just attracts for me sometimes I just like to look at the females going past that one I have to go for that one ya. -LB (Black)

When the participants spoke about the sort of relationships they have with women, opinions seemed to differ between the black, white and coloured participants. One participant felt that

the way in which black men approach women, is very different to the way in which white would approach a women.

Umm like I don't wanna be stereotyping but I've noticed like with a lot of like black guys if there's like a hot girl you guys are like shouting at her and stuff like that and getting her attention but with like white guys we don't like (we are shy I think) ya white guys are shy -SS (White)

5.3.12 Family

Masculinity can also be defined as protecting and providing. According to PC, men are protective, even more so towards family members and the ones that they love. When loved ones are involved, PC has found himself in fights in the name of standing up for them and in most cases being able to stand up for your loved ones is accompanied with feeling as though you would die for them if needs be. In protecting one's loved ones you can easily turn a blind eye to the truth as long as your loved one is protected. It seems as though that protective nature gets the better of you which often ends with getting into fights. Protecting and providing requires that a young man do everything in his power to ensure that for his family even though it may require resorting to violence.



This is my sister she's about 2. As a guy you have to protect the ones you love coz I mean if anyone touched my sister. I mean I don't know what I would do to them, I mean I've gotten into a fight before with someone for standing on my sister's toe. I don't know it's like you have to be able to protect someone there's always someone that you feel like you would die for that person even if like it's like for instance when

my sister becomes older maybe she's in the wrong with someone I'm not going to care about if she is in the wrong or not I'm going to care about what that person's doing to her that's the thing so I don't know it's like yeah also love is blind -PC(Coloured)

Family played a very important role in this participant's life as he valued them above all else. They are small family that has experienced the loss of a mother and a wife. His sister almost symbolizes his family.

That's my sister. I actually wanted to get a picture of my family. The thing is my sister was there and I took the photo and stuff, but like um ya that's my sister and I have like and I have my father my brother. My mom died like years ago so it's just like a small family. I hold them above everything else I think that's the most important thing-SS (White)

5.3.13 Young fatherhood



On talking about having become a father at a young age, one participant felt that this was influenced by the community or the background which is he is from as well as the friends he has. Within his community it seems as though young fathers are very common and this was largely due to exposure to peer pressure, mainly to engage in unprotected sex. He also felt that peer pressure posed a problem amongst young men within his community. He too was a 'culprit' as he explained, of having been influenced by his friends to engage in unprotected sex with the consequence of becoming a young father. It seemed as though in his community it was easier to conform to the peer pressure rather than distance oneself from it. In this way peer pressure became another way of expressing one's masculinity amongst their peers. Peer

pressure was an important aspect of hegemonic masculinity as it emphasized the social nature of the affirmation of masculinity. Success of attainment of masculinity was determined by peers.

Young men in the community they've got child in their masculinity stage and I think the problem with that is because they are being influenced by friends and what and are engaging in unsafe sex and for me I was a culprit of that. I was influenced by my friend having unprotected sex and end up getting a child at a masculinity stage -LK (Black)

Being a father was not only difficult because he is young, but was also complicated by the fact that he was still a student. This means that he had to be responsible enough to be able to handle both roles which he says is not always an easy thing to do. Fatherhood came with responsibilities and one of those is to be able to prioritize what is most important. He illustrated this with a financial example where he said if he has money, he had to think about his child's needs first as opposed to thinking about himself and his friends. So being a father has brought about change in his views of being a man where responsibility for the needs of someone else becomes the priority, further emphasizing the idea of the man as a provider. This however does not mean that before he was a father he was an irresponsible young man, but instead his responsibilities have now changed focus.

For being a father eh now it's important because you need to be responsible sometimes and also I am a student it is difficult for me to be a father and a student at the same time. It changed me a lot eh in a way that now I am being responsible not saying that back then I wasn't responsible. I was responsible, I wasn't responsible enough, but now I've got money I have to think of my child and myself, but back then I have to think for myself or my friends -LK (Black)

5.3.14 Male grooming products

Grooming and grooming products are normally associated with activities undertaken by women. Over time the ideas of men owning such products has increased and is no longer uncommon or strange. PT was able to speak on these products at the risk of sounding 'gay'. Because the use of these products was traditionally defined as a female activity, it was automatically associated with being gay and any man who admits to using these products risks aligning themselves with a gay masculinity. PT spoke about this idea before he shared his photographs. He was aware of the implications that using these products would have on

how the group judged whether his masculinity was successful or not. Masculinity was generally defined in opposition to being gay and he was defining his masculinity with the use of an activity which was not traditionally used in the performance of masculinity. Talking about these products, he knew that there might not be affirmation amongst the peers he was in the focus group discussion with. He owned these products because he felt that it was important for a young man to take care of his appearance, reinforcing visible masculinity. He needs to be able to not only worry about being fit but he also needs to worry about being presentable and have good healthy skin. As much as he owned these products, he made sure to emphasize that he would never use make-up or pluck his eyebrows, defending himself against being seen as gay or feminine. Even though they are seen as 'gay', he felt that if he took part in make-up or plucking of eyebrows he would be crossing that line and would be seen as gay. Using these products in itself requires someone who was very secure in their masculinity but one needs to pay attention to the limit and make sure that it does not get crossed. According to PT, performing these activities would mean that one is taking part in a female activity which means that you would not get affirmation from your peers. Being able to use these products and display them in this context with other young men comes with a certain level of security in his masculinity. He argues it's not about emulating commercial ads but it's about knowing what works for you and what you are secure with. PT is in line with what is termed metro-sexuality.



PT said 'this sounds gay' as he described his chosen photographs which showed that he was aware of what the other men in the group might be thinking of him as he talks about grooming products. He was aware of this because he knew that grooming products were not

traditionally masculine, but he argued that because he was sure of his masculinity as a young man, he could say this. He also argued that to be sure of your own masculinity did not always rely on being compared to those of others, instead masculinity can have unique characteristics to it without being inferior. Because masculinity can be seen in activity, it was important to maintain the visible aspect of it which was why PT spoke about being a man with style.

This is this metro-sexual thing. I decided to round up all the bits of cosmetic stuff I have and it ends up looking quite bad, but umm I don't know there's a bit of moisturizer cream to be honest and that's because I shave my legs and if you don't moisturize them they look painful. Anyway there's gel deodorant shower gel, umm facial wash, umm shaving cream, after shave balm... flip this sounds gay I know! Shampoo and the cologne thing but umm I think that it's not bad to wanna look after yourself. I think things are changing umm and part of my understanding of being a guy is that like you are not just rough and tough and like half unshaven with veld skoene umm that you are trying to be a bit stylish or like just looked after that you are trying to look after the way you skin is or whatever like in know I don't know I haven't made up my mind about the whole thing but I do know I've got the stuff or some of it anyway I don't wear makeup I would never wanna wear makeup and I would never pluck eyebrows or anything like that but umm I think there is a small place for maybe being secure enough to do a few of those things and not so worried about trying to be the camel man that you don't wanna (from the bluff) ya from the bluff -PT (White)

He went on to say that there would be differing views on this topic where some would view it as being feminine bordering on being gay. He was aware of the potential differing views on this topic because '*traditionally if you do all that stuff then it was it seemed a bit effeminate*'. He also touched on how looks can be deceiving in that a man can look very tough or 'hard-core' but be gay. He felt that masculinity provided room for young men to take care of themselves. He likened it to having good manners which was something that was important for a young man to have. Being well groomed and carrying yourself appropriately around other people was important. Without being vein about how one looks, it was important for young men to take pride in their appearance and feel secure enough to do so.

I anticipated there would be differences on this thing umm and traditionally if you do all that stuff then it was it seemed a bit effeminate so that's really what I meant. I guess it sounded a bit effeminate because I know the difference between effeminate

and being gay and sometimes gay guys on the outside look very hard-core umm so you can't always just say ya well you know, but I still think that there is room for that in being masculine. I think that to some degree it's actually important umm maybe not like you have to do it you don't have to umm to be a man look after your skin and do like the grooming kind of stuff but ya good grooming and to me it's similar to good manners and all those sorts of things a little bit of class and I think that's part of manhood umm without just tryna be shallow and just look good looking after yourself and taking care and pride and things -PT (White)

PT mentioned 'a little bit of class' as he talked about his photograph alluding to the notion that masculinity seems to be an overarching umbrella which encompasses categories of masculinity. He was striving for a masculinity which was classy and well groomed as opposed to its rough and rugged counterpart. The aforementioned masculinity was the one which was appealing. In this regard masculinity seemed to intersect with class.

5.3.15 Young men having fun

This is a photograph of young school boys in school uniform playing a game of rugby in an open field. They were playing without the supervision of an adult or coach.

Despite the need for young men to be responsible, successful and disciplined, PT felt that in the process of aiming and attaining that sought after success, young men might lose their sense of being just that; young men. This photograph captured school boys playing rugby on a rugby field which represented what young men should be doing from time to time to ensure that they don't lose the essence of youth. Instead what happens is that young men get caught up in the struggle for success as well as become preoccupied with what others have to say or think about them. When a person is young, what other people think was often not the most important thing you worry about, which is what young men need to do more often. It was similar to 'down time' from the constant struggle to reach that status of success. Men shouldn't be just one dimensional as there is importance in adding that child-like component, it's not purely about playing the sport successfully, but it also encompasses having fun and enjoying it without the fear of persecution.

He also makes reference to young men allowing themselves to be 'wild' but within reason which contrasts with his earlier reference to the importance of discipline and self-control. With masculinity came maturity and discipline but the element of youth was essential which

was achieved through allowing oneself to also let go of the discipline and self-discipline. The only time being 'wild' is excused was in the instance of youth.



These are a bunch of school boys playing touch rugby on a field. They are just having fun you know, they aren't tryna pose for a shot or impress any coach there was no teacher there at the time, they were just playing for the fun of it. I just didn't think it through I just grabbed a photo because I love to go and climb a tree every now and then and be a little bit wild you know, get out into nature umm or just run around and have a game of soccer with my mates. Often there is a competitive urge or we just like wanna run around and I'm always just sad when guys lose too much of the child-likeness inside them. We need to be responsible, we need to be disciplined, we need to aim for success but is we lose that boyishness, that kind of wants to just go and just run or umm build a fort or we don't do that anymore, but it's that like that child-likeness which I think is important and I love spending time with kids because they are so alive still. I think that's what it is, they are like, they are fresh, they don't really care so much what other people think. We often end up at this time in our lives caring what other people think about us. -PT (White)

PT claimed that as a young man one needs to be able to take time out from everything else in life and just have fun. Taking a photograph of himself lying on the side of the road showed that sentiment. The fact that he was lying on the side of the road showed that this form of fun was not the type of fun that would be risky, rather it was better to have safe fun, as illustrated by being on the side of the road as opposed to being in the middle of the road at the risk of being hit by a car.

For me I like to play around when I'm just chilling. Sometimes you need to find yourself, just play around there on the safe side not on the road -LB (Black)

SS hinted at the idea of the importance of young men being able to go out and have fun and mingle with other young men, but doing so in a safe manner. He illustrated this by mentioning again a more religious aspect of the body where the body is your temple and therefore needs to be taken care of and treated properly.

like here I do go out and enjoy myself there is a photo of me outside Crowded House or me taking a photo of Crowded House but I think like young men should go and enjoy themselves and go to town and things like that and mingle and be sociable so like ya your body is your temple look after it - SS (White)

5.3.16 Men taking initiative

Some participants claimed that men needed to be able to take action when the opportunity arose and not wait for someone else to act on the same occasion. Within a group there needs to be someone who was taking charge and taking action. If other men can see another young man taking initiative and not wait for someone else to take responsibility for something, they will be able to see you as a real man amongst your group. If something needs to be done, or if someone needs to take charge, you need to be that man who steps up. The reward a young man will receive is that within your group or amongst peers you will be seen as a real man and therefore will get that sought after respect and motivate others to follow your lead. This particular sentiment echoes that of PT. However a man taking charge and taking initiative can easily be misinterpreted by others as him trying to dominate the group. As a man he felt he had to do something instead of sitting and waiting for another person to take that initiative. Onus to take initiative and be decisive lies with the individual man. With this initiative however, come subtle challenges which men often face in performing masculinity. One of these challenges is that of what other men in the group will think of this act of taking initiative. There is a need for men to take initiative in marking their masculinity but it seems as though it is dependent on the approval of their peers demonstrating the subtle processes in negotiating and performing masculinity.



This is me. It was raining we had some problems at Res where I stay in Denison so that's why I'm carrying a plank here trying to fix some things coz the roof was a little bit faulty. It was raining so we had a problem and the water was dripping there, so as a man I must do something I must take some action. It shows that you are a real man if you like take responsibility among other people so like time to initiate or be the one who acts or. -SK (Black)

5.3.17 Young men fighting

The following photograph was taken by SK. In this photograph are two young men fighting in the street. This was not a real fight caught on camera, rather it was a mock fight put on for the purpose of the study. It was taken to show how the ability to fight was an important performance of masculinities.



SK made two distinctions when talking about this photograph of two young men mock fighting; being male and being female, and being strong and being able to fight. He constructed men and women as different and for this reason they approach this notion of fighting differently. Young men, it seemed, were prone to fighting and tended to solve their problems through fighting. Men who won their fights were seen as real men, and those that lost unfortunately were not seen to be real men. 'Strong' in this particular situation did not necessarily refer to being big and muscular; being strong means as a man, one can stand up for oneself and fight if one needed to and make sure that a fight is won. Being able to fight and win battles was an important factor in the performance of masculinity. Being able to fight and win helped in being able to affirm for what one stand for as well as for one's masculinity is ensuring respect amongst peers. Women on the other hand were seen as not being able to fight and therefore talked their issues through as opposed to resorting to physical confrontation. He used words such 'portray' and 'show' which indicated that when engaging in fighting it was important to be seen by other men within the peer group and in order to maintain a successful masculine it was important to be seen winning the fight.

Here it's me and my friend. We are not fighting but we tryna portray something like like men, men especially young guys, young men they like to be physical when they are like maybe resolving some problem. When they are solving some problems they tend to be physical they fight so they show that if you lose you are showing that you are not a real man. So if you win that means you are a man enough coz you can fight for yourself, you can stand for yourself, ya, but it doesn't apply to most of the general. It was like the way I thought it was my thought that if you are a man you have to be strong although I'm not strong you must be able to fight for yourself ya I think that's all. I can say it differentiates like a man from a woman. Women they are more on talking you know, they talk a lot even if they have a problem they cause problem through talking and they solve it through talking. -SK (Black)

5.3.18 Being well informed

At first glance of this photograph of a young man reading a newspaper and smoking a cigarette, it was easy to assume that the focus was on the cigarette, but according to SK, that was not the case.

The focus of this photograph is rather on the newspaper that he is reading. This newspaper is a university circulated newspaper called the *Nux*. Reading the newspaper is pointing to the

fact that as a young man, it is not only important to be educated, but it is also important to be knowledgeable of the immediate environment around you and the world at large. SK distances himself from the common notion of real men drink and smoke and focuses on the importance of education and being knowledgeable meaning he is possibly distancing himself briefly from the norms of hegemonic masculinity while still maintaining a successful masculinity. It is important to keep current with the world around you as knowledge is power.



This one this is my friend as well he is smoking cigarettes, but the intention wasn't to show the cigarette part, the most interesting part was the paper the one he is reading the Nux. So as a man you must be well informed about what's happening around you around the world so it's part of education as well. You must know what's happening so that you can be able to cope with life in general ya. The cigarettes ya for me, for some men if you smoke and drink you are a real man but in this case it's not like that.- SK (Black)

The way in which SK spoke about smoking, it is evident that it is a contrast from the traditional hegemonic idea of smoking which was defined by PC earlier on. Masculinity was not seen in the terms of smoking or drinking as being empowering, instead, knowledge became empowering and smoking was almost seen as being negative.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter set out to present the findings from the photographs taken by the participants and the discussion held by the young men. The photographs taken by these young men suggest that there appears to be many different ways of performing masculinity. The young

men in this study have conceptualised masculinity around owning cars, taking part in sporting and gym activities, partaking in smoking (marijuana and cigarettes) and drinking, entertainment, religion, owning branded clothing, relationships with other young men and women, computer games, family, fatherhood, grooming products, willingness to fight, young men taking initiative and education. Successful performance in each of these tasks ensures attainment of respect and high status ranking amongst peers and ultimately attaining successful masculinity. What is also evident through these performances of masculinity is how young men adopt some of the hegemonic strategies in constructing their own masculinities.

The following chapter, which is the final chapter of this thesis, presents the discussion and the conclusions inferred from the findings presented in the previous chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Summary of the study

This current study explored how masculinity is constructed among male university students of different races, varying ages and different social backgrounds. The study also explored how these young men position themselves in relation to the hegemonic standards of masculinity.

The major objectives of the study were; (1) to identify the constructions of masculinity made by university students (2) to identify specific features of hegemonic masculinity (3) to explore how young men position themselves in relation to hegemonic masculinity particularly in terms of whether they align or distance themselves with it and how this is managed (4) to explore whether constructions of masculinity are affected by race or dependent on contextual differences. The study was informed by the following research questions;

- How is masculinity performed in daily life?
- What are the features of hegemonic masculinity?
- How do young men position themselves in relation to the norms of hegemonic masculinity?
- Do constructions of masculinity differ across race and context?

In order to address the research questions the study adopted a qualitative design. Focus group discussions and photo elicitation were used to collect data. Data analysis chosen was content analysis for the collected photographs and thematic analysis for the focus group discussion. The research was informed by a social constructionist approach.

This chapter discusses the findings presented in the previous chapter under the four questions posed to inform the research and attempts to offer implications of the findings, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research and conclusions.

6.2 How are masculinities performed in daily life?

According to West and Zimmerman (1987), doing gender entails the creation of difference between girls and boys and women and men. These differences are not natural, essential or

biological. Once constructed, these differences are used to reinforce the ‘essentialnesses’ of gender.

According to Connell (1987), hegemony provides a way of talking about and performing masculinities at the level of everyday ideas and practices performed ‘with consent’ and affirmation and ‘without coercion’. It posits that men are social and influenced by the gender system (Hearn, 2004).

Participants in this study gave the following examples of how masculinities are constructed and performed: through playing sports, going to the gym, smoking (marijuana and cigarettes), drinking and having fun.

6.2.1 Sport

Sport has also been central to the construction of masculinity and to the promotion and maintenance of men’s dominance over women and other men. Men accomplish the reproduction of this dominance through displays of strength and violence in sport. Sports contain elements of competition and hierarchy among men, justifying their right to social dominance (Pronger, 1990). Connell (1995) suggested that ‘Men’s greater sporting prowess has [therefore] become . . . symbolic proof of superiority and right to rule’ (p.54). According to Messner (1992), men compete for hegemonic dominance by showing overt physical prowess. Connell (1995) asserts that abilities and skills associated with power, speed, strength and aggressiveness tend to be dominant. Performance power and strength represent male patterns in sport.

Sports that participants talked about in this study included soccer, rugby and basketball. Historically, rugby has been a predominantly White Afrikaner sport with soccer being historically a predominantly Black sport. Basketball, although an increasingly popular sport in South Africa, is not often the choice of sport. Although basketball was captured as a masculine sport, participants did not align themselves with it. Rather a photograph of basketball became symbolic of sports which is integral to how masculinities are performed. Rugby was described as being a hard sport and therefore the most desirable sport for young men to participate in.

The act of playing a sport was compared to ‘going to war’ for your school or team, converting the playing field to a war field in which masculinity is contested. Patriotism in this regard is also seen as being key to participating in sports. The sport field also provided a

platform for young men to express their aggression which is thought to be an important marker of hegemonic masculinity.

The findings of this study around sport echo the sentiments of Pronger (1990) around masculine dominance which is reproduced through the displays of strength and aggression in sport. Because sport has been central to the promotion and maintenance of men's dominance over women, men who do not or cannot partake successfully in acceptable sports such as rugby, succumb to ridicule and subordination by those who are more successful.

On the sport field young men compete with other men with their physical prowess. Men who are physically stronger are more likely to be successful on the sports field in the chosen sport, affirming their masculinity. Going to the gym plays an important role in attaining that physical strength and putting boys/men at a better standing against other men. In this light gym attendance and participation in sports can be linked.

6.2.2 Gym

According to the participants in this study, going to the gym ties in strongly with sport in the sense that it becomes important for a man to be physically strong and fit to participate in a sport as 'hard' as rugby. The gym also has another benefit; men who go to the gym are found to be more attractive to women. The young men in this study acknowledge that men are not the only ones who go to gym; women also go to the gym. What differs are the reasons for going to gym. Men go to the gym so that they can increase muscles and look bigger, and so be seen to be more masculine. Once this is accomplished other men see you as a worthy competitor; women on the other hand go to the gym to decrease their body sizes. In this way they are more attractive to men. The young men go on to say that women's attendance at the gym it seems is purely for the benefit of men as they will become more attractive than women who have larger bodies. For men getting bigger means success with women and success on the sports field, both important markers of masculinity.

According to Gill, Henwood, and McLean (2005, p.4), "over the past decade, there has been a dramatic rise in the visibility of the male body in the media and popular culture. Men's bodies are on display as never before, from the muscular heroes of the cinematic action genre, to the 'six-packs' who grace the covers of Men's Health, and the 'super waifs' of contemporary style magazines".

The above argument made by Gill et al., (2005) on how the male body is perceived in contemporary society, emphasises the finding of the study regarding the importance of the size of the muscles of the male body. The attractiveness of the male body is dependent on the size of the body. Big muscles become synonymous with heroism and attractiveness. All participants in the study, irrespective of race, agreed on the understanding of going to the gym and its contribution to attractiveness, sexual prowess and enhancement of sporting ability.

6.2.3 Drinking and Smoking

De Visser and Smith (2007, p.596) state that “drinking behaviour is influenced by a range of demographic, social and attitudinal variables. It is important to consider how individual, peer and cultural factors interact to influence men’s alcohol consumption”. Whether or not a man engages in social behaviours such as alcohol consumption or smoking has implications for his masculine identity. Therefore young men’s definition of drinking as being masculine and the importance of them being considered to be masculine may influence their drinking behaviour.

According to a UK study (Harnett, Thom, Herring, & Kelly, 2000), drinking is an important element of young men’s social lives and is taken as a measure of their masculinity. Respondents in this study emphasized the importance of ‘keeping pace’ with peers when drinking (p.597).

The findings of the Harnett et al., (2000) study are echoed by the current study. Drinking is seen as an important social activity in measuring masculinity. Emphasis is made on the ability to drink copious amounts of alcohol to gain respect amongst peers.

One of the participants in the current study emphasized that the amount of alcohol one can have is very important. He also noted that it wasn’t only about being able to keep up while drinking. Young men also had to keep the pace while smoking because if one fails to do so they will be ridiculed.

Young men it seems, are competitive within social spaces that encourage smoking and drinking. This allows them to rank their performances where the more they drink and smoke, the more highly they are regarded amongst their peers (Hinote & Webber, 2012). According to the participants in this study, young men who are able to consume large amounts of alcohol and smoke numerous ‘joints’ are seen as more masculine than other men while men

who lack competence as drinkers or smokers will be ridiculed. Men who do not drink are subjected to ridicule and are seen as being non-masculine or as failing to achieve an acceptable masculinity.

Participants spoke about drinking as being a mechanism for socializing where the consumption of alcohol became part of an activity instead of being the main activity. Here, the domain of drinking exists without competitiveness, allowing one, as explained by the participants, “to be in that other state of mind”. This particular comment was made in connection with how the young men felt it was difficult to be a young man. This suggests that these young men feel that alcohol allows them to realise a masculinity that they would otherwise struggle to achieve. Those who do not achieve this masculinity would not be accepted socially by other young men. These young men feel a degree of social pressure around performing successful masculinity.

The above findings on drinking as a mechanism for socialising is similar to Sharon Bird’s (1996) work, where she states that “masculinities that are identified as “effeminate” are generally suppressed by men in homosocial settings so as to gain access to the exclusive “men’s club” and achieve higher social ranking relative to other men”. In Bird’s (1996, p.121) words, “homosocial interaction, among heterosexual men, contributes to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity norms by supporting meanings associated with identities that fit hegemonic ideals while suppressing meanings associated with non-hegemonic masculine identities”. It seems that social drinking plays a major role for young men in facilitating homosocial interaction and acceptance.

In this study, smoking was reportedly taken up due to peer pressure. When smoking is taken up by the participants, they are not initially aware of the risks involved. However as time goes by, participants become aware of the risks associated with smoking. Although participants in this study did not talk about health related risks such as cancer, they did speak about and admit to the addiction to nicotine. The main risk that emerged was that of nicotine addiction. Smoking cigarettes is also considered to be an important marker of adult masculinity for young boys.

Studies (Merline, O’Malley, Schulenberg, Bachman, & Johnston, 2004; Jefferis, Power, & Manor, 2005), have found that excessive drinking among young men is a significant predictor of binge drinking in adulthood. Findings in the current study emphasized that young men are aware of the addictive nature of alcohol and tobacco, but it is not enough to inhibit their

intake. Despite being aware of addiction to both alcohol and nicotine, participants felt that they are exempt from this because they are in control of how much alcohol and tobacco they consume. An important aspect of achieving a successful masculinity in this regard requires a young man to be in control of their actions, including those actions of smoking and drinking. A young man who drinks and 'passes out' has failed to perform a successful masculinity. Therefore in achieving an acceptable masculinity there is a delicate balance between risk taking, such as through alcohol consumption and control.

There is an interesting dialectic between using substances as a marker of masculinity, and the need to control substance use as another marker of masculinity. Self-control and discipline were highlighted as being essential when one smokes. The ability to stop smoking whenever necessary is important as it shows that one is not addicted and therefore controlled by the substance. Being in control is a key element of masculinity.

So far the findings of this study pertaining to participation in sports, attending gym, smoking and drinking highlight the importance of competition in the construction and maintenance of hegemonic masculinity. Successful masculinity according to the participants involves being good at and winning sports, gaining big muscles at the gym, being able to smoke many cigarettes and marijuana 'joints' and drinking copious amounts of alcohol. This finding is evident in work done by Bird (1996) on how homosociality maintains hegemonic masculinity.

Competitiveness, according to Gilligan (1982), is a meaning which is constructed and maintained through relationships with other men where simple individuality becomes competitive individuality. Competition in the male homosocial group supports an identity that depends on separation and distinction as opposed to likeness and co-operation. Messner (1992) elaborates that competition facilitates hierarchy in relationships while co-operation emphasises symmetry in relationships.

Smoking and drinking was mentioned by the Black participants and the Coloured participant but not by the White participants. Although one White participant mentioned that he has friends who drink, he also mentioned that he did not take a picture of them. This implied that he somehow looked down on the idea of drinking heavily. The black participants and the Coloured participant on the other hand held partaking in drinking in high regard and as an important activity amongst peers.

6.3 What are the features of hegemonic masculinity?

According to the works of Carrigan, Connell, and Lee (1985), hegemonic masculinity involves a specific strategy for the subordination of women and other men. According to Donaldson (1993), hegemonic masculinity is a culturally idealized notion which is personal and collective and emphasizes breadwinning and manhood. “It is exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal, and violent. It is pseudo-natural, tough, contradictory, crisis-prone, rich, and socially sustained. While centrally connected with the institutions of male dominance, not all men practice it, though most benefit from it” (p. 646).

Traditional constructions of hegemonic masculinities include risk-taking, self-discipline, physical toughness and/or muscular development, aggression, violence, emotional control, and overt heterosexual desire (Hinojosa, 2010).

In this current study masculinity was describe in terms of success, being respected, taking responsibility, and taking initiative, willingness to be to be involved in fights and having heterosexual relationships. Owning a car and branded clothing and shoes, having an attractive girlfriend and being willing to fight and win when necessary and the ability to be dominant and take initiative particularly in situations where men were interacting with women, were all seen as markers of success, respect and achievement of desirable masculinity while responsibility was described in terms of family.

6.3.1 Cars

Cars have historically served as objects to position themselves in terms of masculinity, enabling an elaborated performance of the masculine and providing a ground for competition. In work done by Best (2006) on youth and their cars, young men talk about how men with cars often use their cars as a status and thus as a means to get women. This finding is no different to the finding of the current study. The young men spoke about how having a good car increases one’s chances of attracting women. Having a car and an attractive women in turn elevates one’s status amongst peers. Participants in the current study talk about how owning a car is important for their masculinity. Although not all the participants owned a car, they all shared similar sentiments about what significance a car has for masculinity. A car allows one to be independent and to be respected amongst peers. Currently the possession of a car is still an aspirational goal for some of the participants. Cars also become a competitive

arena for men. Participants go so far as to say that the car is 'typically masculine' implying that women have a different relationship with cars.

6.3.2 Music choice

With regard to complicity to hegemonic norms, participants illustrated this notion through the choice of music. Kwaito music is a genre of music popular to black youth, while Trance music is popular with the White youth of South Africa. Although Kwaito music did not represent how they constructed their masculine identity, it was still photographed but as a symbol of a traditionally black masculinity. Participants are aware of what is acceptable to each type of masculinity even though removed from their own construction. It is emphasised that although they do not listen to this particular genre, they are aware that it is a characteristic of a black masculinity and not necessarily their own.

6.3.3 Branded clothes and shoes

The hegemonic masculine gender role as identified by Brannon (1976, p.14) contains four themes: "No Sissy Stuff" (a man must never resemble a woman or display strongly stereotyped feminine characteristics), the "Big Wheel" (the ability of real men to obtain wealth, fame, success and status), the "Sturdy Oak" (conveys manliness, confidence and self-reliance), and "Give 'Em Hell!" (men emit an aura of aggression and violence and use it to obtain sex from women).

For the purpose of exploring the topic of branded clothes and shoes I will focus on two of Brannon's themes namely no sissy stuff and the big wheel.

According to Brannon, real men devalue activities which are traditionally female such as interest in fashion. Interestingly participants in this study take on features of 'no sissy stuff' and 'the big wheel' simultaneously when constructing masculinity. Brannon asserts that men give minimal attention to their clothes. Contrary to this claim, these participants talked about the importance of owning branded items of clothing and shoes so as to be 'cool'. When one is 'cool' they are respected within a group and therefore status amongst peers is elevated. The findings of this study are highlighted when Alexander (2003, p.550) states that 'branded masculinity indicates a transformation of men's understanding of masculinity'. This transformation illustrates that the traditional notion of men as rugged, do not take care of how they look and are not concerned with fashion, has taken a turn. Men are now taking care of their appearance including taking care on what kinds of clothes they wear. Men who wear

branded clothing are seen as men who can afford more expensive clothing therefore commanding respect and asserting status. Brannon emphasises the ability of real men to obtain status. Young men in this study obtain status through wearing branded clothes and shoes which is valued in their peer groups. According to the participants, branded clothing is an important marker of successful masculinity regardless of race. Branded masculinity is one which all young men relate to and aspire to achieve as it symbolises success amongst peers.

6.3.4 Heterosexual relationships

Research (Campbell, 1995) asserts that in the domain of sexuality, traditional masculinity ideologies encourage to be sexually active, assertive, be always ready to have sex, view sex primarily as pleasurable and recreational, perceive penetration as the goal of sex, control all aspects of sexual activity and have multiple sex partners.

According to the participants in this study, having an attractive girlfriend is also deemed an important marker of successful masculinity. This particular emphasis was made by those participants who reported not having girlfriends or not being in relationships currently. For participants who do not currently have an attractive girlfriend, the girlfriend becomes aspirational. In other words they have not yet achieved that important marker of successful masculinity to which they aspire. For those participants who were in relationships, their discussion on their girlfriends differed from each other. Here relationships with women are seen in two ways; one way states that women need to be protected, loved and made to feel good about themselves, the other posits that having a girlfriend is an important 'asset' in the completion of milestones to manhood. Particular reference was made to how in the township, a young man needs to go through certain milestones in his life on the path to achieving successful masculinity. Two of those milestones include engaging in sexual activity and fathering a child. One participant in this study spoke about his experience of young fatherhood. Engagement in sexual activities for him was a result of peer pressure. He also spoke about socialization amongst his peers where young men are expected to go through certain stages in life on the path to manhood.

Different milestones in a young man's life require certain achievements, particularly in the township areas. Although emphasis was placed on achieving these milestones, it was also recognized that the existence of a child in one's life, means a change in responsibilities, including taking on the role of being provider, a distinctive marker of masculinity.

According to Posel and Devey (2003), about half of all men in South Africa over the age of 15 years are fathers. Historically black fathers were separated from their children due to having to work in distant places on terms of migrant contracts. Under these circumstances men had limited interaction with their children and commonly abandoned and neglected their children. Richter and Morrell (2006) asserts that there is a stereotype that men are not interested in children and that they are naturally ill-suited to parenting. But she adds that almost no literature has been written in South Africa about what men think about being a father. According to a national survey conducted by Emmet, Richter, Makiwane, du Toit, Brookes, Potgieter, Altman and Makura (2004), of young people aged between 18 and 32 years of age who were asked to rank what they considered to be distinguishing characteristics of adulthood, more than 70 percent of young South Africans ranked supporting one's family, keeping one's family safe, running a household and caring for children as important aspects of masculine adulthood. The results of the survey show that young South Africans find parenthood and family to be important. These characteristics are no different to the characteristics of a successful masculinity. Masculinity requires a man to support his family, be it emotionally or financially, to protect his family and run a household. Being a breadwinner is therefore an important marker of a successful masculinity. Furthermore, young men are commonly talking about their desires to be good fathers. Richter and Morrell (2006) goes on to assert that fatherhood is associated with manhood. If one is a man, then they are expected to be able to take on the fatherhood role. But the point at which one becomes a man is reached along different routes and the process is often contested. This further emphasises what was expressed by the participant in relation to how he got a girlfriend, began engaging in sexual activities and fathering a child. The path to manhood for him coming from the township requires reaching certain milestones at specific times in a young man's life. For example when he was 16 it was mandatory for him to have a girlfriend and by the age of 25 it was mandatory to have a child. He is a young man who has a young child and is experiencing young fatherhood. Getting a girlfriend and bearing a child, he achieved the essential milestones of manhood. Later on importance shifts away from physically having a child and migrates towards being able to be a responsible parent and considering the needs of the child before his own. As he grows towards adulthood, his priorities shift from himself to his child where the child becomes more than just a marker of successful masculinity.

6.3.5 Fighting

It is widely acknowledged that violence and men/masculinity are closely related (Spierenburg, 1998). According to Greig, 'patriarchal values and structures are both expressed and maintained by men fighting in both public and private domains. He goes on to state that men's natural aggression is often invoked as a defining characteristic of a complex gender hierarchical arrangement in the political and economic lives of richer and poorer countries alike (2000, p.28).

According to Spierenburg (1998, p. 2), 'not every act of aggression is always condemned; it is commonly known that, in various situations, violence may be considered honourable. A man's reputation often depends on 'physical bravery and a forceful response to insults'.

Spierenburg's sentiments are echoed in the findings of this study. In the current study, violence was argued to arise out of necessity. This necessity arises when a man has to protect his family members, or prove to other young men that he can stand up for himself. The participants in this study see aggression as being innate to masculinity. Being able to fight and win enhances the standing of young men amongst their peers, while fighting and losing subjects them to ridicule. While recognizing the importance of aggression in young men, participants generally disapproved of fighting and emphasized the importance of young men finding ways to cope with their innate aggression. Participation in sport was seen as an important way of constructively harnessing and expressing aggression.

In this study the young men spoke about fighting with other young men but not about violence towards women. Fighting in this instance was a protective mechanism in response to a confrontation, rising to the occasion so to speak.

6.4 How do young men position themselves in relation to the norms of hegemonic masculinity?

The findings of the current study affirm Connell's notion of many masculinities rather than one masculinity. Connell (1995) posits that three types of masculinities exist: dominant, complicit and subordinate. Men who do not attain the hegemonic ideal are either performing a complicit masculinity or are being subordinated by other men.

6.4.1 Dominant masculinities

Dominant or hegemonic masculinities refer to the configuration of gender practice that embodies the legitimacy of patriarchy which subordinates women and other men (Connell, 1987). The features of these dominant forms of masculinity include compulsory heterosexuality, power, authority and aggression Connell (1995). Dominant masculinities, and young men's alignment with them, are evident in this study. The young men talk about the need for them to have girlfriends and to engage in sex with them. They talk about violence towards other men, they talk about dominance over women and weaker men in situations where both men and women are interacting, they talk about hyper-masculine displays of masculinity which include increased intake of tobacco, marijuana and alcohol and they talk about attaining success and respect from peers. Participants also talk about the display of physical strength through going to the gym and playing contact sports such as rugby.

6.4.1.1 Video games

Participants also spoke about the playing of computer games or video games being a predominantly male activity. Women tend to think that men who play video games are childish or 'nerdy'. Men enjoy video games more than women do. This sentiment is affirmed by Alloway and Gilbert (1998), who state that video game culture is strongly male focused and masculinist and develops aggressive themes and situations.

Sanford and Madill (2006, p. 287) assert that 'computer and video games provide an interesting, engaging, dynamic, social space for many types of boys'. Furthermore, video games are used to resist institutional authority, hegemonic masculinity and femininity offering them a safe place to resist authority. According to these young men, the reality of performing masculinity is challenging. The young men in this study talk about how the video games provide an escape from reality allowing them to take on any character they please. In this light men who are dominant, complicit and subordinated can all exist on this plane without the requiring affirmation from the other or being subjected to ridicule at their failure to attain the hegemonic ideal.

Players of video games assume authority when they become the game character giving their individual consent for the actions and attitudes they role play (Leonard, 2004). Sanford and Madill (2006), state that many video game story lines encourage players to resist society's expectations. Whether a player is expected to steal a car or to kill enemies or random people,

the game allows players to play out scenarios that they would never actually play out in real life. This sentiment resonates in a comment made by one of the participants about how “you can kill people without going to jail”. Video games therefore have an appeal to young men because they do not have to be anxious about whether or not their actions will result in consequences they have to face in reality. Part of being a man requires being able to stand up for yourself and to face consequences or having the ability to take initiative in situations. In a video game, if that initiative involves killing someone, one can easily do so without the consequences.

Video games allow players to abandon the rules of the real world and engage in a new fantasy where they can be whoever they choose to be without having to abide by the rules that they or others would otherwise have to abide. It allows them the right to ignore stereotypes and prejudices.

Hegemonic masculinity, as I have alluded to, is often an unattainable ideal for many men. In the real world men who do not attain this ideal are often seen as having failed. Many perform a complicit form of masculinity where they accept the ideal norms without abiding by them and those who are unable to perform a form of either hegemonic or complicit masculinity are subordinated and subjected to ridicule. Due to the challenging nature of attaining the hegemonic ideal, video games become the mechanism through which young men attain that ideal but without the consequences which would be enforced by society. For example, video games require the player to choose a player or a character throughout the game. This player becomes the participant’s identity. In order to complete each level in the game, the chosen character is required to perform various tasks and solves various problems throughout each level. Some of these tasks could include, fighting another character till the death or stealing an object from another character. Successfully performing these tasks enables the player to advance onto the next level while failure to do so means the player stays at the same level, or even worse has to return to the previous or first level. Performing the same actions in real life means one is liable to face the consequences which include time spent in jail. In video games, killing another character is synonymous with success and therefore achievement of successful masculinity. Many men who often fail to attain the ideal, tend to position themselves with complicit masculinity and fewer become subordinated.

6.4.2 Subordinated masculinities

According to Connell (2000), subordinate masculinities refer to gender interactions which are related to dominance and subordination between groups of men. Subordinate masculinities are established relationally to and by dominant masculinities and are positioned as inferior or failed by comparison with hegemonic masculinity. Men who fail to attain the hegemonic ideal such as gay men, will be positioned as subordinate by other men.

6.4.2.1 Grooming products

A finding of this study was that of men using grooming products. When this was presented in the group, it was met with some resistance from the other group members. On talking about the photograph of the grooming products to the group, reference to the word 'gay' was made twice, clearly positioning these men as "other" and subordinated. Aldrich(2004) posits that a metrosexual man is a heterosexual man who is in touch with his feminine side. Other heterosexual men tend to call them gay or bisexual. According to Simpson (2002), the metrosexual image conscious man spends considerable resources on appearance and lifestyle grooming products are popular among women, but popularity amongst men is on the rise. Many men have taken up using grooming products to enhance their appearance.

According to the hegemonic ideal, metrosexual men would be subordinated by the other men as their characteristics bear too much resemblance to those of women. When metrosexuality is raised, there is great deal of defence on the part of the young man who raised it. Participants are aware of the effeminate nature of being a metrosexual and they are also aware of the ridicule which is likely to follow. Aldrich's argument is echoed in the findings where one participant feels the need to defend his choice of using grooming products to the other young men. He is aware of possibly sounding gay as he describes the products.

6.5 Do constructions of masculinities differ across race and context?

Schopflin (2001) posits that collective and individual identities exist and impact on one another reciprocally. He argues that identities are anchored around a set of moral propositions that regulate values and behaviour, so that identity construction necessarily involves ideas of "right" and "wrong" and desirable and undesirable.

Race, according to (Nagel, 1994), is a constructed and contested entity that is performed by subjects and is strictly controlled and monitored through the ideologies of those in power. Smith and Langa (2010) state that during the apartheid regime the social construction of

masculinity was intertwined with inequalities and injustices. Historically hegemonic masculinity has also been responsible for subordinating and demoting black masculinity to the 'other'. For a long time white masculinity has enjoyed the uncontested position of 'hegemonic masculinity' and has always been capable of securing a position of dominance over other alternate masculinities. As stated by Hank (1992) whiteness is constructed as the norm against which non-dominant groups are defined as "other". However the end of apartheid has marked many political and socio-economic changes which have influenced how young boys negotiate multiple voices of masculinity.

Race, particularly within the context of South Africa, plays a significant role in the social construction of masculinity. Societal issues mould masculinities in particular ways (Govender, 2006).

In the present study, racial differences in construction of masculinity were presented by the participants in terms of realising manhood, music choice and engagement in sporting activities. Young men in the township areas have to achieve certain milestones in their path to manhood which includes, engaging in sexual activities, and fathering children. Music was separated into two genres; trance and kwaito. Trance music was said to appeal to the white man while kwaito appealed to the black. Rugby and soccer were the most common sports in the discussion. Rugby has been a predominantly white sport while soccer has been a predominantly black sport. Rugby was categorised as being the ultimate masculine sport. Although basketball was featured in the discussion, rugby was still described as being the ideal sport to display one's masculinity.

While the findings of this study do suggest that race intersects with the social construction of masculinity, there were findings which complicated this idea. The study also included a young man who although a Xhosa speaking black man, undertook schooling in a previously all Afrikaans boy school. The way in which he conceptualised his masculinity positioned him apart from how a black man would position his masculinity. Sport and particularly music choice, he feels, sets him apart from the "average" black man. Rugby is traditionally played by white Afrikaans men while soccer is traditionally played by black South African men. Kwaito music is a genre of music, he feels, is the music of black youth while Trance music is a genre listened to by white youth in South Africa. This particular black man when asked about his construction of masculinity aligned himself with rugby and Trance music, in other words his identity and construction of masculinity draws from white Afrikaans socialisation.

His socialisation, regardless of his race and ethnicity, has had the biggest influence in how he conceptualises masculinity. In particular settings, say in the township, this young man would potentially be labelled a coconut, or as trying to be white.

This young man provides an example of the political and socio-economic changes that have taken place in the South African context post-apartheid. He is faced with developing a masculinity identity with multiple faces; dependent on constructing a masculinity which is acceptable in his Afrikaans school setting on the one hand and a masculinity which is acceptable within a township setting. He represents what many post-apartheid youth encounter in negotiating acceptable masculinities in various contexts where masculinity intersects with other variables such as race, class and language. This particular participant has a clear understanding of what characteristics a black man should have. But in saying this he also recognizes that these are not necessarily the characteristics that he possesses, but that does not mean he is less of a man in any way, instead he is a different kind of black man, one who has a hybrid identity, which is a blend of more typically black and white masculine identity.

The social construction of young masculinities in contemporary South Africa is a complex process. The findings of this study regarding race and masculinities indicate that the changes that came with the shift away from apartheid meant masculinities which were not simply black or white, but often hybrid.

6.6 Implications of the findings

“Hypermascularity or exaggerated musculature” (Pompper, 2012, p. 683), was a common theme throughout the findings of the study. The young men in the study spoke about going to the gym to get big muscles, participating in “hard” sports such as rugby to display strength and prowess, consuming copious amounts of alcohol and smoking many cigarettes and marijuana “joints” and engaging in sexual activities. All these activities are features of successful attainment of the hegemonic ideal. However, it may also indicate anxiety about masculinity (MacKinnon, 2003) and preoccupation with the apparent attainment of the visible standards of successful hegemonic masculinity, against an undercurrent of vulnerability about their masculinity.

Participants who spoke about smoking and drinking large amounts of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana, were aware of the risks linked to addiction. However this awareness was not enough to deter them partaking in these activities. The same goes for engaging in sexual

activities with the aim of fathering a child to prove one's achievement of a successful masculinity. Young men risked contracting HIV, and the risk of unwanted pregnancies, but these risks were understated by comparison with the achievement of the township hegemonic ideal.

The findings of this study highlight the essential need for gendered interventions aimed at HIV prevention, prevention of unwanted pregnancies and for alcohol use and abuse. These interventions need to be comprehensive and community-based in order to address the multiple factors influencing the social construction of gender.

Krugman's (1995), argument, although complex, provides a potentially important component in the direction for theory, practice and intervention regarding young men. Krugman argues for the centrality of shame as an organizing affective process in men's development. The main principle in Krugman's theory is that "boys and men are both particularly attuned to shaming responses from others (especially other men) and also very ill-equipped to cope with or transform their own affective experience of shame" (p. 636). Krugman also draws on some of the socialisation pressures identified in social learning paradigms to explain why many young boys are intensely phobic of rejection by others and will go to great lengths to avoid the possibility.

According to Eckes and Trautner (2000), social learning paradigms all ensue from the assumption that gendered behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes are learned from social environments through processes of reinforcement, punishment, modelling and the acquisition of gendered schemas or belief systems. Interventions from a social learning perspective assist boys and men to buffer and alleviate the harmful effects of traditional masculine role socialisation.

Addis and Cohane (2005) posit that social learning approaches to masculinity can also be used to inform development of psycho-educational and preventative interventions. This can be done through challenging existing norms and belief systems about particular sets of behaviours such as substance abuse.

Addis and Mahalik, (2003) assert that because masculinity ideologies begin to develop in early childhood and continue to take shape through adolescence, preventative interventions in school systems are a promising direction for intervention development.

6.7 Limitations of the study

The study aimed to explore how young men within a university setting construct masculinities. In order to explore these constructions the study used a focus group with a small group (7) of participants within a university institution. Given the small sample size and the use of non-random sampling methods, the findings cannot be generalized. Although generalizability is not the aim, the findings of the study can be useful in contexts which are similar to the one in this study. The exclusive use of students is a further limitation of the study as it does not provide insight into the thoughts of those outside the university institution. Having used only one group of participants, the study does not allow for comparisons across different groups. The sample of the participants was made up of two white participants, one coloured participant, and four black participants, omitting participants of the Indian race.

In order for research methods, procedures and findings to be valid, reliable, and transferable, researcher objectivity is essential. This however is not always easily attained. It is therefore important to keep in mind that my assumptions and beliefs as a researcher exist throughout the conceptualisation stage, the analysis and the write-up of this work. Presentation of results could easily reflect the interests of the researcher and ignore the sentiments of the participants, but I have attempted to address that by consistently providing direct participant quotes, followed by an explanation of the quote and my interpretation.

Hegemonic masculinity remains the most widely used conceptual framework for exploring and understanding how men construct and perform masculinities. This however does not mean that it is the only way to understand masculinities. This study could also be framed in a number of other complementary conceptual frameworks.

Lastly, due to the nature of qualitative research, there is the risk of social desirability. Social desirability refers to the tendency of some respondents to report an answer in a way they feel would be more socially acceptable than their truthful answer. They do this to project a favourable image of themselves and to avoid receiving negative evaluations. The concept of social desirability has four characteristics; cultural, personality, mode of data collection, and item. The cultural characteristic is determined by the norms of a particular culture or group; the personality characteristic is determined by the need to conform to social standards; the third characteristic, mode of data collection, is related to the fact that social desirability has been found to interact with some attributes of the interviewer and the respondent including

race, ethnicity, gender, social class and age. The final characteristic, item, refers to the wording of the questions.

This study has attempted to manage issues around social desirability. The study was interested in exploring how young men construct masculinity which is a socially constructed phenomenon and making use of a focus group enabled the young men to share their experiences of being a man. Having male interviewers conducting the interview was conducive to the process of data collection. Interestingly when the participants spoke about their photographs, they were aware of the other participants in the study, particularly in the case of having to explain using grooming products. When explaining the grooming products the participant was quick to defend why he uses these products and says he is aware that it might sound 'gay' of him to talk about using these products.

As a researcher I have to be aware of the possible effects of social desirability on the validity of the responses from the participants. Although I have no control over the cultural and personality trait characteristics of social desirability, the way in which questions are worded and the way in which data is collected can be used to decrease potential socially desirable responses.

Finally, I did not collect this data and therefore was not part of the data collection procedure and because of this, it has impacted on the way in which I have analysed the findings. As a researcher it is important for me to remain aware of this throughout the analysis and discussions of the findings.

6.8 Suggestions for future research

According to McCabe and Ricciardelli (2004), too few studies investigate the interplay of masculinities with age. The Importance of age and in various contexts. Hegemonic masculinity, although useful in understanding masculinity, is not the only concept which can be used to understand and explore masculinities.

Research on South African masculinities has largely been focused on the exploration of how White and Black masculinities have been constructed, particularly post-apartheid masculinities. Given the multiple ethnicities in South Africa, not enough research has been conducted around the Colored masculinities, the Indian masculinities as well as the masculinities of those of Asian or European descent to name but a few.

Recruiting a larger group of participants which is not restricted to the university setting could allow for a comparison to be made between and within groups of participants.

Future research could explore the abovementioned ethnicities as well the role of women in the construction of acceptable masculinities in South Africa. Furthermore, research on the construction of masculinity can be interrogated with the use of other conceptual frameworks as opposed to hegemonic masculinity. It would also be worthwhile to include young women in studies such as this to explore their views about young men and how young men construct and understand masculinity, and their role in the construction and maintenance of particular masculinities.

6.9 Conclusion

This study set out to explore how young men in a university in KwaZulu Natal construct their masculinity. The study explored these constructions using Connell's conceptual framework of hegemonic masculinity. Participants were given the opportunity to reveal their constructions of masculinity through the use of photographs under the heading 'What is it like to be a young man in South Africa today?' Photographs produced around masculinity and manhood included cars, sports, gym, technology, females, and fighting, to name but a few.

It was evident in the study that masculine identity is not static, but fluid and dynamic. The young men in this study had definite ideas of what it means to be a man. These ideas reflected the powerful influence of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in shaping the young men's understandings of what constitutes being a boy. In order to reinforce their sense of masculinity the boys, irrespective of race, tended to construct themselves in opposition to femininity.

The findings of the study suggest that the young men drew on various strategies in the attempt to construct an acceptable masculinity. Young men have three types of masculinity available to them; dominant, complicit and subordinated. Young men commonly drew on the characteristics of the dominant or hegemonic ideal including success, respect, compulsory heterosexuality, physical strength, competitiveness and violence in an attempt to achieve desired masculinity.

Successful masculinity is visible through owning an expensive car, having a girlfriend and engaging in heterosexual relationships, distancing one from homosexual relationships and the willingness to engage in violence.

As evident in the above results and discussion that masculinity is complex, multiple and constantly changing depending on the context. This complexity became even more apparent when examining the role of race in the construction of the young men's masculinities. Race is a key component in the construction of masculinities. But masculinities cannot always be differentiated as either being white or black, as the findings show the emergence of hybrid forms of masculinity.

Throughout the findings it was evident that there is pressure on the young men to conform to hegemonic norms in the construction of masculinity. Young men constantly need to prove their masculinity. According to (Seidler, 1989; 1991) and the findings of the study, young men often struggle to aspire to the idealisation of hegemonic masculinity.

This research has provided insight into how young men construct masculinities as well as how they perform and experience masculinity every day.

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