THE CONSTRUCTION OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENT MASCULINITY

Lee Leonard William Joseph

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of:

Master of Social Science (Counseling Psychology)

at the School of Psychology,

University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

June 2006

DECLARATION

This thesis was undertaken at the School of Psychology, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. Unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, this thesis is a product of the author's own work.

Lee Leonard William Joseph

Pietermaritzburg

June 2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

The field of masculinity research is an increasingly important area of concern for gender researchers. Contemporary masculinity studies have extensively explored the construction of masculine identities and the range of social processes that generate them. However, these studies have largely focused on non-disabled masculinity and as a consequence have overlooked the construction and subjective experience of disabled masculinity. This research is thus an attempt to address this gap by focusing on the construction and subjective experience of visually impaired adolescent boys. This study consisted of semi structured face to face interviews with visually impaired boys, which were fully transcribed and analysed using the integrated analytic approach of social constructionism and psycho-analysis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VI

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Masculinity is becoming an increasingly critical area of research, especially within the South African context, and is currently being pushed to the forefront of gender research. It is becoming pivotal in our understanding of social issues such as HIV, crime, domestic violence and drug and alcohol abuse.

The contexts within which masculinities are constructed are a central concern for contemporary masculinity researchers (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). Masculinity needs to be placed in relation to a number of socially constructed issues. Feminist and pro-feminist writers have identified a number of these related issues, such as "the complex intersections of gender with race, disability, sexuality, class and age in the practices of men" (Pease & Pringle, 2001, p.1). The area of disability could be considered as one of the sites for masculinity research and needs to be explored further. The discourses that surround disability need to be explored so as to gain a greater understanding of how disabled adolescents are positioned in relation to hegemonic forms of masculinity and femininity.

There is an urgent need for the broadening of our understandings regarding masculinity in different settings in order to inform effective interventions, policies and practices. This literature review will provide an overview of the range of theories pertaining to masculinity, disability, identity and adolescence, as well as demonstrating the sites for the expression of masculinity. In doing so, this research will be contextualised by the identification of gaps in the literature.

1.2   DEFINITIONS AND WORKING CONCEPTS OF MASCULINITY

Our understandings of masculinity, its definitions and its various forms and expressions, have changed over time and place. These have changed in response to political, social and philosophical advances. These changes have to a certain extent filtered down into commonly held assumptions, practices and beliefs of people. However, these changes have not transformed the material practices and lived experiences of many people as both men and women continue to be disadvantaged, disempowered and marginalised within society. The following section will review various theoretical attempts to explain aspects of gender and masculinity. Using a social constructionist framework, an attempt will be made to give an explanation for the continued existence of hegemonic forms of masculinity and its relative power over subordinated and marginalised others.

The challenge for many masculinity researchers is in defining what constitutes masculinity. This is made difficult by the need for definitions that are not solely limited to a set number of characteristics, descriptions and behaviours, as these overlook the complex nature of what it is to be masculine and the concomitant interactions between the self and others. It is therefore extremely difficult to give a single, unified definition of masculinity that is able to capture all of its complexity, meanings and variations.

1.2.1   Hegemonic Masculinity

The starting point for many explorations into the construction of masculinity is to define and describe the hegemonic standard, which permeates our understanding of what it is to be male and masculine. It may also serve as a point of reference, from which to explore masculinity as a whole. Central to the concept of hegemonic masculinity is the notion of hegemony, which for Donaldson is "a notion as slippery and difficult as the idea of masculinity itself" (Donaldson, 1993, p. 644). The concept of hegemony was developed by Gramsci in 1971 and involves the maintenance of social power of particular groups in society over others. This power, however, appears to be founded on persuasion and consent rather than force or coercion (Steer, 2001).

Thus hegemony permeates all levels and structures within society and becomes entrenched in the ordering of society, gender relations, political and economic structures and practices, amongst many others (Donaldson, 1993). Pivotal to the concept of hegemony is its' taken for granted nature in that it becomes natural, normal and a part of the lived experience of large sectors of society. Edley and Wetherell's (1999) description of the function of Gramsci's concept of hegemony is: "Hegemonic ideologies preserve, legitimate and naturalize the interests of the powerful – marginalizing and subordinating the claims of other groups" (Edley & Wetherell, 1999, p.336).

According to Wetherell & Edley (1999), Gramsci's concept of hegemony was used by Connell to develop his notion of hegemonic masculinity, which is central to his hierarchy of masculinity. Connell (1987 as cited in Dworkin and Wachs, 2000, p.49) describes this construct as: "hegemonic masculinity, the most dominant form of masculinity (white, middle-class, heterosexual) in a given historical period, is defined in relation to femininity and subordinated masculinities." The presence of hegemonic forms of masculinity in any given society is, as Connell (1995) suggests: to provide support and legitimacy for patriarchy's role in sustaining men's power and position over subordinated others. (Connell, 1995, cited in Steer, 2001, p. 108). Donaldson (1993) contends that the invention of the term hegemonic masculinity is used to explain feminist arguments that the relationship of men to women is often oppressive. For Donaldson this oppression is based on heterosexist and homophobic discourses, in which "women exist as potential sexual objects for men while men are negated as sexual objects for men" (Donaldson, 1993, p.645).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity could be likened to that of a metaphor, in that the standards or norms set, the beliefs and values held, the embodiment and representations of hegemonic masculinity, may for the most part only exist in the minds of people subject to it. This is not to say that there are not role models who appear to embody it, as in the case of some sportsmen. Whilst this needs to be acknowledged, the more important feature is as Connell states, "hegemonic masculinity is not a personality type or an actual male character. Rather, it is an ideal or set of prescriptive social norms, symbolically represented, but a crucial part of the

texture of many routine mundane social and disciplinary activities" (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p.336).

The power contained within hegemonic forms of masculinity is therefore not reliant on the numbers of men who attain the hegemonic standard, but rather rests on those attempting to attain it. The strivings of many men, which involves both conscious and unconscious attempts to align themselves with this hegemonic standard, results in the perpetuation and maintenance of hegemonic forms of masculinity (Edley & Wetherell 1995). It thus becomes apparent that: "Although it is argued that many men do not live up to the culturally hegemonic type, they do, nonetheless, benefit from its existence and are 'complicit' in sustaining it" (Connell, 1995, cited in Steer, 2001, p.108). The status and benefit bestowed on an individual by society, is likely to depend on his proximity to the hegemonic standard of masculinity. The hierarchical nature of masculinity and the standards set within it are negotiated through the complex intersection of race, class, gender and sexual orientation. It is thus hypothesised that White men, who are either gay or disabled, are in a position of subordination to the hegemonic standard of masculinity, but in relation to black men of the same groupings (i.e. gay or disabled) they would be privileged and have greater power within society. Women and girls, as another subordinate group, would follow a similar pattern, and have a hegemonic standard against which other forms of femininity would be measured. Even in respect to the dominance of some women over others, hegemonic masculinity dominates the gender landscape. This is supported by Majors (1990 as cited in Dworkin & Wachs, 2000, p.49) who contends that "although at times both privileged and subordinated male bodies may be said to enjoy male privilege and are seen as physically superior to female athletes, marginalized masculinities are indubitably stigmatised through comparisons with white middle-class norms." This illustrates that masculinity, be it hegemonic or subordinate is constructed as superior to femininity, but it also illustrates the hierarchical structure of masculinity.

The efficacy of using definitions that reify hegemonic masculinity according to race may need to be questioned. These definitions are for the most part developed in western contexts, and may not be appropriate for contexts in which the dominant race group is not white and middle class, like that found in the developing world. Edley

and Wetherell draw attention to some of the criticisms that may be levelled at Connell's hegemonic masculinity: "It is also unclear whether there is only one hegemonic strategy at any point in time or whether hegemonic strategies can vary across different parts of social formation, creating conflicts or tensions for individual men between different hegemonic forms as they move across social practices." (Wetherell & Edley, 1999, p. 337).

Despite the pervasive power of hegemonic masculinity and its success in defining the norms, standards and boundaries of masculinity, there are periods and contexts in which this power may be challenged. As suggested by Edley & Wetherell (1995): "there is space for resistance, with subordinate forms constantly striving for ascendancy" (cited in Steer. 2001, p.117). Thus a seemingly invulnerable construct may at times be assailed and even new standards created. In fact, Wetherell & Edley argue that "one of the most effective ways of being hegemonic, or being a "man", may be to demonstrate one's distance from hegemonic masculinity" (1999, in Steer, 2001, p.111). The need to challenge hegemonic constructs of masculinity and its more destructive and oppressive aspects is undeniable. This focus and the negative connotations associated with hegemonic masculinity may, however, at times distract researches from exploring alternative masculine constructs. Therefore it is essential to note that: "While it is important that research draws attention to the oppressive ways masculinities are constructed, it also needs to be attentive to the ways, contexts and times in which boys inhabit alternative (not necessarily subordinate) masculinities and the attraction of these to them" (Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002, p. 73). This attempt to reframe research into hegemonic masculinity may be seen as being in opposition to Connell's compliant versus resistant view of masculinity construction. Edley and Wetherell (1999) discuss Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity, which contends that men's identities are constructed by their position in relation to the hegemonic standard of masculinity, as they comply with or resists it. Frosh et al (2001) introduce the notion that masculine identities may be produced without having to comply or resist hegemonic forms of masculinity and may exist independently of them.

1.2.2 Masculinity and Adolescence

Adolescence is often defined in society as a crisis period of turmoil, hormonal changes, sexual exploration and intense interest in the opposite sex (Epstein & Johnson, 1998). Adolescence is often depicted as a period of biological upheaval. Arguing from a social constructionist position, Epstein and Johnson (1998) take issue with biologically essentialist notions of adolescence. They argue that the notion of adolescence is a cultural construction that does not exist separately from social practices and discourses. The aim of social constructionist accounts of adolescence is therefore not directed solely at dismissing the biological basis of adolescence, but instead, advocates increased emphasis being placed on the meanings attributed to it. Connell has suggested that experiences of bodies, especially during adolescence need to be understood as part of an interactive 'circuit of production' that makes some sense of the interconnectedness of the biological and the social.

The 'storm and stress' model of adolescence originally proposed by G. Stanley Hall (1940) regards adolescence as a time in which "conflict and confusion inevitably accompany awakening sexual impulses, bodily changes, and an increased awareness of self and society" (Santrock, 1999, as cited in Hook, 2002; Warwick & Aggleton, 1990). The emphasis however is still placed on biological processes and centres adolescence within the individual. Social constructionist readings of adolescence would however, consider adolescence as being discursively defined. This is perpetuated in society through pedagogical practices, school cultures and parental expectations, such that adolescents become positioned according to the popular Western discourse of adolescence. The storm and stress discourse creates expectations of adolescence, which are age-specific, categorises people within an age range according to these expectations, thus positioning people to behave within the discourse. This however does not answer how adolescents may need to subjectively position themselves in relation to these cultural constructions. It is anecdotally suggested that the storm and crisis discourse may have a gendered aspect, perhaps with girls expected to be emotionally volatile and boys characterised by a stormy and persistent sex-drive, states over which they have very little control.

The prevalent view of adolescence within developmental psychology has been Erikson's psychosocial theory. Erikson named the period from puberty to adulthood as the stage of 'identity versus role confusion' when the person integrates experiences and attempts new roles in order to accomplish a coherent sense of self in society (Bukatko & Daelher, 1998). Erikson argues that the adolescent has to form a sense of self or 'identity' in relation to demands, expectations and practices in society and the resolution of conflict. This is partly in line with a social constructionist view of adolescence as it introduces social processes in relation to individualism, but is limited by its cultural universalism and assumptions around fixed biological stages. The stages set in stone by Erikson's theory may not make sense of how socioeconomic changes, HIV and AIDS, cultural transitions, consumer cultures and globalisation are producing new expectations and demands on adolescents. Nor does Erikson's theory explain how adolescence is shaped by political, economic and historical factors – for example, how the apartheid struggle produced expectations of opposition or how the legal rights of adolescents in various countries creates differing expectations.

Essentialist and developmental accounts of adolescence have proven to be insufficient in capturing the complexity of a socially constructed phenomenon, such as that of adolescence. This has necessitated the shift to more in depth and critical approaches to the study of adolescence that accounts for the subjectivity of individuals and the ways in which they are discursively constructed in society. One such study was that conducted by Frosh et al. (2002), which provides an interpretive framework within which a deeper understanding of adolescent masculinities can be achieved. Adolescence forms the primary focus of their research as they state it is "a period...in which boys are becoming acculturated (or acculturating themselves) into increasingly salient masculine identities" (Frosh, et al., 2002, p.1). This is a tenable view of adolescence as culturally, subjectively and discursively defined, and provides a theoretical framework within which to explore adolescent masculinity. Frosh et al. (2002) study, amongst several others, supports and gives credence to research endeavours that focus on adolescence.

1.3   THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO GENDER AND MASCULINITY

The concept of gender has been approached from various theoretical positions, including biological arguments, social role theory, social constructionism and psychoanalytic frameworks. These theories can also be effectively integrated, as seen in the work of contemporary masculinity researchers such as Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002), who combine social constructionism and psychoanalysis. The exploration of gender as a topic of research is central to our understandings of human experience, and it is essential that an overview of the theories and approaches to the study of gender are given.

1.3.1   Biological And Essentialist Arguments

The first major theoretical position is biological determinism or essentialism. This view is contained within a biological framework and asserts that biological difference is the predetermining factor in gender production. The divide between male and female and masculine and feminine is polarised by this position and thus one is masculine because of innate biological dispositions. This biological view places emphasis on biological processes and anatomical structures. Some of these would include the differential hormonal production involved in the development of the sexes and sex organs. This perspective is likely to assert that testosterone causes men to be masculine and results in a number of concomitant associations, such as aggression, toughness and being unemotional, while oestrogen causes women to be feminine and its associations with being demure, submissive, passive and nurturing. These dispositional characteristics are attributed to sex differences and assumed to be true and inevitable. This view is commonly held by people in society, as is suggested by Edley and Wetherell (1995, p.9) "it is not unusual to hear people arguing that men are naturally the more aggressive sex, for example, or that women are much more emotional than men". Other signifiers of gender that are present in society include the meanings attached to the sex organs of men and women: "A penis means masculinity or manhood, while breasts and vaginas denote femininity or womanhood" (Edley and Wetherell, 1995, p. 9). This illustrates the embodiment of gender, as the body has become inextricably linked and synonymous with gender. The process however, of

8

becoming masculine or feminine involves more than being born with a specific set of sex organs, for these do not in themselves denote gender. This forms one of the central criticisms of this approach and has been questioned by many researchers, as is suggested by Edley and Wetherell (1995, p.14): "anthropologists (Ortner and Whitehead, 1981), social constructionists (Lorber and Farrell, 1991) and ethnomethodologists (Kessler and McKenna, 1978) have all sought to question whether the distinction between males and females is not itself a social and conventional construct, rather than something simply given to us by nature."

The argument is not whether biology or hormonal production for example, plays a role in the development of sex difference, for this is undeniable, but rather to what extent they play a role in gender development. The prominent psychologist John Money used the biological paradigm extensively when explaining the development of gender (Fausto-Sterling, 1995). He listed ten stages within which males and females develop. Out of these ten stages nine are associated with biological and hormonal development from the foetal level to that of hormonal excretion at puberty. The tenth stage involves the acquisition of appropriate gender roles and the reproduction of these roles (Fausto-Sterling, 1995). The author continued to comment on this frame work in asserting that "Many medical texts reproduce this neat little scheme, and suggest that it is a literal account of the scientific truth, but they neglect to point out how, at each step, scientists have woven into the fabric their own deeply social understanding of what it means to be male or female" (Fausto-Sterling, 1995, p.129). The above assertion is supported by Edley and Wetherell (1995) when they contend that gender, as an area of research is susceptible to these influences: "At its most innocent, political values and assumptions can inadvertently enter into and influence our perceptions of what constitutes an interesting and researchable topic" (p. 11). This emphasises the need for alternative explanations for gender development, as even the medical paradigm is vulnerable to the social and relational nature of human experience.

The power and relative stability of biological essentialism as an explanation of gender and sexuality is in most part due to the mobilization of societal and cultural assumptions. These are primarily based on the biological and reproductive difference between men and women. The framing of gender based on this difference, bestows a

significant amount of power on certain sectors of society, namely men, and is used to justify inequalities and exploitative practices and behaviours towards women. This is epitomised by the deployment of sex drive discourses that conveniently explain many men's gendered and sexualised attitudes and practices towards women. These are seen as being a function of biology, the role of which is taken for granted and not questioned. The true power contained in discourses based on biological explanations, such as sex drive discourses, is that these ultimately become held as truth. These beliefs lock individuals, especially women into positions, which excuse behaviours and practices that are disempowering. The power transferred to men in this context is thus the consequence of women and men taking up these discourses and occupying positions based on the seeming truths conveyed by biological explanations of sex and gender. This is supported by Lindegger and Strebel (1998, p.6): "yet these opinions reflect a focus on a male, heterosexual construction of sexuality which upholds the traditional view of a sex drive for which men are not responsible, but which women are expected to curb and so entrenches dominant gendered power relations."

The lack of reflexivity of researchers historically has resulted in a skewed sense of gender and masculinity, predicated upon beliefs and practices around biological difference, which in turn guarantees the dominance of hegemonic forms of masculinity. These apparent limitations of biological essentialism have resulted in a need to expand the scope of gender research so as to incorporate previously overlooked factors, such as socio-cultural variables. It becomes apparent that: "The more interesting question for research on sexuality is to chart what is culturally possible - a far more expansive domain" (Vance, 1995, p.47). It is therefore important for gender research to move beyond the bounds of biological explanations for gender, to ones that incorporate broader social, cultural and political processes. It is important, however, not to dismiss entirely, the role that biology plays in our attempts to develop alternative explanations, as this would again reduce and simplify the complex construct known as gender.

1.3.2 Sex Role Theory

The second major perspective is an offshoot of social role theory developed by anthropologists in the 1930s, namely sex role theory (Connell, 2000). Connell (2000, p.7) maintains, "Sex roles were understood as patterns of social expectation, norms for the behaviour of men and women, which were transmitted to youth in a process of 'socialization' ". These sex roles were divided into genderized forms of expression, such as the ways in which men and women should behave, work, think and feel. Furthermore Fausto-Sterling (1995) draws attention to the prescriptive norms, values, behaviours and expectations associated with sex roles; he contends, "Adolescent boys do not dream of marriage, but of careers and a professional future. A healthy adolescent girl, in contrast, must fantasise about falling in love, marrying, and raising children. Only a masculinised girl dreams of a professional future." (p. 132).

This model as the name suggests, combines the biological aspects of gender as well as the social. The use of the term, "role" implies that men and women have prescribed ways of enacting their sex and gender, and has been equated to the roles and performances that actors have to play in drama productions. If one had to consider masculinity as a performance and men as actors in it, then there would be a set script, a series of lines and a sequence of movements and behaviours, according to which men should perform masculinity (Edley and Wetherell, 1995). Although the biology of men and women is acknowledged in this model, the predominant emphasis is on the social, it has therefore been suggested that role theory can generally be understood as a form of social determinism (Edley & Wetherell, 1995).

The development of a masculine identity is for this model, a product of a process of socialisation. This model argues that the identification of children with role models of the same sex, most especially parents, is one of the primary processes in masculinity development. The mirroring of behaviours and attitudes of parents and other adults, and the sanctioning of inappropriate attitudes and behaviours is central to this process of socialisation and the development of formalised gender roles. One of the primary assumptions of this model in its attempt to explain the gendered identities of men and women, is that the biological differences between them offers different platforms from which society develops its" gender system". The assignment of roles to the

biological differences of men and women results in the production of gender. Once individuals take up these roles and act on them the development of an appropriate gender identity is achieved (Edley & Wetherell, 1995).

There are however, a number of criticisms levelled at this model. One of these is suggested by Edley and Wetherell (1995) when they state, "A number of critics have suggested that sex-role theorists simply assume the existence of two sex-roles on the basis that there are two biologically distinct sexes." (p. 88). This assumption would limit the ways in which gender is viewed, as it presumes that there are only two forms of expression possible in gender, this would forestall more critical inquiries into the field of gender and masculinity. It is further suggested that sex role theories position as a social theory, is undercut by the 'prominence' given to biology.

David Lee and Howard Newby (1984) cited in Wetherell and Edley (1995, p.70) "define socialisation as 'the business of learning the normative standards of society.'" The process of socialisation is therefore seen as a critical developmental task for both men and women. The failure however, to successfully acquire the appropriate gender roles has consequences for those men and women who do not live up to the normative standards set by society. Individuals, who deviate from their ascribed roles to any marked degree, would be sanctioned, as in the case of many gay people who deviate from heterosexual norms. These deviations are seen as being a product of ineffective or poor socialisation and seen as the exception to the rule instead of being seen as a significant area of investigation. This model also does not appear to account for individual agency and that the process of socialisation is not infallible. The presence of alternative expressions of gender is therefore seen as deficient or deviant and as a lack in the individual, instead of being a lack in the theory itself. The consequence of this is that alternative expressions are dismissed and blame is placed on the individual or group of individuals, and is not seen as an opportunity to explore the alternative forms possible and the spaces in voices of resistance. The norms that are prescribed for gender are sometimes confused by sex role theorists in that the rules men apply to masculinity, in respects to the practices involved in being masculine, are confused with the expectation that society has in regards too masculinity. Edley and Wetherell maintain that this has "... encouraged sex-role theorists to see any forms of activity

which were at variance with such norms as, not just different, but deviant and defective" (Edley and Wetherell, 1995, p. 90).

1.3.3 Psychoanalytic Approaches

Psychoanalytic theories of masculinity draw attention to the origins of masculine subjectivity in family life and early social experience (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). The starting point of these theories is not genes, hormones or social roles but rather the experience of self, the thoughts, feelings and fantasies, which constitute masculine subjectivity (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). There is less concern with what Wood (1984, in Edley & Wetherell, 1995) calls 'the outward face' of sexist enactment (such as male bravado) but the deeper level of insecurities – the 'inward face' of masculinity.

Freud's psychoanalysis has often been considered phallocentric because his view of masculinity is so favourable. Classic psychoanalysis explains masculine identity as rooted in the boy's identification and introjection of the father as the internal voice of the super-ego, which sets ideal standards of behaviour (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). Critics note that his theories of development were focused more on male than female experience, with men constructed as the superior sex, possessing the capacity for idealism, assertiveness and civilized power (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). Some believe that Freud argued that femininity was a failed form of masculinity (Edley & Wetherell, 1995), whereas recent feminist re-readings of Freud highlight that in his later work, he took a less extreme view (Hird, 2003).

Object relations theory developed psychoanalytic thought by placing primacy on the internalization of early relationships as formative for individual personality. Under the influence of feminism, later object relationists such as Ralph Greenson and Nancy Chodorow provided a radical revision of Freudian notions of masculinity (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). Greenson argues that before the Oedipal phase, boys are completely identified with their mothers and thus with the feminine, therefore, unlike girls, the boys have to dis-identify from his primary object and then has to counter-identify with the father in order to accomplish a masculine identity (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). This idea that boys have two extra stages to accomplish in the achievement of a gender identity leads to the conclusion, shared by Greenson (1968), Chorodorow (1978) and

others, that men have more fragile ego structures than women. There is more potential for failed identity construction in a process that involves more dislocation through these phases. Appealing though this idea may be, it may be limited by cultural practices of parenting, where the involvement of fathers, male figures and other caregivers vary across contexts. Chodorow (1978) develops the view that the mother plays a crucial role in the early development of gender identity. The conscious and unconscious expectations of the mother play a pivotal role, Chorodrow (1978) argues, with mothers acting towards sons as gendered 'others', even before the baby boy knows that he is male (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). Thus the mother's own experience of men and masculinity structures her responses towards her male infant.

According to object relationists the role that a mother plays in the development of a child, both psychologically and physically, is of critical importance for identity development and is widely recognised. The quality of the mother child relationship, be it one characterised by distance and unavailability, or one of constant attention and the fulfilment of the child's every need and whim, all have implications for the development of identity. The development of a masculine identity is therefore reliant on the relationship established and the level of attachment between the mother and child.

A common criticism of psychoanalytic theories is their universalist assumptions and concomitant neglect of issues of diversity. The object relations and psycho analytic theories described above may be limited to the experience of the white middle-class and the nuclear family, and makes less sense in contexts of multiple caregivers, intergenerational child-rearing practices, the effects of migrant labour patterns on the family, single parenting and families that have been radically affected and restructured by the HIV pandemic. In this regard: "Diversity, in general, poses some troubling issues for psychoanalytic theory. One issue is simply the commonality of the kind of family patterns psychoanalysts assume" (Edley & Wetherell, 1995, p 66).

A possible solution to the inadequacies of psychoanalytic universalism is to combine a psychoanalytic account of subjectivity with social constructionist approach to inter subjectivity. Hollway (1984, cited in Frosh et al., 2002) maintains that when describing the formation of subjectivities it is important to account for the individual's

'investment' in taking up one position against another within social discourse. She proposes that psychoanalysis is best suited as an interpretive framework for the emotional and psychic investments of individuals in social discourse (Frosh et al. 2002). Several recent studies have used a combined interpretive framework that draws on both psychoanalysis and social constructionism (Frosh et al., 2002; Nayak & Kehily, 1996; Redman, 2000), and have acknowledged the value of using an integrated approach.

1.3.4 Social Constructionist Approaches to Identity, Gender and Masculinity

Literature that discusses identity is of a complex and layered nature. This originates from its multiple theoretical orientations, ranging from developmental approaches, such as the work of Erik Erikson to that of social constructionist writers, such as Vivienne Burr (2001). This research is contained within a social constructionist framework, which takes a specific standpoint in relation to the concept of identity. This view considers identity as being a social and relational phenomenon, rather than being an intrinsic characteristic of an individual. Burr (2001, p.30) states, "The things that make up human identity, such as masculinity/femininity, hetero-/homosexual, sane/insane, black/white, working/middle-class and so on – these may be seen as socially bestowed identities rather than essences of the person". Social constructionism is therefore premised on the idea of social and cultural processes that are involved in the production of identities such as masculinity. There are variants of social constructionism which focus to a greater or lesser extent on the ways in which identities are produced through social institutions or accomplished in social interactions (Redman, 2001). In general, social constructionism creates an explanatory framework through which social and relational phenomena, such as identity, gender, sexuality and disability can be explored.

Connell (2002) presents a variation of social constructionism that has been widely applied within masculinity research, for example, Morrell (1998), Coulter (2003), and Robertson (2003). Connell (2002, p.10) describes gender as "the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices (governed by this structure) that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social

processes". Connell's (2002) definition overcomes some of the inadequacies of previous models, such as the contradictions that arise from fixed gender categories or the dynamic nature of culture and society. Connell (2002) views the concept of gender as a constructive process in which individuals, as active subjects, negotiate positions in relation to social processes. Gender within this framework is not merely innate and biological, but is a constructive process within which social processes are perpetually in operation. Individuals position themselves in this process and are simultaneously positioned by it. Consequently, masculinity cannot be conceptualised as being one-dimensional but is instead multifaceted.

Social constructionism takes into account the complexity of masculinity and considers masculinity as being plural. Connell (2000) emphasises, that there does not appear to be a single pattern that can be applied within all contexts. One of the central features of social constructionism is the concept of discourse and the subject positions offered to people within these. We need to speak of 'masculinities', and not masculinity'. This concept of multiple masculinities is exemplified by Connell's (2000) work on the hierarchy of masculinity. This hierarchy is comprised of hegemonic, complicit, subordinate and marginalised masculinities.

Following from Connell's original conceptualization of multiple masculinities a number of theorists have used this in order to further our understanding of masculinity. Laberge and Albert (2000) acknowledge this and draw attention to the importance of understanding masculinity by researching masculinity in relation to a number of social constructs: "We also employ recent feminist and pro-feminist research that emphasizes the need to acknowledge the existence of multiple masculinities and the complex intersections and tensions among gender, class, race and sexuality" (Laberge & Albert, 2000).

1.3.5 Summary

It is thus apparent that there is considerable debate around biological and social accounts of gender. For example, Vance (1995) suggests that while "most observers agree that human behaviour is produced by a complex interaction of biological and cultural factors; they differ on the relative weight they assign to each" (p.47). It is therefore important to contextualise any research effort within a theoretical framework that will allow for a greater understanding of masculinity in all its forms and expressions. It is hypothesised that a depth approach that utilises elements of social constructionism and psychoanalysis, such as that proposed by Frosh (2002), will enable the author to gain a richer account of individuals' subjective experiences of what it is to be a male in different contexts, alongside an understanding of the social construction of gender. These contexts however have been limited primarily to the exploration of the intersection of masculinity with race, femininity and class. Researchers have for the most part, overlooked some of the less obvious marginalised and subordinate groups in society, such as the disabled. This research effort will attempt to redress this lack.

1.4 DISABILITY

1.4.1 Introduction

Disability has been defined by Barnes (1994, as cited in Marks, 1999) as "the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers" (p.79). There needs to be a distinction made between disability and impairment. Impairment can be defined as "the limitation in a person's physical, mental or sensory functioning. Impairments only become salient and disabling in specific settings" (Marks, 1999, p. 80). These definitions differ in the degree to which responsibility is conferred to an individual. Impairment is seen as being the product of an individual's deficiency in one area or another, while disability is seen to be a product of a lack in society.

A number of other socially constructed concepts have been extensively explored, such as sexuality, gender and race, but disability appears to have been largely excluded from social inquiry. This can be understood for two different reasons. Firstly, disability was and to a large extent, still is considered to be an embodied phenomenon nested in biological and essentialist discourses. The second reason lies in the historical social approach to the disabled, especially evident in previous practices to marginalise those who are different through institutionalisation. These practices were carried out on many different levels, from government policies, educational opportunities, sheltered employment and societal perceptions of disability. This relegation to the outer fringes of society disempowered disabled people and silenced voices of opposition. Academia and research have primarily not been open to disabled people due to accessibility, both structurally and perceptually. This is in direct contrast to the feminist, gay and lesbian movements that were strongly rooted in academic scholarship (Marks, 1999). Davis (1995 in Marks, 1999, p.9) maintains that "...the concept of disability has been relegated to a side-show, a freak show at that, far away from the academic midway of progressive ideas and concerns'.

Disability has been considered peripheral, to only be studied by experts or as an adjunct to other 'more important' social constructs such as gender. When it has been studied, the concept of disability has been narrowly focused on physical impairments and accessibility to social structures and government policies. This has negated the role that disability may play in uncovering and highlighting the subtle 'organising principles', which underpin our concepts of subjectivity and social relations. Other concepts like gender and race have been used to identify and explore these organising principles. It is however, hypothesised that the omission of disability precludes a greater understanding (Marks, 1999). Furthermore, as Jenks (1998 as cited in Marks, 1999, p. 17) states: " 'core sociological dichotomies', for example between structure and agency, continuity and change, fact and value, normal and pathological, culture and nature, public and private, needs and wants, relativism and absolutism" could be elucidated through the deconstruction of discourses surrounding disability.

Dichotomies are pervasive in our understanding of social phenomenon and are often used at specific times depending on the current theoretical and philosophical climate within academia. The approaches to disability mirror some of these theoretical

understandings, such as 'positivist' approaches to the investigation, categorisation and intervention of disability, which would focus on prevention and rehabilitation or those which rest on more socially constructed approaches, which move away from centring disability within the individual (Marks, 1999). Through the growing reflexivity of academia, there has been recognition of the dialectical process involved in critically examining socially constructed phenomena and the necessity of maintaining such rigour to allow for the unfolding of dynamic positions that are held by individuals, groups, institutions and government. There is a need to recognise that these positions are not fixed but are fluid and shift in relation to the subjectivity of individuals, which have impact on more macro levels in society, which in turn affect change at the individual level. Thus an understanding of disability needs to hold both processes simultaneously. This movement between two positions is countered by resistance in theoretical discourses, which serve to maintain existing power hierarchies, as in the case of the hegemony of more positivist, biomedical models of understanding social phenomena like disability. Models, which attempt to polarise ability and disability, do not recognise that disability like gender and sexuality, is placed upon a continuum in which there are numerous possibilities for expression, which include aspects of both ability and disability. In light of this: "Post-structuralist theory thus challenges the notion of stable, prior or essential characteristics or identities of people in favour of a much more fluid socially constructed subject" (Marks, 1999, p.17).

Attempts to capture the fluid, dynamic nature of the disabled identity have experimented with changing the terminology of disability and ability. For example the term 'Contingently able bodied' (CAB) has been proposed to encompass the full range of positions of ability and disability, which an individual might occupy during his life, depending on a number of social, cultural, economic and temporal variables. It mirrors broader understandings of identity in which identity is not seen as static, but is actually expected to change in response to various internal and external factors throughout the lifespan.

In order to explore the complexity of concepts like disability and masculinity one needs to position oneself in relation to available theoretical perspectives.

1.5 THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO DISABILITY

1.5.1 Psychoanalytic Approaches

Psychoanalytic and psychodynamic approaches are able to elucidate both disabled and non-disabled intra and inter psychic experiences and investments. Both disabled and non-disabled people experience intra-psychic conflicts, which are influenced by socio- cultural values. Psychoanalysis understands these conflicts as reflecting the dichotomies in society around disability, for example the conflict between wanting to reject the disabled, while simultaneously needing to conform to society's views and values towards the disabled. These conflicts result in varied responses, both conscious and unconscious, to the disabled individual. These may be in tension with socio-cultural, familial and religious values.

This tension may result in feelings of guilt and the need to alleviate its accompanying anxiety, which may at times lead to patronising attitudes and the disempowerment of disabled individuals (Marks, 1999).

Individuals and societal responses to the disabled are often motivated by intra psychic processes, which make use of various defence mechanisms to remove intolerable thoughts and feelings evoked by the disabled, such as projection, splitting and repression. In this way responses to disabled people vary. They can often be rejecting and disparaging while also being beneficent and custodial, an approach, which at times may border on patronising the disabled. The motivations behind rejecting responses of non-disabled are strongly linked to our notions of wholeness and the importance placed on being intact and the anxieties created about not being whole. This is based upon the internalisation of societal norms and values, which Marks (1999, p. 21) describes as "a narcissistic culture in which people strive for 'perfection' and 'independence'". The anxiety around not achieving perfection is evoked by disabled people and at times is projected onto those people who embody and represent these imperfections. Therefore those who have been labelled disabled, carry their own anxieties as well as those projected onto them by society.

20

The responses and interactions of non-disabled people toward disabled people is contrasted by the dichotomy of independence versus dependence and the relative weight which individuals and societies place on either position (Marks, 1999). For example in Western societies primacy is placed on the independence of individuals, this however may differ in other contexts in which the community and a collective identity is emphasised as in many African cultures.

As Marks (1999) suggests, the fear created by dependency within able-bodied people may be projected onto those who embody this. These responses result in feelings of inadequacy, social withdrawal, anger and self-denigration in the disabled person. Mason (1992, as cited in Marks, 1999) suggests that these responses have a basis in reality where oppression is an everyday experience of disabled people. This oppression is maintained further by its internalisation by individual disabled people. Disabled people are themselves both containers and perpetuators of their own denigration and isolation (Marks, 1999).

This oppression however, unlike biomedical models, which place responsibility on the individual and often results in blame, should not be interpreted as the individual being consciously aware and responsible for their own oppression. Disabled people do however, have agency and are able to resist and contest as well as submit and comply. These positions, which are both consciously and unconsciously motivated, may vary from one individual to another. This demonstrates the interface between the psycho-analytic and social constructionist approaches, in that disability is constructed as having particular meanings and positions within which disabled people have to negotiate a personal sense of these socially constructed meanings and find ways to cope with feelings that are evoked by them. This supports Frosh et al. integrated approach of Social constructionism and psychoanalytic theory in understanding disabled identities.

While there are very real issues of accessibility to structures and opportunities and the lack of knowledge surrounding experience of disability exists, these issues should not mask the power of unconscious intra psychic processes. Therefore, emphasis placed on media campaigning, awareness workshops and highlighting individual disabled

achievements may not be enough to overcome prejudices and perceptions, which are deeply embedded in and perpetuated by intra psychic processes.

1.5.2   The Social Model of Disability

The social model integrates the critical perspectives of disabled people into a theoretical framework, through which disability may be viewed. With this in mind, it is difficult to attribute the development of the model to a single theorist; however Marks (1999) and Lloyd (1992) identify Oliver (1983), Finkelstein (1980) and Hunt (1966) as some of the major proponents of this theory. Disability campaigners have primarily used this social model, in order to further awareness and understanding of disability. One of its central tenets is that it appeals for an understanding of disability as being located externally to the individual and existing in the broader social, political and economical environment. The focus is more on discriminatory practices in these environments and how they set the disabled individual apart from 'able bodied' individuals. As such attention has centred primarily on changing government legislation and the incorporation of the rights of disabled people: "Our sense of normality and difference does not arise naturally from physical or mental differences between people, but rather is an effect of the way in which these differences are framed through an interaction between people in the context of work and society" (Marks, 1999, p.82)

The focus has been on the identification of overt barriers and to a certain extent discriminatory practices. There has been a move towards the removal and adaptation of physical obstacles and to a lesser extent, an increasing awareness of less overt barriers such as labels and terminology around disability. Although these adaptations may seem to be attempts at inclusion, they do not address the more insidious forms of discrimination that serve to maintain disabled people as being separate and outside the mainstream society. This approach to inclusion ignores the subtle messages, which are communicated to disabled people about their position and value in society, that they are ad hoc additions to established social structures and processes. As Marks (1999, p. 85) argues, these adaptations only "reinforce associations of disability as something which cannot be harmoniously included into the 'able' world". If this is linked to the psychoanalytic perspective, as described above, it is easy to conceive how difference

22

and abnormality becomes internalised in the disabled psyche and is played out in the lived experiences of disabled people. The obvious inclusion of, for example, ramps for wheelchair users goes a long way to address unequal access to buildings. However, the ramps placement, often at the back or to the side of buildings, communicates a message of being different and accorded less status (Marks, 1999). This could be likened to apartheid legislation where there were different entrances and poorer facilities for non-white people in South Africa. Racist oppression has been studied extensively but the internal and external oppression of disabled people has been largely ignored.

The social model focuses on disabling environments but has been criticised for the following reasons:

1. This model, although attempting to move away from bio-medical categorisation, is in itself developing new categories, which recognises disabled people as those who positively identify themselves as disabled. However, those in society who may not associate or link themselves with a form of disability may preclude themselves from being seen as disabled according to the social model.

2. It places more emphasis on structural barriers that physically prevent people from gaining access to work etc. The less overt barriers, such as communication difficulties, learning disabilities, emotional difficulties and attitudes of non-disabled people, are given less attention.

3. Initially social model theorists did not take into consideration that the experience of being disabled varied between disabled people according to gender, race and class and cultural practises (Marks, 1999)

1.5.3 Social Constructionist Approaches

Essentialist and biological perspectives of disability that are rooted within biomedical discourses, confer responsibility for the disability onto the disabled person, and do not acknowledge the role played by social, institutional and organisational practices, and do not account for the subjective experience of disabled people. Furthermore, the

values placed and views held by societies and communities, which are constituted by socio-historical factors, are largely ignored. A social constructionist reading would facilitate an understanding of disability at the social level.

The positioning of disabled people, its meanings, representations and expressions are constituted through the intersection of class, gender, race and sexuality and played out in a number of socio economic, political and cultural arenas. It is therefore likely, even probable that the social construction of disability would not be uniform and exist in one form or other across all cultures, societies and communities. It is therefore hypothesised that the subject positions that disabled people may select or be inserted into, through the interaction with discourses involving disability, class, race and gender, would differ across the spectrum of disabled people.

The interface between disability, class and race, for example are likely to offer different subject positions for individuals to occupy. The subjective experience of one blind person, for example, may differ from another's, according to his or her positioning, that may be either chosen or conferred. It is likely that a white, middle-class blind man's experience of being disabled would differ substantially from that of a poor, rural, black woman's. If these variables were exchanged or added to, for example if sexual orientation and age were added, a number of other positions would be made available. This would mobilise other discourses and automatically change the subjective experience of being disabled. The variations in the subject positions available would require each individual disabled person to negotiate a personal sense of what it is to be disabled, alongside these social constructed and contextual variables. These processes will be elaborated on further in this section.

Social constructionism therefore represents a theoretical approach, which moves away from the previous emphasis of placing disability only within the individual. It views disability as being socially constructed where meanings, categories and commonly held assumptions around disability are actually created by social processes: "Social constructionism thus shows that our values and ways of seeing are a social accomplishment" (Marks, 1999, p.79).

1.5.4   Social Constructionism and Psychoanalysis

In this section, three theoretical perspectives to researching and conceptualising disability have been discussed, with particular emphasis on their contributions to understanding disability. The interface of social constructionism and psycho- analysis as has been mentioned previously, offers researchers a framework to understand the intersection of disability, gender and adolescence in a far more critical and in depth way. The contribution of both is invaluable in increasing our understandings of the discourses and subject positions that operate in the construction of identity, as well as exposing the subjectivity of disabled people and the conscious and unconscious motivating factors behind the maintenance and selection of particular subject positions. For these reasons, Frosh et al. (2002) integrated approach has been selected as the preferred means of framing this research endeavour.

1.6   DISABILITY IN CONTEXT

In order to understand the varied experiences of disabled people, an understanding of situational and contextual variables is needed. In rural areas throughout South Africa, educational and work opportunities for the disabled are extremely limited due to inadequate government resources. The experience of a disabled person within a rural setting will therefore differ from that of a disabled individual living in an urban context, where access to resources will be improved.

Class and location, access to health care and ones' position in society influence the extent to which an individual's disability impacts their ability to function effectively in society.

The impact that race has on the experience of being disabled differs according to the relative power and status that it has within a specific society. Individual disabled people who come from marginalised and disempowered race and cultural groupings are likely to have a different experience from those who come from more dominant and privileged groupings. In this way a disabled person who originates from a marginalised sector of society could be said to be doubly disadvantaged in that they

would be influenced by discriminatory practises that are simultaneously generated from racial and disability discourses.

Gender, as in the case of race, can play a pivotal role in the experience of disability, in that, one's position in relation to gender can serve to further disempower an individual. It has been widely acknowledged that women have been marginalised and disempowered by social, cultural and economic processes, within which they are positioned. In the case of disabled women these processes are compounded further and the effects on disabled women are profound. Thus one can assert that: "In many instances, the disadvantage and discrimination experienced by disabled people generally is simply exacerbated for disabled women" (Lloyd, 1992, p.213). The political ramifications involved in gender have been documented extensively in feminist writings and are of great importance for gender research. This is however beyond the ambit of this research, even though, it is hoped that the findings of this research would be able to contribute to this debate through the analysis of masculinity and its effects on the gender landscape.

Another key context, in which discourses surrounding disability are played out, is in the areas of childcare, parenting styles and pedagogical practices. These practices may differ between disabled children and non-disabled children. This difference appears mostly to be in relation to the restrictions and limitations placed on disabled children. The restrictions placed on disabled children, which seem to be for their own protection are likely to undermine their autonomy and decision making capacity and make them more vulnerable to institutional and social oppression.

1.7 DISABILITY AND MASCULINITY

Masculinity researchers have to a large extent overlooked the intersection of disability and masculinity. There are, however, a few researchers that have to a lesser or greater extent acknowledged the role that disability can play in developing a greater understanding of masculinity.

Mac an Ghaill (1994) argues that schools serve as cultural generators of masculinities and femininities through the interplay of the hidden curriculum, institutional practices,

student cultures and teacher-student interactions. These elements act as scaffolds through which gendered relations of domination and subordination are produced. Mac an Ghaill (1994) makes the following conclusions regarding masculinity in relation to disability. Firstly, masculinities are differentiated and privileged according to organising processes of meaning, representations and material practices in schools. These create power differentials among positions in relation to age, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and disability. Secondly, masculinities are constructed in and through a matrix of social divisions, such as class and race, but also disability, and the construction of masculinity occurs as a complex and dynamic process. This, he argues, is in contrast with sex-role approaches, which disguise and reduce the social complexity of this process. These social divisions cannot be reduced to fixed categories, which allow no room for contradiction. Thirdly, based on the findings of his 1994 study, bullying in schools serves to police dominant gender meanings and is linked with perceptions of 'normality' based on social criteria of perceived physical difference, physical size and appearance. This point illustrates that disability itself can serve to regulate masculinity – anything that is 'othered' is framed as deficit or disability. This introduces the notion that the definition of disability is wide and subtle. Fourthly, his research suggested that homosexuality was constructed as a form of disability, through discourses of naturalisation and 'normality'. This makes a pivotal link between homophobia and perceptions of 'disability', through the process of othering, marginalisation and subordination.

Robertson, in his 2003 study, acknowledges this link between subordinated and marginalised groups by his inclusion of specific sub-samples of gay men and disabled men. Robertson uses sports and health promotion as a vehicle to explore masculinity, through a medium, which is widely acknowledged as one of the sites for the production of various forms of masculinity. Although his study does not primarily focus on marginalised forms of masculinities, such as gay and disabled masculinities, he does make some important comments about sport's role for these forms of masculinity. Robertson suggests that the more social aspects of sport, such as friendship and camaraderie, play a critical role in the re-inclusion of disabled men in social life. He also suggests that it serves as a means to assist disabled people to come to terms with their disability (Robertson, 2003). He elaborates further when he states, "Involvement in sport can empower men, including those with bodily impairments,

facilitating the (re)gaining of control over lives, a renegotiating of identity and the initiation of activities in other social settings" (Blinde & McClung, 1997 and Valentine, 1999 as cited in Robertson 2003 p.710).

One of Robertson's findings is that the involvement of disabled men in team sport appears to be far more inclusive and egalitarian than that of non-disabled men. Consequently he found that within disabled sport, the more aggressive and competitive aspects normally associated with hegemonic masculinity, were less prevalent in sport involving disabled men. This is highlighted by the finding that: "Wheelchair basketball often involved and encouraged women participants, and there were examples of 'lending' players to opposition teams in a swimming contest and playing inexperienced team members in order not to demoralize an opposition team of fledgling players" (Robertson, 2003, p. 712).

The role that sport can play in the redefining of disabled masculinity may be tempered by issues of accessibility, in that accessibility too facilities the presence of sporting teams, clubs and the support of non-disabled people, may not be available to all disabled people, as in the case of many countries in the developing world. It could be said therefore that Robertson's findings are only applicable in contexts that can provide resources for disabled sport, thus reducing the effectiveness of sports role in redefining disabled masculinity. Another limitation of Robertson's study is that it only appears to focus on men who become disabled later on in their life and whose exposure to sport may be different from that of people who were born disabled. It may therefore be necessary to expand research efforts that combine masculinity, disability and sports that account for these variables and how these influence the construction of disabled masculinities.

In reviewing literature, Mac an Ghail and Robertson's studies on masculinity were two of the very few studies which incorporate and make reference to disability. This emphasises the glaring lack of research available, which include masculinity and disability. Consequently, it highlights the need for research on this topic.

1.8. ISSUES AND CONTEXTS IN MASCULINITY

1.8.1 Masculinities in School

The inclusion of school contexts into research efforts that explore adolescent masculinity is critical to developing our understandings of the processes, practices and positions, involved in the construction of masculine identities. This is seen by the way: "Gender power is understood in terms of the ways both boys and girls create gender identities and how, simultaneously, the school environment and its social structures mould these identities and gender relations" (Thorne, 1993, in Morrell, 1998, p. 218). Numerous studies highlight the pivotal roles that schools play in the production of gender identities, for example (Frosh et al., 2002; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Morrell, 1998). Thus schools could, be seen as sites through which gender identities like that of masculinity are produced and expressed. Therefore the analysis of schools should be one of the focuses of masculinity research. Connell in the late 1970s made a fundamental change in the way in which gender research was undertaken in the schooling systems. Morrell (1998) notes Connell's departure from large sample, survey-type research to a more in-depth approach to researching gender, power and inequality. This shift fundamentally changed the way in which gender and especially masculinity was studied. Morrell (1998) explains that within Connell's 1970's study a critical area in gender research was revealed. This being that, "schools each had their own characteristic gender regimes – arrangements of gender relations which distributed gender power" (Connell 1987, p. 219). Morrell views Mac an Ghaill's study as another critical shift in gender research: "The new approach to gender research in education is best exemplified by whole school projects which through detailed ethnography identify the gender regimes of schools" (Morrell, 1998, p.219).

Connell among many other gender researchers has emphasised the finding that women and girls are marginalized, disempowered and not given equal access to opportunities as a result of their engagement with the gender order, especially in relation to institutions like schools. Although this is a critical view put forward by Connell, what stands out of more value to gender and masculinity research is his findings that "groups of boys and men who do not conform to, or who threaten or challenge, hegemonic notions of masculinity are also disadvantaged." (Connell, 1990

29

cited in Morrell, 1998, p. 219). The pivotal role that this finding has had for masculinity and gender research is that it began to dispel the notion of a cohesive form of masculinity.

The duration of time spent within the schooling system constantly exposes youth to gender regimes within which they are positioned. The fragmentation of the family unit has resulted in the need for teachers and the schooling system to take greater responsibility for the care of youth. For these reasons, it is important to explore school contexts, in order to gain a greater understanding of the role that schools play in constructing masculinities. Schools could form one of the primary focuses for interventions aimed at addressing problematic areas relating to masculinity. Morrell (1998) maintains that there is an increasing need to focus on boys in the schooling system due to an increase in the prevalence of dropout, violence within schools, and suicide rates. This, for him is symptomatic of a crisis. Morrell (1998) asserts that there needs to be a shift from the notion of the 'problematic boy' to an acknowledgement of their masculinity being deeply embedded within sexualised discourses, and integral to their gendered senses of self. A view that problematises and places blame solely on boys runs the risk of underestimating the complexity of this phenomenon, and interventions will fall short if discourses maintaining problematic discourses are not changed.

1.8.2   Schools as a Site for Homophobia

Mac an Ghaill (1994) asserts that male heterosexual subjectivity is socially constructed and fragile; and is informed by three elements – misogyny, compulsory heterosexuality and homophobia. He suggests that male heterosexual subjectivity is marked by ambivalence, contradiction and is contingent on contexts. School contexts regulate and reify gender differences and these are performed in discursive and material practices in the school context. Thus, the unstable quality of heterosexuality is represented as a fixed category through arenas such as school playgrounds, the classroom and the sporting cultures of the school (Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

Research in British schools suggests that homophobia is structured through discursive practices expressed in conversation with labels such as 'poof' or 'Nancy-boy'

(Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). These labels tend to be an extroverted display, suggesting the need for public performance and display (Nayak & Kehily, 1996). A position in masculinity research is that homophobia serves to police not only the sexuality of boys but also the performances of masculinity in school-based contexts (Epstein & Johnson, 1998). Studiousness and lack of sporting interest or any other 'soft' quality that does not conform to hegemonic standards may label one as gay by the gendered cultural contexts of schooling (Epstein & Johnson, 1998). This was also found in the study by Frosh et al (2002) in which those individuals motivated by more sedentary pursuits such as intellectual and academic performance contrast a lack of sporting prowess or characteristics associated with toughness and self-confidence. As in Epstein and Johnson's (1998) study, this study found that those who did not participate in sports were considered weak and effeminate (Frosh et al., 2002). This contrast demonstrates the evaluator role that sport has in the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity and in the subordination and marginalization of alternative expressions. Nayak and Kehily (1996) note that the characteristics ascribed to gayness are equally applied to women, making clear a link between homophobia and misogyny. This may be considered the maintenance of categories which individuals are allocated through which a displayed and reinforced 'heterosexual matrix' occurs (Nayak & Kehily, 1996).

Frosh et al (2002, p.10) state that, "popular masculinity involves 'hardness', sporting prowess, 'coolness', casual treatment of schoolwork and being adept at 'cussing'". Research has identified the heterosexist structure of the gendered and sexual hierarchies that are played out in the curriculum, institutional power relations, peer-group interactions and educator practices (Nayak & Kehily, 1996). There is recognition among researchers that boys are gendered subjects and the pathway to "acceptability" according to hegemonic standards involves cultivating a hyper-heterosexual identity which homophobia serves to police (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Nayak & Kehily, 1996). Thus, hyper-heterosexual performances are a part of the gold standard for masculine expression that are maintained and retained by the peer-group's pressure to conform. Nayak and Kehily refer to the normalization of homophobia as a natural, everyday experience for both educators and learners in the developing lives of young men. This demonstrates the intractability of homophobia and its deeply embedded position it holds in the institutional cultures of schools, with

implications for interventions and policies that try to address problematic forms and expressions of masculinity. For example, Coulter (2003) found that with boys involved in a voluntary gender equity project, there was significant resistance and contradiction at the individual level in implementing gender change in their schools, particularly around traditional notions of men as active, protective and self-sufficient.

In addition to its embeddedness and intractability, homophobia has an embodiment element. Studies suggest that homophobic acts have the quality of 'looking big' which is as much about the self as the audience (Frosh et al., 2002; Nayak & Kehily, 1996). Tone of voice and body language, occur as techniques for the sculpting of masculinity and provide an embodied appearance of substance to hyper-heterosexual display. These displays are expansive and competitive, with young men 'looking big' often at the expense of others (Nayak & Kehily, 1996).

Perhaps these bodily references can be read psychoanalytically as a displacement of one's own bodily fears, desire and inadequacies. The complex way in which male peers collectively work with 'body language' is seen in the way sitting close to another male, walking 'funny', crossing your legs, having a high voice and being of slight build are regarded as effeminate actions. According to Connell (1995) the body is a communicative site for the construction of masculinity where "true masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies- to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body" (p. 45). Young men invest in particular stylized masculinities in psychosexual ways and these enactments become a barometer for measuring male performance.

Heterosexuality then acts as the norm within schools and is the focal point around which other sexual behaviours are located. The source of its power is its taken-for-grantedness, the fact that it goes unexplained, unchallenged and is assumed. This has the effect of seeing heterosexuality as natural, rather than socially conveyed through performance.

We see homophobic performance as a style, which gives masculinity the appearance of substance, produced through "the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence" (Butler, 1990, p.137). In the constant struggle for coherence subjects engage in

various forms of splitting, projection and displacement, which are articulated in homophobic performance. The performance is enacted to expel fears, desires and the vulnerability of ambivalence. These processes of self-production appear to go largely unacknowledged by the individuals concerned, as they struggle to achieve the illusion of internal consistency. In order to fabricate a coherent heterosexual masculinity, ambivalences must be managed in external social arenas through public performance and at internal levels within the subject.

Because masculinity is 'structured through contradiction' it is always unachievable, inevitably ungraspable and ever incomplete. The repetition of homophobic sequences suggests the impossibility of acquiring a unified self. The continual rehearsal of these performances is indicative of the psychic rhythms of a dislocated masculinity constituted through a 'lack'.

1.8.3 Masculinity in Sport

Critical in researching the construction of masculinity is the area of sport. A number of studies have been undertaken to explore: a) the role that sport has in positioning boys and men in relation to hegemonic masculinity and b) the development of alternative expressions of masculinity. One example is research on masculinity, sport and health by Robertson (2003). This study comprised focus groups and interviews with participants from various groups, which included health professionals, and various groups of men, including gay and disabled men (Robertson, 2003). A number of critical points are illustrated by this study. Firstly, there are two opposing views on the role that sport may play. The first view is that traditional constructs within sporting activities such as competitiveness and fitness may be seen as beneficial to men and public health in general, and may therefore be employed in public health promotion and interventions. This is juxtaposed by the second view, particularly expressed in feminist and sociological writing, that sport is seen to perpetuate the problematic elements of masculinity such as aggression, misogyny and homophobia (Robertson, 2003). This illustrates the contested position that sport may occupy when masculinity research is undertaken.

Sport has historically played a pivotal role in constructing hegemonic forms of masculinity (Robertson, 2003). Sport as an institutional practice, such as in school sports and clubs, has furthered traditional notions of masculinity as having a set of prerequisites facilitated through participation in sport. This is seen in the way: "Historically sport became institutionalised as a way of nurturing in boys the values necessary for manhood (competitiveness, toughness, desire to win, superiority); a means of instilling 'moral fibre' or 'character' in boy's"(Beynon, 2002; Holt, 1989, cited in Robertson, 2003, p. 707). Sport from this perspective is seen as a carrier of hegemonic discourses around masculinity.

If one considers sport as one of the primary vehicles through which hegemonic characteristics of masculinity such as toughness, competitiveness etc. are perpetuated, then the implication is that marginalised groups who do not value, identify with, or position themselves within this hegemonic masculinity are excluded. As noted: "The avoidance by, or exclusion of, boys/men (and girls/women) from these sports is often part of a wider process of marginalization and subordination which leaves them feeling empty, weak and isolated" (Messner, 1992 cited in Robertson, 2003, p. 714).

This exclusionary aspect of sport is especially apparent in team sports as illustrated by the experience of gay men who perceive team sports as having "negative connotations" (Robertson, 2003) and express 'hatred' at being forced to participate in these sports. Moreover some gay men's participation in sport had implications for their beliefs of self which were internalized as 'individual failure' with phrases such as 'I was never any good at them' and 'I was crap at it' peppering their descriptions (Robertson, 2003).

The exclusionary role that sport may play, must also be expanded to include the notion of the active subject, whose agency may be used to construct an alternative identity, for example, in the above case the construction of a gay identity which has its own set of regimes and regulatory practices. This agency for some gay men was enacted through their rejection of heterosexual constructions of masculinity carried within sport: "Indeed, for some, the process of 'coming out' as gay men meant that ties with sport had to be severed as sport was seen to act as an exemplar of 'straight' masculinity" (Robertson, 2003, p. 712). Moreover the decision of some gay men to

reject sport may be due in part to the fear of "alienation from ones peers as well as the risk of abuse and/or violence within sport" (Robertson, 2003, p. 712). Robertson continues to state that gay men's involvement in sport would run the risk of being "counter (gay) culture" (Robertson, 2003). The importance of this finding is that interventions such as the one initiated by the United Kingdom's Department of Health, would not necessarily be beneficial to all men, as illustrated by gay men's rejection of health promotion through sports. Thus interventions, which focus on masculinity need to explore masculinity in all its forms in order to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

Swain (2003) and Frosh et al. (2002) have highlighted the importance of sport in UK schools, particularly football, in which other ways of 'doing' masculinity are measured and found wanting (Robertson, 2003). Sport is thus a measure against other performances of masculinity, such as academic achievements or cultural interests (Head, 1999). In many UK schools, football has a dominant role in the construction of hegemonic masculinities, with 'real boys' being the established footballers (Swain, 2003).

In a recent study conducted among educators in various South African schools, Attwell (2002) identified sport as a crucial element of hegemonic masculinity. In the historically Model C schools sport was set against arts, drama and cultural activities, which were constructed as the feminine 'other' and 'softening' influences. Sport was constructed as a means of 'protecting' young men from detrimental influences, especially in single-sex schools that were defined as 'rugby schools' by the participants (Attwell, 2002). In township schools, while soccer was given precedence as a feature of dominant practice, because these schools were under-resourced with sporting facilities, school sport was less emphasised (Attwell, 2002). As opposed to the UK comprehensive schools, where football dominated, masculinities in historically white schools in South Africa, privileged rugby as the hegemonic standard. Across these studies, the choice of sport as a hegemonic standard may be related to differences in class, context and culture. In understanding the construction of masculinity it is important to note that not all sports carry equal weight or influence in constructing masculinity. Rather it is noted that, "What is of greater importance is

the participation in socially prescribed sports such as soccer and rugby" (Frosh et al, 2002, p. 71).

Frosh et al (2002) illustrate two key indicators of masculinity and their relationship to one another, these being body shape and sporting ability as signifiers of masculinity. This assertion is supported by Dworkin and Wachs (2000) in that they contend that men's involvement in hegemonic sports, results in them been considered as 'heroes' by dint of their participation. They continue to suggest that through men's participation in hegemonic sports that "their bodies became signifies of power and masculinity" (Dworkin and Wachs, 2000, p.50) and that this power, associated with male bodies, is linked with moral superiority. Thus the male body could be seen as a repository for hegemonic discourses of masculinity, as the male body becomes entwined with discourses, relating to male superiority and power that are activated through men's involvement in sport. This however may be mediated by other external factors as suggested by Robertson. Robertson suggests that the role of sport in the construction of masculinity may be time limited in regards to the individual's active participation, due to the adoption of other roles such as fatherhood, marriage, ageing, and increasing emphasis on financial security. He continues to emphasize the juncture between sport's role in the construction of masculinity and other facets of identity such as sexuality and disability (Robertson 2003). One should however not underestimate the impact of vicarious involvement, such as watching and supporting sport teams and parental involvement in school sport, in the construction of masculinity. This is an area that needs to be explored more fully.

Individual involvement in, and participation in sport, be it active or vicarious, plays a pivotal role in the perpetuation of hegemonic and idealized forms of masculinity. Sporting icons, sports marketing brands and publicized sporting events in all forms of media are all carriers of hegemonic discourses of masculinity. Sport is therefore considered to be a valuable source of information for attempts at uncovering the positions, practices and expectations involved in the construction of masculinity of men and boys.

1.9   CONCLUSION

In order to adequately cover research efforts into the field of masculinity, a review of literature and theory has been provided. Theoretical approaches that span the range of theories that have been formulated to explain the development of gender and masculinity have been critically evaluated, with emphasis placed on their merits and weaknesses. Some of these theoretical approaches have been largely discarded by researches as in the case of essentialist and biological explanations, whilst others have gained popularity, as in the case of social constructionist accounts. The position taken in regards to masculinity within this research endeavour is that of an integrated approach that includes both social constructionist and psycho-analytic accounts for masculinity. It has also included an overview of the theory pertaining to the construction of disability and adolescence, as these, alongside masculinity, form the focus of this research. The range of context and arenas within which the construction of masculinity occurs has been referred to, for example, the schooling system and sports.

In reviewing literature relating to these topics, the author became increasingly aware of a gap in masculinity research. This gap refers to the lack of research efforts that integrate masculinity, disability and adolescence. This research effort is thus an attempt to bridge this gap and contribute to the body of research on masculinity.

CHAPTER TWO
METHODOLOGY

2.1   RATIONALE

Research on masculinity may inform effective interventions and practices. The
contexts of masculinity, such as schooling, have emerged as a central concern in
masculinity research, with a scarcity of research that focuses on masculinity and
disability within adolescence. In the studies surveyed for this research there was not a
single article that addressed the intersection of disability and adolescent masculinity.
Masculinity research has been limited in its exploration of masculinity and race,
gender and class identities but researchers for the most part have overlooked some of
the less obvious marginalised and subordinate groups in society such as the disabled.
Specifically, research that is relevant to a disabled adolescent population should
explore the discourses that surround masculinity, and answer *how* and *why* individuals
are subjectively positioned in relation to cultural constructions of disability and
masculinity. Moreover, it is important to explore issues that may complicate the
development of a masculine identity within disabled adolescents. The focus on
adolescence is in part due to the nature of this developmental period, as adolescents
are experiencing a number of life and social events through and within which they
construct a sense of selfhood and which ultimately inform the construction of a
masculine identity. It is argued that the best theoretical position is one that frees
adolescence from the developmental stage notion, instead approaching adolescence as
a dynamic cultural space for the discursive construction of identities. Adolescence is a
process that is situated within the powerful context of schooling, as an important
arena for the construction of hegemonic, marginalised, subordinate and complicit
identities.

Theoretical approaches that span the range of theories that have been formulated to
explain the development of gender and masculinity have been critically evaluated,
with emphasis placed on their merits and weaknesses. Some of these theoretical
approaches have, to a large extent been discarded by researchers as with essentialist
and biological accounts, while others have gained popularity, as in the case of social

constructionist accounts. The position taken in regard to masculinity within this research endeavour is an integrated approach that includes both social constructionist and psychoanalytic explanations of masculinity, as used extensively by Frosh et al. (2002). The reason for this is that in order to apprehend both the subjective and cultural aspects of masculinity as a social construction, a depth approach is needed that addresses both *how* and *why* subjects are consciously and unconsciously positioned in relation to hegemonic standards. Masculinity is in itself a diffuse and intangible construct and is defined as the taken-for-granted, embodied and symbolically represented hegemonic standards for the male subject in society. As Frosh et al. (2002) argue the individual experience of what it is to be a male in different contexts is consciously and unconsciously experienced and constructed.

Relevant to the interpretive framework for this research, are the theories pertaining to the construction of disability and adolescence, as these, alongside masculinity, form the focus of this research. Progress has been made from thinking of disability in terms of essentialist categories, barriers and social perceptions to a social constructionist perspective which accounts for the fluid, dynamic nature of disabled identities, with insights from psychoanalysis being a useful addition for exploring the subjectivity of disabled persons in terms of unconscious and conscious processes, for example, the disabled person's internalization of oppressive discourses. A social constructionist approach moves away from an essentialist approach or one that emphasises physical structures or dichotomies.

In reviewing literature relating to these topics, the author became increasingly aware of a gap in masculinity research. This gap refers to the lack of research efforts that integrate masculinity, disability and adolescence. This research effort is thus an attempt to bridge this gap and contribute to the body of research on masculinity.

2.2 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

This research endeavour has two primary aims. The first is to explore the social construction of visually impaired boys' masculinity with particular emphasis on the hegemonic constructions and standards of masculinity. The second is to explore the

39

subjective challenges that visually impaired boys have to negotiate in the process of constructing a personal masculine identity with a specific focus on the discursive strategies that they employ in order to maintain a sense of acceptable masculinity. In order to operationalise these aims, a set of research questions was developed. These questions were then used to guide the analysis, as a means to fulfil the aims outlined in this section.

2.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do visually impaired adolescent males construct their masculine identity?

SUBQUESTIONS

1. What are the hegemonic constructions of masculinity found within these boys' accounts?

2. How do visually impaired adolescents position themselves in relation to hegemonic constructions of masculinity?

3. What are the subjective challenges that visually impaired boys face in the construction of their masculinity?

4. What are the discursive strategies they employ, firstly in order to preserve a sense of acceptable masculinity, in accordance with hegemonic standards and . secondly to defend themselves if they are unable to maintain a sense of this acceptable masculinity?

2.4   RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is qualitative in nature. There were several reasons for this choice. Firstly, the design of this study was guided by Frosh et al's (2002) study on adolescent masculinity, which was embedded within the qualitative paradigm. In order to explore the applicability of Frosh's findings and methodology in the South African context, it was important to replicate the design that was used in his study (Frosh et. al.). In this manner it allows for comparisons to be made, in the hope that it would contribute to the existing body of literature surrounding masculinity in South Africa. Simultaneously in the use of Frosh's approach, which has already established

reliability, one has the advantage of not having to re-establish reliability for this particular study. Secondly, the use of qualitative methodology was deemed as the most appropriate, as it is able to explore psychosocial phenomena in an in-depth and comprehensive manner. As suggested by Babbie and Mouton (2005) in qualitative research "the primary aim is in-depth ("thick") descriptions and understanding of actions and events" (p.270). Adopting a qualitative research strategy allows one to explore processes in an ideographic manner, rather than outcomes and characteristics that are immediately presentable (Babbie and Mouton, 2005). The qualitative paradigm takes one further into understanding issues that lie beneath those that are immediately present and most importantly from the perspective of the participants themselves: "Qualitative researchers attempt always to study human action from the perspectives of the social actors themselves" (Babbie and Mouton, 2005, p.270). Since the study centres on identity construction, which is an exceptionally complex and idiosyncratic process, the perspectives of the actors themselves and the way they construct their reality is the primary concern. Therefore this is achievable only through getting close to the research participants and forming an understanding in their context, which is characteristic of the qualitative approach. The qualitative approach places emphasis and importance on the researcher, in that he/she is central to the process of observing, interpreting and generating knowledge in a joint relationship with participants. This process can be seen as a dialectical approach, where the aim is generating truthful and credible inter-subjectivity (Babbie and Mouton, 2005). In light of this fact the researcher is offered an opportunity to become involved and close to the participants, enhancing a holistic understanding.

Furthermore, any qualitative analytic approach used to explore psychosocial phenomena, need to be contextualised and points of reference should be established. The analytic approach used in this research is no different and it is therefore critical that this research endeavour be placed in an analytical framework that is able to fulfil the aims and objectives of this research effort. To this end, the analytic framework employed in this research endeavour is a combination of two established theoretical and analytical perspectives, namely social constructionism and psychoanalysis, which is in line with Frosh et al's (2002) analytic approach. In the process of merging two dissimilar theoretical and analytical perspectives, one would expect that there would be vastly different terms of reference and ways of conceptualising psychological

phenomena. Further more one would assume that the task of integrating the two would make it impractical and inefficient to use, this has however, not proven to be the case, as a number of researchers have successfully been able to integrate the two (e.g. Nayak and Kehily, 1996; Redman and Mac an Ghaill, 1997) all of whom have found that this form of analysis is a viable and legitimate means of exploring issues of identity. One of the strongest proponents of this analytical approach is Frosh, whose analytical framework forms the basis for this analysis. In light of this it is important to describe some of the reasons for using Frosh et al's (2002) integrated approach.

Firstly social constructionism is able to account for and describe the available subject positions, and as Frosh et al (2002) asserts is able to answer the question of "how" subjects are positioned. Social constructionism, for example, is able to reveal the construction of hegemonic and subordinate forms of masculinities and is able to describe the positions that men occupy in relation to them. Furthermore social constructionism is able to provide an account of the socio-cultural processes that produce them.

Secondly the use of Frosh et al's (2002) approach is able to account for the limitations of social constructionism by the inclusion of psychoanalytic theory. The use of social constructionism, like that of any analytic framework, has shortcomings and areas of weakness that limits its ability to completely account for the complexity of identity. The primary area of concern when using social constructionism is that it may not be able to account for why subjects continue to maintain, invest in, select and occupy particular subject positions over others, as is suggested by, "... less light has been thrown on the question of what it is that produces the specific 'choice' of location a particular individual makes amongst the available identity positions." (Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, 2003, p. 40). Social constructionism is therefore limited in some respects but these limitations are made up for by the use of psycho-analysis, which for Frosh is able to answer the question of "why". The answer to the question of "why" proposed by Frosh et al, is answered by psychoanalysis's close attention to the unconscious processes that motivate individuals as they invest in one subject position or another.

Thus Frosh et al's integrated approach was deemed as the most appropriate analytical framework to fulfil the aims of this research endeavour, as it is able to explore the social construction of masculinity and account for and describe the subjective struggles of individuals in the process of constructing a masculine identity.

This approach is therefore able to account for and articulate the simultaneous process of the social construction of masculinity as well as for why individuals select and occupy particular subject positions

2.5   DATA COLLECTION

The data collection of this research involved two individual interviews with each participant. Interviews are effective in eliciting in-depth information and exploring the subjective experience of individuals and are therefore considered appropriate for the study of visually impaired adolescents' construction of masculinity. Robson (1993) elaborates on the benefits of using interviews, as he states "face-to-face interviews offer the possibility of modifying one's line of enquiry, following up interesting responses and investigating motives in a way that postal and other self-administered questionnaires cannot. Non-verbal cues may give messages which help in understanding the verbal response, possibly changing or even, in extreme cases, reversing its meaning" (p. 229). Interviews are logically coherent in regards to the qualitative approach adopted in this study. The benefit of the individual interview is that it essentially allows the participant to speak freely, without having to reply to forced or predetermined questions (Babbie and Mouton, 2005). This approach is central to gaining access to meanings that the participants themselves create to explain their reality. It was decided that a second interview would enable the researcher as well as the participants to further explore issues that arose in the first interview. Thus, the first interview was based on an interview schedule containing open-ended and semi-structured questions, whilst the second interview was directed by issues arising from the first interview and was therefore more open-ended. The duration of these interviews was one hour each. Each interview was tape recorded and later transcribed for data analysis.

Guidelines for the interview schedule were generated from the findings of Frosh's (2002) study. It has already been discussed in the literature review that this research is based on the study by Frosh (2002) and so it was appropriate that the questions for the interviews were developed from his findings.

The questionnaire was piloted on a sample of visually-impaired adolescents in order to assess the effectiveness of it. Although no changes to the interview schedule were made on the basis of the pilot study, it became apparent that the language competence of the participants in the pilot study restricted the depth of data that was collected. As a result, it was decided to change the age range of the sample in order to increase the language proficiency of the participants.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher himself and with the help of a research assistant. The interviews were conducted in English, which is the medium of instruction for all the participants in the sample. No translators were used in the main study however one translator was used in the pilot study.

2.6. SAMPLE

The sampling method used was purposeful sampling: "which is characterized by the use of judgement and a deliberate effort to obtain representative samples by including presumably typical areas or groups in the sample" (Kerlinger, 1986, p.120). Purposeful sampling is a valid method when using participants from a specific population group. It is important to note that the sample needed for this particular study is a highly specific population group and the availability of subjects was thus limited. In light of this, convenient sampling was a major factor in selecting the sample for this research. Even so, characteristic of a qualitative approach, the researcher sampled to the point of saturation, ensuring that all potential variation was accounted for. This method of sampling generated a small sample. As such, it was suitable for this particular study as the findings are not primarily intended to be generalised to a large population, but rather to provide a rich source of information on how visually impaired adolescents construct their identities and give meaning to their world, thus representative of the specific group under investigation.

The sample was drawn from a school for the visually impaired, which was selected due to its proximity and accessibility. The number of participants within each age group was restricted to the school's capacity as well as the admission criteria to the study.

2.6.1 Sampling Procedure

Contact with the headmaster of the school was made and consent for the study to be conducted in the school, was obtained. Initially, ten 11 to 14-year old boys were used as part of the pilot study. This was based on a sample used in a similar study conducted by Frosh and colleagues in London schools from 1997 onwards (Frosh et al., 2002). Difficulties with the participants' English language skills and the subsequent use of a translator however, highlighted shortcomings in using this age range. Although all participants were Zulu-speaking, the school medium of instruction is English. It has already been discussed that following the pilot study, it was decided that an older age group would be more proficient in English due to their greater exposure to English as a second language. Their comprehension of the questions was assumed to be more advanced than the younger age group, which would facilitate a more accurate representation of masculinity and disability. There were thus three sampling criteria for inclusion in the study. Firstly, participants had to be between the ages of 14 and 18. Secondly, participants had to be male. Thirdly, participants had to be visually impaired. There was no race criterion. The exclusion of a criterion based on race may have biased the sample, as only black participants were ultimately included in the study. The final sample therefore consisted of 12, 14 to 18-year old boys. Of these 12 interviews 10 of them provided very rich information and ultimately formed the totality of the collected data. Two of the interviews lacked depth, but were not completely excluded, as there were items relevant to the whole that could be extracted and used.

In starting the sampling process the researcher made contact with the headmaster of the participating school. During the initial meeting the researcher discussed the aims, objectives and scope of the research, in order to clarify what was required of the

school and participants. Once the headmaster agreed to participate an informative seminar was held with all male students who fulfilled the research criteria. Following the seminar, where they were fully informed of the aims of the research, they were invited to participate. For those students willing to participate, a consent form was sent to their parents/guardians.

2.7   DATA ANALYSIS

2.7.1   Steps in the Process of Analysis

The data used in the analysis came firstly from 12 face to face, semi structured interviews with visually impaired boys who's ages ranged from 14yrs to 18yrs. Out of the original 12 interviews, 10 were fully transcribed the other 2, due to the poor quality of recording, were listened to and what material was accessible was noted and used. A second set of data came from a follow-up interview that was conducted to gain further elaboration. The follow up interview had a smaller sample size and was conducted with only 8 participants. There was a loss of participants due to time constraints and difficulty organizing schedules and not due to any negative impacts of the first interview.

The preparation of data for analysis began during the process of interviewing the research participants. The researchers took notes relating to both the form and content of the interviews and documented thoughts and feelings evoked in the researchers. This was used later in the analysis to assist in the development of codes and the subsequent broader themes, as well as in the analysis of transference and counter transference. This is seen as an additional means to validate the research findings. The tape recording of interviews also allowed the researcher the opportunity to refer back to the interviews when needed. This forms part of the process of establishing reliability and validity. The use of tape recordings of the interviews does however have some drawbacks, one of which is that it may produce unreliable and poor quality material. This was the case for two of the recordings as has been mentioned above. This does to a certain extent limit the reliability of the research, but as the majority of the recordings were of good quality and that some information had been gathered from the unreliable tape recordings, it is felt that this does not severely compromise

the study. Another disadvantage of recording is that it may at times create anxiety in the participants and thus distract them from fully participating in the interview process. Fortunately this did not appear to be a problem for the participants, as they were interested in the process and were comfortable with the use of the tape recorder.

It must be acknowledged that the researcher's visual impairment has some disadvantages and advantages. The most important of these is that the researcher was unable to observe some of the non-verbal queues and behaviours, such as the participants' facial expressions and body language, all of which convey meaning. This may to a certain extent be obviated by the researchers increased sensitivity and proficiency in observing meaning through non-verbal audible queues such as intonation and tone. This was also assisted by the researcher's own experience and training as a psychologist. One of the advantages provided by the researcher's visual impairment is that it may have made the participants feel more comfortable, as the researcher has something, besides being male, in common with the participants.

Critical to the analysis was the preparation of data, so as to enable the researcher to work effectively with the interview material. To this end, each interview was transcribed verbatim and assigned codes by the researcher. This was at times a complex, difficult and time-consuming process, despite this, transcribing the interviews offers two advantages. Firstly it enabled the researcher to become familiar with the content and process of the interview. Secondly while transcribing the researcher was able to begin to formulate codes, which assisted in the overall analysis.

The transcription of the interviews provides a written account of the interviews, which provides a data set from which to begin analysis. Transcribing of interviews does, however not allow the researcher to capture some of the fine grained information and subtle nuances conveyed through tone, intonation, pauses and other non-verbal queues this possible limitation was reduced by the researcher's use of interview notes in which some of these cues were noted and used in the analysis. .

The transcribed interviews were then captured and further prepared for analysis using the qualitative analytic computer software "nvivo 2.0" version. This was primarily motivated by the need for the material to be easily accessible, as the researchers visual

impairment limited the use of visual displays and paper based analytical methods. The use of this software was also motivated for its own analytical merits.

Once the process of preparing the data was completed, it was then possible to analyse the data gathered during the interviews. The analysis, as has been mentioned in the research design section of this chapter, utilised Frosh et al's combined approach of social constructionism and psycho- analysis. In line with their approach the analytic process consisted of two stages, which are described below.

FIRST STAGE OF ANALYSIS

Each transcript was viewed separately and the data from each interview was coded so that broader themes could be identified for analysis. Also important to note is that the process of analysis involved the help of two other coders. Interviews were then compared with every other interview transcript using the constant comparative method: "which means that the qualitative researcher should always attempt to find another case through which to test out a provisional hypothesis" (Silverman, 2001, p.179). This enabled the researcher to explore the similarities and differences between the boys' accounts. Furthermore the codes that did not fit into any one of the broad themes were discarded. This was done on the basis of whether or not the discrepant code was supported in some substantive way by other data.

After the broad themes were established and that the researcher was satisfied that all the available thematic possibilities had been exhausted, it was then possible to analyse the data using the first analytic technique proposed by Frosh et al (2002) , namely social constructionism.

This involved the analysis of each of the broad themes, with the aim of reading for meaning. The researcher was interested in how the participants socially constructed masculinity with specific emphasis on the hegemonic constructions. This is seen in how they discursively construct what constitutes masculinity; we see this in their descriptions, analogies and examples of masculinity provided by the boys. It was therefore important to pay close attention to how these boys spoke about masculinity,

because only through the analysis of talk is one able to view the social construction of masculinity.

SECOND STAGE OF ANALYSIS

In line with Frosh et al's (2002) integrated approach, the second stage of analysis used psycho- analytic theory to analyse the interview material. To this end the researcher was interested in how each individual boy positioned himself in relation to their constructions of masculinity. In this regard particular focus was placed on how they discursively constructed their own masculinity and whether or not they were successful in positively positioning themselves in relation to hegemonic constructions of masculinity. Furthermore, the researcher was interested in the discursive strategies they employ to maintain a sense of adequate masculinity and the challenges and defences involved in this. This second aim involves the inner experience of being male and masculine and is analysed primarily through using psychoanalytic theory.

Along side the analysis of the boy's subjectivity was the analysis of the researcher's counter transference reactions: "reaction on the part of the interviewer to the specific unconscious thoughts and feelings projected into him by any particular boy" (Frosh et al., 2002, p.17). On the occasions that the researcher became aware of his counter transference reactions to the boys being interviewed, the researcher used them as an additional means to understand the positioning of these visually impaired boys. In light of this, it became important for the researcher to pay particular attention to his thoughts, feelings and visceral responses to what was said by the boys in their interviews. It was important however that the researchers own subjectivity did not contaminate the analysis. This is often a debated difficulty in qualitative research and is largely dependent on the researcher's ability to note the impressions of the interview process in detail. In respects to this issue, a detailed examination of the researchers own subjectivity is outlined in the reflexivity section of this methodology.

2.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

2.8.1 Informed Consent

Letters of informed consent were sent to the parents of the selected participants. None of these letters were returned. The research participants were all selected from the boarding establishment of the school. The school therefore has guardianship of these students during term time. The institution was thus able to provide informed consent on behalf of the parents, who had been notified of the study.

Participants were recruited with full knowledge of the scope and context of the project as well as their expected involvement. Before the participants were selected a meeting was held, in which all the students that fulfilled the selection criterion were addressed by the researcher. This meeting was co-ordinated by a teacher and the purpose of the meeting was to inform the students about the aims and objectives of this research as well as what would be expected of them should they participate in the research. In addition, potential risks and benefits were discussed. No teachers were present at the meeting as it was essential that students' participation be free of any form of coercion. It was also made clear that they were able to withdraw from the research at any time. Students were encouraged to ask questions and engage in a dialogue around the aims and nature of the study. At the end of the meeting, students willing to participate provided their identifying details to the researcher. All the students who volunteered were included in the study. (Informed consent form attached in Appendix B).

2.8.2. Confidentiality

Omitting their identifying details and storing the data in a coded format guaranteed the participants' confidentiality and anonymity. Tape recordings of the interviews were deleted following analysis. The institutions' name has been omitted from the final research document, so as to ensure anonymity for both the institution and the research participants. If the research findings are to be published or used in further research, the institution, participants and guardians will be advised. The use of this

data will exclude personal information of research participants and will only be released as generalised statements and findings.

2.8.3. Risks and Benefits

The benefit of participating in this research is not derived from the final outcome of the research. It is instead derived from providing a safe environment in which participants were able to discuss their issues, concerns, interests and ideas, around their disabilities and identities. A secondary benefit lies on a macro level in that the data gathered from these participants contributes greatly to furthering research in this area.

The potentially sensitive nature of some of the discussions around individuals' disability was countered by providing the opportunity for debriefing and supportive counselling. The researcher and an associated counselling program at the University of Kwa Zulu-Natal extended these services to individuals who were identified as vulnerable and requiring intervention. Following the completion of this study, the researcher has remained available to both the school and individual participants to discuss issues and concerns that may have been raised during the research process. No incentives were offered to participants or teachers; and participants did not incur any financial costs due to their participation in this research.

2.9. REFLEXIVITY

In the process of conducting research it is important to reflect on this process and contextualise ones own role in it. The first question therefore that I had to ask myself was why this particular topic and population group. In answering this question it is important to acknowledge and make reference to who I am. I am a thirty year old white middle class heterosexual male who in 1996 lost his sight in a car accident. I differ from the boys in three distinctive ways. Firstly all of the boys were black, and therefore my experience of race is different from theirs. Secondly I am older than the boys who participated and thirdly my experience of being disabled is likely to be different from that of these boys. This possible difference relates to the onset of visual impairment. The majority were born visually impaired or became so soon after birth,

51

this differs from my experience as I was twenty when I became blind. It is therefore safe to assume that mine and the boys' experiences would differ in some ways due in part to them not having the experience of not being constructed as disabled. Another important factor is that I am totally blind whilst the majority of the boys are partially sighted. For these above reasons it would be irresponsible of me to assume that I have had a similar experience of being a disabled male. I do however have some inkling of some of the challenges that visually impaired males have in negotiating a sense of adequate masculinity. It is from this that my own counter transference reactions become important in understanding the subjective challenges facing young disabled boys. It is also important to note that my experience of being visually impaired would give me a better vantage point from which to view the construction of visually impaired masculinity than that of a sighted researcher. This would however not be the case if I contaminated the research with my own thoughts and feelings, be they conscious or unconscious.

In reflecting on the research process and my interactions with the boys, I experienced a number of challenges to my own subjectivity. The boys' accounts had a profound impact on my experience of disability and this involved in me having to confront some of the issues and problems that I was either unaware of or had not thought about or had experienced and was forced to look at them again. It would be true to say that I learnt a lot about myself and gained a greater appreciation for the challenges facing these visually impaired boys. For these reasons it became important for me to contain my own feelings, fears and anxieties so as not to project them onto the participants. In order to mediate and reduce this possibility, it was important for me to involve independent parties in the analysis phase of this research. This was also assisted by my own involvement in therapy, which enabled me to critically reflect on my role, feelings, thoughts and other issues relating to my disability. I am therefore confident that all possible steps were taken to ensure that the findings found in this research are reliable and valid.

Returning to the questions asked at the beginning of this section, my choice of this topic was motivated by my interest in masculinity, my own as well as that of others. In addition I wanted to contribute to increasing the understanding of the subjective challenges visually impaired boys have to confront during their attempts to construct

an acceptable masculine identity. It was my belief that research has previously overlooked the experience of disabled adolescents and that this research would be able, in a small way help to address this lack.

2.10 ISSUES REGARDING RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND GENERALISABILITY

Concepts of reliability, validity and generalisability have been of great concern for researchers, especially those working in a quantitative paradigm, but are not exempt from qualitative research. This is due in part to the need of qualitative research to appear to be as rigorous, scientific and legitimate as quantitative and positivistic-based research. This is however at times difficult for qualitative research as it struggles to live up to positivist expectations. It is therefore evident that historically any research endeavour's creditability (especially in the scientific community) largely rests on the establishment of reliability, validity and its ability to be generalisable. This is however, being increasingly critiqued by researchers working in a social constructionist field. Questions have been asked about the appropriateness and relevance of these concepts within such an anti-positivist framework.

These three concepts function effectively within the quantitative paradigm, but their efficacy has been called into question within the qualitative paradigm. It is therefore argued that new ways of conceptualising the rigourness of research need to be developed, as the application of measures, which were primarily developed for quantitative research, may have little relevance for qualitative research. The veracity of any qualitative research endeavour is rather judged by the establishment of subjectivity, creativity, clarity and consistency throughout the research.

The aims of this section are to firstly delineate the use of reliability, validity, and generalisability as well as their applicability in this study. Secondly this research will be contextualised using the contemporary and increasingly popular methods of establishing the rigour of qualitative research and its suitability for this study.

2.10.1 Validity

"Validity can be defined as "the extent to which the research describes, measures or explains what it aims to measure, explain or describe" (Willig, 2001, p.16). Silverman has a similar view of this concept in that he asserts that, "By validity, I mean truth: interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers" (Silverman, 2000, p.175). Even though this concept can be problematic for qualitative methodologies, concerns about validity may be addressed in three distinct ways. These ways are outlined by Willig (2001) and are discussed as follows. In the first place, data collection techniques should aim to ensure that participants are free to challenge and if necessary, correct the researcher's assumptions about the meanings investigated by the research. The idea here is that if the study makes sense to the participants then it is more likely to have some validity. One way in which validity was established was through an on-going dialogue between researcher and research participants in which a shared understanding of interview process and content was established. This involved the reciprocal clarification of statements and questions and where necessary, elaboration was encouraged. Secondly, data collection occurring in real-life settings, are more likely to have higher ecological validity than those conducted in simulated and/or laboratory settings. This study is given ecological validity through the data collection (interviews) taking place in a setting that the participants are accustomed to and in which their masculinity is regularly expressed. In this case the interviews took place in the school context.

The third way of establishing validity in qualitative research is through a process of reflexivity, in which the researcher consistently questions and reflects on his or her own role as well as the research process. To this end, discussions with independent and knowledgeable persons, such as the research supervisor and other peers, were initiated, which assisted in establishing validity. Furthermore validity would be increased if ones own role, thoughts, feelings and assumptions are critically engaged with. This was achieved by in depth discussions with the researchers own therapist. This is discussed in greater detail in the sections on reflexivity and counter transference.

2.10.2 Reliability

In order to improve the reliability of data, there was an attempt made to assess inter-rater reliability. This form of reliability could be defined as: "Reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions" (Silverman, 2001, p.175). To this end, inter-rater reliability is established when the researcher is able to demonstrate the consistency of codes and categories developed through the analysis of interview material. In this regard it was established by the use of two other independent researchers who independently generated codes and categories. Following this a process of discussion in which the commonalities and differences were discussed and decisions were made in regards to what should be omitted, retained or when codes should be collapsed in order to establish new ones. This form of accessing reliability refers to inter-rater reliability.

The reliability of a study is also established as is suggested by Silverman (2001), if the researcher can demonstrate that he/she has consistently used the same codes. In this study the researcher read the interview transcripts for meaning on a number of occasions, with gaps of time elapsing in between every reading. The codes became increasingly more and more established after each reading, until the same codes became repetitive. This form of reliability refers to internal reliability.

It is also suggested that the reliability of a study is reduced if taped interviews are of a poor quality; this was the case for two of the taped interviews, which required the researcher to repeatedly re-play the interviews. Another researcher checked the two interviews and notes were compared so as to maximise the data collected. This however does to a certain extent reduce the reliability of this research, but all attempts possible were made to improve the reliability. It is assumed that this does not severely compromise this research it is however critical that this is acknowledged.

There is however, disagreement about the extent to which reliability ought to be a concern. Many researchers argue against the use of measures of reliability and validity in qualitative research, particularly within a multiple truth or multiple realities paradigm as in the case of social constructionist based research.

2.10.3 Generalisability

Willig (2001) suggests that researchers also need to explore or confront the issue of representativeness, which is dependent on the context and composition of the research. In other words, the relevance of this concept is less applicable in this study as it is concerned with how these specific participants construct their masculinity. The intention is not to apply the findings to a general population, although the findings might have some merit for other visually impaired adolescent boys in similar contexts. This fits with Kippax et al. (1988) cited in Willig (2001, p.18) who suggest "each individual mode of appropriation of the social ... is potentially gereralisable". Generalisability can also be addressed through the use of accumulative techniques. One such technique is that the findings that emerge in this study are substantiated and/ or contested through findings from other studies. For example, the findings that emerged in this study were compared with findings from Frosh et al 2002 study on young masculinity, which were explored in the discussion section of this research. Furthermore Silverman asserts, "I do not think qualitative researchers should be satisfied with producing explanations which are idiosyncratic or particular to the limited empirical parameters of their study...Qualitative research should [therefore] produce explanations which are *generalizable* in some way, or which have a wider resonance"(Silverman, 2001, p.103). This piece of qualitative research, although not directly generalisable, does have some "resonance" for other disabled adolescence.

2.10.4 Alternative Measures of Evaluating the Rigour of Research

The use of reliability, validity and generalisability, may however, be less appropriate for qualitative enquiry as the definitions may be too narrow and restrictive and not account for the complex and dynamic nature of qualitative research (Tobin and Begley, 2004). However, these authors also suggest that if these concepts are ignored, then the rigour of the study may be called into question. This may have resulted in qualitative researchers being reluctant to question and/or omit the use of these concepts in their research. "Rigour is the means by which we show integrity and competence: it is about ethics and politics, regardless of the paradigm" (Tobin and Begley, 2004, p. 391). Tobin and Begley (2004) advocate a revision of rigour to include the emerging criteria of authenticity, trustworthiness and goodness. These

criteria are subsumed within the following six elements. These elements will be outlined and the study's fit with them described in order to establish the rigour of this study within the proposed framework.

1. The foundation of this study is social constructionist and psychoanalytic theory and rigour is established through showing how this research has engaged with these theories and used these theories to inform each stage of the research.

2. Is the methodology consistent with the study's philosophical stance? In other words, is the research as a whole consistent and logical. In order to establish the logic of this research, it is important to illustrate how this research endeavour is consistent in each stage, from planning to implementation. To this end, this research is qualitative in nature and its main aim is to explore the social construction of masculinity, as well as the subjective experience of this for visually impaired boys. This would necessitate that each level of this research, be consistent with these aims. This consistency is shown in the choice of participants (visually impaired adolescent boys), data collection techniques (interviews) and the choice of the analytical and interpretative framework (social constructionism/psycho-analysis).

3. Transparency of data collection and management. That is, to what extent others are able to follow the research process and replicate it, if necessary? The extent to which this study accomplished the ethical management of data is outlined in the ethics.

4. How is the researcher's subjectivity expressed in the research and the relationship between researcher and participants described? Outlined in the reflexivity and counter-transference sections.

5. Is there a consistency between the aims of the research, the epistemological standpoint, data collection, analysis and presentation of findings?

6. Implications for professional practice refers to the outcomes of the research and how they are defined, presented and suggestions for their operationalisation given.

2.11   CONCLUSION

This methodology chapter has provided an outline of the research process and has striven to provide an accurate account of how each stage was conceptualised and implemented. This chapter begins with the rationale, which is intended to both contextualise, this research and to give a convincing argument for why this research should be undertaken. The chapter then describes the intention and focus of the research in the aims and research question sections. These sections give the research purpose and define the parameters of the research. The next section relates to the research design, which includes data collection, sample and sampling procedure and the analytic framework used, which provides an outline of exactly how the research was conducted. This chapter also focused on some of the ethical issues, which are of utmost importance in any research endeavour. This focus on some of the general ethical issues such as informed consent, as well as some of the more specific issues of this research such as ensuring the anonymity of the participants. The final section of this chapter relates to how this research was able to prove the legitimacy of its findings. This includes focusing on issues of reliability, validity and generalisability. The legitimacy of this research was also contextualised using an alternative framework, which was used in conjunction with traditional measures i.e. reliability, in order to establish the rigour of this research.

CHAPTER THREE
FINDINGS

In the analysis of the participant transcripts, an integrated approach was used that combined social constructionism and psycho analysis. Due to this integration, at the start of each section a description of the emerging findings will be provided and an attempt will be made, where possible, to describe the boys' struggle to position themselves in relation to available discourses.

3.1   BOYS' CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY

In the process of analysing the interview transcripts it became apparent that the boys in the sample were accessing and maintaining hegemonic discourses of masculinity in their attempts to define and describe what constitutes being a real boy and man. The construction of masculinity was for these boys, constituted through physical performance, strength, toughness and the ability to fight and defend themselves. These characteristics were constructed as being natural and innate and reserved solely for men and boys.

"Yes, men it is strong, it is natural."

"I mean like, stand for yourself, fight for yourself, show your strongness."

"Um, like, you know, defending myself in certain things. Certain things that happen to me I can defend myself, because being strong."

Further emphasis was placed by the boys on the need to publicly perform these masculine qualities, *"show your manhood"*. The ability to fight and to stand up for oneself is intrinsically linked to being a real boy and man. This ability or lack of, serves to regulate the boundaries and conditions needed to be considered a real boy and establishes the standard by which boys are measured.

"Ja, from side it is important, because you have to show what you are, what you can do for yourself, how do you defend yourself, in maybe certain things. To show your manhood."

Despite the construction of masculinity as expressed above, some of the boys recognised their own as well as other boys' inability to meet the hegemonic standard, because of their visual impairments, raising the question of how they position themselves in relation to this hegemonic standard. Interestingly, these boys do not negotiate separate norms of masculine practice for visually impaired boys, but rather using discursive strategies to save face regarding their inability to perform according to their own construction of masculinity. This necessitated a personal process in which boys have to lessen or reduce possible feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, brought about by their inability to conform to these hegemonic standards. These activities associated with this hegemonic standard range from being able to play sport to being able to fight. The boys' participation in these activities is made difficult by their visual impairment and seen as a challenge that these boys have to confront and overcome in order to defend their masculinity. The adversity arising from their disability was seen as an opportunity through which characteristics of "real boys" were developed.

In analysing the interview transcripts it became apparent, that these boys use some common discursive strategies. Initially they describe the hegemonic standards of masculinity, without questioning whether these standards apply to visually impaired boys. As the interview unfolds another voice enters their accounts, and there is acknowledgement that, because of their impairments, they cannot meet the standards set for being a real boy and man. The boys then attempt to preserve a sense of adequate masculinity in relation to these hegemonic standards by offering explanations and imperatives for their failure to meet the hegemonic standard. To illustrate these discursive strategies that these boys employ in order to maintain a sense of acceptable masculinity an example will be provided below.

"To be a young man, it means you have to face different challenges that will make you to be a man. The first challenges, is like, you have to fight, you know, it is hard to fight when you are partially sighted, visually impaired. So those are challenges that

60

sometimes have to face when you are an albino. Like in my community, you see, they say, to be a man, you have to fight and won the fight. That's tomorrow, they will say, ja, when they are telling you, maybe you are my brother, or your brother is a man who can being in a fight for such a long time. It is challenges like that. Now, I know that, it is hard for me to fight. It is not that I am scared of them, but I am thinking for my future. I am thinking for my eyes, that they won't get affected, you see."

This boy's account demonstrates how these discursive strategies function at the subjective level to preserve a sense of adequate masculinity, and the lengths to which boys will go to in order to maintain a sense of being masculine. This boy's account starts by describing the hegemonic standard set for being a real boy in his community, *"you have to fight and won the fight"*. Fighting, and winning the fight, is thus seen as essential for being a real boy, against which men and boys are measured. Boys and men who are able and willing to fight are real boys, whilst those who don't are seen as *"scared"* and less than a real boy. In order to avoid being labelled or thought of as being not a real boy, he subjectively defends himself against any idea that he is scared, *"It is not that I am scared"* and gives a higher imperative, this being, *" I am looking after my future, I am thinking for my eyes, that they don't get affected"*. This enables him to maintain an acceptable position relative to the hegemonic standard of masculinity. In fact, he is also arguing that protecting his eyes is a major challenge for him, and after all facing challenges is, according to this extract, a distinguishing feature of masculinity.

3.2   MASCULINITY AS INDEPENDENCE

The boys constructed masculinity in terms of being independent, self sufficient and free to make decisions. They also see boys' movements and activities as less restricted and curtailed than that of girls. Furthermore, boys and men were constructed as separate and independent from women and not needing their help. Boys are able to stand up for themselves and do not need anyone to protect and provide for them.

"At home they allow me to go to the movies but not the girls."

"You are not afraid like of something, like, let's say if maybe you are, if you are going out at night, it is not being a challenge, you are just free to go."

This construction of masculinity was in stark contrast to the boys' construction of femininity, with women and girls described as being dependent on men, not being able to make decisions on their own and needing men's protection and guidance. The boys' justification for their view of women was primarily based on the construction of men as being strong, tough, independent and being able to defend themselves.

"Um, girls are very dependent, than men. Girls don't trust themselves enough, because when something happens to them, a woman doesn't solve that problem just by herself, she has to get somebody to help her along to solve that kind of problem. She also needs a strong man, that can help her along, the man that she knows, this man is very strong and keen on something."

"Boys can be without girls but girls cannot be without boys."

Despite these boys' accounts, however there was acknowledgement that men and boys do in fact depend on women e.g. to create a home. The boys' construction of masculinity as being characterised by independence was in tension with their need of and reliance on women. These apparent contradictions are downplayed, however, as they are described as activities normally associated with women, such as domestic activities. The quotes below illustrate some of the contradictions that these boys have to negotiate in preserving their subjective sense of masculinity.

"No one else can make it a home unless if you are a man that is independent that can do things on their own you can make it at home."

"I think girls are people that need respect because a home cannot be a home without a woman."

"When I come home I know someone is there. I know I will be comfortable that I am at home because of one person."

62

We see that the construction of boys as being independent is actually not fully realised by all boys/men, despite this being a highly valued hegemonic standard of masculinity. The quotes above show that it is only truly independent men who can live without the presence of women, thus acknowledging that the majority of boys/men fail to meet the hegemonic ideal of independent masculinity. Women are constructed as nurturing and caring, and necessary for making comfortable homes for men. But because these domestic chores are part of the construction of women, the boys can overlook this dependence on women.

The interviews reveal that, despite or because of the construction of boys as independent, for visually impaired boys conformity to this standard is especially difficult, as visual impairment by its very nature implies a measure of dependency.

"Some don't have any problem with me being, they can understand the situation, they can assist you around some things that you are, that you can't do by yourself, they can help you along by asking them or some just see. on your eyes that, no, this one has got a problem with his eyes, he needs help. So, ja, things like that."

Therefore, these boys in some respects fail to meet this standard of masculinity, as they are at times unable to perform activities that would signify independent masculinity. Given these limitations, these boys have to negotiate a personal sense of vulnerability in their struggle to preserve a sense of acceptable masculinity. As is revealed in the next quote, this often involves a marked sense of subjective distress. This distress is especially exacerbated where visually impaired boys experience discrimination and prejudice from other boys, because of their inability to attain these hegemonic standards of masculinity.

"Some of them. eish, they can't understand but some of them do. It depends now on which friends. The best friend, they won't say anything, they will assist you when you need assitances but those who don't understand, they will start to tease you and laugh at you, say funny things about you. All of that stuff and that makes me feel bad. Sometimes I don't even want to go around. It is not that my sight is bad, it is not about that, but eish, at night it is giving me a problem so, because [laugh] I can also drive, but now I don't want to now. "

63

This boy's account of his struggle to be independent, illustrates the subjective struggle that these boys experience in order to position themselves positively in relation to the hegemonic norm for masculinity. This boy, with the assistance of *"best friends"* is able to maintain a sense of being masculine, as his lack of independence is moderated by his friends' assistance. This is however in tension with his experience of others, who are seen as teasing, these experiences bring his personal vulnerability to the fore, *"that makes me feel bad"* and as a result, he attempts to withdraw to protect himself, *"sometimes I don't even want to go around"*. This may be in part a means to avoid confronting his lack or failure in meeting the hegemonic standard.

Moreover we see the subjective struggle that he is engaged in, as he attempts to retain a personal sense of agency. This boy employs a discursive strategy, in which we see him alternating between a realisation of his failure to meet the hegemonic standard of masculinity and his attempts to discursively defend a subjective sense of being masculine and having agency. We see this in the following quote, *"but eish, at night it is giving me a problem"*. From this statement this boy is admitting that his struggle for agency and a sense of adequate masculinity has failed and that this is due to the limitations placed on him by his disability, which creates a subjective sense of vulnerability and distress. In order to defend against these feelings he employs a discursive strategy in which he can assert his agency and thus retain a sense of adequate masculinity.

Earlier in this section this boy described his unwillingness to go out, which he attributes to others' behaviours and attitudes towards him, *"I don't even want to go around anymore"* and *"but I don't want to now"*. A further way, in which we could interpret this boy's account, is that he is attempting to assert his agency, by his decision not to go out. We see that he discursively defends this by offering the following rational, *"it is not that my sight is bad, it is not about that"*. This allows him to retain a modicum of control over his life, as he constructs this as being a choice, as he could if he wanted to, *"I can even drive"*. This assertion is a powerful attempt at asserting his agency and convincing himself as well as others that he is a real boy. The ability to "drive" could be interpreted as an important statement of masculinity as only real boys can drive, but we see him asserting his agency by him

saying, *"But now I don't want to now"*. This enables him to retain a sense of agency and therefore a sense of acceptable masculinity.

3.3 MASCULINITY AS MALE POWER AND CONTROL

One of the distinctive features of these boys' accounts of masculinity is that they construct masculinity in terms of male power and control. This was primarily in relation to women and girls, although at times was also extended to other boys. This power and control is constructed as a natural component of masculinity and appears to be based on notions of male physical superiority. This was seen as evidence for masculinity's superiority over femininity and was viewed as one of the distinguishing features between men and women.

"Oh they won't have the same power as a boy has. That will never happen. Boys they have power although it is 50/50 but they remain the same boys they have power."

"A man - okay I would say that most of the time they are right. Like they can overpower - according to my sight that man will, can over power."

This boy constructs men and boys as being powerful, strong and having the ability to overpower girls. The participant does acknowledge that girls are equal in some areas, for example when he says that they are *"bright"* and *"50-50"*. Despite this, girls are still constructed as being weaker and less able. The power held by boys and men is maintained by their physical prowess, for example, wrestling, sports and playing rough, and by differentiating themselves from weaker, less powerful girls.

In addition to these boys predicating masculine power and control on physical strength and ability, they also rely heavily on patriarchal notions of masculinity. This is most evident in the power and control that men appear to have over women. Patriarchal constructions of masculinity, frame masculinity as deserving and entitled to respect and obedience.

"Ja, get the man's instruction, do what the man tells them to do."

Mens' power and control, especially in relation to women and girls, is further maintained by the embodiment of masculine power. In the following extract we see this expressed through the male voice, which is used in a literal as well as symbolic sense.

"Um, yes there are differences, but men, in terms of men, they believe in their voices, you know, some sorts of men they have deep voices, so they believe that when they are talking to a woman, men expect a woman to hear him properly. It shows that, you know, that a man is speaking, try and listen to the man."

"It is important, although they also have the right to raise their comments sometimes, sometimes, they are talking because everybody has equal rights."

In the extract above, the power contained in hegemonic forms of masculinity is strongly emphasised, especially through the power they have in relation to women. Women occupy a subordinate position, in which their "voices" are drowned out by that of men. In the second quote, reference is made to some of the political changes in the gender landscape, since the advent of a democracy in South Africa in his statement *"...everyone has equal rights"*. This acknowledgement however, does not seem to change his view of women's position relative to that of men, and illustrates the resistant nature of hegemonic forms of masculinity.

In some of the boys' accounts, we see that not all boys fully endorse the power and control expressed in hegemonic masculinity, and realize some of the negative implications for others, especially women.

"A boy I can describe it as a person that likes to rule people always wants to be the own boss of the people. Every step of the way they want to grab every opportunity that he gets and one that doesn't want to move to another line to give people opportunity."

In the above extract boys are seen in a slightly more negative light and their need to dominate and control others is evident. Masculinity is characterised by the need and desire to subordinate others by limiting the opportunities and rights available to them. This boy, although slightly negative about this aspect of being a boy, does not seem to

question the rights of boys to behave in this manner. The use of terms like, *"rule people"* and *"own boss of the people"*, supports the assertion that boys, are at best, constructed as being assertive, confident and being able to lead others, and at worst they are constructed as being domineering, selfish and having the power to exploit others.

3.4   MASCULINITY RELATED TO WORK AND FAMILY

In the process of describing what constitutes being a man, the boys made frequent reference to the importance of the family. The boys asserted that in order to be a man, it is essential to have a family. Masculinity is therefore intrinsically linked to a man's ability to establish a family. This construction of masculinity positions men in such a way that they have little choice in their decision to have a family, as choosing not to, may result in them not being considered a real man. Notions that this is a natural and expected part of a man's life course further reinforce this.

"Being a man. Having your own family. A man has a family."

Moreover the necessity of men to have a family mobilises discourses of male biological potency, in that they are expected to have a number of children. Masculinity is therefore not only defined by the possession of a family, as is suggested by *"having"* and *"has"* a family, but is also linked to a man's reproductive capacity. The presence of a family may be seen as proof of a man's masculinity, as it is a visible sign that a man has fulfilled some of the fundamental requirements of being a real man.

"Ja, having the family, making the family, um, making more bigger, you know."

The construction of men in terms of having a family raises the question of how men who are not able or willing to establish a family are positioned. From the boys accounts it is safe to assume that these men would not fulfil a fundamental requirement of being a real man, and therefore are likely to be considered as less than a real man.

The family reveals some of the hegemonic and traditional notions of masculinity and the roles men are expected to occupy and fulfil. Within this context men are required to be the providers, protectors and leaders of the family, most especially in relation to women and children. Many of the boys descriptions contain references to patriarchal and traditional notions of masculinity, in which men are not only positioned as protectors, providers and leaders, but also in the need for men to be respected and looked up to by others.

"Um, a man, they think a man is someone who is protective, strong enough to protect women and you know being the head master of the family, that sort of thing."

"Yes because being a man you have a family and you must work to provide money for them."

One of the crucial findings within these boys construction of masculinity is that in the face of their own, or others', failure to meet the hegemonic standards of masculinity; these boys do not redefine or reject the hegemonic notions of masculinity. These boys instead attempt to maintain the hegemonic standards of masculinity and use them to regulate and evaluate their own as well as others masculinity. In order to demonstrate how these boys attempt to subjectively cope with the apparent failure of some men to meet and maintain their position in relation to hegemonic constructions of masculinity, an example of this will be given. In the example below, this struggle is in relation to the failure of the father figure to fulfil some of the requirements of being a real man.

"They are all living by my granny's house and my father is not working, doesn't support. Sometimes I feel my family is better than nothing, but a home is where the that is and for me being away from home gives me space because I don't have to look at those nasty things. I can say that my mommy don't have a problem. She tries her best to keep the family happy but I can say that my father ... he is not the person that deserves everything to be done for him. He isn't a good person."

The traditional construction of fathers as the primary breadwinners and providers is a standard that this boy's father is unable to reach, as is suggested by *"doesn't*

support ". This boy is again telling us of the construction of masculinity in the family, which involves a reciprocal relationship in which men provide for their families and in turn are given respect, obedience and their needs are met. The version of the construction of masculinity that is described above suggests that the head of the household may, *"deserves everything to be done for him "*. Given "those nasty things" which he experiences in his family, we see that this boy is struggling to position himself in his family. Ironically, *"being away from home gives me space "*. This reveals the subjectivity of this boy in relation to hegemonic forms of masculinity, which require that fathers should be respected.

The participant acknowledges the dominance and power of patriarchal masculinity, embodied by his father and is likely to have been willing to accept it. This is however not possible for him due to *"those nasty things "* and his father not being *" a nice person "*, this therefore makes it difficult for him to accept the hegemonic requirement that he respect his father. This demonstrates both the power and control contained in hegemonic forms of masculinity as well as his need to maintain it. This is evident in this boy's unwillingness to reject outright the masculine example provided by his father, as he seems only to seek distance despite these *"nasty things "*.

The construction of masculinity in terms of having a family and the subsequent positioning of men as providers and protectors was seen as a particular challenge for some of these boys. The boys expressed doubts as to their ability to acquire work and attributed this to their disability as they were uncertain what work they would be able perform. These boys fear that their visual impairment may hamper their attempts to align themselves with one of the hegemonic standards of masculinity as their access to employment may be curtailed by their disability. It is therefore important for these boys to subjectively cope as they struggle to find other ways to position themselves. This may be achieved through the boys' emphasis on education and the perception that they have to work hard. This however is still seen as being difficult as the boys expressed their concern at having to find money to pay for their education.

"It is quite difficult sometimes, to be partially sighted, to be visually impaired because there are things that, that you can't do which means there are limited jobs for you,

that is given me a problem. You see, I have to work hard to get into those jobs, those jobs that will be suitable for me. "

The anticipated difficulty for these boys in finding employment, is further complicated for some of these boys. In the quote below this boy has the further consideration of having to protect his vision, and is an example of the subjective challenges that some visually impaired boys have to negotiate.

"Like driving, that will be difficult, and like other jobs that deal with, like fire. Those jobs will be affecting my eyes. Now, I won't be able to be in those jobs. "

In summary, these boys construct masculinity in relation to men being able to establish and maintain a family. Men are therefore positioned as protectors and providers of the family. This however, is seen as a subjective challenge for these boys; as their visual impairment appears to a certain extent limit their accessibility to employment. We also see that these boys appear to be willing to maintain hegemonic masculinity even in the face of failure. It appears that the hegemonic forms of masculinity are powerful and convincing in their ability to perpetuate themselves.

3.5   POPULAR BOYS AND MASCULINITY THROUGH PERFORMANCE

In the above sections we see that the nature of being masculine was constructed in terms of boys being strong, having the ability to fight and defend themselves, being independent and having power and control. In this section the major focus was on the ways in which masculinity was performed. The analysis of the boys' interviews revealed two activities or masculine performances that were especially important for the construction of masculinity. These activities were sport and humour and were selected as they were both frequently mentioned as well as being activities central for the construction of hegemonic masculinity. In order to ascertain the hegemonic standard of masculinity, questions were asked in relation to what constitutes popularity amongst the boys. Popular boys were those boys who most closely adhered to the hegemonic standard and used activities such as sport and humour to construct their masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity was for all intense and purposes popular masculinity and represented by popular boys.

70

3.5.1 Sport as a Masculine Performance

The position that sport has in the lives of boys is useful for this analysis, as it is pivotal in the establishment, maintenance and perpetuation of hegemonic forms of masculinity. Sport in this context serves two main functions, the first as a means to regulate and maintain hegemonic masculinity, secondly as a means to enact masculinity through performance.

One of the distinctive features of these boys' accounts was the need for masculinity to be expressed through public performance. In the quotes below we see that those boys who participate and excel in sport are positioned as successful and popular. This would suggest that these popular boys are able, at least in the opinion of the participants, to meet the hegemonic standard of masculinity. Sport is therefore seen as being a pathway to access the masculine ideal expressed in the construction of popular boys. In the quote below, we see that these boys do not identify themselves as popular, but through their endorsement of sport as a requirement of popular boys, they are maintaining hegemonic masculinity.

"Ja, sport can make you popular. If you are playing soccer, if you are a good player all the people are talking about you."

"Some boys they are popular. Maybe when they excel in sport.

Furthermore, we see that sport is critical for the deployment of hegemonic discourses relating to the construction of masculinity. In the early sections of this chapter, we see masculinity constructed in terms of strength, toughness and fighting ability. In the quotes below we see these qualities being mobilised within sport, which is in turn used to construct hegemonic masculinity.

"Boys, like to play too much, sporting events or sports like soccer. That is the most popular sport that you can play, soccer and rugby. Ja, those rough games especially rugby because they are, you know, very strong, so they know they can do that certain type of sport. They will feel fine."

In this quote we see that the popular sports are soccer and rugby and therefore they are likely to be both the dominant means to enact masculinity as well as constituting the hegemonic standard for boys' participation in sport. Participation in these *"rough"* sports requires specific masculine qualities. The quote reveals that real boys are constructed as tough and strong and rugby and soccer are enactments of these masculine qualities, *"They are, you know, very strong"*. This boy also suggests that only tough and strong boys are able to cope when playing these *"rough games"* as *"they will be fine"*. This illustrates sport's role in regulating the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity, as it is used to differentiate tough and strong boys from those who are not. Furthermore, there appears to be a hierarchy within sporting codes and their relative importance for the construction of hegemonic forms of masculinity. Rugby and soccer are seen as being the embodiment of masculine performance and thus may be more useful for the analysis of masculinity, than that of other sporting codes.

Earlier in this section we saw that hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to being tough, strong and active - characteristics which are enacted through participation in sport. However this is seen as a subjective struggle for some of these boys as they are not always able to access or meet the hegemonic standard owing to their visual impairment. In order to mediate this failure, some boys use discursive strategies to preserve a sense of acceptable masculinity, both at the personal subjective level as well as the public. In the quotes below we see this struggle being played out, as these boys attempt to position themselves in relation to the hegemonic standard.

For visually impaired boys' participation in sports, like rugby and soccer may at times be a challenge for them, in the process making it difficult for them to conform. In the quote below, we see the challenge for visually impaired boys in their attempts to compete with non-visually impaired boys. Previously, soccer and rugby were constructed as the masculine ideal; however, in the quote below, the participant makes reference to how difficult it is for visually impaired boys to compete with sighted boys when playing these games *"because sighted people were playing rough"*. The vulnerability of these visually impaired boys is exposed when interacting with non-

visually impaired boys, as their visual impairment makes them less capable of competing on an equal footing, which makes them even more vulnerable. The hegemonic standard of masculine behaviour on the sport field is to be strong and tough and be able to cope with rough games, but in the quote below we see the failure of visually impaired boys to meet this standard. This boy discursively defends his failure by offering an account of the sighted boys as cheats and this allows him to rationalise his own failure to win, this also serves to discredit the non visually impaired boys attainment of the hegemonic standard, thereby retaining a sense of acceptable masculinity.

"We went to the stadium and we took part in soccer. We came out second. It was difficult because sighted people were playing rough. They thought we can't see there was sometimes cheating."

In the quote below, another boy uses an activity such as "gym" to describe that boys should be *"tough"* and constructs boys who don't as being *"weak"*. This division of boys into distinctive categories is common to most of the boys in the sample. The reification of masculinity into, for example, those who are *"tough"* and those who are *"weak"* offer a limited number of positions to boys. Those who do not go to gym are considered *"weak"* and do not meet up to the hegemonic standard. One of the essential features of the participant's account, is that certain activities are seen to embody masculinity and that the lack of participation is an immediate signifier of not being masculine and a real boy or man.

"Some boys that exercise and go to gym are tough. Those boys that don't go to gym are weak. However, it is alright not to be tough. Each boy should appreciate and accept the way they are."

However, at the private level of his own subjectivity he knows he does not attain the standard of ideal masculinity set within sport. This raises questions as to whether or not he has failed as a man. Immediately he draws on an alternate voice, which challenges the dominant one, *"However, it is alright not to be tough."* This discursive construction provides him a rational for his failure and enables him to preserve a sense of acceptable masculinity.

73

We also see that sport is an important topic of conversation amongst these boys. Real boys are those boys who are able, at least publicly, to demonstrate their interest in sport. The hegemonic norm amongst these boys is that they talk about sport, support teams and we see that this is reserved solely for boys. Previously in this section we saw that participation in sport was one of the primary ways for boys to enact their masculinity, in the quotes below we see another way. Vicarious participation through the boys talk, supporting of teams and watching games is used as a means to align themselves to the hegemonic standards of masculinity. This may be particularly important for disabled boys, as their ability to participate and excel in sport may be limited by their disability.

"Normally talk about teams that we support, teams that we support because my friends they, they support very much, so they normally talk about teams that they support, they talk about soccer, sometimes they will talk a bit about rugby, cricket, you know, proudly South African, supporting our own South African teams."

3.5.2 Construction of Masculinity through Humour

The use of humour, like that of sport, was one of the distinctive features of these boys' accounts of what constitutes hegemonic masculinity. The boys made frequent reference to humour in their description of what boys in general are like, but we see that this is especially important for the construction of popular boys. Humour was also an important factor in the differentiation of boys from girls. Boys were constructed as being naturally more relaxed, funny and unruffled by life's difficulties, while girls were constructed as being more serious. In these boys' accounts we see the need for masculinity to be publicly expressed. This is accomplished through the interactions between boys with other boys and boys with girls. The classroom and the playground were sites for the enactment of masculinity through the use of humour.

"When they are fun, funny people are always popular. They are joking, jovial or whatever."

74

In the following quote this boy responded to a question relating to what boys find funny. From his response we again see the need for masculinity to be publicly performed, this boy draws attention to this when he states, *"Or what someone did more funny, maybe call out to the teacher"*. Popular boys are likely to be those boys who are able to demonstrate their use of humour in front of others.

"What someone did more funny, maybe call out to the teacher, shout at the team, or how she nearly slapped him. What he said to the teacher, things like that."

Humour as stated above is critical in differentiating boys from girls, in the following quote we see that boys are again constructed as funny *"always joking"*, but we also see that girls are constructed as more serious and evoke thoughts in these boys that they are not normally accustom too. We also see that humour may be used to defend against problematic thoughts and feelings, as humour may allow boys to avoid having to experience and confront them. The quote below illustrates the role that girls may play in exposing these issues to the boys. This will be discussed in greater detail later in this section.

"Boys they are always joking and talking things that are funny and sometimes the girls, eish, the girls talking makes you think. They talk things that make you think."

Earlier in this section, humour was seen as being important for the enactment of masculinity, in social contexts, but from these boys' accounts we see there is often a private, subjective distress that they have to cope with. Boys thus use humour as a means to mask their inner conflicts and anxieties from others, by presenting a cool and unruffled exterior.

"You don't have to show that you are angry today. You have to show that you are happy. Even when you are angry you have to laugh. Some of them can't laugh if they are angry."

The construction of masculinity around control of emotions means that boys and men are restricted to a narrow range of emotional expression. This construction requires them to be in control of their emotions and suppress negative feelings, which may or

may not be considered as healthy, for example anger and sadness. One way in which this is achieved is through the use of humour, which enables boys and men to distance themselves from experiencing negative emotions. This distance created by the use of humour has a major impact upon relationships and interactions between boys. It hampers and to a large degree prevents the natural expression of emotions.

3.6   THE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY IN RELATION TO GIRLS

The above sections have explored some of the ways in which masculinity is socially constructed and where it has been accessible, described the subjective challenges that these boys have to negotiate. Previously we see that masculinity is constructed as strong, tough, independent and powerful as well as masculinities need to be publicly expressed through sport and humour. In this section we see the importance of femininity for the reciprocal construction of masculinity and that it is constantly being enacted in relation to women and girls. We also see that hegemonic masculinity is perpetually constructed in opposition to femininity, but at the same time masculinity is defined by its relationship with it. Hegemonic masculinity also requires boys to have girlfriends and that this invokes compulsory heterosexuality. We also see how the notions and desires of girls regarding acceptable masculinity are translated and used by these boys as they construct hegemonic masculinity. Furthermore, we also see the anxiety contained in masculinity, especially in these visually impaired boys, and their attempts to defend and negotiate these anxieties. This is most evident in these boys experience and interactions with girls.

Throughout this analysis we see that masculinity is constantly constructed and enacted in relation to women and girls. In the following quote, this boy aptly describes this relationship

"It is cool man. I enjoy to be a boy, you see, in order to enjoy your sex, sex, you need the opposite sex. So really in order to be a boy where there are girls."

This view is however in tension with another boys account, in which women and girls are seen as alien and relating to them is a struggle.

76

"I am talking ... I wouldn't enjoy myself with the girls. I am talking about with the boys because I wouldn't feel comfortable with many girls there."

"Hey. No, no. That is a problem for me no I am not comfortable."

In the boys' accounts we also see notions that insist that boys should have girlfriends and that this is a signifier of being a real boy. This constructs the hegemonic norm for boys and men. This is most evident in the boys' constructions of popular boys, who are able to accomplish this by having girlfriends.

"Maybe how many girlfriends, like they had, they have. Those are the things that make you popular."

We also see that this construction relies on heterosexual constructions of masculinity as only boys who are attracted to girls are constructed as being real boys. Those boys who are perceived to be homosexual are othered and appear to lose the right to call themselves real boys. From this boy's statement we see that any non-hegemonic behaviour, especially behaviour that runs contrary to heterosexual norms, is seen as being alien to masculinity, *"I don't know where they come from"*. It thus appears that the boundaries of acceptable masculinity are regulated and policed by the use of homophobia.

"I say those ones I can not call them boys ... I don't know where they come from those attracted to men."

The construction of hegemonic masculinity insists that boys have girlfriends. This however, is in tension with some of the boys' accounts of their experience of girls. The subjective challenge for boys is to positively position themselves in relation to hegemonic norms. For some of these boys we see that this evokes anxiety. In the quote below we see that boys, *"worry"* and that this is in relation to girls, *"dumping them"*. This is contrasted with earlier accounts in which men are supposedly in control of women and girls, but from this boys account we see that this is not always the case. In these boys accounts we also see that boys and men are required to be

desirable to women and girls, if a boy or man is rejected by women\girls, questions are asked by himself as well as others as to whether or not he is a real boy or man.

"They mainly worry about, girls dumping them, or they may worry about their school work and that they may not be doing very well in certain subjects."

The quote below reveals that masculinity also involves an element of competition, in which boys are defined by their acquisition of girlfriends. This however may result in anxiety if a boy is unable to retain his girlfriend, as this may signify his failure to be a real boy and man. The boy's response in the quote below was in reference to a question asked about what boys in general worry about.

"Maybe their girlfriends. They would be worried if you are with a beautiful girlfriend you will always be worried. Maybe other girlfriends"

In order to be a successful boy we see that money and material resources play a major role in the construction of masculinity. Real boys who are desirable to girls must have money, dress in the latest fashions and have cell phones. This is however seen as a subjective challenge for some of these boys, as their access to resources, is limited, which in turn restricts their ability to position themselves positively in relation to the hegemonic standard.

"Maybe how well they dress, how expensive they are, what phones they have. Those are the things that make you popular."

"It is not good, it is not good. Because there are some people who do not have the money that the girls want. So those people actually loose."

The following extract illustrates the role that girls and women may play in the construction of boys' masculinity, furthermore it also illustrates that masculinity is constantly constructed in relation to girls. For this boy, girls appear to have a positive impact on his sense of self worth, *"you feel like you are the king"* and *"you are that important"*. This boy appears to have a high level of confidence and is able to interact successfully with girls. This account is in contrast to an earlier construction, in which

masculinity is characterised by boys not needing girls. Here we are seeing that masculinity is constantly enacted in relation to girls. The status of boys, *"you feel like you are the king"*, can only be enacted in relation to girls who are both subjugated and who reciprocally desire him. Thus the construction of masculinity is reliant on femininity as we see that in order for masculinity to be constructed as strong, independent and powerful, there needs to be an opposite, which is represented and constituted by femininity. This is further reinforced in the boy's account as it illustrates the need for masculinity to be affirmed by femininity, which is in contrast to the construction of masculinity as not needing women/ girls and not being reliant on them. .

"I think you feel, most probably, you feel like you are the king, or something you see, around girls, you feel that you are that important, and what girls think about you, you ask yourself, what they think about you as they are talking to you. What wrong they see, what wrong do they see in you, what right they see in you, what they admire in you, whether they admire you or not. All those issues appear in your mind when they are talking to you. "

Earlier in this section we see that masculinity is constantly constructed and enacted in relation to femininity. In this section we see that disabled boys' masculinity is about their struggle to position themselves positively in relation to hegemonic norms, which insist that boys have girlfriends and that boys be desirable and acceptable to girls. The attainment of this standard is seen as a challenge for some of these boys as a result of their visual impairment. From these boys' accounts, visually impaired boys are generally constructed as being less desirable to girls and inferior and secondary to non-visually impaired boys. We see that these boys divide girls into two distinctive groups, those that are seen as rejecting and those who are able to overcome their own feelings towards disability and accept the boys for who they are. The girls, who don't accept disabled boys *"a blind person, so what can I do with that person"*, evoke feelings of inadequacy in the boys which results in them feeling *"bad"*. In order to cope with this we see the boys employing particular discursive strategies, which enable them to feel better about being visually impaired *"I am proud of myself"* and *"I appreciate myself and I will tell them that I am not ashamed of myself"*. The feelings of shame that he states he does not have are likely to be the very feelings he

is protecting himself from and reflects the private distress and vulnerability he experiences.

"I won't be in love with you. Some of them they don't know me, but as when time goes on, I will tell them that I am not a kind of person like that. They won't have a problem with that, but some of them, they have a problem, and would start to say, 'Ah your boyfriend is partially sighted', they will start to say things that are, that will make her feel bad or that will make me feel bad, you see. But I am proud of myself, I won't say, I won't go to them and tell them, no, whatever you are doing is fine, only God knows, maybe you will get a child that will be worser than me."

We also see that in order to temporarily alleviate some of the anxiety evoked by the girls' imagined rejection of him he appears to adopt a moral position, *"I won't say, I won't go to them and tell them"*. Despite this we see him communicating his need to be accepted by girls, but we also see his private distress and anger and his desire to punish those who have hurt him, being expressed, *"Maybe you will get a child that is worser than me"*. The feelings of inadequacy and of not being good enough are however, not allowed to be expressed publicly and we see him placing constraints on himself, *"I won't say, I won't go to them and tell them"*. From this we see that there is a tension between his need to express his feelings, with that of his inner fear and anxiety that if he does, he again runs the risk of being rejected by these girls.

"That will be, maybe you get a child that will be more, maybe you will get a child that will be more, maybe you will get a child that will be triple or that will be paralysed. They way, what I am trying to say, I am trying to tell them, that they way I am, I appreciate myself, and I will tell them that I am not ashamed of myself."

In the following extract we see again that disabled boys are portrayed as being less desirable than non-disabled boys. We see that disabled boys are constructed, for the most part, as lacking and deficient and not as good as non-disabled boys, *"Some girls think that partially sighted boys are better than nothing"*. The messages that are conveyed to boys, by girls, are that even though they attempt, and in some respects, succeed in positioning themselves positively in relation to hegemonic masculinity, that when it comes to fulfilling the requirement that real boys are desirable to and

have girlfriends, we see that they are constructed as not good enough and are second best to non disabled boys. Furthermore we see that disabled masculinity is something that the girls have to accept and come to terms with, *"Okay, I love this person, I just have to accept the situation that I am in"*. This could be seen as an additional discursive defence, as it appears that this boy rationalises and displaces his distress at being constructed as second best and not good enough, by asserting that being hegemonically male is not what is important, as love is the most important thing. Ironically he also says that he has to "explain" himself to the girl and is subsequently reliant on her for acceptance, this is in contrast with constructions of men and boys as independent and in control of women and girls. Moreover disabled boys and men appear to have to justify their masculinity to women and girls, which is a reversal of earlier constructs in which men are constructed as powerful and that women must listen and obey. This illustrates the vulnerability of these disabled boys masculinity and their subjective struggle to construct a masculine identity.

This boy equates a mother's love and acceptance of a disabled child with that of the love required for girls to be in a relationship with a disabled boy, *"It is just like a lady giving birth to a disable child"*. This may be an indication of this boys need to be unconditionally loved and accepted. It is also interesting that he uses the image of the mother, who is generally constructed as caring, loving, nurturing and not being capable of rejecting a child. This again could be seen as a subjective appeal to be accepted, but in this we see that these disabled boys are "reduced" to a level of that of a child. Ironically the construction of disabled boys' masculinity is in stark contrast to hegemonic constructions of masculinity in which men and boys are constructed as strong, tough, independent and powerful and supposedly in control of women and girls. This illustrates the cost that disabled boys pay in order to be accepted, in that they have to relinquish the power and control contained in hegemonic forms of masculinity to women and girls, which in turn further distances them from being positively aligned with hegemonic forms of masculinity.

"Okay that is depending on how you get along with that girl. Okay let's say a person that is in love with a non-visually impaired boy. That boy is depending on the girl now how the boy explains it to the girl and that girl how she takes the situation. Okay, 'he is my boyfriend and he is a special person I will just have to accept it because I love

him.' Some girls just say, 'Oh I can not fall in love with a person that is partially sighted, a blind person, so what can I do with that person'. Some girls think that partially sighted boys are better than nothing. But some girls say okay I love this person I just have to accept the situation that I am in. It is just like a lady giving birth to a disable child. 'This is my baby I just have to accept it.' It has to go like that."

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In general terms, the broad aims of this research were to explore how visually impaired boys construct masculinity and the position that each of them holds in relation to hegemonic standards and norms. Furthermore the intention was to explore the subjective challenges and discursive strategies that are employed in order to maintain and defend a sense of acceptable masculinity against the potential failure to meet the expectations of hegemonic masculinity.

Recent literature that focuses on masculinity has mostly been conceptualised, framed within and carried out using social constructionist theory. There has been a gradual shift to include intra personal and psychological theories in order to address gaps that have been identified in social constructionist and discourse analytic accounts, hence the inclusion of psychoanalysis. The advent and the increasing popularity of integrated approaches appears to offer a more systematic and comprehensive account of identities, thus it was decided to base this study on this approach. For this reason Frosh et al (2002) has been used to guide the analysis and the subsequent discussion.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In analysing the boys' interviews, six primary constructions emerged. These were boys' construction of masculinity, as independence, as male power and control, as related to work and family, popular boys and masculinity through performance. The final construction was the construction of masculinity in relation to girls. These aspects of the construction of masculinity emerged after an intensive process of analysis in which only the dominant constructions were retained.

In the following discussion two distinctive processes operate in the boys' accounts. The first is that the boys generally start their accounts with a description of the ideal standard of masculinity and emphasise and promote attributes associated with

hegemonic masculinity. The second is their attempts to positively position themselves in relation to this standard and defend their subjectivity when they are unable too achieve this standard. These processes generally follow one after another and were prevalent throughout the boys' accounts. It must be noted that there is very little research that directly relates to this topic and therefore it is difficult to integrate these findings with literature that refers directly to this study.

This discussion chapter is divided into two sections, the first section relates to the general and pervasive constructions of masculinity revealed in the boy's accounts, this is in line with Frosh et al's first analytic technique used in their integrated approach. . These findings are then contextualised in mainstream masculinity research, with specific focus on the similarities, differences and gaps in masculinity research. The second section focuses on the subjective experience of masculinity and the challenges and issues confronting visually impaired boys. Moreover, this section focuses on the discursive strategies and defences employed by boys in the process of constructing a personal and socially accepted and endorsed masculine identity. This section is in line with the second analytic technique employed in Frosh et al's (2002) integrated approach, which is rooted in psychoanalytic theory

4.2.1   Boys' Constructions of Masculinity

The section below relates to the social construction of masculinity found in the boys' accounts, which is in line with the first component of Frosh et al's (2002) integrated approach. Before one can look at the social construction of masculinity found in the boys' accounts it is essential to refer back to the research question in order to guide the discussion that follows. In light of this it is essential to highlight the questions: What are the hegemonic constructions of masculinity found within these boys' accounts and how do visually impaired adolescents position themselves in relation to hegemonic constructions of masculinity?

The analysis of the boys' accounts revealed a number of constructions that will be discussed and contextualised in this section. These findings have been presented separately in the findings section of this thesis, but for the purposes of lessening

overlap and redundancy the findings will be discussed together in this section of the discussion chapter. In general the boys constructed masculinity as being independent, tough, strong and having power and authority over women and girls. Furthermore it was constructed in relation to patriarchal and traditional notions regarding family and the expectations placed on men within these. In addition, masculinity was constantly constructed and enacted in relation to femininity. Besides these general constructions two other key indicators of masculinity were identified, namely sporting prowess and humour, which were essential for popular masculinity. These were also used in the construction of hegemonic masculinity.

There is some overlap between the concepts of hegemonic and popular masculinity. These concepts are often interchangeable for they have similar underpinnings and popular masculinity is for the most part hegemonic masculinity. This overlap is explained in Frosh's study (2002) and consequently this study by the omission of the term hegemonic masculinity from questions asked in the interviews. This was motivated by the boys' anticipated unfamiliarity with the term hegemonic masculinity, thus questions were asked that attempted to access this concept, without directly referring to it. This however may have resulted in responses that at times relate to popular and not hegemonic masculinity.

The analysis revealed that masculinity is constructed as tough, strong, and have the ability to fight and defend themselves, characteristics that are frequently reported in accounts of hegemonic masculinity. This construction is supported by Frosh's (2002) finding that boys' valued "hardness" and "body size" and emphasised the importance of these for being considered popular and further, a real boy. Frosh (2002, p.82) also found that being "hard" had limits and that boys who were excessively hard or "too physically threatening" were seen to be hegemonically male and placed "high in the masculine hierarchy", but these boys were not necessarily popular and liked by other boys. This was not a feature of these visually impaired boys' accounts as there was little evidence of overt aggression and bullying in the boys' responses, despite being directly asked by the researchers in the interviews. This may be in part due to the boys wanting to present a positive view of their school or to avoid revealing their own vulnerability. Frosh et al (2002, p.77) also found that linked to the construction of boys as hard, was their need to express "antagonism to school based learning"; this

was seen as an important attribute for boys to be popular amongst other boys. This was however not a feature of these visually impaired boys' accounts, conversely they placed a lot of emphasis and importance on school work and saw education as being essential for them to be successful, independent and self sufficient, in that it would enable them to find employment. This was one of the distinctive differences between Frosh's (2002) findings and this research. It is difficult however to assume that this is a distinct and unique feature of this study as there is no control group of non disabled adolescents to compare this finding with. It is therefore important that other studies are conducted in order to explore this issue more fully. However, one can surmise that education represents for these boys an avenue to escape the constraints of their disability.

Frosh et al (2002) also found a racial hierarchy operating in the construct of popular masculinity, "in that the boys of African-Caribbean decent were presented as the group most likely to embody the characteristics of popular masculinity" (Frosh et al, 2002, p.77). This was however not a feature of the boys' accounts in this research. There was no reference to a racial hierarchy, for example, in the boys' descriptions of their interactions at school. This is primarily due to the homogeneous nature of the sample, as all the participants were black and from similar cultural backgrounds. The homogeneous nature of the sample forms one of the central limitations of this research. Furthermore Frosh et al (2002) and Mac an Ghaill (1994) found that being "hard" and tough were used to police the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity, in that, those boys who were considered to be weak, nerdy and not interested in sport were constructed by their peers as being effeminate and not real boys.

In addition, Frosh et al (2002) and Mac an Ghaill (1994) found that boys who did not meet the hegemonic standard of being physically tough and strong were not only considered effeminate but were also constructed as homosexual. Frosh et al (2002) contend that any suggestion of being homosexual or perceived to be was policed vigorously by boys and used by boys to punish and demean other boys, mainly in an attempt to reinforce their own masculinity and its position in relation to hegemonic masculinity. The boys in this research, although emphasising the importance of real boys to be strong and tough, did not however construct boys who were unable to achieve this standard as being effeminate or homosexual. The only indication of

86

homosexuality being attributed to boys/ men was in relation to the choice of sexual partners and orientation. Boys/ men who were or appeared to be homosexual were constructed as alien to masculinity and denied their rights to be masculine. Homophobic constructions were not, however, used in the general policing of masculinity and this may suggest the dominance and pervasiveness of heterosexual norms and may furthermore reflect what Attwell refers to as a "...culture of silence and denial rather than an absence of homophobia or concerns regarding homosexuality" (2002, p.101). These findings are further supported by those of Danckwerts (2005) where it was found that Black boys did not use homophobia to police the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity. Thus the absence of homophobia in regulating masculinity may be attributed to the homogenous nature of this sample and the influence of particular culture-based constructions of masculinity in which homosexuality may be taboo.

In this study we see that the boys placed a lot of emphasis on sport and the importance for boys to play sport. We also saw that this was a critical means to enact hegemonic masculinity and its associated attributes. Additionally certain sports carried more weight with the boys and were seen as exemplifying masculinity. These were primarily soccer and to a lesser extent rugby. Frosh et al (2002) found that being good at sport was an important criterion for popularity amongst the boys in his sample and was an essential requirement for being considered a real boy. This was of particular importance for the boys in this study and set the standard for masculine behaviour and interest. This study also revealed that sport was a critical site for the enactment of characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity. The boys frequently linked participation in socially endorsed sports like soccer with attributes like strength and toughness. The pervasiveness of this construction is best illustrated by the lack of resistance to this notion, as all the boys expressed the importance of sport and all used sport as one of the defining criteria in their descriptions and definitions of popular masculinity and thus hegemonic masculinity. In light of this it is argued that it is likely that those boys who do not participate or were not interested in sport may have been at risk of being constructed as less masculine than those who publicly endorsed their support of sport through participation or vicarious participation. The boys in this sample were able to defend their masculinity through public display of their interest in sport.

Atwell (2002) found in her study that there was a class and racial construction in regards sports participation within Pietermaritzburg schools, with soccer being played in previously disadvantaged black schools and rugby being played in ex model C and predominately white schools. The school used in this research was predominately black and the participants generally came from disadvantaged and lower socio-economic backgrounds. The most popular sport in this context was soccer as has been mentioned above, but rugby was referred to by some of the boys. The boys' reference to rugby may have been in response to the researcher being white and male, and therefore may have assumed that the researcher would be interested in rugby and thus expressed an interest in order to please the researcher.

Furthermore Frosh et al (2002) found that sport was used by the boys to differentiate boys from girls, usually to the detriment of girls. Frosh et al (2002, p.100) reported that this also included the undermining of girls' activities and interests, which were constructed as being "meaningless and second rate" by the boys. The construction of girls and the dismissal of their activities and interests were premised on essentialist and biological explanations of gender that naturalised the superiority of men solely on the basis of perceived physical strength and ability. Frosh et al (2002) found these notions being expressed in relation to girls being constructed as not being capable of participating in sport, most especially those reserved for boys/men, like soccer. Frosh et al (2002, p.101) found boys constructing girls as "physically uncoordinated" and inept. This was also extended into other areas, "they were simply not up to it, being psychologically and temperamentally unsuited for football" Frosh et al (2002, p.100). Frosh also found that girls who did transgress these boundaries by participating in "boys" sports were constructed as masculine and made the boys uncomfortable. These girls were dismissed and ridiculed for attempting to participate in sports that were seen as the preserve of boys and men. In light of Frosh's findings it would be expected that a similar pattern would be found. This was however not the case. The boys made very little reference to girls participating in sport. There are several possible explanations for this. It is possible that sports such as soccer remain the unassailable preserve of masculine activity. It may also be that the type of questions asked did not adequately access the constructions of femininity in sport, or that responses were not fully probed or followed up.

Despite the fact that visually impaired boys and gay men are both socially marginalised, they are very different in some respects, such as the construction of masculinity around sport. The importance of sport in the construction of visually impaired boys' masculinity is in stark contrast to that of gay men. It is generally acknowledged that both disabled and gay masculinities are constructed as subordinate and marginalised in relation to hegemonic forms of masculinity. This study however revealed that they use sport differently in the construction of their masculine identities. Robertson (2003) found that some gay men rejected and avoided participation in sport on the basis that it was an exemplifier of heterosexual masculinity. Furthermore, he found that gay men's experience when participating in sport was one of being made to feel bad about themselves and that it evoked a large degree of anxiety in them. Moreover gay mens' participation in sport was interpreted by some sectors of the gay community as being counter to gay culture. However, while embodying a subjugated masculinity, these visually impaired boys' experience of sport was markedly different from some gay men's. This difference is primarily based on the boys' identifying with heterosexual norms, which is a characteristic feature of hegemonic forms of masculinity and illustrates the importance that sexuality plays in the construction of hegemonic masculine identities.

Another characteristic feature of the boys' accounts was the emphasis placed on humour. This was seen as being a natural and distinctive component of boys' interactions and communications. The boys in the sample also used humour to differentiate boys from girls, with boys constructed as funny, more relaxed, cool and unruffled by life. Girls on the other hand were seen as being more serious and had a different sense of humour from the boys. Humour, like that of other characteristics attributed to masculinity was constructed as being natural and innate, with humour being an inherent part of boys' makeup. This is consistent with the findings of other researchers, most notably Frosh et al (2002) and Mac an Ghaill (1994), both of whom, found a similar pattern in their study of British youth. Frosh et al (2002) found that the interactions between boys served to regulate hegemonic masculinity, in that humour often masked attempts by the boys to inflict humiliation or pain on others. He found that boys would say hurtful things to other boys under the guise of it being a joke. The intended victim, if he was to maintain his position amongst the boys, would have to

accept this and laugh, because if he did not he would be considered sensitive and less tough. This ensures that boys have to hide their feelings and cover up their vulnerability. There was little evidence of humour being used in this way by the boys in this sample as the boys stated that there was very little bullying in their school. This again may be an attempt to present a positive view of their school or to mask their own vulnerability or complicity in bullying others. The use of humour was however used by the boys to hide unacceptable feelings and emotions that they had difficulty dealing with. These boys constructed masculinity as tough and strong and this was extended to how they cope with emotions and issues and the general consensus was that boys must hide their emotions and that they must always show that they are not affected by issues and problems in their lives. This was primarily achieved through the use of humour and jokes.

In addition the use of humour was seen as a means to differentiate boys from girls. Frosh et al (2002) found that humour was constructed as "exclusively masculine which implied that girls were not sufficiently robust to engage in joking banter" (Frosh et al, 2002, p.103). The notion that girls are not tough enough to cope with boys' humour links back to an earlier finding of this research in which we saw constructions of boys as being strong and tough whilst girls are constructed as weak and vulnerable. In addition the boys in the sample found it difficult at times to communicate with girls, as they were constructed as more serious. This was a common construction amongst the boys in the sample and again reinforces the finding that these boys constantly mobilise essentialist explanations for the constructed differences between boys/ men and girls/ women. The construction of boys as funny, relaxed and joking is, however, in tension with the boys' emphasis and focus on schoolwork and the importance they place on education, which differs in some respects from Frosh's (2002) findings.

The analysis also revealed that masculinity was constantly constructed in opposition to women and girls. This was a pervasive construction throughout the boys' accounts. One of the ways in which this was manifested was that boys emphasised their physical superiority over women/girls. In addition this was extended into other areas, such as the boys' construction of girls as being dependent and reliant on boys for protection and to make decisions for them. This was an important distinction for these

boys and was again used to differentiate masculinity from femininity. This fixes masculinity and femininity into restrictive positions with the relationship between men and women being inherently unequal. The analysis revealed that this relationship although unequal was important in the construction of these boys' masculinity. It became apparent that the construction of masculine identities amongst these boys involved a reciprocal construction, in which girls played a major role in the construction of these boys' masculine identities. This was most evident in the construction of popular boys, who were seen as having the ability to interact successfully with girls and more importantly were able to acquire girlfriends. This was one of the hegemonic requirements for these boys to be considered a real boy and set the standard against which boys were measured.

Furthermore it became evident that boys were reliant on girls to affirm their sense of being masculine and that it was important for them to be desirable to girls. This rested heavily on heterosexual norms for masculinity, in which boys/men are expected to have girlfriends, and this was of particular importance for these visually impaired boys. In addition it was found that boys were required by girls to dress well and have money and cell phones if boys were to be desirable to girls. Girls were thus able to establish some of the criteria for hegemonic masculinity, and this illustrates the reciprocal construction of masculinity. The importance placed by the boys on having girlfriends reinforces the finding that these visually impaired boys' masculinity rests on heterosexual constructions of masculinity. This may be further linked to the importance these boys place on family and the expectations placed on men.

This research differed in one other significant way, from Frosh's (2002) study, in that these visually impaired boys constructed masculinity in terms of men having a family. The boys emphasised the importance for men of establishing a family and this was further related to the number of children a man is able to produce. This emphasizes heterosexual notions of masculinity and sex-drive discourses which link masculinity to a man's reproductive potency, consistent with Lindegger and Strebel (1998). Boys and men were also constructed as independent, not needing women and self sufficient attributes which were strongly valued by the boys. Women on the other hand are constructed as dependent on men for material support and are seen as less powerful

and subservient to men. Women are also constructed as caring, maternal and responsible for all household activities.

The analysis revealed that masculinity was constructed in terms of traditional roles and expectations of the man as head of the household and breadwinner. These roles were rigid and prescriptive and were a hegemonic standard or norm for men. Within this a number of expectations were placed on men to provide for and protect their families, in return for which men are given respect, obedience and their needs are met. These constructions are strongly rooted in patriarchal notions of masculinity. The boys in this study use more overt patriarchal constructions of masculinity than those in Frosh's (2002) study. They insist on male superiority and dominance over femininity. According to Connell (1987) these patriarchal constructions of masculinity perpetuate and legitimize the subordination of women.

The emphasis on the role of men in the family and the difference between this study and Frosh's (2002) study could be attributed to the relative weight each society places on the family and the man's role in it. In the case of this research, the boys all came from cultural backgrounds that are likely to place emphasis on family, while Frosh's (2002) sample, although including some other cultural groups, was primarily white European, who may not view masculinity and the family in the same way.

Connell (1987) stratifies hegemony as white, middle-class and heterosexual. Although these boys confirm to some of Connell's criteria for hegemonic masculinity, they do not however use racially and class based constructions. This may be because these boys come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and in post-apartheid South Africa standards of hegemony may be shifting away from the dominance of the White, middle-class male. This links to Wetherell and Edley's (1999) notion that hegemonic standards vary across context and time.

Furthermore, these boys construct roles associated with gender as being innate and intrinsic to masculinity and femininity and these are premised on biological sex differences. The construction of gender based on biological differences is pervasive in society and is used to explain the constructed differences in behaviour, roles, practices

and dispositions between men and women. This is supported by Edley and Wetherell (1995).

The analysis revealed that the construction of masculine independence and separateness from women was not borne out in the boys' accounts and overlooked an important contradiction. It was found that boys were in fact reliant on women but this was overlooked as it related to domestic and household activities, which is a part of the construction of femininity. Masculinity, as has been found by many researchers, is often constructed through contradiction. Segal suggests that "the closer we come to uncovering some form of exemplary masculinity, a masculinity which is solid and sure of itself, the clearer it becomes that masculinity is structured through contradiction: the more it asserts itself, the more it calls itself into question" (1990, p.123).

The primary intention of this section was to contextualise the findings of this research with other studies on masculinity, most notably Frosh et al (2002) study on young masculinities. Frosh's study was the primary text with which the findings of this study were compared. This was motivated by the intention of this research to replicate the Frosh et al (2002) study in the South African context as Frosh's study was the basis of this research. The analysis of these visually impaired boys' accounts of being masculine revealed a number of striking similarities between this study and the Frosh et al (2002) study of how boys construct their masculine identities. It became apparent that there were very few differences in the construction of masculinity, despite the evident differences in the nature of the samples. Both groups of boys emphasised the importance of sport and humour in their descriptions of activities involved in hegemonic and popular masculinity. They also emphasised the importance of attributes normally associated with hegemonic masculinity and generally used similar arguments for the differences between masculinity and femininity. The differences between this study and that of Frosh et al (2002) centre on the emphasis placed on patriarchal constructions of masculinity and the importance of the family in the construction of masculinity.

4.2.2 Visually Impaired Masculinity, its Struggles, Challenges and Discursive Construction

In this section, the primary focus is on the subjective experience of these visually impaired boys' sense of being masculine and the processes that these boys use in order to construct an acceptable masculine identity. Moreover this section intends to describe the subjective challenges that visually impaired boys face in the process of constructing their masculinity. This involves outlining some of the discursive strategies and defences that they employ in order to retain a sense of adequate masculinity, especially in the face of their failure to meet the ideal standard of masculinity prevalent in hegemonic forms of masculinity. This is line with Frosh et al's (2002) integrated approach in which psychoanalytic theory is used to explore and understand the positioning of subjects in relation to hegemonic constructions of masculinity. In reference to this, the research questions that are used to guide this discussion are: what are the subjective challenges that visually impaired boys face in the construction of their masculinity, what are the discursive strategies they employ, firstly in order to preserve a sense of acceptable masculinity, in accordance with hegemonic standards and secondly to defend themselves if they are unable to maintain a sense of this acceptable masculinity?

It must be noted however that these boys' accounts are deeply personal, idiosyncratic and nuanced, thus it is difficult to compare the findings described in this section with other studies. There are however some generic discursive strategies that were found and it may therefore be possible to compare these with the findings of other researchers. It is further argued that visually impaired boys not only have to negotiate the vulnerabilities, anxieties and contradictions inherent in masculinity in general, but also have to cope with the unique challenges brought about by their disability, and its interface with the broader society. It is in respect to this, that this research endeavour has attempted to explore and bring to the attention of mainstream masculinity research.

The overriding feature of these boys' accounts is that they constantly attempt to position themselves positively in relation to hegemonic masculinity that is aligning themselves with the standards of hegemonic masculinity; this is evident in the

descriptions, definitions and standards that they set for their own as well as others' masculinity. The boys' accounts of popular masculinity and the activities that were constructed as essential for boys/ men to participate in bear a startling similarity with the findings of other researchers (Frosh et al, 2002). This illustrates the pervasiveness of hegemonic constructions of masculinity.

One of the distinctive features of the boys' accounts is that they do not attempt to negotiate separate norms and rules for governing the masculine practices and behaviours of visually impaired boys. Instead, these boys use the same hegemonic constructions of masculinity as non-visually impaired boys to define the standards and norms to regulate visually impaired masculinity. This does however have some rather profound implications for these visually impaired boys' sense of acceptable masculinity, as these boys often fail to meet the hegemonic standard for masculine behaviour and are aware of this failure. The boys thus use hegemonic masculinity to measure, judge and evaluate their own as well as others' performance of masculinity. It may be argued that these boys are complicit in reproducing hegemonic masculinity, as it appears that they support and endorse it by the very standards, practices and norms that they establish for masculinity. Connell (1995) found that the masculine ideal espoused in hegemonic forms of masculinity are generally beyond the reach of most men but they are complicit in reproducing it, as their investment in, and endorsement of hegemonic masculinity, has benefits for them. it is particularly striking that these boys who have particular difficulty in living by these hegemonic standards of masculinity continue to endorse them.

It is further argued that these visually impaired boys use of hegemonic constructions of masculinity to police and construct their personal masculinity is a defensive strategy. This relates to their need to defend against the vulnerability caused by their visual impairment, it is imperative that in order to avoid confronting their vulnerability they need to adhere to and position themselves as closely as possible to hegemonic standards. This is however, a temporary solution and is a compromise, as ultimately this is unsuccessful as they are constantly being exposed to their shortcomings by their disability. Disability, as has been mentioned in an earlier section, is a product of a disabling environment and thus is for the most part socially constructed such as Marks highlights: "Our sense of normality and difference does not

arise naturally from physical or mental differences between people, but rather is an effect of the way in which these differences are framed through an interaction between people in the context of work and society" (Marks, 1999, p.82). The subjective distress experienced by visually impaired boys is therefore only in part due to their impairment, but is mostly generated by the social construction of disability. This construction is characterised by disability being considered deficient and alien and is othered, marginalised and subordinated. In light of this, the interface of masculinity and disability would inevitably result in distress, anxiety and challenges that need to be negotiated.

It is therefore argued that in the case of these boys it is even more important that they adhere to hegemonic constructions of masculinity, if they are able to retain any sense of being adequately masculine. It is further argued that the boys awareness that they are regarded as subordinate and marginalised they are even more at pains to be accepted by the mainstream by adhering closely to the hegemonic norms and standards of masculinity.

The boys attempted to live up to their own constructions of masculinity, but this is at times seen as a struggle for them as their disability placed constraints on their ability to act in a manner that allows them to align themselves positively with the standards of hegemonic masculinity. This struggle evokes a number of intolerable thoughts and feelings in the boys that may need to be defended against, if they were able to maintain a coherent sense of being masculine and further an adequate masculine identity. To this end the boys employed discursive strategies, firstly to defend against feelings of inadequacy and anxiety evoked by their failure to meet the standards for being considered a real boy/man and secondly, to save face in light of their inability at times to live up to their own, as well as others' constructions of masculinity. Thirdly to maintain the illusion of them being able to be as masculine as sighted boys, whose definitions of masculinity are at times beyond the reach of visually impaired boys.

The boys' subjective struggle to align themselves positively with hegemonic constructions of masculinity is revealed in their descriptions of their failure to meet the standards they construct for masculinity. It is at this point that it was possible to see the discursive strategies they employ. The general pattern is as follows:

Firstly they initially describe the dominant constructions of masculinity and focus on the attributes, characteristics, behaviours and activities involved in their conceptualisation of masculinity, but without applying them directly to visually impaired boys. These are outlined and discussed in the first part of this discussion chapter. Secondly they attempt to position themselves positively with their conceptualisations of hegemonic masculinity. This is evident in their descriptions of their own involvement in activities, like sport, and the attitudes and emphasis they place on the differences between boys and girls. Thirdly they appear to recognise their inability to meet the hegemonic and ideal constructions for masculinity. This recognition is at times conscious and at others unconscious, but what is consistent is that this is in relation to their disability and the limitations it places on them. Fourthly they employ discursive strategies in order to defend against their failure to meet the hegemonic standard of masculinity. The failure to meet this standard may at times evoke intolerable thoughts and feelings that the subject needs to defend against, the use of which in turn allows the subject some relief from the distress it evokes in them. This is achieved by the use of defences like denial, displacement, projection and the use of rationalisations.

The use of these discursive strategies was evident in the boys' struggle to position themselves positively with the constructions of masculinity identified in the analysis, the most important of these was in relation to women and girls. The relationship between masculinity and femininity was of particular importance in revealing the boys' subjective struggle to position themselves positively with their constructions of hegemonic masculinity. The boys' struggle is most exposed by their attempts to fulfil the heterosexual requirement of hegemonic masculinity that insists that boys have girlfriends. This struggle may be attributed to what Shakespeare (1996) states: "Both male and female disabled people are often seen as being asexual" (Marks 1999). The implication of non-conformity to this criterion is that boys would be constructed as being less than a real boy/man. This has been discussed in greater detail in the first section of this chapter.

The boys' struggle to position themselves positively in relation to hegemonic masculinity, by obtaining girlfriends, is at times difficult for them. This difficulty relates primarily to the reversal of gender roles, in that boys/men are normally

constructed as having control and power over girls/women, a goal that is not always achievable for disabled boys. This is due to the finding that visually impaired boys are disempowered when relating to girls. This is primarily due to the girls constructing visually impaired boys as being less desirable; this is contrasted by the boys' accounts of masculinity's power over femininity. The analysis found that the boys' interactions with girls evoked anxiety and feelings of inadequacy and not being good enough. The boys generally felt that they were second best to sighted boys in the girls' eyes. In order to defend against these feelings the boys used a number of strategies.

Firstly they attempted to assert their belief in themselves by the use of self-affirming statements like *"I am proud of myself"* or *"I appreciate myself"*. These statements allowed the boys, to a certain extent, to retain a positive sense of being masculine. Secondly they fell back on passive strategies in which there is no direct or overt action. The boys used statements like *"they must accept me if they love me"*. These allow the boys to relinquish their responsibility for their own sense of being adequately masculine. It also prevents any further exploration of their feelings of inadequacy. This strategy is a form of projection, which effectively prevents the boy from having to confront the reality of his disability and people's attitudes and views. The other form of defence is more aggressive in that their inadequacy and feelings of badness are projected onto others most especially girls. This can take the form of implicit or explicit threats, like *"your child might be worser than me"*. Statements like this may express frustration and anger at the restrictions placed on them by their disability and their perceptions of the views and attitudes of girls. However it may also hide an appeal for empathic understanding of their reality. In both cases the private distress and at times anger is expressed, but there was an element of caution in their use of them as they might run the risk of being rejected further. Their fear of being rejected and their inability to express this may result in further distress, anger and isolation, thus increasing their vulnerability, and their feelings of being inadequately masculine.

4.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

The limitations of this research mostly relate to the sample used in the study. Critical to this is the homogeneous nature of the sample, in that the sample only consisted of

black participants. Consequently, the sample was not representative of all race groups. This reduces the researcher's ability to explore the variations and contrasts in the construction of masculinity of visually impaired boys from different race groups. Furthermore the sample consisted exclusively of visually impaired boys and therefore excluded boys with other forms of disability. This reduces the ability of this research to be generalised to the disabled adolescent population as a whole. Furthermore it was not possible to explore the potential similarities and differences in the construction and subjective experience of masculinity, between adolescent boys with different forms of disability.

The final limitation in respects to the sample used in this research is that in order to replicate Frosh (2002) study it would have been necessary to use non-disabled boys, as their study was conducted using this population groupe. This was however not seen as a limitation as this study intended to address a gap in masculinity research, namely the exploration of visually impaired masculinity in the South African context and therefore it is appropriate that the sample differed between Frosh et al study and this research effort. This however made it challenging at times to assess whether or not some of the findings were a unique and distinct feature of visually impaired masculinity or of masculinity in general. This therefore, limited the ability of the findings to be compared to non-disabled boys' interviewed in Frosh et al's (2002) study.

Moreover this research endeavour was guided by Frosh et al's (2002) study on young masculinity, which included both individual interviews as well as focus groups. The findings of their research were therefore generated from data collected using both forms of data collection techniques. In order to more effectively compare the findings of this research with Frosh et al's (2002) study, it would have been preferable to include focus groups in this study. The exclusion of focus groups was due to time, labour and cost constraints and it was deemed that the data collected from the interviews would be sufficient, especially considering that this is a master's thesis.

Another area of concern in regards to this study relates to the poor quality of material gathered from two of the interviews. This issue has been discussed in the data analysis section of this research, but it is important to mention that the loss of this information

does to a certain extent compromise the reliability of this research. As has been mentioned in the data analysis section, all possible steps were undertaken to reduce the impact this may have had on the findings of the research.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The exploration of masculinity does not occur in a vacuum and is not merely based on a whim, but rather, is set against a backdrop of a number of social issues and phenomena which all pose challenges for society. These include the HIV/Aids pandemic, crime, domestic violence, rape and substance abuse to name a few. These have been explored extensively and their relationship with certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity has largely been established. This research effort is therefore contextualised in respects to these issues and hopes to contribute to enhancing the existing knowledge base relating to masculinity.

In addition, this research has been driven by the need to address a gap in masculinity research. This gap relates to the intersection of masculinity, disability and adolescence, which has been largely overlooked by masculinity and disability researchers. This research is therefore aimed at addressing this oversight. This is however not achievable through the implementation of a single study. It is therefore strongly advocated that similar studies be conducted, so as to further explore the experience and construction of disabled adolescent masculinity.

The implementation of similar studies must however take into consideration the limitations and failings of this research and use them to guide future research efforts.

The recommendations for future research that emerged out of this research endeavour tend, for the most part, to derive from the limitations outlined in the section above. The first recommendation is therefore, that this study be replicated by other researchers so as to verify some of the findings of this research. Secondly it would be important to include the various racial groups so as to explore the construction of masculinity across them. It would also be important to include a control group of non-disabled adolescent boys so as to establish a base line against which the construction of visually impaired masculinity could be compared. It would also be essential to

conduct similar studies in other schools catering for visually impaired boys, so as to enable a comparison to be made between the findings of this research with studies of a similar nature. In addition this would enable comparisons to be made in relation to regional and institutional factors between this study and other studies.

The final recommendation is that future studies include other forms of disability, in order to explore the construction and subjective experience of masculinity across the various disabilities. This would enable researchers to explore the similarities and differences in the construction of masculinity and to explore the impact each disability has on the construction of masculine identities.

REFERENCES

Attwell, P.A. (2002). *Real boys: Concepts of masculinity among school teachers.*
Unpublished M.A. (Clinical Psychology) Thesis: University of Natal,
Pietermaritzburg.

Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. (2005). *The Practice of Social Research.* Cape Town: Oxford
University Press.

Berger, M., Wallis, B., & Watson, S. (1995). *Constructing Masculinity.* New York:
Routledge.

Beynon, J. (2002). *Masculinities and culture.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Burr, V. (2001). *An Introduction to Social Constructionism.* New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity.* London:
Routledge.

Connell, R.W. (2000). *The Men and the Boys.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Connell, R.W. (2002). *Gender.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Coulter, R.P. (2003). Boys doing good: Young men and gender equity. *Educational
Review, 55*(2), 135-145.

Danckwerts, S.A. (2005). *Emerging Masculinities: a qualitative analysis of the
construction and practice of adolescent masculinities.* Unpublished Masters thesis:
University of Kwa-Zulu Natal

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research.* Thousand
Oaks, California: Sage.

Donaldson, M. (1993). What is hegemonic masculinity? *Theory and Science. 22*, 643-657.

Dworkin, S.L. & Wachs, F.L. (2000) The Morality/Manhood Paradox: Masculinity, Sport and the Media. In J. McKay, M. Messner & D. Sabo (Eds.). *Masculinities, Gender Relations, and Sport* (pp. 47-66). California: Sage Publications

Edley, N. & Wetherell, M. (1995). *Men in Perspective: Practice, power and identity.* London: Prentice Hall.

Edley, N., & Wetherell, M. (1996). Masculinity, power and identity. In Mac an Ghaill, (Ed.), *Understanding masculinities: Social relations and cultural arenas.* London: Open University Press.

Epstein, D. & Johnson, R. (1998). *Schooling sexualities.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Fausto-Sterling, A. (1995). How to Build a Man. In M. Berger, B. Wallis & S. Watson (Eds.). *Constructing Masculinity.* New York: Routledge.

Frosh, S., Phoenix, A. & Pattman, R. (2002). *Young Masculinities.* New York: Palgrave.

Frosh, S. Phoenix, A. & Pattman, R. (2003). Taking a stand: Using psychoanalysis to explore the positioning of subjects in discourse. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 42,* 39 - 53.

Head, J. (1999). *Understanding the boys: Issues of behaviour and achievement.* London: Falmer.

Hird, M.J. (2003). Vacant wombs: Feminist challenges to psychoanalytic theories of childless women. *Feminist Review, 75,* 5-19.

Hook, Derek. (2002). Critical Issues in Developmental Psychology. In D. Hook, J. Watts & J. Cockcroft (Eds). *Developmental Psychology* (pp. 343-366). Landsdown: UCT Press.

Kerlinger, F. (1986). *Foundations of behavioural research*. New York: Holt, Rhinehart & Wilson.

Laberge, S. & Albert, M. (2000). Conceptions of masculinity and gender transgressions in sport among adolescent boys. In J. McKay, M.A. Messner & D.Sabo (Eds.) *Masculinities, Gender Relations and Sport* (pp. 141-156). London: Sage Publications.

Lindegger, G. & Strebel, A. (1998). Power and responsibility: shifting discourses of gender and HIV/AIDS. *Psychology in Society, 24*, 4-20.

Lloyd, M. (1992). "Does she boil eggs? Towards a feminist model of disability." *Disability, Handicap & Society, 7*, 207-221.

Mac an Ghaill, M. (1994). *The making of men: Masculinities, sexualities and schooling*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Marks, D. (1999). *Disability: Controversial Debates and Psychosocial Perspectives*. London: Routledge Publishers.

Morrell, R. (1998). Gender and education: The place of masculinity in South African schools. *South African Journal of Education, 18*(4), 218-224.

Nayak, A. & Kehily, M.J. (1996). Playing it straight: Masculinities, homophobias and schooling. *Journal of Gender Studies, 5*(2), 211-229.

Pease, B., & Pringle, K. (2001). *A Man's World? Changing Men's Practices in a Globalized World*. London: Zed Books.

Redman, P. (2000). 'Tarred with the same brush': 'Homophobia' and the roles of the unconscious in school-based cultures of masculinity. *Sexualities.* *3*(4), 483-499.

Redman, P. (2001). The discipline of love. *Men and Masculinities,* *4*(2), 186-200.

Robertson, S. (2003). 'If I let a goal in, I'll get beat': contradictions in masculinity, sport and health. *Health Education Research.* *18*(6), 706-713.

Robson, C. (1993). *Real world research.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Segal, L. (1993). Changing Men: Masculinities in context. *Theory and Society,* *22,* 625 – 641.

Silverman, D. (2001). *Doing qualitative research.* London: Sage Publications.

Steer, S.A. (2001). Reconsidering the concept of hegemonic masculinity: Discursive psychology, conversation analysis and participants' orientation. *Feminism & Psychology,* *11* (1), 107-135.

Swain, J. (2003). How young schoolboys become some*body*: The role of the body in the construction of masculinity. *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* *24*(3), 299-311.

Tobin, G. A. & Begley, C. M. (2004). Methodological rigour within a qualitative framework. *Journal of Advanced Nursing,* 48 (4), 388-396.

Vance, C.S. (1995). Social construction theory and sexuality. In M. Berger, B. Wallis & S. Watson (Eds.). *Constructing Masculinity* (pp. 47-62). New York: Routledge.

Warwick, I. & Aggleton, P. (1990). Adolescents, Young People and Aids Research. In P. Aggleton, P. Davids & G. Hart (Eds.). *A: Individual, Cultural and Policy Dimentions* (pp. 89-102). London: The Falmer Press.

Wetherell, M., & Edley, N. (1999). Negotiating hegemonic masculinity: Imaginary positions and psycho-discursive practices. *Feminism & Psychology, 9*(3), 335-356.

Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

School of Psychology

P/Bag X01 Scottsville
PIETERMARITZBURG, 3209
South Africa
Phone: +27 33 2605853
Fax: +27 33 2605809

Dear Parent/ Guardian

We are writing to you about an ongoing research project on the development of masculinity in school boys. The School of Psychology at the University of KwaZulu Natal has already undertaken a number of projects looking at the development of masculinity in school boys. At this stage we are wanting to extend this project in various directions. One of our particular interests is in researching the development of masculinity in visually impaired boys as this is a vastly under researched area, and we are wanting to address this issue.

As the primary researcher responsible for this project, I am personally visually impaired, and so have a particular interest in this area of investigation. As I am visually impaired the interviews will need to be tape recorded and transcribed. These tape recordings will then be deleted so as to ensure the anonymity of the research participants.

If consent is given for your child to participate in the research your child would be invited to attend two individual interview sessions of about an hour long each. These interviews will cover issues around masculinity within adolescent boys. These interviews will take place at School A.

If your consent is given your child is free to withdraw from the research at any time. Your child's confidentiality and anonymity will be guaranteed and will be strictly adhered to during all stages of the research and thereafter. This research will be published as a Master's Thesis, and if accepted may be published in a peer-reviewed publication, however the institutions' name and personal participant details will be

omitted from the final research document, so as to ensure anonymity for both the institution and the research participants.

Participants who feel they need to discuss any of the issues covered in the interviews will be referred for counseling. The researcher will also be available if the participants would like to discuss issues or concerns after the research has been conducted.

If you agree to your son's participation please complete the attached consent form and return in the attached self addressed stamped envelope and it to Mr. L. Joseph at 15 Oribi Road, Scottsville, PMB, 3201 by 7 June 2004.

We would hope that each boy participating in this research will find the discussion of the issues personally helpful. Participants will also be contributing to a greater understanding of the development of masculinity within visually impaired adolescents.

Please feel free to contact me at 0835005477 if you have any concerns or questions about this study.
Thank you for your support.
Regards

Lee Joseph   Prof. G. Lindegger, PhD
Counseling Psychology Masters Student   Clinical Psychologist

---

I _____ (parent/guardian) consent to
my child/children

_____ to participate in the research
conducted by Lee

Joseph of the University of KwaZulu Natal.

My child's date of birth is _____ and current school
grade is _____.

Sign:_____

Date:_____

**UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL**

School of Psychology

P/Bag X01 Scottsville
PIETERMARITZBURG, 3209
South Africa
Phone: +27 33 2605853
Fax: +27 33 2605809

Dear Mr X

I would like to thank you for your cooperation and assistance in facilitating my research at School A, without your cooperation I would have been unable to complete my research.

The research in the field of masculinity has primarily included non-disabled people and the area of disability has been largely excluded. My research will go a long way to developing an understanding of the experiences of visually impaired young men which will be a valuable contribution to understanding masculinity as a whole.

It was a pleasure working with the young men from your school they were cooperative and willing and showed an interest in my research. As a blind person it was a valuable experience for me working with other visually impaired people and I hope that I was able to contribute to them in terms of my experiences as a blind student.

I really valued your involvement and being able to participate in your school. Please feel free to contact me should you have any further questions regarding the research.

Kindest regards

Lee Joseph