

THE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES AND SEXUALITY AMONG YOUNG MALE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Declaration

Unless specifically indicated to the contrary, this dissertation is my own work.

Nosipho Mabel Masitha

Supervisor's approval for submission of this dissertation

Professor N Mkhize & Dr N Mankayi

Date:

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Abstract

This study explores the ways in which masculinity and sexuality is constructed among 18–24 year old young male university students and how these constructions intersect with their sexual practices. A plethora of literature about masculinity and sexuality reveals a normative masculinity where being a man is associated with risky practices. Through literature review it is also emphasised that although masculinity is rather stable, it is contested and subject to struggle and change. Hence there is a call for flexible descriptions of what it means to be a man.

The study is situated in a social constructionist framework. Semi-structured interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Themes are determined and analysed using discourse analysis. Participants' reflections bring to the fore how idealised construction of masculinity is valued and the extent to which men conform in order to earn the status of manhood. Some discourses that emerged from participants contribute to the idealised construction of masculinity. The university context seems to provide a better space for the attainment of this idealised masculinity as opposed to the home (with parents/members of the family), which is perceived to be placing a strain or restriction on masculinity. The study further found that men are reluctant to use condoms, and label women who initiate condom use. This reluctance and labelling reinforce their urge to present themselves as invulnerable, virile, brave, initiators and thrill seeking. The study concludes that it is impossible to tackle the scourge of HIV/AIDS without looking into the construction of masculinity and sexuality among males.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

There are clear differences between male and female adolescents regarding risk taking, with boys being more prone to engage in severe risk taking behaviours than their female counterparts (Bowleg, 2004; UNAIDS, 2001). Hence there is a need to understand better how sexuality and masculinities are constructed more broadly, precisely among young males.

Much has changed in South African governance in the last decade. The country's constitution promotes equality for all, and gender equality is one of the primary considerations. These developments have ignited the need for knowledge generation in many areas, even those that were previously unexplored. The construction of masculinities is one such sphere. Gender differences in levels of HIV infection are greater among young people aged 15-24, with 74% of people living with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa being female (UNAIDS, 2006). Several norms related to gender and sexuality describe how men and women differentially become vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. In many cultures women are expected to be monogamous while men are authorized to have multiple sexual partners (Gupta, 2000; Hunter, 2003). Even when informed by public health programmes about precautionary measures, it is hard for women to be proactive in negotiating safer sex (2000). Considering the above-mentioned aspects it becomes crucial to explore what types of masculinities could be prohibiting some men from taking part in reducing the risk of HIV/AIDS.

1.2 Background and rationale

A study on HIV prevalence between 2005 and 2008 indicated that there has been a decline in infections among young people in most provinces, except in KwaZulu-Natal. This province had a large increase from 7.2% in 2002 to 15.3% in 2008, making it the province with the highest prevalence of HIV among youth (HSRC, 2008). Pettifor, Hendriksen, Lee and Coates (2005) report that adolescents in South Africa experience the highest rate of HIV incidence in the world, and each year 33,5% of new HIV infections occur in young people between 15–24 years. The fact that this age group makes up such a large proportion of those infected is a grave indication of the

significance of the youth in the spread of the virus. It has been pointed out that the sexual behaviours and practices of certain groups of heterosexual men are amongst the main factors contributing to the rapid spread of the epidemic (HSRC, 2008). Among youth, early sexual debut is related to entry into sexual relationships, and consequent vulnerability to HIV infection (HSRC, 2008; UNAIDS, 2001). In 2007, young people aged 15–24 accounted for an estimated 45% of new HIV infections worldwide (HSRC, 2008). This current study focuses on one of the universities in KwaZulu-Natal because of the high prevalence of HIV in this province, and the majority of the full-time university population falls in this age category of 18–24 years.

Factors associated with the HIV/AIDS pandemic provide a contextually diverse and rich opportunity to conduct research because they draw attention to issues that were previously ignored, thus bringing some insight into how interventions can be tailored in an effort to reduce the scourge. The reality of many communities in South Africa is exposure to negative experiences, which include sexual abuse, crime, poverty, unemployment as well as HIV/AIDS, resulting in the incidence of HIV/AIDS becoming more evident and alarming (Smart, 2003). The above is supported by Shefer, Ratele, Strebel, Shabalala and Buikema (2007), who state that HIV/AIDS is the largest international health threat with ever-increasing rates of infection.

In 2006 about 60% of new HIV infections occurred among youth between the ages of 18–24 in South Africa, with AIDS-related illnesses being the leading cause of death among young adults (South Africa HIV/AIDS Statistics, 2006; UNAIDS, 2006). Risky sexual practices among some of the university students is still a problem, as demonstrated by the high HIV incidence and prevalence rates in this sector of the population (South Africa HIV/AIDS Statistics, 2006; USAID, 2007). It appears that currently efforts are focused on tertiary rather than primary health care. The key mode of transmission of HIV/AIDS is heterosexual sex. Aspects of hegemonic masculinities such as centrality of sexuality play a crucial role in the transmission of HIV. This is because the majority of youth engage in risky sexual practices (South Africa HIV/AIDS Statistics, 2006).

There is evidence to show that HIV will have a negative impact on the ability of institutions of higher learning to excel and deliver services. Data on HIV prevalence

among university students is however incomplete and insufficient. Furthermore, it is also not known if the programmes that institutions of higher learning have in place will be able to deal with the pandemic (USAID, 2007). It is on this premise that this study seeks to explore constructions of masculinities and sexuality among young male university students. An investigation of aspects of masculinities and sexuality among young male university students may assist to identify less restrictive and uncomplicated ways of describing men and their behaviours, and ultimately ameliorate the spread of HIV.

Young men's behaviour is not only of concern to them but may also be harmful to others. For example, while men could be central to the cause of the pandemic, they remain peripheral to HIV/AIDS prevention efforts (Davies, McCrae, Frank, Dochnahl, Pickering, Harrison, Zkrzewski & Wilson, 2000). A pilot study on sex and risk for students at tertiary level facilitated greater awareness in males. However, it did not translate into greater self-efficacy in relation to negotiating safer sexual relationships for either males or females (Petersen, Bhagwanjee, Bhana & Mahintso, 2004). The researcher argues that despite increased awareness, many young males are still at the forefront when it comes to making decisions about sex; women on the other hand remain largely powerless to negotiate what must be done, when and how. Previously, the focus was always on the vulnerable groups (women and children) to the exclusion of those who may have brought that vulnerability to them. It is therefore imperative to focus on the less vulnerable groups as they were previously on the periphery of HIV/AIDS intervention efforts.

Universities or institutions of higher education are some of the spaces where an imaginative and heroic assertion of manhood outside of civil society is possible, away from home and family (Capraro, 2000). The current study provides young male university students an opportunity to articulate not only their masculine identities, but also their sexual identities in their own terms. Universities provide another context for some young males to construct their masculinities as well as sexualities in a myriad of ways. Thus, attention to this population group stands not only to enhance our understanding of the dynamics of HIV infection; it could also lead to efficient, targeted interventions to curb the HIV/AIDS scourge.

Given the fact that young men account for so many of those living with HIV and practise so many forms of risky behaviour, there are surprisingly relatively few services or interventions designed with them in mind (UNAIDS, 2001). Over and above this, to date education programmes on HIV/AIDS largely focus on protecting vulnerable groups from the virus, neglecting groups that often unwittingly create vulnerability (Luyt, 2005). The current study seeks to address this gap.

1.3 Research question and aims of the study

This study is aimed at analysing the manner in which young male university students construct their masculinities and sexuality, and how these constructions inform their sexual practices. Although the findings of the study cannot be considered as representative of all young male university students, they will contribute to a neglected part of research, namely the role of gender identity and masculinities in HIV/AIDS interventions.

The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. How do young male university students construct their masculine and sexual identities?
2. How do these constructions inform their sexual practices?

The following are the aims of the study:

- To critically explore the ways in which young male university students construct their masculinities and sexuality.
- To consider the repercussions that these constructions have to young university students.
- To contribute to the growing body of local research that explores masculinities as multiple, fluid and constructed relative to various pressures instead of viewing masculinity as a singular and rigid construct.

1.4 Relevance of the dissertation

Morrell (1998) argues that masculinity is often viewed in essentialist and singular terms where it is believed that it is unchangeable. However, due to its socially constructed nature, it has been argued that all forms of masculinities are fluid and therefore changeable (Morrell, 1998). Shefer and Mankayi (2007) posit that despite a proliferation of research and interventions, South Africa remains an epicentre of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and practices of non-negotiation in heterosexual relationships, as well as other manifestations of gender inequality, remain rife. Thus it becomes imperative to conduct research into other contexts that could be playing a role in fuelling the pandemic. Bearing in mind the urgency to curb the spread of HIV, it has become crucial to challenge those masculinities that are harmful, including adult men's perception of risk and sexuality, and how boys are socialised to become men (UNAIDS, 2001).

This study is important because there are relatively few studies that have been conducted on sexual practices and behaviour among males at universities. A study conducted by Traeen and Martinussen (2008) examined attitudes towards sexuality among university students of 18 years and older in the following places: Havana in Cuba; Tromso in Norway; and the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town, South Africa. The participants in South Africa generally expressed more restrictive attitudes towards sexuality than the participants in Cuba and Norway. The study concludes that more research is needed to further explore cultural differences and sexual behaviours and attitudes (Traeen & Martinussen, 2008). As the cultures involved in the above-mentioned study are unknown to the researcher, it is difficult to conclude that the differences were due to cultural differences. Ampofo (1998, as cited in Shefer *et al.*, 2007) states that although much work has been done on adolescent sexual behaviours, most of this work has come from a reproductive health perspective rather than gender studies and has focused on young people's risky behaviours.

As there will be some discussions about gender and sex, it is necessary to explain how these terms can be clearly distinguished from each other. Gender refers to the socially and culturally constructed notions of what it means to be male or female

(Rogers & Rogers, 2004), while sex refers to one's biological designation as either female or male (Pryzgoda & Chrisler, 2000).

1.5 Outline of the study

After the introduction of the study in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 provides a review of literature on masculinities and sexuality, giving an in-depth discussion of concepts and definitions. The research methodology of the study is presented in Chapter 3. The researcher has situated the work within a social constructionist theoretical framework, utilising a qualitative research design. The study findings are presented and discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 concludes by summarising the findings of the research process. The limitations of the study are also presented as are the implications of the findings as well as the recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section reviews and critically discusses studies about constructions of masculinities. Traditional accounts of masculinities are then considered, followed by the recent descriptions of manhood. Brief accounts of heterosexuality, research about masculinities in African and South African contexts, Black masculinities and HIV risk as well as risky practices are also presented and discussed. Diverse aspects of masculinities and how these may relate to sexual practices and HIV/AIDS are then considered.

2.2 Construction of masculinities

The term 'masculinity' signifies a collective gender identity and not a natural attribute. Masculinities are socially constructed and fluid, resulting in diverse forms across different times and contexts. Masculinities are mediated by socio-economic position, race, ethnicity, religion, age and geographic location, making it more appropriate to use the term in its plural and not the singular form (Ampofo & Prah 1999, as cited in Shefer *et al.*, 2007). Masculinities also define how boys and men should behave, be treated, dress, what they should succeed at, and the attitudes and qualities they should have. All these variations are found across societal and social groups (Shefer *et al.*, 2007).

2.2.1 Traditional description of masculinities

Early descriptions of manhood describe a typically Western ideal of masculinities. An exploration by Brannon and David (1976) reflects how a traditional Western persona of being a man has developed over time; they outline four clusters of norms that define the traditional male role. It is through socialisation that these clusters are reported to be acquired:

1. The most salient norm prescribes the avoidance of any behaviours and traits that are considered feminine, with the authors describing this as 'no sissy stuff'. This norm relates to the distinction drawn in discourses between males and females,

where the two categories are viewed as distinct, binary opposites (Markovic, 2003). The implication of this norm is that in order to be regarded as 'a real man', feminine qualities must be avoided.

2. The norm of achieving status is described as the 'big wheel'. This norm relates to the notion that men are expected to be successful and should be respected for their success.
3. The other norm relates to the cultivation of independence and self-confidence, and it is referred to as the 'sturdy oak'. This norm emphasises that men should be tough and self-reliant, and it is a true reflection of what is observed in masculinities associated with the military, which foreground traditional male principles (Shefer & Mankayi, 2007).
4. The last norm relates to the development of aggression, described by Brannon and David (1976) in the phrase 'give them hell'. There seems to be a strong link between maleness and aggression. This norm prescribes that it is acceptable and expected of 'real men' to resort to violence and aggression.

An ethnographic study by Froyum and Carissa (2007) demonstrates how youth create strategies to protect their heterosexual identities, gender non-conformity and dissociating from gay-coded behaviour. The modern masculine stereotype expects that men should resist the 'negative images' of normative masculinities. These stereotyped understandings of what it means to be a man are defined in part by the exclusion of certain attributes, where differences between men and women are strongly emphasised. Brannon and David (1976) allude to the above as they posit that a real man does not possess feminine traits as that would be indicative of weakness. Male characteristics that are approved include virility, strength, authority, power, wisdom, ability to offer protection and sustenance, imperviousness to danger, risk taking, aggressiveness as well as the ability to bear physical and emotional pain (Gilmore, 1990; Kometsi, 2004; Shefer & Mankayi, 2007; UNAIDS, 2001). Gilmore (1990) describes manhood as something that cannot just be given, but has to be earned by achieving traditionally prescribed values which vary from culture to culture. The above description of manhood suggests that there are specific ways in which men are expected to behave in order to gain this prestigious position in society. The above

essentialist descriptions suggest that men occupy inflexible gender roles that cannot be easily contested. Men's characteristics are contrasted with what it means to be a woman, causing the qualities allocated to the two genders to be polarised.

In describing the concept of hegemonic masculinities Connell (1998) points out that although a number of masculinities coexist, a particular version of masculinity has supremacy and greater legitimacy in society. He further introduced the notion of 'multiple masculinities' which enabled men to position themselves in relation to hegemonic standards. These include four fluid categories which are hegemonic, complicit, submissive or subordinate and oppositional or protest masculinity type. The next section considers research that acknowledges fluidity in expressions of masculinities, focusing more on hegemonic masculinities as it has emerged as a central point for understanding masculinities and male dominance (Swain, 2006).

2. 2. 2 Hegemonic masculinities

The literature generally refers to four different types of masculinities and they are hegemonic, complicit, submissive and oppositional type. This section presents hegemonic masculinities, which seem to be the most researched and the most dominant type. There are many forms of masculinities, with each possessing individual characteristic, shape and features (Connell, 1998). The shape of these masculinities changes over time due to changes elsewhere in society. Simultaneously, these masculinities affect society itself (Connell, 1998).

Schrock and Padavic (2007, p. 624) present hegemonic masculinity as "the most honoured way of being a man" and can be analysed as a cultural ideal or as a local construction created "in the arenas of face-to-face interaction of families, organisations and immediate communities". It is thus not surprising that some men strive to conform to hegemonic masculinities' prescriptions. The term 'hegemonic masculinity' does not refer to a personality type or an actual male character, rather, it is an ideal set of prescriptive social norms, symbolically represented, which play a crucial part of the texture of many routine mundane social and disciplinary activities (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). There are terms that are set as a way in which events are to be understood and how ideals are formulated; a defining morality is an essential part of the process. In addition to being oppressive to women, hegemonic masculinities silence other

masculinities, placing them in opposition to itself in such a way that the values expressed by other constructions do not have legitimacy, presenting how men should behave as the cultural ideal (Morrell, 1998a, as cited in Shefer *et al.*, 2007).

There is an order of ascendancy within hegemonic masculinities where a number of men are subjected to subordination by the dominant form of masculinity. Connell (1998) posits that cultural stigmatisation of homosexuality leads to gay men being subordinated by straight men, and oppression positions homosexual masculinities at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men. Eventually, gayness is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1998). This perception of hegemonic masculinities is a mixture that can appropriate different facets of being male to sustain itself as a central form of power in historically changing circumstances. Hearn (2004) posits that the concept of hegemonic masculinity has become a well-used and widely accepted part of the general conceptual apparatus for studying men. Hegemonic masculinities direct attention to the form and nature of domination that is being reproduced, while it also addresses what happens beyond mere force, the taken-for-granted and the cultural issues. Hegemonic masculinities relate to cultural dominance in society as a whole, and within that overall framework there are specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men (Connell 1998).

In spite of the fact that only few men rigorously practise the hegemonic pattern of masculinity, the majority of men benefit from the patriarchal dividend, being the advantage that men in general gain from the overall subordination of women. Wetherell and Edley (1999, as cited in Hearn, 2004) have identified three more specific positions and psycho-discursive practices in the negotiation of hegemonic masculinities and their identification with the masculine. The first position involves heroic positions where men strongly align themselves with conventional ideals. The second is the 'ordinary' positions where men distance themselves from certain conventional notions of the masculine; where the self as normal is emphasised. The third position is characterised in terms of its unconventionality, with a position involving the flouting of social expectations. Implied in the above is that men appear to have a broad choice on how they can take up a particular discursive position as they express their masculinities.

In Ghana and some African countries oral proverbs are frequently used to describe and affirm stereotypes about men and women. Rattray (1927, as cited in Shefer *et al.*, 2007, p.55) mentions several proverbs that portray men as brave and therefore reinforcing the view that they should remain in charge of events and circumstances. Examples of such proverbs include:

"If the gun lets out its bullets, it is the man who receives them on his chest".

"Even if a woman buys a gun, it leans against a man's hut."

"The hen also knows that it is dawn, but it allows the cock to announce it."

Similar proverbs such as "a man is a sheep, he does not cry" (in isiZulu: *indoda yimvu, ayikhali*) are also used by mineworkers locally (Campbell, 2003, p.32). Proverbs such as the above are used in daily discourse not only to endorse a masculine inclination in boys but also to reinforce gender positions, ensuring that boys know their appropriate place in society (Shefer *et al.*, 2007). According to Hearn (2004), although hegemonic masculinity is rather stable, it is contested and subject to struggle and change. It is on this premise that the researcher suggests that only by confronting the hegemonic form of masculinity will other types of masculinities be able to come to the fore. Moving away from this dominant type of masculinity may provide more exposure to the less dominant types.

Minimal research has been done on the three remaining types of masculinities (Connell, 1998). Complicit masculinity is defined as a type of masculinity that does not always comply with the dominant type; it sways either with the hegemonic masculinities or with the oppositional masculinity. Swain (2006) points out that the complicit masculinity type could be seen hanging around the edges of the dominant group, watching the action: in the term used by Connell (1998), they are "wannabes". 'Submissive masculinity types' are submissive as the name suggests; they simply go with the flow or with whatever type of masculinity that seems to be predominant at a specific time. A key feature of this type is its nature not to challenge anything. The submissive masculinity type can be defined as always submitting to the dominant type of masculinity. According to Swain (2006), the subordinate modes of masculinity are the ones that are positioned outside the legitimate forms of maleness as represented in the hegemonic as they are controlled, oppressed and subjugated. As all masculinities are constructed in contrast to being feminine, those that are positioned at

the bottom of the masculine hierarchy will be symbolically assimilated to femininity and will tend to have much in common with feminine forms (Swain, 2006).

Oppositional/protest masculinity is the type that is viewed to be always in stable opposition to the hegemonic masculinities, fighting against all that the hegemonic masculinity type stands for (Connell, 1998). Among examples of this type of masculinity are pro-feminist men and those men that engage in alternative sexual practices. It should be noted, however, that although various types of masculinities exist, it may not always be simple to distinguish between them as they are constantly shifting.

A new pattern of masculinity termed 'personalised masculinity' has been proposed, the argument being that just because there is a culturally authoritative form of masculinity within each setting, this does not automatically mean that all men will attempt to engage with, aspire to or want to challenge it (Swain, 2006). This type takes cognisance of the fact that not all men are inevitably subordinated or that they have any desire to subordinate others. This concurs with Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) who have tentatively suggested that there can be other masculinities that do not necessarily have to be subordinate to or to be complicit with the dominant forms. Other types of masculinities, on the contrary, represent valuable potential that can be tapped by HIV/AIDS programmes (UNAIDS, 2001). The above could be significant in the fight for gender equality because by challenging hegemonic masculinities, a decrease in gender-based violence and other consequences of gender inequality could be possible.

2. 2. 3 African masculinities

In studying young men in Sub-Saharan Africa, Barker and Ricardo (2005) support Connell's (1987) argument of using the term masculinities instead of masculinity to indicate the plural nature of gender identity. Their argument is that masculinities, including African masculinities, are socially constructed, fluid and diverse over cultural and historical settings and over time. Lindsay and Miescher (2003) also argue that African masculinities in particular are heavily contested due to the varying influence of race, politics, class and religion.

While recognizing the plurality of masculinities, Barker and Ricardo (2005) also identify some common practices that contribute to how men construct and reconstruct their masculinities in the Sub-Saharan region. In some parts of Africa, manhood is often associated with certain rites of passage. Many cultural groups in Africa including South Africa practice initiation rituals where young boys are guided through the transition between childhood and adulthood (Kometsi, 2004; Shefer *et al.*, 2007) The purpose of these rituals is to provide a supportive function for the knowledge about cultural beliefs, male-female relationships, appropriate adult roles, as well as conflict resolution which is communicated by community elders to the young men. A clear separation between being a boy and being a man is defined at these initiation ceremonies. In part, manhood is only attained once the young men have been circumcised and have completed initiation rituals. In a survey conducted in Uganda, an interviewee mentioned that after the initiation, a man must have sexual intercourse with a girl in order to remove the 'evil and boyish spirits' from himself (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). In many young men's perspectives sex and masculinity are closely entwined, and in certain Latin American and Thai societies it has been traditional for an older male relative to take a young man to a sex worker for his first sexual experience (UNAIDS, 2001). This event of having sex for the first time marks a formal entry into manhood.

In the South African context, Kometsi (2004) explored circumcision as a site of constructing masculinities. He also wrote about the initiates' sexual engagement soon after circumcision. In isiXhosa initiation ritual, the initiates are urged to have sexual intercourse with any other woman besides their partners as abstinence is not recommended. It is reported that participants are motivated by the desire to 'test' their sexual performance, because ability to perform sexually is viewed as one of the important aspects of becoming a man (Kometsi, 2004). Furthermore, there is that desire from the initiates to rid themselves of 'dirt' they have supposedly acquired from the initiation. A similarity is apparent between the Ugandan and South African initiation rituals where initiates are expected to rid themselves of 'evil boyish spirits' and 'dirt'. It is noted that the way in which women are exposed in this practice, and the risk involved on men as they are encouraged to engage sexually outside of a committed relationship, is a challenge in efforts to reduce HIV.

Masculinities draw from powerful symbols of tradition, notably polygamy, to associate manhood with multiple concurrent partners. In the late 19th century men were polygamous patriarchs; not only did they aspire to be popular with women, they also sought to have multiple wives (Hunter, 2003). This traditional culture of polygamy could provide a rationale for other young men wanting to have more than one sexual partner. It is however evident that these practices may perpetuate some harmful traditional gender hierarchies where the dominant position of men over women may be reinforced (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). Another purpose for the ritual of circumcision is that young men are expected to tolerate high levels of pain to confirm or affirm their manhood (Kometsi, 2004; UNAIDS, 2001).

There are commonalities between traditional African masculinity types as indexed by initiation schools and the types of masculinities that are promoted in military settings (e.g., the understanding that men must be able to tolerate intense pain without showing emotion). Militaries have been identified as masculine institutions not only because they are populated by men, but because they constitute a major arena for the construction of masculine identities and play a role in shaping images of masculinities and traditional male sexuality practices in broader society (Shefer & Mankayi, 2007). In both these institutions (initiation schools and the military), men are expected to behave in a particular way, toughness and rejection of what are considered feminine attributes, such as caring and emotionality, being among the primary examples. However, it should be noted that while cultural practices are imposed as part of ritual at initiation schools, in military institutions the behaviours indicative of 'real' manhood are rather brought along by individuals or inculcated into others by peers.

How men behave in their families is strongly influenced by societal expectations of what it means to be a man according to their fellow men, the community in which they live and the society at large. When a man does not conform to the norms prescribed for men he is looked down upon (Shefer *et al.*, 2007). Men are generally expected by the community to assume a sex role that is sanctioned by society. Barker and Ricardo (2005) also found that to have employment and subsequently being financially independent and able to start a family served as an important signifier in earning masculinity. However, the above practise is not limited to African settings; it cuts across race and culture.

Epprecht (1998) writes about a 'discursive unmanning' of African men in Zimbabwe as Black masculinity was shaped under the oppression of colonialism and racial capitalism. An African man in a colonial discourse was referred to as a perpetual 'boy' in spite of his age or status. The destruction of the material base of African masculinity made it difficult for a man to obtain the traditional social signifiers of manhood, such as paying lobola and obtaining land (Epprecht, 1998). Similarly to other contexts where groups of men found themselves oppressed by other cultural or social groups, gangs, sports, violence and sexual conquest of women were adopted by African men as means to signal their manhood, thus compensating for the feeling or being 'less of a man' compared to white men (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Epprecht, 1998).

In spite of some African men maintaining and conforming to what was expected from them by the society when they were working in the mines, the migrants were still deprived of some traditional social signifiers because they were absent from their families and as such failing or unable to protect them. This suggests that across cultures and communities, the aspects of masculinity such as centrality of sexuality, importance of physical strength and control over women, emerge consistently as key to hegemonic masculinities (Kimmel, Hearn & Connell, 2005). Central to hegemonic masculinity is heterosexuality, which needs to be taken into account as men often feel that they need to keep the title guarded as a way of preserving manhood.

3. Heterosexuality

According to Johnson (2005), heterosexuality stands as both a mark of normality and originality, appearing as the essential mode of sexuality common to humanity. Alluding to this view is Shefer and Mankayi (2007) who point out that heterosexuality is the accepted norm while homosexuality and celibacy are disdained. Heterosexuality is defined by Katz (1995) as an attraction between opposite sexes; it is the most common sexual orientation among humans. This term can be used to describe individuals' sexual orientation, sexual history or self-identification. Heterosexuality describes a cultural or socio-political group (Katz, 1995). According to Kimmel *et al.* (2005), many contemporary studies of young men across class and ethnicity suggest that normative heterosexuality is constructed as a practice that helps to reproduce the subordination of young women and to reproduce age specific heterosexual styles of

masculinities. Supporting the above is an ethnographic study which examined the way in which a group of American low income black teenagers construct affirming identities through heterosexuality (Froyum & Carissa, 2007). This ethnographic study suggests that policing sexuality is a way to construct masculinities, thus policing gender is another way to affirm heterosexuality (Froyum & Carissa, 2007).

Similarly, in South Africa, research on heterosexuality, coercive heterosexual relationships, male dominion over women, and distancing masculinity from homosexuals have been widely reported (National Progressive Primary Health Care Network, 1995; Richter, 1996; Shefer, 1999; Mankayi, 2006). In spite of the above ethnographic study by Froyum and Carissa (2007), and other research done on heterosexuality in South Africa, there is an emerging trend which suggests that despite evidence of continued adherence to 'dominant discourses of heterosexuality', some young women can be assertive and active agents during sexual experiences (Maxwell, 2007, p.540). Changes in masculine heterosexual identities and expectations manifest a tension between 'old' and 'new' versions of masculinities whereby men display both "a thin, contemptuous misogyny in which women are treated as disposable receptacles for semen, an attitude which coexists with respectful and even admiring view of women's strength" (Maxwell, 2007, p.541). Acknowledging the new versions of masculinities, Morrell (1998) points out that some black men are embracing the idea of 'new masculinity' which is being propelled mainly by the rise of black women into professional positions. The latter makes it difficult for the traditional sexual division of labour in the home to be maintained. This has resulted in young black male professionals becoming much more participatory in the home and supportive of their partners' professional goals. This suggests that as tradition and changing social conditions intermingle, men respond differently and more liberally to new versions of masculinities. As such it can be emphasised that masculinity is repeatedly negotiated with regard to existing power relations.

Other Black adolescent males in the US have heterosexual intercourse at a younger age than White/Latino males, and by the time they are in their twenties, young Black males are more likely than their White counterparts to report having more sex partners. It has been argued that this partly explains why Blacks are more likely to acquire HIV heterosexually than men from other racial groups (Bowleg, 2004). Most

research has pointed out the prevalence of non-negotiation in heterosexual relationships, which is often rewarded by hegemonic masculinities and its association with traditional male sexualities and these are the key areas of challenge for HIV/AIDS (Gupta, 2000; HSRC, 2008).

Haywood and Mac an Ghail (1996) argue that the HIV epidemic has been the site of intense struggle over questions of gender, sexuality and race. The intensity of these struggles is derived from threats that the epidemic has posed to the hegemonic position of heterosexual masculinities. The history of popular responses to HIV reveals an extreme, defensive anxiety about heterosexual masculinity. This suggests that the epidemic has profoundly challenged some of the ideological foundations upon which hegemonic heterosexual masculinities are based (Haywood & Mac an Ghail, 1996). As stated previously by Gilmore (1990) that hegemonic masculinity is earned through risk taking amongst others, it will thus be necessary to look at risky sexual practices.

4. Masculinities and sexual practices

As raised previously in cross-cultural studies (Barker & Ricardo, 1976; Kometsi, 2004), the level of conflict and stress experienced by adolescents can vary greatly, in part, as a function of the prevailing cultural norms with regard to sexual expression. Sexually speaking, the traditional sex role for a man is to be the 'hunter' and initiator of sexual activity; a powerful figure in a relationship (Gupta, 2000). It is mainly because of this cultural norm that some young men feel compelled to be sexually active in order to enhance their reputation. Traditional stereotyping places enormous pressure on some young men and it may inevitably pressure them into partaking in various risk-taking activities to 'prove' their manhood. Given that risk-taking emerges to be strongly associated with masculinities (and given that hegemonic notions of masculinities are associated with sexuality, taking risk and rebelliousness), certain young males may be particularly vulnerable to multiple risk-taking (UNAIDS, 2001).

Risky behaviour refers to unprotected sexual intercourse through inconsistent or lack of condom use (Peltzer, 1995). Styles of gender and sexual interaction between males and females are 'rehearsed' during adolescence. Research carried out among adolescent boys around the world suggests that viewing women as sexual objects, use of coercion to obtain sex and viewing sex from a performance-oriented

perspective often begins in adolescence and may continue into adulthood (Jejeebhoy, 1996, as cited in Shefer *et al.*, 2007). Echoing the above is Powers (2002), who refers to the Spanish 'conquest' of indigenous women and the alleged importance of *mestizaje* as examples of the gendered discourse that continues to glorify male sexual domination while ascribing to women the constricted role of being passive sexual objects. Often embedded in this discourse is an implicit assumption of indigenous female betrayal. The discourse of conquest is paralleled by the deeply entrenched paradigm of "woman as always already whore or traitor" (Powers, 2002, p. 7). Traditional masculine gender socialisation encourages men to put their health at risk. For example, a young man who constructs masculinities in terms of risk-taking may engage in high-risk behaviour, concurrent multiple partnering, excessive drinking and smoking being among the most common examples (HSRC, 2008; Mahalik *et al.*, 2007).

A study carried out by Simbayi, Kalichman, Jooste, Cherry, Mfecane and Cain (2005) supports the above. Simbayi *et al.* (2005) examined risk behaviour and HIV risk factors among some young people living in Black South African townships. Results showed that men (68%) and women (56%) reported high risk sexual behaviour. Although knowledge about HIV transmission was generally high, the study produced evidence that misconceptions about AIDS persist, particularly myths related to HIV transmission. For some young men HIV risk factors were associated with fewer years of education, lower levels of AIDS-related knowledge, attitude about condom usage and dagga use. The study report concludes that there is an urgent need for behavioural interventions targeting youth (Simbayi *et al.*, 2005).

A common association between masculinity and risk-taking behaviour is identified, where reckless sexual practices may be viewed as part of the definition of what it means to be a man. Most at-risk populations engage in behaviours that put them at higher risk, and it is among young men aged between 15 –24 years where the riskiest practices and behaviour relating to HIV can be found (HSRC, 2008; UNAIDS, 2006). Echoing the above are Shefer and Mankayi (2007) who posit that young men in particular, across geographical borders, races, cultures and classes, are at the epicentre of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Research in South Africa suggests that gender-power relations also play a crucial role in placing young women and men at risk of HIV infection by endorsing the very risk behaviours that escalate the likelihood of HIV infection. Sexual violence, encouraging multiple sexual partners, unsafe sex, contractual sex and use of substances are endorsed as normative vehicles for establishing the manhood of boys and men (Campbell, 2003; Gupta, 2000; Hunter, 2003; Lindegger & Durrheim, 2001, as cited in Shefer & Mankayi, 2007; UNAIDS, 2006). This argument follows from an understanding of how masculinities are constructed in different cultures and the pressure on men and boys to conform to the dominant versions of masculinity (Shefer & Mankayi, 2007).

Crossley (2000) argues that a deeper psychological understanding of risky behaviour reveals that although knowledge of its potential lethality may serve as a deterrent, sometimes, by contrast it may actually provide the primary motivation to engage in such behaviours. Hence some people engage in risky health behaviours precisely because of their association with risk, resulting in unprotected sex being perceived as having a certain aura of risk, rebellion and excitement. Implied in the above is that some people often knowingly engage in risky sexual practices that place them at risk. Campbell (2003) suggests that the sexual encounters of young people depict men as sexually driven, active and predatory and young women as largely passive victims of male desire. Sex is considered to be an integral part of any relationship, and young men who tell their friends that they have not had sex with a girlfriend are teased and taunted. This is emphasised by an extract from one of the young male interviewees in Campbell's study (2003, p.125), who opined as follows:

Guys were asking me how I could not have had sex with such a nice girl. They said I am stupid, I didn't know anything about sex. That's why any girlfriend that I will get, I want to make sure that I have sex with her.

The above statement is indicative of the pressure placed on young people to conform in order to be accepted as 'real men', earning their manhood and being sexually driven. This means that boys who do not engage sexually with a girl have failed to live up to hegemonic forms of masculinity, and are thus ridiculed.

The dominant common construction of masculinities plays a major role in influencing sexual behaviour that places men and women at risk of HIV infection is a belief that a variety of sexual partners is essential to men (Gupta, 2000; Hunter, 2003).

Furthermore, there is an expectation that men should be more knowledgeable about sex (Gupta, 2000; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Hunter (2003) describes the practice of having multiple concurrent partners and how it serves to define manhood in KwaZulu-Natal. *Isoka* is a man old enough to commence courting and is defined as a man popular with girls. The *isoka* masculinity draws from powerful symbols of 'tradition' such as polygamy which associates manhood with multiple concurrent sexual partners (Hunter, 2003). A masculinity celebrating polygamy was underpinned by economic success (Hunter, 2003). It is evident that culture plays a key role in shaping masculinities and sexuality, leading some men to take up specific discursive positions in spite of the risks associated with them.

Crossley (2000) posits that risky behaviour is a symbolic rebellion which uses the body as a vehicle through which an individual can embody resistance to cultural norms. He further indicates that appreciating this rebellious dimension of sexual practices associated with homosexuality, such as anal intercourse, demonstrates how such acts stand in defiance of more general societal prohibitions against homosexuality (Crossley, 2000). In this instance individuals are observed defying the dominant norm of masculinities. This implies that there is an attempt by some men to resist the hegemonic masculinities, although this may be detrimental to their health as the HIV infection risk has been proven to be higher in male sexual intercourse.

5. Masculine ideologies, Black masculinities and HIV sexual risk

There is an argument that masculinities cannot be isolated from the socio-historical context. Bowleg (2004) posits that gender ideologies often manifest as internalized scripts that guide relationships and sexual behaviour. In the domain of sexuality, traditional ideologies not only encourage men to be sexually assertive and to view sex primarily in pleasurable and recreational terms but also to control all aspects of sexual activity, including having multiple sex partners (Bowleg, 2004). It has been found that Black, White and Latino adolescent males had more sexual partners, had negative

attitude towards condoms, engaged in inconsistent condom use and were also less likely to believe in male responsibility for contraception (2004).

With regard to HIV risk it has been theorised that the economically, socio-politically and sexually constraining environments in which some Black men live, elicit particular types of Black masculinities that increase HIV risk in Black communities (Bowleg, 2004). Although masculine ideologies appear to transcend ethnicity, socio-economic class and sexual identity boundaries, the socio-cultural context of masculinities, sexual and relationship behaviours for some Black men suggest that a cultural specific focus on Black men is critical (Bowleg, 2004). The lack of opportunity to acquire power in traditional patriarchal structures compel some Black men to adopt a Black Machismo identity that solicits sexual encounters with women and violent encounters with other Black men or aggressive police (2004). Based on the above it is evident that as some Black men attempt to assert themselves, there is a probability that they may be at a high risk of being infected by HIV. High rates of unemployment and poverty among Black men lead to a high risk situation because the subsequent low esteem brought by that status can lead to the use of drugs and high risk behaviours (Bowleg, 2004). The next section discusses drugs and alcohol as these have an impact on the pandemic.

6. Drugs and alcohol

Alcohol consumption in large quantities is common among some young men across the non-Islamic world, and it leads to many high risk activities (UNAIDS, 2001). It is reported that young men are more likely to inject drugs than men in their thirties or older. Injecting drugs may take place in homes or shantytowns where appropriate hygiene is minimal. In these cases, equipment is shared, either from a need to express comradeship, or a lack of alternative apparatus, thus fuelling the risk of HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS, 2001). It is estimated that 80% of drug injectors are men. In South Africa, beer drinking often precedes sexual violence (Bowleg, 2004).

Men mostly drink in the company of other men and not to drink brings a sense of falling short of the cultural ideal of manhood. Based on the above it could be speculated that men may drink to be manly (Capraro, 2000; Van Hoven & Horschelman, 2005). Male drinking spaces are avenues in which the power and

legitimacy of masculinity are cemented in community life (Van Hoven & Horschelman, 2005). In other words, drinking beer in pubs constitutes a crucial performance of public masculinity at which men's power in the community is defended and legitimised (Van Hoven & Horschelman, 2005). Drinking in general, can be an adventure as it takes men through a breach of the social contract and into the realms of violence, sex and other adventure motifs (Capraro, 2000). This implies that drinking is a symbol of the dominant, hegemonic forms of masculinity and the above may be viewed as customs through which men assert their manhood.

Several studies in sub-Saharan Africa have suggested strong links between substance use (both alcohol and recreational drugs) and risky sexual behaviour (Gupta, 2000; HSRC, 2008; Mahalik *et al.*, 2007). Alcohol and recreational drugs lead to impairment in judgement and decision-making which in turn lead to risky sex behaviour. The increase in risky sex behaviour sequentially increases the risk of HIV infection among the users of substances (HSRC, 2008).

Empirical studies with certain African men indicate that factors such as age, socio-economic class, race, ethnicity, identity and geographic residence influence masculinities (Bowleg, 2004). The next section will briefly discuss the manner in which South African miners' working and living conditions shaped their sexuality, while undermining their sexual health.

7. Sexuality and HIV transmission among mineworkers

There seems to be a link between HIV/AIDS and social factors such as migrancy or single-sex housing and few opportunities for leisure. Drinking and sex are the diversionary activities that are easily available on a day-to-day basis for mineworkers (Campbell, 2003).

Morrell (1998) explains specific considerations within the South African context which impacted on black men's masculinities. During the apartheid era in South Africa some men's role was challenged when the displacement of migrant labour caused several fathers to be absent from their families. Miners were forced by law to reside in the 'men only' hostels. Here they worked, ate, slept and did everything together to the exclusion of women and children. In this manner these men ended up abdicating their

responsibilities as heads of families. This led to the emergence of working class masculinities. According to Morrell (1998) many Black men worked in the cities' mines and they maintained their identity which represents the perpetuation of working class hegemonic masculinities. Some African men, who were living in the cities, maintained their hegemonic identity by using resources that were familiar to them. The resources included banding together, reaffirming their rural roots and establishing ethical codes of hegemonic masculine conduct (Morrell, 1998). In essence, permanent urban residence was discouraged because their families were left behind, and this was a conduct associated with African rural-based hegemonic masculinities (Morrell, 1998). Alluding to the above notion is Van Hoven and Horschelman (2005) who explain the ways in which rurality and masculinity interconnect and eventually intersect with geographical space. The above demonstrates how particular constructions of masculinity become socially dominant and legitimised as somehow a 'natural' gendered order.

According to mineworkers there are two facets to being a man: 'going underground and going after women', which links men with being adventurous, unemotional and prepared to take risks (Campbell, 2003, p. 23). Mineworkers further argue that the risk of HIV/AIDS seems to be minimal compared to the risks of going underground (Campbell, 2003). This could be the rationale for mineworkers who do not bother to use condoms. This is where repertoires of insatiable sexuality, need for multiple partners and the manly desire for the pleasure of what is locally called "flesh-to-flesh" sexual contact are observed (Campbell, 2003). Interestingly, there seem to be almost similar contexts that compel men (miners and drug users) to take these risks. Hence Gupta (2000) argues that expectations of men to be invulnerable can discourage attempts to protect themselves from deadly infections and can lead to risk denial.

In some situations, Campbell (2003) points out that miners live in conditions where they feel lonely and isolated, and "flesh-to-flesh" may often come to symbolise a form of emotional intimacy that is lacking in other areas of their lives. All these factors place mineworkers at risk of HIV/AIDS. Gay men and drug users also perceive death as a normal thing and view living without risk as not living (Crossley, 2000). The latter reinforces the notion of masculinities which brings together the concepts of bravery and fearlessness. Ironically, the very sense of masculinities that support some men in

their day-to-day coping also serves to heighten their exposure to the risk of HIV infection. Thus Campbell (2003) argues that the forces shaping sexual behaviour and sexual health are far more complex than individual rational decisions based on simple factual knowledge about health risks (Campbell, 2003).

Great challenges for HIV prevention stem from masculinity expectations that create an environment where risks such as frequent changes of partners become acceptable and encouraged for 'real men', thus generally resulting in certain men having higher reported rates of partner change than women (Gupta, 2000; Hunter, 2003; Mane & Aggleton, 2001). Furthermore, these expectations encourage men to force sex on unwilling partners, to reject condom use while regarding the search for safety as 'unmanly' (Lindegger & Durrheim, 2001, as cited in Shefer *et al.*, 2007). The above indicates how far men will go in practising risky sexual behaviour in order to affirm and earn their manhood. This pattern often begins during adolescence, which is the reason why this study seeks to look at young males of this age range. Prevailing norms of masculinities expect men to be more informed and experienced in sexual matters, which in turn prevents them from seeking information, and it is this ignorance that results in unsafe sexual experimentation to prove manhood, particularly in their youth (Wetherell & Edley, 1999).

The closed cultural circle of the peer group has become increasingly recognised as the key area of influence in forming masculinity (Connell, 1998; Haywood & Mac an Ghail 1996; Swain, 2006). This is where a number of young men obtain their information about how they are supposed to act as boys (and future men), and there are constant pressures on individuals to perform and behave according to expected group norms (Swain, 2006). Although the construction of an appropriate form of masculine identity is a personal accomplishment, masculinities have an existence beyond the individual and are, primarily, a collective enterprise (Swain, 2006). The latter supports an earlier argument by Swain (2006) positing that forms of masculinities are time-space specific, meaning individuals can position themselves differently depending on what the context demands.

Peace (2003) indicates that studies on men have documented a host of discourses that are used to service men's power, involving different identities and a variety of

contexts. Another study analysed the talk of male university undergraduates, where young men were found to reproduce gender difference and inequalities, explicitly, despite having received lectures and seminars in critical social psychology and feminist perspectives (Gough, 1998, as cited in Peace, 2003). This shows how deeply entrenched traditional masculinities are amongst young people. This talk again reproduces sexism quite subtly through grounding difference and inequality in the inevitabilities of biology, socialisation and psychology, while simultaneously proclaiming egalitarian ideals (Peace, 2003). A group of university students were found to reconfigure gender relations, presenting themselves as 'victims' (of feminism, media, health, education, and employment) and women as the real beneficiaries of contemporary gender relations (Peace, 2003). Looking at the resistance in terms of masculinities, some men can now begin to realise that there are numerous ways of being, and that hegemonic masculinities is not the only way to be a man.

Using the Male Attitude Norms Inventory II (MANI II) Luyt (2005) investigated hegemonic masculinities at some universities in South Africa. However, the focus was more on contextual understanding of masculinities while neglecting the sexual dimension which plays a major role in masculine definition (Luyt, 2005). A poor understanding of sexuality is one of the factors that allowed the epidemic to develop in the first place (Campbell, 2003). Other factors include the women's inability to negotiate sex, their economic and societal reliance on men, their lower positioning within family and social structures, and their traditional roles as nurturers which make it difficult for them to ensure protection from HIV/AIDS (Mane & Aggleton, 2001). There are prevailing cultural beliefs that expect men to be more knowledgeable and experienced about sex (Gupta, 2000). Furthermore masculinities are often defined in terms of dominant notions of heterosexuality, resulting in homophobia and stigmatisation of men who engage in sex with other men (Gupta, 2000). The fear of stigma associated with same sex relationships can compel men to keep their sexual behaviour secret while denying the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. The above increases men's risk and their partners'. The expectation that men should be invulnerable can dishearten attempts to protect themselves from potential infection, thus exposing them to HIV/AIDS (Gupta, 2000). Alluding to the above is Campbell (2003) who posits that men view safe sex such as condom use as inherently

unmasculine. If prevention efforts are to have optimal impact, they need to be informed by sound insights into the determinants of sex and sexuality. Furthermore, efforts need to be directed towards primary rather than tertiary health care which is often more costly.

Conclusion

The literature review about masculinities and sexuality explains a normative masculinity which associates being a man with detrimental practices. It also illustrates that this normative conceptualisation of manhood has been contested through a call for less rigid and simplistic descriptions of masculinities. It also shows that although research addresses the intersection between masculinities and sexuality, there is a paucity of studies in South Africa investigating how young men in tertiary institutions construe their masculinities and how these constructions inform their sexual behaviours and/or beliefs. The current study seeks to address this gap.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the study research methodology. It presents a synopsis of the ontological and epistemological assumptions that inform the study, over and above explaining the preferred methodology. The social constructionist epistemology was used as a theoretical approach and the ontological assumptions of the study can be described as postmodern. Data was gathered by conducting in-depth interviews with young male university students. Discourse analysis was used to analyse the text generated from the interviews.

Ontology can be depicted as our assumptions regarding the nature of the world; it seeks to answer questions such as “what is there to know?” (Willig, 2001, p.13) This chapter will consider the ontological assumptions of postmodernism and the epistemological assumptions of social constructionism, highlighting how these have informed the study. The suitability of a qualitative research methodology for the study is considered.. The chapter concludes with a discussion of sampling, data collection and analytic procedures, and the ethical considerations.

3. 2 Postmodernism

Best and Kellner (1991) posit that many authors contrast postmodernism with the discourses of modernity which served as a thrust for the development of the movement. Modernism is described as a historical era that promotes the idea of progress through reasoning, where human beings are viewed as possessing the intellectual capacity to completely understand the world as it exists (Best & Kellner, 1991). The above expands to an ontological level as reality which is viewed as completely knowable. In conducting research, it is assumed that the researcher is in a place to unearth the entire truth about what exists in the world.

Contrary to modernism, postmodern thinkers dispute the privileged position accorded to the subject. Postmodernism contests the idea that the subject has direct access to

reality (Best & Kellner, 1991). The implication of the above is that the researcher is aware of the contribution she/he makes in constructing meaning (Willig, 2001).

Postmodernism provides the possibility to identify multiple sites of power relations that contribute to shaping individuals and populations. The objective of postmodernism is to arrive at environments that are conducive to a useful critique of phenomena. It (postmodernism) is a suitable ontological approach in researching issues like gender, as it is constructed in relation to power. Connell (1987; 1995) argues that power does not only function between genders through patriarchy, but also within genders where some men are marginalised by the dominant forms of masculinities. It then becomes essential when analysing masculinities and diverse constructions thereof to utilise an approach that permits examining how power operates in a relational manner.

3.3 Social constructionism

Rooted in a postmodern ontology, social constructionist research seeks to identify the various ways of constructing social realities that are available in a culture. Social constructionist research also explores the conditions under which the social realities are used, tracing the implications for human experience and social practise (Willig, 2001). According to Gergen (1985), social constructionist thought is mainly concerned with uncovering the processes through which people come to account for, describe and explain the world in which they live. Gergen (1985) outlines four key assumptions of social constructionist thought. These assumptions, as drawn mainly from Burr (1996) and Rogers and Rogers (2004), are presented below.

3.3.1 A critical stance towards knowledge

Social constructionism is critical of the taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world: it challenges the positivist notion that conventional knowledge is based on an objective observation of the world. Our understanding is not a mirror of reality, implying that what we perceive is constantly constructed through our own interpretation (Rogers & Rogers, 2004). The above means that we must be guarded on taking the partitions we have created as we interpret the world as 'real'. Gergen (1985) argues that being a man or a woman is viewed as essential to one's identity. He adds that the importance given to gender as a category is a human product.

Characteristics such as gender and race are significant to people because humankind has made them meaningful (Rogers & Rogers, 2004). If men and women are viewed as having certain characteristics by virtue of their gender, the implications that these constructions have in promoting or limiting certain deeds should then be critically examined.

3.3.2 Knowledge is historically and culturally specific

Knowledge being socially constructed, it can be stated that it will then be meaningful only in the historical period in which it is produced (Rogers & Rogers, 2004).

Definitions of masculinities are challenged and occasionally altered as historical and economic circumstances change. Where men traditionally used to be the sole main source of income (breadwinners), their ability to provide financially was viewed as part of what constitutes being a 'real' man. In spite of the fact that the above notion is still salient, the economic recession has led to a high rate of unemployment in South Africa, resulting in a reinterpretation of what it means to be a 'real' man.

3.3.3 Knowledge is created and sustained by social processes

The third assumption describes knowledge as something that is constructed and sustained by social processes. People construct shared versions of knowledge in the course of social interaction, predominantly through language. This means that what is considered as 'truth' is not a result of what can be observed in the world. It is somewhat during daily interactions between people that our versions of knowledge become formulated (Burr, 1996).

3.3.4 Knowledge implies social action

The fourth assumption indicates that knowledge is inextricably bound to social processes. The understanding of the world by people can take several shapes, with diverse social constructions of reality emerging. These diverse constructions attract different kinds of actions from human beings in that understandings of the world make certain patterns of social action possible and prohibit others (Burr, 1996). For example in some communities romanticized masculinities are associated with men having multiple concurrent sexual partners (Gupta, 2000; Hunter, 2003). This construction endorses risky sexual practices for men and simultaneously limits men's ability to

protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections including HIV. From a critical position to knowledge and the types of practices it might attract or prohibit, one can begin questioning what kinds of actions would be possible when different constructions of reality are accepted as true (Rogers & Rogers, 2004).

The epistemological framework of social constructionism is appropriate for the study because it is sensitive to the constantly growing nature of social life and is a suitable approach to utilise when exploring constructions of masculinity that are actively changing. Social construction theory aims not only to facilitate change but also to generate new ways of thinking. Burr (1996) has argued that the goal of research is not to expose an objective 'truth' but rather the usefulness that findings might have in bringing change. The next segment will discuss the qualitative research methodology that was employed in the study.

3.4 Research Methodology

3.4.1 Qualitative research methodology

The complex nature of the study, which demands the interpretation rather than the measuring of data, suggests a qualitative research approach. Over the past few decades, researchers in the social sciences continue to acknowledge the usefulness of qualitative research approaches. The term 'qualitative research' refers to a number of research strategies that share certain characteristics, amongst which are the analysis of in-depth interview data from a carefully (purposefully) chosen sample and the use of focus group discussions, as opposed to controlled experimentation. While traditional research is based on the assumptions that there is a single, objective reality that one can observe, understand and measure, qualitative research assumes that the world consists of more than one reality and that these realities are highly subject to multiple interpretations (Merriam, 1988). Qualitative research allows for an open and flexible approach where unanticipated responses can be explored (Willig, 2001).

Volan (2003) argues that it is primarily the nature of enquiry which should decide which methods are most suitable. The rationale for this study is to examine how young male university students construct their masculinities and sexuality, and how these constructions influence their sexual practices. The concern that qualitative researchers

have for meaning and other features described below as characteristics of qualitative research are guided by a theoretical orientation. The term 'theory' as defined by Bogdan and Biklen is "... a loose collection of logically held-together assumptions, concepts that orient thinking and research" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 30). The current study was informed Bogdan and Biklen's (1992) and Volan's (2003) approaches to qualitative research, as described below.

Qualitative research has the natural setting as direct source of data, and the researcher is the key instrument

Researchers spend time collecting data and learning about outcomes and processes. They are motivated by a concern for context and the underpinning view that action is best understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs. Qualitative researchers assume that human behaviour is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs.

Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes

The natural context and history of the phenomenon focused on in a particular study are explored. Issues examined may relate to how people negotiate meaning, how certain terms and labels are applicable, how certain notions develop as part of what is regarded as 'common sense' and how some attitudes of certain people are translated into their interaction with other people.

Qualitative research is descriptive

Data is collected in the form of words rather than numbers. In search for a broad understanding, one or more sets of data is analysed without reducing these to numerical symbols. Various categories of data are analysed closely to the form in which they were recorded in order to capture all the richness. Qualitative descriptions in reports are usually described as 'thick'. This is because they often contain quotations when describing a specific view of the world in a narrative form.

Qualitative researchers tend to analyse data inductively

The researcher does not assume that enough is known to recognise all important concerns prior to undertaking the research. The qualitative researcher uses the study

itself to learn what the important questions are. Abstracts are built as the information that has been gathered is grouped together and analysed. Theory developed this way rises from the bottom up, rather than from the top down.

“Meaning” is essential to the qualitative approach

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) there are many ways of interpreting experiences available to us through interacting with others. The complex nature of the dissertation suggested a research approach in which meanings of events and forms of behaviour could be best captured by qualitative data, characterized by the rich, nuanced and contextual information embedded therein (1992).

3.4.2 Research Design

The study employed an interpretive, qualitative research design in which the participants were interviewed individually. The use of a qualitative research paradigm was informed by the purpose of the study, which was to explore young university students' constructions of masculinities and how these constructions possibly inform their sexual practices. Qualitative research seeks to understand how people make sense of their experiences, from their own perspectives as social actors in order to describe and understand social action (Babbie & Mouton, 2005; Denzil & Lincoln, 2000). Given the sensitivity of the topic, it was thought that the participants would be freer to articulate their thoughts in an individual interview format as opposed to a focus group format, for example.

3.4.3 Sampling

This section elaborates on the process of selecting participants for the study. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling where participants are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment (Neuman, 2000). This is done through identification and selection of individuals who share certain characteristics and experiences that are of interest to the researcher. The participants were recruited near the university library and cafeteria in KwaZulu-Natal where the researcher had access. A sample of young male university students between the ages of 18–24 years was drawn. After making contact with the few initial participants, more (participants) were identified through snow-ball sampling, which is another type of non-probability

sampling that requests participants to nominate acquaintances who might be interested in participating in the study. Four of the participants were in their first year of study, two in their third year and one in his second year. There was one participant who was married. Four students resided at a university residence and three resided off campus. Six were black (African) and one was white.

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2004) argued that when doing qualitative research, it is not crucial to have a representative sample. However, in this study an attempt was made to take diversity into account, specifically when identifying and selecting the participants. The decision to aim to interview participants from diverse backgrounds was based on the assumption that different experiences and circumstances may have led to different constructions of masculinities and sexuality. Therefore, participants were most likely to hold diverse views of masculinities and sexuality construction. Unfortunately, this was not possible as the majority of prospective candidates approached were not willing to participate. Hence the small sample of young male undergraduate students as indicated in the demographics. Despite the fewer participants, a good interaction led to rich data from the interviews.

3. 4. 4 Data collection: Research interviews

The researcher sent e-mails to the targeted individuals arranging dates and times to participate in the study. The email addresses were given to the researcher by the participants at the initial meeting in which the participants were responding to the recruitment advert posted on campus. Once the individuals had agreed, the researcher provided them with two consent forms (one consenting to an interview and the other to the use of a recording device). The consent forms explained the purpose of the study and their right to terminate participation at any time if they so wished (Appendices 1 and 2). The forms also explained that early termination would not be held against them. The consent forms also made participants aware that their identities were to be kept strictly confidential. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with young male university students. A semi-structured interview guide (Appendix 3) was used in order to capture complexities and nuances of the data.

In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their

perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006). The in-depth interviews are more beneficial because they provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys. The interviews also provide a more relaxed atmosphere in which to collect information, and the participants are motivated to express their deepest thoughts about a certain subject (2006). Although Boyce and Neale (2006) argue about the limitation of biasness in this technique, the researcher made an effort to create instruments and conduct interviews that allowed minimal bias. Interviews were conducted in on-campus offices and other locations convenient to the participants.

Another limitation for in-depth interviews is that they can be time-intensive because of the time it takes to conduct the interviews, transcribe them and analyse the results. Thus the researcher planned carefully to consider the effort needed in collecting data by setting ample time in analysing the detailed data. The in-depth interviews were conducted in English because all of the university students can speak and understand the language. Participants had an opportunity to ask questions before and after the interview. The research questions of the study were formulated to investigate a specific topic in all its complexity. This was done so as to understand the constructions of masculinities and sexuality through the participants' making of meaning, based on their experiences. The above complements the theoretical approach underscoring the study because social constructionism together with discourse analysis are concerned with how meaning is constructed amongst people through language (Burr, 1996).

In gathering data there exists the benefit of either being an outsider or an insider, and there is often a fluid interaction between these two roles. Sometimes an issue such as gender ends up positioning an individual as an 'outsider' (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Youngwha, Ntseane & Muhamad, 2001). As an outsider the researcher has an advantage to make direct interactions or ask questions that elicit responses which may not be that accessible if one were an insider who is assumed to be a 'knower' or an individual who already knows (Merriam *et al.*, 2001). By virtue of being a female the interviewer was positioned as an outsider and her gender may have hindered the participants' willingness to discuss sexuality issues. People are more inclined to share information with others like themselves (Hutchison, Marsiglio & Cohan, 2002). These

researchers believed that: “the sex of the interviewer becomes crucial as the subject matter becomes more sensitive” (2002, p. 215).

Conducting an interview is a more natural form of interacting with people than asking them to perform some experimental task; it creates an opportunity to get to know people so that one can really understand how they think and feel (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). According to Parker (2005), “an interview is a conversation with a purpose, and the way an interview really differs from most conversations, which also have many purposes, is that the initial purposes are determined by the interviewer” (Parker, 2005, p.57). The researcher interviewed participants individually, and the interviews were captured through audio recording. The research participants were interviewed at times that were convenient to them. These in-depth interviews focused on constructions of masculinities and sexuality, where questions were asked using simple, direct words that are familiar to all research participants. The duration of each interview was about 45 minutes to an hour.

The tapes were transcribed verbatim and only made available to the supervisor and kept in a locked cupboard in the office. Pseudonyms were given to the participants to guard against violating confidentiality. The epistemological framework of social constructionist theory enabled the researcher to summarise large amounts of information and produce a reasonably minimal list of propositions, thus obtaining meaning from chaotic information (Holmarsdottir, 2005). Upon transcribing, participants’ utterances and pauses were taken note of. Transcripts were organised into a meaningful categories within the framework of the research aims and questions of this dissertation. This is in line with the arguments of researchers supporting an approach that attempts to understand the meaning of events (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The social constructionist theory and literature reviewed assisted the researcher to understand and organise data of experience as Holmarsdottir (2005) points out that theories can transform the meaning of what is known. Through continuous reading of interview transcripts, discussing interpretations with my supervisor, and developing a consciousness regarding my own assumptions in a reflective process, I gradually developed a deeper understanding of the material. In this way, interpretations of meanings were made by both me as a researcher and by the participants.

Reflection and self-reflection were utilised so as not to simply believe what is observed. Notes of different discourses that were emerging from the text were made in order to see how these discourses correlated with the construction of masculinities and sexuality. Identification and highlighting of references to masculinities and sexuality from the text was made by the researcher. The researcher frequently stepped back to reflect on what had been seen and heard. A consideration was also made on how the researcher's position could have influenced her interpretations of what she had seen and heard.

The identifying patterns were brought to the fore, while statements were arranged into diverse discourses as they were emerging. The process for conducting discourse analysis were followed as recommended by Alvesson and Kärreman, (2000), Frederiksen (2010), Parker (1992) and Stead and Bakker (2010) The researcher's voice is replaced by the participants 'speaking for themselves' through the use of quotations that capture the essence of information regarding a particular topic.

The richness from the individual in-depth interview was in this case not so much decided by the topic itself, as it was by the way in which the interviews were conducted. The possibility of the researcher influencing data and the quality thereof is inherent in all forms of qualitative research in particular. The researcher was aware of this and hence made an attempt that attention and care were duly paid to mitigate the impact of the researcher on the information attained and this will be reflected upon later in the section of reflexivity. Discourse analysis as a method will be considered in the following section.

3. 4. 5 Discourse analysis as a method

The study used discourse analysis as a methodological approach to analyse the text produced during the interviews. Discourse analysis is an interpretative, critical process in which historical, contextual and cultural aspects of socially shared constructions are studied (Stead & Bakker, 2010). Like social constructionism, discourse analysis is radically anti-essentialist and focuses on how personal identities and social interactions are constituted through language (2010). Using this method to analyse data is beneficial because, in focussing on processes such as deconstruction, the power/knowledge nexus, as well as ideology and identity, to mention a few, the

researcher is enabled to re-examine the taken for granted 'truths', thereby exposing the oppressive practices hidden in current understandings of psychology (Burr, 1996; Stead & Bakker, 2010). A discourse regarding an object manifests itself in texts and this refers to any restricted tissue of meaning duplicated in any form (Parker, 1992). This implies that texts may be recognized in different sources, where the social world and institutions can be treated as text, which may be read (Burr, 1996).

The creation of new knowledge and the construction of new ways of interpreting the social world are achieved through the process of deconstruction (McLuckie, 2000). There is no straightforward method for carrying out a discourse analysis as Stead and Bakker (2010) have argued. This study's approach was partly adapted from the guidelines proposed by Parker (1992), informed by Foucault's work. The flexible phases can be identified in analysing process as suggested by Parker (1992):

Realising that everything is textual

According to Parker (1992), the first stage is to specify what will be analysed. In this approach, everything is textual. As explained by Parker (1992, pp.6, 7), "all of the world, when it has become world understood by us and so given meaning by us, can be described as being textual". This implies that discourses are certainly not limited to the author, but are transindividual.

Engaging in a process of free-association

This is the stage where the process of free association is employed. Seeing that the meaning of a text cannot be limited to the objectives of an individual, it is practical to explore all the connotations that may elicit a text. It is at this stage that the researcher can pay attention to the way in which different discourses may be accessible and be accepted by various audiences. A certain symbol may perhaps offer meaning to a text to one group, although the same sign could be perceived as devoid of meaning to another group. In addition if the sign is significant to the other group its importance might still be rejected.

Asking what objects are referred to in a discourse, and describing them

Discourses are seen as constitutive and as a result the objects of the discourse are brought into being (Parker, 1992). An object is named and given reality through the use of language. There are two layers of reality which are brought about by discourses. Parker (1992) describes the first layer of objectification as the objects which are brought into existence through the discourse. The identified objects are defined by discourse and may or may not exist outside of the discourse that constitutes them (Parker, 1992). The above stage is followed by a discussion of what objects are referred to in the discourse and these objects will be described. For example, text that talks about medical discourse might identify a certain disease as the object.

Talking about the talk as if it were an object

It is at this stage where a second layer of objectification can be identified. This layer of reality is the discourse itself, where a talk is in itself identified as an object (Parker, 1992). The discourse itself can be identified an object for analysis. Maintaining the example just used, the medical discourse on disease can then be viewed as an object being represented in the text.

Specifying what types of persons are being talked about

A discourse invites “certain perceptions of ourselves and others” (Parker, 1992, p. 9). This occurs in two ways, where a discourse positions subjects in relation to the addressor. The addressor is not the author of the text but is instead the text itself. The person reading the text is positioned in a certain manner in relation to the addressor. One could ask “What type of person is called on to hear this message?” A medical discourse might invite a subject position of a carer and a familialist discourse might draw the subject in as a protector, probably with different subject effects for men and women reading the text (Parker, 1992). The subsequent stage will consider identifying the kind of a person the discourse talks about.

Speculating about the rights to speak in that way of speaking

It is at this stage where the second way in which discourses position subjects is considered. Subsequent to identifying the position that a discourse invites the subject to assume, an individual can then ask what right to speak does that position allow.

Discourses let certain things to be said and restrict other expressions. A medical discourse, for an example, suggests that unqualified people adopt the position of non-medic where the right to speak is defined by the amount of knowledge held by the subject. At this stage in discourse analysis one would speculate about what the subjects in the text can say within the discourse and what the reader can say if he/she identifies with them (Parker, 1992).

Mapping a picture of the world presented by this discourse

Discourses are viewed as coherent classifications of statements, where they (statements) can be clustered in terms of how they relate to a particular topic. This grouping will be informed by the researcher's context, where the idea of what constitutes a topic will vary according to culturally and socially available understandings. To locate coherence in a text, we have to rely on our own understanding of the objects offered in it. We "string these repeated references" to an object collectively through calling on our own understanding of what is referred to (Parker, 1992. p12).

Identifying how a text using this discourse would deal with objections

A discourse analysis in addition requires calling on other possible interpretations of the objects presented in the text. In the process of analysis one would call on one's awareness of the opportunity that there could be other ways of talking about an object. This is a stage which looks upon how a text using this discourse would deal with objections to its specific way of talking about objects (Parker, 1992).

Contrasting discourses and objects they constitute

In conducting a discourse analysis, one must draw on other existing discourses so as to articulate a critique of the discourses functioning in a text. This means that one can recognize ways in which discourses contradict each other as they describe an object. Through this process of contrasting various discourses and the way they constitute objects, analysis is facilitated (Parker, 1992). A medical discourse can be contrasted against a mystical discourse by looking at the way each discourse constitutes disease as an object (Parker, 1992).

Identifying points of overlap between discourses

Parker (1992) concedes that discourses are not constantly discrete from one another, and that obvious features cannot always be drawn through contrast. In an analysis there is a regular interrelationship between different discourses. Sometimes discourses draw from support from other discourses and the analysis should identify these points of overlap where objects may be constructed as similar by different discourses (Parker, 1992).

Identifying where a discourse reflects on its own way of speaking

At this stage one can explore implicit meanings by asking: "How would another text employing this discourse refer to the contradictions within the discourse?" The above can be done through identifying occasions where other texts elaborate on the discourse and through investigating how other audiences are addressed. It can also be done through reflection on the terms used in explaining a discourse where the analyst can for an example explore the use of the term 'racist' to describe a discourse about race (Parker, 1992).

Locating a discourse in history

This stage will look at where and how a discourse emerged in history. Parker (1992) argues that discourses are not stagnant but are located in history. In order to make sense of the meaning of the objects as they are represented in the existing discourse, the analysis needs to take account of what the discourses referred to when they emerged. Parker (1992) uses the example of a familial discourse that can be explored as it was constructed and interpreted in history in order to legitimise the Western notion of a nuclear family as natural. An analysis of a familial discourse would then move about between the different interpretations of history that served to construct this discourse and would then support an analysis of what this discourse is referring to when called on today.

Describing how discourses have changed

Given that discourses are not stagnant, the analysis should take into account how discourses have changed over time. In addition to exploring the interpretation of

history that a discourse emerged from, the analyst would also look at the kind of discourses that are dominant at the time in which the discourse currently exists (Parker, 1992).

Identifying institutions which are reinforced or subverted by the use of a discourse

Certain practices serve to authenticate a discourse, and consequently strengthening the substance basis of an institution. Other practices can refute a discourse and can subvert an institution. Parker (1992) utilises the example of a medical discourse, where discursive practices such as giving an injection or operating on a patient serve to reinforce the structure of the medical institution. The institutions which are supported by the use of a discourse and the institutions which are subverted by the use of a discourse will be identified at this stage of analysis.

Identifying the ways in which discourses reproduce power relations

According to Best and Kellner (1991) power and knowledge refer to one thing to an extent that they even refer to them as either power or knowledge. Although Parker (1992) acknowledges that the notions of power and knowledge are related, he nonetheless cautions against approaching a discourse analysis with a view that discourses always reproduce power relations. According to Parker (1992) institutions are constructed around power and function as mechanisms that duplicate power relations. Looking at the increasing institutionalisation of psychology, he argues that demarcations around the professional capacity of psychologists reproduce power. This refers to power to limit what can be viewed as objects within the field of psychology as well as power to control the division amid those viewed as powerful due to their knowledge (Parker, 1992). Discourse analysis is then an instrument that can be used to deconstruct dominant discourses and the power they reproduce, in order to construct new understandings of the social world (Burr, 1996; Parker, 1992). This stage according to Parker (1992) should involve exploring the categories of an individual who gains and loses from the use of a discourse, and understanding who would want to proceed or resist the discourse (Parker, 1992). Deconstruction is concerned with taking apart individuals' constructed discourses and showing how they are put together to provide individuals with perspectives of the world (Stead & Bakker,

2010). When a text is listened to or read from a discourse analysis point of view, internal contradictions and omissions are displayed (2010).

Identifying the ideological effects of discourses

Parker (1992) points out that Foucault was critical of the use of the word 'ideology,' as it was viewed as implying that one system of beliefs is truer than others. The term 'ideology' can be useful when perceived as "a description of relationships and effects" (p.20) that is rooted in a particular history and context, instead of a belief system that presupposes the truth.

3.4. 6 Validity in discourse analysis

In a postmodern age the conception of knowledge as a mirror of reality is replaced by knowledge as a social construction of reality, where the focus is upon interpretation and negotiation of the meaning of the lived world (Kvale, 1994). Knowledge is not a matter of interaction with nonhuman reality, but of communication between persons where the conversation becomes the ultimate context within which knowledge is understood. Alluding to the above is Burr (1996) who points out that social construction and discourse analysis focus on how meaning is constructed amongst people through language. As the researcher was analysing the text in this study, she painstakingly ensured that interaction with participants remained paramount. This is in line with Kvale's (1994) argument that truth is constituted through a dialogue and this is where valid knowledge claims emerge as conflicting interpretations and action possibilities are discussed and negotiated among community members. According to Kvale (1994) the validity of an interpretation cannot be established by a research monograph, thus the researcher did not only use a detailed manual, but worked through the process of research in collaborative partnership with the participants.

Communicative validity involves testing the validity of knowledge claims in a dialogue. Valid knowledge is not merely obtained by approximations to a given social reality, but involves a conversation about the social reality (Kvale, 1994). An emphasis is made that evaluation research does not mainly concern predicting events, but rather whether the audience of a report can see new relations and answer new but relevant questions (1994). The researcher advocates that there are new relations that emerged from this

study, where for an example, the university is perceived as an enabling environment by young men to assert themselves and behave in a manner that may not be acceptable to their families.

Validation as investigation does not solve the issues of the validity of qualitative research. However, the present approach proposes alternative contexts for understanding the validity of social research (Kvale, 1994). Research is judged based on its production of valid knowledge and research methods and conclusions that can be justified (Silverman, 2001). A number of scholars have contributed to the question of validation in qualitative research. They deliberate on the concept of validity in qualitative research through the categorisation and differentiation of primary validity criteria, secondary criteria and techniques (Whittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001). Authenticity, credibility, criticality and integrity are regarded as the primary criteria. The secondary criteria include bias, creativity, explicitness, vividness, thoroughness, sensitivity and congruence. Criteria understood in line with Whittemore *et al.* (2001) are “...the standards to be upheld as ideals in qualitative research, whereas techniques are the methods employed to diminish identified validity threats” (2001: 528). An emphasis that differing interpretive perspectives and differing research designs may require flexibility in terms of which criteria are applied.

Throughout the different stages during the course of this study, the researcher made every effort to adhere to the validity criteria referred to as the primary criteria by Whittemore *et al.* (2001). The choice of investigating the study meant that secondary criteria were also utilized. The ‘in-depth’ nature of the study implied potential quality concerning thoroughness, explicitness, bias, creativity, vividness and sensitivity (2001). As indicated above, all of these criteria are ideal standards, a fact that the researcher was frequently made aware of throughout the research process.

During the interviews for an example, I experienced that occasionally I had to repeat, explain or rephrase my question. This did not appear to be due to the spoken language which was not the mother tongue, but rather the content of the interview dealing with sensitive and personal issues. The above challenged me as the researcher with regard to sensitivity, thoroughness and creativity. I am aware of the fact that I was being subjective during the process of dissertation data collection and

analysis. I was also looking at the world through 'young male university students' lenses'. My age and gender did influence the research process. Thus I cannot rule out that my views were biased. Parker (2005) points to power relations embedded in every social interaction. All participants in this dissertation were men. An analysis regarding feminist research which shed some light on the issue of gender influencing research has the following to say:

Feminist research has a particular concern with gender, but gender appears in many different ways. Every interaction in Western [and other] culture[s] is suffused with assumptions about gender-appropriate and inappropriate ways of behaving. Feminist approaches attend to how power is reproduced moment-by-moment as part of the interview process. (Parker, 2005, p.55)

Trustworthiness, which includes the question of transferability, refers to the extent to which the findings can be transferred to other settings or groups, is another important validity criterion (Lundman, 2003). Throughout the various stages, as the researcher worked on this study, she made an effort to adhere to the validity criteria referred to as the primary criteria as indicated by Whitemore *et al.* (2001). The researcher was also constantly conscientised by her supervisors about all of the above-mentioned critical ideal standards, throughout the research process.

The research design was coherent and appropriate because the epistemological framework of social constructionist theory, the methodological approach of qualitative research and discourse analysis all served to facilitate achieving the objective of the study. The methodological approach enabled the participants to provide rich descriptions in their interviews which subsequently brought to the fore an analysis which created new knowledge.

There are numerous techniques to evaluate the credibility of the findings of discourse analytic research and four major ones are identified by Potter and Wetherell (1987):

Coherence: Analytic claims ought to provide coherence to a body of discourse, in that it shows how the discourse fits together and how the discursive structure produces certain effects. A coherent explanation is one that accounts for both a broad pattern as well as for many micro-sequences that take place. This was done without discounting contradictions in participants' descriptions.

Participants' orientation: The consistencies and differences that the analyst takes note of should be the ones that the participants identify as being noteworthy. The motive for this is that the focus of the research is on the distinctions participants make in their actual interactions and which have implications for the way they live every day. This criterion was not satisfied as the researcher was not able to present the analysis to the participant within the time-frame of completing the mini-dissertation.

New problems: In the process of discourse analysis new problems may be generated, which may be utilised to validate the primary analytic suggestions. Through drawing on some discourses in constructing masculinity, participants construct new problems through the emergence of different responses to what is said. The responses provide support for the analytic claims made by the researcher, in that they substantiate the thinking that participants are drawing on the main discourses identified in the analysis. The criterion of new problems was satisfied in this study because the discourses that were identified were demonstrated to give rise to new problems, and this is in line with Kvale (1994) who points out that research does/ is not mainly concerned with predicting events, but a report should rather see new relations and answer new and relevant questions. For an example, when discussing the discourse of traditional hegemonic masculinities, a contradicting statement that was analysed demonstrated that there is an emerging trend which appears to negate the traditional constructions of masculinities.

Fruitfulness: A set of analytic claims should allow the researcher to make sense of the discourse and to generate new explanations. An active reflection on the researcher's experience in accounting for the interpretive resources and the experience of the research process can provide support for the claim to value that was brought by a study (Burman, 1997; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The next section therefore considers how the reflexive nature of research should be acknowledged throughout the research process.

3.5 Reflexivity in research

Reflexivity can be explained as personal. According to Willig (2001), when discussing personal reflexivity, it is obligatory for the researcher to reflect on how her/his political and social context, values, beliefs and experiences contributed and impacted on the

research. A male researcher, who has possibly experienced the construction of masculinities and sexuality himself, could have come up with questions which the researcher could not have thought of. As the researcher is a woman, discussing masculinities and sexuality with male respondents had its own set of challenges brought about by cultural restraints. In many black communities, women ordinarily never discuss such issues with men. Although some young men were sometimes reluctant to discuss sexuality issues with a woman, I started by warning them that some questions may be personal and sensitive and they were permitted not to answer should they feel uncomfortable. However, due to some trust that had been established between the participants and the interviewer, the young men managed to provide responses that were valuable to this study.

The reflexive nature of a study can provide sustenance for its claim to value (Burman, 1997). However, the researcher was aware of how her personal context could have impacted on the study. The researcher is conscious that the study could have been approached in different ways and that various interpretations might have been reached through readings of other texts. Burman (1997) argues that an active reflection on one's personal experience as a researcher to account for the interpretive resources brought to bear in arriving at interpretations, can bring support for the claim to value that has been made by the study. In the next paragraph the researcher presents the manner in which reflexivity should be undertaken throughout the research process.

According to social constructionism, knowledge is produced in social interaction, and this has a crucial implication for research (Gergen, 1985). Researchers cannot claim that they are impartially 'uncovering' reality as it objectively exists, if what they regard as knowledge is continually created and negotiated through social processes, particularly language.

When the researcher introduced herself as a student from the same university and described the purpose of the study, she found herself being associated with the university, a point that had positive results with most of the participants. The researcher argues that being 'one' of them benefited her access to the field, as well as the quality of the information she received from the participants. The researcher found

herself being a primary research instrument, emphasising the importance of participants' expressions about their thoughts as freely as possible. The interviews generated a process of reflection among the participants (Stead & Bakker, 2010). A provision of a safe environment that lessened the feeling of intimidation was facilitated. This provided the researcher with exposure to typical experiences and perspectives of young males as they were interviewed individually.

The researcher entered the field with some firmly developed expectations which included that the young male university students would be in relationships. However, one of the participants was not in a relationship. There was no expectation of a married male in this age range, yet one of the participants was married. These circumstances were unanticipated, but in spite of this the researcher carried on with the questions that were in the interview guide. The participants were keen to respond to the questions based on their life circumstances.

The researcher was aware of her own values that young men should not engage in sex being influential in the research process and outcomes. Systematically, an attempt was made to acknowledge her own subjectivity, being conscious that it was consistently influencing her thoughts, decisions, actions and the manner in which she communicated. Power-related issues between the researcher and the participants emerged during the research process. There were times when the researcher was perceived as the one who is in a position of power, as she would redirect the questions when the process was becoming derailed from the topic. However, these positions were changing throughout the research process. Sometimes the researcher was reliant on participants' openness in sharing their experiences, thus participants were in position of power, as far as their own experiences were concerned.

3. 6 Ethical considerations

Approval for the study was obtained from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This study was guided by the general codes of ethics of social research as recommended by Emanuel, Wendler, Killen and Grady (2004) and Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2004). A special consideration was given to the sensitivity of the research topic, and the research process was guided by the principle of 'do no harm' to participants (Emanuel *et al.*,

2004; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). The ethical considerations are summarised below.

Recently there has been substantial debate about ethics of research in developing countries. The controversies are centred on three issues which are the standard of care that should be used in research in developing countries, the reasonable availability of interventions that are proven to be useful during the course of research trials and the quality of informed consent (Emanuel, Wendler, Killen & Grady, 2004). The controversies partly reflect that ethical guidelines can be interpreted in multiple ways, which are sometimes contradictory. Thus a proposal of practical benchmarks to guide researchers and research ethics committees in assessing how well the enumerated ethical principles have been fulfilled (2004).

Research in developing countries creates a greater risk of exploitation, yet the regulatory infrastructures that might minimize the risk are poorly established and less supported financially (Emanuel *et al.*, 2004). An ethical framework for researchers in developing countries in particular has to provide more than broad principles, thus a collaborative principle has been added (2004). This principle ensures that there is minimal exploitation between researchers and community as it enables the developing country to determine the acceptability of a research. Furthermore, the above principle demonstrates awareness and respect for cultural differences (2004).

Collaborative partnership

A collaborative partnership between researchers and communities in developing countries helps to minimise the possibility of exploitation by ensuring that a developing country determines for itself whether the research is acceptable and responsive to the community's health problems (Emanuel *et al.*, 2004). This type of partnership requires representation of parties, sharing responsibility regarding the assessment of health problem and the value of research to the community, recognition and respect for the host community, establishment of a system for independent ethical review of research proposals, fair benefits must be received by the community from the research conducted and there must be fair distribution of the tangible and intangible rewards of research among the partners (Emanuel *et al.*, 2004). The participants were given ample time to make up their minds as to whether they should participate in the study

after an explanation regarding the study was presented to them. This was done in order to afford the participants an opportunity to determine for themselves whether the research was acceptable.

Social value

Emanuel *et al.* (2004) argue that ethical research must have social value through knowledge generation that can lead to improvements in health. The absence of social value exposes participants to risks for bad reasons. . To ensure social value, the potential value of the research for the prospective beneficiaries must be outlined and there needs to be mechanisms in place to integrate the results into a long-term collaborative health strategy. Further, the conduct of research should not undermine the community's existing health-care services (2004). As far as possible, the researcher adhered to the principle of social value: knowledge generated from this study could potentially lead to improvements in understanding masculinities as a determinant of risk behaviour among male university students. This in turn could be incorporated into the strategies to counsel the young men. It is however acknowledged that no strategies were devised to disseminate results in appropriate languages and formats to key stakeholders as recommended by Emanuel *et al.*, (2004).

Scientific validity

Scientific validity is an ethical requirement. Unless research generates reliable and valid data that can be interpreted and used by specified beneficiaries, it will have no social value and participants will be exposed to risk for no benefit (Emanuel *et al.*, 2004). Research must be designed so that the results will be useful in the context of the health problem. The study design must realise the research objectives while neither denying health-care services that participants are otherwise entitled to nor requiring services that are not feasible to deliver in the context of the country's health-care system (Emanuel *et al.*, 2004). The study must be designed to be feasible, given the social, political and cultural environment in which it is being conducted (2004). The researcher is confident that the study was feasible and its results may assist in developing better intervention programmes aimed at HIV/AIDS as it was written in the informed consent (Appendix 1).

Fair subject selection

A challenge for research in developing countries is fair selection of target villages, tribes or city neighbourhoods from which individual participants will be recruited. The study population should be selected to ensure that there is fairness in the distribution of the burdens and gains of the research. Scientific reasons for choosing a particular community might be high prevalence, incidence of an infection, special drug-resistance patterns or a particular combination of diseases (Emanuel *et al.*, 2004). Minimizing risk is essential. For instance, in selecting a target population for an HIV-vaccine study, a community that does not discriminate against HIV-infected persons and that can provide treatment for opportunistic infections is preferable. The community should be one in which a collaborative partnership can be developed and in which social value can be realised (2004). Factors such as familial coercion, social marginalisation, political powerlessness and economic deprivation must be considered to determine the vulnerability of communities. For an example, if health policy makers suggest a particular tribe, the researchers should determine that the group has been selected for good reasons such as high incidence of disease, not because of social subjugation. If a scientifically appropriate population is identified as vulnerable, specific safeguards to protect them should be implemented, such as ensuring confidentiality and the freedom of potential research participants to decline joining the study (Emanuel *et al.*, 2004). The researcher ensured that a fair subject was selected because KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa has been identified as the province with the highest prevalence of HIV among youth (HSRC, 2008). The possibility of causing harm was expected as the topic of this dissertation entailed asking sensitive and personal information from young male students. The researcher realised that some may be traumatized by the process as a result of the previous experiences. She provisionally requested the university students counselling centre to provide counselling in the event such problems arose. However, no harm was evident during the conduct of the research. Participants' autonomy was emphasised in the consent forms (Appendices 1 and 2). In the consent forms, participants were assured of their rights to anonymity in any publication that might arise out of the research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim (2004).

Favourable risk-benefit ratio

Research should offer participants a favourable risk-benefit ratio, and the risk-benefit ratio for individuals must be favourable in the context in which they live (Emanuel *et al.*, 2004). When participants confront a higher risk of disease, greater potential benefits may justify greater risks in research design. The risk-benefit ratio should also be favourable for the community, and benefits might include the information obtained from the study, services provided to participants or improvement in the health of the community (2004).

Independent review

To minimize concerns with regard to researchers' conflicts of interest and to ensure public accountability, independent ethical review of all research protocols is necessary. In addition to institutional review, other regulatory approvals may be necessary for some types of research (Emanuel *et al.*, 2004). Transparency enhances accountability by assuring the public that the research is not exploitative. If reviews are in disagreement, it is important to clarify the nature of those disagreements. Only rarely are there fundamental disagreements about whether ethical principles and benchmarks are met. Review must be independent and competent (2004). The current study was reviewed and ethically cleared by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Informed consent

Individual informed consent has been recognized as an important ethical principle for more than a century (Emanuel *et al.*, 2004; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). Differences in language, social traditions and practices make the process of informed consent in developing countries complex. Five benchmarks for evaluating informed consent have been suggested (Emanuel *et al.*, 2004). The recruitment procedures and incentives for participants must be established by the local community and these must be consistent with cultural, political and social practices. In some communities compensation for participation in research may be expected, whereas in others it may be considered offensive. The appropriate form and level of compensation depends on the local and economic context. Disclosure of information should be sensitive to the local context and this should be done using local language, culturally appropriate idioms, and analogies that the prospective participants can understand (2004). The

“spheres of consent,” ranging from village elders to leaders of the extended family may be required before researchers can invite individual participation. Appropriate alternative procedures for documenting informed consent might include tape recordings or written documentation of verbal consent. Special attention must be given to ensure that individuals are aware of their right to and actually are free to refuse to participate or withdraw from research (Emanuel *et al.*, 2004; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004).

In the current study, the researcher acknowledges that only English was used, which is not a home language of most of the participants. Participants should have been given an option to be interviewed in a language of their choice, preferably their mother tongue. The researcher made an effort to ensure that the informed consent forms were written in a simple language while providing a detailed explanation regarding the study. There was transparency in the process of obtaining informed consent because the participants were aware that the study is for academic purpose and it will not yield direct benefits for individuals. A separate consent was prepared for using a recording device in the interviews.

Respect for recruited participants and study communities

Researchers have an on-going obligation to participants, former participants and the host community. It is essential to maintain the confidentiality of information collected (Emanuel *et al.*, 2004; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). It is also important to alert participants that, despite researchers’ best efforts, there is no guarantee of absolute confidentiality. The respect for participants includes informing them of their right to withdraw from a study. Participants and community should be informed when new information arises during the course of research (2004). Most of the necessary precautions were taken into consideration to ensure the rights, dignity and safety of the participants. Participants were interviewed within offices and at times convenient to them. According to Neuman (2000) the researcher has an obligation to ensure that confidential information is protected. The respondents’ anonymity is respected by use of pseudonyms. The participants are protected in terms of confidentiality and non-traceability. This is done to ensure the integrity of research, while protecting the

participants' sensitive information as Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2004) have pointed out.

I acknowledge that I did not give participants in the study an opportunity to verify statements when this dissertation was in draft form. However, it is not envisaged that the study findings as captured in this report could cause harm to the participants.

3. 7 Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of the qualitative research approach which informed the study. It also attempted to demonstrate how postmodernism and social constructionism can be viewed as informed by certain common assumptions regarding the nature of social reality and the construction of meaning. These assumptions in sequence persuaded the choice of using individual interviews as a method of data collection and discourse analysis to analyse the text.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the discourse analysis. The analysis focused on identifying patterns as they function in the text. The latter is aimed at exploring how the discourses prove to be beneficial or limit some men's practices, while also looking at how men are positioned by diverse discursive constructions. The results and discussions are combined into one chapter to enable the researcher to present the findings without elaborating on them and contrasting them to other discourses outside the text.

The main findings from the interviews are presented in this chapter, which is divided into sub-sections relating to what appeared as patterns of consistency in what was said. The quotations are inserted verbatim. In this process the researcher highlights the connections between topics with interlinking comments. The analytical categories are discussed in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The different categories of the empirical material are presented and the researcher has attempted to structure the issues emerging from the questions in a logical framework. There were five discourses that were identified as emerging from the text when the discourse analysis was conducted. These are (a) the discourse of traditional hegemonic masculinity, (b) the discourse of invulnerability, (c) the discourse of sexual conquest, and (e) the university as an enabling environment to assert manhood, and daring attitude or approach to life. These discourses are presented and discussed in relation to the literature.

4.2 “One of the things girls expect is that you should be able to provide and be a leader”: Discourse of traditional hegemonic masculinity

An essential factor emerges from the empirical data that clearly contributes to explaining the rationale for some of the university students' ways of constructing their masculine identities. A dominant discourse in the text is one of a traditional hegemonic masculinity where manhood is constructed in terms of what defines being a 'real' man. In South African research on the other hand academic discourses emerged describing

hegemonic masculinities as informed by diverse contextual influences. Morrell (1998) points out how the apartheid era in South Africa challenged men when they were displaced due to migrant labour causing several fathers to be absent from their families. This analysis serves to illustrate how masculinities are constructed in relation to other influences such as tradition and culture and how the meanings of a discourse change over time and over contexts. The idealised masculinity explained in the text is constructed as achieved through specific practices. The discursive practices include being in a position of authority in the home, being a financial provider and being in a heterosexual relationship. Participants framed these discursive practices based on societal expectations of them as men, and suggested that they experience pressure to conform to these expectations. It is noteworthy to mention that this pressure is not only experienced by men who are in a position to provide, but even young male students experience this pressure to provide for girls. Another participant supported the above statement as follows:

Theophilus: *Uh ... I don't know, it's like being in charge of the house, like being responsible for your whole family and also to provide your family*

Within this discourse, attaining the above signifiers and living up to the expectations of traditional constructions of masculinity puts men under continual pressure. If a man cannot attain the signifiers which are viewed as supporting this type of dominant masculinity, his identity and worth as a man is questioned. A participant expressed a sense of being burdened by the expectations of him as a man as follows:

Siphamandla: *In a hard way though ... Ja we do meet the expectations. Ja. You will find that you will be broke you know. Because you find that you didn't want to show that you don't have money, but you take the last cent ... for her just to be happy.*

According to Epprecht (1998), the colonial emasculation of African men is pertinent at this point, as it informs the historical development of this discourse, at least as far as black men are concerned. The apartheid era in South Africa deprived black men the right to own land and harshly regulated the state of employment. The significance of these signifiers (land, gainful employment) cannot be overstated, given that historically access to material resources has formed the basis of traditional, hegemonic masculinities. It is on this premise that the researcher suggests that the pressure could

lead young men to go as far as spending all their monies to impress women. Here one cannot avoid noting that in spite of Siphamandla being a student, he still feels obliged to provide for his girlfriend. Another participant stated:

Vuyisa: *One of the things girls expect is that you should be able to protect. You know. Cause in most cases you know ... they would say they want to feel safe, you know that kind of thing. They were expecting ... So those are ...most of the expectations you find.*

Providing protection has long been understood as a key characteristic of masculinities, e.g. some African men are known to have walked behind the other members of the family (women and children) during journeys. While women carried luggage and babies on their backs, men would be carrying only weapons in order to protect the families. The above extracts confirm how men position themselves as generally safe, in line with the traditional masculine script and women being viewed as vulnerable to danger. As already stated above, this constructs men as able to take care of themselves and others, and it relates to the construction of traditional masculinities, where men are expected to be self-reliant, impervious to pain and to lead (Campbell, 2003; Gilmore, 1990; HSRC, 2008; Hutchinson *et al.*, 2007; Kometsi, 2004; Shefer & Mankayi, 2007).

Issues that were discursively sustained can be viewed as contributing to an idealised construction of masculinities. This view of masculinities is presented as working in a rigid manner where men have minimal options accessible to them. Research illustrates that hegemonic masculinities are informed by numerous contextual influences. Masculinities are not simply and naturally occurring; they are constructed through cultural and social interactions (Frosh *et al.*, 2002; Gillmore, 1980), and this applies also to socially approved male characteristics such as power, strength, authority, ability to offer protection, and ability to provide sustenance (Shefer *et al.*, 2007). How men behave with their families is strongly influenced by expectations of what it means to be a man according to their fellow men, the community in which they live and society at large (Shefer *et al.*, 2007). The idealised masculinities described are constructed and achieved through explicit practices such as protecting, providing and being a leader. Participants draw from cultural and traditional discourses to validate these practices. In African as in other cultures men are expected to avoid behaviours and traits that are viewed as feminine; they must be employed and

subsequently be financially independent. In turn this enables them to start a family and exhibit the independence and self-reliance traditionally associated with being a man (Brannon & David, 1976).

The interviews with the participants gave an overall impression that they are under enormous pressure to conform to societal expectations mentioned above. The validity of this claim was confirmed by the data collected for this dissertation.

In line with the expectation of being strong and independent, it follows that men must not position themselves as vulnerable. Alluding to this, Gilmore (1990), Kometsi(2004), Shefer and Mankayi (2007), and UNAIDS (2001) point out that approved male characteristics include virility, strength, authority, power, wisdom, ability to offer protection and sustenance. Such construction of masculinities suggests that men need to be in control and to see themselves as such. Thus, seeking safety is perceived as 'unmanly'. Young as male university students are, they perceive themselves as the source of safety to women, implying that they (as men) are tough and capable of protecting women.

A statement by another participant when asked what his family expected from him, aptly captured the sentiment shared by all respondents. He responded as follows:

Sibongiseni: *I'd say a man is someone who provides, who is caring and who is always there for the family when needed at all times.*

The key elements related to traditional construction of masculinities are reflected by economic position. This economic positioning puts men under consistent pressure because one of the approved male characteristic expects them to offer protection and sustenance (Gillmore, 1990). Men are positioned as breadwinners, financially independent and able to cater for others, women and children in particular. This understanding forms an important aspect of traditional, hegemonic constructions of masculinities. Young male university students feel restrained by not being able to provide adequately for their girlfriends. Not having money, then, evokes problematic identities for those men that ascribe to traditional notions of manhood that privilege ability to provide as one of the central defining features of being a man. This shows

the vulnerability of men when they go out of their way to impress (their girlfriends and their families).

Within the discourse of traditional hegemonic masculinities, men are positioned as people with authority in their homes. Men are constructed as leaders; they are considered to be powerful and deserving of respect. This power is exercised over others. Further, men are viewed as decision makers on behalf of their families.

In line with the features associated with hegemonic masculinities, features such as dominance, leadership and superiority, participants' talk served to sustain the discourse that is associated with leadership and wanting to be ahead. This form of positioning is not intended to cause harm, but it is rather benevolent, as it spells out men's beneficial role to their respective families. The purpose for the assumption of authority by men is in order to guide and lead the family positively. There seems to be a link between being a breadwinner and leadership. This discourse is beneficial to men as it constructs them as possessing power in the family. Implied in the statement is that women are positioned as vulnerable and in need of guidance, thus motivating men to take the role of leadership in the family. This discourse enhances men's self-esteem. It is perhaps not surprising that when women resist it because of their ability to equally take care of themselves and children, men tend to feel that they have lost their place, and could even turn to violence to re-establish it.

Although the discourse of men being providers and leaders was sustained, there was a statement that contradicted this discourse. Although this was not a dominant discourse among participants, the statement highlighted how some men perceive the discourses that are changing over time (Parker ,1992). The statement is as follows:

Theophilus: *I think a lot of men nowadays are intimidated by women because before, women were always seen ...[to be meant to] stay at home. You know: cook and clean and have babies and look after children, whereas now more and more women are like getting into the business world and I think the fact that they can now actually also provide for the families, that's threatening to the men out there, because now I have said you know. To me, to be a man you have to provide for your family and so.*

As evidenced by this participant's statement, there is an emerging trend which appears to negate the traditional construction of masculinities (Connell, 1998). This

trend refers also to the emergence of a 'new woman' who with her children is financially independent and not relying on her husband. This forces men to re-evaluate their positions. Masculinities are not only diverse, but also dynamic, and as Swain (2006) argues, the above participant's statement suggests that new patterns of masculinities such as the personalised type may emerge. Alluding to the above is Morrell (1998) who acknowledges the new versions of masculinities. Morrell (1998) points out that some black men are embracing the idea of a 'new masculinity', which is propelled by the rise of black women into professional positions. Young black male professionals are currently more participatory in the home and supportive of their partners' professional goals. This suggests that as tradition and changing social conditions intermingle, men respond differently and more liberally to new versions of masculinities. As such it can be emphasised that masculinity is repeatedly negotiated with regard to existing power relations. This could mean that young men will attempt to challenge the culturally authoritative masculinities within settings, leading to the reconfiguration of gender relations. The emergence of a 'new woman' as well as men embracing 'new masculinities' is in line with Parker (1992) who argues that discourses are not stagnant; they change over time. This is where men will realise that they can also resist the traditional construction of masculinities.

As indicated by Morrell (1998), new versions of masculinities are emerging and some men are embracing the idea by playing a supportive role to their wives as they rise into professional positions. Although men are embracing these 'new masculinities', it is necessary to note that a particular version of masculinities has supremacy and greater legitimacy in society, and some men conform to this particular version as Connell (1998) has argued. The emergence of a 'new woman' and 'new masculinity' serves to demonstrate the fluidity of masculinities. The above arguments concerning the traditional hegemonic masculinities coincide with the findings of this study.

4. 3. The discourse of invulnerability

Invulnerability was another dominant discourse to emerge from the participants. Within this discourse men are not only constructed as tough, independent and self-reliant but they are also considered invulnerable (e.g. to pain, infection and other distresses). This means that men cannot position themselves as vulnerable. It is expected of men

to conform to a normative way of being a man by exhibiting wisdom and strength. In the current study, invulnerability was explicitly indicated where participants opined that it is unacceptable of a man to be positioned as 'not knowing'. Within this discourse a man who does not know risks being viewed as weak and dependent. The discourse lends credence to dominant notions of masculinities where men are not supposed to be vulnerable. When one of the participants was asked if he discussed sex with his friends his response confirmed the invulnerability discourse. He responded as follows:

Makhosonke: *Ja. I just listen, and then laugh if he [a friend] says something that has happened to me once. But I never talk about it. Because some guys would come you know, and then they would share their sessions [with the girls] with you ... so this is what happened to me from A to Z. I think what happens if you did something stupid and then they laugh at you. Then it becomes risky ... that you now become somebody who don't (sic) know about these things. It's two people there [in the bedroom] and ... I would prefer to keep it within those people who were there. Whoever wasn't there shouldn't know, unless ... ja.*

The following statement from another participant supports the above:

Vusumuzi: *No, no we [the boys] never really discuss it. [sex]*

The discourse of men as invulnerable goes hand-in-hand with the view that they should be self-reliant, wise and in control. This means that men cannot position themselves as vulnerable. They are expected to conform to a normative way of being a man by positioning themselves as knowledgeable and this entails not asking questions, amongst others. Being in a vulnerable position such as 'not knowing,' poses a major threat to traditional, hegemonic constructions of what it means to be a man.

Some discomfort was evident as most of the participants in the interviews indicated their preference not to speak about sex with their friends. There seems to be a lot of insecurity when it comes to matters related to sexuality. Obviously, if one speaks and others discover that he has minimal knowledge about sex, one runs the risk of being teased and labelled as not being a 'real' man. Men do not want to be viewed as unknowledgeable, wisdom being one of the traditional attributes of manhood, at least as far as hegemonic constructions of masculinities are concerned. Furthermore, there

is an expectation that men should be more knowledgeable about sex (Bowleg, 2004; Gupta, 2000; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). Not knowing will lead to them being teased and despised by their peers. Ignorance places men in a position of weakness. Within such a construction of masculinities some men are expected to position themselves to others as being in control. Earlier in the discourse of traditional hegemonic masculinities a participant spoke of women constructed as victims who need protection. This discourse positions women as vulnerable and helpless while excluding men and denying them [men] the position of being a victim. This discourse does not only marginalises men by excluding them from claiming positions of vulnerability, but it is also harmful to women who are viewed as passive and without agency. To be in a position of vulnerability such as not knowing might harm their masculinities. Based on normative masculinities a man must be superior and know more, and not knowing leaves one vulnerable; a characteristic that may not be acceptable in hegemonic masculinities.

4. 4. The discourse of sexual conquest

Another dominant discursive practice that emerged as supporting the discourse of traditional hegemonic masculinity is the notion that it is normative for men to have multiple sexual partners. In this discourse men are positioned as potent in relationships. Within this construction it is not only acceptable but even expected of men to demonstrate their masculinity through the sexual conquest of women. Sexually speaking, the traditional sex role for a man is to be the 'hunter' and initiator of sexual activity (Gupta, 2000). As such, some young men feel compelled to be sexually active in order to enhance their reputation, in compliance with hegemonic masculinity characteristics. To have multiple partners is viewed as indicative that an individual is a 'real' man in that he can attract the sexual interest of several women. The above supports the literature indicating that traditionally, male sexuality is defined by the practice of having several concurrent sexual partners (Gupta, 2000; Hunter, 2004; Power, 2002).

The discourse of sexual conquest is not new nor is it limited to this sample. In the international literature, Power (2002) makes reference to the Spanish "conquest" of indigenous women in America. Male sexual domination was glorified, while indigenous

women were relegated to the role of passive sexual objects (Power, 2002). The above discourse began with the subordination of women regardless of race or class by the men of the period (2002). It appears that Spanish men slept with the Indian women specifically for their sexual gratification and this once again supports the notion of women being viewed as passive sexual objects.

In the current study, the discourse of sexual conquest was expressed by the participants in statements such as the following:

Sibongiseni: *It's prestigious to guys you know, to have slept with lots of girls.*

The above participant draws from traditional Zulu notions of what it means to be a man, the tradition of *isoka* in particular (Hunter, 2003). The term 'isoka' refers to a young man who is popular with girls. The *isoka* masculinity draws from powerful symbols of 'tradition' such as polygamy which associate manhood with multiple concurrent sexual partners (2003). In Zulu culture, some men aspired not to be simply popular with women, but to have multiple wives. A masculinity celebrating polygamy was underpinned by economic success (Hunter, 2003). Having several wives was historically interpreted as signifying wealth because men had to pay lobola and support many wives and children. This discourse emerges in history and it is still called upon today to construct masculinity in a specific manner. In the above statement the participant ensures that he conforms to the ideals of manhood by sleeping with lots of girls. Men have a perspective that sex and masculinity are closely entwined. We have learned for example that in initiation schools, it is emphasised that a man must have sex with a girl to remove 'evil and boyish spirits' from himself and earn a rite of passage to manhood (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). The above statement is also supported by literature where styles of gender and sexual interaction between males and females are 'rehearsed' during adolescence. It has been noted that there is a tendency for adolescent boys around the world to view women as sexual objects. Coercion is often resorted to to obtain sex, which in turn is viewed from a performance-oriented perspective. These behaviours which often begin in adolescence may continue into adulthood (Jejeebhoy, 1996, as cited in Shefer *et al.*, 2007).

If a man does not conform to this norm set out by culture and tradition, he is often laughed at and teased by his peers. In this discourse men are in a position of power and in control of women. Comparable to the previous discourses discussed, this discourse contributes to an idealised construction of masculinity that participants feel it is essential to conform to. The interviews revealed a significant number of indications of high prevalence of risky behaviour amongst the participants and this finds support in the literature (Bowleg, 2004; HSRC, 2008; Power, 2002; UNAIDS, 2006; USAID, 2007). The interlinking factors of alcohol and HIV risk behaviour were evident in the participants that were interviewed. This suggests that students are at high risk of being exposed to HIV, given their predilection for risky behaviour such as alcohol abuse and the practise of unsafe sex.

Analysis of the participants' interviews indicates that the discourse of the sexual domination of women by way of having multiple concurrent sexual partners is presented as a norm: The following extract bears lends credence to this view:

Vusumuzi: *Like you will be able, you will be having to sleep with that girl. That will be the [indicators] of manhood. And if you will be changing girls, like chicks, you know ... you changing girls, like beautiful girls. This time you have beautiful girls, and the other day you are having this one and you sleep with them. Ja those are the [indicators] of manhood. Most of the people, the problem with them is that you lose prestige if you don't change girls.*

The above supports the literature on male sexuality worldwide, whereby young men between the ages of 15-24 have been shown to regard sexual conquest as one of the defining features of manhood (Campbell, 2003; Gupta, 2000; HSRC, 2008; Hunter, 2003; Kometsi, 2004; Mahalik *et al.*, 2006; Shefer & Mankayi, 2007; Power, 2002). The association between sexual activity and manhood for the participant above is indicative of how sexuality impacts on masculinities. A plethora of literature reveals an association between masculinities and risk-taking behaviour. This is among young men aged between 15–24 where the riskiest practices and behaviour relating to HIV can be found (Bowleg, 2004; HSRC, 2008; Mahalik *et al.*, 2007; Simbayi *et al.*, 2005; UNAIDS, 2006).

The participant below (Khangelani) also expressed similar views. The way women are portrayed as objects (i.e. to be 'packaged' in men's rooms) in the extract is of particular concern:

Khangelani: You know it actually gives one the opportunity. You know there is no person who is always there ... and say 'don't do this, do that'. And then you would see other guys like ... you know in our language they say 'uyapackager' ('packaging' means bringing different girls to your room at the university residence). So at times you would be tempted. You know a guy would come ... with a girl maybe this weekend ... And then another one next weekend. It has become something that is accepted you know ... by the university society ... or should I say residents. It is something that is practised. So the residence, living at the res is something like ... actually it is like ... sometimes it demands you to engage in such activities. Somehow it directs you.

It is argued that men like to prove themselves as real men to others. In discussions of masculinities, some forms of masculinities are more desirable than others (HSRC, 2008; Shefer & Mankayi, 2007). Furthermore, traditional male attributes, which include sexual virility, are central to constructions of hegemonic masculinities. In this case certain young men are competing against each other by being involved with different beautiful girls. This tendency of competing is noted in one of the participants' comment about 'uyapackager' (literally, packaging) which means engaging in multiple concurrent sexual partnering, by bringing different girls to his room at the university residence.

How do the young men account for this tendency to seek out concurrent partners? Some of the participants saw it as a 'natural' aspect of being a man, as illustrated in the following extract:

Vuyisa: It's their choice ... at times it's ... it might happen that it's their luck, because ... you know ... I don't know, but something that is natural ... you know men appreciate the beauty of women and their presence. To such an extent that they would actually want to date someone else, while they are dating the others. Sometimes it's not that ... I would say what makes it wrong is the circumstances or the situation. Sometimes it's not something bad as most people view it. It depends on how you control and how you manage. How faithful you are. There is a time you find that three people know

each other. Say a guy has two or three different female sexual partners. They know each other.

The discourse that constructs men as 'naturally' desiring to have multiple partners is associated with being identified as *isoka* (Hunter, 2003). The discourse uses culture to maintain what is viewed as a natural state of affairs. The practice is justified with reference to the lifestyles of dominant cultural personalities, as in the following extract:

Vusumuzi: *To them [i.e. those young men who engage in multiple concurrent sexual relationships] it is good, I don't know. Let me give an example. How come our king Mswati... he's got how many wives?... I think he's got thirteen? Like king Zwelithini is not an oppressive someone, but he is a king, but the country is led by the president. This thing is killing us.*

It could be concluded on the basis of the quotation above that culture and tradition are appealed to ideologically to perpetuate multiple concurrent sexual partnerships. Being a 'real men' is reinforced by tradition and is passed down from one generation to the next as Shefer *et al.* (2007) have argued. In some of the above participants' comments, one is able to realise that kings are admired by young men. One participant went to an extent of indicating that even the current South African president is included in this older generation of men who construct masculinities in this particular way.

This is the context where hegemonic masculinities draw from traditional and cultural discourses for support. Culture and tradition have castigations in place in the event of non-conformity and these include being deprived of the status of manhood. Traditional masculine gender socialisation encourages men to put their health at risk, e.g. a young man who constructs masculinity as being a risk-taker may engage in high-risk behaviour such as multiple partners (Mahalik *et al.*, 2007). As it has been argued by Campbell (2003), sex and masculinities are closely entwined in many young men's point of view. It has been noted for example that in some cultures young men are urged by their older male relatives to have sex with a prostitute in order to be ushered into manhood (UNAIDS, 2001). One of the participants in the current study, a young black male student, had undergone a similar experience, whereby his elder brother influenced him to have sex with a girl as a way of ushering him into manhood.

Sphamandla: *Ja as a family or as the elders and the stuff, but of course you know ... I have my older brother ... we are the same age, there is only difference of 3 years. So of course I used to be influenced and stuff ... So he was influencing me here and there. "You have a chick, but you know ... you do nothing with that girl. Ja you know you are passing ... and do that ... sex. You have to show your manhood and stuff, you know what I mean.*

In the above extract there is pressure which comes from the participant's older brother who is encouraging him to conform to the cultural expectations. The above finds resonance with the tendency by the newly initiated boys to find women to sleep with (besides their partner) as abstinence is not recommended (Kometsi, 2004). Though the circumstances differ slightly, in all cases the practice is motivated by the desire to test their sexual performance, because becoming a man is viewed in terms of the individual's ability to perform sexually (Kometsi, 2004). The pressure seems to be coming from peers as well as male members of the family, in line with cultural scripts.

Although multiple sexual partners and sexual conquest were amongst the most important underpinnings of manhood, alternative voices were also evident. Again, messages from important others in the participants' lives played an important role in fostering an alternative conceptualization of what it means to be a man. In the following extract, manhood is defined by loyalty to one partner. The following extracts talk to this issue:

Makhosonke: *Ok. There were so many things, like my father will tell me ... to be a real man you must stick to one partner and for your safety and for preventing ... you know this thing of having children everywhere. You know like ... that was the very mistake he made. He got so many girlfriends ... and therefore [this] resulted [in him having] so many many children. So that was one of the things he taught me not to do, because he regret, he regretted what he did.*

Contesting the dominant discourse of men having multiple partners, was another participant who recounted how his father told him when he was becoming a young man that he must not have multiple partners. This participant appears not to condone multi-partnering, which could be due his father's advice. This could also suggest that he manifests the complicit type of masculinity which does not always comply with the dominant type (Swain, 2006). However, this type does sway either with the hegemonic

or with the oppositional masculinity as Swain (2006) has argued. This is a type that could be seen hanging around the edges of the dominant group, the “wannabes” as termed by Connell (1998). On the other hand, there is a point of tension between what is spoken and what is done, where a parent desires that his son may act differently. A father who recommends that his son must not do what he (the father) did interrupts the normative constructions of masculinity. This is indicative of the fact that this parent does not endorse, at least for his son, what is presented by normative constructions of masculinities.

Alternative views on what love and manhood mean were also evident in statements such as the following:

Khangelani: Firstly, I always tell people that I don't believe in such a thing that you can love twice. You only love once. So having multiple partners ... that's not love, its lust. That's being selfish. Honestly it's being selfish.

Theophilus: I see a lot young men, like they mess their girlfriends around, they mess around a lot, I don't believe in that. I think if you find somebody special then you should... you know respect them and be good to them and not stuff them around

The above participants negate the traditional belief that to be a ‘real man’ one must have multiple partners, lack affection, and dominate or objectify women. This is an indication that there is a shift from traditional masculinities which concurs with the literature as it points out that masculinities are a social construct which is continuously vulnerable to internal contradiction and historical disruption (Connell,1998; Swain, 2006). Implied in this is that men can draw from different discourses, proving that masculinities and sexuality cannot be constructed in a single way.

4. 5 The university as an enabling environment to assert manhood

The data gathered for this study suggest that university is perceived as an enabling environment by young men to assert themselves. Asked about how young males construct their masculinities and sexuality at university, some participants responded as follows:

Vuyisa: Firstly my parents don't know that I drink alcohol. Though it's a tertiary thing

Sibongiseni: *Of course, ja. Of course it's somewhat different. Of course peer pressure it's there, but it's somewhat different, if you were to compare with what I do at home. Ha! Peer pressure is more here.*

Theophilus: *At home I'm a little bit more conservative and at varsity I speak my mind. When I'm at home I'm like try to be quite responsible and look like I'm all well behaved and quite [a] decent young man, but when I am at varsity you know, I do deserve, I go out and have a good time that which I wouldn't do if my parents were around, you know. Then I do like to drink, going out at night something like drinking too much or something like that.*

As it had been previously raised by Capraro (2000), college could be a place where some young males can assert manhood. With the young men away from home, some heroism becomes possible. The young male university students have recently graduated from high school, and being at university could bring some sense of freedom from restrictions that were applied by parents at home. It is evident that peer pressure at university persuades young men to explore things they would not do at home.

Constructing masculine identities translates into men relating to other men and this includes them drinking together. Not to drink as a man could mean a shortfall from the cultural ideal of manhood. As raised previously (Capraro, 2000; Van Hoven & Horschelman, 2005) drinking is another adventure which takes men to various realms such as sex and violence. This is a space where other men legitimise masculinities. The use of a phrase such as "it's a tertiary thing" by one of the participants suggests that when this young male is at university he is distinctly differentiated from others who are not at the university. This distinction is utilised to justify the reason for drinking (Capraro, 2000; Van Hoven & Horschelman, 2005). It has been mentioned in Chapter 2 (Wetherell & Edley, 1999) that there are imaginery positions and psycho-discursive practices in the negotiation of hegemonic masculinities and their identification with the masculine. It appears that young male university students assume heroic positions where men strongly align themselves with conventional ideals.

These extracts support Kimmel *et al.* (2005) who argued that there are different conceptions of the self and various ways of using the male identity across time and

location. The participants' declaration that when at home they behave differently than when they are at university is one good example of these conceptions. Participants draw upon, negotiate and reject aspects of their masculine selves among their immediate male peer groups. These examples illustrate how institutions may construct multiple masculinities. Parental presence seems to produce subordinate masculinity while university life produces hegemonic masculinity. According to participants the university environment evidences the link between masculinities and independence, whereas the home environment is seen as a confining space where young men cannot do what they would like to do due to their parents' presence.

The university is perceived as a context that has brought some sense of freedom, resulting in participants expressing themselves more freely than when they are at home and while relating to each other as young men. Capraro (2000) has also noted that university appears to be an enabling environment where young men can be more expressive and be at liberty to do as they please. Participants reported drinking more alcohol at university than they would at home due. The university also enables some young men to uphold the hegemonic masculine identity. Though this could not be substantiated by evidence emerging from this study, it could be conjectured that parents are possibly constructed as disciplinarians that suppress the masculinity characteristics which young men are able to display at university. Here again a pattern of consistency emerges in the statement as follows:

Siphamandla: *Because you can imagine ... today it's Friday. Tomorrow we will be having clusters down there, after that they will be enjoying alcohol, alcohol, after alcohol. Then what happens then? They are not going to control themselves. They [the women] will just be all over with any kind of man.*

The above also highlights the high level at which alcohol is consumed. The literature indicates that alcohol and recreational drugs could impair judgement and decision-making, leading the users to engage in risky sex behaviour (Crossley, 2000; HSRC, 2008; Mahalik *et al.*, 2007).

It is evident from the text above that, while hegemonic masculinity is constructed as something that men should strive to earn, some men feel burdened by the pressure to live up to the expectations of others such as society, partners as well as the family.

4.6 A daring attitude or approach to life

Many characteristics of traditional masculinities such as bravery, heroism, proof of virility, laying claim to dangerous grounds, and crossing unfamiliar terrain emerged. Wanting to be safe disrupts normative constructions of masculinities. In this discourse some young men appear to engage in risky health behaviour due to its association with risk; unprotected sex is perceived as having an aura of risk (Campbell, 2003; Van Hoven & Horschelman, 2005).

During the interview the participants were asked about their take on condoms and they had a consistent pattern of statements which can be interpreted in the same manner:

Theophilus: *Basically, I'm ... actually I'm. Can I say that I'm not sure how good they are, because, it's agreed that they stop pregnancies, they stop STDs, but at the same time by knowing that there's condoms I think it actually encourages a lot of people who would normally be scared to have sex.*

Sibongiseni: *I just don't believe in them because I am somebody who usually thinks very worse of condoms.*

Makhosonke: *Condoms ... Umh (laughing). Condoms I know they say they protect somebody from getting this HIV. Because I believe they were introduced after this disease. But condoms actually are not 100% safe. They are not. ... You know when you are using condoms, its sin before God. Because God never made sex to be ... you know ... He never made that thing. I mean everything that wasn't made by God hayi (no). I just hate it, because condoms you don't know what fluids or oil was used there and you just insert that in (laughing).*

In the interviews fearlessness emerged as a dominant discourse where most of the participants considered the use of condoms with suspicion. Based on traditional masculinities, a need to be safe would reflect weakness. Condom use is constructed as interfering with attainment of a normative means of being a man. Literature suggests that searching for safety is viewed as 'unmaly' and most men prefer to avoid behaviours and traits that are considered to be feminine (Brannon & David, 1976; Shefer *et al.*, 2007). One participant's statement about condoms is as follows:

Khangelani: *Ja, I think they are there (laughed)... but if the situation doesn't compel you to use them... I would say do as you like. You know they are not used as much.*

Based on this participant's statement, there seems to be a lack of confidence that condoms are effective. Furthermore, according to the participant, condoms can increase the number of young males who become sexually active. This in turn will place many at risk because condoms are not always safe. Other participants' statements suggested a sense of disregard for using condoms. They argued about the manner in which they are manufactured; some had a problem with the oil which is found in them, while others stated that condoms contain worms. One participant even mentioned that he hates them because they are not made by God. Asked about what they think of women who carry condoms, the participants made the following statements:

Makhosonke: *Who carry condoms? I think of them as people who go sleeping around.*

Another participant argued that a girl should not carry a condom, unless she is a prostitute.

Siphamandla: *I think those girls who carry condoms are prostitutes. How can you get ... A girl! ... condoms? Of which you know ... it is the man who will know that today sex is happening. Just picture the scenario. It means she will be using them, how does she know?*

Theophilus: *It depends on the girl you know, 'cause some of them do so (carry condoms) because they are the loose ones.*

Sphamandla argued that a girl never knows when sex will be requested from her. This dominant discourse suggests that men are in control in terms of relationships with women. Men still play a leading role in relationships, where a woman must be submissive. This participant's argument finds support in Power (2002) who noted that women are regarded as "always already whore or traitor." Besides being controlled, women are also detested by some men. Opinions behind the rationale for not using condoms conveyed a message that young men are still inconsistent in their views on condom use. Participants' statements validates Crossley's (2000) argument that in spite of people being knowledgeable about HIV, there is evidence suggesting that

misconceptions about HIV/AIDS still prevail. The above include the aura of risk, rebellion and excitement among some young males.

From the participants' statements, it is evident that being a 'real man' is defined mainly in terms of having multiple partners. The desire for pleasurable sexual contact without condoms, , what is locally called "flesh to flesh" (Campbell, 2003), is evident in participants' talk. The talk indicated that manhood is thought of in terms of ability to conquer hostile environments, thereby laying claim to dangerous ground (Van Hoven & Horschelman, 2005).

Some of the above statements validate Gupta's (2000) argument that some women are not in a position to negotiate. The researcher's analysis of the data indicates that when women carry condoms, they are perceived as prostitutes by young men. It can be argued further that only they (the men) are allowed to plan, and therefore only they should carry condoms since men are allowed to plan for sex. Over and above, this indicates power being located in the hands of men. This obviously has implications for women particularly in respect to the spread of HIV and forced sex (rape). As 'good' women are not expected to carry condoms and are also not expected to decide where and when to have sex, they are not positioned to effectively protect themselves against HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases. In another study analysing the talk of university undergraduates, it was found that in spite of receiving seminars, lectures in critical social psychology, men were still users of discourses that service men's power; women who carry condoms continue to be viewed as sex workers (Peace, 2003). Similar views have been observed in the current study. In spite of the proliferation of literature regarding condoms, some young males perceive condoms with scepticism. Interviews with participants gave an overall impression of reluctance regarding condom use. Although it is beyond the scope of the current study to ascertain that the participants' views are consistent with their behaviour in real life, and even if it should be the case that the participants were telling the researcher what they thought she expected to hear from them as young men (a form of positioning), the study findings point to a pattern consistent with dominant, (idealised) hegemonic constructions of what it means to be a man.

4.7 Conclusion

There are five discourses that were identified from the discourse analysis. These are (a) a discourse of traditional hegemonic masculinity, (b) the invulnerability discourse, (c) the discourse of sexual conquest, (d) the idea that the university as an enabling environment to enact manhood, and (e) and a daring attitude or approach to life. The discourses identified in this chapter mirror the construction of masculinities as an object in the talk of young male university students. Four discourses can be viewed as contributing to an idealised construction of masculinity which functions in a restrictive approach, where men are limited in the kind of exploits available to them. One discourse refers more directly to young men constructing masculinities at university.

The discourses contributed to an idealised conception of what it means to be a man. The idealised masculinities constructed by men are something that is treasured, has to be earned and is obligatory for men to conform to. The idealised masculinities constructed by participants cannot always be attained. Hence men are consistently challenged by the burden of the need to engage in actions that establish their position as 'real' men. The participants collectively constructed their ability to measure up to hegemonic thinking of masculinities which is expected by their peers, parents and their communities. Hegemonic masculinities put men at risk of contracting HIV. Specific discursive acts were stated as contributing to the normative masculinity, such as providing safety, having financial stability, and wisdom. There were however some alternative voices that were critical of hegemonic masculinities, which is in line with the multiplicity and fluidity of masculinities.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

An overview of the present study is provided by summarising the findings of the study. The implications, strengths, limitations and recommendations for future research emanating from the study are also considered in this chapter.

The present study's objective was to explore how young male university students construct their masculinities. The literature regarding men and masculinities established that masculinities are repeatedly discussed in terms which point to an essential and fixed male identity (Morrell, 1998). There is a paucity of research explicitly investigating how young male university students construct their masculinities and sexuality. In an attempt to accomplish the study objective, seven young male university students in KwaZulu-Natal province were interviewed. Discourse analysis was utilised to analyse the text. The main findings are summarised in the next section.

5.2 Overview of the findings

The findings of this study suggest that the participants subscribe generally to traditional forms of masculinities. For example, men are viewed as protectors, providers, and leaders. They are also thought to be intelligent. Similarly, in other national and international studies it was found that some young men may have multiple partners, yet women are expected to negotiate safe sex (Gupta, 2000; Shefer *et al.*, 2007; Traeen & Martinussen, 2008). The discussions about masculinities that emerged were predicated from the understanding that men have to provide their families with material needs.

The discourse of traditional hegemonic masculinities was evident in participants' talk. Amongst the indicators of this discourse were the following: multiple sexual partnerships, men as protectors and financial providers, men as sources of authority at home, men's positioning as wise and knowledgeable, as well as the expectation that they are the main decision-makers when it comes to sexual matters including the carrying of condoms.

The participants reported that inability to provide for their girlfriends was a major challenge to their manhood. This restricts the young males from being compliant with idealised masculinities. It was found that the university environment reportedly contributed to young men's attitudes which exacerbate risky behaviour. Participants reported consuming relatively large amounts of alcohol, something that they reported not doing when they are with their families at home. Parents are constructed as disciplinarians that suppress the masculinity characteristics which young men are reportedly able to display freely at university.

It was found that young men seek to be protectors and providers, a construction that expects men to be independent, strong and self-reliant. This results in them going out of their way in order to impress their girlfriends. The participants spoke about themselves not being able to speak more openly to each other about sex. This lack of communication was also reported with their sexual partners. They perceived that talking more openly about sex to their peers and to their girlfriends is an indication that there are things that they do not know, thus betraying their ignorance. Not knowing is seen as a sign of weakness. An association between masculinities and risk-taking behaviour emerged, where reckless sexual practices may be viewed as part of the definition of what it means to be a man. Literature indicates that men are constructed as people who express emotions that are associated with normative masculinities, such as risk taking, aggressiveness, seeking to prove virility, and self-reliance (Brannon & David, 1976; Gilmore, 1990; Shefer & Mankayi, 2007).

Participants reported reluctance to use condoms, and this reinforces their urge to present themselves as brave, invulnerable, rebellious and thrill seeking. In this discourse wanting to protect oneself (when having sex) is viewed as 'un-manly'. In essence, condom use is perceived as something that disrupts the normative construction of what it means to be a man. In this discourse, condom use is seen as preventing men from conforming to the idealised masculinity.

This construction of masculinities embraces dominance where men make decisions about everything. This behaviour of dominance is salient, where women are not in a position to negotiate sex. Women are deprived of their agency regarding sexuality. Participants expected men, and not women, to carry condoms because women are

not in a position to decide when and how sex must take place. Some utterances suggested that a woman who carries a condom is a prostitute, because it is not possible for a woman to know when sex is going to take place. The participants' view on condoms also brought forth the manner in which they still seem to be practising traditional hegemonic masculinities. This denies women the option to make decisions about sex and to negotiate protection. The above-mentioned discourses contribute to an idealised construction of a normative (hegemonic) masculinity.

It was also interesting to notice the contradictions that emerged. The participants brought forth some unique understanding that some young male university students are reconfiguring gender relations, as Peace (2003) had indicated. Some participants acknowledged that women are no longer confined to the home sphere where they are expected to nurture children, while men are expected to support their families. There appears to be the emergence of 'new woman' and 'new masculinities' which suggest the fluidity of masculinities.

5.3 Strengths of the study

The study contributes to the body of knowledge that explores the construction of masculinities and sexuality, thus bringing attention to voices of young men that were previously neglected. The qualitative research methodology that was chosen enabled the participants to talk about their experiences, without the researcher imposing a fixed structure on them.

5.4 Implications of the findings

The study's objective was to contribute to the body of literature that explores alternative constructions of masculinities and sexuality. The aim of social construction is to generate new ways of thinking about social reality by critically looking at people's claims to knowledge (Burr, 1996). In this sense the study achieved this objective by presenting an account of how some young male university students construct their masculinities and sexuality, thus bringing attention to voices that were previously neglected. The study also hinted at new and different ways of being a man.

The study illustrates the discourses of masculinities that are detrimental to men, where idealised masculinities are connected with high-risk practices akin to multiple sexual

partners. Unprotected sexual intercourse with multiple partners predisposes individuals to infection with traditional STD's (van Dan, 1994). As multiple sexual partnerships without the use of condoms is one of the key factors in the spread of HIV/AIDS, it follows that interventions targeting men's understandings of what it means to be a man, would be useful (van Dan, 1994).

5.5 Limitations of the study

A limitation of this study is the relatively small sample; findings cannot be generalised to the broader population of young male university students. However, the sample size in qualitative studies is relatively small, as the emphasis is situated on exploring personal experiences. Furthermore, the size of the sample in discourse analytic studies may be small because the interactions are analysed in terms of social actions and patterns of language use that can be related to broader themes of social structure.

A mixed methodology, employing empirical (quantitative) surveys with a randomised and more heterogeneous sample could balance the qualitative study findings. Methodological triangulation in terms of data collection would help to enhance the reliability and validity of the study findings. In the current study, participants could have been selected across a range of years of study (such as first, second, and third fourth year). The sample could also have been distinguished across different contexts (e.g., rural vs. urban; white versus black/African). Thus, sampling was not purposeful enough in that only one white male participated and most participants were in their first year of study. In spite of dealing with such a sensitive topic of this nature, there were no male interviewers in the study. It has been established that it is difficult for people to talk about sexual matters to members of the opposite sex, and this is more so if they are older than them. The absence of male interviewers is thus a limitation in this regard. The participants were interviewed in English in spite of it not being their home language except for one. Ideally, they should have been interviewed in their mother tongue, with an option to use English if they so desired. Loss of meaning due to translation at different levels (e.g., during the data transcription phase) is not uncommon in qualitative research and this is more so when one is dealing with sensitive data that is often expressed in cultural idioms.

5.6 Recommendations for future research

As evidenced in the discussions on the limitations of this study, it becomes necessary to conduct the study on participants who are younger than those the study focused on (18–24) because, according to UNAIDS (2001), some of the children below the age of the participants represented in this dissertation start experimenting sexually at a younger age. Questions asked were organised exclusively for the purpose of this study, and information elicited may not be applicable to other contexts. It would be useful to extend the study to other universities.

5.7 Conclusion

The study sought to explore the ways in which young male university students construct their masculine identities. The study also investigated the possible repercussions (influences) that these constructions have on young university students, albeit reportedly. Another aim was to contribute to the growing body of local research that explores masculinities as multiple, fluid and constructed relative to various pressures instead of viewing it as a singular and rigid construction. In order to achieve the above the researcher focused on the group that was previously ignored (males). Through in-depth interviews an opportunity for young male university students to articulate not only their masculine identities, but also their sexual identities in their own terms was created. The findings indicate that young university students generally describe their understandings of what it means to be a man in traditional, hegemonic terms, though emerging, alternative masculinities were also evident in the participants' talk. The study findings were discussed in relation to the literature. The study limitations as well as recommendations for further research were highlighted.

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Appendix 1

Informed consent

Researcher Information

I am Ms Nosipho Masitha, a student of psychology at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus.

I humbly request your participation in my research study investigating the constructions of masculinity and sexuality among full-time young male university students. I am embarking on this study for academic purposes. The study is conducted under the supervision of Dr Nyameka Mankayi in the School of Psychology.

The study poses no foreseeable physical or psychological harm. The study will not have any benefits for each individual, but will help us understand constructions of masculinity and sexuality of university male students. Gaining insight towards their constructions will help us to develop better intervention programmes aimed at HIV/AIDS prevention.

I can be contacted at 072 762 6029 during office hours or by e-mail at 208522822@ukzn.ac.za. Dr Mankayi can be contacted on (033) 260 5670.

Data Collection

I intend to gather data for this study through in-depth interviews. I request permission to conduct an individual interview with you for the duration of 45 minutes at a time that will be convenient to you. Participants are assured that their information will be treated confidentially. All the interviews will be taped and transcribed for analysis purposes. The transcribed information will be kept in a locked cupboard by my supervisor. Pseudonyms will be used.

CONSENT

I, consent to participate in the study and to be interviewed by Ms Nosipho Masitha. I agree that the data gathered for this study may be presented in conferences and all the identifying details and university used will be concealed.

I further understand that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary;
- I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to;
- I may withdraw from the study at any time;

- No information identifying me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.

Signature :

Date :

Place :

APPENDIX 2

Informed consent (Recording)

The study requires the use of a device in order to record data from the interviews that will be conducted. The information gathered through the audiotapes will then be transcribed. Only the supervisor and the researcher will have access to it as it will be kept in a locked cupboard in her office.

The research participants are advised that participation in this study is voluntary and they may terminate at any time should they wish to do so. The transcribed information will be used for analysis purposes and pseudonyms will be used.

Consent

I consent to the use of a recorder during the interview with Ms Nosipho Masitha for her study.

I further understand that:

The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any other person, but the supervisor and the researcher.

No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Signature:

Date:

Place:

APPENDIX 3

Interview guide

What does being a man mean to you?

Do you think your meaning of manhood is the same for everyone?

At what age did you feel you are a man? Can you elaborate?

What is your family's expectation of you as a man?

Can you tell me about your girlfriend's expectation of you as a man?

Do you act the same way here at varsity as you do at home? Tell me more.

Are there circumstances/ situations where you think differently from how a man is expected to think?

Does being at university prevent you from engaging in sex?

How does university environment influence your sexual behaviour? Can you tell me more?

What do you think are risky sexual practices?

What are current challenges facing men?

What do you think about men who have more than one sexual partner?

What is your take on condoms?

What is your view on multiple partnering?

Whose responsibility is it to carry condoms in a relationship or on a first date?

What do you think of women who carry condoms?

Do you talk openly about sex with your partner?

Do you also talk openly about sex with your friends?

