"Sticks and Stones":

Social Dominance, Bullying and Early Adolescent Boys

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DECLARATION

I, LEIGH ANDREA ADAMS, do hereby declare that this research report entitled:

"Sticks and Stones": Social Dominance, Bullying and Early Adolescent Boys

is the result of my own investigation and research. All citations, references and borrowed texts have been duly acknowledged. This work has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

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ABSTRACT

The study is concerned with the ways early adolescent males understand and experience bullying within a hetero-normative school context. The research focuses on the ways in which bullying occurs, and how it relates to identity development amongst young boys. Key theoretical constructs include multiple masculinities, social dominance theory, and social constructionism. The researcher adopted an ethnographic approach. Constructs were explored through the use of four focus groups and one individual interview with 20 Grade 8 learners at a co-educational high school. Three dominant themes emerged from the discussions. The *Embodied Self* explores the expression and development of gender identity through the construction of the physical and performative male body. *Displaced Masculinities* explores the gradual shift in power that young men have experienced in terms of current representations of gender, race and technology. The third theme, *Recovering Power*, identifies subtle subversion strategies that young males reproduce to recover social power. Bullying is normalised within the school context and is understood as a physical and psychological process that differentiates desirable and undesirable masculinities. Masculinities are actively policed by peers, forcing boys to position themselves against the ideal hegemonic masculinity underpinning feelings of uncertainty and instability. Recommendations include continued opportunities for discussion of gender issues at a formative school level, focused policy development addressing the abuse of communication technologies, and translation of gender research into policy and legislation to recognise the role and responsibilities of men, with the major aim of reducing inequality.

Keywords: Masculinities; Bullying; Social Dominance; Adolescence; Social Constructionism; Gender Identity

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

"The effects of using power are as visible as the sun, but its constitution and applications remain as invisible as the air we breathe" (Hamilton & Sharma, 1997, p. 555).

The ever-increasing body of research regarding school bullying and school violence is indicative of the poor state of learner relations. The extent of this problem has made global headlines following the highly publicised tragedies of Columbine and the Virginia Tech Massacre. South Africa is not removed from this issue. A recent article published in the Argus newspaper reported 60 knife attacks at and around schools in the Western Cape over the last six months, a figure that has doubled from the previous year (Fredericks, 2009). Media attention in this country has also centred on the sword slaying perpetrated by youth Morné Harmse at a high school in Krugersdorp. Morné recently received a 20 year sentence for the murder of his peer and three accounts of attempted murder (Lieberum, 2009). Other media speculations related to school-based violence include the Parktown Boys' initiation. During this case, 12 Matric learners including the head boy, orchestrated a violent initiation ceremony in which Grade 11 learners were forced to apply burning ointment to their genitals as well as receive lashes on their backside with cricket bats, golf clubs and hockey sticks (Serrao, 2009a). Recent developments in the case led to the arrest of the Matric learners on charges of assault with the intent to do grievous bodily harm, although the learners were subsequently released as they were judged to be acting within the school policies and tradition (Serrao, 2009b).

According to a recent study by Liang, Flisher, and Lombard (2007) examining over 5 000 adolescent school children at 72 Government schools in Cape Town and Durban, over a third

(36.3%) of students were involved in bullying behaviour, 8.2% as bullies, 19.3% as victims and 8.7% as bully-victims. Bullying behaviours may have serious consequences for educational achievement, peer relations and self-esteem, resulting in various behavioural and emotional disturbances like delinquency, depression, anxiety, social withdrawal, somatic complaints and suicidality (Menesini, Modena, & Tani, 2009). The seriousness of these findings along with the violations reported in the media is implicated in the *Report of the Public Hearing on School-based Violence* released by the South African Human Rights Commission in 2008. The Hearing prompted dialogue around the issue of school-based violence, focusing on bullying, sexual violence and sexual harassment.

A wide array of literature exists for bullying. However, the majority of these studies have adopted a quantitative approach, assessing the prevalence and scope of the problem. This study is qualitative in nature and aims to understand the lived experiences of learners in a public co-educational school, as well as enable dialogue around the issue of bullying. Bullying behaviours may be noted at interpersonal, institutional and structural levels, presenting in the home, school, workplace, or even on a national stage in terms of political bullying. The school environment is of particular interest in this research as the site at which identities are repeatedly contested and negotiated. It is however also important to locate these processes within the broader social context regarding gendered perceptions of responsibility and power. The theoretical framework applied in this study reflects the movement in research towards social constructionism. Social constructionism is a valuable approach as it highlights the social, historical, and collective nature of human consciousness (Durrheim, 1997). In the context of this paper, it is believed that masculine identities and peer relations are actively shaped through various socialising agents like the family, peers, school, and other institutions.

While both males and females bully, research in South Africa indicates that male learners are at most risk of perpetrating and being victimised by acts of bullying (Liang et al. 2007). Research also suggests that younger boys are more vulnerable to victimisation, and that early adolescent boys will be exposed to high levels of bullying as they struggle to define their social hierarchy within the existing secondary school system (Pellegrini & Long, 2004). The various political and social transitions within South Africa provide an interesting backdrop against which to study the intersection of gender, violence and power. It is the changing nature of the social world that has resulted in increased levels of insecurity amongst men, leading to what is popularly phrased, a 'crisis of masculinity' (Morrell, 2001). Exploration of participant perceptions of bullying will be informed by Social Dominance Theory (SDT), as well as understandings of multiple masculinities including hegemonic masculinity, and group dynamics.

South Africa is characterised by a culture of dominance and inequality, reflected by a history of racial oppression, violence and abuse. Review of statistics released by the South African Police Service (2007) reflects this trend by indicating the thousands of violations committed in the country each year. Bullying may appear a lesser offensive in the context of these acts, but it indicates a need for power and a disrespect of others which creates problematic values that may inform other dangerous behaviours. Ferguson et al. (2004) define gender-based violence (GBV) as "any form of violence used to establish, enforce or perpetuate gender inequality" (p. 18). Although we acknowledge that GBV may be perpetrated by women, the predominant responsibility lies with men. This abuse may occur by various means including physical, sexual, economic, militarised, bodily, medical, nutritional, verbal, emotional, psychological, cognitive, social, spatial, temporal and representational (Ferguson et al. 2004). GBV exists in most societies but the severity and frequency of the abuse varies according to the

gender inequality in society. Aside from the various consequences for the individual regarding

mental health and decreased productivity, GBV may also lead to resource strain on public health

and public safety bodies (Ferguson et al. 2004). There is therefore a need to investigate the

social processes and masculine ideologies that shape gender inequalities in this country, with the

hope of applying this knowledge to produce more emotionally and socially attuned young men.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

2.1.   Defining Bullying

Bullying is defined as repeated exposure to the negative actions of one or more persons (Olweus, 1993). Olweus (1993) extends his definition of bullying by underlying three core elements in any bullying interaction. Firstly, there is the use of negative behaviour by the perpetrator to cause *intentional* harm to the victim. This is accompanied by the issue of duration, as the abuse is *persistently* targeted at a certain individual or groups of individuals. The last feature refers to the *imbalance* of power inherent in these situations, where the aggressor is typically the one in possession of power and authority. Pellegrini and Long (2004) focus on the intentional component of this definition, stating that bullying may be a particular type of proactive aggression that is motivated by the acquisition of resources. Resources in this sense may apply to financial gains, but more importantly to social resources like popularity and respect.

Bullying may be expressed in direct physical or verbal forms such as physical fighting and abuse, or verbal insults and teasing (Olweus, 1993). In addition to these categories, there are also more indirect forms of bullying related to the undermining of peers through rumours or manipulating relationships to promote social exclusion (Underwood, 2002). Phillips' (2007) work explored the concept of *punking*, as a specific type of bullying that involves public acts of physical and verbal violence and humiliation amongst male peers. Through her qualitative analysis, she uncovered that punking strategies were taken up and used by many boys to affirm masculine norms of toughness, strength, dominance, and control. Duncan (1999) has an invested interest in the subject of sexual bullying, looking specifically into the expression of abusive gendered power relations within the school setting. His premise is that the evolving sexual

identities of adolescents play a significant role in the kinds of behaviour enacted in bullying. These types of behaviours may include the extreme of sexual assaults, physical assaults motivated by sexual rivalry and jealousy, sexualised verbal abuse, and rumour-setting aimed at humiliating peers and destroying sexual reputations (Duncan, 1999).

The advent of advanced communication has also broadened the definition of bullying by introducing the relatively new phenomenon of *cyberbullying* (Smith, 2004). This phenomenon is supported by Wallace (1999) in her view of the internet as nurturing "an environment where contention can flare up so quickly, where it is easy to misinterpret people's remarks, where anonymity and physical distance provide protection from counterattacks [and] online harassment is more likely" (p. 227). Unlike the traditional forms of bullying which often involve physical contact, cyberbullying is largely impersonal and can operate through time and space (Li, 2005). Because of the nature of current media technology, defamatory images and remarks may be disseminated to a wider audience at a quicker rate. They also tend to circulate in the public sphere for lengthier periods of time. Victims are therefore forced to revisit the shaming and hurtful moments and dwell on the extent of their embarrassment (Li, 2005).

A prominent cyberbullying case in the United States of America centred on Lori Drew and her involvement in the death of her daughter's peer, 13-year old Megan Meier. Drew and her co-conspirators created a fake MySpace profile under the guise of a 16-year old boy named "Josh Evans," who they subsequently used to attract and then reject Megan. Megan, who had known emotional difficulties, later committed suicide. Drew was acquitted on charges based on the judge's interpretation of the computer crime law (Zetter, 2009). Online technologies do exist in South Africa; however their presence and use is stratified, with wealthier areas supporting more technology use than poorer communities. South Africa does have a strong cell phone

culture which has the potential to become a medium for the dissemination of bullying messages, pictures and videos. The use of technology in the context of violence has recently been noted in Katlehong, Johannesburg during the gang sexual assault of a 13 year old girl allegedly perpetrated by three 14 year olds. The perpetrators allegedly used a cell phone to film the assault ("Three Katlehong Boys", 2009).

2.2.   Bullies, Victims and Bully-Victims

In most bullying interactions, there are four groups of people – the pure bullies, the pure victims, the bully-victims, and the 'neutral children' (Haynie et al. 2001). These four groups play an important role in the expression of bullying behaviour. The use of the term neutral children is interesting. Research into participant roles within bullying has identified different positions that learners may adopt when witnessing a bullying encounter. The *assistant* may actively join the bully, the *reinforcer* provides an audience and commentary on the action, the *outsider* ignores the bullying, while the *defender* typically sides with the victim (Salmivalli, 1999). It is therefore the learner's response, or lack of response, to the abuse which is fundamental to the way in which bullying is perceived and managed in a social environment. During adolescence, school plays a key role in fostering the attitude towards bullying through the institution and maintenance of policies for desirable school conduct, punishments and preventative interventions.

Although bullies are typically framed in a negative light, debate exists as to whether bullying behaviour may be an indicator of leadership potential. The first school of thought belongs to Crick and Dodge (1999) who state that the development of aggressive behaviour implies a deficit in social information processing, as in a failure to accurately interpret mental states. They argue that superior cognitions cannot result in such inferior behaviour. Sutton,

Smith and Swettenham (1999), on the other hand, argue that effective bullies possess a superior theory of mind that enables them to interpret and manipulate social situations to their advantage. While physical aggression may be a more primitive response to threat, the ability to architect relationships in the context of relational bullying, may indicate advanced social information processing. It is therefore important to understand the personal values that inform the ways in which social power is used for building or breaking friendship bonds.

Stereotypical media representations draw on external deviations as reasons for why individuals are bullied. These may include unusual personal characteristics like red hair, glasses or protruding teeth. Research suggests, however, that external deviations are not as critical in determining patterns of victimisation (Olweus, 1993). According to Olweus, there are two broad types of victims that are characterised by their way of relating to self and others. The first is the *passive/submissive* victim. While this person may present as physically weak, it is rather his/her anxiety and low self-esteem that signals vulnerability and fear of retaliation. Existing feelings of insecurity are magnified by bullying, leading to poor social networks, thereby sustaining the cycle of abuse. Research on pure-victims typically centres on emotional and behavioural consequences of repeated abuse, thereby sustaining perceptions of helplessness (Smith, 2004).

Olweus (1993) labels the second type of victim as *provocative* based on the combination of his/her insecurities and reactive aggression. The provocative victim may also be understood as the bully-victim, as these individuals receive and perpetuate physical or emotional hurt. These individuals tend to be disliked and socially isolated because of their immature and emotionally volatile behaviour (Pellegrini & Long, 2004). Their victimisation tends to come in the form of sabotage whereby peers will deliberately provoke emotional outbursts or aggression in an attempt to have them punished by stronger learners or by teaching staff (Olweus, 1993). The

vulnerability of the bully-victim population is supported by findings from Liang et al. (2007), whereby the bully-victim group exhibited risky behaviours that included higher rates of vandalism and suicidality than the bully or victim groups. The threat of suicidality for the bully-victim group is particularly worrisome as these individuals have a history of reactive behaviour and may be more likely to act on their distress (Menesini et al. 2009).

2.3.   Bullying and Gender

There is much debate about whether gender differences exist in the type and frequency of bullying behaviour (Espelage, Mebane, & Swearer, 2004). Some theorists state that bullying, in both its direct and indirect forms, is more prevalent amongst boys than girls (Olweus, 1993). This weighted perception, which contributed to the focus of this paper, has lead to various other investments in the phenomenon of male-bullying at the expense of female-bullying, leading to a paucity of information in the latter area. One of the commonly accepted opinions is that boys rely on more physical types of aggression (Espelage at al. 2004). This pattern was consistent with findings by Pellegrini and Long (2004), in which male participants viewed physical aggression more favourably than their female counterparts. Female learners are associated with more indirect forms of bullying like spreading rumours, social isolation and even cyberbullying ("Cyberbullies", 2007). As adolescent girls are said to possess a more developed theory of mind relative to boys of the same age, one could hypothesise that they are more likely to use this indirect, manipulative style in their bullying.

Less gender difference exists regarding the use of verbal insult in bullying interactions. In terms of sexual bullying, female learners undermine the masculinity of their male peers by discrediting the boys' sexual prowess or physical development (Duncan, 1999). Females were

attacked by males based on their sexual reputation. School learners reproduce the *double standard* in which promiscuous sexual behaviour in males is associated with success, whereas similar behaviours in a female population are deemed risky for social relations and reputation (Marks & Fraley, 2005). Although males can be accused of perpetuating these labels, research indicates that females are just as responsible for policing and reinforcing these standards amongst other girls (Delamont, 2001).

Most of the literature on cross-sex bullying examines male-on-female physical aggression, particularly in terms of domestic violence and sexual abuse. It is however important to recognise that females may be physically aggressive towards males. Duncan's (1999) discussion with young male participants revealed that 'real boys' do not fight girls. An engagement in these violent behaviours would in fact serve as a confirmation of the boy's unmanliness. Duncan (1999) defined this decision not to retaliate as a *maladjusted chivalry*. Therefore by declining to fight based on acceptable social conventions, young men avoid defeat at the hands of a girl, thereby securing their dominant position.

2.4.   Adolescence and Friendship Groups

Adolescence is a period of transition. At a biological level, young men are confronted with hormonal changes bringing about physical maturity and interest in sexual relations. Increased body size, muscularity and strength serve as physical markers of manhood. The young men who possess these desirable qualities tend to receive greater affection from females and admiration from their male peers, thereby affirming their dominance (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2001). In conjunction with the onset of puberty is the transition from middle school to high school. This requires that young men move from a familiar environment with an established social hierarchy

to an often larger, intimidating social environment in which their dominance is repeatedly challenged and undermined (Espelage et al. 2004). Secondary school also tends to be characterised by disruptions in peer affiliations as friends move to alternate schools or are placed in different classes based on academic results. Sudden dislocation from the friendship group, failure to meet masculine ideals through sport and poor financial resources may lead to isolation. Being of low social standing further precludes young men from gaining access to other social resources like female company.

Friendships are an integral part of adolescent development. Male friendships are based on a need for support and tend to function through activities like shared participation in a sport, whereas female friendships succeed through verbal communication, self-disclosure and intimacy (Heaven, 2001). Peer groups are also facilitated by educational environments because of the concentrated number of age-related peers. As the relationship with the family changes, the adolescent looks to the peer group for guidance and affirmation. Peer affiliation plays a key role in bullying behaviour. A review of school-based bullying in the United States of America revealed that having more friends was associated with greater perpetration of physical, verbal and relational forms of bullying (Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Belonging to a larger peer group was also associated with less vulnerability to victimisation, providing support for the *friendship protection hypothesis* (Pellegrini & Long, 2002). The same pattern of findings was however not associated with cyberbullying, suggesting that peer affiliation plays a lesser role in cyber-realities (Wang et al. 2009).

Dolby (2001) offered her thoughts about peer groups and racial identity through her ethnographic study at a multiracial high school in 1996. It was found that borders between friendship groups were open to negotiation, enabling connection or conflict among learners.

While some learners attempted to redefine group borders, others held onto their politics of resentment. Interactions across racial divides were often characterised by underlying tensions and dynamics of class conflict. African and Coloured learners used racial teasing in their friendships to stress commonalities; however the force of derogatory comments suggested ambivalence within relationships. White students were excluded from these exchanges out of fear of accusations of racism. Additional findings showed that markers of popular culture like clothing and music became vehicles for transmission of prejudice, discriminating those who did not conform to the preference of the racial group.

2.5.   Hegemonic Masculinity

Sociologist Bob Connell played a significant role in developing theories of masculinity. In his early work he demonstrated how gender was related to conceptualisations of power (Morrell, 2001). Connell (1995) used Antonio Gramsci's concept of *hegemony,* the social and cultural process by which certain parties gain and maintain power and control, to theorise hegemonic masculinity. He believed in the existence of a dominant masculinity that would legitimise man's power over various groups while appearing to represent the interests of the whole society. Hegemonic masculinity is associated with the masculine ideal of heterosexuality, toughness, authority and competitiveness (Connell, 1995). Although not all men can achieve this ideal, it exists in the fantasy lives of men, such that men often position themselves in relation to it, even if they critique or subvert it (Connell, 1995). During Apartheid in South Africa, the White heterosexual male was in possession of this hegemonic masculinity, holding power over those who differed in terms of ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. While aggressive means were

used to maintain these power divides, hegemonic masculinities were also reproduced through a process of cultural consent.

According to Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994), hegemonic masculinity is not fixed to one particular group, but reflective of changing social conditions and open to contestation. "Not all men have the same amount of power or benefit equally from it, and that power is exercised differently depending on the location and the specific arrangement of relations which are in place" (Morrell, 2001, p. 9). Connell (1995) identified other masculinities at play in society: the *subordinate*, *complicit* and *marginalised*. These masculinities were deemed less desirable and afforded less social power on the hierarchy of masculinities. In the current South African context, there is an ongoing struggle for definition and possession of the hegemonic masculinity, fuelling existing social tensions.

2.6.   Embodied Masculinity

According to Connell (1995), "true masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies – to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body" (p. 45). Traditional ideologies of masculinity favour more physical embodiments of strength and power (Connell, 1995). While intellectual power appears to be strongly favoured as per marketplace demands, physical markers of strength and performance continue to be revered, as highlighted through extravagant wage negotiations for international football players like Christiano Ronaldo. Implicit in this increased awareness of men as embodied beings, is a greater media presence of the male body in magazines like *Men's Health*, as well as the growing market of women consumers (Toerien & Durrheim, 2001). This finding supports previous research that has shown that masculine ideals intersect with perfectionistic traits, in which adolescent boys constantly

define their self-worth according to their performance in various areas of their life (Adams & Govender, 2008).

Guillaumin's (1993) perspective on the *body-for-others* explores the type of relationships experienced by males and females in terms of physical proximity. With females, the body-for-others is constructed in a more private domestic sphere. For males, the repeated bodily contact present through sport, fighting and other types of physical play, introduces themes of solidarity, cooperation and control of public space. Sport is a key practice in the expression of masculinity as it is a display of bodies in action (Connell, 1995). These structured games also demand traditional masculine values like rules, toughness and competition. Through sport, men demonstrate their physical prowess and subsequent superiority to females in terms of biological difference and advantage. The body is therefore the site where inequalities are produced. The overlap between biology and social constructs in the arena of sport has recently been highlighted by the controversy around 800m running champion Caster Semenya and the need for gender testing (Foss & Thomas, 2009).

Seidler (2007) acknowledges the detached relationship men have established with their bodies. Approaching the body as an external space that is subject to representation and display, limits the potential for men to connect with their emotional histories, thereby sustaining feelings of displacement. Basing masculinity on bodily performance means that gender is vulnerable when the performance cannot be sustained (Connell, 1995). Gerschick and Miller (1993) in their study regarding disabled men found that men responded to threats to their masculinity by redoubling efforts to meet standards through emphasis of other performative acts like sex; reformulating masculinity according to their limitations; or rejecting hegemonic practices outright. The advent of new cyber technologies has also played a role in "divorcing the

performance of masculinity from the body", forcing men to find new strategies through which to construct and affirm their identities as disembodied men (Kimmel & Aronson, 2004, p. 189).

2.7.   School-based Masculinity

Although schools are not the only socialising force, they hold significance in that learners are exposed to a condensed range of experience, in which they can negotiate and contest their masculine identities (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2003). It is through repeated interaction with same-sex and/or opposite-sex peers that learners begin to generate many different ideas of maleness. Any behaviour that deviates from the negotiated and accepted norm is then identified and responded to in ways that maintain the status quo. One factor implicit in identity development within this stage is the expression of discipline (Heward, 1991, in, Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2003). During the era of corporal punishment, young men were exposed to authoritarian role models who implemented violent teaching practices to instil order and control, thereby reinforcing masculinities characterised by competition and machismo. Following the abolishment of corporal punishment, institutions have had to adopt different styles of discipline, bringing with it opportunities for alternate constructions of desirable masculinities.

2.8.   Masculinity in Transition

Morrell (2001), in his work with masculinities in transition, offered three ways in which men have responded to changes in South Africa, bringing about shifts in hegemonic masculinity. The first position is the *reactive* or *defensive* response. In this way, men actively refuse the idea of change and attempt to reassert power (Morrell, 2001).   These reactionary behaviours are complicit in a fight for possession and authority, and have resulted in the perpetration of violence

and various violations of human rights. Ferguson et al. (2004) prioritise gender identity in their understanding of GBV. Therefore when acting aggressively, men may draw on aspects of their identity that normalise aggression, or justify their behaviour as a defensive response to threat. This threat may be real, regarding one's physical safety, or it may be more abstract, involving a threat to one's sense of self. However, the two are inextricably linked

According to statistics on the *People Against Women Abuse* (POWA) website, a woman is raped every 26 seconds in this country (Rabkin, 2009). High levels of sexual assault within this country have been associated with an assertion of dominance over women who do not conform to desired male expectations (Ratele, 2008). One of the most shocking acts of violence is *corrective rape* where lesbian women are raped to 'cure' them of their sexual orientation (Martin, Kelly, Turquet, & Ross, 2009). In April 2008, Eudy Simelane, a former Banyana Banyana soccer star, was brutally gang-raped and murdered because of her sexual orientation (Rabkin, 2009). The following excerpt by Pumla, a survivor of gang rape, highlights the constant denigration she experiences as a lesbian woman, along with the ongoing risk of further harm:

> You are constantly reminded that you are a bitch, that you deserve to be raped. They yell "if I rape you then you will go straight", that "you will buy skirts and start to cook because you will have learned to be a real woman" (Martin et al. 2009, p. 15).

Lesbian women, particularly economically disadvantaged Black women, are under attack as they are perceived as a direct and specific threat to the status quo. The abuse, which is framed as a lesson, combined with the community stigma, lack of social support and failure to recognise hate crimes as a specific crime category at a judicial level, reflect the dominant heterosexist ideologies in society (Rabkin, 2009).

The second position is the *accomodating* response, where traditionalist notions and practices are resurrected in the attainment of positive qualities like responsibility and respect. This position represents a movement away from the violent masculinities expressed above. Initiation practices, for example, remain prevalent amongst Black African communities, marking the transition to adulthood and connecting young men to a cultural heritage (Morrell, 2001). In urban townships young men may be disconnected from these traditions but they are still negotiating their masculinity against the backdrop of women's growing economic influence. These feelings of uncertainty and anxiety are echoed in Walker's (2005) work, which explores the confusion around expected masculine practices, as voiced by young Black men in South Africa. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has also shifted notions of gender. While gendered values and power relations are implicated in the spread of HIV, it is the consequence of HIV-infection that is forcing men to contemplate their mortality and vulnerability, thereby bringing about shifts in their understanding of masculinity (Morrell, 2001).

The third stance mentioned by Morrell (2001), is *responsive* or *progressive*, in which there is a movement towards contemporary understandings of what it means to be a man. Inherent in this position is the growing visibility of emancipatory masculinities represented by the gay movement (Morrell, 2001). Gay pride festivals are initiated across the world, with less censorship or public outcry. Various organisations have also been established in South Africa to increase gender awareness and equality. The *One Man Can* campaign initiated by Sonke Gender Justice aims to encourage men and boys to take individual responsibility, as well as work together, to end domestic and sexual violence (Sonke Gender Justice, n.d.). The emergence of the New Man discourse in literature speaks to a revised understanding of masculinity that includes greater steps towards gender-consciousness-raising and efforts to increase participation

within the home in terms of housework and childcare (Morrell, 2001). It is important to recognise that the New Man discourse found favour in first world developed countries where existing economic resources and supportive structures facilitated this re-examination. In South Africa, recognition of the principles of the New Man has taken place primarily amongst the middle to upper class population, although that is not to say that working class men are also not going through a process of change (Morrell, 2001).

2.9.   Power Relations

Olweus (1993) defined an imbalance of power as a key element in the bullying interaction. According to Hamilton and Sharma (1997), power requires a framework, and a context within which to operate. As such, power is repeatedly implicated in the functioning of groups and individuals, providing motivation to achieve a desired end. South Africa is embedded with a legacy of power inequalities that continue to shape the ways in which individuals and groups function. Power can be considered as legitimate or illegitimate depending on whether it is used within society's established norms, goals and purposes (Hamilton & Sharma, 1997). A discussion of power relations invokes the work of Michel Foucault. For Foucault (1981), "power is not an institution, and not a structure, neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with: it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (p. 81). According to his theory, power relations are everywhere as they are formed in all relations where differences exist. Power is however not an exclusively negative force and demands an understanding beyond the dualistic notion of one party being dominant over the other (Foucault, 1981).

Constraining forces have been offered to curb abusive power relations. One such example is the establishment of roles, norms and codes for acceptable social behaviour (Hamilton & Sharma, 1997). South Africa has demonstrated this through the development and institutionalisation of one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, advocating for equality across sex, race, age, disability, sexual orientation and religious preference (Walker, 2005). School environments also develop a code of conduct, hierarchical structures and role clarifications to regulate learner behaviour and espouse particular values of conformity. Foucault prioritised knowledge in his understanding of power, with the more powerful parties actively involved in the ownership and manufacturing of knowledge systems. In this way, oppression is perpetuated by a false consciousness, in which the oppressed are offered a biased and uninformed perception of reality which is readily accepted without critical engagement (Foucault, 1981). Therefore in order to move towards balancing power relations, one needs to redistribute knowledge. Through distributing knowledge, both the oppressor's actions would be de-legitimised and the consciousness of the oppressed improved. Technology has the potential to assist in this regard by creating new channels for communication and exchange of information.

2.10. Technology and the Distribution of Power

Much research interest has been generated around the impact of new communication technologies on human relatedness. South Africa has a strong cell phone culture that is represented at all levels of society. The cell phone has become essential for adolescent relations as it represents greater opportunities for connection with peers, and is a symbol of financial status. School policies have attempted to limit the potentially disruptive influence of cell phones,

however this has not deterred learners from bringing their cell phones to school. The construction of identity is complicated in terms of the new media, as each technology creates different experiences and modes of interaction that inform decisions about the self (Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant & Kelly, 2003). In order to understand the role of cybertechnologies on adolescent development and peer relations, it is important to have an understanding of the key features of these technologies, particularly *disinhibition*, *anonymity* and the *mind-body dichotomy*.

Joinson (1998) defines disinhibition as "any behaviour that is characterised by an apparent reduction in concerns for self-presentation and the judgment of others" (p. 44). Disinhibition is often associated with de-individuation and anonymity, as technology users feel they can communicate without social reproach. This may be adaptive in cases where individuals disclose information that is critical to their health, or when they feel more comfortable to initiate a relationship that is not based on external characteristics. The design of media technologies should therefore, in theory, minimise prejudice along gender and racial lines. The maladaptive side of anonymity occurs when users feel shielded to undertake malicious attacks on other people (Wallace, 1999). Under these conditions of anonymity, internet users may diffuse responsibility for their deviant acts amongst other online community members (Joinson, 2003).

According to Wallace (1999), "gender has not vaporised in cyberspace, and problems related to gender roles and conflicts, have, in some ways, been exacerbated as we migrated to the online environment in large numbers" (p. 208). Technologies are not value-free, but rather shaped by the context in which they arise (Reilly, 2004). For many years, men have derived power and status from cyberculture, with men occupying key roles in the development and progression of technologies. At an institutional level, the disciplines of computer science and

electronic engineering have been disproportionately represented in favour of males. New media has also reinforced gendered stereotypes of dominance and vulnerability by affording the objectification of women as evidenced by the surge of online pornography.

Opinions about this mind-body debate inform the way people assess the seriousness of cyberbullying. Julian Dibbell's (2001) account of the 'rape in cyberspace' is well-known in this argument. In this case, an online character, Mr Bungle, forced other characters to perform demeaning sexual acts on him and others in the multi-user domain. In reality, there was no physical contact, and all that transpired was a slow crawling script with dialogue and stage directions, visible for others in the room to see (Dibbell, 2001). For some, the adage of 'sticks and stones' rings true in that a textual display of hurtful and threatening words can never truly capture the threat to bodily integrity that face-to-face encounters can pose. Others would argue that in an online world, the mind becomes the body, and that deviant words or images are equally as damaging to one's sense of self (Dibbell, 2001).

CHAPTER 3: Theoretical Underpinnings

The previous chapter highlighted key literature in the area of bullying, adolescent masculinities and identity development. Inclusion of literature has been guided by theoretical underpinnings, primarily social constructionist theory and social dominance theory. These two broad concepts will be discussed in light of the research.

3.1. Social Constructionism

The Social Constructionist paradigm suggests that individuals are 'shaped' by their environment through various socialising agents like family, peers or school. "Truths and facts are always perspectival interpretations which can only emerge against the backdrop of socially shared understanding"; therefore it is through these institutions that individuals interpellate particular ways of life (Durrheim, 1997, p. 177). Although the power is not overt, people subject themselves to a power discourse by internalising social norms and self-regulating behaviour.

The Social Constructionist framework promotes a more positive outlook for social change by making concessions for human agency. People are considered to have an internal locus of control, where power for change is located within, enabling the resistance of discourses. Power is therefore seen as a shifting entity, procured by different people at different times. This perspective provides the foundation for the theories employed in understanding the development of the masculine identity. Viewing masculinities as flexible provides greater motivation for the application of gender-based interventions aimed at reducing bullying behaviours.

3.2.   Social Dominance Theory (SDT)

SDT subscribes to the premise that human societies are structured along group-based social hierarchies, with dominant and subordinate groups (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The difference between the dominant and less dominant groups is related to the achievement of positive social value, which refers to the possession of desirable social and financial resources. Although individual characteristics play a role in attaining social power, SDT examines the social power that an individual gains by virtue of membership to a socially constructed group (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The need to form group-based social hierarchies provides a conceptual framework to understand prejudice, racism and discrimination. That is not to say that all group hierarchies are bad. According to Dunbar (1988), "dominance hierarchies, when they are stabilised, serve the important function of reducing in-group aggression" (in Pellegrini and Long, 2004).

By adapting Pierre van den Berghe's principles, Sidanius and Pratto (1999) identified three stratification systems that inform social hierarchies. The first refers to an age system, in which a person gains social power as they age. In this case, an individual's power is in flux, increasing with each year that passes, yet shifting according to the age of the persons with whom they associate (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Age plays a significant role in the adolescent developmental phase, with special celebrations noted at 16 and 18 years to mark the transition to adulthood. In a high school setting, age is represented by the grade achieved, and particular privileges are assigned to learners as they progress to Matric. These privileges may include private recreational areas, restricted social events, and personalised clothing.

The second broad stratification system refers to gender, in which males are said to have more social and political power than females. Of the three systems, gender is considered the most static, in that one's position in the social hierarchy tends to be relatively fixed throughout

one's life (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). There are a few problems with this understanding however. Firstly, it is important to distinguish gender as a social construct and sex as a biological product. If we maintain that gender differentiates power, then the understanding is that masculine traits are highly valued over feminine traits. The debate then returns to what comprises masculine traits and whether they are favoured in every social context.

The third system is labelled as arbitrary and is based on other group characteristics like race, religion, nationality or affiliation to a specific clan or tribe (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). In-group/out-group distinctions are based largely on situational factors. It is the arbitrary nature of this system that has resulted in some of the world's greatest human injustices including the Holocaust, the Genocide in Rwanda, and religious tensions in the Middle East. South Africa holds its own legacy of oppression characterised by Apartheid and recent xenophobic attacks.

One of the reasons offered for the increase in bullying during adolescence is attributed to the role of SDT in identity development. For young men, asserting and maintaining dominance may involve *agonistic* and *affiliative* strategies (Espelage et al. 2004). Agonistic strategies may include physical fighting and verbal abuse. Research suggests that these aggressive strategies are more commonly used during the formative stages of group relationships to establish social hierarchies. Once the initial position of dominance has been established, individuals shift their focus to more peer-affirming affiliative strategies, like the management or manipulation of people to secure social stability and access to benefits (deWaal, 1986).

CHAPTER 4: Research Methodology

4.1.   Research Questions

The central concern of the study is how early adolescent males understand and experience

bullying, particularly within the heterosexual school context. Within this broad area for

discussion, there are two key questions that need to be addressed:

4.1.1   In what ways does bullying occur among boys?

4.1.2   How does bullying relate to identity development amongst boys?

The first question examines the actual ways in which bullying behaviours function in a

heterosexual context by examining the power imbalances between males, as well as between

male and female learners. Do boys rely on more direct forms of confrontation like physical or

relational aggression, or do they rely on more indirect means like social exclusion or even

cyberbullying? How may these behaviours be understood within the current South African

context marked by political and cultural transition? Are there other subtle processes through

which male learners negotiate their social power?

The second question examines themes about desirable and undesirable masculinities, as

well as patterns of dominance and social hierarchies. Through exploration of these themes, the

researcher hopes to identify the processes that men apply in understanding, managing and

implementing psychological and physical forms of bullying. Locating the discussion within the

tradition of social constructionism requires an exploration of the institutional and interpersonal

mechanisms that shape identity development and maintain social inequalities.

4.2.   Description of the Sample

The research was conducted at a co-educational public high school. The group participants included 20 grade 8 male learners, aged between 12-14 years. Aside from the hormonal changes during adolescence, Grade 8 learners have the additional stress of moving from a familiar primary school environment to a larger unfamiliar high school. Information reveals that many of these learners reside outside the zoning area and have attended various different primary schools. Issues of age and group belonging are therefore heightened amongst this population, making them suitable for commentary in regards to SDT and ideas around hegemonic masculinity.

Amongst the Grade 8 population, 42% of learners were male while 58% of learners were female, indicating a significant advantage for female learners. The high school is an ex-Model C high school and supports a mixed racial composition of learners – Black African, Coloured, Indian, White and Chinese. Statistics for the racial stratification of learners is unavailable. Amongst group participants, 4 identified as Black African, 5 as Indian and 11 as White. There are learners with physical disabilities represented at the school and the predominant religious groupings include Christian, Muslim and Hindu. The high school itself is well resourced with a library, computer laboratories, science laboratories, sports fields, school hall, art room, drama studio, indoor sports centre, chapel and swimming pool. The income bracket of families is confidential although it is estimated that the school is represented by middle to upper income families. The variability in economic backgrounds is important in terms of the participants' values regarding access to resources and financial power. The school is governed by four senior managers, the heads of department, as well as a governing body comprised of parents and a staff representative. The average Matric pass rate was calculated at 98-100%.

4.3.   Data Collection

The researcher adopted an ethnographic approach in the gathering of data. Through participant

observation, the researcher became immersed in the social processes within the school,

navigating between learners and educators. The researcher employed a combination of

experiential and participating-to-write approaches in the collection of data (Emerson, Fretz, &

Shaw, 2001). The experiential style meant suspending the need to document everything and

freely engaging with the events of the school day. This sense of 'just being there' was balanced

with a conscious need to direct observations and efforts towards areas of interest like

observations of peer relations at lunch time. In the initial stages of data collection, the researcher

relied on mental notes and basic jotted notes to capture the realities of the field. These guides

were later used to facilitate the write up of more detailed field notes which are included in this

paper. Field notes are an essential part of participant observation as the researcher's written

account opens up the experience to the reader (Emerson et al. 2001).

Both male and female Grade 8 learners were addressed about the purpose of the research.

Convenience sampling was employed as the researcher was approached by learners wishing to

participate while walking around the school or addressing the individual classes. Snowball

sampling was also used in this study, as learners who agreed to participate had encouraged their

friends to accompany them. Four focus groups were conducted as well as one individual

interview with a learner identified as a bully-victim. Learners were encouraged to participate in

friendship groups as this increases perceptions of social support and may lead to greater levels of

disclosure. Aside from the verbal content produced by group participants, layers of meaning are

embedded in the group process. Tuckman (1965) popularised four stages within his

understanding of group development: *forming; storming; norming;* and *performing*. These

theoretical principles have relevancy in this study in understanding the process by which

adolescent males construct their sense of self in relation to others within the group.

Each focus group, which lasted between 1 hr and 1 ½ hrs, was held on school premises

during school hours. The focus groups were conducted after the June examinations so as not to

conflict with school work. An interview schedule was used to highlight some key questions

regarding masculinity and bullying, and was used as a reference to guide the discussion (*see

Appendix II*). An additional resource page containing images suggestive of bullying was also

used to facilitate discussion.

4.4.   Data Analysis

The analysis of the data followed the terminology and conventions set out in Miles and

Huberman's (1994) thematic analysis framework. Interpretive thematic analysis was chosen

because it enabled a contextual understanding of the bullying behaviour. The process of analysis

involved a combination of emic and etic coding, providing structure to the coding but also

flexibility for adaptation. Firstly, a provisional 'start list' of codes was developed prior to the

fieldwork that was informed by the research questions and knowledge of keys areas within

bullying literature (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These codes were primarily descriptive in nature.

This start list was then integrated within the *Nvivo* software to develop free coding nodes.

The second step of the analysis involved entering the transcribed conversations into the

Nvivo software programme and tagging the provisional codes to segments of text. Through

transcribing and editing the four focus groups and individual interview, the researcher was

familiar with the content of the discussion and had already recognised other emergent codes and

limitations with the existing start list. Through clustering and constant revision of codes, a new

coding structure was developed in which codes were layered to produce sub-codes (Miles &

Huberman, 1994). These codes were reviewed to ascertain whether the selected extracts

provided an accurate description of the revised code. The overall code structure was then

reviewed to ensure that a relational structure had been created between codes so as to reinforce

the conceptual web of ideas. Upon completion of this process, the report was compiled with

appropriate transcript excerpts (*see Appendix VIII*). The researcher attempted to formulate the

argument based on the codes presented.

4.5.   Reflexivity of the Researcher

The researcher is a White South African female, first-language English speaking. Of primary

concern in this respect was the position of gender, and the ease at which young men would be

willing to disclose thoughts and feelings to someone of the opposite sex. In fact, the role of the

female researcher in the privileged male space was critical in the interviewing process, as it

highlighted the issue of gender for discussion and allowed the male participants to mirror their

feelings against a relatively objective female. The researcher acknowledged these differences,

but attempted to create an open and relaxed atmosphere through her approach. The researcher

did not attend a co-educational high school previously and therefore managed the accounts of the

participants without existing preconceptions about their schooling experience. There was no

immediate language barrier as the medium of instruction at school in English. Group

participants were willing to explain colloquial terms and references to current youth trends.

Racial differences did not appear to detract from the quality of relationships established with

group participants; however it may have played a role in the disclosure of information.

The researcher acknowledged the interview schedule at the start of the research to guide

her questions. Exploratory questions thereafter stemmed from the direction of the participants'

conversation. The researcher was cautious in her use of leading questions and has acknowledged

this in her interpretation and analysis of data. The structuring of themes during the thematic

analysis was influenced by the pattern of participant responses, with these themes then being

shaped by the researcher's personal interests. Field notes are presented in the following section,

including participant observations and researcher impressions. Field notes are inevitably

selective as they present and frame events in particular ways; however the descriptions are useful

in contextualising interpretations (Emerson et al. 2001).

4.6. Trustworthiness of Information

The audio recordings of the group discussions were transferred electronically onto the

researcher's computer and then transcribed accordingly. At the completion of each transcript,

the researcher screened the focus group transcript to correct any errors and ensure that the

transcripts adequately reflected what was said by the group participants. Inaudible dialogue was

noted as such, and additional descriptive information was included in parentheses to clarify

participant statements. The researcher holds no financial and legal obligation towards the school

or the group participants, eliminating bias in the research in the form of secondary gains.

4.7. Ethical Considerations

Due to the fact the study involved participation from adolescents younger than 18 years old,

consent was required from the group participants, as well as their parents/guardians. Learners

who were interested in participating received individual and parental consent forms, as well as a

covering letter detailing the purposes of the study. All forms and letters distributed contained

contact details should the parents or learners have any concerns. Although bullying may be a sensitive subject, the questions devised in the interview schedule avoided personalising the problem and rather targeted general opinions about bullying. As such, permission to participate in the study was achieved through a process of assent, whereby the learner was able to participate in the study unless otherwise stated by his legal guardian. During discussions, group participants readily offered personal experiences of bullying without the direct request of the researcher. In the event that a participant was distressed by the interview, the learner was encouraged to speak to the on-site school counsellor. The researcher was also prepared to refer the participants to a professional psychologist. No participants indicated this need.

Participants were alert to the voluntary nature of the research and that they could withdraw at any time. At the conclusion of the focus groups, participants were debriefed about the purpose of the research and the reporting of findings. The researcher plans to return to the school at the completion of the research to provide feedback. As the learners were in Grade 8 at the time of the study, they are likely to remain in the school system by the time of this visit. Complete anonymity could not be ensured because of the group nature of data collection; however confidentiality was ensured by use of pseudonyms instead of participants' names in the reporting of findings. The school has not been named. Limited identifying information is used to quote the demographic composition of the sample, e.g. age and race.

CHAPTER 5: Field Notes
Reflections on Method, Theory and Being There

5.1. An Ethnographic Perspective

My previous research experience when working with boys in a school setting was centred on

positivist notions of social life. I resorted to methodology that viewed boys' lives as some

objective reality with laws and patterns of functioning that can be captured and explained

through the application of statistical programmes (Adams & Govender, 2008). It is the cold and

intellectualised tone with which I describe this paradigm now that echoes my movement towards

qualitative methodologies. This shift in understanding and operating is likely a result of the

changing trends in social scientific enquiry, as well as recognition of the interpretive limitations I

encountered in my own quantitative work. I do not wish to doubt the merit of quantitative

studies, but I am concerned about truths and nuances of experience that are hidden in these

'rating scale realities' – limited realities which critical social scientists may argue sustain societal

inequality. The thoughts and feelings I have chosen to include or exclude in the field notes are

based on my truth, as a product of sociocultural meanings I have interpellated over the years.

My mode of approaching this research was informed largely by the words of Dolby (2001), in

which "partiality, perspective, and position are understood as frames that enable, not strangle, the

role of research in both interpreting and affecting the world" (p. 121).

5.2. Entering the School

In order to be the least disruptive influence in the academic calendar, I was asked to visit the

school in the week following completion of the junior mid-year examinations for Grade 8s and

Grade 9s. During this week, the older grades were still writing their examinations and as such, only attended school on the morning of their subject papers. Junior learners on the other hand were required to be in class for the duration of the examination period. As a special privilege, it was noted that Matric learners were allowed to write their examinations dressed in casual clothing, which included their official school leaver's jerseys. The exercise of these rules immediately alerted me to the sense of tradition and hierarchy in place, with Matric learners endowed with greater freedom.

The post-examination period is a chaotic time for many local schools, as learners become increasingly disruptive in anticipation of school holidays and educators feel pressured to complete examination marking. Normal school routines shift – school assemblies are infrequent; subject lessons are replaced by 'free' lessons where learners review examination papers and marking schemes, attend field trips, prepare dances and songs for end of term concerts; or do not attend school at all. The class disruption represents a change from normal school functioning which is important to acknowledge in understanding the morale of the school at the time of my entry. It also provides insight into the ways in which I was received by staff and learners alike.

On a typical research day, I would time my arrival at school at the start of the first lesson period. After a quick perusal of the Grade 8 class schedule I was able to judge where each class would be. I would also collect any consent forms that had been handed in with the class registers. Groups would commence during lesson times and would often run over the allocated period. During lunch periods I would sit near the Grade 8 courtyard or stand on an accompanying balcony to observe. Although learners did tend to congregate in their racial groups, interracial groups were noted, and there was no overt racial tension or fighting. Male and female learners usually stayed to themselves, although it was a common occurrence for a

single male learner to infiltrate the all-girls group. Observations revealed considerable physical

play where boys would push each other. I also witnessed harassment in the tuck shop line where

learners were approached for money or repeatedly pressured to buy food.

The availability of on-site school counsellors, the use of Life Orientation as an

examinable subject, and the addition of peer-support programmes for Grade 8 learners, alerted

me to the school's endorsement of psychological interventions. It is the economic position of the

school that enables greater access to these resources. Although mental heath initiatives are

facilitated, they tend to run secondary to physical health and information technology. Although

learners saw little value in the peer-support groups due to logistical issues, they were in favour of

individual counselling. In addition to this, group participants would draw on popular psychology

references or relay personal experiences related to psychotherapy, suggesting a highly

'psychologised' school population. The school is also shown to offering possibilities for

alternate masculinities as it was noted during one of the focus groups that the male participants

had to attend dance practise. Combining these traditionally feminine activities with other 'hard'

activities like football serves to broaden constructions of masculinity.

5.3.   Relations with Educators

The composition of staff revealed male and female educators, with a predominant White racial

composition. Indicators of wealth like expensive fashion and luxury motor vehicles suggested a

distribution of resources consistent with the middle-to-upper class social bracket from which

many of the learners came. Male colleagues tended to gravitate towards each other with

conversations focused on sporting events, while female educators were split into groups by age.

In general, there was little interaction amongst staff members due to brief tea time breaks and

some staff choosing to stay in their classrooms to complete work. It was unclear whether the tense and uneasy environment was a common occurrence, or if it was the result of pressures related to examination marking. My lowly position within the school did not provide me with authority to ask.

Although I had gained permission to conduct the study at the school following negotiation with the school principal, I felt largely isolated and unsupported by the rest of the school staff. The educators that were willing to offer observations appeared particularly interested in my psychology background. However upon hearing that I was conducting a study about bullying, I was met by an air of suspicion. While walking along the school corridors, I was frequently ignored by staff members and I was never encouraged to use the staff room. Although I was conscious of the threat of my research and the ongoing pressures on educators, I was shocked by my sense of isolation. I could not help but feel that if these dynamics were evident in such a brief encounter, then what other ways does the school perpetuate an environment of social exclusion? Although the staff defensiveness and social isolation was initially disconcerting, it assisted me in developing boundaries with the teaching staff so as to not compromise my position with the learners.

5.4.   Relations with Learners

In the absence of the older learners, it appeared that the younger grades were freer to navigate the school without fear of confrontation. Although this impacted my ability to observe the power dynamics across grades, it created a more relaxed environment in which learners would be able to disclose thoughts and feelings. While the interview schedule provided a guide for topics to be

covered in the group, participants were allowed to focus the discussion in different ways, thereby providing suggestions of their specific needs and conflict areas.

The first focus group, comprised of Indian and Black learners, was the loudest and most boisterous, and centred on hyper-masculine expressions regarding aggression, sexuality and substance use. These learners were initially approached in their classroom, where they were being monitored by their class teacher. Their choice not to attend the school field trip immediately alerted me to their non-conformist and rebellious ways. They identified themselves as friends and agreed to participate in the discussion where they referred to themselves as 'naughty boys' or 'jokers'. This opinion was supported by collateral information from other learners in the grade who identified Brown, in particular, as a trouble maker.

The two dominant voices in the group, Justin and Brown, contributed frequently to the discussion without challenges by their peers. Although they repeated and supported each others opinions, their comments were often overlaid with macho expressions suggesting more competition than affiliation. As in Dolby's (2001) work, issues of taste served to construct racial borders, whereby the Indian learners reported an interest in wrestling, which was minimised by the Black African learners. Despite his initial rejection of wrestling, it was noted that later in the interview, Justin made reference to the sport, suggesting some ambivalence along racial borders of popular culture. Racial and cultural concepts were repeatedly drawn upon in defining self and learners were unapologetic for classifying groups as White or Coloured. A common point of connection was the use of Afrikaans expressions, like 'naai' or 'bliksem' – expressions that sit beyond their everyday frame of reference. One wonders whether the use of a neutral cultural group is an attempt to connect along racial borders.

Although the group participants often made chauvinistic and objectifying remarks about women they were the only group to refer to me as 'ma'am'. The use of the term ma'am is loaded with various interpretations. It may reflect an awareness of my authority based on age and occupation. Considering the composition of the group, it may also suggest embedded values about racial difference and power. At the level of gender, it may show an attempt to reconcile my identity against those of their female peers, who they often disrespected.

The second focus group was a White-only group that dedicated a large portion of the discussion to racial tensions and fears of marginalisation in a post-Apartheid culture. It was believed that the group composition and my racial status as a White woman played a significant role in enabling these learners to disclose feelings about their Black peers. The participants were respectful of my authority as an older woman, and would regulate their conversation so as not to interrupt me; however they did not address me by name or use formal greetings. The term ma'am was reserved for educators, confirming that I was not viewed as a staff member.

The learners in this focus group volunteered to participate as members of the same peer group. It was clear however that within the larger peer group were closer friendship units, with these learners often supporting the same ideas. Having this affiliation endowed these group members with greater authority and confidence in expressing their opinion and they were less likely to be challenged by their peers. The education backgrounds of the group members also facilitated an interesting dynamic. One group participant, Max, had recently transferred from a private school due to the victimisation he had experienced there. Although Max was a new learner, he had previously attended primary school with his peers and was therefore afforded immediate entry into his peer group. His participation in the discussion was characterised by forceful opinions, and efforts to assert his authority. At this stage he did not appear to have any

close affiliations with the group and as such would have to negotiate his status according to the new rules of high school. Another group participant, Trevor, who was identified by himself and the other group members as 'strange', had entered high school from a home schooling environment. Trevor was the quietest member of the group and tended to only participate when addressed directly. His speech was characterised by comical sayings and self-defeating statements, further cementing his group difference. His position in the group may therefore have served another purpose as to affirm the positive social value of the others learners.

The third focus group represented a mixed-racial group of learners. Commonalities existed in their apparent physical vulnerability as they were overweight, short or thin. My first encounter with these learners was during a lunch break, in which they were staying in the classroom. I was later to discover that these individuals tended to be bullied by their peers and as such preferred to avoid conflict by staying in the classroom. Issues of popularity, external deviations and group belonging were increasingly emphasised among these learners. It was noted that one group participant, Sam, had a pronounced stutter that worsened under stress. His mother had indicated through the consent form that Sam was being bullied at school because of his small build and speech impediment. What was interesting to note, was that Sam, like Trevor, used humour frequently and tended to exaggerate his difference in what appeared an effort to secure his group identity as the 'joker'. Unfortunately, his immature approach increased opportunities for victimisation, in which he became the joke.

Unlike the previous two groups, there was less sense of affiliation, as evidenced by the learners who laughed or looked embarrassed when Sam stuttered. White participants, although apologetic, were shown to disclose their negative feelings about their Black peers, despite the presence of Black learners in the group, thereby suggesting less group membership. Their lack

of trust in each other appeared to be a significant factor increasing their vulnerability. The arrival of Stuart half-way through the discussion revitalised group participation. His school jacket was emblazoned with badges suggesting his appointment to school counsels and other positions of authority. While he was confident to exert his opinion, he was also allowed the space to adopt a leadership role without having his ideas challenged. Interestingly, these group participants were the only ones to attempt a friendship with me by approaching me at lunch time to talk and requesting future groups. It was unclear whether this was a need for affiliation, or a need to align with authority figures for protection.

The fourth focus group consisted of Black African and White Learners. Due to malfunctioning recording equipment and time constraints, this group was notably smaller and responses appeared more condensed. By institutional standards, these participants were academic and sporting achievers. Rob, a well built learner, was involved in traditionally respected sporting activities. His approach in facilitating the group, organising a venue and confidently expressing his opinions, suggested his strong leadership traits. The impact of my age and position as a guest at the school was apparent in the participants' formal approach to me.

5.5.   Harry: Bully-Victim Status

Throughout the focus group discussions, one learner was repeatedly identified as 'different' and vulnerable to victimisation. Male learners often speculated about his sexual orientation due to his effeminate style, attention-seeking and emotionality, while his female peers were openly rejecting of his intrusive behaviour. His isolation was observed in the classroom, where his volunteering to participate was openly ignored by his classmates. In the absence of Harry's peer group, and not wanting to create a superficial group that would impact disclosure of personal

stories, I agreed to see Harry for an individual consult. Although I had approached educators on an individual basis for observations and impressions, this was the only individual learner consult that I had scheduled. As such, I was conscious that this decision might affirm his thoughts of isolation. However, in playing such a key role in many of the other learner accounts, I felt it was only necessary that he be offered the same platform to speak.

Upon meeting, I immediately noted the effeminate qualities mentioned by his peers. Harry's speech was proper with a slight lilt in his voice, his gestures were calm and delicate, and he walked with a swagger. His experience with counselling showed in his high level of disclosure and psychologised responses. Although he engaged with me on an intellectual level, he would giggle inappropriately and his behaviour tended to be awkward. My own feelings revealed a sense of falseness or dramatisation, which distanced me from him. Harry provided an account of a bully-victim. His ambivalent feelings about relationships, seeing them as cruel and kind, fuel his unpredictable behaviour and he has been known to verbally and physically lash out at his peers without apparent provocation. For him, his feeling of threat may be real and he is lashing out defensively, however it does not make sense to outside observers resulting in his ongoing social isolation.

CHAPTER 6: Results and Discussion

In the following section, the researcher present extracts from transcripts of group discussions with adolescent boys. The themes that emerged from the analyses are relevant to the central research questions: "In what ways does bullying occur among boys?" and "How does bullying relate to identity development amongst boys?" Excerpts from the transcripts will be used to elaborate themes.

6.1.   The Embodied Self

Use of the term *embodied* signifies a need to draw attention to the level of the body, and the values inherent in the physical form. At the forefront of gendered notions of maleness and femaleness is the recognition of biological difference. However the biological does not exist in isolation but is open to interpretation. It is the meanings attached to these differences that are of interest in this study. The major sub-themes encompassing a discussion of the embodied self are the *physical body* and the *performative body*. The former relates to the appearance and development of an individual's physical self. This involves discussion of the physical qualities inherent in the ideal male body, and the understandings of how these qualities are formed biologically and socially. The latter aims to address the instrumental relationship that men hold with their bodies, in which positive social value is gained through physical types of play, initiation, corporal punishment and self-defense practises. According to SDT, these sub-themes offer an explanation as to how individual characteristics may play a role in attaining social power, as well as the strategies adopted by young men to achieve group belonging for the purposes of gaining social power (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). It is important to note that a

discussion of the embodied self does not introduce a discussion of gender and race at this point, and that they will be discussed in later themes.

6.1.1.   Physical Body

6.1.1.1.   Opposing Bodies

This sub-theme examines notions of the superior male body in relation to the inferior. The term 'opposing' has been used to capture aspects of difference while also suggesting the ongoing competition and rivalry between multiple masculinities. When asked to describe bullies and victims, most of the respondents' initial responses focused on the perceived physicality of these two parties. Bullies tended to be described as big, tall and strong, with amassed physical power to inflict harm or threaten others. Since physical maturity is linked biologically to age, learners in the older grades were also often placed in a physically more dominant position. Victims, on the other hand, were often described as short, weak and thin; characteristics which were likely to signal their vulnerability to physical attack. These interpretations coincide with more traditional ideologies of masculinity, in which physical embodiments of strength and power find favour (Connell, 1995).

> INT: Why is he a bully?
> BO: He's taller.
> JO: Because he's bigger than everyone and he thinks because he's bigger than everyone, everyone should be scared of him.
>
> INT: So who usually starts the fight?
> PH: The larger person [*laughs*].
> SU: Ja, the larger person, the person that can take advantage of you.

It is important to note that some participants did not subscribe to a distribution of power along these traditional lines. In the following quote, Rob explains that physical strength does not

guarantee dominance, but that it is rather an individual's popularity based on other resources that may determine social power. Rob's response is consistent with SDT, where social power is primarily gained through group belonging (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

> RO: I see a small person with like a big ego who thinks he can beat up everyone just because he's popular or something, picking on a larger person or a person of the same size.

Consistent with literature is the use of external deviations to describe reasons as to why someone would be bullied (Olweus, 1993). External deviations include any observable difference like a speech impediment, disability or change in physical appearance. In the arena of masculinity, these deviations may represent weakness or fallibility, and are therefore assigned less social power. Having less social power therefore limits group belonging, increasing vulnerability for further abuse.

> RY: Looks! If people have big teeth or something, then they will tease them about that =
> PH: = Glasses
> SI: A person who may have disabilities or look different to someone else.

6.1.1.2.   Growing Bodies

The term 'growing' has been used to describe the process of gender development as it occurs at biological and social levels. Respondents often draw on the concepts of strength and resiliency in differentiating the potential of men and women. It is by locating strength at the level of the body, as an innate natural characteristic, that men are assigned more power. In the following two excerpts, group participants reassert gendered power relations by suggesting that females are weaker because of their biology and that forms of punishment have to be adjusted in light of this information:

> SA: We've got like something that makes us like hard, but girls even if you don't punch them hard, they'll cry.
>
> SH: I think they're, we're just a bit stronger than the woman.
> [*Other boys say "Ja"*]
> BO: I believe that =
> SH: = She can get hit on the knuckles]

Although biological markers of strength were called upon to differentiate basic potentials, the participants also acknowledged the role of socialising forces in shaping experiences throughout an individual's life and informing the relationship that men have with their bodies. The intersection between biological and social is apparent in Max's nature-nurture debate around equality in corporal punishment. He suggests that it is unfair for some males to endure punishment because of their sex, when they in fact possess more feminine traits due to their upbringing. His argument is embedded with many subtle power conventions, including a reassertion of the relational form of gender in which femininity is inferior to masculinity, and in which alternate masculinities are equated with the female sex.

> SH: My opinion on that is, like us boys when we are born, we grow up completely differently to how girls grow up. Girls grow up with like …
> MA: Barbies!
> SH: With Barbies. And like if they get dirty they have to wash themselves like straight away. But with us, it's like if we get dirty, so what!
> JO: We can handle it]
> SH: So I think that's why I think we're a bit more, like rough and tough and firmer than girls.
> MA: [] If the guys get punishment girls should get them too, because you do get guys who are a bit on 'the side' and they're obviously not used to punishment and probably grew up the way Sharky was describing.

6.1.2.   Performative Body

Due to developmental and socialising differences, men learn to communicate in more physical ways rather than through lengthy emotive dialogue. This is supported by Heaven's (2001)

account that male friendships tend to function through shared activities, like sport. Males hold

an instrumental relationship with their bodies, which implies that they use their bodies as a tool

to achieve a particular end. In the context of this paper, the body is interpreted as the site at

which to inflict and receive pain. Examples of physical activities with the underlying purpose of

group belonging include self-defense strategies, corporal punishment, initiation practises, and

types of physical play like sport.

6.1.2.1.   "Standing up for yourself"

As stated earlier, markers of physical power like being tall, having muscles or participating in

sport, may play a role in initially securing social position; however it is the way in which social

experiences are handled that impact on hierarchies of power. Responses from the focus groups

suggest that victimisation is rife in the school environment with most learners experiencing a

form of provocation or insult at some point during their school career. It is the way in which

these encounters are managed that plays a crucial role in protecting self from future bullying

encounters. Common protective strategies identified by group participants included disclosing

the abuse to a parent or teacher, or walking away. While these ideas sounded good in theory, the

reality was more anxiety-provoking, as noted in the following excerpt:

> MA: I'd ask my friends but I wouldn't ask a teacher, or mother or anyone.
> JO: Ja, you wouldn't like ask a teacher or mother or that because they get too serious about it =
> MA: = Or they laugh at us.
> JO: Or they'll embarrass you about it, like they'll go in and they'll =
> MA: = Speak to the bullies.
> JO: They'll speak to the bully in front of everyone and they'll make you feel really bad, and then when, while you're feeling bad and that, the bully would like =
> MA: = Laugh at you.
> BO: Boss you.
> JO: Take advantage of that.

Peers provided the greatest level of support in bullying encounters, as asking for help from

authority figures like parents and educators was embedded with meanings around failed self-

sufficiency and dependence, and would therefore reduce social power. This finding is consistent

with Olweus's (1993) discussion of the passive/submissive victim, whose anxiety and low self-

esteem underpins a fear of retaliation which signals vulnerability and sustains the cycle of abuse.

The idea receiving the greatest support across focus groups was *retaliation*, in which either the

individual alone or accompanied by friends, confronts the bully. Although there are costs to this

strategy, including the risk of self-harm, the act of defiance is ultimately more important than the

outcome, and speaks to traditional masculine ideas around bravery and independence.

> RO: Sometimes the bully follows you, but because you walked away and you turned your back to him or her, he'll hit you for that. That's when you just hold them and just give him a slap on the head or something and say, "leave me alone otherwise I'll really get violent" and they'll leave you. Because they'll see, oh, that this guy or this girl really stands up for himself.
>
> CA: Well, as long as you know you stood up for yourself. []
> BR: Let's say now you're fighting a bigger person, the fact that you put maybe two punches – you stood up for yourself []
>
> AN: If someone's looking for a fight and you don't give it to them, something's wrong with you.
> JU: If someone comes to you and says, "Let's not fight, let's talk" [] Then it's fine. But you mustn't go to him if he started. You must fight. You must [*slaps his hands together to make a sound*] 'bliksem'!

The act of retaliation may extend beyond the individual and involve his peer group. Peer groups

and siblings provide a point of reference for accepted social norms; therefore an attack on one

group member represents a disagreement with the values held in that group (Heaven, 2001). The

quality of assistance afforded by friends when under threat is however dependent on the

affiliation with the group, thereby reinforcing the importance of peer relations as a protective

factor in bullying encounters.

JU: If he brings his friends, then they'll bounce.
BR: If you bring your friends. Then we can have a big 'bust up'!
AN: Or you call like your brother or cousins]

RO: Also depends what kind of friends you have. If you have like really, really true friends you won't need to ask for help, they'll just be there by your side. If somebody tries to bully you, they'll stand up for you.

Group participants also made reference to the pressure to retaliate due to outside interference.

Literature acknowledges the presence of outside participants in the bullying experience who

impact the situation by what they do or fail to do (Salmivalli, 1999). The expectation of the peer

group is high in adolescence, and respondents are fearful of acting in ways that would receive a

negative label like 'chicken' thereby undermining masculine ideals.   The act of retaliating when

under threat is considered a strategy to attain group belonging and assert social dominance. It is

however an anxiety-provoking situation layered with fear of failure, as illustrated in the

following quotes:

MI: Often if there's a crowd behind you, you don't have a choice not to [hit] that person, otherwise they'll say that you're a chicken or something like that.

INT: Do you think it is embarrassing to be in a fight? []
SI: Well yeah, it depends if you win or lose.
RO: If you're likely really beaten up badly and you just lie there as if you're dead, then it could be really embarrassing. []
RO: If you win, you're like a hero!
PE: But sometimes you can put up a really good fight and you lose, you do get a certain amount of respect.

6.1.2.2.   "Learning the Ropes": Corporal Punishment and Initiation

Morrell's (2001) research indicated that boys of all races still believe the use of legitimate

physical force to be the most effective form of punishment. This finding was shared by some

group participants, particularly Bob and Sharky. Bob and Sharky were notably confident and

outspoken, and often drew on themes of responsibility and respect in support of their call for the

re-institutionalisation of corporal punishment. Interestingly, Max's response to the corporal

punishment issue was to retaliate physically, suggesting ambivalence about the use of violence as

a form of social control.

MA: If a teacher had to hit me, I would hit the teacher right back. []
TR: You'd get expelled.
MA: If a teacher hit you, the teacher would get fired and my family could sue them.
SH: Why? It's teaching you respect.
MA: The only thing, I'd say it was like self-protection.
SH: It's teaching you respect! []
JO: But also the teachers don't, they don't have the right to touch you, they're not allowed to touch you. If they touch you or like do physical violence, and they hurt you =
SH: = You're not allowed to touch them.
BO: I think they should have the right to, because it's teaching us respect. [] They wouldn't hurt us for nothing.

Resistance to this form of discipline was encountered by others who were operating from a legal

perspective, stating that educators no longer have the authority to carry out that form of

discipline, and would face severe consequences for acting in such ways. The accessibility of this

knowledge has shifted power relations within the school environment, empowering learners to

take a stand against unfair treatment and forcing educators to develop alternate systems of

discipline like demerits and detentions.

The call for initiation practices and corporal punishment by group participants is

embedded with many values related to strength, discipline and respect for authority. In both

cases, there is an established social hierarchy in place, with the more senior member, either an

educator or a learner, disciplining a younger individual or group of individuals. One of the

understandings is that it is easier to operate within a framework with rules and regulations, in

which there is a clear power differential. Although the punishment only occurs in one direction,

there is a mutual respect – a respect for those in authority who instil discipline, and a respect for

those who can take it.

BO: Ja, bullying is bad but in a way it's =
MA: = Good!
SH: Keeps you in your place. []
BO: = If you don't get bullied then you won't know what to expect later on in life when you actually do get like mugged or something.

SH: [] When we were in Grade 7, the Grade 6's thought they were like =
JO: They thought they ran the show.] Ja, they called us like really bad things and that =
MA: = And then we came and sorted them out]
JO: We came and sorted them out and then, after that they were quiet.

In line with the themes of hierarchy and order, initiation and corporal punishment also appear to be nested in a need for tradition and greater connectedness to previous generations. Bob frequently reflected on the initiation of his father, as noted in the following:

BO: Most [the teacher] can do is give us like a three hour detention or …
SH: But that doesn't really teach us a lesson!
BO: When my dad was younger he used to get whipped with all kinds of things.

BO: My dad told me about his initiation when he was in Grade 8, all the Matrics came and threw him in a lake, threw all the Grade 8's in a lake, and made them swim to the other side.

These challenging situations, which are superficially constructed by senior learners, offer tests of strength and courage to the initiated party. It also creates an opportunity for facilitating group cohesiveness, as the victimised population seek comfort and unity in adversity. By surviving the initiation ceremony and ritual, individuals perceive an expanse in their life experience, with greater access to both inner resources and peer relations during times of strife and difficulty. Therefore, the current limits on these practices at learning institutes due to the heightened consciousness around physical abuse may inadvertently encourage young males to prove their resolve and belonging through alternate risk-taking activities, like substance use, promiscuity and criminal activities. However, whether it is the growing desensitisation to violence due to social context and media representation, or the underlying drive for performance, young people

are pushing the boundaries on what is considered acceptable initiation, resulting in various legal disputes, as illustrated by the Parktown Boys incident (Serrao, 2009a).

6.1.2.3.   Playing Rough

During the course of the focus group discussions, the concepts of bullying, school violence and physical play began to overlap. As stated earlier, Olweus (1993) defines bullying according to the intention to cause harm to the victim, the persistence and regularity of this behaviour as well as the imbalance of power in these situations. Participants did identify bullying based on these dynamics; however they tended more often to describe isolated acts of school violence. For example, the learners, both males and females, would physically attack each other in response to some stressor, most commonly due to relationship issues with a member of the opposite sex. In most cases there was an imbalance of power – an older learner hurting a younger learner, but it was not necessarily repeated victimisation of one person. Group participants suggested that each learner had been physically or verbally threatened at some level. The use of violence and aggression in physical play is more persistent across male friendship groups, with learners admitting to hurting their friends to impress and demonstrate strength. Participants do not recognise this behaviour as bullying in the true sense of the word as the intention to cause harm is questionable.

> JU: You see right here. This boy right here [*points to Brown*] speared a boy into the bus for nothing. []
> BR: It was just for fun. [] He's our friend. We were just joking around. But it was just a mistake that I hit him too hard. But I didn't mean to do it, it just happened!
>
> SU: I must admit I haven't been bullied… too often. I've been hit here and there, but I haven't been like thrown on the floor, and… hit hard. I think they play around a bit but I don't know if they know the boundary between playing and bullying.
> ST: They think it's a game.

Violence in play is naturalised and boys draw on aggressive sports like wrestling as ways in which to shape their identities. In the following excerpt, group participants liken Carl to a famous wrestler.

> JU: = They call him Khalil, the "Great Khalil."
> INT: The Great Khalil. That's a wrestler, isn't it? [] Do you guys watch wrestling? []
> BR: It's nice. [] Because they smack and bully =
>
> BR: You can't practice fighting, it just comes.]

Sport activities were often aligned with a discussion of physicality, in which sports like rugby were assigned the most importance in the school hierarchy. Therefore possessing and demonstrating strength and vigour were seen as immediate strategies to instil fear and respect amongst peers. Competitive male sport provides a socially acceptable tool for the differentiation of masculinities, where boys are excluded for not being able to perform like 'real' men (Ferguson et al. 2004).

> SU: But also the rugby players, they think they're *everything*, and they can =
> PH: = Most of them.
> RY: Especially the one!
> SU: Ja, he's full of himself, that's =
> PH: = Ja, because he knows he's stronger and bigger than everyone else. So he just picks on them.

6.2.   Displaced Masculinities

The term *displaced* captures the gradual shifts that young men have experienced in their sense of self, and their place in the world. Various political and social transitions at a national level, including the revolution of women's rights and the struggle for racial equality, are implicated in these shifts. It is against this historical backdrop that young men are negotiating socially acceptable male identities, underlying anxiety and uncertainty. During the focus groups, young

men identified tensions and fears of marginalisation related to gender and race. While social

conventions prevent addressing these doubts in a physical way, the language of young men is

characterised by subtle markers of abuse and discrimination, serving the ultimate purpose of

recovering social power. Strategies to regain social power will be discussed in the next theme.

6.2.1.   Finishing Second: "Girls have the Advantage"

In the co-educational school environment, the male identity is directly constructed in relation to

his female peers. It is the messages embedded in the institutional practices of the school that

play a large in determining acceptable male and female behaviour. Group participants indicated

high levels of staff favouritism towards female learners which is consistent with Frosh, Phoenix

and Pattman's (2002) findings amongst British adolescent males. Educators were accused of

making allowance for female learners at the expense of male learners, by providing female

learners with greater support. The comparison of male learners to martyrs in the second extract

clearly highlights this feeling of sacrifice and unjust treatment:

> MA: Their favourites, your favourites, it irritates me. []
> JO: The girls, they suck up to the coaches.
> MA: No, no, not only that. But if you ask a question, the coach, not only the coach, the teacher will shout at you, "What they hell are you asking a question for? You are supposed to know!" And if a girl in the class asks probably the same question, it will be like, "Oh yes. How are you doing?" Stuff like that.
> JO: There [are] more feelings for the girls than the boys.
>
> MA: But, but my dad told me that back in his day, that the co-ed schools if the 'chicky' did something wrong, [] they went and they nominated the boy that they didn't like and the boy had to take the punishment for her.
> SH: Okay, that's not fair.
> JO: That's not fair.

Dialogue around female advantage at school revealed that female learners also engage in

physical aggression, either directed at each other, or at their male peers. The tension around

these threats was the fact that social conventions dictate that men must not physically abuse

women. The same rules of confrontation do not however apply to similar encounters between

male learners. In fact, male learners express an obligation to defend against their aggressor,

especially if they are physically stronger. The sense of helplessness and weight of social

conventions is reflected in the following extracts.

> SI: And girls take advantage of boys because boys can't hit girls and they'll just carry on hitting the boy until he bleeds or something.

> SU: The thing about girls is they've got attitude. Lots of them have attitude.
> PH: Advantage, because like you can't do anything if they do something to you.
> Whereas if he's a guy that's smaller than you, then you've got to do something about it.

In understanding the factors that regulate this behaviour, participants referred to early socialising

values as expressed by family members, as well as threat of punishment from parents, educators

and even peers. Participants communicate conflict about these encounters, as their behaviour

would be open to evaluation by peers. For example, a decision not to retaliate is acceptable in

line with social norms but it does leave the victimised party open to physical injury and further

victimisation by peers, who now consider him weak and inferior.

> SU: [] I think it's also the way you're brought up and the manners that you are taught because when I was small I was taught never to hit a girl.

> INT: What happens to a boy if he does hit a girl?
> PE: He'll get in more trouble than the girl
> SI: Then the girls' friends, that are boys, will hit you.
> RO: It's basically like everybody goes against you, just because you hit a girl, everybody will want to hit you – as revenge for the girl.

> RO: Yes, it also depends what kind of guy you are. If you're really not a gentleman and a girl bullies you, all you'll do is just slap her and then just walk away and the girl will cry and run away and guys will start teasing you for hitting a girl. But if you just stand there and let the girl hit you, they'll tease you because they'll say you got beaten up by a girl.

6.2.2.	Policing Racial Tensions

There were various inconsistencies about the reported prevalence of inter-racial bullying at the

school. The educators involved in the study, all of which happened to be White, had cited

incidents of racial confrontation. These perceptions did however differ across focus groups,

usually according to the racial composition of the group. Mixed groups tended to deny racial

tensions at their school and often projected the problem onto other schools in the area, whereas

the group with all-White participants readily supported the staff claims of racial encounters.

Although it was not described as the leading cause for bullying, as in one race directly

attempting to dominate another, racial issues were often underlying the tension emerging

between individuals and groups. The following quote from a participant in a mixed-race group

shows the difficulty in reconciling and expressing racial conflict:

> SU: People get irritated with others often but, I've never… I don't think it's that, you
> know, *hectic* fights. I think it's just… also I think they verbally abuse the other people
> about their race but I haven't seen any racial fights, yet.

Further probing along the issue of race revealed strong perceptions of group belonging based on

racial lines. The participant accounts suggest that racial borders are strengthened through

conflict, with members of racial groups uniting in times of threat to offer protection.

> BO: And this school is a bit racist like, all the Indians stick together, all the Whites stick
> together and all the Black people. Like if there's a fight, it's never really like Black on
> Black, it's more White on Indian, or Black on White.

> RO: It's just the Matrics. [] When a Matric Indian starts with you, and starts trying to
> beat you up and all that, and you stand up for yourself. Then next year, you'll notice
> there's 15 of them – because they like all stand up for each other, and they'll say because
> you are a certain type of colour, "we're going to beat you up", and then all you have to do
> is walk away. And if you go to the corridor and the Indians are there, you have to walk
> backwards because they say, we're not going to let you in because you're not Indian.

It appears that the White male students felt the most disadvantaged by their ethnicity in a post-Apartheid context. This fear of marginalisation and resentment about still being forced to compensate for racial injustices of the past was a sentiment echoed by learners in Dolby's (2001) study initiated more than ten years previously. Inherent in this disempowerment is a sense that White learners have to police what they say for fear of offending others or being accused of discrimination. Interactions with learners of a different race are therefore characterised by unpleasant feelings of guilt and fears of rejection, resulting in tenuous conditional friendships.

> MI: [] It's hard to, to describe someone, to say what colour he is, if they're all thinking that you're being racist. [] So like I can't say [] he has black hair - that narrows it down to about 400 students, so you almost have to say, you know, he's Indian or he's Black or he's White, it narrows it down so much more. But then if you do narrow it down like that, you're called a racist, and then they start beating you and that's where the bullying starts as well.
> BO: But like if I say to you, a Black person, I say, it was a White person that did it then you'll be fine because it's not racial, but if I say it was a Black person then I'm being racist.
>
> MI: Before, what happened before, with like the racism from White to Black, I mean, it's, it's almost like flipped, although we don't have pure racism to a certain extent, now it's just changed around, now I can be called racist for calling someone Black but he can't be a racist for calling me White.

6.2.3.   Technologising Relationships

The use of technology was deeply rooted in the workings of the school. Internet access was readily available through the library system and most learners were said to carry cell phones despite the ban at school. Technologies like cell phones appear to play a vital role in the fostering of peer relationships as they minimise the anxiety of face-to-face communication. Communicating through text enables the user to edit their thoughts and feelings to present themselves in the most favourable light. It may also enable a healthy level of personal expression, as the adolescent cell phone user does not feel evaluated according to physical

appearance. Therefore when utilised safely, cyber-technologies have the potential to foster closeness and individuality – characteristics that are important in successful friendships (Heaven, 2001). The following quote illustrates the positive use of these technologies:

> SI: No they rather like, if they meet someone in the shopping centre or someone that they, like it's a long lost friend and they've seen them again, and they think they like the person, they'll say, "Can I please have your number" and they won't get to know them right there, then they'll go home and talk to them on the phone.

Although technology may provide a safe platform for peer interaction, group participants acknowledged its limitations. In the absence of nonverbal cues and physical closeness, continued cyber-communication may create levels of miscommunication or generate disinterest that may ultimately hamper the relationship.

> RO: Sometimes at the start of a relationship, like a friendship for example, it's a good thing because then you get to know the person and all that but then as time goes, you get bored talking to them, then you end up ignoring them and then you end up fighting because you're not talking and then it ends up with your friendship in the toilet, for example. It's all over.

Paradoxically, the anonymity and disinhibition afforded by cyber-technologies to increase social relatedness may also facilitate cyberbullying behaviours. Examples of cyberbullying cited by learners in this sample include hacking into Facebook accounts and posting hurtful comments on the part of the account owner so as to cause group tensions; the distribution of compromising cell phone pictures as a form of blackmail; and the use of multi-mix, a cell phone based chat function, where multiple learners will target one user by repeatedly sending him/her derogatory messages, or will use this communication to organise a fight at school. The following excerpt suggests that it is the characteristic anonymity of cybertechnology that may assist female learners in their cyberbullying practises.

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> RO: Because some girls are really shy and afraid to give their opinions to another girl face-to-face because maybe that girl is more popular or something, and they know they've got lots of friends. So then what they would do is use any false name, go on the internet, on Facebook or whatever, and *shred* that person which makes them feel good about themselves.
> PE: And it's mostly girls who use a lot of Mxit.

The discussion until this point has centred on the embodied man as a representation of the physical self and the performative self within the real world. Males appear to hold an instrumental relationship with their bodies, actively using their bodies to determine a sense of self worth and group belonging. However, with the relative disappearance of the physical body in cyberspace, the male identity becomes undifferentiated. Participant accounts suggest that cyber-technologies are already utilised equally by male and female learners. In fact, female learners may be better skilled at cyberbullying due to their advanced relational skills and indirect manipulation (Smith, 2004). This alternate space therefore creates another opportunity for subversion of power relations, contributing towards a greater sense of masculine vulnerability.

6.3.   Recovering Power

As discussed in the previous theme, male learners are confronted by shifts in power specifically in the area of gender, race and technological knowledge. Having grown up in a country with a legacy of social injustice, young men are increasingly sensitive to offensive and reactionary behaviours that would suggest direct confrontation. Group participants therefore reproduce objectifying, splitting and othering techniques to recover social power. These strategies are apparent in the language that young men use, as well as the ownership of technological media.

6.3.1.   Objectifying

The premise behind objectifying is to draw on concepts of sexuality and attractiveness in order to highlight the inherent weakness of women. It is important to note that one focus group repeatedly used this strategy which may reflect particular meaning-making within that peer group and is not representative of the sample as a whole. It does however indicate a disrespectful attitude to women which may aggravate GBV in the future. In the following quotes, group participants invalidate their female peers by basing their worth on physical appearance and making comparisons to negative cultural symbols like a 'tokoloshe'. Even biological processes like menstruation are attacked, affirming messages of the superior male body.

> BR: Just say now … if you are meeting up with a girl somewhere and you find out that she's not pretty then you just leave her, if you make a date. Then you just don't go and answer your phone, or whatever.
>
> AN: If you break up with a girl they start spreading rumours =
> JU: = They start chirping you, "you've got a small thing" [] You can only say she's ugly, like =
> BR: = Or she's got small 'somethings' []
> AN: They just call her the "B" word.]
> JU: No man. If she's short then you call her "tokoloshe."
>
> SU: [] Also other girls in classes like… you'll talk to them and that, and they'll take it, it's PMS I think, they'll take it in the wrong way and they'll just start pinching you and stuff it's so annoying. I think I've got more bullied from girls than from boys. I don't have a problem, but... [*group laughs*]

A significant form of objectification exists through the sexual image, which refers to nude self-portraits or video footage of individuals performing sexual acts transmitted by communication media. There are various arguments about the distribution of power in relation to the pornographic image. Some would argue that the female user is exercising her power and sexual dominance by posing for the image. Others would argue that these images serve to demean the

female form, stripping women of their agency and positive social value. The fact that cell phone

technology is not used in the opposite direction, with female learners circulating naked images of

men, speaks to greater social issues of power and possession. The cell phone medium has

therefore become yet another tool to objectify the female body and satisfy the male gaze.

> JU: [on the subject of receiving pornographic images from girls] Yeah, I've got four pictures [*starts to name the girls*]. They're Coloureds. [] They're like bullying me in a sexual way. [] Because you want, you want to have 'six' with girls =
> BR: = So they're giving you like a complimentary ticket. [] A ticket to come inside. [*BR laughs*]

An interesting play on the intersection of technology and gender is also presented in the

following excerpts. In the first example, group participants reduce the value of their female

peers to that of a cell phone, an inanimate object subject to outside control. The comparison that

group participants make of men to machine guns is however embedded with notions of power

and superior performance.

> INT: And your 'things' - what are some of those things?
> BR: Eish! Your cell phone … and your woman! []
> JU: You treat your cell phone as a woman. [] You got your hands on it.] You must change the cover every time. Like if it's used, it's used. [*laughter*]
>
> JU: We can you see, *operate*, we are machines!
> BR: *Machine guns*!

In addition to ownership of the pornographic image, male learners offer accounts of technology

use consistent with a *sexualising of violence*. The desirable violent image is captured primarily

on cell phones during the recording of fights at school. These videos circulate across schools,

bringing a certain level of fame or notoriety to the institution and people involved. This common

practice, which has been documented on investigative journalism programmes like Carte

Blanche, speaks to a culture of commercialised violence and economies of power.

RO: That's just literally for entertainment, where people just want to see what happens at this school – what happens at that school. It happens in nearly every school, where somebody fights, they send it to their friend and those friends send it to their friends, and it just goes on and on and on until a month has passed and there's another film comes out and you bring out the old film and then, "ahhhh, you're old-fashioned, now there's this film" and then they say "give it to me", and then it goes all over again.
INT: Do people make money off the films?
SI: They do, they sell them!
PE: Ja, and they can put them on the internet.

JO: = I'll get the video and then we'll show you. []
SH: = All these Black people are standing in a big circle and as they fall down, it's just like a swarm of bees, it's funny, they all just like run, and they're all just kicking and fighting. [] Everyone has their cell phones out.

While this technology is accessible to all, the possession of the violent image has become one of the key strategies to attain masculine dominance. Due to the fast rate at which these images are produced and disseminated, power is assigned to those who have access to the most recent material. Ownership of this material brings with it the potential for economic gain, as learners charge a fee for sending the images to other learners. Female learners appear to be excluded from these exchanges, thereby reinforcing hierarchies of social power.

6.3.2.   Splitting

In addition to objectifying, group participants tended to subscribe to the Madonna-Whore phenomenon, in which females were classed as 'good' or 'bad' based on whether their behaviour was consistent with accepted feminine gender roles. Viewing women in this way strips them of their agency and perpetuates their negative social value. For the male learner it maintains a masculine stereotype of being able to access sexual satisfaction while also associating with respectable girls that meet the code of expected femininity.

JU: A normal girl is a girl that sits with her legs closed. They don't, how do you say it?
BR: They're ladylike. [] They come when they're called]
JU: They don't look you up and down]
AN: But they don't go too far. They don't take things far =
JU: = It's just like baby kisses, that's all, that's all you'll ever get!

AN: They're like, not soft. []
CA: Yes. You expect them to be like nice and soft, but they're not. Then they turn out… bad ma'am =
JU: = They turn out to be wild.

Ambivalence about these sexual standards is evident in the following extracts where participants negotiate acceptable and unacceptable practises for initiating sexual relations. It appears that the major differentiating factor as to how participants received the sexual advances of a girl was related to her physical attractiveness. If a girl was deemed unattractive, her advances would be seen as a form of bullying, where the female victimises the male with her unwanted demands. In order to regain social power, he would then reject her advances and label her sexuality as 'wild' and 'deviant'. If a girl is judged to be attractive, however, sexual advances would be welcomed as a positive form of bullying. In this case the power dynamic is less clear, as the male submits to his partner's wishes, yet is guaranteed status and affirmation by his sexual conquest.

JU: [] Let's say, once when we were sitting in a group, four girls and four boys. And like, let's say that there's one that's fat, like fat, fat! She takes two chairs, maybe then you'll ask =
BR: If she can move over so you can sit]
JU: Shift. Then she'll say "I got a big ass" or something, you wont be able to 'fit in'. You see, something like that, they're wild! They want us to… [*points to his eyes*] They want us to look! Or sometimes they open their legs =

AN: = They sit like this ma'am [*opens his legs wide apart to show*]
JU: They're sending a message. Some kind of message! [] The message that you're meant to =
BR: = Come!

6.3.3   Othering

Othering is a technique that people use to distance themselves from a problem, thereby

decreasing their perception of risk or responsibility (Canales, 2000). Othering practises surface

in the language that people use, as they construct definitions of the acceptable and unacceptable,

and then align themselves with the more favourable position to reassert social dominance.

During the focus groups, participants used othering tactics to emphasise racial difference as well

as undesirable male sexualities.

In order to make sense of the ongoing conflict resulting from this embedded fear of

displacement White learners often use descriptions of self and others that do not contain overt

racial hatred but are charged with particular race and class connotations. These thoughts and

feelings are usually offered in an apologetic tone out of fear of reproach from peers. The two

following quotes illustrate how learners invoke discourses of primitiveness in the description of

their Black African peers, so as to regain some of the lost White superiority.

> SU: I think there is a lot of racism in this school. But still in South Africa I don't think it
> has really gone away. [] But I think it's the class of the person, because some people just
> accept =
> SA: = Well, rich people and stuff.
> SU: And ja. I mean, I've got a lot of Black friends but some of them, I, I'm sorry this
> might sound bad, but they're just so offish, I can't relate to them because they're just… []
> They have no respect for other people. But you get the people who have just forgotten
> about Apartheid and have just moved on and they're awesome people, but in our class,
> ja… they have no respect.

> MI: But, but, to be realistic, what we're always taught at school is not always true.
> When I ask my family in the Netherlands what's your opinion of the story they'll say,
> well, when they came down to Africa there was no boats, there was nothing, there was no
> trains… and words in the isiZulu language, like accounting is e-accounting, which
> obviously means that they didn't have a subject like that, so, in a sense that it was racist
> before with like Apartheid, it's almost helped the country and then we have democracy.
> And then I think what's going to happen soon is we're gonna almost go back into another
> Apartheid, but the other way round.

Despite attempts by learners to police potentially offensive statements to other racial groups, the same sensitivity does not appear to be applied to other minority racial groups. The Chinese learner in the following account is directly victimised for her minority status and difference. Although there is awareness that her treatment is inhumane, the mob mentality prevails and she is offered little assistance. The underlying suggestion is that by allowing other minority groups to face victimisation, they act as a vehicle for the expression of hostility, and a distraction from existing racial tensions.

> PH: When we went on that History trip yesterday there was a, a Chinese girl sitting in front of us and people kept making fun of her and pushing her seat. [] She was reading her Chinese book.
> SA: Ja, and everyone was like "huh" and laughing at her =
> PH: = And throwing stuff at her and =
> SA: = Bottles, balloons, bottles… ja…

Othering practices are a frequent occurrence with learners not claiming responsibility for the hurt of others. Fear of difference and use of threat tactics is also introduced regarding participant discussions of the recent xenophobia attacks, likening xenophobia to a form of national bullying. Participants express differences in opinion about national pride and respect for humanity.

> BO: But this xenophobia thing it is basically like bullying because our South African people are fighting =
> MA: And that's good, I believe in xenophobia.
> BO: With the Zimbabwean people.
> MA: They must get rid of them. It's true]
> BO: It's like we are bullying the Zimbabweans, the Zimbabwean people.
> MI: But the problem with xenophobia is, in the end we are all one person, we're all the same person, we all come from Africa, we, we're all brothers so why must we fight?

In the arena of sexuality, male learners use othering tactics to create strong gendered messages about the ways that males should behave. Group participants construct vague descriptions of a 'gay identity', in which male learners were rejected because of differences in the way they walk,

the way they talk and their facial expressions. Although there was no verbalisation of what these

actual differences are, there seemed to be a common understanding amongst participants,

highlighting the pervasiveness of these perceived differences.

> SA: If they look like… 'gay' kind of thing, people are like, they're 'get away from me'
> SU: Some people are so anti, um, with gays and lesbians and stuff, that it goes too far
> sometimes, I mean, let them do what they want to do even though I don't really like the
> idea of it. Let them have their freedom.
> INT: When you say someone looks gay – what do you mean?
> SA: = It's in their face and their =
> SU: = How they talk.]
> PH: The walk.]
> SA: Their voice.

The following excerpt presents an attempt to categorise alternate male identities according to

traditional constructs of femininity and masculinity. Immediately a relational concept of gender

is established in that females, as 'pillows', exist in opposition to males, as 'rocks'. Gay identities

traverse the boundaries between these two gender concepts as they are likened to a 'bean bag'.

The instability of this identity appears to create conflict for some learners who react by shifting

the undesirable male identity more towards a more feminine position.

> BO: But like boys are like rocks and girls are like pillows, because they're very soft and
> that kind of stuff. And he's like a bean bag – he's in between [*all the boys laugh*]. I
> promise you.
> MI: That's a very good description.]
> BO: He's in between but he's more, he's much, much more soft than =
> JO: = He's more on the side of the pillow.

In addition to setting up these classificatory systems based on observable behaviour, group

participants explore the possible causative factors of this difference, citing parenting styles,

family instability and patterns of past victimisation. While research does suggest that children

with poor parental support may be exposed to more bullying, the values inherent in these

statements are worth further investigation. On one level, these types of reflections suggest a

more sensitive generation of young men, who acknowledge the importance of family relations.

On another level, emphasising different childhood experiences provides an additional tool to

distance the male learner from alternate undesirable masculinities.

> SU: He's forward, but I don't know what's happened in his life, but something bad has happened. [] He has that voice and he goes up to girls and says, "Ah, ladies looking very nice today" and "Hello my love" and stuff like that.
>
> MI: There's a boy in our class, I'm not going to mention his name but, he's very often teased. [] The reason being he has a sister and the age difference between him and his sister is so great that his mother is just used to raising a girl so she tries to raise him in the same way, that's made his life so different that it's hard for him to cope with almost, you could say, being a boy.
>
> BO: He was probably brought up very differently to us, like he's, he like talks funny, he like, he's not good at sports.
> SH: Like he's very …
> BO: Soft.
> MA: 'Chick-ish'.]
> JO: Instead of playing rugby, he'll be like a medic for the rugby, he won't actually do that =
> SH: = Why, rugby's lekker!

Another strategy that male learners use to differentiate themselves from their undesirable male

counterparts is to blame the victim for the bullying. This theme was present in the work of

Phillips (2007), where punking was assumed in some cases to be the victim's fault because of

failure to regulate behaviour. In the following excerpt, group participants provide an account of

the reasons why their classmate is isolated.

> SH: [] If you say "gay" to him, he'll start crying.
> BO: Because he'll think you're talking about him.
> INT: Would you have been uncomfortable if he had joined the group?
> MA: Yes. I wouldn't have come. I wouldn't have come!
> SH: He's like a leech. He like sticks on to everything, like if, he gets a bit annoying. For our PE exam we had to choose 10 people and, I choose all of us =

JO: We never said anything. We were just like choosing, everything and that, and then out of the blue he just started, like almost started like *freaking out*.
SH: He's like, "thanks guys".]
[*John and Sharky say together: "Shot for giving me the boot".*]
JO: [] And we never said *anything*! But because he acted like that we gave him the boot.

The issuing of blame is a significant concern in the arena of GBV, raising controversial arguments about responsibility for victimisation. Many women have been blamed for sexual assault based on their style of dress, choice of company, sexual orientation, and failure to fend off advances. It is this stigma and lack of support from families, community members and organisations that perpetuates a cycle of failure to report rape.

CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the concept of bullying as a production and maintenance of power relations amongst school-based masculinities. Despite anti-bullying policies and peer-mentorship programmes, bullying is normalised within the school context and is understood as a physical and psychological process that may be enforced in overt or more subtle ways. Masculinities are actively policed by peers, forcing boys to position themselves against the ideal hegemonic masculinity operating within the school environment. Bullying behaviours therefore serve a purpose in social stratification and identity development through the differentiation of desirable and undesirable masculinities.

Early adolescent boys are constantly struggling for social position – facing challenges against each other, against their female peers and against older learners. Hierarchies of social power continue to exist at the level of age. Older learners possess greater physical and social resources and are assigned greater institutional control to increase their positive social value and maintain their dominant position. Management of conflict through either retaliation or more passive avoidance, along with the responses of peers, play a vital role in shaping young men's identity in relation to the masculine ideal. The repeated naturalisation of violence as expressed by group participants is however reflective of a more defensive attitude, which is likely to have negative consequences for more progressive forms of identity development amongst young men. In addition to this, it has been established that cellular communication devices play a key role in the dissemination of violent and sexual images, sustaining this problematic relational style.

Hierarchies of gender remain contested sites, exposing learners to potential conflict. At an institutional level, male learners feel that teaching practices are biased towards females, with

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educators providing additional support and guidance to female learners at the expense of males. These young men also express ambivalence about the current state of gender relations where female learners are active performers in the arena of physical aggression and sexual advances. Female expression of traditionally masculine traits like strength and sexual desire challenge gendered expectations. Male learners manage these feelings of unease and threats to hegemonic masculinity through adherence to sexual bullying tactics, including objectification and reproduction of the double-standard. By reinforcing labels, young men attempt to recover the social power they fear has slowly been eroded through changing social conditions.

Amongst young men, multiple masculinities compete for ascendancy, with gay men remaining on the periphery of acceptable masculine behaviour. Sexuality remains a site of conflict that male learners reinvigorate through their ideas about appropriate maleness and femaleness, with the sexual practises of the school-based masculinity remaining a reflection of the larger hetero-normative society. Non-conforming male learners are identified according to their personal style which involves identifiable markers of speech, movement and personal interests. Learners who do not conform to accepted gender norms are subject to social isolation and sexual teasing, in order to maintain the status quo (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2003). Group participants also draw upon othering techniques to distance themselves from alternate masculinities. Typical strategies are to identify familial or social stressors like divorce, abuse, or incorrect parenting that may have caused this 'abnormal' behaviour. Othering tactics are also reproduced in the context of racial identities to recover aspects of White supremacy. It is therefore less anxiety-provoking and threatening to one's own identity development to shift the responsibility away from the individual and onto circumstance.

Young men appear to be navigating between reactive and accommodating responses to changing notions of masculinity and do not appear to have reached progressive or responsive ways of accepting and integrating alternate masculinities into their sense of self. At this stage, young men's opinions are shaped primarily by institutional values, a need to be connected to past generations, and the influence of peers. At this stage of development, boys have a limited range of masculinities against which to construct their gendered identities, and continue to construct their understanding of self against the fantasy of the hegemonic ideal. The exit from high school may offer greater opportunity for interaction with more secure alternate masculinities that will challenge conceptualisations of self. While elements of the New Man discourse appear to be infiltrating consciousness in the form of calls for gender equality, young men may only really engage with this self-concept when asked to negotiate domestic and career responsibilities.

Although the research is focused on the youth, the emergent themes have implications for other forms of GBV including domestic abuse, child abuse and hate crimes. The emergent themes need to be understood within the South African context, affected by struggles for power, including the women's movement and abolishment of Apartheid. In the past, transformations along gender, racial and sexual lines have been met with a backlash, with fiercely reactive behaviours noted in the form of vigilante groups and corrective rape. Respondents in this study may not present with the same physically violent outbursts, but their comments suggest a veiled resentment and anger, manifesting in other more subtle forms of abuse like relational aggression and social exclusion.

CHAPTER 8: Recommendations

The final chapter outlines limitations within the study, possibilities for future gender research and suggestions for youth interventions aimed at the primary level of prevention. The research was qualitative in nature, requiring a smaller sample size and restricted site selection. Financial constraints, as well as an agreed entry/exit schedule, resulted in a briefer engagement at the school. Extended time at the research location may have added to the value of observations and interpretive detail. The use of a mixed-method design, with quantitative surveys of bullying prevalence combined with qualitative data may also have provided a more grounded perception of bullying within the context. In light of the above mentioned constraints, the findings cannot be generalised in regards to all adolescent boys in South Africa; however emergent themes may be used to guide future research. Ongoing research and consultation with young men is needed to establish factors that shape young men's attitudes and practices, as well as to support and evaluate programmes already in existence. Advocating for programmes that explore the concept of manhood are at the core of other specific interventions geared towards health, sexuality, HIV/AIDS, employment, and gender-based violence.

The motivation for intervening with males at a younger age is that they are still in the process of developing their peer groups, as well as their attitudes about gender and sexuality (Scalway, 2001). Younger individuals are also likely to still be in school, creating another platform for the dissemination of information and implementation of programmes. To echo the findings of Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman (2002), it was evidenced by the researcher that adolescent discussion spaces do yield productive conversation and foster insight into issues of identity and relationships. Role-playing and awareness-raising about participant roles and group

mechanisms are useful techniques proposed to demonstrate adaptive and maladaptive responses to bullying situations (Salmivalli, 1999). Being able to implement these discussions in school, preferably in small groups lead by outside adults, is likely to enrich peer relations and counter bullying behaviours. To employ outside individuals may be costly – however it is possible for schools to network with tertiary institutes involved in the disciplines of education, psychology or sociology, to allocate graduate learners to lead groups.

One of the most well-known and thoroughly evaluated bully prevention programmes is the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme* (Olweus, 1993). The intervention is designed to be holistic and effect change on multiple levels. The programme is not a single time-limited intervention but a guide for school functioning in which policies, rules and reporting mechanisms about bullying are prioritised. Steering committees are developed to head interventions, weekly classroom meetings are held to facilitate discussions about peer relations, and parents and educators are actively engaged in the identification and management of bullies, victims and bully-victims. Barriers to implementation of this programme, which may be relevant within a South African context, include resistance by adults and preference for short-term solutions (Limber, 2004). Provision of research like school bullying prevalence rates may play a role in shifting parental attitudes. Resistance by educators or senior management for fear of negative publicity may however require more authoritative instruction from the Education Department.

In the context of the research findings and growing media reports, schools also need to start developing policies to address the phenomenon of cyberbullying (Kowalski, Limber & Agatston, 2008). While regulating school-based internet technologies is easier due to monitoring software, regulating cellular technologies is problematised. The school in the study does enforce terms of use for cell phones during school hours, with cell phones being confiscated when seen

in class. However, even these policies do little to curb the video taping of fights at school, or the circulation of videos across schools. Although the media is documenting this phenomenon, many parents and learners are unaware of the gravity of these behaviours. Additional recommendations are that parents and learners receive psychoeducation resources on cyberbullying to create awareness on school policies and foster dialogue both at home and at school. Information about cyberbullying should also be integrated into the Life Orientation syllabus to highlight the consequences of this type of abuse, as well as the steps that can be taken by individuals to address these violations when they occur.

At a policy level, there needs to be greater legislation recognising the role and responsibilities of men, with the major aim of reducing inequality. Policies are implemented within the cultural context through the media, institutions and other service providers. There are already efforts to place men on the agenda as seen through the growing number of men's organisations, but this shift must not occur to the exclusion of women and women-based organisations, as this may fuel resistance and deepen the divides instead of moving towards social change. Understanding GBV and other forms of power relations as products of a cultural context rather than innate characteristics shifts the focus of intervention from the individual to society. Greater financial and human capital may therefore be invested at the primary level, emphasising promotion and prevention efforts rather than tertiary level individual care. While one cannot doubt the efficacy of working with the individual in a therapeutic setting, it is not a practical strategy in a country like South Africa where the need outweighs available practitioners. The aim is about working with men and women to engage men in the process of transformation in order to benefit men, women and children, and the nation as a whole.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Transcription Conventions

The following transcription conventions are followed (Shefer & Foster, 2001):

[] Material omitted.

. . . Pause.

] Overlapping talk (put on each statement which overlaps).

= Speaker cuts in.

[*text*] Explanatory material.

[text] Unclear, probably what was said. Also additional or replaced word that was probably

    meant by the writer, or to make the excerpt read better and/or make grammatical sense

text Emphasised by participant.

Appendix II: Interview Schedule

1. What makes someone a bully?

2. What makes someone a victim?

3. How do boys bully? Is it physical, relational or both?

4. Do you think girls bully? If so, how?

5. What does *being a man* mean to you?

6. What other words would you use to describe someone who is *dominant*?

7. Do you think that girls *like* boys who are bullies?

8. Do you think that as a man you can ask for help if you are a victim of bullying?

9. Is *cyberbullying* something you have experienced? Do you think it is a problem that needs to be addressed in a country like South Africa?

10. What are your perceptions of the school in terms of the rules/strategies in place to curb bullying?

Appendix III: Letter of Consent for Parents/Guardians

Dear Parent/Guardian

Re: Research study on bullying and masculinity amongst adolescent boys

I am a Clinical Psychology Masters student at the University of KwaZulu Natal. I am currently conducting a study on the experience of bullying amongst adolescent males, and their understanding of these behaviours in respect to different masculine values. You have received this letter because your son has expressed an interest in participating in the study.

The research will be conducted during June, after the examination period. The study consists of a number of focus groups, which will be conducted on school premises. The focus groups will be approximately an hour in duration, and will be tape recorded for transcription purposes. Participants will be required to attend one or two focus groups discussions. Information provided by your son will remain confidential and used only for the purposes of this study. Pseudonyms will be used to disguise any identifiable information. All participation in the study is voluntary and no adverse effects will result from discontinuing the participation. Should you prefer your son not to participate, please could you indicate this on the attached consent form.

At the end of the study a document will be drawn up describing the findings. A copy will be handed to the principal and will be available for you, the parents, to read. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries regarding this study. Thank you for your contribution.

Yours faithfully,

_____

Ms Leigh Adams   (Researcher)   083 780 5683
Dr Kaymarlin Govender   (Supervisor)   031 260 7616

Appendix IV: Consent Form for Participants

Working title of proposed research study:

Bullying and Masculinity from the perspective of adolescent boys

Volunteering for the study involves participation in one or two focus groups, which will be conducted on school premises, after school. The focus groups will be approximately an hour in duration, and will be tape recorded for transcription purposes.

Consent Form for Participants:

I _____ (participant) understand that my participation in this research project is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw from this project at any time. I have been informed that there will be no adverse consequences should I choose to withdraw from the study. I understand that I will not be obliged to answer any questions which I do not feel comfortable in answering. I have been informed that my responses will be kept confidential and that I will not be named in the report.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Researcher: **Ms Leigh Adams**
                083 780 5683
Supervisor: **Dr Kaymarlin Govender**
                The School of Psychology
                University of KwaZulu Natal
                (031) 260 7616

Appendix V: Consent Form for Parents/Guardians

Working title of proposed research study:

Bullying and Masculinity from the perspective of adolescent boys

---

Consent Form for Parents/Guardians:

Please tick the correct box

I _____ (parent/guardian) of _____ hereby

☐ give permission   ☐ fail to give permission

for my child/ward to take part in the above mentioned study being conducted at Kloof High

School. I have read the attached letter and know what the study is about.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Please tear off and keep for future reference

Researcher: Ms Leigh Adams
083 780 5683

Supervisor: Dr Kaymarlin Govender
The School of Psychology
University of Kwazulu Natal
(031) 260 7616

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher.
THANK YOU

Appendix VI: Letter to the Principal

<div align="right">

University of KwaZulu Natal
School of Psychology
Private Bag X540001
Durban
4000
20 March 2008

</div>

Dear Principal,

Re: Research study on bullying and masculinity amongst adolescent boys

I am a Clinical Psychology Masters student at the University of KwaZulu Natal (Howard College). For the purpose of completing my degree, I am conducting research on bullying amongst grade 8 boys, in order to understand more about this phenomenon. I am being supervised by Mr Kaymarlin Govender.

A wide array of literature exists for bullying however the majority of these studies have used statistical approaches to monitor the prevalence, scope and consequences of these behaviours. The study I propose is qualitative in nature, by enabling adolescent males to discuss the social norms and values that they attach to bullying and other masculine practices.

I am requesting permission to conduct this study at your institution. Please find enclosed a brief research proposal detailing the study to be conducted. I am sure that this proposal will answer any questions that you may have. However, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries concerning this subject.

Yours faithfully,

_____

Ms Leigh Adams   (Researcher)   083 780 5683

Dr Kaymarlin Govender   (Supervisor)   031 260 7616

Appendix VII: Letter to the Department of Education

University of Kwazulu Natal
School of Psychology
Private Bag X540001
Durban
4000

26 April 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Research study on bullying and masculinity amongst adolescent boys

I am a Clinical Psychology Masters student at the University of KwaZulu Natal (Howard College). For the purpose of completing my degree, I am conducting research on bullying amongst grade 8 boys, in order to understand more about this phenomenon

A wide array of literature does exist for bullying however the majority of these studies have used statistical approaches to monitor the prevalence, scope and consequences of these behaviours. This study is qualitative in nature by enabling adolescent males to describe their understanding of masculinity and their experience of bullying.

I am requesting permission from the Department of Education to conduct this study. Please find enclosed a research proposal detailing the study motivation, methodology and ethical issues. I am sure that this proposal will answer any questions that you may have. However, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries concerning this subject.

Yours faithfully,

_____

Ms Leigh Adams   (Researcher)   083 780 5683

Dr Kaymarlin Govender   (Supervisor)   031 260 7616

Appendix VIII: Transcript Excerpts

Note: Due to printing constraints, the following section contains a selection of excerpts from each of the four focus group transcripts. Full transcripts are available upon request from the researcher.

Focus Group 1 - 17/06/2008

Interviewer	**INT**
Andrew	**AN**
Brown	**BR**
Carl	**CA**
Justin	**JU**
Kyle	**KY**

Group composition: 2 Black African; 3 Indian

INT: So about the girls here at [the school], what do you think of them?
JU: Some of them are nice =
CA: = Ma'am, some of them are =
AN: = Aggressive, ma'am.
INT: Aggressive?
AN: Yes.
BR: Like when you go and throw them up ma'am, they'll *rough* you up.
JU: Most of the girls like this ma'am, most of them like this, this [*Justin points to the word 'sex' in the magazine*]
BR: Ja, the White guys.
JU: This here, this word right here. They like this *too* much.
INT: Why, why won't you say it?
JU: No, no….
KY: What word is that?
JU: *Six*
KY: Oh, ok …
JU: With the 'E' in it [*laughter*]
INT: Why, Justin, why are you afraid to say that word?
JU: Because ….
BR: Of the tape recorder.
JU: It's because of that thing right there [*points to the tape recorder*]
INT: So you won't say 'sex'?
BR: Ja
JU: Thank you for saying it. Ok, *sex*, ok….
INT: You feel more comfortable now that I've said if first?
BR: Yes

INT: Alright, so the girls at the school here, they act a bit hardcore…?
[*Participants say "yes"*]
INT: And…
AN: They're like, not soft.
CA: They are what you least expect ma'am.
INT: What you *least* expect?
CA: Yes. You expect them to be like nice and soft, but they're not. Then they turn out… bad ma'am =
JU: = They turn out to be wild.
INT: *Wild*?
BR: Yes ma'am.
JU: They got wild minds. You see, most of them… Let's say, let's say, once when we were sitting in a group, four girls and four boys. And like, let's say that there's one that's fat, like fat, fat, *fat*! [*one of the boys says a girls name*] She takes two chairs, maybe, then you'll ask why…
BR: If she can move over so you can sit
JU: Shift. Then she'll say "I've got a big ass" or something, "you wont be able to fit in". You see, something like that, *they're wild*! They want us to… [*points to his eyes*]
BR: Yes, they want … [*laughs*]
JU: They want us to *look*! Or sometimes they open their legs =
AN: = They sit like this ma'am [*opens his legs wide apart to show*]
INT: Ok, so what do you think they are doing when they do that?
JU: They're sending a message. Some kind of message!
INT: A message, ja, what message?
JU: The message that you're meant to =
BR: = Come!
JU: You must, you must, you must, put that thing to me. [*laughter*]
INT: That thing?
JU: Put that thing to me.
INT: That word?
JU: That thing you've been…
INT: That thing, that three letter word that you don't want to say?
BR: Number six!
INT: Number six, with an 'e'?
JU: Number six with the 'e'.
KY: Number six with the 'e'.
INT: So the girls at the school, they're quite … what's the word?
JU: = *Wild!*
INT: They're wild
JU: Most of them!
BR: They're stiff ma'am, like … [*laughter*]
INT: So they're quite, um, strong, quite dominant.
BR: Ja, fully.
INT: So you say, in some ways, are the girls more like men?
BR: Ja, but not all of them =
JU: = Not all of them.
KY: Some of them.

INT: And the rest of them? Then what are they like?
AN: The rest are normal.
INT: What's a normal girl then?
JU: A normal girl is a girl that sits with her legs closed. They don't … how do you say it?
BR: They're ladylike.
JU: They're ladylike. You see, you want to talk to them, they're like =
BR: = They come when they're called]
JU: They don't look you up and down]
AN: But they don't go too far. They don't take things far =
JU: = It's just like baby kisses, that's all, that's all you'll *ever* get!
INT: Give me some words – you say the girls…
JU: Ladylike.
INT: Normal girls are ladylike, they're not as forceful, they don't sit with their legs open and say, "come here, give me this, give me that!" [*laughter*]
BR: Number six!
INT: Number six.
AN: Give me number six.

JU: Sure, in school, you must, you must *show* that you a man and not a girl.
BR: Yeah!
INT: How do you do that?
BR: You stand up to them!
JU: You stand up!
AN: Like is someone pushes you, you push them back]
JU: If a person pushes you, you must push him back]
AN: Show the man]
BR: You have to show that =
JU: = If he's in Grade 12 he pushes you and you're walking on the side, you move and he pushes you, you must push him back. If he turns around to hit you, you must say I'll hit you back too.
BR: No, just say "hit me" and he hits you]
JU: You fight then walk away, that shows you're a man]
BR: You can't practice fighting, it just comes]
CA: Well, as long as you know you stood up for yourself.
BR: Ja, as long as you know that =
JU: = You tried!
BR: Tried. Let's say now you're fighting a bigger person, the fact that you put maybe two punches – you stood up for yourself and he's a bigger person, even if you make him bleed.
JU: Even if you gave him a blue eye [*BR laughs*]
BR: You can just say =
INT: = But if you don't?
JU: At least you tried. At least you tried]
BR: And you know you tried]
JU: If you can see that he is going to overpower you, you must go for one place and one place only! It's the [*points towards the male genital area. Group participants' laugh*]

INT: Then how is it good to be dominant?
AN: To protect your things otherwise people are going to take advantage of you.
JU: Be victims of crime.
INT: And your 'things' – what are some of those things?
BR: Eish! Your cell phone … and your woman!
AN: Your woman.]
INT: Woman is a thing?
JU: You treat your cell phone as a woman.]
BR: Yes]
JU: You got your hands on it.] You must change the cover every time. Like if it's used, it's used. [*laughter*]
INT: So do you think that women, girls, *like* a man who is dominant?
BR: No, not *very* dominant.
JU: They become boring.
BR: Ja, they become boring.
CA: Some just like them for protection, like "no one's gonna hurt my girl." Or please can you stop saying that.
JU: You remember that girl, the one that you were walking up with.
BR: Ja, I saw her today with that guy]
JU: She depended on me!
BR: Then I had to go. He was busy walking with the girl and then I chased the man. [*Justin and Brown laugh*] No, well, I didn't chase him but =
JU: = You walked by him.
BR: Yes, and then he turned around.]
JU: And you bumped him. And then he ran that way. He ran away. He went that way.
BR: He ran away.
JU: He *ran*!
INT: So what were you doing? Were you trying to help each other?
BR: He was trying to help the girl. I was trying to help him.
JU: You see, I …
BR: He was trying to get, to get it 'up' with the girl =
JU: = But nothing happened… [*Justin and Brown laugh*]

INT: Define bullying for me then.
BR: Bullying is when a bigger person takes advantage of you, and you don't do anything.
INT: A bigger person, bigger size?
BR: Big both – age and size.
JU: Big] [*Justin laughs*]
INT: They take advantage of you. So when that guy came to you, the Grade 11, is that bullying?
BR: No =
JU: = Some sort
AN: It's like discrimination.
BR: And you know, either 'spook' him.
INT: You had 'spook' in your hands. What does that mean?

JU: 'Spook', you couldn't see…
BR: It's like, you see now, my hands, you cannot say I can punch but the 'spook' that comes out when I'm fighting.
INT: I get what you're saying. Boys only fight physically?
BR: Yes]
JU: Yes]
INT: Do they not fight with words?
AN: In the beginning =
JU: = When it starts.
BR: And then someone puts the first punch or hit or clout, or whatever.
JU: Slap or something.] Black people start to slap - *bah* [*Justin pretends to slap someone*]
CA: First words, then punches, and then they both fall down and they still fight.
BR: Sometimes they hit and then talk. Sometimes they hit and then talk.
INT: So there's *no* occasion when guys will just, talk? They just talk =
JU: No, no, no =
BR: = They have to hit!
JU: That means that the other ou's scared of you then, then, then …
BR: You turn to the radio and talk.
INT: And how do girls fight?
CA: Hey, ma'am … slap] [*group participants laugh*]
AN: Slap.]
JU: Slap.] I love women. I *love* women fights. Because some of the women, they don't =
CA: = Ma'am they fight with their hands.
INT: They slap with their hands.
BR: That's how you tell a manly girl!
AN: They pull their hair out.
BR: That's how you tell a manly girl, you see how they fight.

JU: You see right here. This boy right here [*points to Brown*] speared a boy into the bus for *nothing*.
AN: And then the alarm rings and then the teacher came and then he ran.
BR: It was just for fun.
JU: Huh!
INT: So what did you do?
BR: It's a wrestling move.]
CA: Outside the school bus.]
JU: When you hit him in the stomach =
BR: = With your shoulders.
JU: With shoulders, it's like rugby.]
INT: Oh, so you like shoulder-barge.
BR: And then the alarm went on and everyone ran.
INT: And then what happened with that boy?
BR: Nothing.
CA: He's our friend.]
BR: No, he's our friend. We were just joking around. But it was just a mistake that I hit him too hard. But I didn't mean to do it, it just happened!

INT: Do boys fight with each other, even if they're friends or do they only fight if they don't like one another?

CA: Well, sometimes it is to impress the friends, see that they are strong!

BR: Yeah, see that they're stronger than others.

CA: And sometimes it is to fight them for serious …

BR: For serious matters]

CA: Let's say, um, Brown told me that Andrew is going to hit me or do something to one of his friends, and then he comes and he explains it in a different story.

BR: They like talk and then they say, "why you doing this?" If he says he's sorry and stuff then he goes.

JU: But sometimes =

CA: = But the message changes =

JU: = But sometimes they're people who talk s#*t! Pure s#*t! Like if someone says =

AN: = PC language, sorry guys!

JU: When someone says, let's say I ask you, "are you scared of Mr Brown?" and they say, "no" then I'll go to Mr Brown and =

BR: = You tell me that he's not scared of me and then I'll go and *make* him scared of me [*BR laughs*]

INT: So it's a lot, a lot of *talk* firstly?

BR: Yeah

CA: Yeah.]

JU: Yeah.]

INT: People talk and they create situations =

KY: = Well, sometimes they go to another person and tell him, he said that, that, that stuff to him and then you go and ask him, you say bad stuff to him and then you start fighting [*group participants laugh*]

INT: So you cause the fight?

KY: Sometimes you cause the fight.

INT: Why would you cause the fight?

BR: You start it and then you pipe down.

JU: You become the referee – like one, two, three, boom [*slaps hands together, acts out the sound of hitting someone*]. So one punch goes and then you say, "wait" ...

INT: So are you then the bully then for organising the fight? [*laughter*]

JU: Yes, some kind, some kind. We like the, sometimes if a fight's going to break in the bathroom, "It's like R5, R5, come in".

INT: Ok, so you're the business man?

JU: You say give me R5, you pay me, I'll give you R5 tomorrow, I have R45 in my hand. Here 'boetie', put in my pocket. I'll send you one for 30 seconds for R2. I'll send you one for one minute for R5.

BR: You see now, maybe your boy, oh no, wait, your girlfriend sends me a picture and then I say to you [*name*] sent me a picture then you come to hit me, he gets the wrong impression and then we fight, because of the stupid girl sending me a picture.

JU: Yes, you see these girls =

INT: = What picture is she sending?

JU: Nude

BR: Her picture – nude, of herself.
INT: Do girls do that here?
BR: Yes!
JU: Yeah, I've got four pictures [*starts to name the girls*]. They're Coloureds.
INT: From school here?
JU: Not from school, in [*names a community*].
INT: Oh, ok. So they send you these pictures?
BR: Yes.
INT: Do you think that when they send you the pictures, they are bullying you?
BR: No.
JU: *No, no no*! [*laughter*] They are actually, they are giving me a =
BR: = Entrance fee.
JU: An entrance fee.
KY: They're bullying you.
JU: They're like bullying me in a *sexual* way.
KY: Ja.
INT: And, how does that make you feel?
JU: Because you want, you want to have '*six*' with girls -
BR: So they're giving you like a complimentary ticket.
JU: They giving you, like a =
BR: = A ticket to come inside [*BR laughs*]
JU: A ticket, a ticket to =
BR: = Complimentary =
INT: To paradise?
JU: To paradise.

CA: Like we were sitting over there, [*points to a desk in the classroom*] and the girl opens the desk and then he found a condom inside.
BR: Ma'am, some people, they do all that stuff inside the classroom ma'am, whilst the teacher is not there. Not 'six', just they '*jam*'. Like =
JU: = Like you'll be sitting next to a girl and then you see …
BR: Then you see …
JU: Her hands start doing the *procedures …*
BR: Her hands move] [*Brown laughs*] and then you know - tickets! Then you just end up kissing them, whatever =
JU: = You see, you must see the girls in Grade 10, you must look at them all the time.
INT: Grade 10?
JU: Grade 10
INT: Why Grade 10?
JU: Because they're naughty! You must see this finger right here, a boy's finger, at the end like this.
INT: Ok, I am getting… I imagine what you're saying, but why the Grade 10's?
JU: They're *more* naughty!
BR: I don't know why]
AN: They've been around.
BR: They like to 'naai']

JU: They like to 'naai']

BR: Just say now … if you are meeting up with a girl somewhere and you find out that she's not pretty then you just leave her, if you make a date. Then you just don't go and answer your phone, or whatever.

JU: You tell your mother, your father, if she phones "I'm not here".

BR: I'm not here =

JU: = You tell your brother I'm not here.

BR: Not here. Tell everyone, "I'm not here"]

JU: I'm not here.] If she comes to the house and knocks =

BR: = I'm not here.]

JU: I'm not here.] If she wants to come in =

BR: I'm not here.

JU: He's bathing, you say, he's bathing. I'm telling you things change, when she's at your house, it *changes*. It's like "not here". "I want to see if he's not here!" She comes in. She's in the bathroom …

BR: Maybe he's in the toilet.

JU: It's not only, it's not no more, it's not only, "he's not here". She goes into you room, you see =

BR: = He's in the toilet.

JU: He's in the toilet. She goes in the toilet. He's not in the toilet =

BR: = He's in the shower.

JU: He's in the shower.

CA: He's at church.

INT: So then who's the bully and who's the victim?

JU: The girl is the victim =

BR: = The girl is the victim, the boy is the bully.

JU: The boy is the =

BR: = The boy is the victim

JU: The boy is the victim the girl is the bully, because she wants it.

BR: Yes. She's forcing him!

JU: She's forcing it!

JU: Sometimes girls say you've got a small thing.] They say that [*laughter*].

INT: So what do they say - they spread rumours, then?

AN: Yes.]

BR: Yes.]

KY: Yes.]

JU: You've got a small thing, you've got a small thing, you've got a small thing. And when you say, do you want to see it, they say "no", but they keep on saying "you've got a small thing". The only way to prove that you don't have a small thing is to say "guess who".

INT: So they spread the rumour around the school, and is that then a form of bullying?

JU: Yes!

AN: Yes, that's bullying.

INT: So girls do that at the school then?

AN: If you break up with a girl they start spreading rumours =

JU: = They start chirping you, "you've got a small thing", a small thing.
INT: And do guys do that about girls?
CA: Sometimes.
JU: There's nothing =
BR: = You can't say that
JU: You can't say she's got a =
INT: = I know you can't say *that*, but I mean =
BR: = Ja.
JU: You can only say she's ugly, like =
BR: = Or she's got small 'somethings' =
JU: = Maybe you say …
AN: They just call her the "B" word.] They just call her the "B" word.
JU: No man. If she's short then you call her "tokoloshe."
JU: But you girls, you naughty sometimes. Naughty *too much*! How can a girl say you've got a small thing?
INT: How does that make you feel as a man?
BR: It makes me feel like a stupid!]
JU: It makes me feel like a stupid person.]
AN: You're supposed to have a big one then you don't! [*all group participants laugh*]
INT: Ok, a real man will have … will have a big one [*penis*], so if a girl goes around and she's saying that it's really small, and she's telling all your friends and making this rumour around school =
BR: = Then it's gonna make you feel like a stupid knob! And then you're gonna want to show. [*Brown laughs*]
AN: Like you're a girl, you're not man enough.
INT: So then what do you do? Like you say you want to show it, like what do you do?
BR: You get =
JU: = You get the friend, make her friend naughty.
BR: Then you get the =
JU: = Then you get the friend and the friend tells her that, "Hey, your ex-boyfriend" =
BR: He's got a full gasket.]
JU: He's got an anaconda.] [*Justin and Brown laugh*]
INT: What hurts more, like what would be the most hurtful thing for a girl to do to you?
AN: To say you're a 'moffie.'
JU: What's does that mean?
AN: That you're a gay.
BR: To say that you're a 'naai'.
KY: You're stupid! Or spreading rumours about you.
INT: What type of rumours? What would be the worst rumours, we've said to say that you are a 'moffie' or to say you've got a small one.
JU: A small boy.
BR: If the girl is ugly, to say that she went out with you but she never. And she's ugly, she's lying.

Focus Group 2 - 18/06/2008

Interviewer   **INT**
Sharky   **SH**
Bob   **BO**
John   **JO**
Max   **MA**
Mike   **MI**
Trevor   **TR**

Group composition: 6 White

INT: What are some of the reasons why these, these, this bullying happens?
SH: For fun and amusement, amusement.
JO: Because they either want something, or =
MA: To entertain the crowd, people are watching the fights =
BO: To get respect.
MI: Often if there's a crowd behind you, you don't have a choice not to [hit] that person, otherwise they'll say that you're a chicken or something like that.
MA: And I'm one of those people.
INT: So Trevor you've been quite quiet?
TR: Ja, I'm a victim [*group laughs*] I've been bullied quite a bit, like a little bit. I've been pushed into walls, been pushed out the way.
MA: Ja, I've seen that]
INT: Are these people in your grade?
TR: Some of them [*Trevor smiles and looks around the group*]. It's because I'm thin [*group laughs*] and because I'm quiet. I won't do anything about it.
INT: When you say you won't do anything about it?
TR: Because I can't. They might just bully me some more … [*group laughs*]
INT: I'm just picking up on, why is everyone laughing?
MI: Well, because you see, the problem with poor Trevor here is that, the reason =
SH: = He's scared!
MI: He's too scared to say anything, to stand up for himself. And also, if Trevor does get teased sometimes he'll be close to tears, so I think that … [*Trevor looks shocked and gasps*] If, he wasn't bullied, I mean if he wasn't affected so much by the bullying, then people wouldn't tease him, but like if one person in this group said something bad to Trevor, about his mother or something, then maybe Trevor would cry but if Trevor didn't cry, then they wouldn't.
INT: But Trevor is laughing right now?
MA: From, from embarrassment.
BO: Trevor doesn't really get like teased or in fights or anything because he's got quite a few friends.
JO: Most of the time he just gets punched up for like playing around.
INT: So do you boys protect Trevor?
MI: Sometimes]
BO: Ja, to a certain extent]
JO: But not when it comes to [*name*]

SH: Then we're not friends with Trevor, we don't know him.

INT: To ask a question in relation to that, do you think that as a man you can ask for help if you are a victim of bullying?
SH: Sure.
MA: I'd ask my friends but I wouldn't ask a teacher, or mother or anyone.
JO: Ja, you wouldn't like ask a teacher or mother or that because they get too serious about it =
MA: Or they laugh at us]
JO: Or they'll embarrass you about it, like they'll go in and they'll =
MA: = Speak to the bullies.
JO: They'll speak to the bully in front of everyone and they'll make you feel really bad, and then when, while you're feeling bad and that, the bully would like =
MA: = Laugh at you.
BO: Boss you.
JO: Take advantage of that.
MI: Sometimes it's very good to get a very close friend so that you can always if you're being bullied or if something's happening, like for instance one of your family has died, you can speak to your friend about it, and then he can speak to a counsellor, or a teacher, get help for you.
INT: Do you think at this school you can speak to the teachers?
MA: No
JO: No]
SH: No]
BO: If you're being bullied and you tell the teacher, the bully's just gonna get more angry.
MA: Or the teacher's gonna laugh at you.
MI: Or the teacher will laugh at you.]
BO: And if you tell your parents =
SH: = They're just like that
BO: Ja well, that's just life.
INT: So how do you sort out a bully?
MA: You avoid them.
BO: Just avoid them, and just let things cool down, don't react because they get bored and then they go do something else … hopefully.
INT: So the answer is, "don't react".
BO: No, no, unless =
JO: Don't react in a way that you're gonna get yourself =
SH: = I can't do that!
MA: Ok, you go out to [*name*] and smack him, and see what happens next =
SH: = I'm not saying that, you've gotta teach them some kind of lesson.
JO: You've got to stand up to a certain extent not to like that extent where you cross the borders of actually going crazy then the bigger person will also go crazy, and there's more chance of you getting hurt.
BO: If you can like, if they really are [annoying] you and you wanna stop them, and if they are your size then you can hit them and take them down, but if it is someone like [name] and you try hit him and he's gonna laugh at you and he's gonna [flick] you =

MA: Their favourites, your favourites, it irritates me. And from what I've seen, it's mainly the girl, it's like if the girls =
JO: The girls they suck up to the coaches =
MA: No, no, not only that. But if you ask a question, the coach, not only the coach, the teacher will shout at you, "What they hell are you asking a question for? You are supposed to know", and if a girl in the class asks probably the same question, it will be like, "Oh yes, how are you doing", stuff like that.
JO: There's more feelings for the girls than the boys.
INT: Is it hard being a boy at this school?
[*Group says "yes"*]
TR: Ja, a really hard life.
INT: Can you expand on that, Trevor?
TR: On what? A hard life to live?
INT: Hmmmm.
TR: You get beaten up at home, and then you get beaten up at school.
JO: Then you get bad marks and when you go back home and then you get beaten up more
[*laughter*]
TR: It's like a vicious cycle.
BO: Sometimes the teachers, with exams, they like while they're teaching stuff you don't understand something and then when the exam comes, you don't know what to write or answer and they shout at you for getting low marks afterwards when you didn't understand it in the first place.

INT: [] So what about when they have these fights at school and people record them on their cell phones?
BO: Oh, wow, they only record them if it's like really, really =
JO: = I'll get the video and then we'll show you.
MA: I wanna see the video! I haven't seen it yet.
SH: It's like a swarm of bees. It starts off with two girls fighting and, with their friends on either side =
JO: = And in a matter of seconds, you just see =
SH: = All these Black people are standing in a big circle and as they fall down, it's just like a swarm of bees, it's funny, they all just like run, and they're all just kicking and fighting.
JO: They're just kicking anything that =
SH: = Everyone has their cell phones out.
BO: Ja, I bet you he has his cell phone here.
INT: Do you think that was set up, or?
JO: Nah, I don't think so …
SH: Well, they were all standing up on the bank, and they were like talking =
JO: = Because [*name*] and that chick, the two people that were fighting, they were friends.
SH: No, were.
MA: They were.
SH: They were in different grades.
JO: They were in the same grade.
SH: One was in grade 9, the other was in grade 8.

MI: I had, like, an encounter at break. It was like a racial encounter, just like that boy that I was speaking about earlier, the boy that I knew last year. He often said racist things but in high school he has kept quiet a little bit. So at break, I saw him talking to a Black person because he was looking for, for one of his friends and he was describing his friend to this group of boys and, as soon as he said that the person he was looking for was Black, a big fight started, well it wasn't a big fight, it was more like arguing with hands up in the air and things like that, and he looked very small compared to the other bigger, taller … not-white people. [*laughter*] So, I think my friend has definitely learned through high school and through experiences, how to avoid bullies and how to, run his mouth smartly.

SH: Yeah right!

INT: So, if a person gets picked on, how do you think it makes them feel?

MA: Like a loser because [they'll have stopped you]

TR: See, because then you think low of yourself, then you're gonna get bullied more. You've gotta stand up and be like, wait a minute, I'm a *man*! You can't think like =

MA: But that's your self-esteem]

TR: = I'm a little wimp because then they're gonna come beat you up. Because they're looking for somebody that's like, like walking down the street]

JO: They're looking for a soft spot]

MI: They're **tr**ying to impress people. And they think that, bullies think that if they beat somebody up, they're gonna get like instant respect.

BO: I wouldn't feel bad because if you like do something back or just leave it alone =

MA: = Chalk them back!]

BO: You're gonna look like the better one, the better person, and he's gonna look like an idiot.

MA: There's like this one guy, I'm not gonna mention names [*laughter*] He comes to me, he came to me today =

SH: = He's short

MA: Ja, he's short but he is kinda staunch, in a way, and he came to me and punched me and he called me a [*name*], so I =

INT: = He called you a?

BO: A Zulu swear word.

MA: It's a swear word in Zulu. And then, so luckily I knew a swear word back, so I punched him and I called him that and then he left me alone. So sometimes you have to …

JO: Fight Back]

BO: Retaliate]

MA: Yes, that's the word!

BO: [*Name*], is like, this

MA: He actually isn't =

SH: = But I like saw the funniest thing today, [*name*] pushed Trevor, over here, he pushed Trevor while Trevor was walking up the stairs and Trevor went flying and hit the wall, and then when I saw [*name*] walking up, a girl came and hit him and put [*name*] onto the floor. And he was like crying, and then she walked off, and she was fine.

MA: I like that. I wish I could've seen it.

SH: So, it's like the taller guys gets picked on by the shorter, little oke and then the shorter little oke gets picked on by the girl. So it was kinda funny.

MA: Well, in the other school, for our initiation [*one of the boys mumbles something*] Shush! When you walked back from the break they used to play soccer, because there were lots of soccer fans, and they used to come and, they were like Grade 11's and they had perfect aim and they used to hit you in the back of the knees here, so you would fall. And it was kinda funny to watch if you watch it from behind. Because they used to shoot at you and you used to fall to like that and I think a school without that … they still think they're … everything.
BO: Ja, bullying is bad but in a way it's =
MA: = Good!
SH: Keeps you in your place]
BO: It's sort of good because if you never ever get bullied than you don't know =
MA: Well, it's initiation then bullying. Initiation =
BO: If you don't get bullied then you won't know what to expect later on in life when you actually do get like mugged or something.
MA: Yes, yes.] My mom has this one friend, she won't let her children watch the news because it's so bad for them but then this year when we had that strike thing, when that happened, we were supposed to give them a lift home, and they were crying and everything and now for me, if I watch the news and then I watch a violent hit man, or whatever, I'm cool with that so, I'm gonna let my children do that kinda thing so my children won't get all shocked and … they expect it.
MI: The thing is, from a certain age we need to face reality, you can't like - that's what high school teaches us]
SH: School]
MI: We can't like live our whole lives as a lie and then when we turn 18 and we go into the real world, we don't know what to expect and then we're gonna get mugged and things because we're always scared or whatever.
[Max continues to say "yes" in agreement with Mike]
SH: And that's what I think, like the private schools, they try and like, they shelter everything.
MA: Yes, I've seen [*laughter*]
BO: And then when you leave school you don't know what to expect
MA: It's true, because they sit there in their Mercs, they come out after school, they get into their Mercs, and =
BO: = Everything is there,
MA: Everything is perfect - the door gets opened for them by the butler, or whatever …
BO: If there's like a smoking incident or something, you get expelled, or, you get like … but you don't hear about it ever because they cover it up!

MI: It's hard to… when you're talking like, that happened to my friend. It's hard to, to describe someone, to say what colour he is, if they're all thinking that you're being racist.
JO: Ja]
MI: So like I can't say that, I can't say he's tall and he has black hair - that narrows it down to about 400 students, so you almost have to say, you know, he's Indian or he's Black or he's White, that, it narrows it down so much more. But then if you do narrow it down like that, you're called a racist, and then they start beating you and that's where the bullying starts as well.
BO: But like if I say to you like, a Black person, I say, it was a White person that did it, then you'll be fine because it's not racial but if I say it was a Black person then I'm being racist.
MI: Ja]

INT: Do you think that says something about our country?

MA: No! Not really.

MI: Ja, I think the whole thing =

MA: = It's true]

MI: About freedom in this country is… What happened with =

MA: = Mandela]

MI: Before, what happened before, with like the racism from White to Black, I mean, it's, it's almost like flipped, although we don't have pure racism to a certain extent, now it's just changed around, now I can be called racist for calling someone Black but he can't be a racist for calling me White.

MA: Ja

MI: There is something wrong with that.

INT: You think it is a problem at this school?

MI: Yes.

SH: Because in our class there is like, like 15 White people and 15 Black people.

MI: But, to be realistic, what we're always taught at school is not always true. When I ask my family in the Netherlands what's your opinion of the story they'll say, well, when they came down to Africa there was no boats, there was nothing, there was no trains… and words in the isiZulu language, like accounting is e-accounting, which obviously means that they didn't have a subject like that, so, in a sense that it was racist before with like Apartheid, it's almost helped the country and then we have democracy. And then I think what's going to happen soon is we're gonna almost go back into another Apartheid, but the other way round, because =

BO: Ja]

MA: Ja, with Zuma]

MI: 800 000 White people left South Africa last year. 800 000! So I'm sure that figure tells us something.

BO: Ja, they were saying that if Zuma goes to jail =

JO: = He's gonna kill a few English people.

BO: Everyone, all the ANC are going to pick up guns and, start shooting.

MA: No, I don't believe that. He won't get in, no ways [*Bob laughs*]. It's true. It's not going to happen!

INT: What do you think about the future?

JO: The way South Africa is going now I don't think there'll be a future for South Africa.

MA: I promise you he won't]

BO: Ja, there's gonna be like a civil war!

MA: Like Zimbabwe]

SH: Like, I can hear this, they say South Africa is going to be the next Zimbabwe.

MA: Just with crime, just with crime]

BO: It's already started with the =

MI: = Xenophobia

BO: Xenophobia.

TR: What's that?

MA: Xenophobia is =

BO: = When the people from Zimbabwe have been coming in and our Black people]

MA: = And all the Black people have been killed]

MI: You know what's so sad about xenophobia =

JO: But they say it's not about the local people, it's about the, like the Zimbabweans coming into our country that are making the crime.

MI: I saw on the news, 64 xenophobic people that were killed - 27 of them were South African, 27! They're killing their own race =

MI: The problem with this school is like, we can't express ourselves. If I, if my good friend is bullied by, by Bob then he can't just go to the teacher and say "Ma'am today I was bullied" because the simple thing is so many people get bullied, they have so much on their hands we don't want to stress out the teachers too much, and to be honest they can't really do anything about it, so that's why people need to resort to counsellors and things like that.

SH: I also think it's a bit unfair that like, look we're throwing the paper at the teacher but the teacher can't do anything to us [*points to the picture of a person having paper thrown at them*]

BO: Most she can do is give us like a three hour detention or …

SH: But that doesn't really teach us a lesson!

BO: When my dad was younger he used to get whipped with all kinds of things

TR: [*Trevor examines the same image*] But that's like a student, doing some oral and the kids are just being 'swak']

MA: If a teacher had to hit me, I would hit the teacher right back.

SH: No, you wouldn't.

MA: I would hit the teacher back.

TR: You'd get expelled.

MA: If a teacher hit you, the teacher would get fired and my family could sue them.

SH: Why? It's teaching you respect.

MA: The only thing, I'd say it was like self-protection.

SH: It's teaching you respect!

JO: No but also =

INT: Okay, one person at a time.

MA: Yes I would.

SH: No ways!

JO: But also the teachers don't, they don't have the right to touch you, they're not allowed to touch you, if they touch you or like do physical violence, and they hurt you =

SH: = You're not allowed to touch them.

BO: I think they should have the right to, because it's teaching us respect.

SH: Ja.

BO: They wouldn't hurt us for nothing

SH: I also agree

MI: In our modern world where we apply for 'equal-ness' between men and women, it's not fair that you could bring something like that back in, and then not make it even for both. If like every country wants to make like a woman president, and a woman leader, or something like that, so bringing women in then if you do one thing right then you have to do the other right.

INT: Are men designed though to be able to take more physical punishment?

SH: I think they're, we're just a bit stronger than the woman.

[*group participants say "Ja"*]

BO: I believe that =

SH: = She can get hit on the knuckles]

JO: If like, if the boys have to get hit, then the girls must also because just because we're a boy doesn't mean like we can handle a whipping and everything, if we have to get hit then the girls also have to get hit.

SH: My opinion on that is, like us boys when we are born, we grow up completely differently to how girls grow up. Girls grow up with like …

MA: Barbies!

SH: With Barbies, and like if they get dirty they have to wash themselves like straight away. But with us, it's like if we get dirty, so what!

JO: We can handle it]

SH: So I think that's why I think we're a bit more, like rough and tough and firmer than girls.

MA: But I think guys should, if the guys get punishment girls should get them to, because you do get guys who are a bit on 'the side' and they're obviously not used to punishment and probably grew up the way Sharky was describing.

BO: But like boys are like rocks and girls are like pillows, because they're very soft and that kind of stuff, and he's like a bean bag - he's in between. [*laughter*] I promise you.

MI: That's a very good description.]

BO: He's in between but he's more, he's much, much more soft than =

JO: He's more on the side of the pillow.

INT: And what about girls who're the other way. They're meant to be pillows but they are =

SH: = Rocks!

Focus Group 3 - 20/06/2008

Interviewer   **INT**
Sam   **SA**
Philip   **PH**
Steve   **ST**
Ryan   **RY**
Stuart   **SU**

Group composition: 3 White; 1 Black African; 1 Indian

SU: I must admit I haven't been bullied… *too* often. I've been hit here and there, but I haven't been like thrown on the floor, and… hit *hard*. It's, I think they play around a bit but I don't know if they know the boundary between playing and bullying.
ST: They think it's a game.
INT: You say you don't think that girls bully?
SA: They do]
PH: They, ja]
SU: Heavily]
INT: They bully boys?
SU: I promise you they do.
INT: That's one question, out of all the groups I've had, that has always got the biggest response. When I've said, "do girls bully boys?" Everyone goes "Ja!" [*laughter*]
SA: Well they do.
INT: Why is that?
SA: Verbally.
SU: No =
ST: = No also, physically.
RY: They do, they do. They'll slap you around a bit.
INT: If girls bully boys, why does it happen?
PH: Because they think they're tough, bigger.
SU: I don't know how to say [*group starts talking about a girl*]
SA: Who?
SU: Who me?
RY: No someone in our class.
SU: A girl?
[*Sam says the girl's name, the group participants laugh*]
INT: Why, what about this girl, what does she do?
PH: She just pushes through.
SU: Oh, this girl! [*rest of the group laughs*] She bulldozes!
INT: Does she have a nickname?
SU: Ja, "Bulldozer"
RY: If you try to get through the door, she like pushes you out.
INT: And she uses her strength to 'pick on' people?
[*Group participants say "Yes"*]
SA: She gets… [*whistles and shows actions of someone hitting a person into the sky*]

SU: If you're in her way, let's just say, she can push you… *down*!
PH: She doesn't ask you to move or she doesn't move for you.]
SU: Attitude!
[*group members agree, "yeah, attitude"*]
ST: The way she looks at people, teachers…
SU: Ja, her and [*name*] have an attitude like towards people. Disrespect, I think.
SA: The biggest [attitude].
SU: Ja, she's been shouted at a lot but… also other girls in classes like… you'll talk to them and that, and they'll take it, it's PMS I think, they'll take it in the wrong way and they'll just start pinching you and stuff – it's so annoying. I think I've got more bullied from girls than from boys. I don't have a problem, but... [*group laughs*]
INT: Do you think that if a girl bullies you, you can do anything about it?
SU: I would never hit a girl back =
PH: = Ja,
SU: So I think they can take advantage of that, and they know that they can take advantage. I mean, I would never, like I'd tap them like this [*taps one of the other boys*] and say, "No, stop it" but never like hit a girl.
PH: Never like hit]
INT: Whereas you could do that with guys?
SU: As long as he's not *too* large [*group laughs*]
INT: In a bullying situation, you can't bully girls physically because… well, why can't you do that?
SA: Because =
SU: = It's disrespect!
SA: We've got like something that makes us like hard, [*stutters*] but girls even if you don't punch them hard, they'll cry…
SU: No, but I think it's also the way you're brought up and the manners that you are taught 'coz when I was small I was taught never to hit a girl.

ST: Even here, when those girls were fighting last week, they were video taping that fight.
SA: Ja, like on the bus, there were phones everywhere.
INT: What was that? You said phones everywhere?
SA: On the bus, we went in there and then we saw people by the window with their phones filming it.
SU: Ja, they find it funny I think that two people are fighting and then someone gets 'smoked'. It spreads quickly. There was a black boy and white boy and they think it was racism, you know that thing.
SA: Yeah.
PH: When we went on that History trip yesterday there was a, a Chinese girl sitting in front of us and people kept making fun of her and pushing her seat =
SA: = Because she was reading [*stutters*] =
PH: = She was reading her Chinese book
SA: Ja, and everyone was like "huh" and laughing at her =
PH: = And throwing stuff at her and =
SA: = Bottles, balloons, bottles… ja…
INT: I hear mixed things from different people, is there interracial fighting here?

SU: I think there is a lot of racism in this school. But still in South Africa I don't think it has really gone away.

PH: [It comes up, like because you're this or because you're that race].

SU: But I think it's the class of the person because some people just accept =

SA: = Well, rich people and stuff.

SU: And ja. I mean, I've got a lot of Black friends but some of them, I, I'm sorry this might sound bad, but they're just *offish*, I can't relate to them because they're just…

SA: They're like =

SU: = They're a different… They're in their own world because they just know =

PH: = Ja, like in our class.

SU: Like our class. They have no respect for other people. But you get the people who have just forgotten about Apartheid and have just moved on and they're awesome people, but in our class, ja… they have no respect.

SA: The girls especially =

PH: = Ja

SA: They just go wild.

INT: So do you think a lot of what happens in school is a reflection of what is happening outside in South Africa as a whole?

PH: Yes]

ST: Yes]

PH: And then it spreads. When they're out of Matric, they're gonna tell people to, to, like, "don't trust those kinds of people" and …

SU: And it will go on in families and generations, I think. Because I can understand it was a bad experience but now it's over, leave what's in the past in the past. Because, ummm, also I get irritated because some people get angry when they talk about Apartheid but they didn't live in that time so how can they relate to the struggle?

INT: When people are picked on, what are some of the characteristics that people use to 'pick on' people?

RY: Looks! If people have big teeth or something, then they will tease them about that =

PH: = Glasses

SA: If they look like… 'gay' kind of thing, people are like, they're 'get away from me'.

SU: Some people are so anti, um, with gays and lesbians and stuff, that it goes too far sometimes. I mean, let them do what they want to do even though I don't really like the idea of it. Let them have their freedom.

INT: When you say someone *looks* gay - what do you mean?

SU: Even like =

SA: = It's in their face and their =

SU: = How they talk]

PH: The walk]

SA: Their voice and, ja.

INT: How they talk =

PH: = How they are as a person?

SA: Well, we know this boy, okay.

PH: [*Says a boy's name*]

SA: Yeah, [*name*]. And he's like that, he's asked so many chicks out, but got like 20 rejections.

SU: He's forward, but I don't know what's happened in his life, but something bad has happened, and he's just… he has that voice and he goes up to girls and says, "ah, ladies looking very nice today" and "hello my love" and stuff like that but, and I think some of them get irritated with him a lot, and they've told me to go and, ja. I think also, another characteristic is hygiene.

INT: Hygiene?

SU: Ja.

SA: Apparently some people don't bath in the morning.

SU: But I think something, because my friends have gone to [*private all-boy schools*] and I really wanted to go but I couldn't go, and I think they don't really get bullied as much, I think it's very rough in the boys' schools, but I think they get accepted as a person easier than a co-ed school and I don't think there's as much trouble with girls and stuff because my one friend said he has a friend at [*one of these private boys' schools*] and his brother died because he was a retard, and the one guy called him a retard, and then he said, "what did you say?" and other guy came behind him and said, "you're a r-r-r-retard" so he hit the guy like that and then the guy behind him he hit him in the back, and they were both like knocked out. And he said a few weeks after that they were friends again. They just got over it and got on with life but I don't think that would ever happen here =

PH: = Ja

SU: I think they would stay angry for so long, ja.

INT: Is it easier to speak about the subject of bullying at a co-ed school or at a single sex school?

SU: Co-ed school.

SA: Ja, co-ed.

PH: Ja, but male or female can talk about the same thing =

SU: = But I think there is more bullying at a co-ed school than an all-boys school because… you can get in trouble easier at a co-ed school with girls and stuff and then another bigger guy that likes them with come after you and bully you, so I think it's ja.

Focus Group 4 - 21/06/2008

Interviewer   INT
Rob   RO
Peter   PE
Simon   SI

Group composition: 1 White; 1 Black African; 1 Indian

INT: When I say the word 'bullying' to you – what are some of the things that come to mind?
RO: I see a small person with like a big ego who thinks he can beat up everyone just because he's popular or something, picking on a larger person or a person of the same size.
PE: I think of a big person dangling a smaller person upside down while taking his money and his lunch.
SI: I see a group of bullies that are bullying a little person that's all by himself and he can't do anything because there is no one to protect him and he doesn't want to do anything because there is a lot of them and only one of him.
INT: So then, what are some of the qualities that you think make someone a bully?
SI: Muscles.
RO: A person that's popular and everybody likes him.
PE: If he has a lot of attitude.
INT: So it's physical qualities like muscles; socially he's popular and he's also got an attitude that makes him want to fight.
RO: Yes.
INT: And similarly, what are some of the qualities that make someone vulnerable to being a victim?
RO: If that person is like really lonely, and is like usually reading books all by himself. And then people will want to pick on him just because they see a reason for that.
PE: A really unpopular person who's really quiet.
SI: A person who may have disabilities or look different to someone else.
INT: So someone who looks different and doesn't have friends [*intercom announcement*]. What are some of the ways that people bully?
RO: It's usually verbally, but sometimes they can be more physical, like they'll push you around and if you retaliate to that, they'll just start beating you up for no reason.
INT: Physical and verbal. Do girls bully?
PE: Yes they do. Yeah, some girls do it, because some older girls pick on younger girls.
SI: And girls take advantage of boys because boys can't hit girls and they'll just carry on hitting the boy until he bleeds or something.
INT: At this school, girls have more power because boys can't retaliate?
SI: Yes]
PE: They're more girls in the school than boys]
RO: Yes, it also depends what kind of guy you are. If you're really not a gentleman and a girl bullies you, all you'll do is just slap her and then just walk away and the girl will cry and run

away and guys will start teasing you for hitting a girl but if you just stand there and let the girl hit you, they'll tease you because they'll say you got beaten up by a girl.

INT: It sounds like you really can't win in those situations!

RO: Yes!

INT: What happens to a boy if he does hit a girl?

PE: He'll get in more trouble than the girl.

SI: Then the girls' friends, that are boys, will hit you.

RO: It's basically like everybody goes against you, just because you hit a girl, everybody will want to hit you - as revenge for the girl.

INT: Do you think that as a whole, the Grade 8s are bullied, as a grade?

RO: Yes, sometimes, they think, "Ah, they're smaller than us and we've been here for a longer period of time than them, so they should get initiated", and that's when all the Grade 8s get hit by the Matrics and Grade 11s.

SI: There are some people who say "oh, I went though that in Grade 8, I was bullied in Grade 8, I know what it feels like" and some will say, "Now we must do that to them" or others will say, "I don't want these Grade 8s to feel the way we felt, we must stop it now".

INT: Did you have an initiation in Grade 8?

RO: No]

SI: No]

RO: We were supposed to also have one for rugby, where the 1st team hits us, but because they were hit in Grade 8, they decided not to hit us. They said, "No, let's leave them alone, this is their first game and it is a big match. So let's just encourage them to win". And they came to our game and supported us, and we won our first game.

INT: When you say they were supposed to *hit* you, what was planned?

SI: It's on a bus, on the way to another game. You're on the same bus as them and then =

RO: = Because the teachers go in their cars, so we're left all alone with them but then they decided not to do anything.

INT: Would they just *hit* you, literally just hit you?

SI: Yes.

RO: Well, if you're in the way, they'll just hit you. They'll just stand up and hit anybody in the way. First they'd say, "Ok, who is in U14 rugby, A-team?" And if you didn't put up your hand, they'll just say "Ok, then we'll just hit everyone", if you put up your hand and say "I'm being honest, I am in U14 rugby", they'll also just hit you.

INT: Again, you can't win.

RO: Yes.

INT: If you have to think about your time in Grade 8, has it been a good experience, have you made new friends?

SI: Yeah, it's way more exciting than primary school.

RO: Primary school is like a limit of what you can achieve, here at high school there's lots of people with a large variety of sports and all that, when you meet people there and then you become friends with them and you learn them for a long period of time, and when there is an incident of bullying - when you get bullied, your friends support you and then the bully will just walk away because there's too many people.

RO: Sometimes the bully follows you, but because you walked away and you turned your back to him or her, he'll hit you for that. That's when you just hold them and just give him a slap on the head or something and say, "Leave me alone otherwise I'll really get violent" and they'll leave you. Because they'll see, oh, that this guy or this girl really stands up for himself.

PE: If you are smaller, they can always just walk away towards the teacher where he can't bully you in front of the teacher.

INT: But then when the teacher is not there anymore?

PE: Go to the office.

RO: Most people, smaller people, they hide out at the library, where there's always a teacher present.

INT: They hide out at the library? So they avoid being around people.

RO: Yes, but that's what makes them unpopular.

INT: What do you think a person could *do* to, you know, break out of that cycle?

RO: They only thing you can do is just get 'true' friends. True friends will most of the time, be there with you - just hang around with them. If you're a whole group, a bully wont really bully you because they'll know, oh, if I bully him then one of them runs to a teacher or calls them, I get in trouble, or if I bully one of them, they all gang up on me and I'm in trouble.

SI: I would say cyberbullying is the best way to like, to tell what you're feeling because you're not like scared to type it in and send it to your friends because they can't really do anything to you, because you're like quite far away and everything.

PE: And sometimes you're under false names so they don't know who's bullying who.

INT: So who are the bullies who use Mxit?

SI: Can be anyone, that's it.

RO: Usually that's when a certain person has been bullying you for like your whole life in high school or something, that's when you can get them back and just bully them, they get scared because they don't know who it is.

INT: Do you think it has the same effect as face-to-face bullying?

SI: No.

RO: Not really, because then you can just delete the person and it's over. In face-to-face, if you walk away the bully can follow you and just punch you, and if you try run away they can run after you.

PE: But if you delete them on Mxit no one can really laugh at you.

SI: But no one else will know.

PE: Face-to-face, they will know because they would have seen what happened.

INT: Who do you think uses cyberbullying more – girls or boys?

PE: Girls.

RO: Yeah, girls…

INT: Why do you think this?

RO: Because some girls are really shy and afraid to give their opinions to another girl face-to-face because maybe that girl is more popular or something, and they know they've got lots of friend. So then what they would do is use any false name, go on the internet, on Facebook or whatever, and *shred* that person which makes them feel good about themselves.

PE: And it's mostly girls who use a lot of Mxit.

INT: And the consequences of using electronic communication to, sort of, bully. Do you think that the consequences are as much as face-to-face bullying?

SI: Not really because if you go offline and the other person goes offline, you've got no evidence of what happened, if it happens at school and everyone can see what happens then they can tell a teacher what they saw.

PE: With smses, sometimes you don't keep them.

RO: But sometimes it can be more, let's say they do find out who it is, then what they can do is save the messages, send them to all their friends, all the friends will know about it, they'll gang up on you, somewhere like they'll meet you while you're walking up the road, and you're all alone and your mom has asked you to get bread and milk or something. That's when they can take advantage of you and like really, *really* punish you for what you did.

PE: But sometimes you're under false names so you don't know who's bullying you.

INT: If they know who it is, they can keep it as evidence, and use it against you.

INT: And with filming the fights at school with cell phones?

RO: That's just literally for entertainment, where people just want to see what happens at this school, what happens at that school. It happens in nearly every school, where somebody fights, they send it to their friend and those friends send it to their friends, and it just goes on and on and on until a month has passed and there's another film comes out and you bring out the old film and then, "Ahhhh, you're old-fashioned, now there's this film" and then they say "give it to me", and then it goes *all* over again.

INT: Do people make money off the films?

SI: They do, they sell them!

PE: Ja, and they can put them on the internet.

INT: Which one is more hurtful, when you have a video of you going around in a fight or being in the actual fight in front of all your friends?

PE: Being in the fight.

RO: I'd say the video because more people get to see it, the fight is just basically everybody here, and they have to get over it for some time. The video can go, oh gee, 10 times, and somebody emigrates to England and spreads all over.

INT: Do you think it is embarrassing to be in a fight?

SI: Yeah… hmmm =

RO: = It depends

SI: Well yeah, it depends if you win or lose.

RO: If you're likely really beaten up badly and you just lie there as if you're dead, then it could be really embarrassing.

INT: And if you win?

RO: If you win, you're like a hero!

PE: But sometimes you can put up a really good fight and you lose, you do get a certain amount of respect.