

**Understanding Young Christian Religious Men's  
Constructions of Masculine Identity**

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## DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment / partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

....., in the Graduate Programme in .....

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I, ....., declare that

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## Abstract

*“Understanding young Christian religious men’s constructions of masculine identity”*

This study aims to address the question of whether and how religious belief, affiliation and identity impacts on young men’s construction of masculine identity. Looking at how young men construct a socially acceptable masculinity, it explores how they position themselves in relation to this socially normative hegemonic masculinity. Alongside this, the study looks at whether and how young men construct alternative versions of masculinity and how a religious identity impacts on the young men’s masculine identities.

Participants in the study (N=5) were all young men ranging in age from 18 to 25 years old, and all held a strong religious affiliation. Through a series of in-depth interviews, the participants gave their accounts of what it means to be a man in their lives, giving examples of how they both accepted and rejected the social norms of masculinity, as well as describing how their religious affiliation impacted on their lives.

A common version of hegemonic masculinity was identified by the participants, characterised by male authority, emotional stoicism and symbolised through physical strength and material possessions. But alongside this the participants identified alternate versions of masculinity that tended to oppose hegemonic ideals. There was a strong focus from the participants on the impact of their religious affiliation on their masculine identity, with religious values taking precedence when in conflict with a hegemonic identity.

It was found that the participants tended to perform a hybrid version of masculinity, with a hegemonic and religious identity existing in parallel. This new version of masculinity is argued to be an alternative version of a hegemonic masculinity that has emerged in response to their religious identity, and is consistent with other gendered developments in the South African context.

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

Recently there has been a great deal of interest in the concept of masculinity, and the problem encountered when attempting to understand how masculine identities are formed. It is argued by authors such as Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) that there may even be a crisis in masculinity, with men's masculine identities under threat from constantly changing social forces.

The concept of masculine identity exists against a backdrop of a traditional, powerful and often destructive version of masculinity, referred to as "hegemonic" by authors such as Connell (1995). The recent negative social view towards this hegemonic version of masculinity has led to a widespread appeal for changes in patterns of masculinity and how men behave. This underlies the crisis faced by modern young men seeking to establish their own individual masculine identity amongst the strong social forces that surround them.

Frosh *et al.* (2002) and other authors working in the field of masculinity have expressively identified the challenge faced by boys in their attempt to develop a viable masculine identity. On the one hand boys feel the pressure to conform to these powerful versions of masculinity. On the other hand many boys are aware of the risks to themselves and others of adopting this traditional version of masculinity, and so seek to create for themselves an alternative masculinity. However, the inherent risk of this is the possibility of being seen as a failed masculinity, unacceptable to their peers. So the challenge becomes one of finding a viable strategy to develop an alternate masculine identity.

Thus this thesis begins with the question of how young men negotiate an alternative masculine identity, and whether a religious affiliation provides a base for the establishment of an alternative masculine identity. The majority of religious belief systems and their moral codes oppose many of the behaviours typically regarded as masculine, such as high-risk behaviours, substance abuse and multiple sexual partners. Due to the authority held by such religious teachings that oppose these hegemonic norms, it could be asked whether they could provide a powerful alternative point of reference that can legitimise an alternative masculine identity. This thesis aims to address the question of the impact of religious affiliation on young men's negotiation of masculine identity, through the following aims:

1. **To identify religious young men's descriptions of masculinity:** This aims to understand what the participants describe as a socially accepted norm of masculinity, and how it is performed by the men around them.
2. **To identify how they position themselves in relation to hegemonic versions of masculinity:** This aims to compare the participants' version of masculine identity with the hegemonic features identified in their peers.
3. **To identify alternative narratives or versions of masculinity which are not based on dominant hegemonic norms:** This aims to identify the features the participants identify as masculine, yet in contradiction with a hegemonic masculinity.
4. **To examine whether religious young men hold multiple versions of masculinity (masculine positions), and how a religious identity impacts on the young men's masculine identities:** This aims to identify the features of a

religious identity presented by the participants, and how they construct a masculine identity in relation to this religious identity.

5. **To examine how young men negotiate conflict in relation to their masculine identity, and whether a religious identity is used to sustain these masculine identities:** This aims to understand how men construct their masculine identity in relation to hegemonic expectations and the impact of religious values on this masculine identity.

The thesis will address these questions through the following chapters:

#### *Chapter 1 – Introduction*

This chapter introduces the area of study, looking at the academic and social background that the study is founded on, and presents the question of whether a religious identity has an impact on young men's construction of masculine identity.

#### *Chapter 2 – Review of Literature*

This chapter looks at the work of previous authors in the field of masculinity studies, focusing on the history of the concept of masculinity, how masculine identity is formed, whether there are multiple versions of masculinity and how religion impacts on masculine identity.

#### *Chapter 3 – Methodology*

This chapter addresses the design of the study, which will include the rationale for the study, the aims, research design, sample, data collection methods, data analysis and ethical considerations.

#### *Chapter 4 – Results*

This chapter reports on the findings of the research, developing the themes that emerge from the data, looking at how the participants identify and view the social norm of masculinity, the alternative versions of masculinity present in their lives, how religion impacts on their masculine identity, and how the participants negotiate their masculine identities.

#### *Chapter 5 – Discussion*

This chapter looks at how the participants' responses can be understood in relation to the relevant literature, and the impact of the responses on the understanding of what it means to be masculine.

#### *Chapter 6 – Conclusion*

This chapter summarises the findings and the understanding of meanings derived from the data, as well as looking at the implications and limitations of the study, along with further research possibilities.

## Chapter 2 - Literature Review

### Understanding Masculinity

*What is gender?:*

R.W. Connell, at the forefront of gender literature, discusses the contemporary understanding of gender within society. In his book *Masculinities* (Connell, 1995), he describes the socially held view of masculine and feminine genders as dichotomous opposites, being male, and female. Connell argues against this socially held view, stating that gender identity is far more complex than simply being male or female, according to biological and physical attributes.

The dichotomous view of gender is pervasive amongst societies around the world, defining categories of sport, employment, social roles and even the physical environment in which we live. These categories serve to create a separation between male and female through the roles in which individuals within society are expected to fulfil (Connell, 1995).

Throughout the academic history of the study of gender, there has been a dichotomous view of a stark contrast between that which is masculine versus that which is feminine. The two concepts have over time been set up as polarised opposites, creating terms that deny any possibility of negotiation of traits that do not conform to one of the opposing subscriptions by the individual. This is evident in many early theories, such as in the work of Jung, where the conscious masculine is counterbalanced by the anima of the feminine rising to create conflict or balance within (Connell, 1995).

As the study of gender has developed over recent years, there has been a shift from this dichotomous, polarised opposition between masculine and feminine. Whilst Connell (2002) describes the surface view of gender as “stark and rigid”, this only serves to hide a fluid identity that holds many ambiguities, complexities and uncertainties. The surface view creates an expectation that individuals are required to conform to a particular set of rules according to their gendered identity, thus expecting to perform in a masculine or feminine role according to social expectations. As such, the fluidity of the “becoming” gendered is highlighted, as individuals learn to perform this identity as required. This opposes the early views that gender development is merely a natural progression, with any deviance from the expected norm described as pathological. Connell’s (1995) description of this fluidity normalises the conflict and challenges inherent in the development of the individual’s gendered identity.

The prominence of gender ambiguity begins to argue against the truth of gendered roles being reliant solely on biological attributes. The occurrence of homosexual relationships, trans-gender behaviour and the adoption of contradictory social roles suggest that gender identity is not fixed as either masculine or feminine, but rather that there are significant differences within these two dichotomous classifications. It is apparent on closer inspection that the boundaries between the two categories are far more blurred due to the differences and ambiguities found within gendered identities. Thus gendered identity is not reliant on biological make-up, but rather becomes a performance according to social expectations placed upon the individual. Society tends to place these expectations on the individual according to their physical

attributes, but this becomes more complex as an individual is socialised into a particular role (Connell, 1995).

*What is masculinity?:*

The notion of masculinity has developed over recent time, with explorations into the impact of biology and the interaction with social forces. Emerging out of a biological understanding of what it means to be male, initial thought focused on the genetic makeup of men, seeing masculinity as a sex role that is derived from physical attributes of males. Alongside this was the dichotomous view of masculinity as all that was not feminine (Connell, 1995). Masculinity was therefore positioned in direct opposition to femininity, and predominantly as superior to femininity in many aspects (Smiler, Kay and Harris, 2008).

However, over time, the study of masculinity has led to an understanding of the social nature of what it means to be a man in the context of the direct environment. Thinking thus shifted towards the idea that masculinity involved a physical presence in a social world (Connell, 1995). Prusanck (2007) describes masculinity as the cultural expectations of men with regards to their actions and displayed characteristics. Over the last century, these expectations have been communicated via the rapid development of the media industry. The media world began to define and communicate what is expected of men in relation to a masculine identity (Smiler, 2006b). Similarly, Salamone (2007) suggests that “culture gives meaning to [the biological] in a social landscape” (p. 45). Thus there is a need to understand how the concept of masculinity develops within the social world, beyond mere biological differences.

*Gender and masculinity in the socially constructed world:*

Connell (1995) defines gender as “a way in which social practice is ordered...[where] the everyday conduct of life is organized in relation to a reproductive arena, defined by the bodily structures and processes of human reproduction.” (p. 71). He recognises that there are greater forces at play beyond mere physical sex attributes, but rather that social forces assist in the production of gender and how it is expressed. Billington, Hockey and Strawbridge (1998) describe the socially constructed world as one in which human beings view their reality in a subjective manner, according to their own preconceived notions. Thus gender is viewed as ‘social differentiation, inequality and sometimes discrimination and prejudice, based on perceived differences between the two sexes’ (p. 27). Within this, Billington *et al.* (1998) raise Giddens’s notion of the ‘duality of structure’, in describing how society is subject to a set of predetermined set of rules imposed upon individuals, who then alter those rules according to their own subjective views and intentions. Thus society can be seen as both systemic and dynamic, where individuals are subject to a pattern of roles and relationships that are connected to social expectations, yet remain as active participants in the process of role development. As such, these individuals are described as ‘social actors’ or performers, who are creating their own identities within the framework of societal norms.

Connell (1995) discusses this gender identification and performance as a product of an anxiety around social expectations, and a need felt by the individual to conform. This is developed out of a fear of rejection though being identified as an ‘other’, someone who does not conform to the social expectations, and as a result is rejected

by those who are conforming to the socially expected performance of their gender. At the root of these social interactions lies the theme of power, as described in Connell's (1995) description of the relationship between different forms of masculinity. He suggests that these relationships are categorised into *alliance, dominance and subordination*, whereby the individuals fall into a hierarchy of power, lead by those that 'perform' a dominant masculinity. Individuals can therefore ally themselves with those who hold the power, hence dominating those who are described as the 'othered' less masculine individuals, who are in turn forced into subordination to those who hold the power as masculine individuals.

The social nature of such a concept seen above is inherent in the institutional nature of the social world, be it the school and academic environment, the sports field, or corporate environment of work. Connell (1995) argues that the origins of the institutional nature of masculine identity can be seen in the schooling system, through its process of discipline, dress and uniform, academic hierarchy and team games. This schooling system serves to reinforce the dominance of a particular performance of masculinity, and the need to be allied or subordinated to those in power. The institutional nature of masculine identity has also resulted in a shift of the definition of the ideal masculinity, alongside the cultural shift in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century within the economic environment. As the economic atmosphere changed in the 1920's, there was a move away from the traditional educated man, who was characterised by "old" money and class privilege, towards the "self-made" man, characterised by skill, cunning and luck, identified by Smiler (2008) in his study of the development of American masculine identity. Thus a greater understanding of this ideal or "hegemonic" masculinity is needed.

#### *Hegemonic masculinity:*

The term hegemonic masculinity originated in the work of Connell, focusing on his social theory of gender. He defines hegemonic masculinity as "configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 1995, p. 77). As such, hegemony is a distinct form of gender, which legitimises patriarchy and the subordination of women. Thus this hegemonic version of masculinity is created in relation to femininity and subordinate masculinities, being seen as a dominant form. In particular, hegemony is seen in the areas of work, sexuality, emotions and power relations, in which the hegemonic norm suggests superiority of men who have greater opportunities through being granted power over the "other", whilst remaining emotionally distant from the feminine, caring norm (Demetriou, 2001). Hegemony is evident within the traditional work environment, where men dominate authority roles, whilst women are seen as only suitable for menial administrative work. Thus the authority is seated within the male staff, with the female staff filling the subordinate positions. This set of roles is further played out within sexual relations, with men holding the power and required to take the lead within heterosexual relationships. At the same time, the female is expected to fulfil the caring role, being allowed displays of emotion from which men are barred according to the hegemonic expectations of society.

Connell (2002) highlights the characteristics of hegemony in terms of this subordination, alongside the ideas of complicity and marginalisation. Thus those

males who fill roles that are seen as caring, or as subordinates of those in authority, are seen as 'less' masculine in relation to those in power. This is generalised to any males who are seen to be filling a role that a woman is traditionally expected to fill, marginalizing these men as non-hegemonic and rejecting them as 'others'. In relation to this are the men who fill a complicit role, which consists of those who do not fully conform to hegemonic masculinity in entirety, yet still benefit from hegemony. In particular, this benefit is seen in patriarchal systems that subordinate women and give authority to men within society. Connell (1995) goes on to argue that certain versions of hegemonic masculinity may even be marginalized due to social and political forces, such as race and class. Thus hegemony refers to a dominant authority that marginalizes other versions of masculinity through the disempowerment of the general population that does not fully conform to its expectations.

Peralta (2007) also discusses the notion of hegemonic masculinity, describing it as a dominant discourse that is accepted by the general social group. He describes it as a "culturally specific ideal masculinity" (p. 742), which differs according to the cultural context in which the individual is situated. This ideology of what it means to be a man is reinforced and recreated through social interaction and the group dynamics of consensus. Thus, through complicity, the hegemony of a particular set of ideals is maintained and imposed upon individuals through an expectation to conform. Morrel, Jewkes and Lindegger (2012) identify the complexity of hegemonic masculinity within the South African context. They argue that as a result of the unique political history and cultural diversity, there is no single hegemonic version of masculinity evident, but rather a multitude of hegemonic versions that have developed out of each social group's unique context. The previous government was led by a white, predominantly Afrikaans minority that promoted a purist view of masculinity based on rigid ideals and hierarchical social order. This then shifted as power and leadership changed in 1994, and the development of a new constitution based on human rights and the effort to address past inequalities. However, over time and as leadership of the country has changed, this ideal has not been achieved, and actually taken a shift towards a more traditional hegemonic ideal that focuses on a heterosexist, patriarchal man that is sexually successful. Morrell *et al.* (2012) argue that this is represented through the example set by the country's leaders who embody a powerful hegemonic identity.

Some attributes of hegemonic masculinity, as identified by Smiler (2006a), include an emotional stoicism, risk taking, status seeking, and the avoidance of any activity deemed feminine in nature. As such, hegemonic masculinity is positioned as a discourse that opposes femininity and alternative masculinities that are oppressed and sidelined in order to maintain the dominance of the hegemonic norm. Thus marginalisation is used to attain this goal of dominance and imposition. Closely tied to this view of hegemony, as opposing the "other", is the view of the male body as a symbol of hegemonic masculinity. The muscular male body is seen to epitomise masculinity through a representation of independence, dominance and aggression, along with notions of power and invulnerability (Wienke, 1998). As such, there is a promotion of a compulsory heterosexuality, which is seen as a requirement of the hegemonic norm. The particular nature of these attributes is seen in their opposition to the traditional notions of what it means to be feminine.

Wetherell and Edley (1999) take a slightly different view of masculine positioning, through their critique of Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity. They propose that men take on one of three positions in their personal accounts of their masculine identity, namely the heroic, ordinary or rebellious position. The heroic, or imaginary position entails men's descriptions of their masculine identity that aligns strongly with conventional ideals. This position can be imaginary in nature, combining both real characteristics, with an idealised presentation of self. This compares to the ordinary position, in which men present themselves as average and ordinary, whilst separating the self from social stereotypes. In comparison to the heroic position, there is no exaltation of masculinity, but rather an individualistic view of the production of masculine identity. Within the third, rebellious position, Wetherell and Edley (1999) argue that men define their masculine identity in terms of their unconventional features. This is a strongly individualistic pattern of masculinity where the men are argued to actively create their own personal masculine identity, through the act of rejecting a 'macho' masculinity.

*The critique of Connell's 'hegemony':*

Seidler (2006) provides a strong critique of Connell's (1995) concept of hegemony, arguing that it does not provide for the diverse voices of young people. He argues that the notion of hegemony is centred around a white European viewpoint and it fails in its attempts to create a universal theory in understanding masculinity. This approach tends to ignore the diverse cultures of masculinity prevalent around the globe in this attempt to generalise the concept of a socially expected masculinity. Seidler (2006) argues that the concept of hegemony is static in nature, ignoring how men can change, as well as the processes and transitions that are involved in the formation of masculine identity.

Wetherell and Edley (1999) also critique Connell's (1995) notion of hegemony, stating that it is not actually intended as a description of real men, but rather is an "ideal or prescriptive set of social norms, symbolically represented" (p. 336). They describe hegemony as an aspirational goal, rather than an actual description of how men live their lives. Thus, this appears to be a goal that can never be attained, but rather a set of values reinforced within society and maintained through men that benefit from the power it endows on them. They suggest that these discrepancies in Connell's (1995) theories emerge out of a lack of empirical evidence to support his claims, along with a very limited description of what actually characterises a hegemonic masculine identity.

In response to the criticism of the original theory of hegemonic masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) suggest that as the study of masculinity has developed, certain aspects of Connell's theory have been proven to hold true, whilst others required revision. The notion that multiple versions of masculinity exist in various cultural and institutional settings has been recognised in numerous studies across the world. Within this is the documentation of hegemonic masculinity existing in relation to the subordination of nonhegemonic masculinities. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that hegemony need not be the most common practice of masculine identity, but rather works through the production of exemplars of masculinity as symbols that most men and boys do not fully live up to. In addition, it is argued that masculinity is a historically based concept that is subject to change in relation to the prevailing social forces.

However Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) acknowledge that the essentialist nature of gender hierarchy prevalent in the early theoretical position is needing reformulation, along with a move away from the strong focus on traits as characteristic of masculine identity. The authors also argue that there is a geographical nature to masculine identity that has emerged in recent studies, and masculine identity needs to be understood on three different levels, namely local, regional and global. A particular weakness identified in the original theories is the limited understanding of the social embodiment of hegemonic masculinity and how this impacts on identity. Furthermore, there is a move towards a greater focus on the dynamic nature of masculinity and the complex layering and internal contradictions in the construction of identity, which was not fully recognised in the early theorisation of hegemonic masculinity.

*The masculine crisis:*

Connell (2002) argues that gender categories are inherently instable, taking a post-modern approach in viewing a disconnection between the discursive, socially constructed gender identity and the physical bodies which these identities refer to. He raises the proposal that structures develop ‘crisis tendencies’, defined as “internal contradictions or tendencies that undermine current patterns and force change on the structure itself” (p. 71).

Frosh *et al.* (2002) highlight the apparent ‘crisis’ that is to be seen in many forms of masculinity, which are under threat from constantly changing social conditions. These conditions have challenged the hegemonic norms of masculinity, providing alternative approaches to the portrayal of masculinity. In turn this has led to a developmental ‘crisis’, in which boys have begun to struggle in the process of identity development, being surrounded with many conflicting images of masculinity within society. Frosh *et al.* (2002) also highlight the impact of the development of this ‘crisis’ on social structures, whereby developmental disturbances in the teen years have been linked to a disruption in social order. The ‘crisis’ in masculinity is said to create a conflicting dilemma in which boys feel pressurised to conform to a particular hegemonic norm, and yet are also facing the desire not to conform to these views for numerous reasons. Thus the desire these boys feel is to maintain an acceptable masculinity, whilst not conforming to the hegemonic norms.

Smiler *et al.* (2008) identify a recent crisis in masculine and gender identity as a result of the rise of the ‘self-made man’ in the modern era, in reaction to the encroachment of women into male-dominated areas. Walker (2005) expands this notion, suggesting that the social gender order has been disrupted by the recent successes of women, particularly in the corporate environment. This has led to a conflict between the traditional, conventional male role and the desire to be a modern, respectable and responsible man. The socially constructed role of the male as the financial provider has been challenged and in crisis, men have chosen to react by clinging to the patriarchal power and dominance of traditional roles or in response have chosen to construct a new identity.

Walker (2005) ascribes a recent focus on the rise of a crisis in masculine gender identity in South Africa as a result of the transition into democracy and the resultant adoption of the constitution. This new democracy in South Africa resulted in a period

of social turbulence and transition, where social roles were challenged and reinvented in the wake of a newfound respect of human rights. The adoption of the democratic constitution minimised traditional male roles and legitimised the opportunity for alternative expressions of masculinity, granting rights to those marginalized by the hegemonic masculine dominance and assertion of power. Some of these masculine identities were marginalized on the basis of race, culture, beliefs and sexual orientation. Walker (2005) focuses specifically on the role gender and sexual violence towards women has within hegemonic masculinity amongst black South African males, and how young men are reconstructing their identity in relation to the respect for women and gender equality. Thus there has developed a crisis in South African masculinity, with a conflict between the traditional patriarchal view and men who have chosen to construct an identity based more on the rights of the newly adopted constitution. The end result of this negotiation of masculine identity is seen in the legitimisation of alternate masculinities that differ from the hegemonic norm, whilst still maintaining social acceptance as displays of masculine identity.

Sideris (2005) provides an example of this conflict between a traditional masculinity and a human rights approach in her study of men in the Nkomazi area of South Africa. The study looked at how some men in the community had chosen to present an alternative form of masculinity that conflicted with the traditional patriarchal social system within the community. These men were explicit in their descriptions of themselves as being different from the traditional norm, describing a masculinity that respected women as equals and valued a caring nature in their approach to others. This contrasted with the prevailing norm of violence towards women being used to maintain male authority in the community. Sideris (2005) identifies the transition to democracy as the moment of significant challenge to traditional views, promoting this rights-based shift in the presentation of masculine identity. In this specific study, the participants also based their shift in thinking on a reaction to the violence of their parents, and the domestic violence seen in the community around them. However, the men appear to present this new view as a reworking of what it means to be the head of a family, often only allowing women authority within certain constraints that do not challenge the men's authority within the family.

#### *Alternative Legitimate Masculinities:*

Connell (2002) argues that one can identify multiple patterns of masculinity in contemporary society, as a result of class, ethnic and cultural differences. In addition to this, the notion of the 'crisis' of masculinity can result in the development of an alternative masculine identity through contradictions and social dynamics. Gender categories can thus be described as inherently unstable, with internal tendencies towards change. The dominant nature of hegemonic masculinity in itself can become an agent of change through the actions of the traditional hegemonic male towards those who do not conform to the social expectations, forcing those non-conforming individuals to fight and negotiate their way out of subordination through the legitimisation of an alternative masculinity (Connell, 1995).

The notion of masculinity in itself has become a plural concept, extending beyond a typical white middle-class heterosexual male towards the existence of multiple masculinities. Johnston and Morrison (2007) argue that hegemony is a generalisation that ignores how men function psychologically. Due to the social nature of gender performance, men's behaviour is enacted to meet the demands of the given

circumstances along with the perceived expectations of others. As such, few, if any men can achieve the idealised status of a truly hegemonic male. The results of the Johnston and Morrison's study showed that although the men were able to identify the traits of a hegemonic male, they themselves did not fully conform to the expectations of hegemony, but rather positioned themselves on a dichotomous continuum of gender, as close to hyper-masculinity as possible. In this manner the men were still able to identify themselves as masculine, despite not fully conforming to hegemonic expectations.

Connell (2002) suggests that these alternative masculine identities emerge out of the crisis tendencies discussed above, where resolution of the crisis on an individual level is likely to result in eccentricity. However the tendency for these crises to co-exist in parallel with others can lead to a sustainable change and development of an alternative masculine identity. Thus at the core of sustainable alternative identity is the need for group acceptance of the variance in actions and characteristics that deviate from the norms of hegemony, and thus legitimising behaviour as masculine.

However in itself, the very move towards an alternative masculine identity can result in a crisis, whereby men are required to negotiate their identity between the conflicting demands of pervasive hegemonic norms and the desire to be a modern man, as described by Walker (2005). Walker (2005) describes this modern man as someone who is in control, rational and responsible, which is starkly contrasted with the violence of hegemonic masculinity. Thus it can be argued that even should a man succeed in legitimising his alternative behaviour as masculine, he is still under pressure to constantly negotiate his position as masculine in the midst of the continuous social forces that surround him.

### **The Role of Religion in the Construction of Masculinity**

#### *Defining a religious identity:*

Thomson and Remmes (2002) define being religious in two spheres of an individual's life. Firstly they describe a cognitive and behavioural belonging, which focuses on social activity in which group norms may steer individual action. Thus being religious exists within a social context where the individual belongs to a group defined by religious affiliation. Secondly they identify the cognitive and emotive believing aspect of religion. The focus in this sphere is on individual beliefs, which affect individual action, and are often subjective in nature.

Smith (n.d.) quotes Wright's (2000) definition of religion as of:

*“the relationship of the individual within the community and tradition, to that which is – or perceived to be – of ultimate concern, ultimate value and ultimate truth, as appropriated through an informed, sensitive and reflective striving for wisdom” (p. 104).*

Thomson and Remmes (2002) and Smith (n.d.) thus suggest that there needs to be a consideration of both the individual and social aspects of a religious identity, and how the individual places their gendered identity within a religious identity. These arguments suggest that the social context of religion has an impact on individual identity through group acceptance of religious actions in the religious context. However there is also an interaction between the individual and social, with

individual belief systems guiding social action both in the religious and secular context.

*The gendered nature of religious identity:*

There is a strong consensus amongst researchers that a feminine gender orientation is a significant determinant of men's religious participation, both in terms of participation and intrinsic orientation (Thomson & Remmes, 2002; Francis, 2005). Thus male individuals with a strong religious identity tend to present themselves and their actions in a manner that could be defined as feminine in relations to the expectations of a hegemonic masculinity. There is also seen to be a distinct gender difference in the view of the importance of religion, with men's attendance of church even being viewed as 'suspect' by some – suggesting a challenge to their masculinity (Smith, n.d.). Thus religiosity is seen as inherently feminine in nature, with hegemonic masculinity positioned in opposition to the embracing of religion (Thomson & Remmes, 2002).

The distinctly feminine nature of religious identity, and in particularly a Christian religious identity creates a problematic conflict for men who wish to maintain a masculine identity. Due to the polarised nature of hegemonic masculinity, it becomes challenging for men to maintain both a masculine identity and a religious identity, forcing the need for a renegotiation of masculinity within the context of a religious identity (Gelfer, 2010).

*Recapturing masculine religious identities – the Men's Movements:*

In the midst of a view of a religious identity taking on a feminine association, there has been a rise of the men's movements that strive to resurrect the image of masculinity for men who still desire to maintain a religious identity. Mere association with religion as a man challenges their masculine identity, where the hegemonic ideal conflicts with any religious involvement, with religious involvement being viewed as feminine and contradictory to hegemonic ideals. This has led to a rise of popular evangelical men's movements promoting a more masculine approach to the Christian belief system, which have gained widespread followings (Bartkowski, 2000). The two most recent movements are those of John Eldredge's (2001) book *Wild at Heart*, and the Promise Keepers movement (Gallagher and Wood, 2005). These movements could be argued to have arisen in an effort to protect religious men's sense of masculine identity.

Eldredge's (2001) book has gained a massive following in Christian communities, challenging the image of religious men as "really nice guys" who don't smoke, drink or swear. He claims that men have been tamed and become passive, rather than living out their purpose to be a wild and dangerous warrior, saying that men are inherently designed to be aggressive, seeking adventure. He suggests that this is an authentic masculinity based on the image of God. This is based on biblical descriptions of God as a being to be feared, involved in wars and characterised by strong leadership. However Eldredge challenges the idea that this concept is merely a reiteration of a traditional hegemonic masculinity by arguing that the "Wild at Heart" style of masculinity focuses on men as valiant and dangerous, versus an anger, lust and fear characteristic of his view of a hegemonic ideal.

Similarly the Promise Keepers movement, which had an exceptionally strong following in the 1990's, seeks to redefine the masculine identity in the context of Christianity. However, Bartkowski (2000) points out that even within this movement, there are conflicting ideals as to what is expected of men in relation to their religious identity. There is certain views that reflect a similar approach to Eldredge (2001), describing manhood as being characterised by aggression, strength and rationality, with an achievement-minded approach. There is a strong focus on a patriarchal family system, with the belief that men are designed to be leaders, and women to be submissive. Bartkowski (2000) highlights a strong dichotomous view of gender within the Promise Keepers movement, which focuses on the development of men, whilst excluding females.

The Promise Keepers movement does however challenge the myth that masculinity is positioned in direct opposition of anything feminine, claiming certain traits defined socially as feminine, are in fact merely human traits to be embraced by men. In particular there is an emphasis on emotional expression and community interaction, strongly encouraged through the involvement of men in small group support meetings. Bartkowski (2000) identifies an uneasy tension however between the traditional patriarchal views and egalitarian approach evident within the teachings of the movement. He suggests the reframing of the concept into a "servant-leadership" legitimises the expectation of male leadership and women's submission, where the dominance seen in a hegemonic ideal is replaced by a focus on efforts to be better husbands and fathers (Gallagher and Wood, 2005).

*Religion in support of and opposition to hegemonic masculinity:*

The Christian religion is strongly rooted in a traditional patriarchal system, supporting a hegemonic ideal of masculine dominance and feminine submission (Collins, 2010). Foster and Keating (1992) highlight the nature of God as being seen predominantly as male, often described as the 'Heavenly Father'. This image then extends into the realm of organised religious structures, with a gender structure claimed to be ordained by God himself (Connell, 1995). The very leadership structure of the church is dominated by men who fill the vast majority of positions as head of the church as the decision makers. Women can only attain any form of authority and status within many churches by being married to the head of the church (Coats, 2010).

However, even within the strongly hegemonic portrayal of masculinity within the biblical Old Testament, there is a distinct contradiction and deviation from the hegemonic ideals within the main figures. Boer's (2010) analysis of the portrayal of the men within the book of Chronicles show the superficial hegemonic characteristics hide a deeper, more feminine nature. Actions by the leaders portrayed include celebrations of dancing, singing and decorating of the temple, strongly in conflict of what would be considered a typical hegemonic identity. Boer (2010) suggests that this portrayal of traditional Christian role models allows for the legitimisation of an alternative masculinity through the fact that the individuals portraying such an identity are those in authority, holding a social standing that allows for deviation from the expected norm.

*Negotiating a masculine identity in a religious context:*

As a result of the conflict between the feminised nature of a religious identity, and the desire for men to maintain a masculine identity, men have tried to restructure their

masculine identities in order to maintain a legitimised masculinity. The movements of the Promise Keepers, and the use of Eldredge's (2001) *Wild at Heart* are one such means in which men have tried to reclaim their masculine identity, whilst still maintaining a religious identity. These movements aim to rephrase hegemonic ideals into something more palatable in a religious context, suggesting that the wild, risk-taking characteristic of hegemony is actually appropriate as a part of a masculine religious identity (Gallagher and Wood, 2005).

Coats (2010) introduces the notion of 'discursive tacking', borrowing a sailing term for zig-zagging against the wind direction in order to reach a destination. Likewise, men and the men's evangelical movements have attempted to use this discursive tacking to renegotiate masculine identities through the language that is used, thus allowing men to maintain a hegemonic identity within society, whilst still maintaining religiously acceptable behaviour by reframing it through the language used to describe this religious action. This reworking of gendered identity however has limits placed on it, through the allowance for certain deviations from the hegemonic norm towards more feminine attributes, but only in the aspects accepted by the religious group as a whole. In this manner, men can oscillate between rational patriarchy and expressive egalitarianism whilst maintaining their masculine identity through group acceptance.

This links to Bartkowski's (2000) understanding of the Promise Keepers movement, where men used certain approaches to maintain masculine identities despite the conflict caused by their religious involvement. Firstly men maintained certain essentialist masculine traits, focusing on physical strength and an opposition to femininity in order to maintain their masculine identity. Secondly they positioned themselves as 'other' to the extremes of homosexuality, taking a strong heterosexual and anti-gay stance in their communication. This is seen in the third approach in which certain terms are used to separate their homosociality from homosexuality, especially through the use of the word 'brothers' to legitimise homosocial interaction, likening it to a sibling relationship.

Thomson and Remmes (2002) suggest that another means men use to maintain their masculine identity in a religious context is a self-serving approach. Based on the patriarchal nature of Christian leadership, men legitimise their involvement through the seeking of the status that is associated with leadership positions. According to Boer (2010), this leadership status can supersede the impact of a religious identity on masculinity, allowing men to legitimise their masculine identity in holding a position of authority in a distinctly patriarchal system.

## Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

### *Rationale:*

As Frosh *et al.* (2002) argue, there is evidence that young men construct their own versions of a legitimate alternative masculinity within their immediate social context. These young men use a variety of methods in order to deal with the challenges involved to sustain these alternative masculine identities, despite differing from the accepted, hegemonic norm. One possible factor that impacts on masculine identity is that of a religious affiliation, and it is likely that many of the core values of various religions are in conflict with a hegemonic masculine identity, and are used as a means of sustaining a legitimate alternative masculine identity. Thus the study aimed to investigate the impact a religious affiliation and associated religious identity has on the individual respondents' masculine identity, and whether and how religious affiliation assists in the efforts of young men to create and maintain a legitimate masculine identity.

### *Aims of the study:*

The primary objective of the study was to examine the role religious identity plays in the construction of masculine identity of Christian religious boys and young men. This was explored through the following aims:

1. To identify religious young men's descriptions of masculinity.
2. To identify how they position themselves in relation to hegemonic versions of masculinity.
3. To identify alternative narratives or versions of masculinity which are not based on dominant hegemonic norms.
4. To examine whether religious young men hold multiple versions of masculinity (masculine positions), and how a religious identity impacts on the young men's masculine identities.
5. To examine how young men negotiate conflict in relation to their masculine identity, and whether a religious identity is used to sustain these masculine identities.

### *Context of the study:*

The study formed part of a larger SANPAD funded study in which diverse groups of boys aged 16-25 participated. The larger study focused on different groups of young men and how they constructed their masculine identities. This study represents a sub-sample of that study, and focuses specifically on religious boys.

### *Design*

The study used a qualitative design parallel to that used by Frosh *et al.* (2002) in their British study. Qualitative designs allow for the engagement with information, taking an open-minded, inductive approach. As such a qualitative design results in a selected study of in-depth detail that emerges from the data. This inductive approach is characterised by an "immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important categories, dimensions and interrelationships" (Durrheim, 2006, p. 48). The focus is on the interpretation of people's feelings and human experiences, rather than quantification.

The study used thematic analysis in order to provide a ‘thick description’ of young Christian men’s masculine identity. This provides a thorough description of the characteristics, processes, transactions and contexts of the participants’ experience in relation to their own masculine identity, which is found within the language used to describe their experiences (Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly, 2006). The steps used in this thematic analysis are discussed below.

*Data collection:*

The data collection involved the use of in-depth interviewing, which is described by Taylor and Bogden (1984) as

*“repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and informants directed toward understanding the informant’s perspectives on their own lives, experiences or situations as expressed in their own words.” (p.77)*

As Taylor and Bogden (1984) suggest, this allows the researcher to focus on, and bring to the fore the subjective human experience. The interviews focused on the expressed perspective and positioning of the participants in relation to what it means to be a man. The interviews were performed by SANPAD researchers, employed as part of a larger project on masculinity.

The study follows Kvale’s (1996) seven stages of interview research:

### **1 – Thematising**

This involves the formulation of the purpose of the investigation, and description of the topic to be investigated. The focus is on the *why* and *what* of the study, looking at the reason for investigating the topic, and the specific area of knowledge to be studied. This study follows the work of Frosh *et al.*’s (2002) study of masculinity, looking at how boys and young men construct their masculine identities. Taking Frosh *et al.*’s framework, the study looked to replicate the investigation in a local, South African context. Specifically, the study focuses on how young religious men describe their masculine identities, looking whether there is a crisis of masculinity, and how the respondents negotiate their masculine identity within society.

### **2 – Designing**

This stage involved the planning of how the study is to take place, how the information is to be obtained, whilst still taking into account the ethical implications of the study. Thematic analysis was used in order to obtain the details found within language, whereby in-depth interviews were required to explore how the respondents describe their masculine identity.

### **3 – Interviewing**

This stage entailed the gathering of information through an interview process, based on the predetermined interview guide. The interviews focussed on young religious men’s construction of masculine identities, asking what it means for them to be a man.

### **4 – Transcribing**

This stage involved the transcription of interview material from oral speech to written text in order to prepare the material for analysis. The interviews were transcribed by external transcribers, and each interview coded with a corresponding initial to maintain confidentiality.

## **5 – Analysing**

This involved the choice of appropriate methods of analysis, based on the purpose of the study, alongside the nature of the interview material. The analysis was done following Terre Blanche *et al.*'s (2006) steps for thematic analysis discussed below.

## **6 – Verifying**

This stage looked at the reliability and validity of the research findings, looking at the consistency of the results, and whether the study was investigating the intended topic.

## **7 – Reporting**

This stage involved the communication of the findings, considering the methods used and ethical implications.

### *Sample*

The sample consisted of 5 young men, aged 18 to 25, who are currently actively involved in a Christian organisation. The sample was drawn from different contexts, namely the various University of KwaZulu-Natal Campus Christian ministries and local Pietermaritzburg churches and Christian ministry organizations. The sample was representative of different Christian denominations, namely New Covenant, Baptist and other more traditional denominations, whilst using convenience sampling within the contexts (Henry, 1998). The sample represents a cross-section of race, and education level, also representing a range of economic backgrounds from previously disadvantaged through to middle-class, stable income families.

### *Procedure*

The participants were approached through local Christian organisations, where volunteers were requested to participate in the study. An initial meeting was held to explain the study to the participants and set the process in place to obtain informed consent. Once consent was obtained, each participant was issued with a disposable camera, and invited to take twenty pictures with the caption “My life as a boy/man”. Arrangements were made for the film to be collected and processed.

At a second meeting, the printed photos were returned to the young men. They were invited to choose five photos that best describe their lives as boys/men, and to share these in an individual interview (See Appendix A). They were then asked to describe their photographs as narratives of their lives and to discuss how and why they chose the five photos, as well as the meaning of each photo. This interview was modelled after a biographic narrative in which boys are invited to associate freely about their identities in their past. This has been shown to provide a means for narrators to reflect on their present position (Lindegger, 2006), to show hesitations and doubts as well as to articulate clear views on who they are now via events in their past. At a final meeting two months later, the young men were invited to a follow-up individual interview, which further explored the issues of the first individual interview, especially focusing on examples from their own behaviour over the previous two months.

### *Data analysis*

Each interview was transcribed, and a code allocated to identify the tape in relation to the transcribed interview. The photographs were also coded with the same code for each participant.

Each of the interviews were analysed by myself using thematic analysis. Boyatzis (1998) describes thematic analysis as a process that enables the encoding of qualitative information into specific themes. These themes consist of patterns found in the information, which can describe, organise and interpret aspects of the phenomena being studied. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (2006, p. 321) argue that interpretive analysis serves to “place real-life events and phenomena into some kind of perspective”. Within this analysis, the common themes were grouped and explored, being compared amongst responses for similarities and differences, and their position in relation to the hegemonic norm of masculinity as expressed by Connell (2002). This process focused on the following steps, as suggested by Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006):

#### **1 – Familiarisation and immersion:**

This step involved a familiarisation with the raw data and a development of ideas around the responses of the research participants. This was done through an immersion in the data, reading and rereading in detail and taking notes on the common ideas emerging from the texts.

#### **2 – Inducing themes:**

This involved a bottom-up approach in finding themes within the raw data, focusing on “processes, functions, tensions and contradictions” (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006. p. 323). This was done by searching for the naturally occurring organisational principles that emerge from the data, focusing on the language used. These underlying principles were then grouped into main themes with several sub themes each.

#### **3 – Coding:**

This involved the reduction of the data into the themes, identifying textual instances of the themes identified in the previous step. This step entails the application of the themes, finding relevant instances in the data and grouping those occurrences under the main themes and sub themes,

#### **4 – Elaboration:**

Elaboration involved exploring the themes more closely, through the comparison of extracts grouped within the themes, allowing for the exploration of differences and sub issues.

#### **5 – Interpretation and checking:**

This final step focused on the interpretation of the findings, exploring whether these findings were in line with the raw data, and reflecting on the role of the interpreter in the interpretation. This involved a return to the original data, comparing the findings to see if they correlate with the original information gained in the interviews.

#### *Validity and reliability:*

Van der Riet and Durrheim (2006) address the issues of validity and reliability within qualitative studies, which differ from quantitative studies. They define validity as “the degree to which the research conclusions are sound” (van der Riet and Durrheim, 2006. p. 90). The difficulties within a qualitative study are the lack of ability to rule out specific validity threats in advance, and the rejection by social constructionism that research findings can be accurate reflections of reality. Instead they propose the

need for credibility, which aims to produce convincing and believable findings. Due to the design of qualitative studies, generalisability is not possible, as meanings are likely to be highly variable across different contexts. Instead, qualitative research aims to achieve transferability by giving “readers detailed accounts of the structures of meaning which develop in a specific context” (van der Riet and Durrheim, 2006. p. 92). In relation to this study, the aim was to produce results that accurately reflected the views of the participants in their context and lived experience. Thus credibility was achieved through clear descriptions of how the young men described their masculine identity in relation to hegemonic norms and religious values. As such, generalisability was not possible in the context of the study, nor was it an aim of this study, as findings are likely to be variable across different contexts.

Using a qualitative design, reliability as reflected in repeatable results across time and interviewer is not only difficult but undesirable. As the experiences being studied are unlikely to be fixed and unchanging, the same results are unlikely to occur repeatedly. Rather, the focus is on dependability, which refers to “the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researcher says they did.” (van der Riet and Durrheim, 2006. p. 93). This dependability emerges out of rich and detailed descriptions that consider the interaction with context, and its impact on actions and opinions (van der Riet and Durrheim, 2006). Dependability was achieved through inviting participants to provide detailed descriptions of their experience of what it means to be a man in their lives, and using extracts from these interviews.

*Ethical considerations:*

This project formed a part of an ongoing SANPAD project on masculinity, which received ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Potential participants were provided information regarding the purposes of the study, as well as what would be required of them, and that strict confidentiality would be maintained, with only the interviewer knowing their identity. Informed consent was then obtained through written consent (Appendix B), with a separate signature for the release of the photos. As all the respondents were over the age of 18, they were able to give informed consent without permission from guardians. The participants were only then enrolled in the study once informed consent was obtained,

In order to maintain the confidentiality of the respondents, the transcribed interviews were stored according to codes, separate from personal details. Throughout the study, the respondents are referred to by their respective codes, with no personal details given. Due to the nature of the study, there was no immediate risk to the respondents, and so no additional support required once the interview process was completed.

Because of the possibility of participants being distressed by participating in the study, interviewers debriefed them after the interview, asking whether they experienced any distress arising from the interviews. They were offered the possibility of referral to the Child and Family Centre for counselling. None of the participants took up this offer.

## Chapter 4 - Results

### Description of and Relative Positioning in Relation to the Hegemonic Norm of Masculinity

The participants were interviewed extensively on their view of what it meant to be a man, exploring their view of masculine identity in their individual context, as well as for their peers in their immediate social environment. The participants identified a number of socially accepted masculine norms, positioning themselves in relation to these expectations of their actions as a socially accepted masculine individual. At times the participants merely identified the norms they have observed, describing the actions of their peers, and at other times explicitly identifying with and at other times rejecting these expectations in the construction of their own individual masculine identity.

#### *The masculine role as the responsible provider:*

A strongly reported marker of masculine men as responsible providers was being able to financially support both themselves as an individual, as well as a nuclear family when he has one. KA describes this, saying

“I think that being a guy, you need to be able to support yourself, or support your family if you have one; being independent and earn money for yourself”

This provider work role is described as distinctly masculine, particularly in the context of a married relationship, where the man is expected to provide for the rest of the family. KA goes so far as to say that should this not be the case, the individual's masculine identity may be under threat, saying

“a man should always be working, if like in a family, if the woman / the mother is the one going out and earning the big money and the man is the one who is staying in the house, then he's looked down upon.”

This is particularly expressed through the need to fill a traditional work role, earning a salary that is sufficient to provide for the needs of the family, often to the point that it is not necessary for the female partner to earn additional income.

JH identifies the need for the work role to be permanent and stable, with particular roles gaining more acceptance within the community based on level of income, with higher earning jobs more desirable and accepted socially. Many of the participants identified particular careers such as accounting, engineering and law as desirable, but the common feature of all work roles identified was one of success based on filling a leadership role in the work environment. Corporate and work success is a marker of masculine identity as a means of providing for self and others. Although the majority of the participants identified white-collar pursuits as jobs of choice, WM differed, associating work that requires physical strength as distinctly masculine in nature. He argues that physical work is an important feature of masculinity because it is a role women cannot occupy, justifying his approach due to the need for a physical strength absent in women, describing the need to carry heavy electrical equipment as a part of his job. JH extends the description of the masculine work role as encompassing more analytical roles where men “take things apart and see how they work” versus the feminine disinterest in the mechanical nature of objects.

Interestingly, a number of the participants also identified a need to fill a role as provider for the older generation, such as parents and grandparents. This appears to

identify a more Afrocentric approach to family responsibility that extends beyond the traditional married family and children, as it is the African participants who reported this view WM suggests that

“you must always take care of your family, because they are the ones who were... always taking care of you when you grew up”.

This sense of responsibility is also identified by WM as absent in some of his peers – which he rejects as not filling a masculine role as a provider. His view suggests that he equates financial provision with caring for family.

#### *Masculinity as independence:*

A central theme in masculine identity in the view of the participants is the notion of independence. The ability to provide for oneself financially is essential to a feeling of freedom and independence from parents. However it is not in the work role that independence is most related within the interviews, but rather the physical freedom of transport and ability to go places at will. The car is identified by every single participant as a symbol of masculine independence, and valued as a desired possession. KA described it as

“the guy in matric who comes in his own car, comes to school and parks it there in the parking lot, and the first thing you immediately start dreaming about is getting a driver’s license and buying a car and driving yourself to school”.

PT adds the association of the ownership of a car with independence, saying

“Well every young man wants a car. If you look down the road there, you’ll see this thing with big spoilers and mags and exhaust pipes, I think it can be a bit silly, but I think it’s showing the independence of having a car.” – PT

Thus cars function as physical representations of an ideal masculinity of strength, power and independence, where owners spend large amounts of money to make them more powerful and aesthetically pleasing, as seen in the first quote by PT about the spoilers, mags and exhausts. The owners use the vehicles to show off their masculinity, displaying that they are in control and independent, and do not need to rely on others. PT extends this notion to a bicycle that is used for competitive sport, suggesting that it is a “finely tuned machine” representative of masculine identity – effective and in control, as well as being a vehicle for independence and freedom.

#### *In control of self and others:*

At the centre of the socially accepted norm of masculinity is an emotional stoicism that dictates that men do not cry or display emotion. Many of the participants identified with this norm, describing how they were raised to be tough and not show emotion. However the positioning of some of the participants showed an allowance for deviation from this expectation – recognising emotional control as a masculine trait, but allowing for times in which it was acceptable to show small signs of emotion. As a whole, there was a general agreement amongst the participants that “boys don’t cry”, symbolising the social expectation of stoicism, describing expression of emotion as feminine in nature. JH describes this well by saying

“girls aren’t as scared as guys to show their emotions”.

This creates an opinion that emotional expression is a feminine trait, and likely to result in rejection from male peers if emotions are openly expressed. KA goes further to suggest that there is also an expectation to control excitement and enthusiasm when

in the presence of girls that a man may like – that they must remain in control of their emotions at all times.

This mastery of self extends to the interaction within the immediate environment, where men are identified as needing to be in control of their circumstances, with PT saying “at work or in family life we need to know what is required of us there.” He discusses the idea of facing challenges in life that need to be overcome to produce a sense of mastery, alluding to the idea that a masculine individual remains in control and can overcome the challenges faced, with success adding to the legitimisation of the individual’s masculine identity. The majority of the participants described the need to master skills in their immediate environment. One such example is the achievement in sport, defined by a practised ability that sets the individual apart from those around them, showing a success through the skills displayed in the sporting arena. This is given a high value in relation to masculine identity, with PD saying, “scoring goals made me feel great”, relating this to the mastery gained from intense training for soccer.

Many of the participants describe laziness in opposition to the desired mastery and sense of control, thus detracting from a sense of legitimate masculine identity. WM goes as far as to equate laziness with failure, suggesting that laziness will result in a lack of achievement, which is integral in his view of a masculine identity. This contrasts with JH’s view of laziness being a generalised attribute of men, particularly when it comes to being organised and punctual. JH describes his view as:

“I think guys are a lot worse than girls are um I’m not actually sure why it is, but sort of maybe again it goes to like which part of the brain girls use, and they are in general more organised and can use um time more effectively”

Thus the participants’ attempts at mastery and control, through emotional stoicism and the development of skills, serves to continue to add to their sense of a legitimate masculine identity that is aligned with the social norms and expectations created by their peers.

#### *Masculinity as being heroic, brave and wild:*

There was a conflict between the participants regarding the idea of masculinity as being heroic, brave and wild. Many describe a pressure to conform to a masculine ideal of bravery that is epitomised especially in risk taking behaviour. Wildness by comparison is seen in carefree social activities, late night partying and heavy drinking which is popular amongst their peers. There is a social pressure to participate in these activities that is explicitly rejected by the participants that discussed the issue, feeling that they did not enjoy the ‘wild’ partying. KA describes the pressure in terms of social rejection through post weekend conversations, saying

“when you come back after the weekend, the first thing you talk about is the person who couldn’t handle their drink”.

This statement describes his observation of his peers’ expectations for men to be able to drink large amounts of alcohol, and when they are unable to, face ridicule and rejection as a result.

In contrast, JH and PT describe a particular aspect of the notion of bravery and heroism, suggesting that the masculinity involves the protection of women, implicitly suggesting a physical strength that is to be used to protect the ‘weak’ and ‘vulnerable’ women around them. This creates an image of men as being in control and able to

protect others who rely on them for this protection. PT draws on a biological discourse when he states that “guys are naturally the ones who protect”, describing men as “knight(s) in shining armour”. In contrast to the masculine performance of being a strong male, comes a rejection of the use of physical strength to harm someone weaker, which is described as cowardly, with PT going as far as to describe such an individual as an ‘animal’. Thus it is seen that although strength and power is an important feature of masculinity, it needs to be combined with control. Interestingly, JH comments that this idea of the masculine protector is actually reinforced by women, suggesting that

“many women expect to be provided security from partners or the men around them”.

PT extends the idea of masculinity as “wild and free”, describing his response to the confines of being a subordinate in a work environment where the strict boundaries create a sense of inefficacy. He suggests that at times, men need to

“function and live like wild animals do and at the same time wild animals are free and we need that too”.

This links to the idea of the masculine need for independence, as well as a need to be in control of their lives and circumstances.

This notion of heroism and freedom both contradicts and supports the masculine role as the responsible provider. The wild partying and risk taking are in direct opposition to the support of a family and stability as a financial provider, hindering the pursuit of success in the work environment, all in the name of personal enjoyment. However the opposite notion of masculine strength and bravery as a protector falls into a strong image of the responsible family man who will do anything to protect his family and those he cares about. This serves to create a socially acceptable expression of positive emotion that stills legitimises a masculine identity, using the desire to physically protect to express an otherwise feminine emotion of caring for others.

*The masculine approach to communication and social relationships:*

It is clear from the responses in the interviews that a masculine identity has a distinct social element, whereby acceptable norms are created by peer groups, creating a set of expected behaviours amongst the social group. This tends to centre around social activities of parties and associated alcohol consumption, which are described as rights of passage into manhood. KA describes this view as

“I see other people going around, mostly on the weekend, they’ll be like, oh let’s get money together and buy some Jack Daniel’s or whatever, just to prove to each other that they can drink booze.”

There is a tendency by the participants to reject the activities of partying and excessive drinking, implicitly and explicitly stating that it does not conform to their personal views. Such a standpoint is described as being likely to lead to rejection by peers, a negative consequence described by PT, saying “you are excluded, and to be excluded is bad for a guy”.

However the majority of the participants identify sport participation and viewing as central to social interaction, with many identifying soccer in particular as a large influence on their social group. Social time is spent discussing sport, especially during the week, with the focus on either the previous weekend or upcoming weekend’s sporting fixtures that the group is going to view. In addition to the social

conversation about sport, the participants identify the discussion of girls as a second topic of conversation. KA describes the discussion of girls as centring on which girls someone in the group likes, or the status of current relationships, along with how attractive particular girls are.

However it is explicitly stated by the majority of the participants that discussion of emotions is not acceptable within social groups. Showing any form of emotional vulnerability is seen as taboo and can result in rejection or ridicule. JH describes the symbolism in a picture of a stuffed bear with a zipped up mouth, saying that  
“if you’re battling something out, like emotionally or something like that, your mouth would tend to be closed.”

The comparison describes the masculine tendency to keep emotional difficulties to oneself, as if their mouth is zipped shut, complying with the expectation of emotional stoicism within the hegemonic masculine norm.

The emphasis within the interviews appears to be on the value of peer relationships in legitimising masculine identity, creating a group within which individuals conform to hegemonic masculine norms. Although there is a recognition of a hegemonic norm of parties and alcohol consumption that the participants do not identify with, they continue to structure their social interaction with other social activities such as sport. Discussion tends to steer away from what would be associated with the feminine realm of emotions and personal struggles.

*The heterosexual man – masculinity and romantic relationships:*

The participants’ construction of a socially normative masculinity focused on men’s interaction with women, particularly in relation to romantic and sexual relationships. They identified a heterosexual relationship as an essential characteristic of masculinity, with WM describing sexual conquest as an important aspect of masculinity, saying

“they usually play games, like if you sleep with maybe 5 girls, and another guy will sleep with 4 girls, then the former wins”.

Sexual relationships are trivialised into conquests to boast about with friends, with no interest in long-term relationships. PT rejects the actions of his peers, stating “that [sexual conquests] doesn’t show masculinity, you not just the sum total of how many girls you can pick up”. This view reflects that of all the rest of the participants, who explicitly reject sexual relationships before marriage. However, KA suggests that at times men, including himself, are not actually interested in relationships with girls, but peer pressure demands that there is a need for a girlfriend in order to be considered masculine.

The participants all identify with the heterosexual norm, despite their rejection of the sexual conquest of their peers. However their focus is less on the sexual aspect, and more on the goal of finding a partner for marriage, as stated by WM, who says

“let’s say when I am married, then that will make me feel like a man”.

The underlying tone of all the participants is one of respect for women, in contrast to their description of men who objectify women as sexual trophies.

The majority of the participants are explicit in their rejection of gay men as masculine, strengthening their view of heterosexuality as essential for maintaining a masculine identity. The participants attempt to mask their rejection through how they

phrase their perspective, trying to hide the explicit nature of the rejection. WM manoeuvres his position by stating “he is a man, but his deeds, that’s not a hundred percent man”. PT says a gay man

“doesn’t make a difference to me... but there is something that comes to the back of your mind that this guy is different from me, I’ll only be uncomfortable if I felt I am being checked out by a gay guy”.

This statement shows the tendency for masculinity to ‘other’ those that are different, rejecting them and not desiring them to encroach on their comfortable environment in order to maintain an unchallenged sense of masculine identity.

#### *What is not masculine – a discourse of opposition:*

There is a strong discourse of a dichotomous view of masculinity that is evident throughout the interviews, positioning masculinity in opposition to femininity. This view is apparent in statements that suggest a strong sense of what it means to be masculine, with particular traits being rejected, disqualifying those individuals from being accepted as masculine. In particular the notion of homosexuality is explicitly identified by the majority of participants as preventing men from being considered masculine, stating their actions are more like that of a woman. WM describes this

“In Zulu you used to call them ‘Stabans’, like a man, wanting to become a woman. He is a man, but his deeds, that’s not a hundred percent a man”

PT goes so far as to say he would feel “uncomfortable if I felt I am being checked out by a gay guy.” PA describes men that act and dress like women as “half and half”. Throughout these discussions there is an understanding of the difference between a biological sex and gender identity, where the participants acknowledge that physically the individuals are men, but their actions do not allow them to be considered masculine. PA suggests that these individuals may consider themselves a ‘real man’, but personally he cannot consider them as such.

JH identifies any feminine actions or characteristics as liable to result in teasing, positioning a masculine identity in opposition to femininity. He suggests that men are required to keep a “stiff upper lip”, characterising an emotional stoicism in comparison to what he describes as a feminine open display of emotion. KA describes the display of emotion as a “girl thing to cry”.

In essence, the descriptions of masculinity by the participants are characterised by an underlying understanding of masculinity as being a direct opposite of femininity, positioning itself as a dichotomous concept through the rejection or justification of any characteristics that may be considered feminine.

#### **Alternative Voices of Masculinity in Relation to the Hegemonic**

Throughout the interviews with the participants, the description of their conformity to the socially accepted hegemonic norm was interspersed with accounts of deviations from the hegemonic norm within their own lives. While participants gave evidence of the responses towards a pressure to conform to this hegemonic norm, the participants identified personally held alternative views that tended to reject the norm, whilst maintaining their own individual sense of masculine identity. In this manner, the participants managed to negotiate their own position as masculine, despite conflict with particular expectations from their peer group. These alternative viewpoints were

predominantly described in an explicit manner, identifying the contradiction with the hegemonic norm.

*Alternative masculine identity expressed through social relationships:*

The impact of peer relationships on masculine identity was discussed in depth by all the participants, giving a large priority to the importance of the relationships with their friend and social groups as a support for an alternative masculine identity. The choice of friends was seen as essential in allowing an alternative expression of masculinity through the socialisation with peers that held similar viewpoints and personal values. JH describes the need for

“good friends or people [that] should give you respect for who you are, not the possessions you have.”

This identifies the conflict with the hegemonic masculine value of possessions as symbols of masculinity.

Many of the participants felt it was acceptable to have girls as close friends, saying that it is not the expected hegemonic norm, but they felt that it was still masculine within certain confines. However if all of a person’s social time was spent with females, that individual could be considered less masculine and potentially homosexual, which is likely to result in rejection of the person’s masculine identity by their peers.

The participants all described a close relationship with both family and friends, which they suggested would not necessarily be seen as masculine by others. PT describes this by saying

“To be honest, I do think we have meaningful conversations maybe more than the average group of guys. We talk about our future, marriage, maybe talk about stuff that we have read or recently heard at church or what the latest news is.”

JH describes his relationships with his peers as “deep”, suggesting a contradiction to expectations of the hegemonic norm. PD describes the strong peer support he has, saying

“The people that I hang around with, it’s very rare of us whereby a day goes by without motivating each other.”

Likewise the participants all describe a close relationship to their family members in strong contrast to the demands of the hegemonic norm for masculine independence. There is a general view of family as a strong support structure within difficult times, where the participants all felt they could go to in times of need. KA describes his family and parents in particular as an essential part of his life, saying

“I just think that for a guy to have a family with/ to have a family, people who can look out for them when they’re in trouble or people they can go to when you need help, ja, is important.”

*Treating women differently:*

A common thread throughout all the interviews was a strong respect for women that tended to contrast with the patriarchal nature of hegemonic masculinity. There was a tendency to view women as equals and people to be valued and treated well. Women are described by the majority of the participants as individuals who are able to contribute both financially and in terms of leadership and guidance of men. There was an acceptance that women could also be financial providers within the family,

although many of the participants suggested they were uncomfortable with women being the sole provider within a family, preferring an equal contribution, or at least feeling as though they themselves were making a significant contribution. KA describes his views of a limited acceptance of women contributing to a family in his response, saying

“But a man should always be working/ if like in a family, if the woman/ the mother is the one who is going out and earning the big money and the man is the one who is staying in the house, then he’s looked down upon, in my opinion that people think that he is more of a wimp or meek, that he’s not earning money and he’s letting his wife do all the work. So even if both people/ the man and the woman, are successful, the man has to be at least out and about earning money.”

He suggests that in one sense he opposes the hegemonic norm in regards to women not being allowed to contribute financially at all to the family, but at the same time he endorses the hegemonic view that men need to maintain a superiority through being the larger contributor financially. An interesting addition to the notion of female contribution is PT’s view of relationships and the ability for women to contribute as guides in a man’s life, as well as be independent. He suggests a man would

“want somebody to guide [them]... she needs to be her own person with her own set of goals and desires that are true to her, that [he] can see she is standing up for at least that she holds, so that you can kind of become a team.”

As such, PT echoes the other participants move away from patriarchal dominance of women, towards an approach that holds gender equality at its core.

Another strong theme within the participants’ discussion around women is the positive view of abstinence before marriage. There is a strong rejection by all the participants of the social pressure for sexual activity as the central focus of a relationship, and marker of masculinity. Instead the participants focus on emotional feelings, prioritising them over physical attraction within relationships. JH describes this as

“respecting women and treating them like sisters until married.”

Likewise, there is a strong rejection of multiple concurrent and serial relationships with women as disrespectful towards them, with a focus more on finding a partner for marriage rather than merely finding an individual to satisfy physical and sexual desires. This is seen in KA’s statement

“the more girlfriends you have, it just makes your image amongst others, in my opinion, more unrespectable.”

Interestingly some of the participants went so far as to suggest that girlfriends were not a priority or necessity in relation to maintaining a masculine identity. The suggestion is that a masculine identity is separate to romantic relationships, and is not necessarily defined by heterosexuality and marriage. KA describes this as

“if he doesn’t have, if he even went through his whole life not married and died single, I don’t see him as less of a man.”

However, despite this view of relationships and marriage not being a necessity, all of the participants describe marriage as a certainty, using words such as “when” rather than “if”. They show an acceptance of an alternative expression of masculinity, yet do not fully associate with such an idea, distancing themselves from the deviation from the expected norm.

*Real men cry – the vulnerable man:*

The majority of the participants focus on the pressure of the hegemonic norm for masculine stoicism, in which it is expected that “real” men do not cry. As such there is a strong restraint on what emotion is acceptable for men to express and in what context. The participants however take an explicitly contrasted position, stating that it is alright for men to express emotion as they themselves are human and subject to feelings. PT describes it as

“real men are able to be secure enough in their masculinity that they don’t have to think they look weak if they show affection or emotion or caring, because real men do cry, they should be able to, they should be real people not pretending behind false things.”

As such, the participants normalise the expression of emotions, focusing more so on the expression of negative emotions such as sadness and the action of crying, something which is characterised as distinctly feminine within the hegemonic view.

However the participants were clear that there was a contextual nature to the expression of emotion and crying, focusing on which individuals it was alright to express their emotions to. The suggestion was that it was appropriate to show emotional vulnerability in front of close family members, such as parents, and that the discussion of emotions was more appropriate with female friends. JH goes so far as to suggest that the expression of emotion is actually seen as attractive by girls, even though it may lead to rejection by male peers, saying that

“maybe if you showed emotion you would get teased more by guys but maybe girls would find that attractive than a guy”

The participants also suggest that a close relationship with their group of friends allows for a greater expression of emotion and vulnerability that defies the constraints of a hegemonic masculinity. However the suggestion is that it is only appropriate in certain situations in front of certain close friends rather than in general public view. This shows the strong ambivalence about the hegemonic norm, showing its power in their lives even though they believe in an alternative masculinity.

Interestingly, WM differs slightly in his view of men expressing their feelings, tending to contradict himself and his views at different points. He initially suggests that it is necessary for men to express their feelings to someone when struggling, but then later states that it is not appropriate for men to cry, except in extreme circumstances such as the death of a close relative. He then goes on to state that it is important for men to express “good feelings” only.

The participants tended to link the expression of emotion to the vulnerability of seeking help from others, be it emotional or physical help. This help-seeking behaviour is described as being in direct contrast to the hegemonic view of independence. KA directly rejects the stoicism characteristic of a hegemonic masculinity, stating that

“you actually being stupid [as] asking for help shows you are actually a man”

However, the participants identify the social pressure around help-seeking, where they feel at risk of rejection by their male peers through the use of the word “vulnerable”, describing the conflict felt between their own masculine identity and the social pressures to conform to a hegemonic masculinity. They recognise the alternative position that they take and how it may not be accepted as masculine by those complicit with the hegemonic position.

*That is not masculine – opposing identified norms:*

Throughout the interviews the participants identify particular aspects of the hegemonic norm that they explicitly oppose, describing these characteristics as distinctly not masculine. One such view that is held by all the participants is the social activities of their peers that centre around alcohol consumption, substance abuse and parties. This is seen as a loss of self-control that is not considered acceptable within the participant's personal masculine position. KA describes it as necessary to "know how to control yourself in terms of alcohol", ascribing overuse as the cause of unnecessary violence. There is a strong tone of rejection of the expected overuse of substances in social settings throughout all the interviews, except by WM, who accepts others' alcohol consumption, but personally does not wish to partake, saying

"although it's not wrong to drink, but for me, I'm still a baby in Christianity, so then I need to grow myself into salvation".

Another hegemonic norm that is strongly rejected by the participants is that of the patriarchal dominance of women, and the expectation of men of having the right to physically abuse their wives. The participants all had a strongly expressed respect for women and gender equality, yet maintained a discourse that suggested women were physically weaker than men, but did not see this view to mean that men were superior. PA rejects gender-based violence, saying

"I don't think beating up a women, you are a man. I don't think at all."

Similarly, many of the participants reject masculine aggression, and the norm of violence towards male peers. The participants identified a trend of fighting amongst males and the physical dominance over those that are considered weaker or less masculine. This display of physical strength and dominance is at the core of a hegemonic masculine identity, yet the majority of the participants explicitly reject such actions as not conforming to their personal views of masculine. KA describes his view in his statement:

"I see that as being a coward because you just hurting someone for no reason and he didn't provoke you in any way."

### **The Impact of a Religious Affiliation on Masculine Identity**

The participants were specifically selected for their strong religious affiliation, with all describing themselves as Christian. In discussion of what they felt it meant to be a man, they took both an explicit and implicit approach to the influence of their religious beliefs on their personal view of masculinity. However throughout the interviews there was an underlying influence of religious values that determined the responses from the individual men.

*"I am Christian":*

The participants all take an extremely explicit position within the interviews, with no hesitation in describing their religious affiliation. Throughout the participants this was described in one of two manners. The majority of the participants described their view of themselves as having a relationship with God that suggests an extension of traditional religious affiliation. Their description of Christianity is personal and their descriptions imply an emotional connection with God. PD describes this as

“having a relationship with God is a part of my life.”

The second manner in which participants describe their religious affiliation is in terms of the word “saved”, which implies that they have been saved from the punishment of sin through God’s grace, as described in the Christian doctrine. WM describes this in detail when describing his view of what it means to be a Christian, saying

“[God] gives you another life. So if you die then you can live another life... so then He’ll forgive your sins... cos the Bible says that by His blood, he washed all our sins away. So then that means I don’t have any sins anymore, because I repent.”

This religious identity is described by all the participants as an integral part of their life and identity, continuing to play a role in their identity even outside of a religious context. They describe this with a sense of pride, attributing personal value to their unwavering dedication to their beliefs. PT describes his view of the integration of religion into his life, saying

“God and Church related things are not separate from what you do, so even if I am working in a completely secular basis, I still wouldn’t see it as a separate pocket of my life.”

A number of the participants separate their view of the Christian religion from their peers’ version of Christianity. Whereas the participants describe Christianity as integral to their lives, they identify what JH calls “submarine Christians” and PT call “Sunday Christians”. They imply that there are amongst their peers, individuals who attend church and go through the required actions as a Christian, but this is not evident throughout their lives, but rather only in contexts when it is convenient for them.

Interestingly all the participants describe their religious identity in terms of a purpose or calling that is determined by God. They take an approach that limits their own sense of control of their lives, believing that God is the one that enables certain opportunities to come about, and it is their responsibility to ascertain what God’s desire for their lives is, and to follow that leading. This is generally around the individual’s actions in relation to the people that they are in direct contact with in life. PA describes his sense of purpose as

“everybody has a calling irrespective of what you do. You came into this earth to impact somebody’s life in some way or another... and when you don’t take steps into what at least you must try, I would say it is better for you to die trying than rather just hanging around and not do anything about it.”

This sense of purpose appears to be the driving force behind the participants’ social actions and interactions.

Another common trend amongst the participants’ view of their own personal religious identity is the notion that they are ‘different’. They tended to describe themselves as separated from their peers that ascribed to a more hegemonic form of masculinity, particularly around their values and morals that caused such a separation. Although not described in an arrogant tone, the participants felt that their views of masculinity were superior to the identified hegemonic norm due to their sense of responsibility in maintaining a moral approach to life. The participants do however identify the risk of rejection by their peers due to their ‘difference’, but qualify it as necessary due to their religious views superseding the pressure by their peers to conform. JH describes this pressure as

“you don’t really want to be noticed, and you don’t really wanna be different, but I think being Christian, I obviously do it for God and try give all the glory to Him and stand up for Him.”

PT takes an even more explicit approach, suggesting that masculinity is not something determined by peers and social forces, but rather

“God has thought what He thinks masculinity should be.”

His view explicitly rejects the hegemonic norm of masculinity, describing it as “empty”, suggesting rather that Christianity is actually a part of being a good man, and cannot be separated from a masculine identity. However he does acknowledge some of the emotional cost in doing this because of being perceived as ‘different’.

*Being Christian as a dominant social identity:*

The strong social nature of a religious identity is evident within the interviews, with the participants describing their circle of friends as tending to have similar moral and religious views as themselves. It appears that religion is central to friendships within their peer groups, where the participants feel they can relate better to peers with similar values as themselves. They are however quick to state that religion is not an excluding factor in friendships, suggesting that it is alright for non-Christian peers to be a part of their group of friends, but it seems this has not occurred in many situations. JH describes his friends as

“most of us are all Christians and we obviously, obviously there is no problem having someone who is not a Christian in our group it’s great I think... and we all share similar interests and we have quite similar values and morals.”

Many of the participants are quick to suggest that they do not reject peers that have different religious views, but this often does not tie up with the individual’s actions. One such example is PT’s description, saying

“don’t try hang out with the Christians, and make yourself separate because we need to be in the world... but most of my friends we have the same theology.”

Thus it appears that the majority of the participants close social interaction with peers is with individuals that have similar religious views, becoming the defining characteristic of the social group.

The social nature of the religious identity of the participants is reinforced by the activities the participants choose to participate in. Within the interviews, the participants describe social activities as centring around religious activities, starkly contrasted with typical hegemonic behaviours such as partying and substance abuse. Church meetings are described by many of the participants as a place to either meet new friends, or spend time with current friends. Other such activities identified are church camps, prayer groups and youth groups. PT describes these religious activities as something that is an integral part of social life, saying

“church meetings, prayer meetings, cell group meetings, there’s a lot that goes into it, but it’s not just for the sake of doing things, I think it’s because Christians meet together, you know the natural habitat.”

These social activities are described as being a natural part of Christian life, and contrasted by many of the participants as in direct opposition to the identified hegemonic norm of parties involving drinking and other substance abuse. JH describes his view of such

“friends at school on a Friday night all of them would go out and get drunk maybe or Saturday night, and whereas friends at church on a Friday night we go to youth.”

The participants describe a preference to participate in social activities that are religious in nature. They suggest that this religious context gives them the ability to freely express themselves without fear of reproach from their peers. This freedom allows for individuals to act in a manner that is not typically masculine by the cultural standards of hegemonic masculinity, but not be rejected by those around them, as the religious nature of the activities legitimises individual expression. KA describes this as

“when you having a worship session when everyone is singing a song they just jump around, just jump around with their eyes closed, just being one with God, so just lose control of that, just don’t worry what other people think of you... cos we all, we all here to worship God and don’t need to worry about what they think of you about the way you praise Jesus and stuff.”

KA’s statement indicates that peer opinion is an important component of masculinity, yet being in a religious space with peers who share a religious outlook seems to free people from this pressure.

*Religious values in opposition to the hegemonic norm:*

The participants take a strong position in opposition to activities that are associated with the hegemonic norm of masculinity. One such set of social activities is described as partying with substance use and abuse. This is strongly rejected by all the participants as something that cannot be associated with a religious identity, particularly in terms of substance abuse and the associated loss of self-control. JH takes this position in his statement

“obviously being Christian we not into smoking or getting drunk”

However some of the participants take a slightly less oppositional approach, suggesting a leeway in terms of drinking alcohol in particular, where they say it is alright to consume a small amount of alcohol, but still continue to reject the act of getting drunk. KA responds to the query of whether as a religious person, would drinking be irresponsible,

“Ja, drinking too heavily... [I would drink] moderately, not like drink until I drop.”

Another strong view held by the participants is the notion of not having sex before marriage. They base their views both on religious teachings, as well as suggesting that this is a sign of respect for women. There is a distinction made between the lust of physical sexual encounters that are encouraged within the hegemonic norm of masculinity, and the love based on a respect of women and religious teachings. PD describes his personal experience of the hegemonic view and resultant desire to change, saying

“it’s temptation that you have and God helps us through that when you look at this girl and you see that she’s a great girl and all your kind of stuff but now it’s a problem because when you were not saved, you were sleeping around with girls and finding that after a while you don’t care.”

The participants thus recognise the social pressure to succumb to compulsive sexual enactments, but stress that their religious values take precedence over the social norm of enacting personal sexual desire. KA describes how religious thinking impacts on his view of relationships, saying

“I’m thinking if I’m gonna be with a girl, I might as well be in a true relationship... and just thinking about not sleeping around with her / not sleeping with her when I just feel like it, but waiting till marriage to do whatever.”

The participants tended to take the position that it was acceptable for men to express emotion, such as crying, in opposition to the hegemonic norm of emotional stoicism. But they do suggest that the extent and form of emotional expression might partly be a function of context. WM takes this further, suggesting that it is suitable to cry as a means of religious expression and emotional release. However he suggests that a similar expression in a school environment would lead to rejection by his peers. He describes the expression of emotion in church as

“in church, it doesn’t matter... you can cry cos the Holy Spirit when it is here, you must release yourself.”

### **Sustaining a Masculine Identity**

Although the participants all consider themselves as decidedly masculine, they position themselves in opposition to the identified hegemonic norm in a number of aspects of their lives. As such, the participants describe their own personal alternative masculine identities that are distinctly inter-woven with, and perhaps a product of, their religious identities. The participants all identify a social pressure to conform to hegemonic versions of masculinity, creating conflict with their own personal values and masculine identity, thus requiring a negotiation of this conflict in order to sustain their masculine identity.

#### *Causes of conflict in masculine identity:*

The participants recognise a power inherent in hegemonic masculinity, with the social pressure to conform to the norms being described as central in many peer interactions. This peer pressure acts to reinforce the hegemonic norms by pressurising boys and men to conform, or face rejection and ridicule from their peers, and from boys and men both outside and within their social circle. This pressure creates a conflict for the participants, who feel that certain hegemonic norms are not in line with their personal and religious values. This pressure is reported to centre around the social activities of partying, drinking and smoking, as well as casual sexual relationships. These activities are described as central to a hegemonic version of masculinity and form the basis of a large amount of social interaction. Participant JH describes this dilemma as he wants to avoid being seen as different

“there are times when you don’t really want to be noticed, and you don’t really want to be different... I think it’s just human nature that you want to [fit in], like you want to go out and fit in with friends and you want to...”

This description suggests that JH and the other participants feel pressured to join in with the social group around them in order to feel a sense of belonging, But feels conflicted as the actions of this group contradict his personal values.

Interestingly, WM is the only participant who identifies with both the hegemonic and alternative masculine identities. He describes a change in identity, where he previously spent his social time partying and drinking, as such conforming to the hegemonic norm, but having become ‘saved’, he no longer feels that such behaviour is appropriate. However WM’s previous social group continuously pressures him to

join them once again in their social activities of partying and drinking. The pressure is so great that WM avoids these old friends when visiting his family in the area he grew up in, where these friends reside.

The detailed description of the hegemonic norm by the participants suggests that it is a pervasive pressure on their lives, creating conflict with many aspects of their alternative masculine identity. The participants contrast this pressure to conform, with a mature sense of responsibility that overrides the pressure to perform a hegemonic masculine identity, even when in direct conflict. PD gives an example of such a situation, where the traditionally feminine role of cooking creates a conflict, saying

“Maybe your wife is working the night shift and now who’s going to cook for you if you have children?”

However PD goes on to indicate his willingness to perform a typically feminine activity of cooking as a result of the responsibility he feels to care for children, which in itself is not considered a typically hegemonic masculine activity, but is consistent with his alternate version of masculinity.

At the heart of the conflict within the participants’ masculine identity is the tussle between an emotional human nature, and an intellectual, rational, moral self. The conflict between the temptation to conform to physical and sexual desires affirmed by hegemonic masculinity, and the values inherent in the participants’ religious identities are described at length. There is an honesty in many of the interviews, where the participants do not claim to be immune to such human desires, but describe the constant struggle. PD gives a scenario where a woman swearing at him could lead to frustration and anger, saying

“when you come back to your culture you just think, I need to whack this girl”

However out of a sense of respect for women, he would choose not to react to circumstances such as this, or get involved in sexual relationships with women, choosing rather to wait until he was married. In resisting the hegemonic temptation, the tone of the response is one of superiority. PT positions himself as superior to hegemonic men, saying

“The idea of identity hasn’t been settled for them, they not exactly sure who they are, or the things they believe in, once you have that settled down, then whoever you are with, those beliefs stay the same, those patterns of behaviour stay the same”

#### *The impact of context on the performance of alternative masculine identities:*

The majority of the participants explicitly claim that their core values and alternative masculine identity does not change across context, but their descriptions reveal what they show of this masculine identity and how they perform it does vary across different social contexts. Some of the contexts identified by the participants include close friendships, larger groups of friends, peer groups in school, religious groups and romantic interactions with girls. PT describes the shift in expression and behaviour through the example of social conversation, saying

“as the group changes, opinions probably change a bit too... a conversation is based on the people you are with and the people you are sitting with”

The participants also describe that it is safer to show vulnerability in emotions with close friends as JH states

“obviously there are close friends that I will share my emotions with” Similarly, the majority of the participants identify church and religious environments as places in which they feel like they are free to be themselves and express emotions without fear of rejection, as might be the case in other social environments. WM describes this difference across contexts, saying that it is ok to cry in church, as it is an expression of the presence of the Holy Spirit, but the same actions within a school environment would lead to teasing. There is also a reported difference between social interaction with male peers, and females whom the participants desire to have a relationship with. KA describes the difference

“if I was with my friends, I can be all lively and whatever, and be all relaxed. But if I was to be with a girl who I want to have a relationship with, I would probably be a bit more down to earth, then talk calmly and stuff, about more appropriate subjects.”

*Strategies of negotiation – using hegemonic norms:*

The participants identify a number of means used to negotiate an alternative masculine identity, allowing traits in conflict with the hegemonic norm to be maintained and legitimising the individual participant’s construction of their own masculine identity. Throughout the interviews, it is recognised that a masculine identity is formed within a social context, with the individual participants aware of the pressure from peer groups to conform to hegemonic norms. In order to escape this peer pressure, all the participants identify a close group of friends that hold a similar view of masculinity, and a similar set of values. This group acceptance of the individual’s masculine identity legitimises it as masculine, despite certain non-conformity to the hegemonic norm. KA describes this as

“when I’m with my friends, I’m just myself and just doing things however, or with my friends, I’m just relaxed and not tense.”

KA uses this to describe how he feels that there is minimal peer pressure within his group of friends, allowing him to show his true identity without the pressure to conform to the hegemonic norm.

The participants seem to draw on behaviours and discourses of hegemonic masculinity that legitimises their masculine identity, even though they do not fully conform to the hegemonic norm. The most prevalent example was that of sporting prowess, which is described as something that is a strong component of maintaining a masculine identity. JH describes his experience as

“when I am playing sport, I feel like a man.”

Thus sport is maintained as a strong symbol of masculine identity, drawing on hegemonic masculinity to legitimise the individual’s own masculine identity. KA identifies other aspects that affirm an individual’s masculine identity, namely musical skill with popular music, and a sense of humour that is used to entertain their peers. These qualities serve to legitimise an individual’s masculine identity, becoming the focus of identity, whilst shifting focus from traits that could be considered less masculine.

*The negotiation of an alternative masculinity:*

The participants tended to take a strong rights based approach with regards to their interaction with others, viewing women as equal, and considering the act of showing respect to peers as being of utmost importance. This respect for others takes a rights-based approach, as PT states clearly,

“you don’t have a right to that person you know”.

This respect for others is identified as entailing the use of physical strength to protect and help, rather than to harm others. Linked to this is the rejection of violence towards women, identified as a part of the hegemonic norm. The view that women should be treated as equals, and with respect was a common theme throughout all the interviews, and used as an argument for sexual abstinence before marriage. JH argues this point, saying

“obviously I don’t really see it as being that respectful to girls if you like sleeping with them”

At the core of many of the participants’ alternative masculine identities, they identify the impact of significant role models. These tend to be family members with the father playing a central role in some of the participants’ lives, but in the absence of a father figure, mothers and extended family members are identified as playing a positive role. The participants base a large part of their confidence in their alternative masculine identity on lessons learnt through the example of these role models. PD describes the impact of such people in his life as

“socialising with people, you have different kinds of people that are impacting on your life, not only saying something to you or motivating you, but that are inspiring you by their action”

These role models serve to legitimise the participants’ masculine identity by creating a positive example on which the individuals can base their own identity, and verbally reinforce the individual’s masculine identity.

#### *The role of religion in support of an alternative masculinity:*

Although not the sole contributor to the maintenance of an alternative masculine identity, the participants do recognise the significant impact of their religious beliefs on their masculine identity. Identified as being at the core of a religious identity is the belief in fate and calling, imparting a sense of authority to God, placing him in control in regards to making decisions and suggesting that he is responsible for determining the true meaning of what it means to be masculine. While most men are affirmed in their masculinity by conformity to hegemonic norms, the participants suggest that they do not need to be bothered with the opinions of their peers, as their primary identification is with God. This position of themselves primarily in relation to God is suggested by the participants to play an important role in maintaining an alternative masculine identity. PD describes this guidance by God as

“you have something to check on, how I need to act as a man... so it’s easier because you actually know what to do.”

All the participants describe the submission to God, albeit through different terms, namely a ‘calling’ or ‘purpose’, or a sense of guidance. This in turn is used to minimise the impact of social pressure to conform, and in turn allows for the performance of an alternative masculinity.

Many of the participants identify a sense of freedom brought about by religious activities, stating that it removes them from the fear of negative judgement by others, as their only consideration is how God views their actions. This is identified as predominantly within religious social gatherings, where deviations from the hegemonic norm are both accepted and even encouraged. KA illustrates this with the experience of loss of control in a worship session, saying

“when you are having a worship session when everyone is singing a song they just jump around with their eyes closed, just being one with God, so just lose control of that, just don’t worry what other people think of you.”

Similarly, all the participants describe close male peer relationships with a shared religious identity as playing an important role in the maintenance and legitimation of an alternative masculine identity. This serves to create a social group in which common views and moral values are an expression of their alternative masculine identity. There is an explicit recognition of religious identity being both at the core of close social groups, as well as social activities. The participants choose to participate in activities that remove them from the expected behaviours of the hegemonic norm, centring around these religious activities, such as youth groups and worship sessions. The fact that the group of friends share similar views means that there is no direct and imposing peer pressure to conform to the hegemonic norm, but rather legitimises an alternative masculine identity. JH describes his group of friends as

“most of us are all Christians and... we all share quite similar interests and we have quite similar values and morals... being Christian we are not into smoking or getting drunk on the weekends and stuff”

Thus the pressure to conform to the hegemonic norm is distanced and no longer comes directly from friends, but becomes merely a remote influence from a peer group whose influence is not valued.

## Chapter 5 - Discussion

### Understanding Hegemonic Masculinity

#### *I am masculine:*

The participants were selected due to their religious affiliation, individuals who identified themselves as Christian men whose belief system was integral to their personal identity. This religious identity is described by Thomson and Remmes (2002), and Francis (2005), as being considered feminine in nature and in opposition to a socially accepted masculine norm. However it is interesting to note that none of the participants queried their own masculine identity. In their description of masculine norms, those individuals identified as not being considered masculine, were always described as a generalised set of characteristics that did not conform to the norm. The participants seem to preserve their own masculine identity by not questioning their own nature and the contradiction with the social expectations identified, but rather merely talk as if there is no doubt of their own masculine identity, separating themselves from those that could be considered non-masculine.

#### *The complicit position:*

It is apparent from the responses within the interviews that a single characteristic of identity, in this case a religious affiliation, does not necessarily imply an identity that is in total conflict with a hegemonic view of masculinity. In many cases the participants took a complicit position in their view of masculinity, reinforcing the hegemonic norm. A large amount of the discourse within the interviews closely correlates with Smiler's (2006) attributes of hegemonic masculinity, namely emotional stoicism, risk taking status seeking, and opposition to activities deemed feminine in nature. There is a strong social nature to the accounts of masculinity given by the participants, where social interaction is often independent of religious activities and so follows a more hegemonic pattern of expression. It is only certain characteristics of the hegemonic norm that are explicitly rejected, such as the physical abuse of women, and substance abuse, in which case religious beliefs then step in to supersede the need to perform a socially accepted masculine identity.

At times there is evidence of Coats (2010) notion of 'discursive tacking' when it comes to restructuring the description of hegemonic norms into something that is more appropriate within the religious context. The substitution of words such as 'lead' rather than 'dominate' when describing male leadership of family and church serve to reinforce the patriarchal dominance in a more polite manner that complies better with religious teachings. In this instance, it is apparent that a religious identity is not always in conflict with a masculine identity, but can actually provide opportunities for masculine expression through the legitimisation of patriarchal leadership and expression. This expression of masculinity can be described as self-seeking, along the lines of Thomson and Remmes' (2002) description of men who maintained a religious identity in order to achieve a position of authority, and thus reinforcing their sense of masculine identity.

The position taken by the participants in opposition to feminine traits and homosexuality further reinforces their complicit position. In the act of "othering" those who are considered to be feminine or homosexual, the participants show a strong correlation with the hegemonic view whereby such individuals are to be

rejected as non-masculine. In this circumstance, religious views and teachings are actually used to reinforce the hegemonic norm, legitimising the rejection of such individuals. Thus at times it appears the religious position of the participants is actually closely aligned with that of the hegemonic position, and not always in opposition as the literature suggests (Francis, 2005).

*Work, cars, sport and women – The foundations of a masculine identity:*

Although differing in their opinions of what entails the ideal masculine work role, there was a general agreement amongst the participants that masculine identity is very much rooted within the work role the individual performs. Underlying the roles described were the notion of earning a suitable income, with a focus on high earning jobs such as accounting and other professional roles. These dream jobs were related to the ability to provide for self and family, as well as to be able to afford luxury items that had a high social standing. The work roles described also followed the lines of the traditional patriarchal system as described by Demetriou (2006), in which certain roles are considered to be masculine in nature, particularly through their leadership role and dominance over subordinates. Interestingly one of the participants actually chose to rather focus on physical strength in the work place as a symbol of masculine identity. He was happy to fill a subordinate role through the belief that his physical strength made up for the fact that he filled what would be considered an inferior role.

One such item that was central in the participants' description of masculinity was the motorcar. A large part of discussion in the interviews centred on the car as a symbol of masculinity, with more expensive cars being linked to a greater show of masculinity. Participants related the ownership of a car as a symbol of independence and social standing, with high value cars being envied by peers. The level of intensity with which cars are described suggests that they are the central physical objects by which masculine standards are measured. This need for affirmation of masculine identity from the individual's peers links to Smiler's (2006) description of hegemonic masculinity and the act of status seeking being inherent in such a masculine identity.

Wienke's (1998) description of the male body as the epitome of masculinity is seen in the central nature of sport in the participants' construction of masculinity. Sport is described in a manner in which it becomes the vehicle for the expression of individuals' expression of their own masculinity. Sports stars are idolised as hyper-masculine role models, becoming central to social discussion amongst male peers, where the weekend's sporting events are the general topic of discussion amongst male friends. The participants also appear to express their own masculinity through their own sporting involvement, with the acquiring of skill and strength through hard work valued as a masculine endeavour.

Linked to Wienke's notion of the physical body being a manifestation of masculine identity is the act of compulsory heterosexuality. For many of the participants, conversations with male peers steer towards women and relationships as a topic. They describe a strong pressure to be in a heterosexual relationship, and all talk of marriage as an inevitable occurrence in life. There is no doubt or suggestion of not being married, alongside a distinct rejection of homosexuality. In this manner the traditional hegemonic view of relationships is reinforced within certain parameters that are acceptable within the religious view of the participants. Deviation however occurs when it comes to sexual relationships, whereby religious teachings that conflict

with sexual activity before marriage supersede the described norm of multiple, meaningless sexual encounters encouraged by their male peers. Thus there is a certain adherence to the hegemonic norm within relationships that is encouraged by religious views and teachings, but within certain parameters that do not allow the relationships to be of a sexual nature without marriage first.

#### *Is hegemonic masculinity so simple?*

In the writings of authors such as Connell (2002), Peralta (2007) and Demetriou (2001) there is a strong consensus on the general description of a hegemonic norm of masculinity. Likewise the participants interviewed tended to agree on what was a socially accepted norm of masculinity within their context, which correlated with the authors' views on the topic. However it appears that in itself the concept of hegemony is fraught with contradictions that necessitate the need for negotiation of identity.

One such potential conflict is the masculine role of male provider, in which there is a strong need for responsible behaviour in the need to look after a family. Yet contrary to this is the notion of a wild and free man that is independent, takes risks, parties often and drinks a lot. These two positions are strongly in opposition, yet both are seen as inherent within a hegemonic view of masculinity. One of the ways in which the participants describe the negotiation of such a conflict is through the notion that certain masculine actions are appropriate at different stages of life, with the wilder partying expected during the years of studying, but then there comes a need to become responsible as one enters adulthood, in the working and family environment. The second conflict between the responsible man and the need for independence requires a similar need for renegotiation. The idea of being a provider and supporter of a family limits a man's ability to be independent and is likely to lead to strong internal conflict. Many of the participants actually reframed this family and societal role into one of leadership in which a certain level of independence is maintained, whilst still fulfilling the duties associated with a patriarchal role in the family.

#### **Alternative Masculinities**

##### *All that is not feminine – maintaining the dichotomy of gender identity:*

As reported in the previous chapter, the participants' discourse is one that does not question their own personal masculine identity, despite identifying particular traits that deviate from the hegemonic norm. The participants are able to identify others that do not classify as masculine, by identifying distinctly feminine characteristics that place those individuals in a non-masculine category, defining them as inherently feminine in nature. There is no mention of a possible middle ground on the continuum of gender identity between masculinity and femininity, despite recognition of deviation from the extremes. Thus, although the interviews suggest that gender identity, and masculine identity in particular exist on a continuum, this is heavily weighted towards either end of the spectrum, with no identification of a possible middle category. This closely links with Johnson and Morrison's (2007) findings that although men did not fully conform to the expectations of hegemony, they chose to position themselves on the dichotomous continuum as close to hyper-masculinity as possible. The participants thus tended to position themselves in opposition to those that did not conform to their expectations of masculinity, taking a position similar to

Connell's (1995) dominant position, allowing them to maintain a sense of masculinity, despite a deviation from the hegemonic norm in certain manners.

The participants appear to maintain a strong underlying discourse of opposition to femininity, with any feminine actions being rejected as distinctly non-masculine. When mention is made by participants of personal actions that may be construed as feminine or homosexual, they are quick to take a defensive position to legitimise their actions as masculine in nature, making use of Coats' (2010) concept of 'tacking' in order to maintain their masculine identity. Using this technique, they reframe what could be identified as feminine, by providing an argument that supports the queried characteristic as masculine.

*Born a man – the impact of the biological:*

Authors such as Connell (1995) focus on the social construction of masculine identity, where the individuals are said to 'perform' a masculine identity in relation to social norms. However there is a strong view by many of the participants that biological sex still has an impact on masculine identity. Many of the participants appear to struggle to differentiate the concepts of physical sex and gender identity, suggesting that even though an individual's actions may not be masculine in nature, they are still men due to their biological makeup. This is close to Salamone's (2007) suggestion that culture and social forces merely give meaning to the biological, thus saying that the root of masculinity is found in the biological sex, which then guides an individual's performance of a masculine identity.

The participants do however tend to separate actions from physical attributes in relation to masculine identity – characterising certain actions as non-masculine, yet stating that due to other defining features men can maintain a masculine identity. This relates to Wienke's (1998) suggestion that the muscular male body is seen to epitomise masculinity. Thus the focus is shifted towards the physical presentation of masculinity, rather than certain characteristics that may disqualify individuals from having a masculine identity. In such a way, men can maintain an alternative masculine identity by being complicit (Connell, 1995) in certain aspects with regards to the hegemonic norm, despite having some characteristics that are in direct conflict with hegemony. This is done by focusing on those aspects that legitimise their identity as masculine amongst their peers.

*Is masculinity really in crisis? – Participants' view of self:*

Although the participants take a mildly defensive approach in reaction to certain characteristics and actions, they appear not to question their own masculinity. There is very little indication that these young men are facing a crisis in their masculine identity as Connell (2002) suggests, but actually appear to be content in their own masculinity. The participants identify minor social pressures in relation to their alternative views, but hold steadfast in their belief that theirs is a legitimate masculinity, with no desire indicated to change their point of view. This appears to be legitimised by the participants surrounding themselves with peer groups and friends who hold similar viewpoints. Thus the participants move from individual eccentricity towards a sustainable masculine identity as described by Connell (2002).

The manner in which the participants describe their own personal masculine identity is less suggestive of a crisis, but rather appears to be more reflective of a resolution of a crisis around masculine identity. The tendency to explicitly reject particular

hegemonic norms, which they see as incompatible with their religious identity and values, assists in establishing an alternative masculine identity. In this manner, the individual masculine identities begin to take on a new perspective and set of norms that closely resemble Walker's (2005) description of a new masculinity emerging in South Africa in reaction to new constitutional values.

Thus the participants appear to maintain a consensus on a new view of what it means to be masculine, whilst still holding on to what are considered positive hegemonic characteristics. This then has created a blend of a complicit position (Connell, 1995), with a legitimate alternative masculinity that appears to be growing in acceptance, particularly within the South African context (Walker, 2005). As Walker (2005) identifies, it could be argued that this form of masculine identity may even be moving on from being considered an alternative masculinity towards a legitimisation equal to that of a traditional patriarchal hegemonic position without the context of constitutional freedom in South Africa.

### **The Impact of Religious Identity**

#### *Just ordinary people:*

The participants take an ambivalent position that on a superficial level isolates and separates themselves from their description of the hegemonic norm, yet on closer view they tend to conform to the hegemonic norm to a large extent. They view and even explicitly describe themselves as 'different', yet their accounts of their own personal masculine identity do not always match this view. In essence, the description of their personal masculinity given by the participants closely resembles Demetriou's (2001) definition of hegemonic masculinity that describes a social system in which men have greater opportunities through being granted power and positions of leadership, and the distancing of self from individuals described as the 'other' or in opposition to the feminine norm. Although reframed in a more acceptable manner, the participants' views retain the authority of men over women, and continue to reinforce hegemonic norms of the tough male provider and protector. The responses within the interviews reflect many of the traits identified by Wienke (1998) and Smiler (2006) as a part of the hegemonic norm, involving a discourse of opposition to any action defined as feminine in nature. The individuals maintain a need for independence and ascribe to a compulsory heterosexuality, along with an implicit rejection of homosexuality.

Thus the religious identity so strongly held could be described as merely being a facet of the participants' masculine identity that pervades all aspects of masculine life, but does not define the whole of the individual's masculine identity. As such, the participants recognise a continued social expectation for how they perform their masculine identity, which is only truly queried when it is in direct conflict with religious identity. It could thus be argued that a strong religious affiliation does not necessarily lead to an alternative masculinity, but more so that the religious identity is merely a particular deviation from what is essentially still a hegemonic identity. Even those aspects of the individual's identity that deviate from the hegemonic norm are described by the participants as masculine in their view, and so in this manner the participants actually describe themselves as fully masculine, despite recognising some aspects may not always be accepted by their peers as masculine.

### *Two kinds of Christians:*

JH's description of the "submarine Christians" that is reiterated by many of the other participants in different forms highlights the two iterations of a religious identity that are described within the interviews. The participants all take the position that their religious beliefs are integral to their life in its entirety, forming an integral part of their masculine identity. However they describe a second expression of a religious identity that is contextual in nature, and one which they do not agree with. These "submarine Christians" are described as following the expectations of the Christian belief when participating in religious based activities, but outside of this context, their beliefs have no impact on actions and behaviour. It appears that this may be an attempt to protect a fragile hegemonic masculine identity in which a religious affiliation is seen as feminine in nature as suggested by Francis (2005), and so do not express their religious identity outside of the religious context. This relates to Thomson and Remmes (2002) proposal of two spheres of religious identity and how they impact on individual identity. The first is the cognitive and behavioural belonging aspect of religion, in which both the participants' and the "submarine Christians" could be classified. In this aspect of religious identity the Christian group norms guide individual action in the religious context. This allows both the participants and 'submarine' Christians to conform to a religious identity within a religious context. However it is the aspect of cognitive and emotive believing that appears to differentiate the participants from their accounts of the "submarine Christians". According to Thomson and Remmes (2002) this aspect suggests the individual beliefs of the participants are what determine their actions, and thus influencing their masculine identity whereby their belief system supersedes the pressure from society and peers. Thus the participants are no longer subject to peer pressure to conform to the hegemonic norm due to their individual beliefs being valued over social norms, however the 'submarine' Christians individual beliefs are not strong enough to withstand the pressure to conform to hegemonic norms.

### *Is religiosity feminine?*

Thomson and Remmes (2002) argue that characteristics and activities inherent in a religious identity hold a distinctly feminine gender orientation that is in opposition to the hegemonic norm of masculinity. Within the interviews this feminine orientation could be argued to be true in relation to particular attributes described by the participants. The first of these would be the caring and nurturing role taken on by the participants in relation to family and their peers. There is a focus on treating people with respect and supporting them in need, along with being emotionally available to assist struggling peers and family. This is in conflict with the stoicism and independent authority that is expected by the hegemonic norm. In addition a second attribute could be described as feminine in nature, namely the open expression of emotion and the associated vulnerability that would result. The participants suggest that the expression of emotion is appropriate, particularly within the religious context, where all emotional control could be lost, and yet remain appropriate. This appears to centre around a rejection of the popular notion that "boys don't cry", with crying becoming the common example of taboo emotional expression that is justified by the participants.

However in response to the description of attributes that could be considered feminine in nature, the participants affirm their masculine identity by refuting the classification of their actions as feminine, but rather use their religious beliefs to justify their actions

as masculine, despite being in opposition to the hegemonic norm. The participants describe their version of masculinity as something that is determined by God, rather than their peers, in line with Eldredge's (2001) view of an 'authentic masculinity'.

*The rise of the modern man:*

It could be argued that the version of masculinity presented by the participants in this study echoes that described by Walker (2005) as the emerging 'modern man'. Walker argues that this new masculinity has emerged from post-apartheid transition towards democracy, a period through which the participants have grown up. In response to new constitutional values, this 'modern man' is characterised as someone who is in control, rational and responsible, whilst opposing the violence inherent in the hegemonic norm. This description could be used in relation to how the individual participants all view their own personal masculine identity, suggesting that they themselves could be considered a part of this emerging 'modern man' masculine identity. In this version of masculinity, religious identity is no longer in conflict with masculine identity, but in fact legitimates a different, but equally authentic masculine identity, albeit one that is different from hegemonic versions of masculinity. The attributes within Walker's (2005) account and those found in this study are closely aligned, allowing this religious identity to become supportive, rather than in conflict with the individual's masculine identity.

### **Sustaining an Alternative Masculine Identity**

*Multiple versions of hegemony:*

It is clear throughout the interviews that hegemonic masculine identity cannot be regarded as a single and unified entity with a specific set of characteristics. There is a recognition by the participants that their own personal view of what it means to be masculine is not necessarily the same view held by their peers, and even less likely to correlate with the views held by individuals in a different cultural and geographical context. The participants' views express the possibility for multiple versions of masculinity, and even the possibility of multiple versions of hegemonic masculinity. While some men may have features that do not conform to a particular version of hegemonic masculinity, they may participate in and perform what is effectively another version of hegemonic masculinity legitimated by a different audience.

Ordinarily, as Connell (1995) identifies, this might result in rejection by peers for being different from the hegemonic norm, and yet participants report little if any such experience. In fact, despite these differences they describe good relationships with their peers, merely identifying with an alternative set of group norms, which according to Thomson and Remmes (2002) will serve to steer individual action. The shared identity of this group and identification with God serves then to legitimise actions as masculine through group acceptance, despite being in contradiction with the hegemonic norm.

Interestingly the participants also identify a fluidity in their own masculine identity across contexts, with different expressions of masculine identity being performed in different social contexts. Connell (2002) argues that gendered identity actually holds many ambiguities, complexities and uncertainties, which is something evident in the accounts of the participants in relating their experience of masculinity. The participants identified a different expression of masculinity when with their family,

compared to when with their friends, which was in turn different when interacting with women that they liked.

Again, Coats' (2010) notion of 'discursive tacking' can be used to understand how the participants negotiate the ambiguities within their own masculine identity. It is apparent that the participants thinly disguise traditional hegemonic masculinity and make it more consistent with their religious values through subtle discursive moves and reframing. Thus at times it becomes apparent that an alternate or hybrid masculine religious identity is actually a hegemonic masculinity disguised in a form that is more consistent with religious values and outlook.

*The impact of social interaction on masculine identity:*

It could be argued that friendships with religious peers served two intertwined functions. Firstly the participants identify these friends as people that they can relate to, and with whom they can share religious activities. These activities both express and serve to strengthen their common values. This friendship group provides a network that is free from the pressures identified as inherent in the hegemonic form of masculinity. Secondly these friendships serve to reinforce the alternative masculine identities through social group acceptance of variation in action as argued by Connell (1995). Thus it is through the social group that an alternative masculinity is sustained, rather than it becoming a mere eccentricity should it be identified only on an individual level. This reinforces Peralta's (2007) argument that masculinity is reinforced and recreated through social interaction and the group dynamics of consensus, supporting the group's expression of masculinity as valid through common views as held by the participants and their friends.

It is striking in the results that despite setting and maintaining an alternate, religiously informed, masculine identity, the participants hold on to those aspects of hegemonic masculinity that remain acceptable even within a religious framework. The findings show the participants to constantly struggle to find acceptability from mainstream hegemonic men. Maintaining certain hegemonic qualities allows the participants to establish a hybrid masculinity based on a parallel positioning in relation to both hegemonic and alternate masculine identities. This allows them to find acceptability amongst non-religious men, whilst not compromising their religious beliefs and values. Despite Gelfer's (2010) claim that it is impossible for men to maintain both a masculine identity and a feminised religious identity, the findings show the way in which these young men skilfully manage this hybrid blend of masculine identity and what might otherwise be regarded as a feminised identity. This is done by the performance of a masculine identity that reflects a large portion of hegemonic characteristics, and only differs in aspects that are deemed to be in direct conflict with the individual's personal religious values and perception of what it means to be a man.

The findings reveal that the participants' construction of their own masculine identity is actively managed rather than being a passive reaction to dominant social norms on one hand, and religious values on the other hand. Rather this is an active process that is the result of conscious management of conflict between social norms and moral values. This construction follows Giddens' notion of the 'duality of structure' in which society imposes a predetermined set of rules on individuals, who then alter the rules according to their own subjective views and intentions. Thus the participants

describe an active role in the construction and performance of their masculine identity, whilst still remaining within the framework of societal norms (Billington, Hockey & Strawbridge, 1998).

## Chapter 6 - Conclusion

### *The aims of the study:*

1. To identify religious young men's descriptions of masculinity.
2. To identify how they position themselves in relation to hegemonic versions of masculinity.
3. To identify alternative narratives or versions of masculinity which are not based on dominant hegemonic norms.
4. To examine whether religious young men hold multiple versions of masculinity (masculine positions), and how a religious identity impacts on the young men's masculine identities.
5. To examine how young men negotiate conflict in relation to their masculine identity, and whether a religious identity is used to sustain these masculine identities.

### *Summary of findings:*

The identification of a socially accepted version of masculinity is evident throughout the study. This is constructed through social interaction and expectations, and communicated through social action and discourse. The strong pressure to conform to this ideal masculinity runs through the interviews, and the participants display a desire to be accepted as masculine in the social context. As such they identify a number of features of hegemonic masculinity, many of which they personally ascribe to in order to maintain an acceptable masculine identity.

Hegemonic masculinity is described as being a responsible provider who has a good job and earns a sufficient income to support his family. This man is in charge of those around him, displaying an authority and power of leadership in the home and work context. Yet despite this, hegemonic masculinity is described as being characterised by independence that is often displayed in this leadership and power to make decisions, rather than existing as a subordinate in the work and social environment. This is extended in an image that men are heroic, brave and wild, often taking risks and seeking out adventure in order to 'prove' their masculinity. This all leads to an expectation for men to display an emotionally stoic front, in which the display of emotion, and in particular the act of crying, is not seen as masculine. The hegemonic norm prescribes a compulsory heterosexuality, with sexual conquests lauded as displays of success as a masculine individual, with these conquests becoming trophies about which men boast with their friends. Inherent in the descriptions of the hegemonic norm of masculinity is the discourse of opposition, rejecting the display of alternative features as non-masculine. Within this is the distinct rejection of homosexuality and anything that may be deemed feminine in nature.

At the core of the identified hegemonic norm of masculinity are the strong themes of work, cars, sport and women. These themes are described as the symbols of a hegemonic masculinity, allowing for acceptance amongst peers as legitimately masculine. Men are expected to have a high-earning job, as well as being able to afford an expensive car, alongside having sporting prowess in masculine sporting activities, and have a good-looking girlfriend, or string of concurrent or successive female partners. The findings show the participants' complicit position, ascribing to many of these social expectations of masculinity. The participants use this complicit position to validate their own masculine identity

*Creating an alternative masculinity:*

Although the participants take a complicit position in relation to many features of hegemonic masculinity, they are at pains to demonstrate and live an alternative masculine identity, one that is consistent with their Christian identity. In this performance of an alternative masculinity, they actively choose to reject certain hegemonic traits when describing their own personal masculine identity. Particular hegemonic traits are explicitly rejected as not being masculine in nature, such as violence and aggression towards women, as well as the social activities of partying and substance use and abuse. There is a strong view by the participants that women are to be respected and treated as equals, yet also be protected from harm. This is described as an appropriate expression of masculine strength, which contrasts with the view that men are merely human beings who are vulnerable, and thus it is appropriate to express emotion and cry in certain contexts.

However, although the participants identify with an alternative masculine identity, they still position themselves in opposition to all that is considered feminine. They maintain a dichotomous view of gender consisting of two polar opposites, and struggle to accept an expression of gender that may fall in between these two constructs. As such, there is an explicitly strong rejection of homosexuality and avoidance of the suggestion any of their own actions may be considered as feminine. They also ascribe to the idea that biological factors contribute to masculine identity, whereby a male body plays a major role in sustaining a masculine identity, even when some of the individual's actions may be in conflict with a masculine identity. Although there remains some conflict and contradictions within the participants' view of their own masculine identities, there is little to suggest that their sense of masculinity is in crisis. The tone of responses suggests an acceptance and resolution of conflict with the hegemonic norm, along with a contented approach with their own alternative masculine identity.

Throughout the interviews it is evident that religion cannot be merely described as a part of the participants' identity, but rather plays a central role in the construction of their masculine identity. Religion intersects with the discourses of masculinity, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly, however it remains a pervasive element in how the participants interact with and understand the world around them. Activities and social interaction tended to revolve around this religious identity, contributing to the expression of an alternative masculine identity through social activities that rather centre around religious activities, as well as which peers the participants choose to socialise with. The participants described a close relationship with peers that shared their religious views, and how they preferred to participate in social activities that have a religious purpose with these like-minded peers, enabling them to feel accepted as masculine through shared views. These views at times tend to exist in opposition to the identified hegemonic norms, at which point the participants religious values supersede the pressures from society to conform.

Despite this strong religious identity, the participants make an effort to not isolate themselves socially, but rather continue to see themselves as ordinary people that happen to be religious. However they identify two different kinds of religious identities, namely the one they ascribe to, which entails an impact of religion on all aspects of life. This is contrasted with other individuals who in religious contexts

express a religious identity, and when in a non-religious social setting, their behaviour changes to conform to a hegemonic masculinity. This behaviour suggests a risk of rejection by peers in relation to a religious identity, which the participants are aware of, but do not feel pressured to hide their religious identity in a secular context. Although some expressions of religion are stereotypically seen as feminine, which would lead to rejection from peers, the young men do not identify these actions as feminine, but rather as being legitimised as masculine by the religious context in which they take place.

Despite a contented tone of the participants regarding their masculine identities, there is a recognition that a masculine identity is a fluid concept that is subject to individual and social forces. The participants describe a conflict that exists between social pressures to conform to the hegemonic norm, and religious beliefs and values that contradict the hegemonic norm. At the same time the participants identify a conflict between their intellectual, rational self, and the emotional instinctive human nature inherent in every person. It is through resisting both social pressures, and personal instincts that the individuals manage to maintain their alternative masculine identities. However the participants do recognise there is still a contextual force that affects how a masculine identity is expressed, depending on the social context. In order to maintain an alternative masculinity, the participants tended to socialise with like-minded peers who shared similar views, as well as continuing to display hegemonic attributes that were deemed to still be appropriate in relation to their religious identity. Thus the participants present multiple versions of masculinity, with particular hegemonic features existing in parallel with alternative masculine features. In times when the peer pressure to conform to the hegemonic norm contradicted with beliefs, the participants used their religious identity as a means to legitimise their actions as masculine. The primary method used by the participants is the relinquishment of control, stating that God determines what it means to be a man and He is in control of their fate and it is their duty to follow his desires for their life and actions.

The fluidity of masculine identity suggests the possibility that there is more than one way to express masculinity, in turn creating the mechanism for the sustaining of an alternative masculine identity. This suggests that hegemony is not merely a static concept, but subject to social and contextual forces. This then allows for alternative traits to be accepted as masculine, which is then further legitimised through group consensus as seen when comparing the accounts of the participants. The association with male peers who share a similar view and express similar traits allows for an acceptance of how the individual's express their masculine identity. At the core of the negotiation of masculine identity lies an approach whereby the participants use discursive tacking to reframe their expression of alternative traits, describing these traits in a manner that is more acceptable within a religious framework, as well as in a manner that reframes alternative traits into more acceptable within a hegemonic viewpoint.

*The implications of the findings on theory and practice:*

The research findings suggest that masculine identity is far more complex in practice than some authors claim. There is a complex interweaving of features that underlie how individuals present themselves as masculine in a social context, a presentation of masculine identity that is fluid and constantly shifting according to context. In line with this, it is evident that a religious identity has a large impact on masculine

identity, promoting behaviour that is considered to be beneficial socially. This new masculine identity that is argued to be a version of hegemonic masculinity strongly reflects the notion of the modern man – someone who plays a positive role in society, upholding the rights of women and others, and able to act responsibly within society.

*Limitations of study:*

The sample of this study consisted of a range of young men living in Pietermaritzburg and affiliated to Christian religious organisations. As such they are at the extreme end of a continuum of religious involvement, and not fully representative of a general population, but are rather a small group of individuals with a strong religious identity. As such, the results may be valid for this population group, but may not be reflective of all young men who describe themselves as Christian. It is apparent that the participants also form a small section of the Christian population, holding similar views, but this may differ when looking at more traditional denominations and different age groups. There is also little indication as to whether or not the participants will continue to hold similar viewpoints at a different point later in life, or whether as they grow older, their views may shift from what is reported as young men. The participants are also potentially at risk of giving responses that conform to a social desirability to be viewed as committed Christian men, and do not wish to be seen to not be living up to the expectations created by Christian religious teaching.

The design of this study is also subject to limitations, particularly through the subjective interpretation of the part of the researcher, whose views are subject to personal experience and frameworks of thinking. The conclusions are those of the researcher, and are potentially one of a number of other potential conclusions, where there may be other plausible explanations for the findings. As a young Christian man, I was able to identify with the participants and relate to their reported experiences, yet in the interests of realistic reporting needed to distance myself from my own personal beliefs and views, and objectively look at the lived experiences of the participants. This required a recognition that each individual's viewpoint and interpretation of religious teachings is unique, and each individual has the right to their particular viewpoint, rather than taking the perspective of beliefs to be considered as right or wrong.

*Further research possibilities:*

As this study focuses primarily on Christian young men, there are many possibilities to expand the investigation of the impact of a religious identity on masculine identity. There is room for investigation on the impact of factors such as age, with comparisons between different generations of men, as well as looking at the impact of Christian denomination and whether there are variations linked to a denominational affiliation. In addition, there is a need to investigate whether the findings in this study are isolated to a Christian religious identity, and how the results compare to young men from different religious groups.

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## **Appendix A – Interview Schedule**

### **SANPAD MANUAL FOR INTERVIEWERS**

#### **INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH BOYS**

##### **Introduction for interviewers.**

This project is about boys and masculinity, and is broadly concerned to understand what it means to be a boy in a religious setting. We are especially interested in finding out:

- What expectations there are for boys, and how these are reflected in norms of behaviour?
- Are there different kinds of boys with different kinds of expectations of masculinity?
- Does being a boy vary in different situations e.g. at home, at school, with friends?
- What are the challenges that boys face, and how do they deal with them?
- Are there changes taking place in what it means to be a boy?
- How does religious belief impact on boys' views of masculinity?

We are interested in understanding the specific aspects of their experiences, so examples would be very helpful.

#### **PREPARATION FOR STUDY PARTICIPATION**

- Explain the purpose of the study broadly
- Explain that there are different stages: we are inviting them to participate for about 2 months, but they are free to not continue at any time
- The first part will be to spend two weeks taking photographs of “my life as a boy or young man”. We will arrange to collect the cameras and develop the photographs.
- About two weeks later we hope to meet with you on your own to show you the photographs and to ask you to tell us about them, and about your life as a boy/young man in South Africa.
- About two weeks later we would like you to come to a meeting with about 7-8 other boys/young men in the project to share some of your photographs, and talk about them.
- We will pay them R25 for each interview conducted.
- Carefully explain the ethics of participating in the study:
  - Anonymous interviews – no one will know who you are except the interviewer
  - Confidentiality - only researchers will deal with the information
  - At any stage that you prefer not to carry of please feel free to stop

PTO.....

## INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PHOTOS

### Preparation for the interview

- Explain the study and the ethics briefly
- Give copies of the photos to the young man and allow him some time to look at them. Chat very informally about them, e.g. Do you think they are good? Etc
- Explain that you want to use the photos to understand more about what it is like to be a boy/young man in SA.
- Check that this is acceptable.
- Check that he is happy that you tape record the interview

### Introduction

- Before we look at the photos, it would help me to know just a little about you, so as to understand the photos
- Chat informally about aspects of their lives: Where do you live? Who makes up your family? Where do you go to school? What class? What are some of your interests? How would you describe yourself?

### Looking at the photos

As you look through the photos, please keep a careful note for yourself which photo the person is talking about.

- Ask him to look at the photos one at a time.
- Ask him to tell you about each photo: Please tell me about this photo
  - Free description of the photo
  - Why and how did you decide to take this photo?
- Use each photo to get a description of aspects of masculinity, as referred to in the introduction to the study e.g.
  - Is this an important part of being a young man e.g. playing soccer or being with friends?
  - Do you think that this would be important for boys?
  - Do you think that there are some boys who would not think this is important?
  - If any of the photos raise issues in the introduction, please try to talk more fully about this with the young man

### Open-ended interview

After looking at the photos, please thank the person for being willing to share their photos and their stories. Ask them if you can ask them some other general questions about being a boy.

*Throughout this section, please explore any of the issues that are described at the beginning of this guide.*

### *General*

- What is it like to be a boy?
- Is it very different from being a girl? How so?
- What do you like most about being a boy?

### *Interests and activities*

- How do boys spend their time? Where? With who?
- What do they talk about?

### *Expectations regarding masculinity*

- How must a young man behave or be, in order to be a proper man?
- What kinds of things make boys think of other boys as real men?
- What kinds of things make girls think of boys as real men?

### *Different kinds of boy*

- Are there different kinds of boys?
- (You may need to give some examples to prime the person: some boys may be very “cool” others not; some may be very sporting, others not; some may be quiet and reserved, others very sociable?)
- Are some more popular than others?
- What makes some boys popular and others not?
- What makes boys popular among other boys? What do they have to do or be in order to be popular?
- What makes boys popular among girls? What do they have to do or be in order to be popular?
- What is it like for unpopular boys?
- Do you think that you are popular? What makes you so?

### *Ideal masculinity*

- Who are the men you admire? Why?
- Who do boys generally admire?

### *Being masculine in different situations*

- Do you think that boys feel and behave differently in different situations? e.g. at school or home? How so?
- Do you feel and behave differently in these different situations?
- Do boys behave differently when they are with girls or with boys?

### *Relationships with girls*

- Do girls expect boys to behave in particular ways?
- What kinds of boys do girls like?
- What kinds of boys do girls not like?
- What kinds of girls do boys like?
- What kinds of girls do boys not like?

### *Challenges of being a boy*

Some people say that it is not easy to be a boy or man.

- How do you find being a boy or man?
- What do you like best about being a boy or man?
- Do you think that there are challenges or difficulties to being a boy?
- What kinds of challenges or worries do you experience about being a boy?
- (Here you may give some examples to prime the person e.g. have to have money, have to have many girlfriends etc)
- Are boys able to talk to other boys about the things that worry or challenge them?
- To whom would they talk?

### *Influences on masculine development*

- What has taught you or helped you in becoming a man?
- Have members of your family played a role? If so, how?
- Have friends played a role? If so, how?
- Have teachers or coaches played a role? If so, how?
- Has anyone else played a role?
- Do you ever wish that there had been other people to help or guide you?
- If identified: Does your religious views fit in with what it means to be a boy or man?

### Conclusion

- Thank the person enormously for their great help in doing the interview and being willing to chat so freely.
- Ask if you can keep the copies of the photos until the discussion with other boys.
- Copies of the 5-8 pictures that they like best will be made for them.

## **Appendix B - INFORMED CONSENT**

### **RESEARCH PROJECT ON MASCULINITY (MANHOOD) IN TEENAGERS AND YOUNG MEN.**

Thank you very much for taking some time to consider whether you would want to take part in this research study. This study is being done by researchers at the University of KZN and the University of the Witwatersrand, together with Targeted AIDS Intervention, an NGO working with young men in the KZN Midlands area.

This study wishes to come to a deeper understanding of the challenges facing teenage boys and young men as they move towards adult manhood, and how they cope with these challenges. There are many challenges facing young men today, some of them brought about by the HIV/AIDS crisis. We are interested in where, when and how teenage boys and young men experience these challenges, and how they make decisions to cope with them. We are wanting to include young men between the ages of 16 and 20 in our study, to help us to understand and reflect on these challenges.

If you decide that you would like to participate in this study, and are selected to participate, we would invite you to do a number of things. *First*, we would give you a free disposable camera, and ask you to take 20 pictures which give some idea of your life as a young man in South Africa. You could choose to take any photos that best describe your life as a young man. *Second*, once we have developed the photos we would show them to you, and ask you to select the five photos that best reflect your life as a young man, and the challenges facing you. We would invite you to share your photos in a discussion with 6-8 other young men, discussing the topic "challenges of being a young man in South Africa". Following the discussion group, we would arrange to make copies of 10 of the photographs of your choice for you to keep. With your agreement, we will keep copies of all the photographs for our study, although no-one (except the research team) will know that they were taken by you. *Third*, a few weeks later we would invite you to a personal interview with a member of our research team, who would ask you to describe some aspects of your life as a young man, and some of the challenges that you face. If you are agreeable, we will tape record the interview. If you are not happy with this, we will keep detailed notes instead. A month later you may be invited to another interview to talk about some of the same issues, after you have had some time to reflect.

It is important to know that we want you to feel safe and respected throughout this study, should you participate. *First*, you must feel absolutely free not to participate at any time. If you decide to participate and change your mind at any stage, we will fully respect your decision. *Second*, if you are under 18 years old we will ask your parents to give their written agreement to your participating. *Third*, all the discussions in groups or with you personally will be strictly confidential. Absolutely no-one will find out anything you have told a member of the research team, without your consent. *Fourth*, while participating in the study if you wish to discuss any of the personal matters more fully, we will arrange for someone to assist you. *Fifth*, we will only use the photographs with your full consent. The photographs will mainly be used to study the challenges facing young men. We may decide to hold an exhibition of some of the photographs. If so, and if we wished to use some of your photographs, this would only be with your full agreement. *Finally*, if at any stage you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of the research, one of our research team would be very happy to assist you.

If you decide to participate, we hope that you will find your participation helpful, enjoyable and rewarding.

Please answer the following questions about this research study by circling "Yes" if you understand and "No" if you do not understand:

For Example:

Do you understand that $2 + 2 = 4$ ?	Yes	No
Do you understand that you can ask questions about this study at any time?	Yes	No
Do you understand that participation in the study is voluntary and you can stop participating at any time?	Yes	No
Do you understand that you will need permission from a parent or guardian in order to participate in this study if you are younger than 18?	Yes	No
Do you understand that you can decide whether your photo's are used in the study or not?	Yes	No
Do you understand that group interviews will be tape-recorded and individual interviews will be tape-recorded with your permission?	Yes	No
Do you understand that the tapes recording the interviews will be kept private and that only the researchers will be allowed to listen to them?	Yes	No
Do you understand that your name will not be recorded when we write down what you have said in the interviews?	Yes	No
Do you understand that all the interviews (including your own) will be used to write a research report?	Yes	No

Please sign here if you have answered the questions above and you agree to take part in the study:

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

\_\_\_\_\_  
YOUR NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME OF WITNESS

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

Please mark the appropriate box:

I agree that the interviews can be tape-recorded:

I would prefer that the interviews are not tape-recorded

I agree to release my photographs to the researchers to be used for research purposes:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_